



QUR'ANIC WORLDVIEW
GUIDE FOR LIFE IN A BROKEN WORLD

"A Thematic Journey through the Qur'an for the Modern Human"

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Foreword

In the name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate.

What you are about to read was born from conversations along the way conversations with young people, mothers, and elders. In **the barren plains of Chad**, in **forgotten villages across Africa**, and **amid the chaos of refugee camps**. I saw children smile in orphanages on Lombok, prayed with elders in remote mosques in Indonesia, and heard the *takbīr* echo beneath the rain of bombs in **Gaza**.

As a theologian, ḥāfīz, and Islamic teacher in Belgium, I could not remain confined to theory. I traveled, listened, built, and shared not to change the world, but to understand it through the light of the **Qur'an**. My work with Gardens of the sincere, active in more than forty-five countries, brought me **face to face with raw realities** and with the profound questions of youth, educators, and communities across the world.

What I have learned through all these years is this: **many people do not understand the Qur'an as it was meant to be understood. They confuse culture with revelation.** As a result, frustration, misunderstanding, and above all a great distance between human beings and the Divine message arise.

This book is my answer. **A thematic exploration of the Qur'anic worldview** a lens through which we can look at issues that are too often left unspoken. It discusses, for example, the impact of *zīnā* in an age of overstimulation, the isolation of youth searching for meaning and belonging, the shame culture transmitted from generation to generation, and the spiritual indifference of our community toward the suffering in Gaza.

Each chapter presents verses from the **Qur'an**, always accompanied by insights from **classical tafsīr** such as those of **Ibn 'Ashūr, Al-Qurṭubī, and Ar-Rāzī**. Carefully selected **Verse** further reinforce each theme without overburdening it.

What makes this book unique is the **reflective layer** that follows each section. In it, I translate these timeless insights into concrete realities of **education, upbringing, and community life**. Each **chapter concludes** with a concise reflection that calls for **self-examination and action**.

I should note that this work does not claim to be exhaustive. To keep it accessible, I have chosen a limited selection of verses, **Verse**, and scholars for each chapter. I am aware that there are many other relevant sources, yet I have selected those most fitting within the context and message of this work.

This book is written for **teachers, students, caregivers, youth, parents, and seekers** for everyone who dares to think and to feel. It is an invitation to not only recite the Qur'an, but to **understand it, live it, and apply** it even in the difficult conversations that our community has long avoided.

May Allah bless this work, open our hearts to His Word, and make these pages a source of guidance, courage, and renewal. *Āmīn*.

Introduction

The Qur'an is not merely a book of worship; it is a revelation that offers a **complete worldview** a framework in which humanity, life, death, justice, knowledge, sexuality, economy, and social relations all find their rightful place. In the early centuries of Islam, this worldview gave rise to civilization, balance, and true humanity. Today, however, many Muslims young and old experience a growing sense of **alienation** between what the Qur'an teaches and what they encounter in their daily lives.

This alienation stems from multiple causes. On one hand, there is a **lack of contextual understanding and thematic education**. On the other, many communities are trapped in a suffocating culture of silence, where complex, uncomfortable, or sensitive issues **are left undiscussed**. This leads to religious superficiality, double standards, and young people turning away from faith not out of rebellion, but out of confusion.

During my many journeys with Gardens of the Sincere, I have witnessed something striking. We continue to distribute food parcels, sacrifice animals, provide clothing, and support hospitals and that is noble, indeed. Yet at times, it feels like trying to empty a flood with a bucket. Why are there so many orphans? Why do we keep feeding generations without seeing real change?

In some villages, people simply wait for their meat during Eid, making no effort, because they know it will arrive anyway. The mentality changes. **Ṣadaqah becomes a habit on the receiving end, without empowering people to become self-reliant**. We must do more than just give; **we must engage people, restore their self-confidence, and address the root causes not merely the symptoms**.

This is why we believe in **long-term structural transformation**. Alongside immediate aid and awareness through books such as this one, we as an organization aim to invest in the **establishment of training centers, schools, and even universities**; places where the next generation can be shaped with a clear vision, intellectual resilience, and spiritual depth. For only when we change the mentality we can change the future.

And this is where the Qur'an re-enters the picture. Without an inner transformation of consciousness, responsibility, and upbringing nothing truly changes. **Charity is meaningful only when it uplifts the human being and provides direction**.

This book was born out of a deep conviction: the **Qur'an offers a worldview** not merely a collection of rituals or rules, but **a complete framework for understanding and shaping life**.

Instead of a traditional approach by *sūrah* or single topic, this work takes the reader on a **thematic journey** through the Qur'an from **family to society, from spirituality to social engagement, from inner struggle to collective responsibility**. Each chapter begins with **contemporary observations**, often drawn from personal experiences in Belgium, Africa, and Asia, and then deepens through Qur'anic verses supported by insights from classical scholars such as **Ibn 'Ashūr, Al-Qurṭubī, and Ar-Rāzī**.

We address themes rarely discussed in mosques or classrooms, such as:

- The normalization of zinā (sexual immorality) in a world of overstimulation,
- The silence surrounding spiritual emptiness and identity crises among youth,
- The misinterpretation of polygamy and gender roles,
- The collective failure to respond to the suffering of the Ummah, such as in Gaza,
- The tension between culture and religion, between tradition and truth.

In this book, the Qur'an does not appear as a symbolic volume resting on a shelf, but as a light, **a lens, and a guide** one that dares to address the hardest questions of our time.

This work is written for **young people, parents, educators, imams, counselors, teachers, and students** for everyone who not only wishes to recite the Qur'an but **to understand it, live it, and apply it**, even when it becomes confronting or uncomfortable.

For only when we dare to look at our weaknesses can we begin to build an Ummah that not only believes but also **lives with insight, compassion, and strength?**

May this work contribute to awareness, knowledge, and above *all a return to the Word of Allah as the guiding light for both heart and mind.*

Theme 1: The Foundations of Faith – The Five Pillars in a Qur’anic Perspective

Chapter 1 – The Foundation: We Are Servants of Allah

In an age where freedom is considered the highest virtue, the word “*slave*” sounds harsh, outdated, and even uncomfortable. Yet it lies at the very heart of our identity as believers. The Qur’an teaches us that we are not autonomous beings, but “*ibād*” servants of the One who created us.

"إِيَّاكَ نَعْبُدُ وَإِيَّاكَ نَسْتَعِينُ"

“You alone we worship, and you alone we ask for help.” (*Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, 1:5)

"قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ"

“Say: Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my life and my death are for Allah, Lord of the worlds.”
(*Sūrat al-An‘ām*, 6:162)

The meaning of ‘*udūhiyyah* (servitude to Allah) is that we **submit ourselves completely** to His will, in surrender, obedience, love, and dependence. It is an honor, not a humiliation. For in servitude to Allah lies the only **true freedom**; freedom from idols, from desires, from social pressure, and from the inner slavery to this worldly life.

1.1 Observation

During my travels across Africa and Asia, I saw young people losing themselves for hours in their smartphones, families arguing over money, and youth who neglect prayer but know everything about trends, games, or football statistics. Even in Belgium, I meet Muslim youth who **consider themselves free**, yet their time, thoughts, and identities are controlled by algorithms, likes, and entertainment.

During a visit to Malaysia, I spoke with a young man, recently married, who worked as a taxi driver. He said, “I have no time to pray; I have to work.” But as our conversation went on, it became clear that he also chose to drive extra hours not out of necessity, but out of choice. What does that say about **our priorities?**

In a village near Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, we arrived to perform the *qurbān* sacrifices and distribute meat. The men of the village sat in the shade while we and our team carried out all the slaughtering and distribution. They said it was too hot. This attitude is waiting for others to **do the work reflects a mentality that blocks true transformation.**

In Uganda, I met a man who called himself an imam. He had a well built by *Gardens of the Sincere*, fully funded by donations, yet he had replaced our nameplate with another and claimed to a new donor that he had built it himself. This was not poverty; it was **spiritual exploitation**. This form of slavery is treacherous because it appears normal. Yet every habit that weakens our connection with Allah is a chain around the heart.

1.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat adh-Dhāriyāt (51:56)

"وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ"

"And I did not create the jinn and humankind except to worship me."

- **Ibn Āshūr** emphasizes that this verse summarizes the **ultimate purpose of human existence**: 'ibādah (worship). According to him, 'ibādah is not limited to rituals such as prayer or fasting, but signifies a **deep inner submission and obedience** to Allah in every aspect of life. He explains that this verse establishes the **existential foundation of human life** the purpose of creation is spiritual connection with the Creator, not material success.
- **Ar-Rāzī** states that in this verse, Allah **decisively rejects every alternative worldview**. Life is not about wealth, pleasure, status, or power; it is about worship. He further explains that "li-ya 'budūn" ("to worship Me") also **refers to ma'rifah** (knowledge of Allah), based on the saying: "**Worship is the knowledge of Allah**" (العبادة هي المعرفة). True worship, according to Ar-Rāzī, **begins with knowing Allah's Names, Attributes, and Signs** which leads to love, awe, and surrender.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** interprets this verse as a reminder of **life's true priority**. He states that worship is the reason why **everything in creation has been subjected to human use** (food, air, earth), yet man himself was created for Allah. He stresses that 'ibādah must be both **internal and external** not a ritual without heart, nor merely a spiritual state without action. He warns that whoever forgets this purpose wastes his life.

The purpose of life is worship not as a limitation, but as the **fulfillment of existence**. Worship is **more than rituals**; it is a way of life rooted in recognition, love, obedience, and devotion to Allah. Whoever ignores this purpose will wander from goal to goal but never find true contentment.

Verse 2 – Sūrat al-An'ām (6:162)

"قُلْ إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ"

"Say: Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death are for Allah, Lord of the worlds."

- **Ibn Āshūr** regards this verse as a **summary of complete devotion**. He highlights that the list prayer (*ṣalāh*), sacrifice (*nusuk*), life (*mahyā*), and death (*mamāt*) **represents the entire human existence**. For him, it means that every act, whether worldly or spiritual, must be done with full **awareness of Allah**. It encompasses not only worship in the mosque, but also life choices, attitudes toward death, and even intentions.
- **Ar-Rāzī** sees this verse as a **statement of pure tawḥīd (monotheism)**. Everything of value from ritual acts to the entirety of existence is **entirely devoted to Allah**. He notes that "*nusuk*" refers specifically to sacrificial acts, but can also be understood more broadly as **all forms of dedication**, even suffering and self-sacrifice for Allah's sake. Ar-Rāzī emphasizes that the

verse also **rejects *shirk*** (association of partners with Allah): nothing in life or death belongs to anyone or anything other than him.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** views this verse as the ultimate expression of ***ikhlas*** (sincerity). He describes it as a refutation of all forms of idolatry and hypocrisy. According to him, this verse teaches the believer that every breath, every action, every dream, and even the manner of one's death **must be colored by the intention to please Allah**. Al-Qurṭubī also notes that this verse has a prophetic dimension it was addressed to the Prophet ﷺ as a message to his people, and as a timeless lesson for every Muslim after him.

This verse reminds us that **Islam is not merely a part of life it *is* life itself**. True submission means that our plans, choices, successes, and failures **all exist for Allah's sake**. Only when these aspects are devoted to Him does life gain meaning, coherence, and inner peace.

1.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"تَعَسَ عَبْدُ الدِّينَارِ، تَعَسَ عَبْدُ الدَّرْهَمِ، تَعَسَ عَبْدُ الخَمِيصَةِ، تَعَسَ وَانْتَكَسَ، وَإِذَا شَبِكَ فَلَا انْتَقَشَ"

"Perished is the slave of the dinar, perished is the slave of the dirham, perished is the slave of fine cloth and luxury. He is ruined and humiliated, and when he is pricked by a thorn, he will not be healed."

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

Reflection: The Prophet ﷺ warns that whoever attaches his heart to wealth or luxury becomes a slave to those things. This form of slavery is invisible, yet as real as the physical chains of the past. It is precisely what we witness today young people who seek their worth in brands, money, fame, or even likes on social media, losing in the process their sense of servitude to Allah.

1.4 Reflective Layer

The message of **true servitude** touches every dimension of our existence. In a world where success is often measured by **popularity, possessions, or comfort**, the Qur'an calls us to seek our identity not through the eyes of people but through our **connection with the Creator**. True honor does not lie in how the world perceives you, but in **how you serve Allah**.

In **upbringing**, this means teaching our children from a young age that their identity does not begin with a celebrity, a sports idol, or an influencer but with **Allah**. A child who knows **whom he serves** grows with **stability, self-confidence, and direction** not out of arrogance, but because he knows where he comes from and **where he is headed**.

In **education**, the concept of **servitude** must never be secondary. Tawḥīd is not merely an academic subject; it is the **essence of who we are**. Islamic education must not only **inform** young people about rituals or rules but **shape them into conscious believers** who carry their faith with conviction and purpose.

And in our **spirituality**, we must constantly ask ourselves: Whom do I truly serve? My comfort? My desires? The expectations of others? Or **my Lord**? For as long as we remain bound to our **inclinations, laziness, or cultural habits**, we remain prisoners of ourselves even if we feel “free.”

True liberation begins when we mold our hearts toward **obedience** to Allah not through coercion, but through **love**. Only then do we cease to be slaves of systems, trends, or fears, and become **conscious servants** building an Ummah that is not dependent, but **responsible**; not swayed by the winds of opinion, but guided by divine light.

1.5 Conclusion

Before we discuss topics such as zina, identity, education, or Gaza, we must first understand something essential: **we are servants of Allah**. This is the foundation of our faith. If we forget that, we will fail to grasp the rest of the Qur’an.

When you see yourself as a servant of Allah, your **entire outlook changes**. You no longer choose what simply feels good or what others do, you first ask: “What does Allah want from me?” Only then can you make the right choices. Only then do you live with purpose.

This first lesson is not a stern warning, but a **wake-up call**. It reminds you that your worth does not lie in money, likes, or so-called freedom but in your bond with Allah. True dignity and freedom are found only when you live as Allah desires.

Look at what Allah says in the Qur’an, in Sūrat al-Isrā’:

"سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا"

“Glory be to Him who took His servant by night...” (Qur’an – al-Isrā’, 17:1)

He did not call the Prophet ﷺ a “leader” or a “hero,” but a **servant** for that is the highest title a human being can attain.

When we understand this, we will stand stronger. We will see life differently. Together, we will build an **Ummah that lives with conviction**, love, and strength connected to Allah and connected to one another. May Allah help us become his true servants, with our whole hearts.

Chapter 2 – The Meaning and Weight of the Shahada

2.1 Observation

The shahāda “*Lā ilāha illa Allāh, Muḥammadur Rasūlullāh*” is the key to Islam, the gateway to faith. Yet we find that for many, this key is spoken but never consciously held.

In practice, as an **Islamic teacher and field worker**, I observe that many **young Muslims** are Muslim **simply because their parents**. They were raised in a **culturally Islamic environment**: learning to pray, reciting some Arabic, fasting in Ramadan, eating halal. But often **without depth, without reflection, without a conscious decision**. Islam was handed to them as an identity rarely as a conviction.

In contrast, **converts to Islam** often remember the very hour they pronounced their *shahāda*. They did so with awareness, reason, and a deep yearning for meaning and truth. And usually, their Islam is more deeply rooted precisely because it was a **deliberate choice**.

During our projects in places like **Madagascar**, we noticed that some people uttered **the shahāda merely to receive a food parcel**, a sack of rice, or other aid not out of conviction, but to gain something. Yet the *shahāda* is not a transaction; it is a **covenant with Allah**.

During a humanitarian project in the Philippines, we built a mosque in an area where, historically, people were already Muslim before the Spanish colonization. *Subḥān Allāh*, the response was overwhelming. After a lecture I gave there, more than thirty people embraced Islam. This shows how vital it is to think strategically in our projects: **a mosque is not only a place of prayer but a center for rediscovering one’s true identity**. When you understand *where* to build a mosque, it can reopen doors for entire communities to return to their original faith.

Even today, the power of the **shahāda** is alive. Every week, people embrace Islam; sometimes after years of searching, reflection, or spiritual hunger. It is deeply moving and inspiring. **Yet a new challenge arises: what happens after conversion?**

Sadly, some new Muslims, right after their shahāda, find themselves surrounded by conservative or rigid groups that overwhelm them with rules and prohibitions without space for gradual growth or understanding. Some are bombarded with questions of fiqh, clothing rules, or differences between legal schools long before they grasp the foundations of tawḥīd or learn to pray. I have witnessed this firsthand: a convert who completely withdrew after a few months, overwhelmed and confused.

The shahāda is the beginning of a journey, not the destination. Every journey requires patience, guidance, and space. New Muslims need time to grow step by step with room for questions, mistakes, and the freedom to find their own path within faith.

We also frequently see another pattern: the emotional moment of conversion is celebrated with hugs, tears, and congratulations but within days, everyone returns to their own lives, leaving the new Muslim alone. No guidance. No community. No friendship.

This is why it is urgent that we invest in structured follow-up and care through mosques, organizations, and initiatives that offer continuous support to new Muslims. Not only at the emotional moment of *shahāda*, but in the months and years that follow: in understanding the Qur'an, integrating faith into daily life, and building a healthy spiritual identity.

“The shahāda is not a formula it is a life choice.”

Finally, there exists within many Muslim communities the belief that all non-Muslims are automatically destined for Hell. Children are often taught this as a simple fact without nuance, without distinction, without context. But when we return to the Qur'an and the era of revelation, we notice something important: The verses that speak of punishment for the disbelievers were primarily directed toward people like **the Quraysh**

- Those who heard the message,
- Saw the Prophet ﷺ with their own eyes,
- Recognized the truth,
- Yet rejected it out of arrogance or self-interest.

In our time, the situation is different. Many people around the world have never truly encountered Islam let alone in a pure, authentic form. Some know it only through distorted media portrayals, war, or the bad examples of others. Can we then hastily claim that such people are “disbelievers” in the sense intended by the Qur'an?

2.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Ṭaha (20:8)

اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ

“Allah there is no deity except him. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr:** This verse reaffirms tawhīd the absolute oneness and divinity of Allah as the core of faith. It forms the starting point of every act of belief and worship.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** He explains that the negation (*lā ilāha*) followed by the affirmation (*illā Allāh*) represents a total rejection of all other deities, false priorities, or objects of devotion in life.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** The shahāda is not merely a statement of words but a commitment of heart and action. Whoever utters it yet behaves as though there are multiple powers besides Allah has not grasped its true essence.

The verse reminds us that *lā ilāha illa Allāh* is not only a sentence to recite but a worldview to live by one that purifies the heart from dependence on anything but Allah and reorders our priorities toward Him alone.

Verse 2 – Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt (49:15)

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَرْتَابُوا

“Indeed, the true believers are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger and then do not doubt...”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** True *īmān* comes with steadfastness without doubt, without superficiality. The *shahāda* is therefore not a passing phrase but a stable and enduring inner state.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** This verse perfectly aligns with the idea that the genuine believer does not waver between worlds; he stands firm in his conviction.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Doubt often arises from ignorance or lack of knowledge. Thus, this verse underlines the necessity of intellectual and spiritual understanding when declaring the *shahāda*.

To live the *shahāda* means to cultivate certainty (*yaqīn*) an unshakable awareness that anchors the believer amidst life’s storms. Faith is not blind emotion; it is enlightened conviction rooted in knowledge and trust in Allah.

Verse 3 – Sūrat al-Anfāl (8:55)

إِنَّ شَرَّ الدَّوَابِّ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ

“Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are those who disbelieve and they do not believe, even after recognizing the truth.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** He clarifies that this description does not refer to those who are ignorant of the truth or have no access to it, but to those who knowingly reject it despite clear evidence.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** He observes that the disbelief mentioned here is accompanied by arrogance and deliberate denial after recognition of the truth.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** He highlights that the Qur’an differentiates between those who knowingly reject the truth and those who remain unaware or misinformed about it.

Classical scholars such as **Ibn Taymiyyah**, **al-Ghazālī**, and **Ibn ‘Āshūr** elaborated on this distinction. They differentiated between:

- **Ad-da‘wah al-muballaghah** when the message has been clearly conveyed, and
- **Al-‘udhr bil-jahl** the excuse of ignorance.

Those who never received the message clearly, or who only encountered a distorted version of Islam, cannot automatically be judged as disbelievers in the same sense as those whom the Qur’an describes.

Therefore, it is not for us to determine who will enter Paradise or Hell. That judgment belongs solely to **Allah the Most Just and the Most Merciful**.

The shahāda must thus be understood not merely as a ticket to Paradise, but as a conscious act of surrender a sacred commitment that not everyone receives, or recognizes, under the same circumstances.

2.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"مَنْ مَاتَ وَهُوَ يَعْلَمُ أَنَّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ دَخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ"

"Whoever dies knowing that there is no deity except Allah will enter Paradise."
(Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

Reflection: The key word in this Verse is “knowing” (*ya’lam*). It is not merely about pronouncing the words, but about understanding, realizing, and affirming them. Without knowledge, the *shahāda* is just sound an empty utterance without meaning.

Verse 2:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"مَنْ قَالَ لِأَخِيهِ: يَا كَافِرٌ، فَقَدْ بَاءَ بِهَا أَحَدُهُمَا، فَإِنْ كَانَ كَمَا قَالَ، وَإِلَّا رَجَعَتْ عَلَيْهِ"

"If a man says to his brother, 'You are a disbeliever,' then one of them bears the consequence of that statement. If it is true, then it applies to the person described; but if it is not, it returns upon the one who uttered it."

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

Reflection: This Verse teaches us to be extremely cautious when passing judgment on the faith of others. It is not for us to decide someone’s final destiny. Only Allah knows what lies within a person’s heart, circumstances, and intentions. To rush in declaring others unbelievers (*takfir*) is not only unjust it can endanger one’s own soul.

2.4 Reflective Layer

Uttering the shahāda is not a magical formula that guarantees salvation, but a conscious decision to acknowledge and serve Allah as the One and Only.

In **parenting**, this means that we do not simply teach our children to say “*lā ilāha illa Allah*” but help them understand what those words truly mean love for Allah, obedience to him, reliance upon him, and rejection of every form of idolatry, whether it appears in the form of idols, trends, or desires.

We must also give children space to ask questions and express doubts without fear. The shahāda is not a sword used to condemn others but a bridge to compassion and understanding. We should teach our children that Allah is just and that the final judgment of who is saved or not belongs solely to him not to us.

In **Islamic education**, lessons on tawhīd and the meaning of “*lā ilāha illa Allāh*” should stand at the center. Not as dry theory, but as a way of life. Cultural Islam without conviction leads to spiritual emptiness. That is why we must create opportunities for faith renewal grounded in knowledge and love, not in habit or social pressure.

In **da‘wah** and community work, we must avoid judging people whose stories we do not know. Many have never truly heard or seen the beauty of Islam. Approach them with gentleness and respect. Let your character be the invitation.

And above all remain humble. The fact that you were granted faith is not your achievement; it is a gift from Allah. And a gift should never produce arrogance, but responsibility.

2.5 Conclusion

The shahāda is the foundation of our identity as Muslims but every foundation must be solid. If it is built on habit, culture, or convenience, it will collapse at the first storm of doubt or hardship. Only those who consciously and rationally choose Allah will remain spiritually steadfast.

The shahāda is not a weapon to exclude others, but a light we are entrusted to carry. It is about acknowledging Allah, loving His message, and following the Prophet ﷺ not about stigmatizing those who live differently.

When we understand that the Qur’an’s warnings were addressed to those who knew the truth and still rejected it, we also realize that not every non-Muslim falls into that category. Many have never truly encountered Islam, or have only seen a distorted image of it.

Let us therefore approach the shahāda as the Companions once did with gratitude, responsibility, and love for humanity. And let us never use our words to build walls where Allah may still have left doors open.

Chapter 3 – Prayer: The Backbone of the Worldview

3.1 Observation

There is no pillar in Islam that is mentioned as frequently yet neglected as often as prayer (*aṣ-ṣalāh*). Across the world, from Belgium to Japan, prayer remains one of the greatest weaknesses among Muslims. Many do not pray at all, or only occasionally. And among those who do, many pray out of habit without reflection, without presence, without understanding.

In classrooms, students proudly declare that they are Muslim *al-ḥamdu lillāh!* yet when the conversation turns to prayer, silence fills the room. Not long ago, I stood outside a Turkish mosque and saw some of my former students. **The congregational prayer had already begun.** I called out, “Come, let’s go inside.” One of them replied, “I’ll pray later at home.” But who knows if he ever did? Everyone seems **to find an excuse** to postpone or even avoid prayer.

In my experience as an Islamic teacher, I ask my students each year who among them performs the five daily prayers. The answer is always shocking: **barely 20 to 25 percent and often**, those are newcomers from countries like Somalia or Afghanistan. The third-generation Muslims; They have largely lost their connection to prayer. Moreover, what about the many young people who recite *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah* every day without knowing its meaning? How can one claim to have a conversation with Allah while not understanding the words being spoken? For many, prayer has been reduced to a physical routine devoid of spiritual depth as if it were merely a form of cardio exercise.

Today, many young people and adults as well struggle with various addictions: endless gaming, scrolling, and smoking, watching prohibited content, or chasing desires. What most do not realize is that the first step toward healing is not therapy, medication, or a detox program it is *ṣalāh*. Whoever performs prayer correctly, on time, with understanding and sincere connection to Allah, will find that the soul begins to rest, the conscience awakens, and sins begin to weigh heavily on the heart. Prayer is not a duty beside the problem it is the **beginning of the solution.**

As long as the feet do not stand firmly on the prayer mat, the heart will continue to wander drifting between desire and emptiness.

3.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verses Sūrat al-Ma‘ārij (70:19–21)

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا (19) فَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا (20) وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا (21) إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ

“Surely, the human being was created anxious: when hardship touches him, he panics; and when good comes to him, he is withholding **except** those who pray.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** The term *halū‘* (هلوع) denotes an intense, jittery craving for comfort a person unable to bear setbacks and addicted to ease. Yet the Qur’an carves out an exception: *illā al-muṣallīn* “except those who pray.”

- **Al-Qurṭubī:** This verse sketches a psychological profile of the human being: panicky and stingy. Prayer is the therapy that reforms this temperament.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Prayer disciplines the ego: it structures life, makes us patient in trial and grateful in bounty. Whoever truly prays stops being driven by impulse?

This means a Muslim’s worldview is not built merely on what he feels or possesses today, but on the larger realities of the Hereafter, the Ummah, and the divine plan. Whoever prays rises above himself?

Verse Sūrat al-Ma‘ārij (70:23)

الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ

“Those who are constant in their prayers.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Dā’imūn (دائمون) goes deeper than merely observing prayer times. It signals sustained attentiveness and dedication. These are people who never neglect their prayers, regardless of circumstance; prayer is the backbone of their daily life.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** This verse sits within a passage listing the qualities of true believers. Dā’imūn includes **praying with khushū‘** (humility), establishing the obligatory prayers and nawāfil (supererogatory), and recognizing prayer as the bond with Allah.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Dā’imūn indicates **continuous spiritual connection**. They do not seek excuses; prayer is their **moral anchor**. Even when others neglect prayer, they maintain it with devotion.

Allah speaks here further about those who are steadfast in their prayers and what character traits they derive from it.

Character traits of the sincere believer

Verses Sūrat al-Ma‘ārij (70:24–34)

(70:24) وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَعْلُومٌ

“And in their wealth there is a known right.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** A consciousness that wealth is a trust from Allah, obliging one to share.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Establishes social responsibility in the Islamic economy; a believer does not think only of himself.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Ma‘lūm (“a known due”) points to both Zakāh and regular voluntary ṣadaqah.

(70:25) لِلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ

“For the beggar and the deprived (who do not ask).”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Allah mentions both the one who asks and the one too dignified to ask warning us not to judge needs by appearances.

- **Al-Qurṭubī:** An appeal to give with insight and compassion seeing hidden poverty, not only what is visible.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** The *mahṛūm* is often needier than the asker yet overlooked.

(70:26) وَالَّذِينَ يُصَدِّقُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ

“And those who affirm the Day of Recompense.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Real belief in the Hereafter produces ethical conduct here and now.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Whoever believes in Resurrection will act justly.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Faith in Judgment Day fuels charity and chastity.

(70:27) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ

“And those who are apprehensive of their Lord’s punishment.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** *Mushfiqūn* denotes not mere fear but tender humility and concern.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** True spirituality includes a measure of fear to counter pride and complacency.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** This fear balances religious life and keeps one alert in fulfilling duties.

(70:28) إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَأْمُونٍ

“Indeed, none can feel secure from the punishment of their Lord.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Even the most devout cannot presume safety the verse nurtures humility and vigilance.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** No one should deem himself “safe”; arrogance is a stealth killer of faith.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** The intent is continual awareness; safety lies in constant devotion.

(70:29) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَزْوَاجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ

“And those who guard their chastity.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** They confine sexual desire within lawful bounds.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** A sign of self-control born of *taqwā*.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Chastity flows from spiritual purity strengthened by prayer.

(70:30) إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ

“Except with their spouses or those their right hands possess; then they are free of blame.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Islam recognizes human needs yet sets clear limits.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Fidelity within marriage undergirds moral stability.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** The exception displays both mercy and order.

(70:31) فَمَنْ أَبْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ

“But whoever seeks beyond that such are the transgressors.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Any sexual pursuit outside these bounds violates purity.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Indicates moral decay and loss of spiritual discipline.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Such behavior erodes the transformative impact of prayer.

(70:32) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمَانَاتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ

“And those who are faithful to their trusts and covenants.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Guarding trust reflects an upright heart.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Fidelity to people often mirrors fidelity in prayer.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Keeping one’s word is a hallmark of true *imān*.

(70:33) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِشَهَادَاتِهِمْ قَائِمُونَ

“And those who stand firm in their testimony.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Honest testimony safeguards rights and society.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Steadfast testimony correlates with truthfulness in prayer.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** It requires courage and moral clarity.

(70:34) وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ

“And those who carefully maintain their prayers.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** This signals punctual, conscious, and devoted prayer.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Prayer crowns all deeds; whoever guards it guards his soul.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Not merely performing prayer, but keeping it alive in the heart.

What it means to truly pray

These verses describe not just any believer, but the one whose prayer is real not prayer as habit, but as transformation. Such people give out of reverent fear of Allah, even unprompted; they sincerely believe in the **Day of Judgment**; they live chastely, keep their promises, and bear honest witness. Above all, they guard their prayer in performance and in meaning.

Yet today, from Africa to Asia to Europe, we see millions who have prayed for 10, 20, even 30 years, five times a day, often in the mosque but that **prayer leaves scant trace on character, ethics, or dealings**. They gossip, cheat, are stingy, aggressive, or dishonest and see no problem so long as they “keep praying.”

This is one of our greatest wounds: prayer without awareness, ritual without morals, and submission without transformation. Allah did not institute prayer as a mere physical exercise, but as a schooling

of the soul. These verses remind us: if prayer does not change you, you may be praying with your body but not with your heart.

Verse Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:143)

وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضَيِّعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

“Allah would never let your faith be lost. Truly Allah is Most Gentle, Most Merciful to mankind.”

Context: Revealed when the qiblah changed from Bayt al-Maqdis (Jerusalem) to the Ka‘bah (Makkah). Some Companions worried about the prayers they had performed facing Jerusalem.

- **Ibn Kathīr:** Īmān here refers to ṣalāh (prayer).
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Allah calls prayer “faith” to magnify its worth; it is the central proof of genuine belief.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Without prayer, faith is incomplete; ṣalāh is the tangible proof of an inner conviction.

So although the verse literally says “faith,” the scholars agree it addresses the prayers already performed.

Verse Sūrat at-Tawbah (9:11)

فَإِنْ تَابُوا وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ فَإِخْوَتُكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ

“But if they repent, establish prayer, and give zakah, then they are your brothers in religion.”

- **Ibn Āshūr:** Highlights outward deeds as prerequisites for religious brotherhood; faith must manifest in prayer and zakāh to be fully recognized within the community.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Neglect of ṣalah fractures brotherhood. This bond is not merely emotional or cultural, but religious and conditional.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Ṣalah and zakāh are not optional; they are essential building blocks of faith, marking the boundary of Islamic belonging.

Verse Sūrat Maryam (19:59)

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَاتِ فَسَوْفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غِيًّا

“Then there succeeded them generations who neglected the prayer and followed desires; they will soon meet ruin.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** “*Aḍā‘ ū ṣ-ṣalāh*” need not mean total abandonment; delaying it beyond its time and treating it lightly is already a loss.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Neglecting prayer precipitates moral decline; without *ṣalāh*, one more readily succumbs to desires.

- **Ar-Rāzī:** Losing prayer opens the door to spiritual collapse. *“Fasawfa yalqawna ghayyan”* points to deviation and, per some Companions, to a specific valley in Hell (Ghayy) for those who abandon prayer.

Here, abandoning prayer is directly linked to falling away from faith.

Verse - Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:3)

الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْغَيْبِ وَيُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ

“Those who believe in the Unseen, establish the prayer, and spend out of what we have provided them.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Allah places prayer immediately after belief in the **Unseen as its visible manifestation**.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Prayer is the first outward deed through which inner conviction appears.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Prayer is the pivot of deeds; without it, the rest of faith is weak and incomplete.

Verse Sūrat al-‘Ankabūt (29:45)

أَتْلُ مَا أُوحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

“Recite what has been revealed to you of the Book and establish the prayer. Indeed, prayer restrains from indecency and wrongdoing. And the remembrance of Allah is greater. And Allah knows what you do.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Prayer shapes not only the individual but **society**; it must yield **moral change**, not mere ritual repetition.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** Prayer is purifying. When performed correctly, it deters grave sins (faḥshā’) and **forbidden acts** (munkar). If someone prays yet persists in corruption, something is fundamentally wrong in his understanding or performance of prayer.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** “The remembrance of Allah is greater” means **presence-of-heart in prayer** outweighs outward motion.

Verse Sūrat al-Muddaththir (74:43) *(the citation is often miswritten as 29:43)*

قَالُوا لَمْ نَكُ مِنَ الْمُصَلِّينَ

“They will say: ‘We were not among those who prayed.’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** That neglecting prayer is named first shows it as the key to spiritual downfall and moral decay.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** These verses indicate that prayer is the absolute minimum for preserving *īmān*; willful neglect signals deep indifference toward Allah.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** Prayer is the bridge between servant and Lord; breaking it severs one from guidance, purification, and moral protection.

Prayer as a Mirror: Self-Reflection and Self-Control

Ṣalāh is not merely ritual; it is a moment of inner confrontation. Five times a day, the believer pauses to assess deeds, intentions, and direction. Prayer becomes a **spiritual mirror**: “What am I doing? Whom do I truly serve? What is the state of my heart?”

Verse Sūrat al-A‘lā (87:14–15)

(15) قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ تَزَكَّى (14) وَذَكَرَ اسْمَ رَبِّهِ فَصَلَّى

“Successful indeed is the one who purifies himself, remembers the Name of his Lord, and then prays.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr**: Tazakkā (self-purification) refers not only to outward conduct but to inner cleansing; for which prayer is a concrete instrument.
- **Al-Qurṭubī**: This verse **couples dhikr (remembrance)** with embodied worship as the key to success; prayer is the practical expression of inner purification.
- **Ar-Rāzī**: Prayer not only purifies actions; it trains the heart to self-monitor and stay alert to sin.

In sujūd (prostration), the believer becomes literally the lowest and thus the closest to Allah. It is the moment when self-reflection can be purest. Prayer is therefore a school of self-control: learning to wait, to pause, to say “no” to the nafs.

Compare this with addictions that afflict many today from gaming and social media to prohibited content or smoking. The first step toward freedom is not a harsh regimen or guilt it is regular, mindful prayer. A heart that returns to its Lord five times a day will, over time, learn to set boundaries on its desires.

3.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“الْعَهْدُ الَّذِي بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمُ الصَّلَاةُ فَمَنْ تَرَكَهَا فَقَدْ كَفَرَ”

“The covenant between us and them is the prayer; whoever abandons it has committed disbelief.”
(Sunan al-Tirmidhī 2621; authenticated by al-Albānī)

Reflection: The Prophet ﷺ describes prayer as the criterion of genuine faith. When prayer is sound, other deeds are sound; when prayer fails, faith falters. On the Day of Judgment, prayer will be the first deed to be examined it is the mirror of our spiritual life.

3.4 Reflective Layer

Upbringing Give prayer meaning from the start

We must teach children not only how to pray, but why. The outward motions of **ṣalāh** matter, but without awareness and love they remain hollow. Teach them the meanings of the words they recite and the wisdom of the verses they read. Help them understand that prayer is not a punishment but a meeting with their Lord a moment of **calm, safety, and purpose**. When children receive this from an early age, ṣalāh becomes not a burden but a longing.

Education Anchor the foundation in curricula

A school without ṣalāh is like a body without a heartbeat. **Tafsīr** of core sūrahs such as al-Fātiḥah, al-‘Aṣr, and al-Ikhlāṣ should be fixtures of the **Islamic curriculum not superficially**, but with depth: linguistic analysis, themes, and above all, application to a young person’s life today. Through education we translate the core values of ṣalāh surrender, order, awareness into a concrete way of living.

Community Work Activate the mosque as a workshop of the spirit

Our **mosques and youth programs** must be more than prayer halls or social hubs; they must be renewed as **centers of spiritual growth**. Speak openly about the importance of prayer not through fear-based rhetoric, but through insight, experience, and heart-work. Share stories, struggles, and practical tips. Create spaces where young people can say, “I find praying difficult,” without being judged, and where they can search together for renewal.

Prayer is not a habit or a routine box to tick. It is a **lifeline**. It shapes our thinking, behavior, and worldview. It tames the ego, grants rest, and teaches humility. When we reduce prayer to a set of movements or a cultural ritual, we lose the capacity to stand firm and balanced in life.

Pause and consider: what does your prayer say about you? Not only whether you pray, but how you pray. Is it rushed or mindful? Mechanical or heartfelt? Prayer is not only an obligation it is a mirror, reflecting the true state of your relationship with Allah.

If you are **distracted in ṣalāh**, you are often distracted in life. If you constantly delay prayer, you may be delaying other vital responsibilities as well. But when you set your prayer in order with focus, calm, love, and surrender you will notice other matters fall into place: your character, patience, and priorities.

Prayer is an anchor in storms, a wake-up call in times of ease, and a source of strength when you feel weak. If you lose your focus in life, return first to your prayer. That is where every rebuilding begins.

3.5 Conclusion

Prayer (ṣalāh) is not merely a pillar of Islam it is its **backbone**. It will be the first matter Allah asks about on the Day of Judgment. It is the daily meeting between servant and Lord. It is what keeps the heart alive, subdues the ego, and nourishes the soul.

The Qur'an shows that those who neglect prayer gradually sink into desire and loss. The *aḥādīth* confirm that without prayer, faith becomes only a shadow of itself. And whoever guards his prayer, guards his soul, his honor, and his place in the Hereafter.

Ṣalāh is not a burden, but a **gift**. Not a habit, but a spiritual journey. Not an obligation, but **an honor and a privilege**.

Chapter 4 – Zakāh and Ṣadaqah: Giving Is Living

4.1 Observation

In my years of work with Gardens of the Sincere, active in more than forty-five countries, I have repeatedly witnessed the same paradox. When we offer a water well with a personalized nameplate or an animal sacrifice accompanied by a custom video, donations flow easily. But when we speak about building a school, supporting a farm, or launching sustainable projects without a visible name attached, the enthusiasm often fades.

Many people think that **zakāh and ṣadaqah** are only about money. Yet Allah teaches us otherwise. Giving means more than wealth. In **Sūrat al-Ḥadīd**, Allah calls upon us to give from what he has entrusted to us; this may be your time, your energy, your knowledge, or your presence beside a sick person. Every sincere sacrifice counts.

I have seen that many people give ṣadaqah out of emotion, yet have no understanding of the obligatory nature of zakāh; let alone perform a yearly calculation of their assets. This ignorance undermines the system of social justice that Allah Himself built into society.

Today we also see donation campaigns where contributors demand their names on wells, buildings, or schools; sometimes even complaining that their names are not written large enough. In our own experience at **Gardens of the Sincere**, we have learned the importance of continually reminding donors about sincerity (ikhlaṣ) and humbleness. **a donation is not an act of self-promotion; it is an act of worship.**

We live in an age where people spend freely on themselves: thousands of euros on holidays abroad, tens of thousands on cars, hundreds of thousands on houses. Yet when it comes to giving for the sake of Allah helping Gaza, supporting orphans, funding water wells or Islamic education suddenly the hesitation begins.

This tendency is especially painful to see among business owners. Many spend more sponsoring a football club or advertising their company than on a charity project that truly saves lives. Even when they could gain tax benefits from a deductible donation, many keep their wallets closed. Money for luxury feels natural but money for ṣadaqah or zakāh has become a burden.

This behavior reveals something deeper: as a community, we are **more occupied with consuming than** with contributing. Wealth is not a blessing if it produces no good. On the contrary, it becomes a test. Allah does not look at how much you possess: He looks at what you do with it.

It is time to look honestly at ourselves: are we generous only toward ourselves? Or do we invest in what truly matters to Allah? **The real profit** is not a new car or an exotic trip; it is a school you helped build, a water well that sustains lives, or a child who learns to pray because of your support.

4.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 Sūrat al-Ḥadīd (57:7)

"آمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَأَنْفِقُوا مِمَّا جَعَلَكُمْ مُسْتَخْلِفِينَ فِيهِ"

"Believe in Allah and His Messenger, and spend from that which He has made you successors (trustees) over."

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** explains that *"mimmā ja'alakum mustakhlafīna fīh"* highlights the temporary nature of wealth. Everything we own is, in truth, a **trust (amānah)** given to us for a limited time.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that this verse reveals the true test of faith: **giving** from what one loves most.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** points to the responsibility that comes with possession wealth is not a right, but a duty.

Verse 2 Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:254–261)

In this series of verses, Allah places giving (infiq) right after belief in life and death, the Verse of the Throne (Ayat al-Kursi), and stories of Allah's miraculous power (such as the man who slept for 100 years).

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ كَمَثَلِ حَبَّةٍ أَنْبَتَتْ سَبْعَ سَنَابِلٍ فِي كُلِّ سَنَابِلَةٍ مِئَةٌ حَبَّةٌ وَاللَّهُ يُضَاعِفُ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ

"The example of those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah is like that of a grain which grows seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains. And Allah multiplies for whom He wills. And Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing."

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** views this verse as a powerful image of blessing (**barakah**). The multiplication is not merely mathematical it is spiritual and boundless.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** stresses that intention (niyyah) is **central**. What matters is not the amount given, but sincerity, timing, and the real need of the recipient.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes that giving is not losing but **investing** in **eternity** like planting in fertile soil, with Allah ensuring the harvest.

Verse 3 Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:262)

الَّذِينَ يُنْفِقُونَ أَمْوَالَهُمْ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ لَا يُتْبِعُونَ مَا أَنْفَقُوا مَنًّا وَلَا أَدَىٰ لَهُمْ أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ

"Those who spend their wealth in the way of Allah and then do not follow up what they have spent with reminders or harm for them is their reward with their Lord, and there will be no fear concerning them, nor will they grieve."

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** explains that this verse addresses not only material charity but the **ethics of giving**. True charity must be pure free of arrogance or humiliation of the recipient. The word **"mann"** refers to **reminding others of one's generosity** as a way of gaining control or pride.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** adds that “**adhā**” (**harm**) includes subtle forms a look, a sarcastic comment like “Remember what I did for you?”, or publicly mentioning one’s donation. **Such actions destroy the reward entirely.**
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes the psychological harm caused by such behavior; it **strips the recipient of dignity**, contradicting the very purpose of charity. What matters to Allah is how we give, not only what we give.

Verse 4 Sūrat al-Layl (92:5–7)

"(7) فَأَمَّا مَنْ أَعْطَىٰ وَاتَّقَىٰ (5) وَصَدَّقَ بِالْحُسْنَىٰ (6) فَسَنُيَسِّرُهُ لِلْيُسْرَىٰ"

“As for he who gives and fears Allah, and affirms the best (truth), We will ease him toward ease.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** describes giving as the first key to tazkiyah **purification of the soul.**
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that generosity opens the **heart and makes life easier.**
- **Ar-Rāzī** links giving directly with *taqwā* (God-consciousness): whoever truly fears **Allah will not be stingy.**

The Qur’an teaches that giving is not a loss, but an investment in both the soul and the future. Wealth entrusted to us is not ownership but **amānah**, a trust for which we are accountable. As Allah says: “Give from that which He has made you successors over.” (57:7)

Blessing lies not in the quantity of giving, but in the purity, **intention, and discretion** behind it. The image of the grain (2:261) reminds us that Allah multiplies our deeds in ways beyond imagination as long as they remain free of pride, harm, or ostentation (2:262).

The prophetic path is not one of boasting about generosity, but of giving with **reverence, faith, and trust.** In Sūrat al-Layl, Allah promises that those who give with taqwā and faith in goodness will be guided toward al-yusrā ease, virtue, and divine success (92:5–7).

Thus, generosity is not merely a social act it is a **spiritual path of tazkiyah (self-purification)**, strength, and deep connection with Allah. It is the bridge between wealth and riḍā the pleasure of Allah.

“And whatever you spend, Allah knows of it.”

(Sūrat al-Baqarah, 2:273)

Zakāh the Forgotten Pillar

What is Zakāh?

- Zakāh is the annual obligatory purification of one’s wealth.
- 2.5% is given from savings held for one lunar year, provided it exceeds the niṣāb (around 85g of gold).
- It is not symbolic it is a binding act of worship, equal in weight to prayer.

The Eight Categories of Beneficiaries *Sūrat at-Tawbah (9:60)*

1. The poor (al-fuqarā')
2. The needy (al-masākīn)
3. Those employed to collect zakāh (al-‘āmilīn ‘alayhā) e.g. Organizations like Gardens of the Sincere
4. Those whose hearts are to be reconciled (al-mu‘allafatu qulūbuhum)
5. For freeing captives (fi ar-riqāb)
6. Those in debt (al-gharimīn)
7. In the path of Allah (fi sabīlillāh)
8. The stranded traveler (ibn as-sabīl)

“**Fī Sabīlillāh**” According to **Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī**, this can include educational and da‘wah initiatives such as building schools, training imams, establishing mosques, and supporting media that serve the faith as long as they strengthen the Ummah and advance the cause of Allah.

4.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"مَا نَقَصَتْ صَدَقَةٌ مِنْ مَالٍ، وَمَا زَادَ اللَّهُ عَبْدًا بِعَفْوٍ إِلَّا عِزًّا، وَمَا تَوَاضَعَ أَحَدٌ لِلَّهِ إِلَّا رَفَعَهُ اللَّهُ"

“Charity does not decrease wealth. Allah increases the honor of those who forgive, and whoever humbles himself for the sake of Allah Allah raises him.”

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

Reflection: This Verse refutes one of the most common human fears that giving will make us poorer. In truth, the opposite is certain. Ṣadaqah is a source of blessing, dignity, and spiritual elevation. In a world that measures worth through money and possessions, the Prophet ﷺ teaches us that real wealth lies **in giving, forgiving, and humility.**

4.4 Reflective Layer

Giving zakat and sadaqah should not only be taught as a religious duty, but as a way of life that begins in upbringing, deepens in education, and becomes concrete in community work. We must teach children from an early age that giving isn't always about money. Someone who doesn't have money can still give sadaqah through time, attention, a smile, help around the house, or support for a friend. This shapes their character: they learn that generosity isn't a result of wealth, but of **a pure heart.**

Education should provide space for **practical lessons** on how zakat works. Not just theory, but real-life examples: how do you calculate zakat, what is the nisab, what about debts or savings, when should you give, to whom, and why? Young people must learn that zakat isn't a symbolic amount to be ticked off, but a spiritual cleansing and a social responsibility. Those who understand this also develop a financial awareness that goes beyond self-interest. In our communities, we must raise awareness of fi

sabilillah. Many people readily give for immediate needs food, water, clothing. And that's wonderful. But more attention must be paid to structural aid. Building schools, setting up agricultural projects, supporting medical posts, and training young people to become independent workers and thinkers that's also **fi sabilillah**. Allah's path is not only the path of need, but also of progress. And as long as we don't explain this to our donors, we remain trapped in a cycle of treating the symptoms.

Therefore, it is our duty as educators, as teachers, as community leaders to cultivate people who give with insight. Who understand that true sadaqah not only soothes but also transforms. Because whoever understands fi sabilillah will give with vision, build with dedication, and invest with the hope that Allah will multiply it, in **duniā and ākhira**.

At **Gardens of the Sincere**, we don't believe in temporary bandages, but in **sustainable solutions** for structural poverty and dependency worldwide. Our ultimate mission is to make people **self-sufficient**. This means investing in **education, schools, universities, and communities** that can support themselves for generations.

To achieve this, we need structural funding. That's why we want to work on waqf structures: sustainable projects like farms where people not only find work but also learn to produce their own products. Think of our own agriculture, our own livestock, and even the development of our own brand of products, with quality, halal, and proudly owned by the community.

We believe that Muslims should not only **consume**, but above all, they should also **produce**. Only in this way can we address the core of structural inequality and helplessness worldwide. As the Prophet ﷺ said:

"The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, and in both there is good." (Sahih Muslim, 2664)

This applies literally and figuratively: strong in faith, knowledge, decisiveness, and economic resilience.

That is what we want: an ummah that stands strong, not dependent, but supporting. And that starts with Zakat and Sadaqa, deployed with vision and a focus on the future.

4.5 Conclusion

Zakāh and ṣadaqah are not merely spiritual gestures or symbolic rituals; they are the backbone of social justice in Islam. They remind us that wealth is a responsibility, not a privilege. That wealth only gains true value when it is shared. And that genuine worship does not end with prayer; it continues through acts of compassion, solidarity, and responsibility toward the Ummah.

Whoever gives with insight and sincerity purifies not only their heart from greed but also restores the dignity of others. Giving zakāh is not a favor to the poor it is their right. To neglect it is to weaken one of the essential pillars upon which the Islamic society is built.

In a time of global inequality, war, hunger, and extreme wealth, it is our duty to use what we possess with awareness not in excess and luxury, but in the service of goodness. Organizations like **Gardens**

of the Sincere strive to do exactly that: to build bridges between those who have and those in need. Through sustainable projects such as water wells, schools, agriculture, and emergency aid, your donation is transformed into dignity, hope, and a future.

Our mission is not merely to give it is to build. To build a world where justice lives. To build a generation that understands the meaning of giving. To build a legacy that endures long after we are gone.

May Allah open our hands and hearts, and make us among those who give with wisdom, sincerity, and love.

Chapter 5 – The Importance of Qurban: An Act of Submission and Sacrifice

5.1 Observation

Qurban, the ritual sacrifice performed during **Eid al-Adha**, is one of the most powerful expressions of devotion that unites **faith, community, and sacrifice**. In practice, however, I have observed striking differences between communities. In our work with **Gardens of the Sincere**, we see how deeply the **Turkish community** takes Qurban to heart. Sometimes even to the extent that they call us while we are still slaughtering animals in Africa: “Has my animal already been slaughtered? I want to perform my two rak‘āt of the Qurban prayer!” Yet, some of these same people **do not perform their daily prayers**. This shows that Qurban is sometimes understood in isolation disconnected from the broader framework of worship and obedience.

On the other hand, there are communities that neglect Qurban under the pretext of: “**It’s just a Sunnah**, and we can’t slaughter animals here in Belgium anyway.” However, the **Sunnah mu’akkadah** the confirmed Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ is not something to take lightly. Especially today, when organizations like ours make it possible to sponsor a share of a cow in Africa for as little as €80, there remains no valid excuse.

5.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 Sūrat al-Kawthar (108:2)

"فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحِرْ"

“So pray to your Lord and sacrifice.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse directly **links prayer (ṣalāh)** with **sacrifice (nahr)**, rooting the act of slaughter in devotion to Allah. It is not a mere ritual act of killing but a manifestation of full **submission**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that this command affirms the special status of the Prophet ﷺ and his community, in which prayer and sacrifice unite as symbols of gratitude and surrender.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that prayer and sacrifice together represent the purification of the **body** (through action) and of the **soul** (through intention).

Verse 2 – Sūrat al-Ḥajj (22:37)

"لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومَهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤها وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَى مِنْكُمْ"

“Neither their meat nor their blood reaches Allah, but it is your piety (taqwā) that reaches him.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that the essence of this verse lies in **intention**: the act is not about the material offering itself but about the consciousness of surrender to Allah. The sacrifice

symbolizes the **believer's willingness to give up everything for Allah**, just as Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was ready to sacrifice his son.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** stresses that Qurban is a form of **purification not only of wealth but also of the ego and attachment** to worldly desires. Whoever neglects **Qurban** out of convenience misses a yearly opportunity for spiritual cleansing.
- **Ar-Rāzī** adds that this verse reflects a **universal principle of worship**: Allah does not seek the physical offering, but **the spirit of submission and taqwā** that accompanies it. If one sacrifices without taqwā, what remains is only meat not worship.

5.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"مَنْ كَانَ لَهُ سَعَةٌ وَلَمْ يُضَحَّ، فَلَا يَقْرَبَنَّ مُصَلَّاتَنَا"

*"Whoever possesses the means to offer a sacrifice but does not do so, let him not approach our place of prayer."
(Ibn Mājah, 3123 classified as ḥasan by Al-Albani)*

Reflection: These words are powerful and confronting. The Prophet ﷺ connects the willful neglect of Qurban despite financial ability to exclusion from the spiritual community. This is not a physical banishment but a spiritual warning: your heart has drifted away from surrender, compassion, and the Sunnah of Ibrāhīm عليه السلام. Whoever fails to sacrifice out of laziness or indifference, while being capable of doing so, reveals misplaced priorities in their relationship with Allah.

Verse 2:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"مَا عَمِلَ آدَمِيٌّ مِنْ عَمَلٍ يَوْمَ النَّحْرِ أَحَبَّ إِلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ إِهْرَاقِ الدَّمِ، وَإِنَّهُ لَيَأْتِي يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ بِقُرُونِهَا وَأَشْعَارِهَا وَأَطْلَافِهَا، وَإِنَّ الدَّمَ لَيَقَعُ مِنَ اللَّهِ بِمَكَانٍ قَبْلَ أَنْ يَقَعُ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ، فَطَيَّبُوا بِهَا نَفْسًا"

"On the Day of Sacrifice, no deed is more beloved to Allah than the shedding of blood (of the sacrificial animal). Indeed, it will come on the Day of Resurrection with its horns, hair, and hooves. Verily, its blood reaches Allah before it touches the ground. So be sincere in your intention".

(Sunan al-Tirmidhī – authentic)

Reflection: This Verse reveals the immense spiritual weight of Qurban. Allah does not look merely at the physical act of slaughter, but at the sincerity of the heart behind it. In a time where appearance often outweighs essence, this narration reminds us that the sacrifice is not a cultural formality; it is a profound act of surrender, love, and connection to Allah. It is an investment in the Hereafter, before the blood even touches the earth.

5.4 Reflective Layer

Qurban teaches us to give up what we love, just as Ibrāhīm عليه السلام was willing to sacrifice his son. Yet today, the essence of this ritual is often lost amid show, status, or convenience. Some only want a video of “their” cow, a name tag, or a selfie with the animal without genuine reflection.

Still, Qurban offers a powerful opportunity for self-transformation:

- **Parents:** Teach your children *why* we sacrifice not only *what* we do, but the meaning behind it. Make it a moment of family reflection.
- **Communities:** Encourage collective participation, even symbolically, **to strengthen unity and solidarity.**
- **Organizations:** Focus not only on donor visibility but on the **spiritual transformation** that *Qurban* can inspire both in the giver and in the receiver.

The View of the Legal Schools and the European Context

In Europe, Qurban faces new challenges due to legal restrictions and social changes. This calls for renewed reflection on how to live and uphold this act of devotion.

The classical schools of jurisprudence differ in their rulings regarding its obligation:

- **Ḥanafī school:** considers Qurban wājib (obligatory) for those who can afford it.
- **Mālikī, Shāfi‘ī, and Ḥanbalī schools:** view it as sunnah mu’akkadah (strongly recommended), where neglect is blameworthy, though not necessarily sinful.

More important than the legal classification is the purpose: the sacrifice is meant as an act of spiritual surrender and social solidarity with the poor. In contexts such as Belgium, where halal slaughter is restricted and local poverty is less visible, the question arises: how can we remain faithful to the spirit of Qurban?

Scholarly guidance provides clarity:

- **Ibn Taymiyyah** and contemporary scholars such as **Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn** emphasize that it is preferable to perform the sacrifice in **regions where the meat will directly benefit the poor.**
- Transporting meat or delegating the slaughter abroad is *permissible* and has precedent among the Companions.
- Fatwas from bodies such as the **European Council for Fatwa and Research** and **Shaykh Yusuf al-Qaradāwī** note that if slaughter under state-imposed stunning violates Islamic principles, it should be avoided.

For this reason, many Muslims today choose to have their Qurban carried out through trustworthy organizations in Africa or the Middle East. This ensures both correct execution and direct impact on those in need. At Gardens of the Sincere, every **Qurban** is performed in full compliance with the

shari‘ah, with **transparency**, local **supervision**, and **distribution** among the **poorest** families transforming an individual’s act of worship into collective relief and hope.

5.5 Conclusion

Qurban is not a mere obligation, a yearly tradition, or a marketing moment; it is a test of sincerity and submission. Whether you have much or little, whether you live in Belgium or Malaysia, everyone has the opportunity to take part. For only **€80**, you can participate in a Qurban in Africa and feed thousands of people.

But more importantly, you also nourish your own soul. For whoever truly sacrifices with heart, deed, and intention draws closer to his Lord.

“Indeed, Allah does not look at your bodies or your appearance, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds.” **(Sahih Muslim)**

Chapter 6 – Ramadan Fasting Without Taqwa?

6.1 Observation

We live in a time when Ramadan rarely reflects its true essence anymore. Many Muslims fast, but do not pray. They still curse, gossip, and lose themselves in TikTok, TV series, or football matches. “I’m fasting, but prayer? I’ll catch up later.” Or worse: “There’s a Champions League match tonight, so I’ll skip prayer.” Or even worse: “I have a match today, so I won’t fast; I’ll make it up later.”

Ramadan has often been reduced to a diet program or a cultural festival filled with food and social visits, without touching the heart of what this month is meant to cultivate: taqwa, self-discipline, forgiveness, and a renewed connection with the Qur’an.

In Islamic education, I notice that many young people don’t even know why we fast. They know it as a ritual, but not as a form of spiritual training. After Ramadan, everything goes back to normal no change, no growth, and no renewed bond with Allah.

We also sadly hear people say they can just “make up” a day of fasting as if it means nothing. Yet whoever intentionally misses a day of fasting during Ramadan without a valid reason commits a serious sin. Even fasting sixty days as expiation (as required for having intercourse during the day) cannot fully make up for that one missed day. This shows how heavy the omission of a single fasting day weighs on the spiritual scale.

In the past, the term “**Ramadan Muslim**” was used for those who only appeared in the mosque during this month. That category still exists today brothers and sisters who are absent throughout the year but suddenly fill the prayer rows each night during Ramadan. Every year, I personally see faces reappear that I haven’t seen for months. Even some imams who lead tarāwīḥ prayers disappear again afterward, as if Ramadan were merely a temporary role they perform and then... silence.

But today, being a “Ramadan Muslim” might even be **something positive** because we’ve slid further still: an increasing number of Muslims let the **entire month of Ramadan pass by as if it were any ordinary month**. No fasting, no mosque, no Qur’an. Not a single sign of spiritual engagement.

One day, during Ramadan, I was in **Istanbul**; a city that once symbolized Islamic splendor. What I witnessed was shocking: people eating and drinking openly in broad daylight, as though Ramadan didn’t exist. I went to the mosque at **Taksim Square** for tarāwīḥ only a few rows of worshippers, while the streets outside **were full of shoppers, ice cream, selfies, and tourist crowds**. I thought to myself: “At this very moment, there are probably more people in the mosques of **Ghent** than here.”

What happened to us? How did we drift so far that Ramadan has become, for many, **more a matter of culture than of worship?**

And yet... as soon as **‘Eid al-Fiṭr** arrives, those same people stand in the front row, wearing their finest clothes, smiling and proud. But what are they celebrating? A month of effort, worship, self-discipline, and Qur’an? Or merely a cultural event that demands nothing but presence and tradition?

This chapter seeks to return to the essence of Ramadan not as a cultural occurrence, but as a month of taqwa, purification, prayer, fasting, and return to Allah. A month in which the gates of heaven are opened but we must be the ones to step through them.

6.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Surah Al-Baqarah (2:183–187)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُتِبَ عَلَيْكُمُ الصِّيَامُ كَمَا كُتِبَ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

“O you who believe! Fasting has been prescribed for you as it was prescribed for those before you, so that you may become conscious of Allah (develop taqwa).”

- **Ibn ‘Ashur:** Explains that la'allakum tattaqūn “so that you may attain taqwa” expresses the ultimate goal of fasting: developing an inner restraint of the soul. It is not mere physical discipline, but **spiritual transformation**.
- **Al-Qurtubi:** States, “Fasting is the key to purification of the soul. It was not prescribed for the body, but for the heart.”
- **Ar-Razi:** Notes that *taqwa* here means more than abstaining from food and drink it involves **disciplining the tongue, the eyes, the heart, and the thoughts**.

Verse 2 – Surah Al-Baqarah (2:185)

شَهْرُ رَمَضَانَ الَّذِي أُنزِلَ فِيهِ الْقُرْآنُ هُدًى لِّلنَّاسِ وَبَيِّنَاتٍ مِّنَ الْهُدَىٰ وَالْفُرْقَانِ

“The month of Ramadan is that in which the Qur'an was revealed a guidance for mankind and clear proofs of guidance and criterion (between truth and falsehood).”

- **Ibn ‘Ashur:** Draws a direct link between revelation and fasting: whoever does not strive to **engage with the Qur'an** during Ramadan misses the very essence of the month.
- **Al-Qurtubi:** Explains that Ramadan is not merely a sacred month; it is the month of guidance, truth, and justice. Fasting gains meaning only when accompanied by **reflection upon the Qur'an**.
- **Ar-Razi:** Describes Ramadan as a month of illumination, in which the soul is freed from the dominance of the body.

Instead of wasting time on cooking, Netflix, or scrolling through social media, this month should be dedicated to renewing one's connection with the Qur'an. Yet how many homes are filled in Ramadan with food and gossip and not with Qur'an and *dhikr* (remembrance of Allah)?

Verse 3 – Surah Al-Baqarah (2:186)

...وَإِذَا سَأَلَكَ عِبَادِي عَنِّي فَإِنِّي قَرِيبٌ

“And when my servants ask you about me indeed, I am near. I respond to the call of the supplicant when he calls upon me...”

- **Ibn ‘Ashur:** Points out that this verse is purposefully placed between the verses on fasting, emphasizing that it is precisely during this month that **Allah’s nearness** is most deeply felt.
- **Al-Qurtubi:** States that Allah’s nearness requires no intermediary *du‘ā’* (supplication) is a **direct link** to the Creator.
- **Ar-Razi:** Describes this verse as the spiritual **heart of Ramadan** the moment when the soul opens and connects with the Source of mercy.

Verse 4 – Surah Al-Baqarah (2:187)

أَجَلَ لَكُمْ لَيْلَةَ الصِّيَامِ الرَّفْتُ إِلَىٰ نِسَائِكُمْ

“It has been made lawful for you to be intimate with your wives during the nights of fasting...”

“...And live with them in kindness...”

“...Allah knows that you were deceiving yourselves, so He turned to you in mercy and forgave you.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashur:** Explains that this permission is an act of **divine mercy and relief for the believers**. In the early days of Islam, it was forbidden to engage in marital relations after sleeping during the nights of Ramadan. When this proved difficult for the companions, Allah revealed this verse as a compassionate concession. According to Ibn ‘Ashur, this verse demonstrates that the **Shari‘ah is built upon gradual wisdom and human capacity**. The conclusion of this verse teaches that the purity of fasting must also be reflected in one’s **intimate conduct and family relationships**.
- **Al-Qurtubi:** Emphasizes that this relaxation of the earlier rule is a **sign of Allah’s deep knowledge of human nature**. He cites companions who expressed shame for their actions before this revelation, and Allah responded to their sincerity with forgiveness and ease. Al-Qurtubi also points out that this verse shows how **Islamic law takes into account both the physical and the spiritual dimensions of human life**.
- **Ar-Razi:** Discusses the word **rafath**, which refers to sexual relations but is expressed in the Qur’an in a respectful and modest manner. He highlights that Islam recognizes human needs but regulates them within a **framework of dignity and timing**. Ar-Razi adds that this verse does not **exempt the nights of Ramadan from God-consciousness (taqwa)**, but rather allows room for affection within halal boundaries.

Verse 5 – Surah Al-Baqarah (2:187)

...هُنَّ لِبَاسٌ لَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٌ لَهُنَّ...

“They (your wives) are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashur:** Explains that this metaphor signifies mutual protection, closeness, and love between spouses.
- **Al-Qurtubi:** Points out that Ramadan is not a time to withdraw from one’s family; rather, it is a month to **strengthen family bonds and compassion.**
- **Ar-Razi:** Emphasizes the balance between spiritual devotion and family responsibility. One who neglects their spouse and children in the name of extra worship has misunderstood the balance of the *din*.

This verse represents a shift from spiritual austerity to domestic gentleness. Ramadan is not a month of neglecting one’s spouse or children; it is a month of mutual tenderness and forgiveness. Men who spend their nights in the **mosque yet show impatience at home miss the point** and women who exhaust themselves in the kitchen at the expense of their spiritual growth miss it as well. Ramadan is a month of rahmah and mercy that begins in the heart and radiates through the home.

6.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"الصِّيَامُ جُنَّةٌ، فَإِذَا كَانَ أَحَدُكُمْ صَائِمًا فَلَا يَرْفُثْ وَلَا يَجْهَلْ، فَإِنْ امْرُؤٌ قَاتَلَهُ أَوْ شَاتَمَهُ، فَلْيَقُلْ: إِنِّي صَائِمٌ، إِنِّي صَائِمٌ"

“Fasting is a shield. So when one of you is fasting, let him refrain from indecent speech and ignorant behavior. If someone insults him or tries to fight him, let him say: ‘I am fasting, I am fasting.’” (Sahih al-Bukhari, Sahih Muslim)

Reflection: This Verse makes it clear that fasting is meant as **spiritual training**. It is not only abstaining from food and drink but primarily about **disciplining the ego**. A person does not automatically grow spiritually simply by refraining from eating during the day. As long as fasting is not reflected in **behavior, speech, and self-control**, it remains nothing more than hunger and thirst.

Today, we too often see the opposite: people who fast during the day but do not restrain their tongues they argue, gossip, or lose their temper easily. Fasting is meant to protect us from such impulses.

A Muslim during Ramadan should **speak less, think more, complain less, thank more, eat less, give more, sleep less, and read more Qur’an.**

6.4 Reflective Layer

Ramadan is **not a month of automatic reward it is a month of conscious transformation**. Those who merely abstain from food and drink but **continue to gossip, express anger, remain lazy, neglect their prayers, or stay addicted to screens** may have fulfilled the technical act of fasting but have neglected its spiritual essence.

The Qur'an teaches that the **goal of fasting is *taqwa*** awareness of Allah. This does not arise by default; it is cultivated through **self-reflection, surrender, prayer, and discipline**. Fasting is not only physical it is **emotional, mental, and spiritual**. It requires **silence, introspection, seeking forgiveness, and mending broken relationships**.

We must invite **youth, parents, and even mosque communities to experience Ramadan differently:**

- Not as a series of social dinners, but as an opportunity for **spiritual renewal**.
- Not as an excuse for laziness or nights spent gaming and watching series, but as a **moment of self-control and deep Qur'anic connection**.
- Not as an annual "obligation," but as an **inner training** through which we purify **our tongue, eyes, and heart**.

The Qur'an also teaches that **Allah is near (2:186)** but that nearness must be sought. **His mercy is open in Ramadan**, but whoever does not step through the door remains outside.

The Verse calls fasting a **shield** yet a shield **must be actively used**. Fasting without self-restraint is like dropping your shield in the middle of battle. Ramadan, therefore, is **training in character** in patience, courtesy, forgiveness, discipline, and humility.

We must teach our children and youth that **Ramadan is not folklore not merely a family festival filled with sweet drinks and lavish tables**. It is a **serious spiritual bootcamp**, designed to **transform who we are. And at home, spirituality does not end at the mosque door**. The Qur'an reminds us that family life is part of our spiritual purification. Whoever fasts during the day but neglects their spouse at night misses the balance. Whoever exhausts themselves cooking or ignores their partner for extra prayers misses the greater picture. **Ramadan is love in balance, spirituality in harmony, and family in peace**.

6.5 Conclusion

Ramadan is not a month of exhaustion, cooking stress, or spiritual display. It is a month of **purification, reconnection with Allah, and inner reconstruction**. Fasting is meant to teach us what truly matters: letting go of desires, restraining the tongue, opening the heart, and embracing the Qur'an.

Whoever spends the days of Ramadan hungry yet does not guard their tongue, lower their gaze from the harām, or maintain their prayers has missed the very purpose of fasting. Whoever does not open the Qur'an, strengthen family bonds, or raise their hands in supplication has not sought the nearness of Allah.

Taqwa is the fruit of this month and taqwa is not limited to the mosque or the iftar table. It manifests in how we think, speak, and live before, during, and after Ramadan.

Just as the Qur'an concludes the fasting verses with messages of love and intimacy within the family, we too must understand that Ramadan is not isolation from the world, but **an exercise in living with deeper awareness, greater love, and more deliberate choices**.

Chapter 7 – Hajj and ‘Umrah Between Obligation, Delay, and Inner Transformation

7.1 Observation

In the West, **many Muslims consciously** postpone performing the Hajj. They often see it as a kind of “religious life hack”: “I’ll wait until I’m old then all my sins will be forgiven.” This reasoning is dangerous. What if death reaches them before they have fulfilled this sacred duty?

Students often tell me:

“First I’ll study, then save for a car, then buy a house, then get married, have children... and maybe after that, Hajj.” And in the meantime yearly trips to Morocco or Turkey, spending money on luxury and comfort, while they already meet the conditions required to perform Hajj. The reality is that most young Muslims in Europe can afford Hajj financially but delay it due to misplaced priorities.

Moreover, the spiritual impact of Hajj or ‘Umrah is often lost. As a ‘Umrah guide, I’ve witnessed people who, only months after their journey, return to their old habits. It becomes, for some, an external ritual without inner transformation.

Moral concerns are also frequently raised: “I don’t want to go now because Saudi Arabia invests in America, which **supplies weapons to Israel...**” While such ethical concerns are understandable, the overwhelming majority of scholars agree that Hajj remains a **divine obligation** for every Muslim who meets the conditions regardless of the political context.

Delaying it without a valid reason reflects not only a misunderstanding of priorities but also a missed opportunity for deep spiritual renewal one that could reshape the heart, reorder one’s life, and purify one’s purpose before Allah.

7.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Āl ‘Imrān (3:97)

وَلِلَّهِ عَلَى النَّاسِ حُجُّ الْبَيْتِ مَنِ اسْتَطَاعَ إِلَيْهِ سَبِيلًا وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ

“And it is a duty to Allah upon all people to perform the pilgrimage to the House for whoever is able to find a way thereto. And whoever disbelieves (and rejects it) indeed, Allah is free of need from all creation.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this obligation applies to every Muslim who is **physically and financially** able, without unnecessary delay. To postpone it without a **valid reason is a sign of weakness in faith**. He emphasizes that performing Hajj deepens the servant’s bond with his Lord a physical manifestation of tawḥīd (oneness of Allah).
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that Allah associates neglecting Hajj with **kufr** (disbelief), not in the sense of renouncing Islam, but as an act of ingratitude as if one shows no appreciation for Allah’s commands.

- **Ar-Rāzī** adds that the phrase “a way thereto” (sabīl) signifies not only physical accessibility but also **spiritual readiness**. To postpone it lightly is to underestimate one’s relationship with Allah. He views Hajj as a form of tawakkul (trust in Allah), through the act of leaving behind comfort, family, and luxury.

7.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

بُنِيَ الْإِسْلَامُ عَلَى خَمْسٍ:
شَهَادَةِ أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ، وَأَنَّ مُحَمَّدًا رَسُولُ اللَّهِ، وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ، وَإِيتَاءِ الزَّكَاةِ، وَالْحَجِّ، وَصَوْمِ رَمَضَانَ

“Islam is built upon five pillars: testifying that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, establishing the prayer, giving zakat, performing Hajj, and fasting in Ramadan.”
(Bukhari and Muslim)

Reflection: Hajj is not an optional extra within the five pillars it is a central pillar of Islam. The Prophet ﷺ never delayed it, even though his life was filled with hardship and struggle. So what holds us back? Comfort? Fear of change? Misplaced priorities?

Verse 2:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، قَدْ فَرَضَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ الْحَجَّ فَحُجُّوا

“O people! Allah has made Hajj obligatory upon you, so perform the Hajj.”
(Sahih Muslim 1337)

When a man asked, “Every year, O Messenger of Allah?” the Prophet ﷺ remained silent three times, then said: “Had I said ‘yes,’ it would have become obligatory and you would not have been able to bear it.”

Reflection: The Prophet ﷺ affirmed the obligation of Hajj while also illustrating Allah’s mercy; it is required only once in a lifetime for those who are able. To delay it without a valid reason, therefore, reflects negligence in one’s faith and heedlessness toward one of Islam’s greatest acts of devotion. The Hajj is more than a journey to a sacred land; it is a journey toward the purification of the soul. Every step taken around the Ka’bah is a step away from the ego and a step closer to Allah.

7.4 Reflective Layer

Hajj is not a journey for souvenirs or a symbol of status; it is a **spiritual reversal of the ego**. We all wear the same clothing (ihrām), stand on the same plain (‘Arafah), and repeat the same words: “Labbayk Allāhumma labbayk” “Here I am, O Allah, here I am.” It is the ultimate reset but only

when accompanied by reflection and sincerity. From our experience as an organization, we see that those who perform Hajj at a young age are often the ones who truly transform. Why wait until sixty to purify your heart when you can do so at twenty-five?

At the same time, the growing trend of ‘Umrah becoming a “religious city trip” deserves reflection. Social media is full of selfies in ihrām but where is the khushū‘ (humble focus), the quiet prayer by the Ka‘bah, the tear of repentance?

The true traveler is not the one who moves from city to city, but the one who moves from heedlessness to consciousness, from ego to servitude, from self-centeredness to submission.

7.5 Conclusion

Hajj is an **obligation** not a luxury option. Delaying it without reason is a sign of misplaced priorities. The true goal is not to complete a checklist, but to experience inner transformation. Both ‘Umrah and Hajj require **preparation of the heart and mind**, not just financial readiness. Youth should be encouraged to **fulfill this duty early in life**, when the heart is still flexible and the soul eager for growth. Ethical discomfort should never become an excuse to neglect divine obligations. As Allah says: **“And whoever disbelieves indeed, Allah is free from need of all the worlds.”** (Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān, 3:97)

Theme 2 – Mental & Spiritual Development

Chapter 8 – Trials: Standing Firm in the Storm

8.1 Observation

We live in this world as though we are all **sitting in small boats upon a wild and restless sea**. No one is spared. Some boats are large and sturdy; others are frail and full of cracks. Yet the storm strikes everyone alike young or old, rich or poor, Muslim or non-Muslim. No one passes through life without scars.

In my years as an Islamic teacher, counselor, and traveler, I have seen how hardship **manifests in many forms**, yet always feels **equally heavy** to those who bear it. A child barely eleven years old, with no apparent trauma, can already feel lost asking questions like, “What is the point of this life?” *or* “Why am I here?” Hidden behind a smile, he struggles with deep insecurity, unable to express it in words.

At the other end of the spectrum, I hear weekly from adults trapped in years of marital conflict or bitter divorce. Some suffer from depression no one understands; others live in constant fear. I know people who have not slept properly for over a decade, tormented nightly by jinn. Others face chronic pain, rare illnesses, paralysis, heavy medication, or mental breakdowns that completely disrupt their lives.

And then there are the **structural hardships** people are born into. In Africa, I’ve seen families who walk three hours each morning just to fetch water. When survival consumes every ounce of energy food, water, shelter; there is little space left for education, creativity, or self-development. Life becomes about endurance. Then come the **natural disasters**: earthquakes in Turkey and Syria, tsunamis in Indonesia, floods in Pakistan, and devastating shocks in Morocco. Each one leaves thousands behind without family, without homes, without hope.

And beyond **nature’s wrath are the tragedies** caused by human hands: war, tyranny, and politics. Syria, Yemen, the Rohingya, the Uyghurs, Sudan, Gaza people displaced, bombed, starved, and ignored. Sometimes you look at the world and can only ask: ***How much can the human heart bear?***

Faith: The Anchor in the Storm

If we are honest, everyone carries a storm within. Each of us bears an invisible weight – one wrestles with loss, another with despair. But what determines whether a person sinks or stays afloat is not the size of the storm, but the strength of the anchor. And in Islam, that anchor is **īmān** (faith) in Allah, in His wisdom, his plan, his promise.

Faith keeps you afloat. It allows you to withstand the waves without losing your compass. It reminds you that life on earth was never meant to be paradise, but a test. That this world is temporary. That hardship is not a punishment, but a means through which Allah purifies us, molds us, and draws us nearer to Him.

The Steadfastness of Gaza: An Example to the World

Perhaps no people embody this more beautifully than the people of Gaza. Despite relentless violence, years of blockade, and unimaginable despair, they remain firm in their faith. They do not complain. They do not give up. They refuse to drown in self-pity. Their children memorize the Qur'an amid the rubble. Their women pray knowing the next bomb could fall at any moment. Their men weep in *du`a`* as if standing on the threshold of the Hereafter.

Their strength is so profound that people in the West embrace Islam simply by witnessing their patience and *tawakkul* (trust in Allah). They lose family members yet keep their dignity. They bury their children yet never lose hope. What sustains them? Not money. Not safety. Not international aid. Only **īmān**; Only **Allah**.

8.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat At-Taghābun (64:11)

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ يُؤْمِنْ بِاللَّهِ يَهْدِ اللَّهُ قَلْبَهُ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

“No calamity befalls except by Allah’s permission. And whoever believes in Allah He guides his heart. And Allah is All-Knowing of all things.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse teaches us that every trial, no matter how big or small, **occurs only by Allah’s will**. Nothing is random or chaotic; every hardship serves a **purpose**: to mold hearts, strengthen souls, or erase sins.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that a person’s faith at that moment is crucial. Whoever truly **believes** in Allah will find peace within, knowing that nothing happens without divine wisdom.
- **Ar-Rāzī** adds that the “guidance of the heart” means not only understanding that a test comes from Allah, but also learning **how to face it with ṣabr** (patience), *raja`* (hope), and *taslīm* (submission).

When people are struck by illness, loss, mental pain, or fear, their first reflex is often, “Why me?” But this verse redirects the question: it’s not “why”, but “what will you do with it?” The true test is whether you maintain trust and Allah promises that, if you do, He will guide your heart.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Al-Ḥadīd (57:22–23)

مَا أَصَابَ مِنْ مُصِيبَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي أَنْفُسِكُمْ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ نَبْرَأَهَا إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ • لِكَيْلَا تَأْسَوْا عَلَى مَا فَاتَكُمْ وَلَا تَفْرَحُوا بِمَا آتَاكُمْ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ

“No calamity strikes upon the earth or within yourselves except that it is inscribed in a Book before We bring it into being indeed, that is easy for Allah so that you do not grieve over what has escaped you nor exult in pride over what He has given you. And Allah does not love the arrogant and boastful.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** interprets this as a call to inner **balance**: not to drown in sorrow when you lose, nor to become arrogant when you succeed. Everything, gain and loss, is already known and willed by Allah.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** views it as a reminder of **humility**: life is not fully in our control. Whoever accepts this truth becomes free from both regret and pride.
- **Ar-Rāzī** connects this to *riḍā* contentment with Allah’s decree. He says that **whoever attains this state rises** above the storms of worldly change.

This verse reminds us that even our heaviest burdens were written long before we ever felt them. They are not mistakes, not accidents but part of a divine story we cannot yet see in full, though Allah sees it completely.

Verse 3 – Sūrat Al-Baqarah (2:155–157)

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ • الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ • أُولَٰئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

“And We will surely test you with something of fear and hunger and loss of wealth, lives, and fruits. But give glad tidings to the patient those who, when disaster strikes them, say, ‘Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed, to Him we shall return.’ Upon them are blessings and mercy from their Lord, and it is they who are rightly guided.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** says that Allah speaks with honesty in this verse: hardship is part of life. But He also provides the key **ṣabr** (patience) and the inner acknowledgment that everything ultimately returns to Allah.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** highlights that whoever sincerely says these words at the moment of trial is granted peace, guidance, and **Allah’s love**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** calls this verse a foundation of **spiritual resilience** showing that grief itself can become a form of worship when borne in connection with Allah.

This verse does not deny pain; it sanctifies it. It does not dismiss grief; it transforms it into meaning. The believer’s response “Innā lillāhi wa innā ilayhi rāji‘ūn” is not mere recitation, but a profound shift from panic to surrender. It is a return of the heart to its true Owner.

Verse 4 – Sūrat Al-Baqarah (2:286)

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا

“Allah does not burden a soul beyond its capacity.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse reflects the deep justice and mercy of Allah. Every test, every pain, every challenge a person endures no matter how unbearable it feels remains within the limits of **what that person can handle**, even when they **themselves doubt** it. It is both a **comfort and a responsibility**: you *can* endure this. The verse does not deny that a trial can feel overwhelming, but it affirms that Allah never imposes a duty without also granting the capacity to respond rightly. The test may be crushing loss, humiliation, hunger, abandonment

but Allah never holds you accountable for what lies beyond your control, only for **how you act within the trial**.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that al-wus‘ (capacity) is not limited to physical strength but includes mental, emotional, and spiritual endurance. Allah knows precisely what you can bear, and within every trial lies the possibility of **growth, purification, and reward**. This verse must not be misused to excuse sin by saying, “It was too hard for me.” Allah’s justice excludes any obligation that is truly impossible but the trial’s **very purpose is to test loyalty amidst hardship, not to justify wrongdoing out of convenience**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights that the verse acknowledges human psychology: we often feel overwhelmed, yet Allah never decrees anything without also providing a path toward relief. This is not a call to passivity, but to **trust**.

This verse is both a promise and a test. You are allowed to cry, to struggle, to stumble but never to say, “I had no choice but to do wrong.” The choice for patience, prayer, and integrity always remains. Even when it feels like you are drowning, know that Allah has never let go of your boat.

8.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُصِبْ مِنْهُ

“When Allah intends good for someone, He afflicts him with trials.”
(Bukhārī and Muslim)

Reflection: This simple yet profound statement of the Prophet ﷺ challenges modern logic: hardship is not necessarily a punishment it can be a **sign of divine love**. When Allah wishes good for someone, He purifies and elevates them through tests not to destroy, but to shape them. Each hardship is a chisel in the hands of the Creator, carving the believer’s heart into something more beautiful and steadfast.

Verse 2:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَا يُصِيبُ الْمُؤْمِنَ مِنْ نَصَبٍ وَلَا وَصَبٍ وَلَا هَمٍّ وَلَا حُزْنٍ وَلَا أَذًى وَلَا غَمٍّ حَتَّى الشَّوْكَةِ يُشَاكُهَا إِلَّا كَفَّرَ اللَّهُ بِهَا مِنْ خَطَايَاهُ

“No fatigue, illness, anxiety, sorrow, pain, or distress befalls a believer not even the prick of a thorn except that Allah expiates some of his sins thereby.”
(Bukhārī and Muslim)

Reflection: This Verse is a tender reminder that no suffering however small is wasted in Allah’s sight. **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that within this **statement** lies immense mercy: even the prick of a thorn is counted as purification. Not a tear, not a headache, not a sleepless night goes unnoticed. Every ache that draws you closer to Allah becomes an act of cleansing. Every sigh of endurance is written as reward..

8.4 Reflective Layer

The trials of this life are not chaos, nor are they punishments. They are invitations. Callings.. **Signals** Every test no matter how raw, how painful, or how incomprehensible is an opportunity to pause and reflect on where you stand in your relationship with Allah.

Sometimes they come like thunder; sudden and devastating: a loss, a diagnosis, a crisis. Other times, they come as slow drops a little tension, sadness, loneliness, or routine each day. But whether loud or silent, they all press on the same place: the **soul**. And then the question arises where do you take that pain?

The Qur'an gives a clear answer. In **Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:153)**, Allah says:

“Seek help through patience and prayer; indeed, Allah is with the steadfast.”

Notice: He does not say **“seek help through solutions”** or **“through people’s understanding.”** He says **ṣabr** and **ṣalah** **patience** and **prayer**. Why? Because these two keys lift you above the moment. They place your pain within the greater picture.

Ṣabr is not passive waiting; it is active endurance with trust. It is saying, “Yā Rabb, I don’t understand, but I refuse to surrender to despair.”

Ṣalāh is not just a ritual; it is a lifeline, an anchor a way to speak, to cry, to ask directly from Allah. And when you live with this mindset, the divine promise is fulfilled the one found in **Sūrat At-Taghābun (64:11)**: ***“And whoever believes in Allah, He guides his heart.”*** Whatever befalls you, if you truly believe, Allah takes your heart by the hand. You do not lose your mind. You do not fall apart. You remain standing, even with tears in your eyes.

And immediately after, in **verse 64:12**, Allah says:

“Obey Allah and His Messenger. And if you turn away, then upon Our Messenger is only the clear conveyance.”The sequence is meaningful. First, Allah teaches: everything that happens does so by His permission. Then He promises: whoever believes, He will guide their heart. And finally, He commands: follow Him and His Messenger for that is how you find direction in every storm.

This means that even in sorrow there is an act of obedience. Even in pain you can still choose: will I stay connected to Allah, or will I turn away? Faith is not proven in comfort it is proven in crisis.

The Qur'an does not teach us how to avoid pain. It teaches us how to grow through it. It shows that even trials, just like blessings, are a form of guidance.

In the Footsteps of the Prophet ﷺ

The Prophet ﷺ himself endured deep sorrow. He lost children. He watched loved ones die. He was threatened, mocked, wounded, and betrayed. He tasted poverty, hunger, and grief. Yet he remained the most grateful and steadfast of all men. He prayed. He wept. And when facing loss, he said: ***“The heart grieves, the eyes shed tears, but we say nothing except what pleases our Lord.”***

That is faith. That is the essence of spiritual maturity not that you never cry, but that you know where to take your tears.

For Those Who Suffer in Silence

I write this for those who wrestle quietly: For the eleven-year-old boy who lies awake wondering about the meaning of life. For the sister who feels unseen in her marriage. For the father who works every day in pain to feed his family. For the young widow who has never been the same since that one morning.

For all those souls who walk through the day smiling while storms rage within. Know that Allah knows your storm. Know that He is nearer to you than anyone else. Know that your tears are not wasted water, but a means of purification. Even the prick of a thorn erases sin.

And when you whisper, *“I can’t take it anymore. I’m breaking.”*

Remember: it is in the broken hearts that Allah descends the closest.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter began with the observation that no one is spared. Children, the elderly, families, entire nations all carry their own burdens. Though the forms differ, the feeling is universal: fatigue, grief, fear, loss, injustice. Life on earth is not paradise; it is a passage a test.

The Qur’an offers no guarantee of a life free from storms, but it offers something better: **direction** within them. Allah teaches that trials are not signs of rejection, but of divine involvement. Every pain is known. Every tear is seen. Every hardship opens a door to something greater if we choose to come closer to Him through it.

Faith is not an **insurance** policy against hardship. It is not a ticket to comfort. It is the rope that holds you steady when everything else collapses. It is the certainty that your suffering is not forgotten by Allah, even if no one else understands it.

And sometimes, that alone is what saves you not the solution to the problem, but the **meaning you give it**. Not the end of the storm, but the calmness of heart within it.

Look at **Gaza** at the children who smile with half a loaf of bread, the women who pray under the rubble, the fathers who bury their children with tears and hope. Their **strength** does not come from this world it comes from above.

Faith transforms suffering from wasted time into a ladder toward Allah. On that ladder, you may stumble, you may cry, but **you keep climbing.**

**The storm is not what destroys you. It is what shapes you.
And whoever holds Allah as their anchor will never drown.**

Chapter 9 – Depression, Mental Weakness, and Finding Peace through the Qur’an

9.1 Observation

We live in an era in which inner unrest has the upper hand. In a world full of technological progress, comfort, and abundance, souls remain empty. Especially in the West, but also increasingly in Muslim countries, people are confronted with feelings of meaninglessness, unrest, mental pressure, and even despair. According to recent figures (according to Sciensano, the average in 2021 was about 3.8 per day, making suicide the leading cause of death among 15–45-year-olds), there are on average **3 to 4 suicides per day in Belgium**, and many more attempts. The figures are alarming.

Moreover, what is even more disturbing: this trend is also visible within the Muslim community? Many young people **suffer in silence**. Some feel worthless if they lose their job or if their relationship ends. Others fall into depression when they cannot reach or maintain a certain standard of living. During the corona crisis, we saw how mentally weak we have become: despite a full fridge, internet, comfort, and safety, many sank into anxiety and depression.

We have become so accustomed to ease and control that every setback feels like the end of the world. And precisely in this, we recognize the Qur’an: "Verily, man was created in panic (restless)." The trial of this time is not per se poverty, but **inner emptiness and spiritual imbalance**. The West does not **struggle with hunger** like the South, but with mental hunger. And the solution lies, according to the Qur’an, not in pills or prestige, but in reconnecting with the Creator.

In many African and Asian countries, the idea exists that the West is a paradise: a place of **abundance, safety, prosperity, and comfort**. And yes, materially speaking, there is rarely a lack: fridges full, access to medical care, internet, heating, clothing, and freedoms. But what is often forgotten is that abundance too is a trial. The *fitna* of wealth is sometimes heavier than the trial of poverty.

We see today that people run from one “**goal**” to the other. One month it is fitness, then career, then travel, then relationship, then financial success. They seek a goal, a reason to get out of bed. Some focus obsessively on their body and spend hours in the gym; others, especially women, spend thousands of euros on external appearances **such as botox, nails, and fillers**. They try to fill a certain emptiness. But what they miss is: this **emptiness is not a physical hole, but a spiritual thirst**. And that can never be filled, except by Allah.

9.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Al-Ma‘ārij (70:19–22)

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ خُلِقَ هَلُوعًا (19) فَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الشَّرُّ جَزُوعًا (20) وَإِذَا مَسَّهُ الْخَيْرُ مَنُوعًا (21) إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ

“Indeed, man was created anxious and restless. When harm touches him, he is impatient; but when good touches him, he withholds. Except for those who pray.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** Humanity, by **nature, is restless and easily agitated** unless it surrenders to Allah through **prayer**. Ṣalāh disciplines the soul, calms the heart, and reorders one’s inner world.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** These verses describe the **natural psychological** state of the human being fearful, unstable, and self-centered and show that prayer (*ṣalāh*) acts as the spiritual antidote to fear and greed.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** This is a divine **psychological diagnosis** of the human condition. **Prayer** is the therapy **prescribed** for the soul that loses itself in material anxiety and attachment.

Every human carries within them something they must overcome. It is as though we all suffer from an invisible illness not a physical disease, but a **spiritual imbalance** that demands constant attention. Just as someone with a chronic condition must take daily medicine to stay stable, so too does the **soul require continual nourishment through reflection, prayer, remembrance of Allah, and moral discipline**. No one is completely free from inner struggle. But those who acknowledge their struggle and consciously work through it grow spiritually, emotionally, and mentally.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Ar-Ra‘d (13:28)

الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَطْمَئِنُّ قُلُوبُهُمْ بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَلَا بِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ تَطْمَئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

“Those who believe and whose hearts find tranquility in the remembrance of Allah surely, in the remembrance of Allah do hearts find rest.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashur** Ṭuma’nīnah (inner tranquility) is unattainable without dhikr “remembrance”. Allah presents **dhikr** here as a **spiritual remedy** for the **soul**. It does not merely mean repeating words such as SubḥānAllāh or Allāhu Akbar; it means the **ongoing awareness of Allah’s** presence in the heart. Knowing that Allah sees you, hears you, and understands your pain that awareness itself brings serenity. Dhikr is both inward and outward.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** People seek peace in wealth, power, and relationships, but true tranquility comes only through connection with Allah. He interprets **dhikr broadly reciting the Qur’an, performing prayer, making supplication, and reflecting upon Allah’s Names and Attributes**. The heart finds peace because dhikr connects it to the Source of peace: **Ar-Raḥmān**. Without that connection, the soul becomes directionless.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** This verse teaches that dhikr is not an optional act of devotion, but a **vital necessity** for the believing soul. He calls dhikr “**the nourishment of the heart**.” Without it, the heart hardens and empties. Some seek calm in wealth, health, or human love, but Allah makes it clear here that **only remembrance of Him grants true peace**. Dhikr is not merely the movement of the tongue, but a **state of the heart** that illuminates one’s entire being.

Verse 3 – Sūrat Ṭa-ha (20:124)

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْ ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى

“And whoever turns away from my remembrance indeed, for him is a constricted, miserable life, and we will raise him on the Day of Resurrection blind.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** The word a‘raḍa (“turns away”) implies not mere ignorance but a **deliberate rejection** a conscious act of neglecting Allah’s remembrance. The term ḍankan describes existential suffocation a sense of emptiness and restlessness despite outward prosperity. It is not necessarily material poverty, but a **life stripped of barakah** (blessing) and purpose. Ibn ‘Āshūr calls this a **spiritual law**: whoever forgets Allah, inevitably loses themselves.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** A **life without dhikr becomes one without light** like a person lost in a dark cave. He explains that this narrow life affects even those who appear successful or wealthy, because the soul feels an inner void that nothing but Allah can fill. He describes symptoms of this emptiness: **sorrow without cause, anxiety without reason, and chronic unease**. The blindness on the Day of Judgment symbolizes their blindness in this life those who refused to see Allah’s guidance will rise without sight in the Hereafter.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** He explains that ma‘īshatan ḍankan (a constricted life) **refers both to worldly and spiritual suffocation**. Even if one lives amid luxury, if the heart is hard and the conscience restless, life feels narrow and heavy. Dhikr is the soul’s essential nourishment and direction; to neglect it is to wage war against oneself. The blindness, he adds, may be both literal and metaphorical blind to Allah’s mercy and truth in this **world, and literally** blind in the next.

Synthesis – Between Ar-Ra‘d (13:28)

Where Sūrat Ar-Ra‘d reveals the positive law *“In the remembrance of Allah, hearts find rest”*

Sūrat ṬāHā presents its opposite: *“Whoever turns away from my remembrance will live a constricted life.”*

Together, they form a complete spiritual equation:

Dhikr = tranquility Neglect of Dhikr = Inner Constriction

9.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“أَمْرُ الْمُؤْمِنِ كُلُّهُ خَيْرٌ... إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَاءٌ شَكَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ، وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَاءٌ صَبَرَ فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ”

“How wondrous is the affair of the believer! Truly, everything that happens to him is good. If he experiences prosperity, he is grateful and that is good for him. If he experiences hardship, he is patient and that too is good for him.”

(Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim)

Reflection: Mental resilience is born from **spiritual trust**. The true believer never falls into absolute despair, for he views every circumstance as an opportunity to draw nearer to Allah. This mindset protects him from total mental collapse.

“True peace is not the absence of problems, but the presence of trust in Allah.”

9.4 Reflective Layer

Modern man suffers not so much from external shortages, but from **inner poverty**. We see how young people and adults drown in silence in feelings of emptiness, anxiety, and meaninglessness. Their agendas are full, their houses filled, their screens constantly on, but their hearts are empty. This reveals to us a truth that the Qur'an unveiled centuries ago: abundance without Allah is not a blessing, but a trial.

The verses that we have discussed teach us that man is by nature restless. This is not a flaw in creation, but an invitation to search for the true source of peace. Just as a thirsty body can only be quenched by water, so the soul can only be quenched by **dhikr; the conscious remembrance of Allah**. The Qur'an draws the contrast sharply: whoever remembers Allah finds peace; whoever turns away receives a constricted existence.

This also has pedagogical consequences. When we raise children in a culture where performance, status, or appearance take center stage, we plant unrest in their hearts. But when we teach them that success lies not in likes, diplomas, or possessions, but in connectedness with Allah, we give them an inner anchor. In a society where burnouts and depressions are increasing, a generation growing up with dhikr, prayer, and tawakkul (trust) can make the difference.

For the believer, suffering is not proof of meaninglessness, but an opportunity for growth. The Verse of the Prophet ﷺ teaches us that every situation can be good: prosperity leads to gratitude, adversity to patience. This does not mean that the believer never knows sorrow, but rather that he does not succumb to despair. He sees in every moment a path to Allah.

The reflection that follows from this is that true peace is not for sale, nor to be found in external forms of entertainment or prestige. **True peace lies in the heart that lives with Allah, remembers Him, and trusts Him**. Without this spiritual foundation, even abundance becomes suffocating; with this foundation, even poverty can be bearable and meaningful.

Therefore, the prayer, as emphasized by Ibn 'Ashur, Ar-Razi, and Al-Qurtubi, is not a ritual but a medicine. It is daily nourishment for the soul, and whoever neglects it, robs himself of protection against inner emptiness.

Through this, the believer learns to see life through a different lens: not as an endless search for control and comfort, but as a journey of trust and surrender. And precisely in that surrender, he finds peace.

9.5 Conclusion

In an age where the **body is glorified** but the **soul is neglected**, countless people collapse daily under the weight of inner unrest, emptiness, and hopelessness. The human being was created with a deep spiritual thirst a longing that no worldly goal, no physical transformation, and no material wealth can ever satisfy.

The Qur'an teaches that **true tranquility comes only through the remembrance of Allah** (13:28), and that whoever turns away from it will **inevitably live a constricted**, suffocating life (20:124). We were not created to run endlessly from one project to another, but to **worship, know, and turn to Allah**: *"I did not create jinn and mankind except to worship Me."*(*Sūrat adh-Dhāriyāt*, 51:56) *"Say: Indeed, my prayer, my sacrifice, my life, and my death belong to Allah, the Lord of the worlds."* (*Sūrat al-An'ām*, 6:162)

Depression and inner crises are not mere signs of weakness; they are **signals** from **the soul, calling us back to our Source**. Therapy, medicine, and dialogue all have their rightful place, but without reconnection to Allah, something essential will always be missing.

The solution, therefore, is not only psychological or social; it is profoundly **spiritual**. For a heart that forgets Allah will eventually forget itself. But a soul that remembers him even in the darkest night finds **peace, direction, and strength** even amidst the storm.

Chapter 10 – Tawbah (Repentance) & Hope

10.1 Observation

In our communities, one **encounters many faces of faith**. There are those who forget Allah in their daily lives. There are others who even mock what is sacred. Yet, there are also those who *do* believe, but silently feel that they are **no longer welcome** before their Lord. They feel too distant, too impure, or too broken to return.

In their hearts echo words such as: **“I’ve made too many mistakes,”** or **“After all I’ve done, why Allah would still want me?”** Sometimes even more painfully: *“It’s too late for me.”* But this feeling is rarely true humility. More often, it is **despair disguised as modesty**. And despair is not a form of *taqwa* it is a lack of trust in Allah’s limitless mercy.

The Prophet ﷺ taught us that no sin is greater than Allah’s forgiveness, so long as one turns back to Him sincerely. Yet some abandon prayer because they believe they are “not good Muslims.” Others close their hearts, convinced that their past has forever condemned them.

But the Qur’an teaches: **as long as you live, the door to return remains open**. The path to Allah closes only when the soul leaves the body. **Tawbah (repentance) opens that door wide, while despair slams it shut**.

May this remind us that Allah is not a refuge only for the pure, but especially for the broken those who dare to find their way back to Him.

10.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Az-Zumar (39:53)

قُلْ يَا عِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ أَسْرَفُوا عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِهِمْ لَا تَقْنَطُوا مِن رَّحْمَةِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَغْفِرُ الذُّنُوبَ جَمِيعًا ۗ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ

“Say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the Mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, He is the All-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** regards this as *the most hopeful verse in the Qur’an*. The address “O My servants” indicates nearness and compassion, even toward the greatest sinners. The word **أَسْرَفُوا** (“those who have exceeded all limits”) encompasses even the gravest offenders.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that this verse speaks *directly* to those who see themselves as lost. It is a divine **invitation to return no matter how far one has fallen**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights the word **جَمِيعًا** (“all sins”) as proof *that* no sin is excluded except despair itself or dying without repentance.

Verse 2 – Sūrat At-Taḥrīm (66:8)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا تُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ تَوْبَةً نَّصُوحًا

“O you who believe! Turn to Allah with sincere repentance.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that “*tawbah naṣiḥa*” is more than mere regret; it is a pure, wholehearted, radical return to Allah without delay, without hidden motives.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** outlines four conditions for this form of repentance: 1. Remorse for the sin, 2. **immediate cessation** of the sin, 3. **Firm resolve** not to return to it, and 4. **Restitution** for any harm done, where possible.
- **Ar-Rāzī** adds that true *tawbah* must be accompanied by inner reform. One who says, “I repent,” yet changes nothing in their behavior, deceives themselves.

Verse 3 – Sūrat Al-Furqān (25:70)

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ ۗ

“Except for those who repent, believe, and perform righteous deeds for them, Allah will replace their evil deeds with good ones.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** states that this verse does not merely refer to the *erasure* of sins, but to their **transformation into good deeds** (ḥasanāt). The sins are not simply ignored; they are turned into merit as a reward for sincere return.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** calls this the **pinnacle of Allah’s mercy**. He not only forgives, He *honors* the one who comes back with faith and repentance.
- **Ar-Rāzī** observes that this verse gives the believer **tremendous hope**: one’s past can, through sincere repentance, become a *source of reward*. What was once a burden can, by Allah’s grace, become a bridge to Paradise?

10.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"اللَّهُ أَفْرَحُ بِتَوْبَةِ عَبْدِهِ مِنْ أَحَدِكُمْ سَقَطَ عَلَى بَعِيرِهِ وَقَدْ أَضَلَّهُ فِي أَرْضٍ فَلَاةٍ"

“Allah is more joyful with the repentance of His servant than one of you who finds his camel after losing it in a barren desert.”

(Bukhārī and Muslim)

Reflection: Imagine a man who loses his camel in the desert his only means of survival, carrying all his food and water. He is certain he will die. But then, suddenly, he finds his camel again. His joy is indescribable. And yet, the Prophet ﷺ tells us: Allah is even more joyful than that when you repent. Allah is not a vengeful judge waiting for your fall; He is a Merciful Lord waiting for your return.

10.4 Reflective Layer

Tawbah is not the end of spirituality it is **the beginning of the journey back to Allah**. It is the key that opens the door to a new life a life in which the heart returns to its origin. Without awareness of sin, there can be no sincerity. Without remorse, there can be no purification. But without **hope**, there can be no movement forward. In our teaching and upbringing, repentance **should not be portrayed as humiliation as though man is crushed under the weight of guilt but rather as liberation**, a renewed connection with the Creator who elevates him.

True *tawbah* is more than uttering words. It is **breaking the chains of sin** that imprison the heart, **opening the door to peace** that no worldly comfort can provide, and proving that the heart is still alive for a dead heart feels no remorse.

The Prophet ﷺ taught us: *“Every son of Adam commits sin, but the best of sinners are those who repent.”* (At-Tirmidhi)

This means we must not judge others by their past, nor imprison ourselves in shame. We must believe that **Allah is greater than all our faults**. The past may shape us, but it should never shackle us; the door of repentance remains open as long as our soul remains within our body. Every tear shed in repentance is a step closer to Allah. Every sincere *Astaghfirullah* is a **weapon against despair**. And every *sujūd* (prostration) in which we confess our guilt can be **the beginning of a life filled with divine light**. Allah says in the Qur’an: *“Say: O My servants who have transgressed against themselves, do not despair of the mercy of Allah. Indeed, Allah forgives all sins. Indeed, He is the All-Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”* (Sūrat Aṣ-Ṣūrah, 39:53)

This verse is not a door left slightly open it is an invitation to return, no matter how far one has strayed.

10.5 Conclusion

The greatest lie of **Shayṭān** is the whisper that **“it’s too late to return.”** But the Qur’an says clearly: **“Do not despair of the mercy of Allah.”** And the Prophet ﷺ assures us: **“Allah is more joyful with the return of His servant than a traveler who finds his lost camel in the desert.”** Whoever you are, whatever you have done **the door is still open**. Not because you are perfect, but because **Allah is infinitely Merciful**. So whisper it in silence, cry it out in tears, let your heart proclaim it:

يَا رَبِّ، ارْحَمْنِي وَاعْفِرْ لِي

“O my Lord, have mercy on me and forgive me.”

For Paradise is not for those without mistakes but for those who were broken, and yet **found their way back**.

Chapter 11 – The Culture of Shame & Family Honor

11.1 Observation

In many communities, “*what people will say*” plays a greater role than *what Allah says*. Young people are not corrected out of love for Allah, but punished out of fear of disgrace. Problems are not solved they are hidden, as long as the outside world doesn’t see them.

Girls are forced into marriages to preserve the family’s name. Boys are pressured into silence about abuse or violence because “*we must protect the family’s honor.*” Some families go so far as to commit so-called **honor killings**, not out of religious conviction, but out of cultural pride.

The culture of shame has replaced taqwā. What neighbors, uncles, and acquaintances think has become more important than what Allah knows.

This mindset leads to oppression, hypocrisy, and even abuse where wrongdoers are shielded, victims are punished, and sins are covered up... as long as no public disgrace occurs.

But the Qur’an shatters this illusion. Islam is not built on saving face or maintaining reputation, but on truth, justice, and purity before Allah. The real question is not: *What do people think of you?* The real question is: *What does Allah know about you?*

11.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat An-Nūr (24:11)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ ۗ لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُم بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ

“Indeed, those who came with the slander (against ‘A’isha) were a group among you. Do not think it bad for you; rather, it is good for you.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that this revelation about the slander of ‘Ā’isha (radiyAllāhu ‘anhā) exposes how communities can be driven by gossip, honor-based thinking, and social pressure rather than facts and justice.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that Allah Himself intervened in this event to **defend the honor of a woman**, rejecting the culture of rumor and false accusation. This verse, he says, establishes a divine precedent: **Allah protects the innocent, even when society turns against them.**
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that the message is clear **honor is not defined by people’s words about you, but by what Allah knows and affirms of you.**

Verse 2 – Sūrat Al-Aḥzāb (33:37)

وَتَخَشَى النَّاسَ وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تَخْشَاهُ

“...and you feared the people, while Allah has more right that you fear Him.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that even the Prophet ﷺ was reminded that fear of public opinion must never outweigh fear of Allah. This gentle divine correction serves as a **lesson for the entire community**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** stresses that **social pressure can never justify abandoning what is right**. This verse is a timeless correction to cultural or political considerations that conflict with divine guidance.
- **Ar-Rāzī** says that this verse captures the essence of **ikhhlāṣ** (sincerity): one’s actions are not measured by how people perceive them, but by **how Allah judges them**.

11.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ أَحَبَّ أَنْ يُزَخَّرَ عَنِ النَّارِ وَيُدْخَلَ الْجَنَّةَ، فَلْتَأْتِهِ مَنِيئَتُهُ وَهُوَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ، وَلْيَأْتِ إِلَى النَّاسِ الَّذِي يُحِبُّ أَنْ يُؤْتَى إِلَيْهِ

“Whoever loves to be saved from the Fire and admitted into Paradise, let him die while believing in Allah and the Last Day, and let him treat others as he would love to be treated.”

(Muslim)

Reflection: This Verse dismantles every form of *shame-based culture* built on hypocrisy, appearances, and social fear. Islam teaches us:

- The true measure of a person is faith and justice, not image or reputation.
- Your honor lies in sincerity before Allah and in fairness toward others.
- Whoever lives for Allah, does not live for people’s opinions.

11.4 Reflective Layer

In many communities, **the culture of shame has replaced conscience**. People fear what others might think, but not what **Allah already knows**. This shift has created societies where reputation seems more important than integrity, and where mistakes are hidden rather than corrected. Spiritually, we must return to *taqwā* an **inner awareness** of Allah that outweighs social pressure, family pride, or cultural vanity.

True modesty (*ḥayā*) is modesty before Allah, not before people.

Education begins at home:

- Don’t teach children to ask, “What will people say?”
- Teach them to ask, **“What does Allah say about this?”**
- Encourage them to be truthful, even if it brings consequences.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“If you feel no shame (before Allah), then do as you wish.” (Bukhārī)

This means that shame is a protection, but only if it is directed towards Allah. Shame before people often leads to **hypocrisy**: pretending that everything is fine, while the opposite is true.

Practical Steps to Place Taqwā above Shame Culture:

1. **Address mistakes openly** in a safe environment so that people learn confession is the first step toward healing.
2. **Choose justice over silence**; resolve problems honestly, even if it brings temporary embarrassment.
3. **Protect your family with truth, not with lies**, so integrity becomes more valuable than image.
4. **Be a role model of honesty and gentleness**; children learn more from what they see than from what they hear.

For Allah does not look at our status, lineage, or reputation. **He looks at our hearts.** And on the Day of Judgment, **deeds will speak, not the stories people told about us.**

11.5 Conclusion

Islam does not teach us to protect honor at the expense of justice. On the contrary: true honor *is* justice. In the Qur’an, the logic of culture is broken and replaced by divine standards: **tribe or status do not make a person noble, but taqwā does. Public opinion does not determine your worth; Allah does.** Shame before people must never be an excuse to conceal the truth.

Whoever lives for Allah does not need to fear people. But **whoever lives for people** will inevitably lose sight of Allah. Therefore, Islam asks not for outward appearances, but for pure hearts. True honor means protecting your daughter with truth and justice, guiding your son with wisdom and care, and acknowledging your own mistakes with courage. It does *not* mean covering things up to keep up appearances.

We must dare to break with honor killing and replace it with justice. **Pride must give way to submission to Allah.** Cultural fear must yield to an inner consciousness of **Allah that is stronger than any peer pressure. For whoever fears Allah needs to fear no one else.**

“**وَاللَّهُ أَحَقُّ أَنْ تُخْشَاهُ**” “And Allah has more right that He should be feared.” (Surah Al-Ahzab 33:37)

On the **Day of Judgment**, it will not be our reputations that speak, but our deeds. And in that just weighing, no honor from people counts, but only the honor that Allah bestows upon those who were sincere.

Chapter 12 – Jealousy, Pride & Arrogance

12.1 Observation

We live in an era where **pride is admired, arrogance is marketed as confidence, and jealousy is justified as ambition.** Social media has amplified the stage on which people display their lives from vacations to relationships, from clothing to achievements and within this constant comparison, a culture has emerged where the heart becomes filled with either **superiority or envy.**

Pride and jealousy often enter unnoticed. Some elevate themselves because they “*live halal*” and therefore look down upon others. Others because they possess more knowledge and belittle those who are simpler. Some because they are more popular and thus despise those less known. And there are those who quietly envy the happiness, success, or even the inner peace of another.

The Qur’an reminds us that **the very first sin in creation was not murder, nor intoxication, nor fornication but pride.** The fall of Iblīs began with a single toxic thought: “I am better than him.”

That one moment of arrogance was enough to cast him out forever from the nearness of Allah. For this reason, *tazkiyah* **the purification of the soul from jealousy, pride, and arrogance is not a luxury or an optional virtue; it is a fundamental condition** for anyone who wishes to draw near to Allah. As long as the heart is polluted with envy, true love for Allah and sincere brotherhood cannot flourish.

Whoever seeks to purify his soul must learn **not to measure himself by the world, but by Allah’s pleasure.** He must not weigh his success by what people see, but by what Allah sees within his heart. For on the Day of Judgment, there will be no weight in follower counts, social status, or possessions only in **sincerity and purity before Allah.**

12.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Al-A‘rāf (7:12)

قَالَ مَا مَنَعَكَ أَلَّا تَسْجُدَ إِذْ أَمَرْتُكَ قَالَ أَنَا خَيْرٌ مِّنْهُ خَلَقْتَنِي مِن نَّارٍ وَخَلَقْتَهُ مِن طِينٍ

“He (Allah) said: *What prevented you from prostrating when I commanded you?* He (Iblīs) said: *I am better than him; you created me from fire, and You created him from clay.*”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this statement of **Iblīs represents** the prototype of *spiritual arrogance* judging based on origin or essence rather than obedience.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** highlights that **Iblīs** did not refuse out of ignorance, but out of **pride.** The root of his disobedience lay in comparison, in failing to recognize the supremacy of obedience over lineage.

- **Ar-Rāzī** observes that this verse proves arrogance can even infiltrate those who once had knowledge and worship, as it did with Iblīs before his fall. Pride, therefore, can lead to destruction even when cloaked in piety or honor.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Ash-Shams (91:9–10)

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا • وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

“Indeed, successful is the one who purifies his soul, and doomed is the one who corrupts it.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** says these verses form the **essence of the inner dimension of Islam**: true success lies not in rank, knowledge, or accomplishments, but in *purifying the inner self*.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that *tazkiyah* means cleansing the heart of diseases such as envy, self-glorification, hypocrisy (*riyā*), pride, and resentment.
- **Ar-Rāzī** calls this verse the dividing line between salvation and failure on the Day of Judgment; it is not merely deeds that count, but the *state of the soul* behind those deeds.

Verse 3 – Sūrat Al-Ḥujurāt (49:11)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ

“O you who believe! Let not a group of people ridicule another group it may be that they are better than them.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** points out that mockery and disdain often stem from hidden arrogance or jealousy. This verse forbids every form of **superiority thinking**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** warns that even **subtle gestures** facial expressions, tone, or sarcasm can reveal a heart contaminated by pride.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes that this verse exposes *the social symptoms* of arrogance: mockery, gossip, and backbiting. The cure lies not in outward politeness, but in *tazkiyah* inner purification.

12.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«لَا يَدْخُلُ الْجَنَّةَ مَنْ كَانَ فِي قَلْبِهِ مِثْقَالُ ذَرَّةٍ مِّنْ كِبَرٍ»

“He who has even a mustard seed’s weight of pride in his heart shall not enter Paradise.”

(Muslim)

Reflection: The Prophet ﷺ did not mention theft, lying, or adultery but *pride* in the heart. Even a **trace of it blocks the way to Jannah**. Why? Because pride erects a barrier between the servant and his submission to Allah. Whoever believes he is better than another by knowledge, lineage, appearance, clothing, achievements, or religious status severs himself from *tawāḍu‘* (humility), the very essence of *‘ubūdiyyah* (servitude).

12.4 Reflective Layer

Jealousy and arrogance are diseases of the heart. They grow slowly, often unnoticed, until they poison both our relationship with Allah and our relationship with people. They rob us of joy at the success of others, make us **look down rather than look up**, and hide behind outward religiosity or pious words while the heart secretly glorifies itself.

In the spiritual path, **tazkiyah** (purification) of the heart is indispensable. It means **replacing jealousy with *riḍā*** (contentment with what Allah has given), **pride with *tawāḍuʿ*** (humility), and **arrogance with *khushūʿ*** (reverent submission before Allah). Without purification, knowledge breeds vanity, devotion breeds self-righteousness, and even good deeds become a source of envy toward those who do more.

In upbringing, we must teach our youth that life is not a race of comparison but a journey of consciousness not **to appear the best**, but to *be* sincere; not **to always win**, but **to remain pure**, even when unseen.

In our daily attitude, Allah calls us to self-examination:

- *Why do I want to be better than others?*
- *Why do I feel pain at someone else's success?*
- *Why do I joke or mock others?*
- *Why do I crave recognition?*

The key to healing is not *making yourself bigger*, but *breaking yourself before Allah*. As al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said:

“Whoever truly knows himself, despises himself.”

For the one who sees his own flaws has no time to count the flaws of others and whoever fears Allah does not fear that another might stand above him.

12.5 Conclusion

Pride is not a small matter; it is the **root of rebellion against Allah**. Whoever believes that knowledge, position, or religious practice elevate him above others carries the same disease that led Iblīs to ruin.

The true believer does not look down, but looks *up* to Allah and *within*, to cleanse his heart. Our task is not to appear greater, but to become smaller before Allah; not to surpass people in status, but to surpass ourselves in humility.

True honor is *tawāḍuʿ* bowing the heart before the head bows. **True strength is *khushūʿ*** subduing one's pride even when one is right. **True victory is *riḍā*** being content with what Allah has granted, without envy toward what He gave another.

Whoever walks this path purifies his soul and finds peace in surrender. And as Allah says:

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا

“Indeed, successful is the one who purifies his soul.”
(*Sūrat Ash-Shams, 91:9*)

Chapter 13 – The Evil Eye, Superstition, and Our True Protection – Tawakkul and Dhikr

13.1 Observation

In many cultures, particularly in Africa, Asia, and also among migrant communities in Europe belief in the “*evil eye*” (*al-‘ayn*) is deeply rooted. Anything that goes wrong from illness to relationship issues or financial loss is often attributed to someone who “*looked at you with jealousy.*”

As an imam, I am frequently asked to recite Qur’an over people who are said to have been afflicted by the evil eye or black magic. I gladly do so, for the Qur’an is *shifā’* (healing). Yet what I often find concerning is that people treat me as though I were some kind of magician as if a recitation would magically fix everything, without introspection, without seeking medical care, without behavioral change, and without strengthening their trust in Allah.

Today, many people see the ‘*ayn*’ everywhere; a car accident, an illness, failing an exam everything becomes a sign of the *evil eye*. As a result, they turn to charms, jewelry, or blue-eye talismans for “protection,” believing that others may harm them or their loved ones through envy, especially if they are beautiful or successful.

In Africa, I heard mothers say: “Take off his nice clothes, or he’ll get the ‘*ayn*!” In Asia, babies are given black dots or blue beads. In Europe, even Qur’anic verses are used as amulets, or within Turkish communities, the blue “Nazar” eye is worn. But all of this borders on superstition and superstition lies dangerously close to shirk (associating partners with Allah) when one believes that something or someone other than Allah can influence one’s life.

13.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Al-Qalam (68:51)

وَإِنْ يَكَادُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَيُزْلِقُونَكَ بِأَبْصَارِهِمْ لَمَّا سَمِعُوا الذِّكْرَ وَيَقُولُونَ إِنَّهُ لَمَجْنُونٌ

“And indeed, those who disbelieve would almost make you slip with their eyes when they hear the reminder, and they say, ‘Indeed, he is mad!’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse is a *metaphor* describing the intense hatred and envy of the disbelievers toward the Prophet ﷺ. Their gaze was so filled with hostility that it was *as if* it could make him fall but this is rhetorical **imagery**, not evidence of mystical power.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** clarifies that this expression **functions** like the Arabic idiom “*to devour someone with your eyes.*” It does not imply that a gaze alone can cause real harm without Allah’s will.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that any effect of the ‘*ayn* (evil eye) occurs only *by Allah’s permission*. The verse therefore calls us to tawakkul (trust in Allah) and steadfastness, not to paranoia or fear of people.

The *‘ayn* as it is commonly believed today that a jealous glance can independently harm one’s health, fortune, or destiny represents a **theological problem**. **No one can affect your *qadr* (divine decree) except by the will of Allah**. Everything happens only by His permission.

Thus, the *‘ayn* is not an autonomous force. It cannot operate outside of Allah’s decree.

13.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«الْعَيْنُ حَقٌّ، وَلَوْ كَانَ شَيْءٌ يُغَيِّرُ الْقَدَرَ لَكَانَتِ الْعَيْنُ»

“The evil eye (al-‘ayn) is real, and if anything were to alter destiny, it would be the evil eye.”
(Muslim)

Reflection: Notice carefully: even in this Verse, the Prophet ﷺ did not say that the *‘ayn* **actually** changes destiny. He said, *“if anything were to...”* a **conditional statement**. The purpose is not to confirm some magical power, but to make people aware of **jealousy as a spiritual disease** and to emphasize the importance of seeking protection through remembrance of Allah (*dhikr*), not through superstition.

13.4 Reflective Layer

What does it mean when we believe that a single glance just a look can harm our health, marriage, or success? It means we have **granted power to creation, not to the Creator**. It means we have placed **fear** at the center of our lives, instead of **trust** (*tawakkul*) in Allah.

If a person’s jealous gaze truly possessed such power, then consider this:

All Muslims on earth could glare with anger and hatred at a **war criminal like Netanyahu**; would he suddenly collapse? Would his army vanish? His power dissolve? No. Because the universe does not function by the power of human glances it operates by **the decree (*qadar*) of Allah**.

Our looks cannot alter fate. We can despise oppression daily, but nothing changes unless Allah wills it. Therefore, our energy should not be spent on **paranoia, suspicion, or fear**, but on **du‘ā’ (supplication)**, sincerity, good deeds, and *tawakkul*. If you constantly think everyone is striking you with *‘ayn*, then ask yourself: Do I live in **fear** or in **trust**?

Protection does not come through amulets or talismans it comes through: *Adhkār* (daily remembrances), Recitation of the Qur’an, Sincere *tawakkul* on Allah.

13.5 Conclusion

The *‘ayn* (evil eye) **exists**, in the sense that **jealousy can have a spiritual effect**, especially upon those who neglect their own spiritual protection. But it does **not** mean that a glance independent of Allah’s will can cause harm. To believe that a human being, by merely looking, can destroy your life, is to attribute **divine power to creation** and that borders on *shirk* (associating partners with Allah).

Therefore, our focus must be on **true protection**, not superstition:

- Spiritual protection through **morning and evening adhkār**
- **Regular recitation of Sūrat Al-Falaq and Sūrat An-Nās**
- **Making du‘ā’ for protection against envy and harm**
- **Educating youth** to reject superstition and to understand the true source of power Allah alone

Let us **purify our faith** from cultural residues that have nothing to do with the Qur’an. The problem is not the *‘ayn* of your neighbor; it is the **lack of *tawakkul* and knowledge**.

Islam teaches us to act, to trust, and to see **Allah alone** as the source of strength and protection

. **“And whoever takes Allah as his Protector (*Walī*), has nothing to fear.”**

Chapter 14 – Hypocrisy – The Disease of Double Faces

14.1 Observation

Hypocrisy is one of the **greatest spiritual diseases of our time**. We live in an age where **words and actions no longer align**. People speak of faith, justice, and solidarity yet their actions reveal the opposite. They speak about Islam while, behind closed doors, injustice, lies, and corruption take place.

On social media, faith is displayed for all to see but often the real **motivation is status and likes**, not sincerity. In the mosque, humility is shown, but at home arrogance reigns. Some speak passionately about Palestine, yet act unjustly toward their own families. Even worse, some **leaders use the name of Islam** while oppressing others, stealing from the ummah, or betraying the trust of their people.

Even in spiritual circles, there are those who **preach purity but whose hearts are polluted with pride, hatred, or deceit**. This duality not only destroys individuals but also erodes the trust and unity of the community.

The Prophet ﷺ warned most strongly against *nifāq* hypocrisy a danger that creeps in silently, difficult to detect, often **hidden behind religious language and outward piety**.

14.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Al-Ḥadīd (57:13)

يَوْمَ يَقُولُ الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا انظُرُونَا نَقْتَبِسْ مِنْ نُورِكُمْ قِيلَ ارْجِعُوا وَرَاءَكُمْ فَالْتَمِسُوا نُورًا فَضُرِبَ بَيْنَهُمْ بِسُورٍ لَهُ بَابٌ بَاطِنَةٌ فِيهِ الرَّحْمَةُ وَظَهْرُهُ مِنْ قِبَلِهِ الْعَذَابُ

“On that Day, the hypocrite men and women will say to those who believed, ‘Wait for us, that we may borrow some of your light.’ It will be said, ‘Go back and seek your own light.’ Then a wall will be placed between them with a gate inside it is mercy, and outside it is punishment.”

- Ibn ‘Āshūr explains that this **verse portrays the reality of the Last Day**: the hypocrites tried to imitate believers in life, but lacked inner sincerity.
- **Ar-Rāzī** interprets the “light” as a symbol of **true faith (īmān)** hypocrites possessed only the outer appearance of religion, not its essence.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that the “wall” symbolizes the final separation between **outward appearance and inward truth** between those who lived for Allah and those who lived for appearances.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Al-Ḥadīd (57:14)

يُنَادُونَهُمْ أَلَمْ نَكُن مَعَكُمْ قَالُوا بَلَىٰ وَلَكِنَّكُمْ فَتَنْتُمْ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَتَرَبَّصْتُمْ وَارْتَبْتُمْ وَغَرَّتْكُمُ الْأَمَانِيُّ حَتَّىٰ جَاءَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ ۗ وَغَرَّكُمْ بِاللَّهِ
الْعُرُورُ

“They (the hypocrites) will call out to them (the believers): ‘Were we not with you?’ They will say: ‘Yes, but you deceived yourselves, you hesitated, you doubted, and false hopes deluded you until Allah’s command came and the deceiver deceived you about Allah.’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that the hypocrite does not openly deny faith but **lives in illusion, passivity, and doubt** constantly postponing true submission.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that this verse outlines the **stages of inner decay**: *self-deception* → *procrastination* → *doubt* → *delusion*.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** points out that the hypocrite never truly submits inwardly to **Allah; everything remains for show until it is too late**.

Verse 3 – Sūrat At-Tawbah (9:67)

الْمُنَافِقُونَ وَالْمُنَافِقَاتُ بَعْضُهُمْ مِّنْ بَعْضٍ يَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمُنْكَرِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَقْبِضُونَ أَيْدِيَهُمْ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَنَسِيَهُمْ إِنَّ
الْمُنَافِقِينَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

“The hypocrite men and women are allies of one another. They enjoin what is wrong and forbid what is right and withhold their hands. They have forgotten Allah, so He has forgotten them. Truly, the hypocrites are the defiantly disobedient.”

- **Al-Qurṭubī** describes this verse as a complete picture of **inverted religiosity**: promoting evil, suppressing good, and closing the hand of generosity.
- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** observes that these hypocrites are **active influencers**, not merely passive bystanders; they shape corruption through their example and silence.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that their behavior earns them the title *fāsiqun* defiantly sinful because their hypocrisy translates into deeds that **undermine and corrupt society**.

14.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“آية المنافق ثلاث: إذا حدث كذب، وإذا وعد أخلف، وإذا أؤتمن خان”

“The signs of a hypocrite are three: when he speaks, he lies; when he makes a promise, he breaks it; and when he is entrusted, he betrays the trust.”
(Bukhārī and Muslim)

Sirah Example – The Expedition of Tabūk:

During the Battle of Tabūk, in the 9th year after Hijrah, the Prophet ﷺ called upon the Muslims to contribute and march with him to defend the borders. The hypocrites began to **make excuses**,

withheld their wealth, and even tried to discourage others from joining. They pretended to be loyal, but their behavior and attitude exposed their true nature.

Reflection: The true test of sincerity appears in times of **sacrifice, hardship, and responsibility**. *Nifāq* is **not about making occasional mistakes; it is about deliberately performing for people while harboring deceit in the heart.**

14.4 Reflective Layer

These verses and the Verse show that **hypocrisy (*nifāq*)** is not merely disbelief in the heart; it often begins as a **subtle gap between outward appearance and inner truth**. A person may appear religious attending prayers, joining Islamic gatherings yet inwardly, their heart remains hollow.

The Qur'an vividly portrays this on the Day of Judgment: the hypocrites will beg the believers for light, but they will be told that light cannot be borrowed; faith must be cultivated within. **Imān cannot be copied; it** must grow from the inside, nourished by sincerity (*ikhhlāṣ*) and devotion.

In our time, *nifāq* takes on new forms. Young people grow up in a world where **image outweighs essence**. Social media feeds the desire for visibility to *appear* religious, charitable, or wise, while the intention weakens. Hence, education must focus not on building a façade, but on training the heart in **ikhhlāṣ (sincerity)** doing good purely for Allah.

The Prophet ﷺ described *nifāq* in three behaviors: lying, breaking promises, and betraying trust. It is not merely a theological flaw, but a **moral and behavioral** one. When youth grow accustomed to lying, breaking commitments, or **betraying trust**, they unknowingly walk in the shadow of hypocrisy.

The story of *Tabūk* is a painful yet instructive example: the hypocrites withheld their resources and efforts when the community most needed them. Their problem was not incapacity, but **insincerity**. The real test of faith appears when sacrifice is required. For us today, true spirituality is not measured by our words or public acts, but by how we behave in times of difficulty, duty, and sacrifice. *Nifāq* is not a slip-up; it is a lifestyle of pretending before people while living by a **different truth inside**. The only cure is **self-reflection, purification of intention**, and the courage to admit mistakes without resorting to lies or excuses.

14.5 Conclusion

***Nifāq* is the most destructive disease of the heart.** It corrodes faith from within, even when the outward appearance remains intact. The Qur'an warns repeatedly against hypocrites even more than against open disbelievers because their duplicity poses a greater threat to the community. **Sincerity saves. Pretense destroys.** The light of the Hereafter will only be granted to those who were sincere in this life. That is why we must examine our hearts daily, purify our intentions, and ask Allah to make us people of one face, one tongue, and one pure heart.

According to the Qur'an and Sunnah, there are **two kinds of hypocrisy: Hypocrisy of Belief (*nifāq i' tīqādi*)** A person outwardly claims faith but inwardly rejects it. This is the gravest form of disbelief,

leading to the lowest depths of Hell, as Allah says: “Indeed, the hypocrites will be in the lowest depths of the Fire.” (Q. 4:145) **Practical Hypocrisy (nifāq ‘amali)** A believer who acts contrary to faith: lying, breaking promises, greed, discouraging good, or neglecting prayer.

But what happens if practical hypocrisy persists? The verses in **Sūrat Al-Ḥadīd (57:13–14)** show that on the Day of Judgment, the hypocrites will have **no light (nūr)**. They lived among believers, but their procrastination, doubt, and false hopes blinded them. They will cry out: “*Were we not with you?*” And they will hear the painful reply: “*Yes, but you deceived yourselves, you hesitated, you doubted, and you were deluded by false hopes.*”

Likewise, in **Sūrat At-Tawbah (9:67)**, Allah describes hypocrites as those who command evil, forbid good, and forget Allah. Their hearts become fāsiq rebellious and corrupt until they reach a state that borders on disbelief.

According to scholars such as Ibn ‘Āshūr and Al-Qurṭubī, when a person persists in these behaviors and his heart detaches completely from faith, practical hypocrisy transforms into belief hypocrisy. Such a person will be counted among the true *munāfiqīn* and treated as a disbeliever in the Hereafter.

What can we learn from this? Hypocrisy often begins small a lie, a neglected prayer, a broken promise. But whoever continues in sin without repentance, and convinces himself that he is still righteous, risks becoming one of the true hypocrites. These are the people with no light, separated from the sincere, and exposed by Allah Himself.

The solution is clear: **Ikhlāṣ (sincerity), tawbah (repentance), constant self-examination, and a struggle against hypocrisy in the heart.** As ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb (رضي الله عنه) said:

“The true believer fears hypocrisy even when he performs many good deeds.”

May Allah purify our hearts from deceit, grant us truth in our words, faith in our hearts, and sincerity in all that we do.

Chapter 15 – Individualism & Egoism – The Crisis of the Nafs

15.1 Observation

In our time, **the ego has been elevated to an ideal**. “Follow your heart.” “Put yourself first.” “Do what makes you happy.” These are no longer harmless slogans they have become guiding philosophies shaping our **upbringing, relationships, spirituality, and even activism**.

The **nafs** of the human soul is no longer disciplined or refined; instead, it is **fed, indulged, and celebrated**. **Responsibility is seen as a burden**. **Service is labeled as submission**. Sacrifice is dismissed as outdated. Many people demand their rights, but neglect their duties. They seek freedom, but abandon accountability and connection.

This culture of **individualism and egoism** has deeply affected our families, our communities, and most importantly, our relationship with Allah.

15.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Yūsuf (12:53)

(إِنَّ النَّفْسَ لَأَمَّارَةٌ بِالسُّوءِ إِلَّا مَا رَحِمَ رَبِّي)

“Indeed, the soul certainly commands one toward evil except for those upon whom my Lord has bestowed mercy.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse shows the **nafs to be inherently unstable**, inclined toward desire and wrongdoing. Only divine mercy (rahmah) can purify it. He emphasizes that man cannot fully control his nafs by sheer willpower; he requires **divine assistance**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** identifies al-nafs al-ammārah “the soul that commands to evil” as the lowest and **most dangerous form of the soul**. He highlights the importance of **discipline and remembrance (dhikr)** to tame it, describing it as deeply attached to worldly desires.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes that this verse **underscores man’s lack of complete autonomy over his inner self**. Without divine guidance, the nafs will continuously drag its owner toward sin. This reveals both human weakness and the necessity of humility before Allah.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Al-Ḥashr (59:19)

(وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّذِينَ نَسُوا اللَّهَ فَأَنْسَاهُمْ أَنْفُسَهُمْ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ)

“And do not be like those who forgot Allah, so He made them forget themselves. They are the defiantly disobedient.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** views this verse as a profound spiritual warning: forgetting Allah leads to spiritual dislocation. One who forgets **Allah loses his purpose, his moral compass**, and even self-awareness.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that “forgetting one” means neglecting one’s true interests, soul, and salvation failing one’s duties toward oneself, Allah, and society.
- **Ar-Rāzī** describes this as a chain reaction: abandoning remembrance (dhikr) and **worship leads to a hardened heart**, which then results in spiritual blindness. To forget oneself, he says, is to reduce the soul to a mere body without mission or meaning.

Verse 3 – Sūrat Ash-Shams (91:9–10)

﴿قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا، وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا﴾

“Indeed, successful is the one who purifies it (the soul), and failed is the one who corrupts it.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that tazkiyah (purification of the soul) is the **ultimate goal of faith**. It is not only a spiritual act but also a moral and social duty: whoever purifies his soul also purifies his conduct, his intentions, and his interactions.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** clarifies that **tazkiyah means cleansing oneself of shirk, hypocrisy, jealousy, hatred, egoism, and all inner diseases**. Dassāhā means covering or burying the soul under layers of sin, desire, and heedlessness.
- **Ar-Rāzī** calls these verses a **Qur’anic axiom**: true success comes not from external gain wealth or status but from inner purification. He draws attention to the depth of the word dassāhā: not merely neglecting the soul, but **actively suppressing it beneath pride and lust**.

These verses clearly reveal that the human being carries within himself a **natural inclination toward sin and selfishness** yet also the potential for purification. The Qur’an defines the purification of the soul as a **lifelong mission**. Whoever follows his nafs descends into a life of desire, pride, and self-centeredness. But whoever disciplines his nafs rises into a life of justice, submission, and responsibility.

15.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«الْمُجَاهِدُ مَنْ جَاهَدَ نَفْسَهُ فِي اللَّهِ عَزَّ وَجَلَّ»

*“The true warrior is the one who strives against his own soul for the sake of Allah, the Almighty.
(Ahmad – Hasan)*

Reflection: This Verse teaches that the greatest form of jihād is the **inner struggle against one’s ego and desires**. True strength does not lie in shouting, conquering, or displaying power, but in mastering anger, pride, greed, and cowardice. The real mujāhid is not the one who overpowers others, but the one who conquers himself.

15.4 Reflective Layer

The Qur'an and the Sunnah make it clear that the **greatest enemy of the human being is often not outside of him, but within him** the nafs. While the modern world teaches that happiness lies in following one's desires, Islam teaches that **true freedom lies in mastering them**. Every day is therefore a battlefield not only against external injustice, but against **laziness, pride, and lust within ourselves**. Whoever cannot overcome his own ego will never remain consistent in prayer, never be just in dealing with others, and never be sincere in intention.

Today's culture of individualism **feeds the ego instead of taming it**. Everything revolves around "me": my time, my rights, and my comfort. But the Qur'an teaches the opposite that real greatness comes through **discipline, service, and responsibility**.

Key lessons for the believer:

- **Self-control instead of self-glorification.** The strong believer is not the one who indulges, but the one who can restrain himself.
- **Service instead of self-interest.** True honor lies not in what you take, but in what you give.
- **Responsibility instead of comfort.** A marriage, a family, or a community does not grow through desire, but through sacrifice.

That is why it is essential to restore the language of tazkiyah (purification of the soul) in our homes and communities. This means teaching children not only to excel academically, but also to manage their anger, jealousy, and pride. It means preparing youth not just for careers, but for responsibility, patience, and sacrifice.

The true crisis of our time is not a lack of knowledge or resources, but an **excess of ego**. And the solution does not lie in more slogans or self-help philosophies, but in **returning to Allah** through daily dhikr, prayer, gratitude, patience, and sincerity. It is through this training of the soul that the believer rises above the noise of the nafs and finds peace in submission.

15.5 Conclusion

The ego is not an enemy we defeat once it is a lifelong companion that continually challenges us. The Qur'an teaches that success lies in **purifying the soul**, and **failure in neglecting it**.

In a world that constantly promotes the "I", Islam calls us to rise beyond ourselves. Those who live for their egos remain trapped in desire and discontent. But those who live for Allah find **peace, direction, and dignity**. Strong and lasting communities are not built by people who only take, but by those who **discipline their nafs** and learn to give.

May Allah make us among His servants who purify their souls, do not forget themselves, and understand that the greatest jihād is not fought outside us but within us.

Chapter 16 – Contentment (Qanā‘ah)

The Wealth of a Satisfied Heart

16.1 Observation

Contentment is the key to inner peace yet one of the rarest virtues in our age. We witness a striking phenomenon in many communities today: people who, objectively, lack nothing they have a roof over their heads, daily meals, safety yet constantly reach out to others for help, money, or favors.

Sometimes it’s relatives in countries like **Pakistan, Algeria, or Morocco** who repeatedly ask their family members in **Europe for money, gifts, or sadaqah**, often without considering the circumstances of those living abroad. And the most painful part: if you bring them nothing, you hear nothing from them again. The relationship was not built on love or kinship, but on **expectation**. That is not poverty that is **ingratitude**. But even in the West, this illness thrives. One trip is no longer enough. One car is not enough. One compliment is not enough. We want **more money, more possessions, more affection, more recognition, more likes, more attention** yet we are never satisfied. Our hearts are full of desires but empty of gratitude.

Even in our work with **Gardens of the Sincere**, we witness this repeatedly. Sometimes we come to **gift a water well, and before the project is even completed**, we already hear requests for more for money, for a mosque, for food parcels. Gratitude is scarce. Appreciation for what was already done is absent. At times, we donate purely out of mercy, only to hear the response: “Is that all?”

And then you remember that one woman in Chad who received a single sack of rice and she wept out of gratitude. She had nothing, yet her heart was full. Others have everything, yet their souls remain hungry.

Thus, **contentment is not an economic condition; it is a spiritual state**. The soul will never be satisfied until it is filled with Allah. And the heart that finds sufficiency in Allah will never feel deprived.

16.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat At-Tawbah (9:59)

وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَضُوا مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ سَيُؤْتِينَا اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَرَسُولُهُ إِنَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ رَاغِبُونَ

“If only they had been content with what Allah and His Messenger gave them and said, ‘Allah is sufficient for us. Allah and His Messenger will grant us of His bounty. Truly, to Allah we turn our hopes.’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that this verse was revealed about people who expressed discontent with material distribution. He describes ḥasbunallāh as a form of **spiritual equilibrium** recognizing Allah as sufficient.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that contentment (riḍā) is not passive resignation, but an **active state of trust** believing that Allah knows better than you what is good for you.

- **Ar-Rāzī** calls this verse a lesson in living free from bitterness or envy. Whoever is content with what Allah provides, lives without resentment and without arrogance.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Ṭā-Hā (20:131)

وَلَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ

“And do not extend your eyes toward what we have given some of them as the splendor of worldly life that we may test them through it.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse addresses the Prophet ﷺ directly, **reminding him not to be impressed or influenced by the material luxury of the disbelievers.** True worth lies in the Hereafter.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** warns that longing for worldly adornment becomes dangerous once it enters the heart. This verse teaches **self-restraint**, even in the face of visible wealth or success.
- **Ar-Rāzī** describes the “bloom of worldly life” (zahrāt al-ḥayāh ad-dunyā) as a **temporary glitter** that deceives the soul. Contentment (qanā‘ah) is the shield against this trial (fitnah).

Verse 3 – Sūrat Ash-Shūrā (42:27)

وَلَوْ بَسَطَ اللَّهُ الرِّزْقَ لِعِبَادِهِ لَبَغَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ

“If Allah were to expand provision for His servants, they would surely transgress throughout the earth.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that **Allah restricts or expands sustenance according to His wisdom**, not arbitrarily. Excess wealth often leads to arrogance and corruption.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that this verse is a **form of divine protection**: sometimes having less is better for your faith. Allah knows how much provision each soul can bear without spiritual harm.
- **Ar-Rāzī** concludes that true wealth lies not in what one possesses, but in **how one deals with it.** Contentment is wealth without possession.

16.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«لَيْسَ الْغِنَىٰ عَنْ كَثْرَةِ الْعَرَضِ، وَلَكِنَّ الْغِنَىٰ عَنِ النَّفْسِ»

“True wealth is not measured by the abundance of possessions, but by the richness of the soul.”
(Bukhārī and Muslim)

Reflection: Real wealth does not lie in your bank account, your house, your car, or your social status it lies in your soul. A heart that is content is a heart that knows peace. You can be materially poor yet live like a king if your soul is grateful; and you can be materially rich yet live in misery if your heart is never satisfied.

16.4 Reflective Layer

Contentment (qanā'ah) is not something we are born with; it is a virtue that must be **trained and cultivated**. In a society that constantly demands more; more money, more possessions, more success, more recognition; it seems that enough is never enough. Yet true tranquility lies in the heart that can sincerely say: **“Allah is sufficient for us.”**

The Qur'anic warning, “Do not extend your eyes toward what we have given some of them as the splendor of worldly life” (20:131), is more relevant today than ever before. In the age of **social media**, the soul is bombarded daily by images of other people's “blossoming worldly life” luxury, travel, cars, attention, and endless approval. The heart becomes **filled with desire but emptied of gratitude**. **The fitnah of constant comparison is deadly to the soul.**

Here lies a crucial task for **education and parenting**. Parents who constantly complain or envy others **plant seeds of discontent** in their children. But parents who show gratitude and speak with satisfaction about what Allah has given them raise children with a different worldview. Gratitude is not taught in theory it is modeled through everyday behavior.

It also requires **boundaries**. A child who receives everything he asks for will never learn contentment. Sometimes, a thoughtful “no” is an act of love; it trains the soul to find peace in what already exists. Equally important is showing children that there are always people who have less. A child who learns to look downward with empathy rather than upward with envy will find peace much sooner.

Contentment, therefore, is not an economic matter but a spiritual condition. A heart that finds Allah sufficient will never experience scarcity. An upbringing that teaches contentment grants a form of wealth no material possession can ever match.

16.5 Conclusion

Contentment is not about what you possess, but how your heart perceives what you possess. The Qur'an teaches that those who are dazzled by the bloom of worldly life will always remain hungry, while those who find sufficiency in Allah will discover **inner richness, even in poverty**. In a world driven by consumption, comparison, and constant stimulation, contentment is the **forgotten key to peace**. It is a quality we must re-learn for ourselves and embody for our children. **Gratitude nourishes contentment, contentment nourishes peace, and peace opens the path to nearness to Allah.**

True wealth is not in accumulating more, but in the heart that says: “Ḥasbunallāh – Allah is enough for us.”

- وَقَلِيلٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِيَ الشَّاكِرُونَ

“And few of My servants are truly grateful.”
(Sūrat Saba’, 34:13)

Be among those few and you will live richer than the billionaires of this world.

Chapter 17 – Patience (Ṣabr) & Gratitude (Shukr)

Perseverance in Times of Trial and Gratitude in Times of Ease

17.1 Observation

Life constantly shifts between **hardship and ease**. No one escapes loss, grief, illness, or poverty. At the same time, no one lives without blessings: health, family, food, and safety. Yet despite this natural balance in existence, people often respond **unevenly**.

In hardship, **anger, complaint, and even blame toward Allah prevail**. In prosperity, **arrogance, indifference, or forgetfulness** take over. The heart loses its balance. We plead for Allah’s mercy, yet we cannot bear trials. We long for rizq, yet forget the Giver of provision. We thank Allah when something great happens, but take for granted the daily blessings oxygen, water, sleep, sunlight.

Islam teaches that a strong heart rests on two foundations: **Ṣabr (patience) in hardship, Shukr (gratitude) in ease**; both are signs of **true imān (faith)**. Whoever loses ṣabr becomes bitter; whoever forgets shukr becomes arrogant. But whoever masters both finds balance and lives in peace, no matter what Allah has decreed for him.

17.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Al-Baqarah (2:155–157)

وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِّنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِّنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ • الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمُ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ • أُولَئِكَ عَلَيْهِمْ صَلَوَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ وَرَحْمَةٌ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُهْتَدُونَ

“And we will certainly test you with something of fear, hunger, and loss of wealth, lives, and fruits. But give glad tidings to the patient those who, when calamity strikes them, say: Indeed, we belong to Allah, and indeed to Him we shall return.” It is they upon whom are blessings from their Lord and mercy, and it is they who are rightly guided.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that these verses are a direct psychological preparation for believers. Allah does not say “if you are tested,” but “We will surely test you” **trials are an essential part of life**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** highlights that ṣabr here is tied to three divine gifts: rahmah (mercy), ṣalawāt (divine blessings), and hidāyah (guidance).
- **Ar-Rāzī** stresses that true **imān** is revealed not in prosperity but in how one reacts to **loss**.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Ibrāhīm (14:7)

وَإِذ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِن شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ وَلَئِن كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ

“And (remember) when you’re Lord proclaimed: ‘If you are grateful, I will surely increase you; but if you are ungrateful, indeed, my punishment is severe.’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this divine promise of increase applies both **spiritually and materially**. **Shukr opens the doors of barakah in wealth**, health, peace, and even faith.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** reminds us that shukr is not merely saying “alhamdulillah.” It is expressed through **actions, obedience, and humility**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** underlines that ingratitude here is described as a **form of disbelief (kufr)**, not mere impoliteness. Gratitude is not optional it is a **divine duty**.

Verse 3 – Surat AZ-Zumar (39:10)

إِنَّمَا يُوفَى الصَّابِرُونَ أَجْرَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ

“Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without measure.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** calls this a **unique promise**: whereas other deeds have fixed rewards, ṣabr is so noble that its reward is **limitless**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that ṣabr manifests in three ways: Patience in **hardship**, Patience in **obedience** and Patience in **refraining from sin**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes that ṣabr is one of the **keys to success** in both religion and worldly life. No knowledge, worship, or marriage can succeed without it.

Verse 4 – Sūrat Al-Ma‘ārij (70:5)

فَاصْبِرْ صَبْرًا جَمِيلًا

“So be patient with a beautiful patience.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** interprets ṣabr jamīl as **patience without complaint or resentment, while** the heart remains connected to Allah. The Prophet ﷺ was commanded to respond to rejection with grace and composure.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** defines ṣabr jamīl as “tranquil acceptance of what Allah has decreed not **only silence of the tongue**, but peace within the heart.”
- **Ar-Rāzī** distinguishes between three levels of patience:
 1. **Patience with complaint** (like Prophet Ya‘qūb’s lament to Allah)
 2. **Patience with silent frustration**
 3. **Ṣabr jamīl** the highest form: no complaint, no bitterness, only surrender and trust.

This verse calls the believer to **spiritual maturity**. Not every trial requires action; some demand **beautiful patience** surrendering to Allah without resentment, without asking “Why me?”, without blaming oneself or others.

In our times, patience is often misunderstood as suffering silently. But ṣabr jamīl is much deeper. It means:

- Not passive endurance, but active submission
- Not suppression, but trust
- Not a mask of strength, but a heart that whispers: “My Lord sees me.”

This verse teaches that **the quality of our patience matters**. Every believer will be tested, but it is our **reaction** that determines our spiritual rank. As the early scholars (salaf) used to say:

“It is not the trial that honors you, but your response to it.”

17.3 Verse Reflection

Verse:

The Prophet ﷺ said:

عَجَبًا لِأَمْرِ الْمُؤْمِنِ، إِنَّ أَمْرَهُ كُلَّهُ لَهُ خَيْرٌ... إِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ سَرَاءٌ شَكَرَ، فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ، وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ ضَرَاءٌ صَبَرَ، فَكَانَ خَيْرًا لَهُ.”

“How amazing is the affair of the believer! Every situation he faces is good for him. If something good happens to him, he is grateful and that is good for him. If something bad happens to him, he is patient and that is good for him.”
(Muslim)

Reflection: For the believer, **every situation is a form of gain**. When he receives, he does so with gratitude (shukr). When he loses, he endures with patience (ṣabr). He perceives the Hand of Allah in both prosperity and adversity. Thus, ṣabr is not merely enduring pain; it is recognizing Allah’s wisdom within the trial. And shukr is not limited to great blessings; it is found in the small, the daily, the easily overlooked.

17.4 Reflective Layer

The life of a believer is not about avoiding hardship or chasing prosperity, but about **finding balance between ṣabr and shukr**. They are like the **two wings of one heart**. Whoever thanks only in ease will crumble in hardship. Whoever is patient in difficulty but forgets gratitude in abundance will harden in arrogance. But whoever embraces both will find peace regardless of what Allah decrees.

Ṣabr jamīl (beautiful patience) teaches us that patience is not clenched silence or forced endurance; it is **inner serenity** a heart that rests in Allah’s decree and whispers: “My Lord sees me.” This is what distinguishes the believer from the crowd: where others complain or despair, he finds strength in surrender.

Shukr, on the other hand, is more than a word it is a **way of life**. True gratitude means seeing oxygen, water, sleep, and sunlight as blessings equal to wealth and health. It means not waiting for extraordinary events to say alḥamdulillāh, but recognizing the constant stream of blessings already flowing each day. Those who train themselves in this perspective live lighter, freer, and closer to Allah.

For **education and upbringing**, this means teaching children not to complain only when they lose, nor to celebrate only when they win, but to understand that Allah is present in every circumstance. **A child who learns ṣabr when disappointed and shukr when gifted grows up with a heart that depends not on circumstances, but on Allah.**

The Prophet ﷺ said: “How amazing is the affair of the believer, for everything in his condition is good.” This is the essence of spiritual education: the believer learns that nothing happens in vain. In prosperity, he sees an opportunity for gratitude; in hardship, a chance for growth. **Thus every situation becomes a step closer to Allah for He is present in the midst of it all.**

17.5 Conclusion

Ṣabr and shukr are the two pillars upon which the believer’s heart rests. One protects him from bitterness during hardship; the other guards him against arrogance during ease. Together, they create an inner balance independent of worldly conditions rooted entirely in Allah.

The believer learns that his worth does not lie in what he gains or loses, but in **how he responds.** Every circumstance becomes an opportunity to draw nearer to his Lord. **Whoever unites ṣabr and shukr lives with tranquility in the heart and strength in faith finding in every trial and every blessing a pathway to divine closeness?**

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ

“Indeed, in this are signs for every steadfast and grateful soul.”
(*Sūrat Ibrāhīm, 14:5*)

Chapter 18 – Ikhlaṣ – Sincerity for Allah Alone

18.1 Observation

We live in an age where everything must be seen likes, views, recognition, and applause. Even in religious spaces, people perform, post, and speak but the question remains: **for whom? Is it truly for Allah**, or for status, influence, and reputation?

Even in acts of devotion and repentance such as ‘Umrah, this tension is visible. While ṭawāf is meant to embody remembrance and humility, the focus sometimes shifts toward taking photos and crafting perfect social media posts. Young people then become confused: is this worship, or self-promotion? Is this connection with Allah, or personal branding?

The same question arises in humanitarian work, religious campaigns, and online da‘wah. The heart must constantly ask itself: **for whom am I really doing this?** For Allah, or for the image others have of me?

The Qur’an teaches that **no deed is accepted except the one done with pure sincerity (ikhlaṣ)**. That is why the Prophet ﷺ began his message with the timeless warning: “Indeed, actions are only judged by their intentions...” Today, this **Verse** is more relevant than ever.

At Gardens of the Sincere, we believe that our growth, protection, and strength all stem from one core word: **ikhlaṣ**. Without sincerity, every action loses its value. We seek no PR without purity, no project without worship, and no team without clean intention. For Allah does not look at numbers, campaigns, or results He looks at the hearts behind them.

18.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Az-Zumar (39:2)

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ

“Indeed, we have sent down to you the Book in truth; so worship Allah, making the religion purely sincere for him alone.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse summarizes the essence of prophethood: **not mere worship, but pure worship** without ulterior motives, audiences, or riyā’ (showing off).
- **Al-Qurṭubī** says that ikhlaṣ is a condition for acceptance: whoever worships Allah while also seeking something else (attention, prestige) **commits a subtle form of shirk within intention**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights that mukhliṣan here means: free from pride, politics, or self glorification only then does religion become truly religion.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Al-Bayyinah (98:5)

وَمَا أُمِرُوا إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ الدِّينَ

“And they were not commanded except to worship Allah, being sincere to Him in religion.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that ikhlāṣ applies not only in prayer but in all actions work, da‘wah, charity everything must return to Allah.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** calls this verse a repetition of the universal message shared by all prophets: pure devotion is the foundation of every revelation.
- **Ar-Rāzī** points out that mukhlisīn means cutting off all other intentions even subtle motives such as recognition or competing with others.

18.3 Verse Reflection

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“إن الله لا يقبل من العمل إلا ما كان له خالصًا وابتغى به وجهه”

“Indeed, Allah accepts no deeds except those done purely for Him, seeking His Face.”
(*An-Nasā’i – Ṣaḥīḥ*)

Reflection: This Verse is clear: even the greatest deed building a school, feeding a family is rejected if the intention is not sincere. Conversely, the smallest act a smile, a helping hand becomes immense if done with a pure heart. Ikhlāṣ is not a detail; it is the **key to acceptance**. Without it, every effort will be lost on the Day of Judgment.

18.4 Reflective Layer

Ikhlāṣ is the oxygen of worship. Without it, every deed suffocates no matter how impressive it appears. Building a mosque, establishing a school, or feeding thousands carries no meaning if the intention is tainted. Yet a small deed, a smile, a sip of water offered, a kind word becomes vast in worth when the heart is sincere.

In our time, the struggle for ikhlāṣ has become more intense. **The world demands visibility; Allah demands sincerity.** Likes, views, and metrics measure success in the eyes of people but Allah measures hearts. The danger of riyā’ (showing off) has never been subtler. It can hide within the noblest acts: a donation, a lecture, a da‘wah video even a pilgrimage can turn into a branding moment if the focus shifts from Allah to the camera.

Spiritual education therefore means teaching young people and communities to keep recalibrating their compass with the question: “For whom am I doing this?”

This simple question exposes the soul. The answer determines whether a deed carries weight before Allah or vanishes like dust. Even in organizations and projects, this principle is vital.

A humanitarian campaign may reach thousands, but without ikhlāṣ, it is mere publicity. A religious speech may receive applause, but without ikhlāṣ, it is just noise. Allah does not look at how much He looks at why.

The Prophet ﷺ made it crystal clear:

“Allah accepts no deed except that which is purely for Him, seeking His Face.” This is not a minor condition; it is the **essence of faith**. Whoever neglects his intention loses everything. Whoever purifies it gains everything, even with little.

Thus, ikhlāṣ is not a concept to learn once but a **lifelong discipline**. It guards our worship, opens the doors of acceptance, and brings barakah into our work. Those who cultivate it will find Allah protecting their efforts, blessing their projects, and purifying their names even without likes, fame, or recognition.

18.5 Conclusion

Ikhlāṣ is the core that gives every deed its weight before Allah. Without it, even the greatest effort becomes worthless; with it, the smallest act shines with eternal value. In a world that prizes visibility over sincerity, the battle over intention has become one of the believer’s greatest challenges. For youth, parents, and communities alike, the success of worship, projects, and institutions is not measured by numbers or recognition, but by **the degree to which they are done purely for Allah**. Only then can there be barakah, protection, and lasting impact.

Whoever guards his intention preserves his faith. Whoever mixes it with pride, status, or reputation loses its essence. The key to acceptance is ikhlāṣ the hidden secret between the servant and his Lord.

At **Gardens of the Sincere**, we choose **intention before image, purity before publicity, Allah before all**. And alḥamdulillāh that has been, and will remain, our source of growth.

مَنْ كَانَ يُرِيدُ وَجْهَ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ الَّذِي يُزَكِّيهِ

“Whoever seeks the Face of Allah it is He who purifies him.”

May Allah make us among the mukhlisīn sincere in our worship, our work, our words, and our purpose. **Āmīn.**

Chapter 19 – Truthfulness (Şidq) Living in Line with Your Words

19.1 Observation

In an age of appearances and masks, **şidq inner truthfulness has become rare, yet it remains essential for a meaningful life.** It means that the **heart, tongue, and actions** are in harmony: What you say, you mean. What you promise, you fulfill. What you feel, you live by.

The name Gardens of the Sincere does not only refer to **ikhlaş (sincerity) toward Allah**, but also to **şidq (truthfulness) toward one another.** Truthfulness must be the foundation of every collaboration, relationship, and organization. It means honesty in teamwork, openness in communication, transparency in finances and execution and surrounding yourself with people who wear no masks.

Reality, however, teaches us that this is far from easy. In Pakistan, we discovered that someone had not carried out the work honestly and had hidden personal luxury expenses. In Gaza, a team member seemed loyal, but only for the sake of accessing funds. Such experiences cut deep yet they also make one realize how essential şidq is as a foundation.

Alḥamdulillāh, by holding firmly to truthfulness, Allah ultimately sent us the right people. Truthfulness attracts the truthful. It is a spiritual law: Whoever lives with honesty will be surrounded by honest souls; whoever lives behind masks will find himself surrounded by masks.

19.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Al-Aḥzāb (33:23)

مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ رِجَالٌ صَدَقُوا مَا عَاهَدُوا اللَّهَ عَلَيْهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ قَضَىٰ نَحْبَهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ يَنْتَظِرُ وَمَا بَدَّلُوا تَبْدِيلًا

“Among the believers are men who have been true to the covenant they made with Allah. Some of them have fulfilled their vow (by death), and others await (its fulfillment); but they have never changed in their commitment.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse is a tribute to those who remained loyal to **their covenant with Allah not merely in words, but with their lives.** Whether they died as martyrs or continued steadfastly in patience, their truthfulness lies in **perseverance despite hardship, fear, or pressure.**
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that the phrase “they did not change”(mā baddalū tabdilā) refers to **consistency in both belief and conduct:** they stayed firm over time, **unwavering in loyalty to Allah.**
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights the strength of the word şadaqū **they not only made a promise but proved it through actions and steadfastness.** This stands in direct contrast to the hypocrite, who makes promises but abandons them when tested.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Maryam (19:54–55)

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ ۚ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا

“And mention in the Book (the story of) Ishmael. Indeed, he was true to his promise, and he was a messenger and a prophet.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that *ṣidq al-wa‘d* (truthfulness in promises) applies even in the smallest matters. It is narrated that *Ismā‘īl* once waited for days at a meeting place, **showing his unwavering integrity even in everyday affairs.**
- **Al-Qurṭubī** observes that Allah praises *Ismā‘īl* first for his **truthfulness before mentioning his prophethood emphasizing that fulfilling promises** is among the highest signs of sincerity and prophetic character.
- **Ar-Rāzī** connects this quality to spiritual leadership: a person who is true to **his word will also be true to his mission**, earning both divine trust and the trust of people.

19.3 Verse Reflection

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“عليكم بالصدق، فإن الصدق يهدي إلى البر، وإن البر يهدي إلى الجنة.”

“Hold firmly to truthfulness, for truthfulness leads to righteousness, and righteousness leads to Paradise.”
(*Bukhārī and Muslim*)

Reflection: A path of *ṣidq* truthfulness leads step by step toward Paradise. Not through grand statements, but through **consistency, reliability, and transparency.** Every moment of honesty brings the heart closer to Allah, while every lie, even a subtle one, distances it from His light.

. 19.4 Reflective Layer

Ṣidq (truthfulness) is more than honesty in words it is **living in coherence.** Your heart believes, your tongue confirms, and your body acts in accordance. It is a state in which a person **does not deceive himself, does not mislead others, and does not treat Allah as an afterthought.** *Ṣidq* is the bridge between what you say and who you truly are.

We live today in an age where **image outweighs inner reality.** Many people say beautiful things, post religious quotes, speak of ethics yet their actions tell another story. That is not *ṣidq*, that is a façade.

In the upbringing of our children, *ṣidq* is vital. When a child sees his father say, **“We will pray together later,” but he doesn’t, the child doesn’t just learn neglect he learns to lie.** When we preach truth in the mosque, but gossip, complain, or misuse funds behind the scenes, we destroy **the moral foundation of an entire generation.**

In organizations, leadership, cooperation, and donation management, ṣidq must be the compass. It means **transparency in budgets, honesty when mistakes are made, and no false promises** to the poor or to donors. At Gardens of the Sincere, this has become our guiding principle. If someone raises large funds but lacks truthfulness, we part ways as we did in Pakistan and Gaza.

Because ṣidq has a **fragrance**. It can be felt in a person's eyes, voice, presence, and conduct. It leaves a spiritual imprint stronger than a thousand speeches.

Ṣidq also means being yourself always. Whether at home or abroad, in company or alone, as a leader or a student, you carry **one face**, not two masks.

I remember a moment in **Burkina Faso**, where I gave a lecture to university students. I was dressed simply a T-shirt and trousers, no imam's robe. The driver's eyes betrayed his judgment; in his view, an imam should wear a long qamīs, a cap, and carry himself above others. But I smiled, played with the children, acted naturally... **until I began to speak**. Then everything changed. The message touched him not despite my simplicity, but because of its **sincerity**.

That is ṣidq: **being yourself everywhere**. No performance, no role, no masquerade. Islam does not demand appearances; it demands authenticity. And it is precisely this that touches hearts.

I have witnessed this in many places: Those who dare to be themselves with flaws, but without lies **open doors to the hearts** of others.

19.5 Conclusion

Ṣidq is the quality that defined **Ibrāhīm (‘alayhi as-salām)** and that Allah commanded for the followers of **Muḥammad ﷺ**. It is a spiritual virtue that unites **strength and peace strength**, because you no longer need to manipulate or hide behind masks; **peace**, because you no longer have to maintain two versions of yourself.

Allah praises the people of truth: “**Among the believers are men who were true to the covenant they made with Allah...**” (Q. 33:23). Truthfulness is not a luxury; it is a foundation. Without ṣidq, every bridge collapses, every organization loses its soul, and even the greatest act of charity turns to dust. **Allah does not accept the deeds of liars, even if His Name is written on their banners.**

Our aim is to build **Gardens of the Sincere** gardens of honesty, paradisaal spaces where no hypocrisy exists, where faces shine with light and hearts remain pure.

May Allah make us among those who **speak the truth, live the truth, and die upon truthfulness**. As He taught us to pray:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ اَدْخِلْنِيْ مُدْخَلَ صِدْقٍ وَّاَخْرِجْنِيْ مُخْرَجَ صِدْقٍ

“And say: My Lord, cause me to enter with a truthful entry, and cause me to exit with a truthful exit.”
(*Sūrat Al-Isrā’*, 17:80)

Chapter 20 – Steadfastness Remaining on Allah’s Path despite Everything

20.1 Observation

We see many people with **good intentions**, noble resolutions, and strong spiritual moments yet they eventually drift away. They begin to pray, then stop again. They distance themselves from sin, only to return. They open the Qur’an with enthusiasm, but after a few weeks, the rhythm fades.

Why does this happen? Because what is **often missing is steadfastness** a consistent structure, a daily renewal of the soul, and a conscious struggle against the nafs (ego) and shahawāt (desires). Within each of us lives something that constantly pulls us downward. The Qur’an points to this in Sūrat At-Taghābun: desires are an inner disease that must be resisted every single day.

We often protect ourselves from external enemies or difficult circumstances, yet the hardest battle is against our own laziness, comfort-seeking, and tendency toward sin. True progress is only possible with perseverance: by holding firmly to prayer, continuing to read the Qur’an, guarding one’s behavior, admitting mistakes, and refusing to give up even after setbacks.

This applies not only to spiritual life but to everything: work, marriage, projects, da‘wah, and leadership. Success is not for those who begin strong, but for those who **continue despite obstacles**. **Steadfastness** is the bridge between **intention and result**.

20.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Al ‘Imrān (3:200)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

“O you who believe! Be patient, outdo others in patience, remain steadfastly connected, and be mindful of Allah so that you may succeed.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** explains that this verse calls **not to passive patience**, but to an **active state of endurance, alertness, and spiritual solidarity** with others who share the same goal.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** highlights *rābiṭū* to stay spiritually tied to a greater purpose, not merely to the immediate outcome.
- **Ar-Rāzī** identifies four progressive steps to success. 1.) **Self-control** (*ṣbirū*) 2.) **Encouraging others** to persevere (*ṣābirū*) 3.) **Remaining firm as a group** (*rābiṭū*) 4.) **Grounding it all in taqwā**, which ultimately leads to *falāḥ* (true success).

Verse 2 – Sūrat At-Taghābun (64:15–16)

إِنَّمَا أَمْوَالُكُمْ وَأَوْلَادُكُمْ فِتْنَةٌ وَاللَّهُ عِنْدَهُ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ
...فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ مَا اسْتَطَعْتُمْ وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَطِيعُوا وَأَنْفِقُوا خَيْرًا لِّأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَمَنْ يُوقِ شُحَّ نَفْسِهِ فَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ

“Your wealth and your children are only a trial, whereas with Allah lies a tremendous reward. So fear Allah as much as you can, listen, obey, and spend (in charity) that is best for yourselves. And whoever is protected from the greed of his soul it is they who will prosper.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes “mā istaṭa‘tum” “**as much as you can**”. Even limited means are no excuse to quit. He describes this verse as **a summary of spiritual responsibility**: Allah does **not burden beyond capacity**, but He does expect effort and perseverance within our means. This demands awareness and daily discipline, not complacency.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** reminds us that **the greatest distractions from steadfastness often come from within** family, possessions, and worldly attachments. He links the end of the verse “whoever is protected from the greed of his soul” to true **victory** over the nafs. The real conqueror is not the one who defeats others, but the one who conquers his own inner **greed, laziness, and passivity**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** adds that only those who daily recognize and manage these trials **truly develop taqwā** and **avoid being deceived by the temporary**. The command “as much as you can” is dynamic: it pushes you to stretch your limits while staying honest with yourself. Taqwā demands **inner effort, not outward perfection**.

This verse teaches us that **every day is a battle against our limitations** our energy, wealth, and ego. Those who wait until they are “perfectly ready” before acting **miss the essence** of this verse. **Allah does not ask for perfection. He asks for sincere, daily effort according to your capacity.**

20.3 Verse Reflection

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«أحب الأعمال إلى الله أدومها وإن قل»

“The most beloved deeds to Allah are those that are done consistently, even if they are small.”
(Bukhārī and Muslim)

Reflection: Allah does not look at the intensity of an act, but at its **consistency**.

- Reading a little Qur’an every day is better than reading for hours once and then abandoning it.
- Giving a few euros each week is more beloved than a single large donation with no follow-up.

Consistency shows **sincerity** it means you are committed, connected, and unwilling to let go of your covenant with Allah.

20.4 Reflective Layer

Steadfastness (thabāt) is the bridge between intention and result. Many people have the most beautiful intentions, but lose their way because they never build a daily rhythm. The Qur'an teaches that faith is not merely an inner conviction; it is a **continuous practice**: listening, obeying, giving, exercising patience, falling and rising again.

The Prophet ﷺ reminded us that Allah values persistence over size: “The most beloved deeds to **Allah are those done consistently, even if they are small.**” A few verses of Qur'an daily outweigh hours of sporadic zeal. A small but regular act of charity carries more divine weight than a grand one-time gesture.

In education, this principle is vital. Children must learn that success does not come on the first day; it requires daily effort: in prayer, in study, in character. Whoever learns to persevere despite **obstacles develops a resilient heart.** Those who don't, become trapped in the cycle of “start with passion, stop with fatigue.”

Spiritually, steadfastness is the weapon against our greatest enemies: the **nafs** (ego) and **shahawāt** (desires). Our impulses, procrastination, and comfort-seeking nature drag us down daily. That is why the Qur'an teaches that the greatest victory is not over others but over oneself. **The true mujāhid is the one who conquers his own ego.**

Therefore, **spiritual renewal is essential.** Prayer, Qur'an, dhikr, and good deeds are not optional extras they are the daily fuel of the soul. Without this renewal, a person falls back into laziness, status-seeking, and time-wasting. But those who remain steadfast find direction even when the road is heavy.

Thabāt is not about strength for a single day it is about loyalty across many days. That is the secret of success in religion, in work, in relationships, and in leadership.

20.5 Conclusion

The path to Allah is not a straight, calm road. It is rough, sometimes dark, and filled with distractions but it is the only road that truly leads somewhere. That is why **steadfastness (thabāt) is indispensable.**

Steadfastness means: **You keep praying even when focus fades.** You keep giving even when you're tired. You keep hoping even after disappointment. **You keep building even when no one is watching.** Allah says: “**And be patient, for Allah does not allow the reward of those who do good to be lost.**” (Sūrat Hūd, 11:115)

Without thabāt, there is no perseverance. Without ṣabr, there is no victory. Without istiḳāmah (uprightness), there is no closeness to Allah. Faith does not require perfection it requires perseverance.

May Allah make us among those who **do not start and quit**, but who persist until the end as He says: **“Indeed, those who say, ‘Our Lord is Allah,’ and then remain steadfast upon them will descend the angels (with peace).”**(Sūrat Fuṣṣilat, 41:30)

Chapter 21 – Qawl Ṣadīd The Power of Truthful Speech

21.1 Observation

We live in a world overflowing with **words that carry no weight**. People speak endlessly on the streets, in the media, on social platforms yet little of what is said is **true, sincere, or meaningful**. Gossip, sarcasm, half-truths, performative language, and broken promises corrode our relationships.

Even among Muslims, it has become easy to create **false impressions**, exaggerate, stay silent when we should speak, or speak when silence would be wiser.

In online da‘wah and Islamic spaces, beautiful words are often used as **wrapping paper** yet the intention, substance, and consistency are missing.

But Islam teaches that **speech is an amānah (trust)**. To speak is an act of worship or a sin. One word can save or destroy a marriage. One sentence can bring someone to Paradise or to Hell.

The Qur’an both **warns and guides** us about this power. And the most direct verse concerning **the importance of truthful and correct speech** is found in Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33:70).

21.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33:70–71)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَقُولُوا قَوْلًا سَدِيدًا
يُصْلِحْ لَكُمْ أَعْمَالَكُمْ وَيَغْفِرْ لَكُمْ ذُنُوبَكُمْ ۗ وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ فَقَدْ فَازَ فَوْزًا عَظِيمًا

“O you who believe! Be mindful of Allah and speak words that are straight and truthful. He will rectify your deeds for you and forgive your sins. And whoever obeys Allah and His Messenger has indeed achieved a great triumph.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr**: defines qawl ṣadīd as “**speech that is correct in form, sincere in intention, and beneficial in effect.**” He stresses that taqwā combined with disciplined speech leads to **inner purification and social harmony**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī**: says qawl ṣadīd includes every statement that is **truthful, just, and appropriate**. It applies especially in giving advice, making judgments, and da‘wah as long as one speaks with softness and sincerity.
- **Ar-Rāzī**: highlights **the connection between words and deeds. A truthful word leads to ṣalāḥ al-‘amal (rectification of actions) and forgiveness**. Evil words, however, are often the beginning of evil deeds and the corruption of the heart.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Qāf (50:18)

مَا يَلْفُظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ

“Not a word does he utter but that there is an observer [angel] ready to record it.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** views this verse as a warning against careless speech. Every utterance large or small is recorded. The tongue, therefore, becomes a **moral organ**, even before the hands and feet.
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** notes that **even sighs and whispers are documented**, except for truly meaningless sounds. This underlines the importance of **intention (niyyah)** in speech.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** connects this verse to the Hereafter our words will serve as evidence for or against us on the Day of Judgment. Whoever believes this will automatically restrain his tongue.

Verse 3 – Sūrat al-Furqān (25:63)

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا

“And the servants of the Most Merciful are those who walk upon the earth humbly, and when the ignorant address them, they respond with words of peace.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr:** emphasizes that this is not passive tolerance but an active moral choice refusing to descend to the level of ignorance. Here salaam means, **“I choose peace over conflict.”**
- **Al-Qurṭubī:** says avoiding argument with the ignorant is a mark of **moral elevation and self-control**. Even if one is right in content, one may lose in character by responding with anger or pride.
- **Ar-Rāzī:** links this **behavior to the essence of being true servants of ar-Raḥmān**. Only those who have mastered their souls can respond this way it reflects **spiritual strength**, not weakness.

21.3 Verse Reflection

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“من كان يؤمن بالله واليوم الآخر فليقل خيرا أو ليصمت”

“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent.”

(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī & Muslim)

In another narration, a man asked the Prophet ﷺ: “What must I do to be saved?” He ﷺ replied: **“Control your tongue.”**

The tongue is a key to Paradise or to destruction.

21.4 Reflective Layer

In Islam, **speech is never just sound**. Every word we utter is **counted, weighed, and recorded**. The Qur'an teaches that speech is a responsibility a form of worship or a source of sin. To speak properly requires: **Taqwā before the tongue** awareness of Allah before speaking. **Ṣidq on the tongue** truthfulness in what we say. **Ḥikmah during the tongue** wisdom in how we say it. **Ṣabr after the tongue** patience when our words are not immediately understood or accepted.

This responsibility becomes most real **within our own homes**. In our interactions with our spouses and children, emotions can rise yet precisely then the Qur'anic principle of qawl ṣadīd must guide us: to speak pure and upright words. That means: **Speaking without shouting**. Correcting without insulting. Responding without sarcasm. Communicating with firmness, calmness, and honesty.

Moreover, when the other person becomes angry, ignorant, or raises their voice, the Qur'an reminds us of the example of the servants of ar-Raḥmān: "They say: Salaam." They choose peace over conflict; they step back from argument and refuse to descend to the level of ignorance.

Education begins with **example**. Our children learn not only from what we teach, but from what they **hear us say** and **see us do**. If our own speech carries peace, truth, and dignity, our children will grow up speaking the same language of sincerity. The tongue truly is a **key to Paradise or to destruction, and every day we decide in which direction we turn it**.

21.5 Conclusion

Speech is an amānah (trust). It can heal or destroy a marriage, comfort or wound a heart, build or break a community. The Qur'an and Sunnah show that the **tongue is often more decisive than the hand**: where actions reach a small circle, words travel far leaving traces that can shape generations.

That is why Allah calls the believers to speak qawl ṣadīd words that are correct, sincere, and just. This is not a matter of eloquence or rhetoric, but of: **Taqwā before speaking, Ṣidq in speaking, Ḥikmah while speaking, and Ṣabr after speaking**. A believer does not measure his words by how they impress people, but by how they weigh before Allah.

In the age of social media, marketing, and public opinion, this lesson is more urgent than ever. Countless words circulate without weight gossip, sarcasm, broken promises, false impressions. Yet Allah reminds us: "Not a word is uttered except that there is a watcher ready to record it." (Sūrat Qāf, 50:18) Every word will return to us on the Day of Judgment as evidence **for us or against us**.

This responsibility begins in the smallest spaces **our homes**. In our relationships with our spouses and children, where emotions run high, the value of qawl ṣadīd becomes visible. Honest, calm, and respectful speech builds **trust and tranquility**; angry or hurtful words destroy relationships and scar hearts. Our children will speak as they hear us speak. **Whoever wants his children to speak with truth and wisdom must embody it first**.

Thus, speech is not merely a tool of communication it is a **spiritual mirror**. Pure words lead to pure actions; pure actions lead to pure hearts. And whoever speaks in this way receives the promise Allah gave in the Qur'an: "He will rectify your deeds for you, forgive your sins, and grant you a great victory." (Sūrat al-Aḥzāb, 33:71)

The tongue is a key to Paradise or to destruction. Whoever guards his tongue, guards his heart and whoever guards his heart, guards his destiny.

Chapter 22 – Good Character – The True Strength of a Believer

22.1 Observation

Sometimes, you don't need to speak. **Your behavior speaks volumes.** Your attitude, your tone, the way you treat people that is often the real invitation to Islam. Words may convince the mind, but behavior moves the heart.

We all know people who pray, fast, and perform ḥajj yet their behavior remains unchanged. As if the pillars of Islam were mere rituals, when in reality they were meant to **transform us**. Our spiritual practices are not isolated acts they are pedagogical. They are designed to shape character.

Prayer teaches steadfastness, purity, trust, discipline, and punctuality. Fasting trains patience, self-control, and empathy. Zakāt cultivates generosity and social responsibility. Ḥajj teaches humility, order, and detachment from comfort. Each pillar contributes to forming an ethical human being.

Each year, Muslims should ideally become **a better version of themselves** not only in knowledge, but in behavior. Yet if we are honest, this is often not visible. Many Muslims know the rules, yet lose their calm at the slightest disagreement. They recite Qur'an but gossip in the same breath. They claim to love the Prophet ﷺ, but their conduct bears little resemblance to his.

The most painful truth is this: **the improvement of behavior should first be visible to those who know us best** our parents, our spouses, our children. Within the walls of the home lies the true test of character. Not on the minbar, not online at home. It is easy to be kind to strangers. It takes true ethics to be kind to those who know your flaws.

We sometimes forget that the greatest impact does not come from knowledge or debate, but from conduct. **How many people have entered Islam because of the behavior of a Muslim?**

Consider the example of the Companion sent by the Prophet ﷺ to Yemen to invite people to Islam. According to the narrations, it was **Mu'adh ibn Jabal**, a young man of both knowledge and character. The Prophet ﷺ gave him clear instructions: call first to tawḥīd, and be gentle. Whole tribes eventually embraced Islam not through force or spectacle, but through the example of noble behavior.

This still happens today. I had a student at a secular (GO!) school who once asked the school board for permission to perform his prayer. Normally, that is not allowed on the premises. Yet they granted him permission. Why? Because he was an exemplary student the best grades, the best manners. Everyone admired him: teachers, classmates, the administration. His behavior had already opened their hearts before he even made his request.

Another example from my own teaching experience: **two of my students, Gurkan and Jamshed, embodied Islamic character in their secular school.** Not through preaching, but through their

ethics, courtesy, respect, and sincerity. Their classmate Francisco was so deeply moved by their behavior that he **decided to embrace Islam.** I was given the honor of taking his shahāda.

This event reminded me that **da‘wah through character is often more powerful than a thousand speeches.** A smile, courtesy, and respect for others are the true proofs of our Islam. Whoever claims to be Muslim yet behaves harshly, impatiently, or arrogantly, repels people. But whoever is humble and kind opens hearts.

I try to apply this same principle in the world of football an environment full of emotion, where many Muslims lose their self-control. In every match, I try to be a Muslim not only by name, but in attitude. I remember an important championship game when the coach told me, “Go ahead, provoke him and kick him when the referee isn’t looking.” I calmly replied, “I can’t. I’m Muslim. Everywhere.” And he understood.

These are the moments that truly remain. These are the actions that touch souls not through grand words, but through small acts of integrity. For Islam did not come merely to make people believe **it came to refine their character?** The Prophet ﷺ did not say, “I was sent to bring you much knowledge.” He said: **“I was only sent to perfect noble character.”**

22.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat al-Aḥzāb (33:21)

لَقَدْ كَانَ لَكُمْ فِي رَسُولِ اللَّهِ أُسْوَةٌ حَسَنَةٌ لِّمَن كَانَ يَرْجُوا اللَّهَ وَالْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَذَكَرَ اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا

“Indeed, in the Messenger of Allah you have an excellent example for whoever hopes in Allah and the Last Day and remembers Allah often.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse places the **Prophet ﷺ** as the **moral and spiritual model** for humanity. The phrase *uswa ḥasana* (beautiful example) does not only refer to his outward actions but to his reactions his patience, composure, and dealings with others, especially under pressure, in times of war, fear, and social tension.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that following the Prophet ﷺ is not limited to appearance or form, but must be reflected in **behavior, self-control, and human interaction.**
- **Ar-Rāzī** points out that this **role-model function** only benefits those whose hope is directed toward Allah and the Hereafter those willing to shape themselves according to a higher moral ideal.

This verse was revealed during one of the most difficult periods of the Prophet’s life **the Battle of the Confederates (al-Aḥzāb).** All of Arabia had united against him. Madinah was surrounded. Hunger and fear reigned. The hypocrites within the city spread doubt. On top of all that, the Prophet ﷺ carried responsibility for his family, his companions, and the entire Ummah.

In that suffocating context, Allah calls: **follow the Prophet ﷺ.** Not merely in his dress or outward sunnah as beautiful as that may be but in his **strength under unbearable pressure,** in how he stayed

calm, humiliated no one, and **acted with wisdom, gentleness, and dignity** when any other man would have collapsed or lost control.

This is the deeper meaning of the verse: the Prophet ﷺ as a **moral compass** in times of fear, tension, and difficulty. Yes, he is our leader in fiqh and Sunnah, but even **more importantly, he is our example in conduct when life is hard.**

Whoever wishes to follow him should not only imitate his sandals or clothing, but above all his **character** his patience, justice, humility, and respect even toward enemies, hypocrites, or difficult people within his own household.

That is the true sunnah. That is the example Allah presents to us.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Fuṣṣilat (41:34)

وَلَا تَسْتَوِى الْحَسَنَةُ وَلَا السَّيِّئَةُ ۚ ادْفَعْ بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي بَيْنَكَ وَبَيْنَهُ عَدُوٌّ كَأَنَّهُ وَلِيٌّ حَمِيمٌ

“Good and evil are not equal. Repel (evil) with what is better; then the one between you and him who was an enemy may become as though he were a devoted friend.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** calls this a **revolutionary verse**, stating that the highest moral response is not “just retaliation” but **noble reconciliation**. He describes it as a form of moral superiority lifting yourself above your lower instincts.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** stresses that this behavior is not weakness but the **pinnacle of moral excellence (akhlāq)**. He cites the Prophet ﷺ, who transformed his enemies not by humiliation but by mercy and gentleness.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes that such a response repaying evil with good can only come from a soul that has been disciplined. It is not a spontaneous reaction, but a mark of **spiritual maturity**.

This verse is golden for those who face provocation, gossip, or hostility. It teaches that **you don’t need to respond to every attack with another attack**. Sometimes, the real victory is not in striking back, but in rising above. The Prophet ﷺ said: **“I was not sent as one who curses, but as a mercy.”**

Verse 3 – Sūrat al-Ḥujurāt (49:11)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا يَسْخَرُ قَوْمٌ مِّنْ قَوْمٍ عَسَىٰ أَن يَكُونُوا خَيْرًا مِّنْهُمْ

“O you who believe, let not one group of people mock another; it may be that they are better than them...”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** says this verse is part of the **ethical backbone** of the Islamic society. Mockery, sarcasm, and contempt are diseases of the heart that destroy trust and community.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** observes that the command goes beyond mere prohibition of ridicule; it teaches that no one should be underestimated, because Allah values the **inner heart**, not outer appearance.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights the word ‘asā (“perhaps”) as a profound reminder: you do not know how Allah sees someone. The person you belittle **may be** far more beloved to Allah than you are.

This verse directly addresses those who think themselves superior because of appearance, lineage, religious knowledge, success, or status. Islam teaches **no superiority, only humility**. True spiritual growth is always accompanied by gentleness and respect.

22.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"إِنَّمَا بُعِثْتُ لِأَتَمِّمَ مَكَارِمَ الْأَخْلَاقِ"

"I was only sent to perfect noble character."
(Ahmad, al-Bukhari in al-Adab al-Mufrad)

Reflection: This Verse delivers a crystal-clear message: the goal of Islam is not merely prayer, fasting, or knowledge it is **character**. Conduct forms the very essence of prophetic education. If we wish to represent Islam, it begins with how we treat others with gentleness, patience, forgiveness, and sincerity. Whoever does not cultivate good character has missed the very core of the message.

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"مَا مِنْ شَيْءٍ أَثْقَلُ فِي الْمِيزَانِ مِنْ حُسْنِ الْخُلُقِ"

"Nothing is heavier on the scales on the Day of Resurrection than good character."
(Abū Dāwūd, al-Tirmidhī – ṣaḥīḥ)

Reflection: Our deeds will be **weighed**, not **counted**. This Verse reminds us that Allah does not look at the quantity of our actions, but their **quality**, and especially how we treat people. Whoever respects others, forgives, and remains humble carries something that weighs more with Allah than a hundred heartless prayers. Your behavior is your true provision for the Hereafter.

Verse 3

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"إِنَّ مِنْ خَيْرِكُمْ أَحْسَنَكُمْ أَخْلَاقًا"

"The best among you are those who have the best character."
(Al-Bukhārī, Muslim)

Reflection: The true hierarchy within the Ummah is not built upon knowledge, lineage, or status, but upon **character**. The one who is kind to his parents, trustworthy in his promises, fair in his judgment,

and gentle in his interactions that is the best Muslim in the eyes of Allah. That is the standard by which we must measure ourselves.

22.4 Reflective Layer

Good character is not a luxury it is the **foundation**. It is the first thing people notice about you, the last thing they remember, and perhaps the only glimpse of Islam they will ever see.

We live in an era where **Islamic identity is often reduced to outward symbols** or ritual acts. People argue about clothing, food, and minor fiqh details while sometimes being harsh, unjust, or impatient toward their parents, spouses, children, or colleagues.

Yet the Qur'an and Sunnah teach something else entirely: **the character of the Muslim is his true calling card**. The pillars of Islam were built to **shape the soul**. Every prayer should make you more humble. Every day of fasting should make you more patient. Every act of charity (zakāh) should make you more generous. If that doesn't happen, the act is hollow you may have the form, but not the essence.

The most beautiful example remains the Prophet ﷺ himself. Under extreme pressure during war, betrayal, hunger, and isolation he remained soft, wise, and just. He never lost his dignity or composure. Even at home, in poverty or disappointment, he remained noble. **That** is our example.

Today, every Muslim whether in class, at work, on the football field, or on social media carries Islam on their shoulders. Your **behavior is da'wah**. Your calmness is a message. Your justice is an invitation. Your forgiveness is a lesson. Your honesty can bring someone to Islam, just as it has done for countless converts before you.

Especially young people must realize this: your tongue is not your strongest weapon **your character is**. When you refuse to gossip, when you remain polite to an unfair teacher, when you keep calm on the field instead of cursing you are stronger than a thousand words.

In a world moving at lightning speed, where people judge by appearances and online images, the character of a Muslim becomes a **form of silent resistance** a message of light in a world of chaos. Good character is the real victory. And the true Muslim is recognized by **his manners**, not merely by his name.

22.5 Conclusion

Islam is not a religion of mere words or rituals. It is a **lifestyle** that must be visible in every aspect of **our behavior**. A Muslim is not only Muslim in the mosque or during prayer, but especially outside of it: in their interactions with parents, spouses, children, neighbors, colleagues, and even with their enemies.

The **Prophet ﷺ** was not a ruler in palaces or a man of worldly power, but **he conquered hearts with his character**. His gentleness shattered pride. His forgiveness cut through resentment. His justice silenced even his enemies.

If we truly claim to follow him, we must **begin with our manners**. For your behavior is what people remember, not your knowledge, not your clothes, not your words. That is where your da'wah, your jihad, your influence lies.

Good behavior is the **heaviest weight on the scales**. It is the crowning glory of your faith. It is the mirror of your soul. And it is the first thing you do to make a difference; in your family, at school, at work, in society.

So be like the Prophet ﷺ: steadfast, gentle, wise, honest, and faithful. And when the world shouts, be the one who responds calmly. When others slam, be the one who stands firm. When they test you, be a Muslim in behavior, for Allah.

Theme 3 – Education, Family & Community

Chapter 23 – Islamic Education in Modern Times

Between WhatsApp, Netflix, and TikTok: How Do You Raise Children in Taqwa?

23.1 Observation

Raising children today is a challenge of an entirely new kind. From their toddler years onward, children are surrounded by screens. Tablets, YouTube, TikTok they seem harmless, yet they quickly replace real parenting. Screen time is difficult to monitor, especially when both parents work or come home exhausted. The result is a generation that swipes its way into its own world unfiltered, unguided, and devoid of values.

What do they learn there? **Vulgar language, inappropriate music, shallow humor, and a worldview where Allah and morality are absent.** Children are growing up with freedom without boundaries, and that manifests as defiance, lack of respect, and loss of discipline. In the past, the pendulum sometimes swung too far toward harsh or even unjust punishments. Today, it has swung too far the other way: a parent who merely raises his voice is quickly labeled a “bad father.”

There is also a sociological shift at play. **The first generation of Muslims in the West** was often poor, had large families, and struggled to survive. **The second generation** worked its way up through discipline and education. But now, many want to give their children everything they themselves lacked and go too far in doing so. The result is children who lack nothing materially, but have no gratitude, no respect, and no taqwā. **Mini-Fir’awns (little Pharaohs).**

Family structures have also weakened. In the West, divorce, absent fathers, and single-parent households weigh heavily on the youth. Many children grow up without a role model, seeking examples instead in online personalities or peer groups. In the Global South, another problem emerges: **patriarchal passivity.** Fathers leave parenting entirely to mothers, take no responsibility, yet invoke the Verse about having many children. They misuse this Sunnah, for they do not care for those children. The result is a generation without direction, attention, or security young people growing up in poverty, frustration, and crime.

Then come organizations distributing food packages or aid but often it’s like **mopping the floor while the tap is still running.** Because the real question is not “How many children do you have?” but “What are you doing with them?” One child raised in taqwā is worth more than ten lost in spiritual emptiness.

In the schools where I teach, I see this every day. Troubled students rarely come from bad nature, but from unstable homes. They don’t lack intelligence or talent they lack guidance, affection, presence, and example. **That is why Islamic upbringing today is not a luxury; it is a form of jihād a struggle against neglect, superficiality, and a world that seeks to erase Allah from the heart of the child.**

23.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat At-Taḥrīm (66:6)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَهْلِيكُمْ نَارًا

“O you who believe, protect yourselves and your families from the Fire...”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** explains that this command places a **direct responsibility** upon the heads of households: fathers, mothers, and educators. It is not merely about external protection but about **spiritual guidance, education, and correction**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that this verse proves parents cannot remain neutral spectators. They must **actively shield** their families from misguidance, even when it comes through screens, friends, or culture.
- **Ar-Rāzī** states that true upbringing begins with **warning, teaching, and setting limits**. Parents who allow their children to drift under the pretext of “it’s their choice” fail in this divine duty.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Luqmān (31:13–19)

...يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تَشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ

“O my son, do not associate partners with Allah...”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** calls this series of verses **the most complete model of education in the Qur’an**, for it combines **faith, behavior, attitude, and communication**. Luqmān nurtures his son from within.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** highlights that Luqmān begins with **tawḥīd**, not with social norms. Education is not about “what will people say?” but **“what does Allah say?”**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** sees in this passage the model of **loving, wise, and constructive parenting** not shouting or hitting, but speaking, reminding, and guiding with purpose.

Verse 3 – Sūrat Al-Furqān (25:74)

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا

“And those who say, ‘Our Lord, grant us from among our spouses and offspring comfort to our eyes, and make us leaders for the righteous.’”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** explains that this supplication is not only a plea for good children, but for **children who bring peace and joy** to their parents something achievable only through proper upbringing.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that this verse links the **essence of parenting** to taqwā and leadership: children who will one day **lead you in goodness**, not merely follow you in wrongdoing.
- **Ar-Rāzī** stresses that this verse shows **education combines du‘ā’ and action**. Righteous parents both pray and actively strive to shape their families according to divine guidance.

23.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"كلكم راعٍ، وكلكم مسؤولٌ عن رعيته"

"Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock."
(Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

Reflection: Parenting is not a side task or an optional project. The Prophet ﷺ makes it clear that every member of a household will be held accountable: fathers, mothers, teachers, even leaders. In an age where screens are raising children and parents are absent, this prophetic warning is more relevant than ever.

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"تَزَوَّجُوا الْوُدُودَ الْوُلُودَ، فَإِنِّي مُكَاتِرٌ بِكُمْ الْأُمَّمَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ"

"Marry loving and fertile women, for I will take pride in your numbers before the other nations on the Day of Resurrection."
(Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd authenticated)

Reflection: This Verse is often misused to justify irresponsible parenthood having many children without providing love, care, or education, under the excuse that it is sunnah. But the Prophet ﷺ spoke about children who know the Qur’an, carry knowledge, and serve the Ummah. **Quality comes before quantity.**

How many children are called “Muslim” yet are lost on the streets without a father figure, without direction, without love? This Verse calls us to **responsibility**, not reproduction without purpose.

23.4 Reflective Layer

Parenting in our time is a jihad not with weapons, but with values. The challenge is not merely how to teach a child to pray, but rather how to protect the child’s heart from a world determined to erase Allah from its consciousness.

Today, parenting is too often outsourced to screens, shows, and systems. Toddlers swipe better than they speak. Their young minds are shaped by cartoons and YouTube videos that slowly hollow out their Islamic identity. Schools teach information, but often without direction or morality. And society tolerates everything except sincere religiosity.

At the same time, many parents display a weak or uncoordinated approach. Some give their children everything they desire luxury, phones, trips but not time, structure, or spiritual guidance. Fatherhood is often absent sometimes physically, due to divorce or work; sometimes emotionally, due to lack of dialogue or presence. Mothers carry the burden alone, or are sidelined entirely in certain cultures. In other families, there are five to seven children, yet no stability, no vision, no parenting plan.

The result is predictable: **children who lack respect, are addicted to screens, spiritually empty, and emotionally unstable.** Teenagers who are silent at home, rebellious at school, and lost online.

What we need is **education rooted in taqwā.** Its foundation lies in five core values:

1. **‘Ilm** – Provide age-appropriate religious knowledge that nourishes faith.
2. **Ḥubb** – Show love and correction; listen before you shout.
3. **Ḥudūd** – Set clear limits: what is allowed, and what is not.
4. **Qudwa** – Lead by example; a father who doesn’t pray cannot expect his child to pray.
5. **Du‘ā** – Always pray for their guidance, even when they drift away.

As **Ibn al-Qayyim** said: “The father is like a farmer: his words are the seeds. If he sows with care, he will harvest fruit. But if he neglects his field, weeds will grow.”

Parenting, therefore, is not about providing things it is about **teaching a child who Allah is, how to remain pure, and how to stand firm in a world of deception.** Parents who assume that children will “learn it on their own” are mistaken. If you don’t teach them, **TikTok will.** If you don’t set boundaries, **Netflix will.** If you don’t give purpose, **Shayṭān will.**

Self-discipline can be developed through rhythm and balance. Entertainment should not be a default, but a **reward after effort.** For every session of screen time, there can be a short Qur’an lesson, a story, or a discussion of values. This teaches children that enjoyment only has worth when **knowledge and spiritual growth** come first.

The Qur'an confirms this principle:

(وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۗ ۚ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ)

“But as for he who feared standing before his Lord and restrained his soul from (its) desire then indeed, Paradise will be his abode.”

(Sūrat An-Nāzi‘āt, 79:40–41)

Islamic upbringing rests upon two pillars: loving closeness and firm leadership. Parents must be their children’s best friends present, attentive, and trustworthy yet at the same time their **guides**, who set boundaries and explain Allah’s rules with seriousness. For a child who is allowed to do everything will lose his way; and a child who is forbidden everything will rebel.

The balance lies in **taqwā** being gentle in approach, but strong in principles.

23.5 Conclusion

Islamic education today is not about slogans or giving children Arabic names. It is a form of jihad in its deepest sense a struggle against laziness, passive parenting, and the destructive influences of a digital world that consumes our children before they reach adulthood.

We cannot afford to wait until things go wrong. Upbringing requires **proactivity**: not merely control, but inspiration. By learning the Qur’an ourselves and reciting it with our children. By setting boundaries with love and vision. By scheduling time for meaningful conversations, books, and reflection instead of endless scrolling and silence at the dinner table.

What seems like a “small issue” today becomes character tomorrow. What we tolerate today becomes a right tomorrow.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ»

“Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock.”

(al-Bukhārī & Muslim)

Our children are not accessories. They are an **amānah** a trust from Allah for which we will be questioned on the Day of Judgment.

Therefore, it is not enough to complain about “the youth,” Netflix, or TikTok. **The solution lies in action in your home, in your heart, and in your example.** Because parenting doesn’t begin with them it begins with you.

Marriage in the Qur'anic Worldview

Chapter 24 – The Path to Marriage

24.1 Observation

The path to marriage has become, for many today, a **difficult** and **painful** journey. In an age where **ḥarām** (forbidden) options are more accessible than ever through social media, dating apps, and hidden online connections the **ḥalāl** (permissible) route has become the real obstacle. Young Muslims are not only struggling with their own desires but also with **cultural barriers, racism, social expectations, and financial pressures**.

Many young people tell me: “I want to get married, but I can’t find the right person.” And that’s true. How can you find someone who lives with God-consciousness (taqwā) in a world where so many are guided by lust and superficiality? Even when you do find someone with faith and character, you may still face resistance from parents’ cultural traditions, national backgrounds, or even **skin color**. To make matters worse, marriage is often reduced to a financial project: extravagant wedding parties, gold rings, gifts, separate housing, and so on. In Belgium, wedding expenses can reach **€50,000**. How is a young man supposed to afford that?

People’s standards have also become excessively high. Before looking at one’s **faith**, they first check one’s degree, car, and income. The result is a **vicious cycle** where many give up, enter relationships behind their parents’ backs, and end up hurting themselves in the process. How many young people have I seen suffer from heartbreak? “We were perfect together,” they say. “We wanted to marry.” But after a few months, it ends and they’re left with a broken heart, which often leads to more sin. Some spend years in relationships with non-Muslims, and when it ends, they find it hard to commit again. By the time they’re in their thirties or older, they’re still single and it’s unrealistic to believe that all those years they’ve managed to completely suppress their desires. **That’s humanly nearly impossible**.

Women face their own struggles. Some sisters have had **multiple relationships**, know exactly what they want and what they no longer want and set their standards so high that finding a husband who meets them all becomes nearly impossible. They search for the perfect match, but that person doesn’t exist. Many grow older, remaining unmarried past forty, often with **regret, pain, or a sense of inner emptiness**.

In some parts of Africa and Asia, marriage may be **financially more accessible**, as long as the man can provide. But there, the problems lie elsewhere: living together with extended family under one roof, a lack of privacy, or more painfully **sexual infidelity**. In my conversations with people from African communities, I often hear the same complaint: “A man who doesn’t cheat is rare.” And when a just and loyal man does appear, some women are even willing to become a second wife, as long as he is honest and faithful.

In short, the path to marriage is full of obstacles: **cultural barriers, financial burdens, unrealistic expectations, lust without responsibility, deep emotional wounds from**

forbidden relationships, and the structural flaws of modern society all of which make the journey toward a pure, God-centered union difficult, but no less essential.

As the saying goes: **“Real men speak directly about marriage, and real women refer them to their parents.”** Such conduct has become rare. Across the world, we see young Muslim men and women communicating sometimes with good intentions but often their interactions spiral into **emotional attachment and temptation**.

Instead of being direct and clear, people delay and overcomplicate things. Shayṭān works in the silence between the lines. And when it all falls apart, hearts break and some seek ḥarām as a way to dull the pain.

Moreover, in many parts of **Asia and Africa**, **divorced women and widows** are often ignored in the search for marriage. Many men look only for young virgins, even though this attitude goes **against the Qur’an and the example of the Prophet ﷺ**, who married widows and honored them with love and dignity.

24.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah An-Nūr (24:32)

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۚ إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَسِعَ عِلْمَهُ

“Marry off those among you who are single, and also the righteous among your male and female servants. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them from His bounty. And Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** highlights that this verse directly addresses a common fear: “I cannot marry because I lack money.” Allah clearly states: “If they are poor, Allah will enrich them.” This is a divine promise. **Whoever takes the ḥalāl path is supported by Allah’s barakah** (blessing).
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that this verse comes in the form of a command, establishing a **communal responsibility**: society must help facilitate marriage for those who remain unmarried. Allah does not link marriage to wealth, but to **righteousness (ṣāliḥīn)**. Those who think that money is a prerequisite for marriage have not fully understood this verse.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes that marriage serves as a protection for one’s faith and a pillar of **moral stability**. Therefore, Allah places great emphasis on it and implicitly condemns any attitude that makes marriage unnecessarily difficult.

This verse urges believers to promote marriage for those without partners including **divorced women, widows, and servants**. The word al-ayāmā refers first and foremost to **vulnerable members of society**, not just to virgins or the young.

In the context of Madinah, marriage customs were largely tribal and centered on marrying within one’s own lineage or preferring younger brides. But this verse **broke through social barriers and opened new horizons**, setting a precedent for inclusive and compassionate community ethics.

Verses – Sūrah Al-Qaṣaṣ (28:22–28) The Marriage of Mūsā (Moses, peace be upon him)

Summarizing narrative with integrated verses and scholars' explanation:

When Mūsā was forced to flee Egypt after unintentionally killing a man, he arrived in Madyan as a stranger. There he encountered two women standing aside with their flock. He asked them why they were not watering their animals. They replied that they were waiting until the men had finished, for their father was an old man.

Out of **modesty and compassion**, Mūsā helped them and watered their flock. Then he withdrew and offered a humble supplication:

رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنْزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ

“My Lord, indeed I am in need of whatever good You might send down to me.” (28:24)

According to **Ibn ‘Ashūr**, this supplication is key it shows that marriage begins with **service and du‘ā’ (supplication)**, not with demands. Mūsā did not ask for anything; instead, he displayed **character and responsibility**.

Then one of the daughters returned **modestly**, saying:

إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا

“My father invites you so that he may reward you for watering (our flock) for us.” (28:25)

The Qur’an then narrates that the father identified by scholars as **Shu‘ayb** observed Mūsā’s behavior. His daughter said:

يَأْتِيَتْ أَهْتَجِرُهُ إِنَّ خَيْرَ مَنْ اسْتَجَرْتَ الْفَقْوَى الْأَمِينُ

“O my father, hire him! Indeed, the best one you can hire is the strong and the trustworthy.” (28:26)

Al-Qurṭubī points out that the woman did not mention his appearance, lineage, or wealth but rather **his character and reliability**. These two traits are the true foundations of a righteous marriage.

On this basis, the father offered Mūsā his daughter in marriage:

إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أَنْكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هَاتَيْنِ عَلَى أَنْ تَأْجُرَنِي ثَمْلِي حَجَجٌ

“I wish to marry one of these two daughters of mine to you, on condition that you work for me for eight years...” (28:27)

Ar-Rāzī calls this the **Qur’anic model of marriage** a union grounded in shared values, mutual responsibility, sincere intention, and a fair agreement. There is no excessive wedding display, no exaggerated demands just a dignified bond built on **faith and action**.

This story reflects that a righteous marriage is not about **status or luxury**, but about **character, service, and trustworthiness** the essential ingredients of a home blessed by Allah.

Verse 2 – Sūrah At-Taḥrīm (66:5)

عَسَىٰ رَبُّهُ إِنْ طَلَّقَنَّ أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُ أَزْوَاجًا خَيْرًا مِنْكُمْ مَّسْلَمَاتٍ مُّؤْمِنَاتٍ قَاتِلَاتٍ تَتَّبِعْتِ عِدَّتِ سَلَّحَاتٍ تُبَيِّنَاتٍ وَأَبْكَارًا

“Perhaps his Lord, if he divorces you, will give him wives better than you women who submit (to Allah), who believe, who are devoutly obedient, who repent, who worship, who travel for His sake previously married women and virgins.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** notes that the order of these qualities is not coincidental it follows a spiritual hierarchy. Allah begins with Islam, īmān (faith), and qanā‘a (devotion and obedience), and only at the end mentions marital status (thayyibāt previously married, abkār virgins). This shows that **spiritual and moral traits are far more important than physical or cultural preferences**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** states that this verse also teaches a communal lesson: **divorce can sometimes be a redirection toward a better, more sincere relationship**. Moreover, it serves as a warning to women (and by extension, to all believers) to re-evaluate their behavior and sincerity in faith.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that **inner qualities** outweigh social or physical ones. The order demonstrates that taqwā, ‘ibādah (worship), and tawbah (repentance) carry more weight than virginity or experience. In societies where virginity is over-idealized, the Qur’an reestablishes the correct moral balance.

This verse breaks cultural prejudice. In many societies, including today’s, preference is often given to young virgins, while widows and divorced women are marginalized. Yet **the Qur’an raises believing, repentant, and devoted women to a higher spiritual rank, regardless of their marital past reminding us that piety and character** are the true measures of worth in Allah’s sight.

24.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

النِّكَاحُ مِنْ سُنَّتِي، فَمَنْ رَغِبَ عَن سُنَّتِي فَلَيْسَ مِنِّي

“Marriage is part of my Sunnah, and whoever turns away from my Sunnah is not from me.”

(Ibn Mājah)

Reflection: These words of the Prophet ﷺ make it clear that marriage is not merely a cultural or personal matter; it is part of the **spiritual path** of a Muslim. Avoiding marriage out of laziness, fear, or worldly concerns means neglecting a sacred avenue of purification and growth. In an age where

zina (fornication) has been normalized, adhering to this Sunnah becomes an act of **resistance against ḥarām** and a mark of sincerity in faith.

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

يَا مَعْشَرَ الشَّبَابِ، مَنْ اسْتَطَاعَ مِنْكُمُ الْبَاءَةَ فَلْيَتَزَوَّجْ، فَإِنَّهُ أَغْضُ لِلْبَصَرِ، وَأَحْصَنُ لِلْفَرْجِ

“O young people, whoever among you has the means to marry, let him marry. For it helps lower the gaze and guard one’s chastity.”

(Al-Bukhārī and Muslim)

Reflection: This Verse acknowledges the **reality of human desire**, especially among the youth. The Prophet ﷺ does not deny these feelings but directs them toward a **constructive and moral outlet/marriage**. It is a shield, not only against sin but also against inner turmoil, regret, and self-destruction. Rather than waiting for a “perfect” situation, this Verse teaches that **the pursuit of chastity takes priority**, even with limited financial means.

Verse 3

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذَا جَاءَكُمْ مَنْ تَرْضَوْنَ دِينَهُ وَخُلُقَهُ فَرُجُوهُ

“When someone comes to you whose religion and character you are pleased with, then marry him [to your daughter].”

(At-Tirmidhī)

Reflection: This Verse emphasizes **dīn (faith)** and **akhlāq (character)** as the true pillars of a successful marriage. Today, many prioritize financial status, education, or appearance, creating unnecessary barriers and delays. Yet if we were to truly heed the words of the Prophet ﷺ, our marriages would be marked by **blessing, simplicity, and stability**. The Qur’anic and prophetic model calls for prioritizing **piety over prestige** and **character over class**, leading to homes built on love, mercy, and sincerity.

24.4 Reflective Layer

As we have seen in the Qur’an and the Verse, marriage is not merely a private matter but also a **communal responsibility**. In the Qur’an, the command to marry is expressed in the plural form, directed at the **community**: “Marry off those among you who are single...” (24:32).

But who makes up this community? In my view, it is primarily the **mosques and their umbrella organizations**. Ideally, they should through proper guidance and discretion provide a **safe and ethical platform** where young people can meet each other in a **ḥalāl** way. Instead of judging or rejecting youth who express a desire to marry, mosques should guide them, listen to them, and provide opportunities within Islamic frameworks.

Parents, too, must understand their role. They should **be open** to allowing their children to get to know one another within **honorable and safe limits** without taboos. And if it doesn't work out, there should be **no resentment**. Too many young people today think that approaching someone's parents automatically means commitment. But in Islam, that is not the case. The father investigates the man, advises his daughter, but **the final decision rests with the daughter**.

Even if she is in love with someone the parents deem less suitable and she still chooses him, it is better to make a **mistake through ḥalāl means than through ḥarām**. Because if you block them, they might act behind your back. **At that stage**, our children are often mature enough to make their own decisions. And if they later realize it was the wrong choice, **divorce in Islam is not a disgrace**: it is a correction.

We must also dare to look beyond cultural boundaries. Islam is clear: "Seek a woman for her faith and character." And "When someone comes to you whose faith and character you are pleased with, marry him [to your daughter]." **Race, lineage, education, or ethnicity** should not be walls we build within the Ummah. What truly matters are **īmān** (faith) and **akhlāq** (character).

At the same time, young **men must understand** that marriage is not merely about **falling in love**. It comes with **major responsibilities** financial, emotional, and spiritual. You take over the role of her father: not just to provide for her, but to ensure her safety and well-being.

Some young men are ready at eighteen I was one of them. I proposed to my wife when I was just eighteen. Others, however, still spend hours gaming at that age or even ten years later without the maturity that marriage requires. And there are men who were never ready, yet still married. Then they find themselves in a marriage where they **carry nothing** and gradually destroy everything. **A marriage without responsibility is self-destruction**.

We often forget that the **context of revelation** was filled with temptation, moral decay, and public indecency. In Makkah and even in Madinah, **zina** (fornication) and open displays of desire were widespread. The Qur'an was revealed in a society **highly sexualized** the idea that the first Muslims lived in a "holy bubble" is false. Yet they were expected to transform to be steadfast in their pursuit of purity and sincerity.

Today, the challenge remains, but it is still achievable with **clear guidelines**. One of them is simple yet powerful: **"Speak to the point."** Conversations between the sexes should be **clear, purposeful, and brief**, within **ḥalāl boundaries**. Meetings should take place **after parental consent**, so emotions remain protected.

Where Do We Find the Right Match?

In the search for a life partner, it is essential to use the **means that Allah and the community have made available**. Below are common and recommended ways, based on both experience and Islamic principles:

Parents

Parents know their children deeply. They often have a sense of what type of person suits their son or daughter. With their experience, they can help avoid pitfalls and bring stability. Of course, **parents must listen, not dictate.**

Trusted Acquaintances

Good friends or family can play an important role. They may know both parties either casually or closely and can assess whether an introduction makes sense. During the Prophet's ﷺ time, many marriages were arranged by **trusted community members.**

Mosques

A mosque should not only be a place of prayer but also a **social and moral meeting space** where people can connect in a safe and dignified way. Mosque boards or imams can play a positive role by facilitating such platforms or providing guidance.

Lectures and Conferences

Events focused on Islamic knowledge, community service, or interfaith dialogue are often natural meeting places for like-minded individuals. These settings reveal who is **spiritually engaged**, which can be a good indicator of compatibility.

Random Encounters

Sometimes, someone crosses your path unexpectedly at school, work, or in public. This is not forbidden, **as long as it is followed by a proper and ḥalāl process.** However, this route requires extra caution, as it often involves more risk of **ambiguous or inappropriate interactions.**

Ṣalāt al-Istikhārah

After taking all human means, comes **tawakkul (trust in Allah).** Perform istikhārah, the **prayer of guidance, asking Allah** to bring what is good closer to you and to keep away what is harmful. It is not a “dream generator,” but a means to purify your heart and intention in making your decision.

Social Media and Marriage Apps

A vital disclaimer: This is **not a fatwa** permitting extended communication between men and women via social media or apps. **The foundational rule in Islam remains: interaction between the sexes should be limited to necessity,** maintaining modesty and moral decorum.

However, in **today's reality**, many people do meet through such means. If one chooses this path, **extreme caution** is necessary:

- Speak only with a clear purpose (marriage).
- Keep communication brief, respectful, and focused.
- Involve parents or a trusted person as early as possible.
- Avoid **emotional attachment** before serious intent is confirmed.

Shayṭān works hardest where there is ambiguity where boundaries blur and emotions dominate. Many sins begin with words.

In all circumstances, therefore: **“Speak to the point.”** One of the greatest global mistakes is that **men and women talk for hours without a clear goal.** It leads to **emotional attachment, desire, and often, sin.**

Look at the example of **Mūsā (peace be upon him):** when he spoke to the daughters of Shu‘ayb, he was **brief and direct.** They, in turn, conveyed the message straight to their father.

Real men are clear in their intentions, and real women refer to their parents early on.

The search for a partner is not a passive waiting game, nor something that should rely solely on emotion. It requires **effort, wisdom, guidance, and trust in Allah.** As with every decision in life: combine **human effort with tawakkul** use the means, and let Allah guide the outcome.

24.5 Conclusion

Marriage is neither a fairytale nor a punishment. It is a **divine protection, a training ground for character and responsibility, and a path to tranquility of the heart** provided it is built on faith and mutual respect. In our time, where **ḥarām relationships are normalized and ḥalāl marriages are increasingly difficult,** it falls upon us to rebuild a culture in which marriage once again becomes **possible, dignified, and sacred.**

The Prophet ﷺ declared marriage to be part of his **Sunnah.** He married, his Companions married, and marriage consistently served as a **bridge to purity, stability, and personal growth.** When we abandon this prophetic path, we often fall into chaos, sorrow, and regret.

We must not reduce marriage to **culture, status, race, or financial conditions.** The Qur’an and the Verse are clear: **faith (īmān) and character (akhlāq)** are the keys. Whoever marries for the sake of Allah will receive **divine assistance** from Him.

Many people search endlessly for the **“perfect match,”** as if there exists somewhere an ideal person without flaws. But the truth is: **everyone carries a story** traumas, quirks, fears, or a past. The right question is not, **“Who is perfect for me?”** but rather, **“Whose imperfections am I willing to embrace with love?”**

That is real love: taking responsibility for each other’s vulnerabilities.

Communities, mosques, and parents must reclaim their role. **Young people** must learn to bear responsibility. And we must all understand: **true love does not begin with infatuation, but with taqwā.**

The Qur’an calls for **facilitating marriage,** especially for the vulnerable: widows, divorced women, the poor, and those without support. The verse in **Sūrah An-Nūr (24:32)** reminds us that **wealth is not a condition for marriage,** but sincerity and righteousness are. Yet many of us make marriage difficult with **unrealistic expectations, superficial preferences, and cultural barriers.**

Therefore, it is essential that we:

- **Purify our intentions:** Seek a partner for the sake of taqwā, not mere attraction.
- **Involve the right people:** Parents, trusted advisors, and mosques should play an active role in the process.
- **Guard our boundaries:** Prolonged, vague, or excessive contact between the sexes opens the door to fitna.
- **Communicate clearly:** Just as Prophet Mūsā (‘alayhi as-salām) spoke with clarity and purpose, a sincere Muslim should also express his or her intentions respectfully and without delay.
- **Be realistic:** Everyone carries emotional and spiritual baggage what matters is the responsibility you are willing to bear.

Even if social media or apps are used as a means, this must be done with **utmost caution** not to force a ḥalāl door open, but to prevent slipping into ḥarām through negligence. The reality of our age demands **guided and conscious searching**, treating the feelings of others with the same care as we wish ours to be treated.

Whoever seeks for the sake of Allah will **find**. Whoever waits with **sabr (patience)** will receive better than he imagined. And whoever marries merely to satisfy desire, without responsibility, often ends in bitterness.

Marriage is **not the endpoint** it is the **starting point of a spiritual journey**.

Chapter 25 – The Purpose of Marriage in the Qur’anic Worldview

25.1 Observation

In our modern society, many people enter marriage with **shallow or misguided intentions**. Some marry purely out of infatuation drawn by beauty, status, appearance, or financial comfort. Others see marriage as a **means of escape**: from an unbearable home situation, from loneliness, or from **social expectations**.

Many young people, under **parental or cultural pressure**, marry cousins from their homeland without genuine emotional or spiritual connection. In certain regions, marriage is still a **cultural obligation** imposed on girls arranged without consent, love, or religious depth.

The result? **Broken marriages** couples who live next to each other, not with each other. Relationships where the investment in love, affection, and tenderness has ceased. In its place come **distance, coldness, and sometimes betrayal**, disguised as a “second marriage” or outright deceit. What was once primarily seen among men is now found among women as well a reflection of a deeper societal decay that affects both genders in the modern West.

We observe that **marriage today is rarely built on spiritual foundations**. Yet, the Qur’an teaches that marriage is in fact a **sign (āyah)** of Allah’s power and mercy.

25.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah Ar-Rūm (30:21)

وَمِنْ آيَاتِهِ أَنْ خَلَقَ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا لِتَسْكُنُوا إِلَيْهَا وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَكُمْ مَوَدَّةً وَرَحْمَةً إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ

“And among His signs is that He created for you spouses from among yourselves, that you may find tranquility in them, and He placed between you love and mercy. Indeed, in that are signs for a people who reflect.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** explains that this verse elevates marriage to the level of a **divine sign (āyah)**. It is meant to bring sukūn (tranquility), mawaddah (affection), and raḥmah (mercy). These three form the heart of a successful marriage. He notes that the **order of the words** reveals a profound psychological and spiritual harmony: first comes peace, then affection, and finally mercy that sustains love through hardship.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that these **three elements** require **nurturing and effort**: love grows through companionship, mercy through understanding, and peace through trust. They are not instant gifts but **fruits that must be cultivated** through patience and sincerity.
- **Ar-Rāzī** interprets mawaddah as **physical and emotional attachment**, while raḥmah manifests in **patience, forgiveness, and mutual support**, especially in times of weakness. This highlights that marriage is a **spiritual exercise in compassion and sacrifice**, not a transaction of pleasure or convenience.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Al-Furqān (25:74)

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا

“And those who say: ‘Our Lord, grant us from among our spouses and offspring comfort to our eyes, and make us an example for the righteous.’”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** explains that qurratu a ‘yun (“coolness of the eyes”) refers to **deep inner joy and spiritual contentment**. A successful marriage should not only bring physical comfort, but **spiritual pride**; a partner who brings you closer to Allah, and children who carry forward your faith.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** states that this du ‘ā’ expresses the **highest form of marital success**: a household where love, piety, and exemplary conduct unite. It is a **supplication for spiritual harmony**, not just worldly happiness.
- **Ar-Rāzī** observes that this verse connects marriage to **leadership in righteousness**. A couple’s goal is not merely to live together, but to walk together toward taqwā, becoming a model for others in their faith and moral conduct.

25.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ تَزَوَّجَ فَقَدْ اسْتَكْمَلَ نِصْفَ الْإِيمَانِ، فَلْيَتَّقِ اللَّهَ فِي النِّصْفِ الْبَاقِي

“Whoever marries has completed half of his faith. Let him then fear Allah regarding the remaining half.”
(Bayhaqī, authenticated by al-Albānī)

Reflection: This Verse highlights the **religious and spiritual value of marriage**. It protects one’s honor, stabilizes the heart, and strengthens a believer’s moral compass. But this applies **only when marriage is founded upon faith**, not mere passion, convenience, or social pressure.

25.4 Reflective Layer

When we reflect on marriage, many forget its **true purpose**: tranquility. Not beauty. Not wealth. Not status. Allah says in the Qur’an (Sūrah Ar-Rūm 30:21) that He created spouses for us **“so that you may find rest in them”** (litaskunū ilayhā). Tranquility is not a luxury it is a **divine blessing**. But how often do we actually look for a partner who provides that kind of peace?

People today say: “I’m in love.” “She looks good.” “He has a good job.” But what if that beauty fades? What if that wealth disappears? What remains then? **Peace endures**. That is why we must ask ourselves: “With whom do I truly feel at peace? With whom do I feel closer to Allah?”

For some, peace means enjoying silence together. For others: walking side by side, laughing together, playing with their children, or sharing a simple evening meal in serenity. Perhaps your peace is with someone who watches an anime with you, or someone who looks at the night sky and says,

SubḥānAllah. Everyone experiences peace differently but the goal is to **find the one with whom your soul feels calm.**

Alongside peace, there is another fundamental though often unspoken reason for marriage: **to fulfill human desires in a ḥalāl way.** The Qur'an is explicit about this. Allah praises the believers in **Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn (23:5–7)** and **Sūrah Al-Ma'ārij (70:29–31)**:

“...And those who guard their chastity, except with their spouses then they are not to be blamed.” (Al-Mu'minūn 23:5–6; Al-Ma'ārij 70:29–30)

These verses show that **sexuality is not taboo in Islam** it is, in fact, one of the **legitimate purposes of marriage.** We are human. Allah created desire within us and provided a **safe, spiritual, and loving path** to experience it: marriage.

That is why **physical attraction also matters.** Beauty is not sinful it is a valid factor but it must never be the sole motivation. The Prophet ﷺ even encouraged looking at one's potential spouse before marriage, yet he also said: “Choose the one with faith may your hands be blessed.” (al-Bukhārī, Muslim)

If one of these two essential goals **spiritual peace** or **lawful intimacy** disappears, then one must sincerely ask: “Why am I still in this marriage?” Even if children are involved, ignoring the complete collapse of these foundations only deepens the harm.

Ultimately, we must remember: **marriage is not the destination, but the beginning** the beginning of a journey toward Allah, shared by two souls seeking peace, love, and mercy. But it all begins with **intention.** Whoever marries with the right intention will taste the **fruits of that union in this world and in the Hereafter.**

25.5 Conclusion

Marriage is not merely a social contract or a religious formality. It is a **divine sign** an āyah, as Allah Himself calls it in Sūrah Ar-Rūm. It is a **spiritual journey**, a sanctuary of peace (sukūn), love (mawaddah), and mercy (raḥmah) a safe harbor in a world filled with chaos.

We live in an age where marriage is often reduced to appearances, social expectations, or escapism. But whoever enters marriage **without clarity of intention** or **awareness of its divine purpose** will quickly become lost in disappointment and emptiness.

The Qur'an teaches that true success in marriage lies in:

- Finding **tranquility** with one another (sukūn)
- Cultivating **love** (mawaddah)
- Showing **mercy** (raḥmah)
- And channeling our **desires through ḥalāl means**, preserving chastity as praised in Sūrah Al-Mu'minūn and Al-Ma'ārij.

Therefore, the real questions every young person, parent, and community must ask are not: “Who is attractive?” “Who has the best job?” But rather: **“With whom will I find peace?” “With whom can I grow closer to Allah?” “With whom can I forgive, build, laugh, and struggle but never break?”**

Once we find that peace, we must **protect and nurture it**. Because marriage is not the end it is **the beginning of a lifelong journey**, and every day on that journey is an opportunity to **reflect Allah’s love** through the love we show each other.

Chapter 26 – Preparation for Marriage in the Qur’anic Worldview

26.1 Observation

Many young people today enter marriage without true preparation. They think that love or attraction is enough, or that a marriage will automatically succeed if it’s with “the right person.” Some have never even reflected on their own role as a husband or wife. The result? Disappointment, clashing expectations, frustration, and sometimes divorce shortly after marriage begins.

Others are overwhelmed by social pressure, cultural traditions, or the fear of aging alone, rushing impulsively into marriage. Rarely do couples approach marriage as what it truly is: a spiritual bond, an emotional responsibility, and a social mission. Among young Muslims who are serious about their faith, you often hear: “I want to get married.” That, in itself, is a positive sign. But at the same time, there’s a lingering doubt: “Are there still good men or women out there?”

The truth is, many people yearn for a ḥalāl relationship but enter marriage completely unprepared. Think about it: if you wanted to become an electrician, doctor, or engineer, you would study, take exams, and complete internships. Yet for one of the most critical decisions of your life a marriage that will shape your soul, your faith, and your future there is often **no preparation at all**. No knowledge. No coaching. No self-reflection.

Most young people are simply dropped into marriage without guidance, without mental or spiritual training. Parents rarely discuss how to handle conflict, communicate effectively, or navigate emotional cycles within marriage. And mosques or Islamic institutions are often silent on these topics. Yet marriage is one of the keys to a stable family and a healthy ummah.

An inspiring example comes from some Catholic churches, where couples are required to attend premarital courses that include case studies and role plays. Although their concept of marriage (“**till death do us part**”) differs from ours, we as Muslims could certainly learn organizationally from their approach.

I speak from personal experience **over twenty years of marriage**, filled with ups and downs. At the beginning, I honestly knew **nothing about marriage**. I didn’t understand the emotional phases a woman goes through. I didn’t know how important it was to listen without giving instant advice. As an only child, I had never been responsible for anything at home. I couldn’t cook, wash dishes, clean let alone fix things. Everything had always been done for me.

My wife, on the other hand, had no idea how men function how simple and direct we often are, how little we read between the lines. So our worlds collided. Those first years of living together? They were difficult. We had to balance, grow, learn to give and take, and most importantly, learn to understand one another.

This personal experience is not the exception it is the rule. That’s why **premarital courses, mentorship, honest conversations with experienced couples, and practical exercises** should

become the foundation of marital preparation. Because marriage is not a fairytale it is a **path of taqwā, love, struggle, and growth**. You must not only get to know the other person, but more importantly, **yourself**. Ask: Where do I stand in my faith? Am I emotionally ready to give? Can I carry responsibility? Do I understand what it means to be a source of support for another human being?

You Only Truly Know Someone after Marriage;

More and more often, young people ask me: **“But how can I get to know my future spouse if I don’t first talk to them or meet with them?”** It’s a valid concern people want to feel secure, to sense a connection, to see if it “fits.”

But what many don’t realize is that this so-called getting to know each other phase is usually when **both people are performing a role**. Everything is tailored to make a good impression: the nicest appearance, the kindest behavior, the most patience, the sweetest words. You show what you want the other person to see not necessarily who you truly are. It’s a **stage of masks**, where true nature is often hidden beneath infatuation, excitement, and expectations.

Moreover, that’s understandable those early months are light and carefree. There are no bills, no children, no shared responsibilities. Everything revolves around you and me, without the weight of household chores, family obligations, character differences, or exhaustion after a long workday. But after marriage, **the dynamics change**. Reality sets in finances, in-laws, work stress, sleepless nights, and disagreements. What once came easily now requires effort.

The beloved partner is also human sometimes tired, anxious, stubborn, or carrying emotional scars. Only then do you discover each other’s true selves: Not in your best clothes, but in pajamas. Not smiling on a date, but crying after an argument. Not with flowers in hand, but with a trash bag on the way out the door. And that’s when many people realize: “I never truly knew them.”

That is precisely why Islam encourages us not to live together or date for months, but rather to hold wise and purposeful discussions during the engagement phase, under supervision and with guidance.

These discussions should cover: **Vision and life goal, Roles and responsibilities**, Religious values, Parenting and education, Financial management, Communication, Intimacy, Future planning

True love does not grow from long chats or romantic dinners, but from shared values, honesty, and transparency. Those who avoid these conversations often marry an illusion. A marriage must be built on more than attraction or emotion it requires preparation, awareness, and maturity. You don’t need to reveal everything before marriage, but you do need to know enough to determine if you can build a life together one that can withstand the storms of reality. Because it is only when pressure increases that you see how solid the foundation truly is. That’s why I always say:

You only truly get to know someone after marriage. But before marriage, through wisdom, guidance, and proper preparation, you can lay the groundwork so that when the masks fall, trust remains.

26.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah An-Nisā’ (4:1)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي تَسَاءَلُونَ بِهِ وَالْأَرْحَامَ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَيْكُمْ رَقِيبًا

“O mankind, fear your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and created from it its mate, and from the two spread many men and women. And fear Allah, through whom you demand your mutual rights, and respect the wombs (family ties). Indeed, Allah is ever an Observer over you.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** explains that this verse reveals the **deepest spiritual connection between man and woman**: both come from one soul (nafs wāḥidah). This shows that marriage is not a mere contract, but a **union rooted in shared origin**, held together by taqwā (God-consciousness).
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that the verse begins with a **universal address** “O mankind” indicating that marriage is a human reality, not bound by culture or class. It must be built upon **reverence for Allah and kinship**, not upon lust, social status, or pressure.
- **Ar-Rāzī** points to the command “fear Allah and respect the family ties” as proof that **marriage and all that follows from it** in-laws, children, lineage fall under divine protection. Therefore, marriage demands **awareness and preparation** for this sacred responsibility.

This verse takes us back to the **very origin of human existence**: man and woman are not rivals or incidental partners, but **two halves of one soul**. Marriage, therefore, is not a worldly transaction but a **spiritual covenant**, one that can only flourish when built upon taqwā, respect, and family integrity.

We often forget that in Islam, marriage is not merely a social contract; it is an act of worship (‘ibādah). And just as prayer or fasting requires preparation, so too does marriage. Whoever enters it without **knowledge, self-awareness, and spiritual readiness** risks harming both themselves and their partner.

Verse 2 – Sūrah An-Nūr (24:32)

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيْمَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ ۚ إِنْ يَكُونُوا فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ وَسِعَ عِلْمَهُ

“And marry those among you who are single, and the righteous among your male and female servants. If they are poor, Allah will enrich them out of His bounty. And Allah is All-Encompassing, All-Knowing.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** highlights that the focus here is on the **ṣāliḥīn** the **righteous and morally upright**. This means that **character and faith** are the first forms of preparation for marriage; wealth comes later. Allah Himself promises His bounty.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** states that this verse teaches us **not to wait until everything is materially arranged** money, housing, a car before marrying. The true preparation is **moral and spiritual**, not financial.

- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that **being ready for marriage** means being aware of one’s responsibilities and viewing the union as a **form of worship** (‘*ibādah*’), not merely a personal pursuit or worldly achievement.

Verse 3 – Sūrah An-Nūr (24:26)

الْخَبِيثَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ أُولَئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ

“Corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men are for corrupt women; and good women are for good men, and good men are for good women. They are innocent of what the people say; for them is forgiveness and a noble provision.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** notes that this verse goes beyond sexual purity; it encompasses **moral integrity, faith, and inner virtue**. Whoever strives for righteousness and sincerity will naturally be paired by Allah’s decree with someone of similar purity. This establishes **spiritual balance in society**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that the verse also served as **protection and reassurance** for believers who were falsely accused such as ‘Ā’isha (may Allah be pleased with her). At the same time, it is a **warning**: those who choose immoral behavior will face its reflection in their relationships.
- **Ar-Rāzī** stresses that ṭayyibīn (“the pure”) refers not only to physical chastity but primarily to **moral and spiritual purity**. Thus, **self-purification is the first step** in preparing for marriage. Only a pure heart can attract a partner of similar purity.

This verse captures the essence of **self-preparation**: You attract what you are. As the scholars say: “Marriage is like a mirror whoever is pure will draw purity, but whoever lives in hypocrisy will be trapped within it.

26.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

تُنكَحُ الْمَرْأَةُ لِأَرْبَعٍ: لِمَالِهَا، وَلِحَسَبِهَا، وَلِجَمَالِهَا، وَلِدِينِهَا، فَأَظْفَرُ بِذَاتِ الدِّينِ تَرَبَّتْ يَدَاكَ

“A woman is married for four reasons: for her wealth, her lineage, her beauty, and her religion. Choose the one who is religious, may your hands be blessed.”

(al-Bukhārī and Muslim) Reflection: This prophetic wisdom applies equally to both men and women: **the best preparation for marriage lies in one’s faith, character, and devotion to Allah**. That is the foundation of a lasting and blessed marriage.

26.4 Reflective Layer

Preparation for marriage begins long before engagement. It is not an administrative checklist, a cultural ritual, or a fairytale where you wait for “the right person.” It is a process of **self-knowledge, character building, and spiritual growth.** You are the foundation upon which everything else will be built. If your foundation is weak, every relationship will tremble.

Marriage is not the goal it is **the beginning of a spiritual journey**, whose ultimate destination is the **pleasure of Allah.** That’s why the first questions you must ask yourself are:

- Have I learned to resolve conflict peacefully?
- Am I patient? Am I forgiving?
- Can I listen without judging?
- Do I know how to express my emotions in a healthy way?
- Can I remain loyal even when things get difficult?

If you have not mastered these, you are not yet ready for marriage.

Work on Yourself First;

Be a pearl, so that you are worthy of a pearl. Many people search for the ideal partner but forget to become a worthy partner themselves. Your **behavior, faith, way of speaking,** and **how you deal with hardship** that is what truly matters.

For Men: Do not think that money or looks are everything. Work on your **patience, gentleness, emotional stability, and sense of responsibility.** Understand your wife’s basic emotional and physical needs. Learn about **the menstrual cycle,** about **her emotional landscape,** and how much **attention and tenderness** mean to her.

Also, learn practical skills: **how to cook a few meals, clean, or handle household tasks** this is not a luxury but a necessity when you step into marriage. But also understand: you are her **husband, not her servant.** You must be able to set boundaries and **show leadership,** not dominance. Be a man who is **respected and missed,** not feared or avoided. And above all: your ultimate goal is not to please your wife, but to **please Allah.** Only then can you truly fulfill her rights and lead your household with justice.

For Women:

Do not wait passively for “the prince.” Work on your **intellect, spiritual development, and self-confidence.** Do not think you must lose yourself in the other person or sacrifice your identity. But remember: **men are created differently.** They often miss subtle cues, are more direct, and sometimes even naïve in their emotional understanding. Communicate clearly say what you feel, what you need, and what you expect.

Above all, be **grateful.** For a man, feeling appreciated is a powerful motivation. Even if he is simply fulfilling his duty to provide, he deserves your respect. Never belittle him not even when you are hurt.

Respect is to men what love is to women. It is the fuel that keeps the heart of a man alive in his marriage.

26.5 Conclusion

Marriage is **not an escape**, not a status symbol, and certainly not a cultural performance. It is a **sacred covenant**, a **test of character**, a **pillar of society**, and above all a **path to the pleasure of Allah**. But that path does not begin on the wedding day **it begins with you, today**. Whoever wants to prepare for marriage must stop focusing only on finding the right person, and start working on becoming the right person.

Work on your **akhlāq (character)**, **communication**, **patience**, **empathy**, **domestic skills**, and **self-awareness**. Understand that marriage is not about perfection, but about **growth**, **resilience**, and **sincerity**. We live in a time when many people do not know how to manage their own emotions, let alone those of another. Young people enter lifelong commitments **without mental readiness**, **without guidance**, and **without spiritual grounding**. That is why we see so many broken relationships, divorces, and fractured families.

But the Qur'an gives us clear guidance.
As Allah says in Sūrah An-Nūr:

الطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ

“Good women are for good men, and good men are for good women.” (24:26)

Building a marriage without preparation is like building a house without a foundation. So prepare yourself. Invest in knowledge. Seek counsel from experienced people. Take courses. Speak with your parents, mentors and with yourself. Ask questions that go beyond infatuation or appearances.

And remember: **marriage in Islam is not just a social contract it is an act of worship (‘ibādah)**. Just as prayer and fasting require preparation, so does marriage. If you view marriage as worship, your entire intention and approach will change. You will realize that you are preparing for a life journey centered on **love**, **devotion**, and **spiritual growth**. Ultimately, it's not about who you marry it's about **who you become within the marriage**.

When two people come together with the intention to serve Allah, guided by patience and mutual understanding that is not a fantasy it is reality. A reality that brings peace, as Allah describes:

– لَسَعُنُوا إِلَيْهَا

“So that you may find tranquility in them.” (Ar-Rūm 30:21)

So make your preparation an act of worship. And know: **A good marriage begins with a purified soul.**

Chapter27 – Challenges and Responsibilities within Marriage

27.1 Observation

We now enter a sensitive subject one in which many mistakes are made, often not out of malice, but due to **ignorance, cultural influence, or lack of preparation.**

The Qur'an does not give a detailed list of every task or duty within marriage. Why? Because **every situation is different.** One woman may be a doctor or a provider; another prefers to stay home. One man may work long hours outside, another may be an imam or engaged in da'wah. Life is too diverse for a single rigid division of roles. That is why Allah does not give us an inflexible checklist, but **core principles:** Mawaddah (love) Raḥmah (compassion), and Qiwāmah (responsible leadership and protection).

The practical application of these principles is left to the partners themselves. Yet in many cultures, we still find **a harsh division of roles,** often disguised as religion. Women are expected to cook, clean, raise the children, and always be available even if they also work outside the home. Nowhere in the Qur'an is this made an obligation. The result? Countless conflicts. Men expect food on the table and physical availability, but forget to ask how their wife's day was. There is no real conversation, no mutual understanding, no sense of partnership.

That is why the **engagement phase** is so crucial. It is the moment when couples should discuss expectations: Can the wife work? How will we divide household responsibilities? How will we raise our children? Which duties do we share? Too often, these discussions are avoided only for **disappointment** to follow later. Even the **Prophet ﷺ helped with household chores** a clear lesson for anyone who believes that care and domestic work belong only to women.

In Europe, we fortunately see a growing awareness among young Muslims. More and more couples talk openly and **share responsibilities** fairly. But in many **African and Asian contexts,** marriage remains **deeply patriarchal.** Women are told to obey and serve, often at the expense of their own well-being. They become exhausted, lose their identity, and feel emotionally isolated. When they finally collapse, some men seek solace elsewhere sometimes with a second wife, sometimes in sin, and sometimes under the pretext of religious justification. This is **not Islam** it is **cultural abuse disguised as religion.**

The Qur'an teaches **balance, consultation, love, and justice.** It is time to restore that standard not only in books or sermons, but **inside our homes.**

At the same time, in the **Western context,** we see a different imbalance. Because many women are financially independent, some begin to view men not as partners but as **burdens** “a big child” they have to take care of. Marriage then loses its balance.

Moreover, **love and validation** have become easier to find elsewhere through casual relationships, “open” arrangements, or shallow online connections. What is still taboo in some cultures is normalized here.

The result is the same: **the loss of stability and trust**. So we are losing balance on both sides. In some cultures, **women are oppressed and overburdened**. In others, **men are made redundant**, and the family structure collapses.

Another major issue is the **misuse of Qur’anic verses**.

In parts of Africa and Asia, some men **abuse the verse of qiwāmah** “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women” to justify domination and oppression.

Even worse, the verse that allows limited correction of a wife under strict conditions is ripped from its context and used to **justify domestic violence**.

This often happens in **shame-based societies**, where women have nowhere to turn not to the police, nor to their families. Out of fear or shame, many remain silent.

Meanwhile, in the **West**, we find the opposite pattern: Some marriages have turned into systems of **control and mistrust**. Men feel constantly scrutinized financial care is no longer enough, and every mistake is met with suspicion.

Sometimes, the woman becomes the “monitor” of the relationship: “Where were you?” “Why are you five minutes late?” Even when the man repents and tries to improve, **trust has been replaced by constant accusation**.

Of course, trauma and past wounds often play a role. But a marriage cannot survive on **endless reproach**. It requires the courage to **turn the page together**. The Qur’an calls us to taqwā, forgiveness, and growth not to a cycle of blame and resentment.

The lesson is clear: **Marriage is meant to be a partnership of balance, support, and tenderness**. When **culture, ego, or mistrust** replace these divine principles, the marriage loses its soul. Only by returning to the **Qur’anic foundations** love, mercy, justice, and mutual respect can the equilibrium of marriage be restored.

27.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verses: Sūrat an-Nisā’ (4:34) – Roles, conflicts, and correction within marriage

Part 1 – The man as the responsible party

الرِّجَالُ قَوَّامُونَ عَلَى النِّسَاءِ بِمَا فَضَّلَ اللَّهُ بَعْضَهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ وَبِمَا أَنْفَقُوا مِنْ أَمْوَالِهِمْ

“Men are caretakers in charge of women, by virtue of what Allah has given some over others, and because they spend out of their wealth.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that qawwāmūn does not mean domination, but a **role of care, guidance, and responsibility**. The man is appointed as responsible because he provides financially

(nafaqah) and, by physical disposition, may better protect. **But this grants him no absolute power.**

- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that this **responsibility comes with duties**: leadership implies justice and compassion. This verse is not a license for tyranny, as some men mistakenly assume.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that bimā faḍḍala Allāh does not mean men are superior in worth; rather, **creation and task-distribution differ.**

This verse underlines that **responsibility is never detached from justice, empathy, and care.** It is a **spiritual role**, not cultural patriarchy. And that responsibility is **not limited to financial provision**: it also includes **emotional support, spiritual guidance, and moral stability** not only for one’s wife, but also for one’s **mother, daughters, sisters, and the other women in one’s life.**

Part 2 – The righteous woman and her inner qualities

فَالصَّالِحَاتُ قَانِتَاتٌ حَافِظَاتٌ لِّلْغَيْبِ بِمَا حَفِظَ اللَّهُ

“The righteous women are devoutly obedient, and safeguard (in the husband’s absence) what Allah has commanded to be safeguarded.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** says qānitāt is not blind submission, but fidelity to Allah and to the **moral order within marriage.** Ḥāfizāt li-l-ghayb refers to loyalty, chastity, and guarding the home and **trust even when the husband is absent.**
- **Al-Qurṭubī** clarifies this is not a **list of imposed duties**, but a description of the ideal of mutual trust. It is tied to taqwā, not to oppression.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes that bimā ḥafīza Allāh highlights that the ability to remain faithful is a **gift from Allah**; it requires spiritual formation, not merely rules.

Here the Qur’an describes **the heart of a harmonious woman**, not her household schedule. Aṣ-ṣāliḥāt are women who **bring goodness, stability, and calm.** Their greatest strength is preserving **inner peace and moral harmony** within the marriage. They contribute to an atmosphere of **trust, gentleness, and safety** where a husband feels secure and where children can grow up in peace.

In a world of chaos, social media, and constant stimuli, such a woman is a point of rest not because she is silent or accepts everything, but because, from strength, faith, and wisdom, she knows **when to extinguish the flame and when to kindle it.**

Part 3 – Handling conflicts and the sensitivity around “striking”

وَأَلْتِي تَخَافُونَ نُشُوزَهُنَّ فَعِظُوهُنَّ وَأَهْجُرُوهُنَّ فِي الْمَضَاجِعِ وَأَضْرِبُوهُنَّ سَبْعًا إِنِ اطَّعْتُمْ فَلَا تَبْغُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ سَبِيلًا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا
كَبِيرًا

“As for those whose defiance (nushūz) you fear: admonish them, then leave them alone in the beds, and (as a last step) give a light tap. But if they obey you, do not seek a way against them. Surely Allah is Most High, Most Great.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that nushūz means a serious disruption of marital order **open rebellion or destructive behavior**. The sequence (wā‘izūhunna → hajurūhunna → ḍribūhunna) shows escalation is permitted only in extreme cases, and even then with strict constraints.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** clarifies that ḍarb (striking) **may never cause pain, injury, or humiliation**. It is a symbolic last warning that a husband is **not** free to apply at will. Imām ash-Shāfi‘ī and others forbid any form of violence that causes harm.
- **Ar-Rāzī** states the verse does not **command** striking but allows a limited, context-bound measure. He reminds: “Whoever imagines himself above her forgets that Allah is above him.”

This passage is often abused or misunderstood. In reality, **the Qur’an sets a very high bar**: communication, patience, and wisdom always precede any measure. Even then, **no harm, no revenge, no humiliation** is allowed. The closing words are deliberate: Allah is Most High, Most great **so do not exalt yourself beyond your bounds**.

Verse – Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:228) Reciprocity and balance in rights and duties

وَلَهُنَّ مِثْلُ الَّذِي عَلَيْهِنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ ۗ وَلِلرِّجَالِ عَلَيْهِنَّ دَرَجَةٌ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَزِيزٌ حَكِيمٌ

“And for them (the women) are rights similar to those against them, according to what is right. And men have a degree over them. And Allah is Almighty, All-Wise.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains this verse highlights reciprocity in rights and obligations, with bi-l-ma‘rūf referring to what is **morally and socially proper within context**. The man’s “degree” is a degree of **responsibility**, not of worth. He bears financial duty and is expected to lead the family with justice.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** stresses that **darajah** (degree) is linked to **obligations** like protection, leadership, and care. It is no excuse for oppression. The man must use his position for his family’s welfare, not to impose his will.
- **Ar-Rāzī** underscores that the verse is about **balance** and **just distribution of roles**. Difference in role does not equal difference in value. Allah gave each gender qualities that contribute to a well-functioning marriage.

Islam does not envision a tyrannical model, but one of **justice, balance, and mutual recognition**. The man leads, but with love and responsibility not arrogance or abuse.

Verse – Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:187) Intimacy and mutual protection within marriage

هُنَّ لِبَاسٍ لَّكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ لِبَاسٍ لَّهُنَّ

“They (the women) are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** sees the garment metaphor as rich in meaning. **Clothing protects, covers, adorns, and warms**. Likewise, a spouse fulfills all these roles: guarding honor, covering faults, beautifying life, and offering warmth and security. The verse indicates intimacy as well as emotional and moral connectedness.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains this points to mutual need and closeness. **As clothing clings to the body, spouses are each other’s companions** and refuge. Though revealed to permit intimacy during Ramadan nights, the wording transcends context and outlines a deep ideal of marriage.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes marriage as mutual protection from sin, an emotional anchor, and a safe space to be oneself. **The metaphor also implies that partners protect** each other’s weaknesses rather than expose them just as clothing covers.

In a world that reduces marriage to a contract of duties or material interests, this verse reminds us that marriage is essentially a **spiritual bond**. The Qur’an does not say the man is a shield **for** the woman or vice versa; rather, **both** are garments for each other equals in protection, warmth, and honor. This counters culture-bound notions of dominance or subjugation.

Verse – Sūrat an-Nisā’ (4:19) – Respect and kindness toward wives

وَعَاشِرُوهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ فَإِنْ كَرِهْتُمُوهُنَّ فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا...

“...And live with them (your wives) in a goodly manner. If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** stresses that ‘āshirūhunna bi-l-ma‘rūf is a general call to harmonious conduct that **holds regardless of personal feelings**. Even when love fades, respect remains obligatory. This is a call to ethical behavior within marriage.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** cites this as a call to moral nobility. Marriage is not only about romance but about honor, care, and trust. He notes the **verse specifically** reproves men who quickly turn away from their wives when disappointed.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights the emphasis on **patience and spiritual vision**. What you find difficult may be a source of spiritual growth and abundant good (khayr kathīr). Allah sees beyond the surface.

This verse urges the husband to approach marriage as a **spiritual path** replete with trials, but also hidden blessings. Divorce should never be the result of superficial frustrations. Islamic conduct demands magnanimity, even when it is hard.

Verse – Sūrat at-Taghābun (64:14) – On relationships as a test

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ وَأَوْلَادِكُمْ عَدُوًّا لَكُمْ فَاحْذَرُوهُمْ ۚ وَإِنْ تَعَفَّوْا وَتَصْفَحُوا وَتَغْفِرُوا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

“O you who believe, indeed among your spouses and your children there are (at times) enemies to you so be on your guard. But if you pardon, overlook, and forgive, then surely Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that ‘aduw (‘‘enemy’’) does not mean a spouse or child hates you; rather, their love, concerns, or **pressure may distract you from obedience to Allah** for example, a wife discouraging da‘wah efforts, or children holding one back from zakat or struggle. It is a spiritual warning, not an accusation against women.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** confirms this verse does **not** mean the wife is hostile; a partner **can sometimes be a hindrance to one’s religious growth**. He mentions Companions whose wives discouraged migration to Madinah or participation in striving for Allah’s cause.
- **Ar-Rāzī** points to the verse’s balance: Allah warns of a potential danger (unwitting distraction) but ends with a call to forgiveness and forbearance showing that relationships are full of trials, yet love and forgiveness remain central.

This verse is **not** a license for suspicion or antipathy toward one’s wife; it is a call to spiritual alertness: even those you love most can (consciously or not) distract you from duty to Allah.

At the same time, Allah emphasizes **forgiveness, compassion, and mercy** as the core values in handling such challenges. The Qur’an both **warns** and **softens**.

Verses – Sūrat at-Taḥrīm (66:4–6) – The impact of the wife

إِن تَتُوبَا إِلَى اللَّهِ فَقَدْ صَغَتْ قُلُوبُكُمَا وَإِن تَظَاهَرَا عَلَيْهِ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ مَوْلَاهُ وَجِبْرِيلُ وَصَلِحُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمَلَائِكَةَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ ظَهِيرٌ

“If you two turn back to Allah, then your hearts have indeed inclined (away). But if you support one another against him, then surely Allah is his Protector and (so is) Jibrīl, and the righteous believers; and after that the angels are also his supporters.”

Context of Revelation:

These verses were **revealed in an intimate domestic context** not on a battlefield or in a political crisis. The matter concerned **the Prophet ﷺ and his wives ‘Ā’ishah and Ḥafṣah**. According to the major tafsīr works (e.g., Ibn Kathīr, Al-Qurṭubī), out of jealousy the two collaborated and disclosed the Prophet’s confidential matter possibly related to Māriyah al-Qibṭiyyah or the prohibition he imposed on himself regarding her.

What is striking is Allah’s response. It was a **private, household** issue, yet Allah intervened with language typically reserved for the battlefield:

“Allah is his Protector, and Jibrīl, and the righteous believers, and then the angels...”

This shows how **seriously the undermining of a husband’s morale and trust even that of the Prophet ﷺ is taken**. Not because he was weak, but because **women possess the power to disturb a man’s inner balance**, even that of a Prophet; and such inner unrest can gravely impact his mission.

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that ṣaghat qulūbukumā (“your hearts deviated”) indicates an inner inclination to defiance or jealousy. Taḏāharā (“you two support one another against him”) denotes active collusion a kind of mini-revolt.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** underscores that mentioning Allah, Jibrīl, and the angels shows that **even domestic tensions can be strategically significant for revelation**. The Prophet’s inner tranquility was essential to his public mission.
- **Ar-Rāzī** stresses that Allah here places **household equilibrium above public and political duties**. Even amidst warfare and hypocrisy in Madinah, Allah says: **settle your home first**.

This passage teaches that **the stability of a marriage is crucial for the well-being of society**. If the Prophet ﷺ despite all his duties, enemies, battles, and revelation is instructed by Allah to first set his domestic affairs in order, then what of us?

No dā'wah, no activism, no struggle against hypocrisy or injustice outside the home will be successful if **injustice, chaos, or distrust prevails within**.

Marriage is not secondary; it is the **first arena** of moral education, spiritual purification, and character formation. That is why Allah intervenes firmly, even when the issue seems to be only jealousy between two wives because the marriage of a believer, especially the Prophet ﷺ, must radiate calm and trust, not unrest and division.

27.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ، وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ... وَالرَّجُلُ رَاعٍ فِي أَهْلِهِ، وَهُوَ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

“Each of you is a shepherd, and each of you is responsible for his flock... The man is a shepherd over his household, and he is responsible for his flock.”
(Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

Reflection: Leadership within marriage is not a privilege but a burden a duty to care, to protect, and to build. The Prophet ﷺ points us to moral accountability: your family is your amanah (trust), not your possession. This Verse reminds a man that every choice and every behavior toward his family will be held to account.

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

خَيْرُكُمْ خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِهِ، وَأَنَا خَيْرُكُمْ لِأَهْلِي

“The best of you is the one who is best to his family, and I am the best of you to my family.”
(Al-Tirmidhi)

Reflection: True excellence begins at home. Your conduct in the mosque or on social media is not the measure of your Islam; it is how you treat your wife and children. The Prophet ﷺ was gentle, helpful, and loving at home. He showed that piety first manifests in your dealings with those closest to you.

Verse 3

The Prophet ﷺ said:

وَالْمَرْأَةُ رَاعِيَةٌ فِي بَيْتِ زَوْجِهَا وَمَسْئُولَةٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهَا

“The woman is a shepherd in her husband’s house, and she is responsible for her flock.”
(*Al-Bukhārī and Muslim*)

Reflection: This Verse highlights the woman’s responsibility as steward of family life. Her role is not inferior, but essential. She is a cornerstone of calm and stability in the home. Islam recognizes her as an active guardian, not a passive follower. Trust, care, and dedication are her core qualities.

Verse 4

The Prophet ﷺ said:

سَأَلَتْ عَائِشَةَ مَا كَانَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ يَصْنَعُ فِي بَيْتِهِ؟ قَالَتْ: كَانَ فِي مِهْنَةِ أَهْلِهِ

“Al-Aswad asked: ‘What would the Prophet ﷺ do in his house?’ She (‘Ā’ishah) said: ‘He would assist his family with the household tasks.’”
(*Al-Bukhārī and Muslim*)

Reflection: The best of all people ﷺ washed his own clothes, mended his sandals, and helped his family. He did not consider it beneath his dignity. On the contrary, it was a sign of his greatness. In a time when many men only wish to lead, this Verse shows that true manly strength lies in service, gentleness, and active involvement at home.

Verse 5

The Prophet ﷺ said:

وَفِي بُضْعِ أَحَدِكُمْ صَدَقَةٌ

They said: “O Messenger of Allah, would one of us receive reward for fulfilling his desire?”
He replied:

أَرَأَيْتُمْ لَوْ وَضَعَهَا فِي حَرَامٍ، أَكَانَ عَلَيْهِ وِزْرٌ؟ فَكَذَلِكَ إِذَا وَضَعَهَا فِي الْحَلَالِ، كَانَ لَهُ أَجْرٌ

“In the intimacy one of you has (with his spouse) there is charity.” They asked, “O Messenger of Allah, does one of us obtain reward for satisfying his desire?” He said, “Tell me, if he were to place it in the unlawful, would he bear sin? Likewise, when he places it in the lawful, he has a reward.” (Muslim)

Reflection: Even the most intimate moments between husband and wife are sanctified in Islam not merely lawful, but rewardable. Islam recognizes human nature and gives it a spiritual form. Love, desire, and pleasure thus become part of the path to Allah.

27.4 Reflective Layer

Marriage is an institution created by Allah as a place of tranquility, a source of love, mercy, and covering. Yet what was meant to be a sanctuary has, in many cases, become a battlefield. What was meant to be mutual trust has turned into suspicion. What was meant to nurture spiritual growth has become a source of frustration, stress, and emotional exhaustion.

The Qur'an reminds us of a fundamental truth:

“And for them (women) are rights similar to those against them, according to what is fair...” (2:228)
“And live with them in kindness...” (4:19)

These verses establish a divine principle of balance, mutual respect, and morality. In some verses, the man is appointed as leader and responsible guardian, but never as a tyrant or dictator. His responsibility is not merely financial it is also emotional, spiritual, and moral. He must care, protect, guide, and serve. That requires maturity, wisdom, and taqwā. It demands self-control and a deep relationship with Allah for whoever cannot lead himself, cannot lead others.

On the other hand, we also see how some women, in reaction to centuries of patriarchal abuse, have swung to the opposite extreme. The man is no longer seen as a partner, but as a burden. Financial independence has led some to believe they no longer need anyone. Raising children has become a task to outsource. Love and romance? To be found through apps without commitment. Yet Allah says:

“They are a garment for you, and you are a garment for them.” (2:187)

A garment covers, warms, protects, and adorns. In the Qur'an, this metaphor is deeply spiritual. Marriage is meant to cover each other's flaws, soothe each other's pain, and treat each other's vulnerabilities with honor. But what do we often see? We expose one another's weaknesses and use them as weapons. We demand “rights” but forget “duties.” We crave love but withhold patience.

The Prophet ﷺ gave us illuminating examples:

“The best of you is the one who is best to his wife.”
“A woman is like a rib: if you try to straighten her, you will break her.”
“The woman is an amānah a trust in your care.”

He helped in the household sewing his own clothes, washing his garments, milking his goat. This was not weakness. It was strength. True greatness belongs to the one who does not see himself as above ordinary tasks. And then there is that powerful warning from the Qur'an:

“Indeed, among your spouses and children are enemies to you; so beware of them...” (At-Taghābun 64:14)

Not because they are malicious, but because **love without guidance**, and **care without knowledge**, can lead to dependence, selfishness, or even idolization of the family over Allah. Anything that distracts you from Allah becomes a test even love, even your children.

Finding Balance

What we need is a **re-education of the soul**, for both men and women.

- Men must learn that leadership is not a position of power but a role of service.
- Women must understand that feminism is not the only path to dignity; the Qur'an offers a spiritual path of honor, balance, and equality within distinction.
- Parents must stop teaching their sons that "a woman belongs in the kitchen" and their daughters that "a man must solve everything."
- And youth must learn that marriage is not a fairytale it is jihad an-nafs: building, failing, forgiving, and rebuilding again.

Maintaining Love is Also 'Ibādah

What many forget in marriage is that love does not sustain itself automatically. In the beginning, everything feels effortless affection, sweet messages, gifts, dinners, kind words before sleep. Everything feels light and natural. But what about after ten or twenty years with children, work stress, responsibilities, misunderstandings, and disappointments?

That is when the real work begins. That is when marriage becomes true dīn a spiritual discipline, a form of jihad an-nafs, fighting against selfishness, laziness, and emotional neglect. Allah says:

"And He placed between you love and mercy." (30:21)

Notice: love and mercy. Because love without mercy fades, and mercy without action dies.

A woman thrives through attention. She needs her husband to tell her she is beautiful, to praise her efforts, to surprise her not only with material gifts but through simple acts: cleaning the house without being asked, cooking so she can rest, taking care of the children so she can have time for herself. In turn, this gives her energy to care for herself, to feel attractive something important for her well-being and for her husband.

Men, on the other hand, need respect, trust, and peace when they come home not constant questioning or criticism. A man needs a wife who supports him, doesn't suspect him, and encourages him in his role as leader, father, and servant of Allah. He, too, needs to feel safe.

Hence the saying:

"Marriage is like a castle with two gates each spouse guards one gate."

If one gate remains open, the enemies will enter: Shayṭān, temptation, fatigue, ego, and monotony. But if both partners guard their gates, help each other, forgive each other, and keep building, the fortress grows stronger with the years.

Talking is repairing the Lock

Some couples live together for twenty years without ever truly speaking about what matters to them. No woman is a mind-reader. No man automatically understands what she needs. **Open communication is a form of 'ibādah.** Say what you appreciate. Say what you miss. Listen not to reply, but to understand.

The question is not:

“What do I get from this person?”

but rather:

“What am I willing to invest in this person for the sake of Allah?”

Ultimately, marriage is a **mirror of the soul:**

- Can you forgive?
- Can you work on yourself?
- Can you cherish the other, even when you're struggling?
- Are you a source of peace or of stress?

Allah did not create marriage for relaxation but for “sakan” deep inner tranquility. And tranquility requires work every single day. That is not weakness; that is strength.

“And Allah placed between you love and mercy...” But it is up to you to keep planting it, watering it, protecting it from drought and storms.

The Path Forward

We must return to the Qur'an not as decoration on our walls or slogans in arguments, but as guidance in our hearts, actions, and relationships. We must stop copying cultural traditions with no root in divine revelation. We must stop silencing domestic abuse under the pretext of sabr. We must stop demanding from others without offering sacrifice ourselves.

Marriage is a sacred covenant not a business contract, not oppression, and not unbounded freedom. Marriage is 'ibādah. Whoever lives it sincerely grows closer to Allah. And whoever fails in it (may Allah protect us) wounds himself, his partner, and often his children.

“If you dislike them, it may be that you dislike something in which Allah has placed much good.” (4:19)

I myself have **grown immensely through my marriage** as a man, as a Muslim, and in my societal role and service to the ummah. That growth came not only from the beautiful moments of support, but also through the challenges we faced together. **Marriage is not always roses; it is often a process of friction, forgiveness, communication, struggle, and fusion. Yet within that process lies the deepest spiritual wisdom:** you learn patience, you learn to listen, you learn to know yourself, and you learn to know Allah. The foundation is and always will be **sabr (patience)** and **taqwā (God-**

consciousness). Without them, everything crumbles. With them, even the storm becomes a force that draws you closer to each other and closer to Allah.

27.5 Conclusion

Marriage in Islam is not a contract based on personal interests, but a **spiritual covenant** founded upon three pillars: **love (mawadda)**, **mercy (raḥma)**, and **responsibility (qiwāma)**. It is a form of **jihād** a lifelong struggle to overcome the ego, to serve one another, and to build a home that pleases Allah.

The Qur'an leaves no room for abuse or tyranny:

- The man is **responsible**, not a ruler.
- The woman is **loyal and devoted**, not inferior.
- The differences between them are **complementary**, not hierarchical.

“And for them (the women) are rights similar to those against them, according to what is just.”
(2:228)

We have seen how the Qur'an emphasizes **care, respect, communication, and both financial and moral responsibility** from both sides. The Verse reinforce this message: the Prophet ﷺ served within his household, helped with chores, showed affection, and repeatedly stressed the importance of **respect, patience, and good treatment**.

Yet our reality shows that these balances are often lost today:

- In some parts of Africa and Asia, marriage is still seen as a field of male dominance, where abuse, control, and culture override religion.
- In the West, we see how some women are no longer a source of peace, and how both partners burn out under mutual pressure, unrealistic expectations, and lack of appreciation.

Therefore, this chapter must end with a **clear call to restoration**:

- Marriage requires **effort, time, attention, and open communication**.
- It requires **commitment**, even after twenty years.
- It requires **spiritual growth, mutual recognition, and forgiveness**.
- It requires that both partners **guard their gates** against the influences of Shayṭān, ego, and monotony.
- And it requires that we never forget that our marriage is an **amānah** a sacred trust and responsibility before Allah.

When marriage fails, the family often fails. When the family falters, the **community falters**. Thus, **change in the ummah begins at home**.

Let these words not only be **read**, but **lived**:

“The best of you is the one who is best to his wife.”

Verse of the Prophet ﷺ

Chapter28 – Divorce (Ṭalāq): Between Mercy and Boundaries

28.1 Observation

When we look at the global reality surrounding divorce, we notice two striking trends that differ strongly depending on the cultural context.

In many African and Asian countries, a **strong culture of shame still prevails around** divorce, especially for women. Ending a marriage is seen as a personal defeat or as a disgrace to the family. Women are often socially stigmatized and lose their status within the community. What makes this situation even more harrowing is the fact that many women are financially dependent on their husbands. They have no income of their own, no access to support, and are therefore **forced to stay in a toxic relationship**, even when there is psychological or physical abuse. Not infrequently, we hear stories of women who suffer in silence for years because the alternative divorce seems socially, religiously, or economically impossible to them.

In contrast to this, we see **an opposite movement** in Europe and other Western societies. Here, divorce seems increasingly to be the first reflex when difficulties arise. Statistics confirm this: about **45 to 50% of marriages** end in divorce, and within Muslim communities, too, these figures are rising alarmingly. In our environment, we see numerous examples of young couples, often even within five years of marriage, who split up.

What remains are **children caught between two worlds**, fathers who see their children only every two weeks, mothers who bear the upbringing alone, and broken families that leave long trails of sorrow, trauma, and instability. Divorce is sometimes so normalized that there is hardly any thought given to alternative solutions such as mediation, patience, communication, or guidance.

However, what is often missing in both contexts, both in the East and the West, is a **purely Islamic perspective** on divorce: not as a sin, not as a taboo, but also not as a taken-for-granted way out. In Islam, divorce is **fully permitted**, but it is also considered **the most hated permissible act to Allah**. It is a solution for when there is truly no other way, but not a decision that should be taken lightly.

It is striking that the Qur'an has not dedicated a separate chapter to marriage, but *has* to divorce: Surah At-Talāq. In it, it states again and again: "Fear Allah," because even when ending a relationship, respect, responsibility, and justice remain central. We must realize as a community that a lack of peace and mutual attraction in a marriage can form a real ground for divorce. But precisely for this reason, Islam asks to invest in relationships, to strengthen communication, to resolve tensions, and to seek help when things get difficult.

Another problem that emerges increasingly is the selective use of Islamic rules. During the marriage, some like to appeal to statements such as: "The man's money is for us, and my money is only mine." But when it comes to divorce, many let go of Islamic guidelines and grab onto Western principles: everything must be divided 50/50, regardless of ownership, responsibility, or situation. The man must often give up everything, even what is not religiously obligatory. This often creates tensions, legal

conflicts, and injustice on both sides. On top of that, there is much ignorance about the actual rules of *ṭalāq*. Some think that saying “I divorce you” three times suffices to end a marriage. But it is not that simple. Islam provides for a process of intention, deliberation, time, mediation, and (if necessary) a reconsideration during the waiting period (*‘idda*).

Finally, a deeper mental colonization also plays a role. We have often unconsciously adopted a Christian-Romantic ideal of marriage, where a marriage is only successful if it lasts “until death do us part.” In reality, Islam acknowledges that a marriage can also end, and that this is not necessarily a failure. It can even be a form of mercy. Islam also allows someone to remarry after a divorce, to support multiple families, and in that way to distribute his responsibility and resources rather than concentrating them.

28.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah an-Nisā’ (4:35)

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ شِقَاقَ بَيْنِهِمَا فَأَبْعَثُوا حَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهِ وَحَكَمًا مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا إِنْ يُرِيدَا إِصْلَاحًا يُوَفِّقِ اللَّهُ بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلِيمًا حَكِيمًا

“And if you fear a breach between the two (spouses), then appoint an arbiter from his family and an arbiter from her family. If they both desire reconciliation, Allah will cause it between them. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that this passage presents an **institutional solution** to marital disputes before they escalate to divorce. Appointing a ḥakam (arbiter or mediator) from both families is intended to maintain fairness and balance. It is not about defending one’s own side, but about **sincerely seeking reconciliation**. If the intention is pure (in *yurīdā iṣlāḥan*), Allah Himself promises to bring harmony between them.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that this verse is not merely a recommendation, but in many cases an **obligation** when serious conflict arises. **Islam encourages believers not to separate impulsively** but to first involve wise and trusted mediators from both families to calm, counsel, and attempt peace before considering divorce.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights the spiritual dimension: Allah links His assistance to the **sincerity of intention**. If both spouses truly wish to reconcile, Allah will aid them. But if stubbornness prevails, no system can restore harmony. This verse reminds us that success in relationships even in times of crisis begins with a pure heart and ends with Allah’s guidance.

Verse 2 – Sūrah at-Ṭalāq (65:2)

فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ فَارِقُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ وَأَشْهِدُوا ذَوَيْ عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ ذَلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَن كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۗ وَمَن يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا

“When they (the women) have reached the end of their waiting period, then retain them in a fair manner or release them in a fair manner. And call to witness two just men among you, and uphold the testimony for Allah. That is an admonition for whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day. And whoever fears Allah He will make for him a way out.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that this verse is not only about the technical end of the waiting period (‘iddah), but about **the manner** in which one conducts oneself during divorce with dignity (ma‘rūf), justice, and respect. The requirement of witnesses indicates that divorce is a **social and legal act**, not a private emotional outburst. Taqwā (God-consciousness) is the compass for right action in these delicate matters.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** stresses the significance of the term ma‘rūf meaning “in a good and decent way.” Divorce must not be conducted harshly or with slander, but with respect and proper financial provision. Even in separation, believers must keep Allah before their eyes. The requirement of witnesses protects both parties and ensures justice and transparency.
- **Ar-Rāzī** interprets this verse as a call to **moral discipline** during conflict. Divorce must never be an impulsive reaction driven by emotion or anger, but a conscious act guided by faith and awareness of its consequences. The promise that Allah provides “**a way out**” for those who fear Him shows that even in crises, spiritual awareness can open unexpected doors of healing and growth.

Verse 3 – Sūrah al-Baqarah (2:231)

وَإِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ فَبَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ سَرِّحُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ ۖ وَلَا تُمْسِكُوهُنَّ ضِرَارًا لِّتَعْتَدُوا ۗ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ... فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ ۗ وَلَا تَتَّخِذُوا آيَاتِ اللَّهِ هُزُوعًا ۗ وَادْكُرُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ

“And when you divorce women and they have reached the end of their waiting period, then retain them honorably or release them honorably. Do not retain them to harm them so that you transgress. And whoever does that has certainly wronged himself. And do not take the verses of Allah in jest, and remember the favor of Allah upon you...”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse condemns **manipulative behavior during divorce**. Some men used to hold their wives until just before the end of the ‘iddah period, only to reclaim them out of spite or control. This is explicitly forbidden. Islam forbids treating women as property; **taqwā here means letting go with honor**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** interprets “Do not take the verses of Allah in jest” as a warning against treating ṭalāq lightly. One must not utter words of divorce carelessly or without understanding their implications. Divorce should always be approached with awareness and seriousness.
- **Ar-Rāzī** analyzes the **psychological aspect** of divorce: decisions made in anger or frustration often lead to injustice. This verse reminds believers that the **harm one causes another ultimately harms oneself**. Islamic law is not a tool of domination but a framework for **justice and mutual dignity**, even when a marriage ends.

Verse 4 – Sūrah at-Ṭalāq (65:2)

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا

“And whoever fears Allah He will make for him a way out.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that even in moments of deep crisis, such as divorce, **taqwā** must remain the foundation. Deliverance is not merely practical but **spiritual**; the path forward begins in consciousness of Allah.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** observes that many people follow their desires during divorce. This verse calls believers back to **justice and reverence for divine boundaries**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights that Allah provides solutions in ways we could never anticipate as long as we uphold His laws and maintain awareness of Him.

28.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

أبغض الحلال إلى الله الطلاق

“The most hated permissible act to Allah is divorce (ṭalāq).”

(Abū Dāwūd, 2178; classified as ḥasan by some scholars)

Reflection: This Verse expresses a profound spiritual truth: **divorce is permissible**, yes but it remains something that **Allah dislikes**. Why? Because divorce tears apart something that was intended to be a source of **tranquility (sukūn)**, **love (mawadda)**, and **mercy (raḥma)**.

At the same time, this narration gives a **realistic framework**: Allah did not forbid divorce. He permits it when marriage no longer fulfills its purpose. The Prophet ﷺ’s words invite deep reflection and responsibility to exercise this right **only when no other way remains**, and even then, to do it **in a way that pleases Allah**.

The word **“al-ḥalāl”** (permissible) reminds us not to turn divorce into a **cultural taboo** it is allowed. The word **“abghaḍ”** (most hated) teaches us, however, that it must not be taken lightly.

Divorce should only follow:

- sincere attempts at **reconciliation**,
- the proper **Islamic steps and procedures**,
- and **awareness** of its spiritual and social consequences.

The Prophet ﷺ never said, “Divorce is ḥarām.” But he did teach us that **even in separation, character and ethics (akhlāq) must prevail**.

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

جاءت امرأة ثابت بن قيس إلى النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم فقالت: يا رسول الله، ما أعتب عليه في خلق ولا دين، ولكني أكره الكفر في الإسلام. فقال رسول الله صلى الله عليه وسلم: أترددين عليه حديثه؟ قالت: نعم، فقال رسول الله: اقبل الحديقة وطلقها تطليقة.

Ibn ‘Abbās reported that the wife of Thābit ibn Qays came to the Prophet ﷺ and said: “O Messenger of Allah, I have no complaint about his character or his religion, but I fear that I might fall into ingratitude (kufr) in Islam [if I remain with him].”

The Prophet ﷺ asked: “Will you return his bridal garden (mahr)?”

She replied: “Yes.”

The Prophet ﷺ then said: “Accept the garden and divorce her once.” (Bukhārī)

Reflection: This Verse demonstrates that **emotional alienation itself can be a legitimate reason for divorce** even when the husband has done nothing wrong in terms of religion or behavior.

The woman in this narration acknowledges her husband’s goodness but feels that she can no longer offer him genuine love. She fears that remaining in the marriage would lead to inner resentment and spiritual harm. The Prophet ﷺ does **not** rebuke her, nor does he force her to stay. Instead, he upholds **justice**: if she wishes to separate, she must return the dowry (mahr) a process known as **khul’**.

From this, we learn that in Islam:

- **Divorce is not only permissible in cases of abuse or sin,**
- But also when there is **a deep incompatibility** that causes emotional or spiritual harm.
- At the same time, the **husband’s financial right** is preserved if he is not at fault.

The message is clear: Allah desires **peace and tranquility** within marriage “So that you may find tranquility in them.” (Qur’an 30:21) And when that peace is no longer possible, Islam offers a **dignified way out**, without blame or disgrace.

28.4 Reflective Layer

Islam teaches us to approach difficulties in relationships with balance **neither dramatizing nor ignoring them**. Divorce in Islam is **not a sin**, but a **last resort** when harmony, love, and tranquility have completely vanished and all sincere efforts at reconciliation have failed. As the Qur’anic verses emphasize, the focus is not merely on ending a marriage, but on **how** that ending is conducted.

Unfortunately, in practice, we often see the opposite. People divorce in anger with revenge, gossip, hatred, or financial exploitation. Children are used as weapons, responsibilities are neglected, and the limits of respect and religious ethics are crossed. Yet Allah repeatedly commands in the Qur’an: **(bima’ rūf) – In a good, recognized, and dignified manner.**

How Should Divorce Be Conducted According to Islam?

Islam has set forth **clear, balanced guidelines** for ṭalāq designed to preserve justice, calm, and dignity. Below is a concise overview:

1. **Divorce During a State of Purity (ṭuhr), Without Intimacy:**
Divorce must be pronounced when the wife is in a state of ritual purity (not menstruating) and no sexual relations have taken place during that period.
This prevents impulsive or emotionally charged decisions and allows space for reflection.
2. **Pronounce One Ṭalāq, Not Three at Once:**
Only one declaration of divorce should be made, after which a waiting period (‘iddah) of three menstrual cycles begins.
Declaring three divorces at once is, according to many scholars, a **blameworthy innovation (bid‘ah)** it causes confusion, regret, and undermines the spirit of deliberation that Islam commands.
3. **Respect the ‘Iddah Period:**
During this waiting period, the wife remains in the marital home (unless it is unsafe) but without physical intimacy. This allows time for calm reflection, emotional healing, and the possibility of reconciliation (rujū‘) if the couple regrets their decision.
4. **If Divorce Becomes Final Depart With Justice:**
When separation becomes definitive, it must be accompanied by:
 - **respectful and clear communication,**
 - **financial fairness** (e.g., maintenance when applicable),
 - **avoidance of gossip, slander, or hatred,**
 - and protection of the children they must never become part of the conflict.
5. **No Misuse of Religion:**
The rules of Islam must never be manipulated for control or revenge. Ṭalāq is a sacred and regulated act, not a weapon or emotional outburst.
6. **Include Witnesses (When Possible):**
As stated in Qur’an 65:2, two upright witnesses should be present at the formal declaration of divorce. This prevents disputes or injustice later on.
7. **Legal Documentation:**
While a religious ṭalāq may be spiritually valid, it is strongly recommended to also finalize the **civil divorce** legally, ensuring that all rights and obligations are documented and upheld.

Spirituality and Character in Divorce

The manner in which one divorces is one of the greatest **tests of character**. A true believer’s worth is not shown in moments of love, but in moments of separation. It is easy to be kind when things are good; the real test lies in remaining fair and respectful when the heart is wounded. Whoever maintains dignity, patience, and justice at the moment of disappointment demonstrates true taqwā (God-consciousness).

We must teach our children that sometimes a marriage fails and that this is not a moral failure if it ends with honor, forgiveness, and responsibility. **As a community, we must create spaces for healing** and new beginnings, where people can rebuild without stigma or judgment. And we must remember:

Allah does not only look at whom you marry, but also how you let someone go. You are accountable not only for how you loved, but also for how you parted.

28.5 Conclusion

Divorce is not a failure, not a sin, and certainly not a disgrace. It is a way out permitted by Allah when a marriage loses its foundations and when **peace, mercy, and respect** disappear despite repeated attempts at restoration.

Islam offers us a balanced path in this: not the blind persistence that holds victims hostage in a suffocating marriage, but also not the frivolous attitude that throws in the towel at the first conflict.

***Ṭalāq* is more than a legal mechanism; it is a spiritual trial.** It asks us the question of how we deal with loss, whether we remain just when love disappears, and whether we choose honor and *taqwā* even at the moment of parting.

That the Qur'an dedicates a complete surah to divorce shows that Allah knows man and his vulnerability. He knows that relationships sometimes break, but **He does not want us to break along with them in morality and dignity.**

A divorce does not say everything about a person, but how one divorces says everything. With Allah, one is not only judged on whom one chose to love, but also on whom one chose to let go with justice.

Chapter 29 – Polygamy in Islam

29.1 Observation

When discussing the topic of **polygamy**, it becomes clear that its practice and perception differ dramatically across regions of the world. In many **African countries** where I regularly travel for humanitarian missions, polygamy remains deeply ingrained in the culture. It is striking how openly some men there speak with pride about having two wives, as if it were a **status symbol** or proof of their virility. Yet, upon closer observation, a troubling pattern emerges.

What stands out repeatedly is that the **second wife** is almost always much younger than the first; often even a virgin. In a conversation with partners in Niger, I was told quite candidly that when a man desires a second wife, he simply visits a **high school** to select a young girl. There is no sign of mutual maturity, responsible dialogue, or concern for the woman's well-being. It resembles a form of **subtle, religiously wrapped exploitation** more than a sincere Islamic act of care.

Others proudly told me that their two wives compete with one another out of **jealousy**, as though this were an achievement—a sign of power or masculinity. Some men even admitted that the sexual dynamic becomes tense and difficult, especially in the beginning, because rivalry and emotional distance are constant factors—even when both wives live under the same roof, each in a separate room.

What affects me most, however, is this: **I have never once heard** of a man taking as a second wife a **widow** or a woman with **children** who has no one to support her. Women in such situations often the most vulnerable are neglected, avoided, or deemed “unattractive.” In many of these societies, marrying a widow is considered taboo, even though doing so would be an act of **mercy, responsibility, and righteousness**. So how can one call this an **Islamic practice**, when the **Qur'an** and the **spirit of the Sunnah** are being used to **justify ego and desire under the guise of religion**?

I often ask myself: *Why do women accept this?* Sometimes it is simply because they are trying to escape a **hopeless home situation**, or because their families treat them like **commodities**. In certain contexts, daughters are literally “married off” without their consent, driven by **economic hardship** or **social pressure**. On the other hand, some women and this is a reality consciously accept being a second wife because they cannot find reliable or righteous men. When they finally meet one sincere and responsible man, they would rather **share him** than remain **alone and unprotected**.

Still, as a community, we must ask the **fundamental question**: Why do some men want a second wife? Is it truly out of **care, justice, and social responsibility** or because their first marriage is already fractured, and polygamy serves as an escape rather than a service? I recall a **Malaysian friend** of my age proudly telling me that he was planning to take a second wife. When I asked him whether his first marriage was still healthy, he hesitated... and eventually realized he needed to **repair what was broken** before starting a new chapter.

Before speaking about the **rights and conditions** of polygamy, we must first be **honest** about the **reality** in which it is often practiced, and the **motives** that drive it. Because when the **spirit of justice and responsibility** is missing, what remains is only an **empty form cloaked in pious language**.

29.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat An-Nisā’ (4:3)

وَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تُقْسِطُوا فِي الْيَتَامَىٰ فَانكِحُوا مَا طَابَ لَكُمْ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ مَثْنَىٰ وَثُلَاثَ وَرُبْعًا ۚ فَإِنْ خِفْتُمْ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا فَوَاحِدَةً أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ
أَيْمَانُكُمْ ۚ ذَلِكَ أَذْنَىٰ أَلَّا تَعْدِلُوا

“And if you fear that you will not deal justly with the orphan girls, then marry other women of your choice two, three, or four. But if you fear that you will not be just, then (marry) only one, or those your right hands possess. That is more likely to prevent you from committing injustice.”

Tafsīr Insights

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** points out that this verse was revealed in a context **where orphan girls were often exploited or wronged**. Many married them for their property, without genuine care. This verse sets an ethical limit: if you are afraid of not doing justice to vulnerable women like orphans, **then rather take a mature woman whom you marry voluntarily and can treat justly**. He also notes that the order in the verse “two, three, or four” is not a promotion of polygamy, but rather a maximum limit and a test of justice. The essence is: **can you be just among multiple women?**
- **Al-Qurṭubī** states that **polygamy is permitted, but not recommended, unless there is a social or moral motive** behind it such as care for widows, orphans, or protection of women without family. He emphasizes the second part of the verse: “If you fear not being just, then (take) only one.” According to him, this condition is so heavy and difficult to fulfill (justice in attention, time, material care), that in most cases it is wiser and safer to stick to one woman.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that the word *ta‘dilū* (being just) is not only about material matters, but also about emotional balance, attention, and respect. And Allah says later in the Qur’an (4:129): **“You will never be able to be completely just between women, even if you desire that.”** According to Ar-Rāzī, this is an indication that polygamy is indeed permitted, but spiritually risky, and that it is better to avoid it if there is no higher necessity.

The Qur’an makes it possible to marry multiple women under one condition: absolute justice. But exactly that condition is called into question again and again in the Qur’an. Moreover, in verse 129 of the same surah, **it literally states that you will never be able to do that completely.**

The message is clear:

- **Polygamy is *not* an ideal**; it is a permitted exception for those who can bear what it demands.
- It is not a right **without responsibility, and certainly** not a means to pleasure, competition, or status.

In times of war, famine, and social fracture, such as in the time of the revelation, polygamy could be an instrument of mercy and protection. But in a world where it degenerates into a means of desire, status enhancement, or oppression of vulnerable women, we must not justify it with Qur’anic verses without respecting the spirit thereof.

29.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ كَانَتْ لَهُ امْرَأَتَانِ فَمَالَ إِلَىٰ إِحْدَاهُمَا، جَاءَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَشِقُّهُ مَائِلٌ

“Whoever has two wives and inclines toward one of them (showing favoritism and lacking justice) will come on the Day of Resurrection with one side of his body leaning downward.”

(Abū Dāwūd, 2133 – authenticated by Al-Albānī)

Reflection: This Verse of the Prophet ﷺ is both powerful and sobering. It shows that **polygamy** is not merely a matter of permission, **but** one of **profound spiritual responsibility**. The image of a man appearing with one side leaning on the Day of Judgment symbolizes the **moral imbalance** and is not merely a matter of permission, **but injustice** he committed in this life. He failed to uphold one of Allah’s explicit commands to be **just and fair** among his wives in terms of time, attention, financial support, and treatment. Many men who pursue polygamy view it as a **right or personal achievement**, while ignoring the divine condition stated in the Qur’an:

“But if you fear that you will not be just, then (marry) only one.” (fa-in khiftum allā ta’ dilū fa-wāḥidah Qur’an 4:3)

The Prophet ﷺ himself had multiple wives, yet he repeatedly expressed his awareness of the limits of human fairness, saying:

“O Allah, this is my distribution regarding what I am able to control (my time and provision), so do not hold me accountable for what I cannot control (my heart).” (*Aḥmad, Abū Dāwūd*)

Even the Messenger of Allah ﷺ whose justice and character were unmatched **recognized the impossibility of complete equality of the heart**. How much more cautious, then, should ordinary people be?

This Verse is not a prohibition, but a **stern warning**. If one truly believes he can uphold polygamy, he must know that on the **Day of Judgment**, Allah will scrutinize his fairness down to the smallest preference, glance, and emotional inclination. Whoever cannot uphold this with **justice, self-control, and taqwā**, has **no valid reason** to enter into polygamy.

29.4 Reflective Layer

Polygamy is one of the most sensitive subjects in our communities. The Qur'an has set a **clear limit and condition** upon it: "If you fear not being just, then take only one." (4:3). But in practice, **we see that this condition is often ignored or manipulated.**

In African countries, polygamy is often **culturally normalized**. Men who have multiple wives are seen as a status symbol. It is something people are proud of. But as we saw in the observation, this usually does not happen out of social responsibility, but out of desire: the second wife is often younger, a virgin, while widows and women with children are ignored. Polygamy is rarely deployed in this context to protect vulnerable women, whereas in the time of the revelation that was often indeed the underlying reason.

We also see a worrying trend in Europe. Within some conservative groups, divorced women are often taken only as a "second wife," purely for sexual lusts on the weekend or for some attention. These women have sometimes been through a difficult divorce, feel vulnerable and seek stability, but are then used as a temporary solution. No financial care, no serious involvement with their children, but only a hidden relationship under the guise of "polygamy." **This is a distortion of the Qur'anic guidelines, for polygamy here becomes an instrument of abuse instead of an act of mercy and responsibility.**

On the other hand, there are also **women who approach the concept incorrectly**. For instance, a woman once approached me via the mosque, looking for a husband; she even said she was willing to become a second wife. She had her own apartment, was independent, but set as a condition that **her future husband would have to pay her 2000 euros monthly**. Then you inevitably ask yourself the question: what kind of marriage are we actually speaking about here? This is not a covenant based on love, faith, or shared responsibility, but a transaction disguised as marriage.

The core of the problem the core of the issue lies in the motives:

- Is it out of **care and social responsibility** (for example, for a widow or divorced woman with children)?
- Or is it out of **ego, lust, or status?**

If the first wife is neglected and the marriage is already internally broken, a second marriage solves nothing. On the contrary: it magnifies the problem. As we saw in the anecdote of the Malaysian friend, it is often better to **first restore and improve the first marriage**, instead of "escaping" problems by adding a second wife.

The Prophet ﷺ was very aware of the heaviness of polygamy. He explicitly warned that whoever favors his wives [unequally] and is not just, **will stand leaning on the Day of Resurrection** (Verse Abū Dāwūd, 2133). This image is not intended symbolically: it shows how seriously Allah takes injustice within polygamy.

Even the Prophet ﷺ, who was known for his justice, said in his *du'ā'*: “O Allah, this is my division in what I can control (time and possessions), but do not blame me for what I cannot control (my heart).” (Verse Aḥmad and Abū Dāwūd)

If he already said this, then how careful must we be? Polygamy is **not a religious privilege**, but a **spiritually heavy responsibility** for which Allah will hold us to account.

29.5 Conclusion

Polygamy is **permitted** in Islam, but that does not mean it is **recommended, easy, or suitable for everyone**. It is an arrangement that stems from specific contexts of care, necessity, and social responsibility; not from lust, status, or convenience.

The Qur'an opens the door for polygamy, but **immediately places a heavy condition alongside it: justice**. And in that same Qur'an, Allah explicitly states that complete justice is impossible, even if one desired it (Surah An-Nisā' 4:129). **That makes clear that this permission is surrounded by spiritual caution and moral vigilance.**

In practice, **polygamy is often abused today:**

- In Africa as a cultural tool of power where young girls are taken away from school benches.
- In Europe, among some conservative groups, as a means to use divorced women **temporarily and secretly for one's own need**, without care or commitment.
- And in many cases as an **escape route for men who** are already neglecting their first marriage, instead of healing it.

The essence of polygamy is **caring for multiple families, not the distribution of pleasure**. Whoever truly wants to follow the Sunnah of the Prophet ﷺ must realize that he **married widows, older women, women with children**, and not to satisfy his lusts, but to protect, support, and uplift them.

The true Qur'anic worldview is: If you cannot handle it, do not begin it. And if you do it, know then that you will account for every unjust glance, night, preference, or negligence. The true man is not the one who takes multiple wives, but the one who treats one wife justly as if she were four.

Chapter 30 – Child Marriage – Between Tradition, Trauma, and Justice

30.1 Observation

Child marriage remains a deeply troubling phenomenon worldwide including in countries with large Muslim populations. In **Indonesia**, for instance, recent statistics show that **approximately 17% of girls are married off before the age of 18**. Locally, this practice is often referred to as “*nikah muda*” (Arabic: نكاح مُبَكَّر) literally, “*early marriage*.”

However, behind this seemingly innocent phrase lies much more than youthful love or commitment. In certain regions, a disturbing **cultural practice** persists: when a young man falls in love with a girl, he **literally abducts her**. By “taking her away,” he exerts **social pressure** on her parents, who, out of **shame** before the community, feel **obliged to approve the marriage**. It becomes a *fait accompli* a done deal.

This form of **social coercion** is not unique to Indonesia. Similar customs are found in **Turkey**, parts of **North Africa**, and **South Asia**. In all of these cases, **family honor** and **reputation** weigh more heavily than the girl’s well-being or consent. The central concern becomes: “*What will the neighbors say?*” rather than, “*Is this girl ready?*” The crucial questions; Is she physically mature? Is she emotionally capable? Does she have the freedom to choose? are rarely even asked. She is transformed overnight from a **child into a wife**, burdened with all the responsibilities of adulthood **without ever having been allowed to be a child**.

What kind of marriage emerges from this?

- A **bond without self-awareness**.
- A **relationship without free consent**.
- A **woman stripped of her youth**, who never developed her own identity, yet is suddenly expected to be a **mother, housekeeper, and spouse**.

The **psychological consequences** are often devastating. Many carry a **lifelong sense of emptiness**. I have personally met women in Europe who were married young often under **cultural or religious pressure** and who, in their late twenties or early thirties, began to **reclaim their “lost youth.”** This longing often manifests as: impulsive behavior escapism, promiscuity, or even, complete disconnection from their earlier religious lives. Not out of rebellion, but out of a **deep hunger for freedom**, spontaneity, and self-expression that was **denied to them during their formative years**.

The Core Question Can a girl who is still a **child** truly give **informed, conscious consent** to a **lifelong commitment** with all its emotional, moral, and physical responsibilities? And if she cannot, then what is the value of such a marriage in the sight of **Allah**? Is it a **union of love and responsibility**, or a **form of cultural coercion disguised as religion**?

30.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat An-Nisā' (4:6)

وَابْتَلُوا الْيَتَامَىٰ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغُوا النِّكَاحَ فَإِنْ ءَانَسْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ رُشْدًا فَادْفَعُوا إِلَيْهِمْ أَمْوَالَهُمْ

“And test the orphans until they reach the age of marriage. Then if you perceive in them sound judgment (rushd), hand over to them their property.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** explains that this ayah clearly mentions two conditions for maturity: **“Balaghū an-nikāh”**: reaching marriageable age (physical maturity), and **“Rushd”**: intellectual and moral maturity. In his tafsir, he makes it clear that marriage in **Islam is not merely a biological matter, but also a question of responsibility and judgment**. Rushd means that someone knows **what a marriage entails**, can handle conflicts, and understands his or her role.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that the verse is not only about finances, but also **implies general maturity and decisiveness**. Marriage is here implicitly linked to financial independence and life skills. This is crucial: someone who **cannot bear responsibility for his own money**, how can he lead a family? According to Al-Qurṭubī, this verse can be cited to demonstrate that marrying off immature children is contrary to the spirit of the shari‘a, **even if it was formally permitted in pre-modern contexts**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** devotes much attention to the concept of rushd. He views it as the **moral and intellectual capacity to make one's own choices**, free from others' pressure. He distinguishes between **natural maturation** (physical) and **functional adulthood** (moral, social). Both are necessary to make a marriage legally valid and meaningful. He also states that the absence of one of these elements leads to injustice, and that Allah warns against making decisions over the heads of immature youths.

The verse from Surah An-Nisā' shows that Islam does **not set a purely physical threshold for marriage**, but rather places emphasis on **responsibility, maturity, and independence**. In many societies, while the girl's body may be fully grown, her personality is still **in full development**. If her will is not formed, there can be no **true consent** (riḍā), and thus no marriage as Allah intended it.

The Qur'an connects marriage to a state in which someone is capable of bearing the marriage: in understanding, in behavior, in choices. Marrying off children who do not yet understand their own lives is a violation of that Qur'anic spirit.

The true question is therefore not: “Is it allowed according to fiqh?” But: “Is it in line with what Allah wants for His servants?” A marriage without maturity is not only legally questionable, it is **spiritual injustice**. And Allah is just. He wants people to marry in peace, maturity, and mutual choice, not under coercion, pressure, or innocence.

30.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ، عَنِ النَّبِيِّ ﷺ قَالَ:
"لَا تُنْكَحُ الْأَيِّمُ حَتَّى تُسْتَأْمَرَ، وَلَا تُنْكَحُ الْبِكْرُ حَتَّى تُسْتَأْذَنَ". قَالُوا: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، وَكَيْفَ إِذْنُهَا؟ قَالَ: "أَنْ تَسْكُتَ"

Narrated by Abū Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him):

The Prophet ﷺ said: A previously married woman must not be married off without her explicit consent, and a virgin must not be married off without her permission." They asked: "O Messenger of Allah, what is her permission?" He replied: "Her silence (out of modesty)." (Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī)

Reflection: This Verse is fundamental in Islamic marriage jurisprudence. The Prophet ﷺ places emphasis here on the **individual consent** of the woman, regardless of her age or family background. Two categories of women are mentioned:

1. **Al-Ayyim** – a woman who was previously married → her consent must be **explicit** and verbal.
2. **Al-Bikr** – a virgin → her consent may be **silent out of modesty, but must be voluntary**.

This Verse shows that in Islam:

- Marriage is not a **transfer of property**.
- The woman is **not a passive object** that is simply married off by her father or family.
- The **will of the woman is essential**. Without her consent, the marriage is invalid.

Yet we see in many cultures that this principle is **neglected**. Girls are put under pressure, convinced, manipulated, or intimidated to say "yes," while their silence is then wrongly seen as consent. Sometimes they are not asked at all. However, the Verse clearly says: "Not without her consent."

And how can there be consent if the girl herself:

- Has not yet formed her identity?
- Does not understand the responsibility of a marriage?
- Hardly knows herself yet?

A marriage that is concluded without mature, voluntary consent is not Sunnah, but an act of cultural coercion disguised as religion. And it can leave deep traces in the heart and psyche of a woman, far into her adult life.

30.4 Reflective Layer

Islam teaches us that marriage is a covenant **of love (mawadda), mercy (raḥma), and tranquility (sukūn)**. But how can there be tranquility in a marriage where childhood is taken away, and life suddenly changes into a duty?

In many communities, child marriage is defended with cultural or even religious arguments. “The Prophet ﷺ also married a young woman.” Or: “The body is mature, so it is allowed.”

But what people forget is that the **seerah of the Prophet ﷺ must never become an excuse for injustice**, nor be seen separately from the **context, the wisdom, and the care he showed for his wives**. Marriage in Islam is not about age, but about:

- free consent (riḍā),
- maturity (rushd),
- and a sense of responsibility.

A girl who is married off before she is mature; physically, psychologically, and socially, is robbed of her youth. She never learns who she is, what she wants, how she sets boundaries, or protects herself. She suddenly becomes a wife and mother, while she is still a child herself.

Psychologically, this leaves deep scars. Many women who were married off as children later say:

- that they have lost their own identity,
- that they live with suppressed traumas,
- and that they only realize late what was done to them.

Thus, there are also women in Europe who were married at a young age, sometimes under soft pressure from family or religious environment, and who at a later age (late twenties, early thirties) suddenly started to relive their **"lost youth."** **They went out, experimented, rebelled, not because they were bad, but because a part of their humanity never got the chance to grow.** Some broke their marriage. Others became spiritually lost. What was missing was not faith, but development, safety, and freedom of choice.

Parents, especially fathers, bear a heavy responsibility here. A daughter is not a possession, not a cultural project, not an honor to protect against the tongues of neighbors. She is an **entrusted soul from Allah**. If you marry her off out of fear of shame, or for economic reasons, or to get rid of a burden, then you are not her protector, but her oppressor. And whoever fears Allah knows that He “will ask about what is entrusted to us” (Qur’an 33:72).

Communities and religious leaders must stop remaining silent or justifying it.

- “She consented, didn’t she?” No, pressure and fear make true consent impossible.
- “But she is physically mature.” No, the Qur’an also asks for rushd.
- “It is culturally so.” But is it also Islamic? Is it just? Is it merciful?

If we continue to tolerate or trivialize child marriages, then we are forming a generation:

- with damaged marriages,
- broken religious experience,
- and women who only get to know themselves when it is already too late.

30.5 Conclusion

Child marriages are not an expression of Islam, but of **cultural pressure, patriarchal structures, and psychological ignorance, wrapped in religious language.** The Qur'an and the Sunnah build marriage around consent, maturity, justice, and tranquility. Not around **a sense of honor, fear of shame, or social custom.**

Allah says: "Test them until they reach marriageable age, and if you perceive maturity in them, then hand over their responsibilities to them." (Surah An-Nisā' 4:6)

This teaches us that marriage is **more than biology.** It requires insight, judgment, self-knowledge, matters that children do not yet possess.

The Prophet ﷺ warned that **no woman may be married off without her consent.** And what is consent worth if a girl has never learned to say "no"? Or does not know her own dreams? Or if her parents consider her marriage as a way out or a solution?

Child marriages rob children of their **youth, freedom, voice, and safety.** They create relationships built on inequality, frustration, and dependence. And they often contribute to traumas that only manifest years later, in the form of inner unrest, spiritual distance, or the sudden "catching up" on a lost youth.

The Qur'an calls for **love and mercy,** not for psychological oppression. For responsibility and protection, not for the shifting of guilt and shame. For spiritual growth, not for cultural stagnation.

Therefore, we as a Muslim community must be clear: A marriage without maturity, consent, and care is not sunnah. It is a violation of the *amanah* that a daughter is. **And whoever treats a child as a wife before she herself is ready for it,** will give account for that before Allah.

The Qur'anic worldview is clear:

**You do not protect a child by marrying her,
you protect her by raising her in safety, knowledge, and dignity.**

Chapter 31 – The Upbringing of Children – A Forgotten Amānah

31.1 Observation

In the West, we see a growing gap between **practicing parents** and their **children who drop out**. Many pray themselves, fast, donate, but their children barely **speak Arabic, know no Qur’an verses, and do not feel connected to the mosque**. Some parents **only realize it when it is too late**: when their son says he no longer believes, or when their daughter suddenly rejects everything she has learned. And then they ask: “*What did we do wrong?*”

Upbringing is in Islam an **amāna**, an entrusted task. But many parents treat it as if it happens automatically, or as something that can be outsourced to the imam or weekend mosque. They invest in expensive schools, sports clubs, tutoring, and hobbies, but **forget the soul of their child**.

We see four pain points recurring:

1. **Religious upbringing is postponed or ignored.**
Parents do not want to “put pressure,” or are too busy themselves working and surviving. Children grow up in a climate of freedom, but without a framework.
2. **Love and discipline are out of balance.**
Some parents give their children everything except boundaries. Others emphasize only rules and duty, without affection. Both extremes are harmful. The Prophet ﷺ combined tenderness with clarity.
3. **Lack of role models.**
Parents say: “Do this!”, but the child sees that their behavior radiates the opposite. Children learn with their eyes, not with their ears. Instead of inspiration, they often find hypocrisy.
4. **Deficient spiritual development.**
Children are fed intellectually, but starved spiritually. They know technology, but not themselves. They are smart, but empty inside. The result? Confusion, depression, addiction, or even apostasy.

In many African and Asian societies, faith lives even stronger in the public sphere than in the West. Children grow up with the *adhan* sounding through the streets, Qur’an recitation at school or on the radio, and religious symbols in the house. Yet there is a striking gap between the **outward religious presence** and the **deeper spiritual upbringing**.

In large parts of Africa and Asia, religious education equates to **memorizing the Qur’an**. Children sit for hours in *madāris* (Qur’an schools), often in austere conditions, and repeat verses without guidance in their meaning or application.

Many of these children **learn to fear Allah**, but not **necessarily to love Allah**.

They know the text, but not the purpose. They are formed religiously, but not nourished spiritually. And in some cases, the use of physical punishment leads to fear and even aversion. Children are trained to obey, not to understand.

Respect for parents and the elderly is deeply ingrained in African and Asian cultures. Children **may not contradict, asking questions is seen as insolent, and absolute obedience is expected.**

Although reverence for parents is fundamental in Islam, this extreme model can lead to a lack of open communication, suppressed emotions, and a passive experience of faith. Young people do not ask questions, but they do have them. They learn the rituals, but miss the ‘why’.

Similarities with the West:

It is striking that, despite the great cultural differences, children in Africa and Asia **often experience the same emptiness as their peers in the West:**

- They grow up without **spiritual guidance** at home.
- They have to deal with **digital addictions, broken families, or emigration of parents.**
- Many fathers are physically or emotionally absent, due to work abroad, war, or social pressure.

Whether it is in Brussels, Dhaka, or Bamako, the child who does not receive a loving, conscious upbringing grows up in confusion.

31.2 Qur’anic Verses

Sūrat Luqmān (31:13–19) – A Model for Upbringing

Verse 13

وَأِذْ قَالَ لُقْمَانُ لِابْنِهِ وَهُوَ يَعِظُهُ يَا بُنَيَّ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّ الشِّرْكَ لَظُلْمٌ عَظِيمٌ

“And [mention] when Luqmān said to his son while advising him: ‘O my dear son, do not associate anything with Allah. Indeed, associating partners with Allah is a great injustice.’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** highlights that Luqmān begins with **tawhīd**, as this is the foundation of all morality and upbringing. Without a pure relationship with Allah, every other form of guidance loses its base. The gentle expression “*O my dear son*” shows that education must not only be intellectually sound but also **emotionally wise and compassionate.**
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that this verse demonstrates how all upbringing begins with **faith and submission.** Parents should give priority to nurturing spiritual awareness in their children.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that a child is shaped by **inner conviction**, not by rules alone. Luqmān combines **wisdom with tenderness**, showing that sincere counsel stems from love.

True upbringing begins with the **heart** with connecting the child to Allah. Once **tawhīd** is firmly rooted, moral conduct and life choices naturally follow. This verse teaches that **education is both a moral and spiritual mission.**

Verses 14–15

These verses address the **duties toward one’s parents** and are discussed later in the chapter dedicated to parental rights.

Verse 16

يَا بُنَيَّ إِنَّهَا إِنْ تَكَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ فَتَكُنْ فِي صَخْرَةٍ أَوْ فِي سَمَوَاتٍ أَوْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَأْتِ بِهَا اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ

“O my dear son, even if something were the weight of a mustard seed and it were hidden within a rock, or in the heavens, or in the earth Allah will bring it forth. Indeed, Allah is subtle and All-Aware.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that Luqmān reminds his son of **moral conscience** and the **awareness of Allah’s watchfulness** that no action, however small, is hidden from Him.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that true upbringing involves **building an inner conscience (taqwā)**, not mere outward behavior. Taqwā means knowing that Allah sees you at all times.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that this verse teaches **personal accountability**, even when no one is watching.

A child must be raised with **inner morality**. A parent who only imposes rules cultivates hypocrisy, but one who teaches the awareness of Allah cultivates **sincere responsibility**.

Verse 17

يَا بُنَيَّ أَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ وَأْمُرْ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَانْهَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَكَ ۗ إِنَّ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ عَزْمِ الْأُمُورِ

“O my dear son, establish the prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over whatever befalls you. Indeed, that is of the matters requiring determination.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse unites the **three dimensions of faith**: The relationship with Allah (**ṣalāh**), Responsibility toward society (**enjoining good and forbidding wrong**), Inner strength through patience (**ṣabr**).
- **Al-Qurṭubī** teaches that true upbringing involves **social awareness** and **resilience** raising children who care for others and can endure hardship.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights that patience is essential; both parenting and da‘wah require **emotional stability and perseverance**.

This verse presents a **balanced model of upbringing**:

- Connection with Allah (*through prayer*),
- Social responsibility (*promoting good and resisting harm*),
- Emotional resilience (*through patience*).

To educate a child is not merely to **protect** them but to **prepare** them for the realities of life.

Verses 18–19

وَلَا تُصَعِّرْ خَدَّكَ لِلنَّاسِ وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ مُخْتَالٍ فَخُورٍ
وَأَقْصِدْ فِي مَشْيِكَ وَأَغْضُضْ مِنْ صَوْتِكَ إِنَّ أَنْكَرَ الْأَصْوَاتِ لَصَوْتُ الْحَمِيرِ

“And do not turn your face away from people in arrogance, nor walk upon the earth proudly. Indeed, Allah does not love the arrogant and boastful. And be moderate in your walk and lower your voice; indeed, the most unpleasant of sounds is the voice of the donkey.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** states that this is a lesson in **ethics and social conduct** teaching children how to behave in public, interact with others, and carry themselves with humility.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** adds that even **the way one walks and speaks** is part of Islamic upbringing. Islam shapes every aspect of behavior, not just ritual worship.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that arrogance and loudness reflect **inner imbalance**. Outer behavior mirrors one’s inner state.

Parents must therefore raise children who are not only **religiously sound** but also **emotionally and socially refined** children who have **confidence without arrogance**, and **strength without harshness**. Islam forms **character**, not just **conduct**.

31.3 Verse Reflections

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

كُلُّكُمْ رَاعٍ وَكُلُّكُمْ مَسْئُولٌ عَنْ رَعِيَّتِهِ

“Every one of you is a shepherd, and every one of you will be held accountable for his flock.”
(*Bukhārī & Muslim*)

Reflection: This Verse emphasizes that parents bear a **religious, moral, and educational responsibility**. Upbringing is not optional; it is an **obligation** for which every parent will be **held accountable before Allah**. Children are a trust (amānah), and neglecting their spiritual and moral formation is not a personal failure alone; it is a **breach of divine duty**.

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

كل مولود يولد على الفطرة، فأبواه يهودانه أو ينصرانه أو يمجسانه

“Every child is born upon the natural disposition (fītrah), but it is his parents who make him a Jew, a Christian, or a Magian.”
(*Bukhārī & Muslim*)

Reflection: Children are born in a **pure state of fitrah**, naturally inclined toward the recognition of Allah. Parents through **upbringing, example, and environment** shape the direction of that heart. This means that parenting is not simply providing food and shelter, but **nurturing the divine potential** within the child. To raise a child is to **preserve and protect the fitrah**, keeping it uncorrupted by ego, materialism, or heedlessness.

Verse 3

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«ليس منا من لم يرحم صغيرنا، ويعرف شرف كبيرنا»

“He is not one of us who does not show mercy to our young and respect to our elders.”
(*Sunan Abī Dāwūd – Ḥasan*)

Reflection: This Verse highlights the **central role of love and compassion** in Islamic education. Mercy is not weakness; it is the **foundation of moral strength**. A loving relationship between parents and children builds **trust, emotional safety, and spiritual confidence**. Discipline without affection breeds rebellion; affection without guidance breeds confusion. The Prophet ﷺ showed that **true pedagogy unites both mercy and respect**.

Verse 4

The Prophet ﷺ said:

طلب العلم فريضة على كل مسلم

“Seeking knowledge is an obligation upon every Muslim.”
(*Sunan Ibn Mājah – Ḥasan*)

Reflection: The upbringing of children must also be aimed at the transfer of **knowledge**, religious and worldly. This is not a luxury or a choice, but a fundamental duty. Whoever lets his children grow up without knowledge leaves them behind spiritually unarmed.

31.4 Reflective Layer

The upbringing of children is not an individual hobby or a series of accidental choices, it is a **sacred amanah**, an entrusted good from Allah ﷻ. Both the Qur'an and the Sunnah make clear: you as a parent, as an educator, as a teacher, you form the future of this *ummah*.

Yet we see the same painful patterns recurring worldwide: Children **growing up with rules without love**, or with **love without guidance**. They are taught to pray, but not why. They hear "haram", but never "rahma".

The parents themselves have often never learned how to raise children. They simply adopt what they experienced, or in the West even turn away completely from upbringing in the name of "freedom" or "busyness".

Religious upbringing is not automatic

Having your child memorize the Qur'an or sending them to Islamic class is beautiful in itself, but not sufficient. For how can a child love Allah if it only learns to fear Allah?

How can a child be proud to be Muslim, if faith only means strictness and restrictions?

The solution lies in authentic spiritual upbringing:

- Teach your child who Allah is; as **Raḥmān** and **Raḥīm**.
- Speak with your child about the purpose of life, not just about prohibitions.
- Give love, set boundaries, and be yourself the **role model** that you want your child to follow.

Balance: love and discipline

As we also see with Luqmān: his words are full of softness, respect, and love. But at the same time he warns powerfully against *shirk*, against arrogance, and against bad deeds. This balance is often lost today. In the West permissiveness prevails ("let them choose for themselves"), in Africa and Asia authority prevails ("listen without questions").

Islam teaches us: **love without guidance is neglect, guidance without love is oppression.**

The difference between opportunities and choices

In Europe and other Western countries, Muslims have **unseen opportunities** to acquire worldly and religious knowledge, free education, internet, libraries, freedom. Yet many choose not to study, not to deepen themselves in faith or upbringing. In countries like Bangladesh, Mali, or Niger it is the reverse: people **want** to learn, but have no access. The reality is bitter: whoever *can* do it, often does not do it. Whoever wants it, *cannot* do it.

Therefore we must realize again: **knowledge begins at home.**

The first *madrasah* is the home. The first *moallim* is the parent. A child gets the first impression of Allah through the way the father and mother speak, react, teach, love.

The greater goal

Upbringing is not the taming of children into well-behaved followers. Upbringing is the preparing of **free, conscious servants of Allah**, who understand life as a test, who know what is right and wrong, and who are strong enough to go against the current if they must.

31.5 Conclusion

The upbringing of children is the **key to the rise or downfall of a community**. Every father, every mother, every teacher carries an immense responsibility. Children are born with a **pure natural disposition (fitrah)** but their direction, faith, behavior, and moral compass are all **the fruits of upbringing**.

The Qur'an presents us, in **Sūrat Luqmān**, with a timeless example: A father who does not shout, does not impose, but **advises with loving seriousness**. He places **Allah at the center**, while also teaching his son about **prayer, character, humility, and dignity** as the foundations of life.

The Verses make it clear that every child is born with a **divine potential**, but it is the **parents who shape them** according to their worldview. You shape their **hearts** long before the world shapes their **minds**.

In the **West**, religious upbringing is often **avoided**, out of fear of being too strict or controlling. In **Africa and Asia**, religious upbringing is sometimes **reduced to obedience without understanding**. Both miss the true spirit of **Islamic education** which is **spiritual guidance rooted in love, knowledge, and leading by example**.

We cannot continue to leave this generation's children to **TikTok, YouTube, schoolbooks, and street influences**. It is upon us **parents, educators, and communities** to guide them with **Qur'an and wisdom**, with **affection and patience**, and with **an understanding of the challenges of our time**. Let us stop **complaining about the youth**, and start **building their hearts guided by love and understanding**.

Chapter 32 – Parenthood – Between Reverence and Abuse

32.1 Observation

Parenthood is one of the holiest responsibilities within Islam. It is an *amanah*, a divine trust, which requires care, wisdom, and balance. But as with every form of power, there also exists here the risk of abuse, neglect, or derailment. In our world today, both in the West and in Africa and Asia, we see that the relationship between children and parents has become unbalanced, albeit in very different ways.

In many African, Asian, and Arab contexts, parenthood is too often interpreted as a form of absolute power. Parents, and especially mothers who are supported by cultural traditions, demand complete obedience, even when their demands clash with Islamic guidelines. The well-known Verse “Paradise lies under the feet of your mother” is then not read as a call to care and respect, but misused as an instrument to put children under pressure. Daughters are forbidden to marry outside their village, sons are emotionally blackmailed if they make choices outside family expectations, and children are told that regardless of what happens, they must always obey. Thus arises a culture of guilt and manipulation, in which the boundary between reverence and emotional abuse blurs. Islamic authority is not divinity; parents have a right to respect, but no right to break the soul of their children.

On the other hand, we see the opposite in the West. Here, many parents have completely let go of their authority in an attempt to be modern, democratic, or ‘friendly’. Children grow up without boundaries, without discipline, and without a sense of responsibility. They address their parents as if they are peers, expect daily luxury and comfort, refuse to help in the house, and feel little obligation to show gratitude. Parents want to be friends instead of educators, but the result is not freedom, it is indifference. A generation is growing up that does not know what duty means, what respect entails, and what self-control requires.

Thus extremes arise on both sides. In the East, too much control and too little understanding. In the West, too much freedom and too little guidance. In both cases, the balance is missing. **Islam teaches us that parenthood requires love with guidance, affection with authority, and a spiritual foundation in which both parents and children grow towards Allah.**

Children are not the property of their parents, but creatures in development. And parents are not gods over their children, but educators who give guidance in the name of Allah. When parents behave like gods and children feel like gods, families will never know peace. Only when parents and children together acknowledge that they are both servants of Allah, does balance, peace, and growth arise.

32.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Al-Isrā’ (17:23–24)

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا
إِذَا بَلَغَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرُهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا
وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذَّلِيلِ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْتَانِي صَغِيرًا

“And your Lord has decreed that you worship none but Him, and that you show kindness to your parents. If one or both of them reach old age with you, do not say to them ‘uff’ (a word of irritation), nor scold them, but speak to them with noble words.

And lower to them the wing of humility out of mercy, and say, ‘My Lord, have mercy upon them as they raised me when I was small.’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that this verse contains the **highest of divine commands**: *tawhīd* (the oneness of Allah) followed immediately by *birr al-wālidayn* (kindness to parents). The sequence is deliberate reverence for parents follows directly after the worship of Allah.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that even the slightest expression of annoyance such as saying “*uff*” is **forbidden**. If even that is prohibited, how much more so shouting, insulting, or severing ties? The Qur’an sets an extremely high standard of respect.
- **Ar-Rāzī** points out that the phrase “*قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا*” (*noble words*) is a **continuous moral obligation** even when a parent becomes unreasonable or senile. The balance between respect and self-protection lies in the supplication: “*as they raised me when I was small.*”

Verse 2 – Sūrat Luqmān (31:14–15)

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ وَهْنًا عَلَىٰ وَهْنٍ وَفِصَالَهُ فِيَ عَامَيْنِ أَنِ اشْكُرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيْكَ إِلَيَّ الْمَصِيرُ
وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا وَصَاحِبُهُمَا فِي الدُّنْيَا مَعْرُوفًا

“And We have enjoined upon man to be good to his parents. His mother carried him in weakness upon weakness, and his weaning takes two years. (We said:) ‘Be grateful to Me and to your parents; to Me is the final return.’ But if they strive to make you associate with Me that of which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them, but accompany them in this world with kindness.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** highlights the crucial boundary in these verses: even if parents call to *shirk* (polytheism), one must **remain polite**. *Dīn* (faith) takes precedence, but *adab* (respect) must remain.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** draws attention to the **physical and emotional sacrifice** of the mother pregnancy, childbirth, and nursing as reasons for lifelong gratitude, regardless of later disagreements.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that these verses teach youth how to set **boundaries** without losing respect. There is a vast difference between *refusing* and *rejecting*; between asserting truth and abandoning kindness.

Verse 3 – Sūrat Al-Aḥqāf (46:15)

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا وَوَضَعَتْهُ كُرْهًا وَحَمْلُهُ وَفِصَالُهُ ثَلَاثُونَ شَهْرًا

“And We have enjoined upon man to show goodness to his parents. His mother carried him in hardship and gave birth to him in hardship, and his gestation and weaning period together last thirty months.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** stresses that the **repetition of the mother’s hardship in carrying** and birthing serves as a powerful reminder of the sacrifice inherent in parenthood.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that this repetition acts as a spiritual **warning**: whoever is indifferent toward their parents is ungrateful toward their very origin.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes that Allah **repeats the command to honor parents** in multiple sūrahs, each time linking it to gratitude and recognition of one’s beginnings.

These verses collectively show that **kindness to parents is not a cultural courtesy**, but a **divine command**. Allah repeats it in several parts of the Qur’an, always emphasizing **gentleness, gratitude, and humility**.

At the same time, the Qur’an establishes **boundaries**: when parents exert pressure to go against truth whether through *shirk* or cultural coercion obedience is not required, yet **respect must remain**. This balance is the essence of the Qur’anic message: **Love without blind submission, and boundaries without disrespect**.

32.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

قَالَ رَجُلٌ: يَا رَسُولَ اللَّهِ، مَنْ أَحَقُّ النَّاسِ بِحُسْنِ صَحَابَتِي؟

A man asked: “O Messenger of Allah, who has the greatest right to my good companionship?”

قَالَ: أُمُّكَ. He replied: “Your mother.”

قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ The man asked: “Then who?”

قَالَ: أُمُّكَ. “Your mother.”

قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ “Then who?”

قَالَ: أُمُّكَ. “Your mother.”

قَالَ: ثُمَّ مَنْ؟ “Then who?”

قَالَ: أَبُوك. “Your father.”

(Bukhārī, Muslim)

In this **Verse** in which the mother is mentioned three times a universal hierarchy or a contextual emphasis?

A. Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH)

In *Kashf al-Mushkil*, Ibn al-Jawzī explains that the Prophet’s ﷺ repetition of “your mother” is **not an absolute ranking** between parents, but rather a recognition of the **extra physical and emotional sacrifice** of the mother. He clarifies that the general duty of *birr* (kindness and good treatment) applies equally to both parents. The repeated emphasis on the mother was contextually appropriate particularly in times or cultures where mothers were **neglected or undervalued**.

B. Qur’anic Reference – Sūrat Al-Aḥqāf (46:15)

وَوَصَّيْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ بِوَالِدَيْهِ إِحْسَانًا حَمَلَتْهُ أُمُّهُ كُرْهًا...

“And We have enjoined upon man goodness to his parents. His mother carried him in hardship...”

This verse shows that **both parents** are included in the divine command of good treatment, but the **mother’s hardship** is specifically mentioned hence the prophetic emphasis. It is not about absolute priority, but about **acknowledging her suffering**.

C. Contemporary Scholars (Dr. Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī)

In *Fiqh al-Awlawiyyāt* (The Jurisprudence of Priorities), Qaraḍāwī clarifies that this Verse should **not be treated as a mathematical formula (3 vs. 1)**. Rather, it is a **rhetorical method used by the Prophet ﷺ to correct social imbalance** not to diminish the father’s rights. He adds that in some cases, the father may even deserve greater merit for example, if he singlehandedly raised his children or made exceptional sacrifices.

D. Shaykh Ibn ‘Uthaymīn (Contemporary, Saudi Arabia)

In his *Sharḥ Riyāḍ aṣ-Ṣāliḥīn*, Ibn ‘Uthaymīn notes that while mothers often bear more **physical hardship**, fathers usually shoulder greater **financial and educational responsibility**. He concludes: “Islam assigns merit to each according to their effort. There is no conflict only just allocation.”

E. Ibn al-‘Arabī al-Mālikī

In *‘Arīḍat al-Aḥwadhī*, Ibn al-‘Arabī suggests that the Prophet ﷺ may have repeated “your mother” three times in **response to a specific situation**. The man in question might have been **neglecting or mistreating his mother** as some narrations indicate. Thus, the repetition was a **pedagogical correction**, not a **universal hierarchy**.

F. Ibn Ḥazm al-Zāhirī – The Rights of Both Parents

In *al-Muḥallā*, Ibn Ḥazm states that the rights of both parents are **equal in essence** but **contextually distinct**. There is no absolute superiority circumstances determine priority. **In some cases, a father may hold greater right, such as in provision, education, or protection.**

Conclusion on this Verse

- It does **not establish a universal ranking** where the mother always “has more right” than the father.
- It is a **contextual emphasis** acknowledging her unique sacrifices.
- The Qur’an gives **both parents equal rights** to *birr* (righteous conduct), as seen in Sūrat Al-Isrā’ (17:23).
- Depending on circumstances, the **father may also hold greater right** based on his contributions or the absence of the mother.

Verse 2

رِضَا اللَّهِ فِي رِضَا الْوَالِدِ، وَسَخَطُ اللَّهِ فِي سَخَطِ الْوَالِدِ

“The pleasure of Allah lies in the pleasure of the parent, and the anger of Allah lies in the anger of the parent.” (al-Tirmidhī – authenticated by al-Albānī)

Reflection: In the Qur’an, the word *al-wālidī* is used as a collective term for both parents, even though it is grammatically singular. This shows that reverence and obedience are not only owed to the mother, but to both parents together. The Verse confirms this by making it clear that the attitude of children towards their parents has a direct influence on their relationship with Allah. *Birr al-wālidayn* – **good treatment of parents is therefore not merely culture or tradition, but a spiritual obligation and a condition for Allah’s pleasure.** With this, Islam corrects both cultural excesses that glorify only the mother, and Western tendencies that minimize parenthood: the Qur’an places emphasis on the importance of both parents, in balance and justice..

32.4 Reflective Layer

The Qur’an invites us to view the relationship with our parents as a **spiritual discipline** not merely a matter of obedience, but a journey toward developing **gentleness, gratitude, and patience.**

For **children and youth**, respect is not limited to polite words; it manifests through actions helping around the house without being asked, listening without arguing, and showing genuine concern for their parents’ well-being. These may seem like small gestures, but in truth, they are **acts of ‘ibādah** forms of worship that carry immense weight in the sight of Allah.

For **parents**, authority should never become a weapon of control, but a **tool of guidance.** Parenthood requires listening, praying for one’s children, and guiding them with wisdom. It is not about **imposing one’s dreams** or dictating every choice, but about teaching children to make their own decisions **within the boundaries of taqwā.** Just as **Luqmān** addressed his son with words of love and insight, parents should speak to their children with the same tone not through **fear and pressure**, but with **wisdom and trust.**

The way forward lies in **mutual respect.** Children must continue to show care, even when parents are harsh or distant. But parents must also understand that their children are **not their property.**

Only when both sides internalize this truth can there be a **healthy bond**, one rooted in love where religion is not used as a **weapon of guilt**, but as a **source of peace**.

The Qur'an teaches **balance and justice**. The verses from *Sūrat Al-Isrā'* and *Sūrat Luqmān* show that respect for parents never means submitting to injustice. And the **Verse** that mentions the mother three times should be understood in the **context of gratitude**, not as structural inequality. As we've seen, other aḥādīth emphasize the **equality of both parents**, and that Allah's pleasure is tied to how we treat **each of them**.

So what is the right attitude?

1. **Continue showing care and attention**, even if parents are distant or difficult within the limits of what is humanly possible.
2. **Do not surrender completely**, but maintain your own spiritual boundaries with *taqwā* and wisdom as an adult.
3. **Engage in sincere conversations** about the difference between **culture and religion**, and allow space for reconciliation without unrealistic expectations.

Imām al-Ghazālī expressed it beautifully:

“If your parents ask you to disobey Allah, refuse them with respect. If they mock you, endure it with patience. And if they abandon you, continue to pray for their forgiveness.”

32.5 Conclusion

The relationship with our parents is among the most sacred bonds that Islam recognizes and protects. Both the Qur'an and the Sunnah repeatedly emphasize that **honoring one's parents is a key to Allah's pleasure**. Yet, this does not mean that parents hold **absolute authority** over every aspect of our lives. Islam calls not for **blind obedience**, but for **respectful responsibility**.

The extremes we see today **rebellious, boundaryless children** on one side, and **parents who weaponize religious texts** for control on the other reveal how far society has drifted from balance. One destroys **respect**, the other destroys **autonomy**.

Islam, however, teaches the **middle path**:

- Parents deserve our **love, service, and gratitude**, even when they are difficult.
- Children deserve **protection from psychological, emotional, or spiritual abuse**, even if it comes from their parents.
- And the **community as a whole** bears the duty of teaching this balance through **khutbahs, education, and example**.

In *Sūrat Al-Aḥqāf* (46:15), Allah teaches us the essence of this relationship:

رَبِّ أَرْحَمُهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيْتَنِي صَغِيرًا

“My Lord, have mercy upon them as they raised me when I was small.”

This is the heart of it all: **recognition, forgiveness, and the preservation of a pure heart**, even when the relationship is painful or complex. True righteousness lies not in perfection, but in continuing to seek **mercy, gratitude, and justice** for our parents, and through them, for Allah.

Chapter 33 – Culture versus Islam: Between Custom and Revelation

33.1 Observation

As an Islamic scholar, I am often invited to schools and interfaith dialogue events. What always strikes me is the *astonishment* of people when I speak about the *true Islam* the Islam of the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Their perception of Islam rarely comes from the revelation itself; it is almost always shaped by the Muslims they know and those Muslims are often deeply influenced by culture. That is why I always say: **“Do not look at the Muslim; look at Islam.”**

We live in a time where **culture has often become greater than Allah**. Rules, expectations, and judgments are not based on what the Qur'an commands, but on what families, communities, or traditions dictate. Marriage is a painful example of this. Instead of seeking *faith and character* as the Prophet ﷺ taught parents impose *cultural* conditions: “He must be Algerian.” “No Berber, only Arab.” “Not African.” Even within a single country, like Morocco or Pakistan, marriages are rejected because of tribal, ethnic, or linguistic differences. In some Turkish families, a young man is told he must save **€50,000** before he can marry as if that were the true measure of manhood. If he cannot afford it, he is deemed “not ready,” even if he prays five times a day and carries himself responsibly.

The same confusion appears in **funerals, childbirth, and social customs**. Families insist on Qur'an recitations on the third day after death; women are forced to wear mourning clothes for forty days; newborns are given sugar on their tongues; and guests are told they must eat three times or risk being labeled rude. Some of these customs are harmless even beautiful. But many are elevated above the actual religious obligations themselves, and that is where the problem begins.

Allah warns us about this in the Qur'an. When the messengers called their people to *tawḥīd* pure worship of Allah their response was: **“We only follow what we found our forefathers doing.”** (*Qur'an* 2:170; 43:22) This mindset is timeless. Even today, Muslims cling to traditions that have **no foundation in revelation**, yet they enforce them as if they were divine law. The Prophet ﷺ came precisely to break those chains not only the idols of stone, but the **idols of culture** that enslave the heart instead of elevating it.

The central question we must ask ourselves is: **When do we obey culture, even when it contradicts Allah's commands? And do we have the courage to admit it?** Sometimes, the greatest idol is not made of stone or woodp it is made of *habit*.

The Qur'an teaches **balance**. Culture can be beautiful, as long as it serves revelation. But when culture becomes greater than Allah when tradition outweighs Qur'an and Sunnah; it becomes our duty to **break from habit and return to revelation**.

This chapter seeks to shed clear light on that tension. It aims to bring the reader back from *custom to Qur'an*, from *tradition to taqwā*, from *people to Allah*. Only then does Islam become *pure, liberating*, and truly a *source of peace*.

33.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat Al-Ḥujurāt (49:13)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقْوَاهُ ۗ

“O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Verily, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the one with the most taqwā (God-consciousness).”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that Allah here acknowledges **human diversity in ethnicity and lineage** not as a source of superiority or exclusion, but as a means of recognition and cooperation. The only true measure of worth in the sight of Allah is **taqwā**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that this verse is a direct rejection of **racism, tribalism, and ethnic nationalism**. Nations and tribes are meant for **mutual understanding and collaboration**, not for arrogance or discrimination.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** points out that this verse applies strongly to **marriage**, where families often prioritize lineage or ethnicity over piety even though the Prophet ﷺ said: “If someone comes to you whose religion and character please you, then marry him.” (Verse in *al-Tirmidhī*)

Verse 2 – Sūrat Al-Baqarah (2:170)

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ اتَّبِعُوا مَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ قَالُوا بَلْ نَتَّبِعُ مَا أَلْفَيْنَا عَلَيْهِ آبَاءَنَا

“And when it is said to them: ‘Follow what Allah has revealed,’ they say: ‘No, we follow that upon which we found our forefathers.’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** calls this the **core of cultural rigidity**; the human tendency to prefer inherited customs over divine guidance, even when those customs have no wisdom or proof.
- **Ar-Rāzī** interprets this as more than mere stubbornness; it reflects a **psychological attachment** to comfort and conformity, even when the truth is clear. People fear social rejection more than divine disapproval.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** warns that blind adherence to tradition can lead to **innovation (bid‘ah)** and even **shirk**, since it replaces divine law with human convention. He writes: “Every custom that takes the place of a command from Allah is a test and a misguidance.”

33.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

لَتَتَّبِعَنَّ سَنَنَ مَنْ كَانَ قَبْلَكُمْ، شِبْرًا بِشِبْرٍ، وَذِرَاعًا بِذِرَاعٍ، حَتَّىٰ لَوْ دَخَلُوا جُحْرَ ضَبٍّ لَاتَّبَعْتُمُوهُمْ

“You will surely follow the ways of those who came before you, step by step, arm’s length by arm’s length even if they were to enter the hole of a lizard, you would surely follow them.”

(*Bukhārī and Muslim*)

Reflection This Verse shows how the Ummah **runs the risk of blindly following the culture, trends, and habits of others**, even if they are destructive. It warns us against **imitating non-Islamic customs** without insight or limit. According to Ibn Hajar, this refers to **practices that originate in culture, but clash with revelation**, such as the pursuit of status, clothing norms, wedding excesses, etc. The image of “*entering the hole of a lizard*” is symbolic: it describes how imitation can reach irrational extremes, where Muslims copy others even in what is **harmful or humiliating**.

33.4 Reflective Layer

These verses and narrations confront us with an uncomfortable but necessary question: **Do we truly live according to what Allah has revealed, or according to what our environment expects of us?**

In practice, we see that many Muslims organize their lives according to cultural codes. We dress, marry, mourn, celebrate, and even divorce in ways that are determined more by tradition than by Qur’an and Sunnah. Often we do not even ask ourselves whether these customs are in line with the revelation. And worse yet: whoever *does* try to follow Qur’an and Sunnah is sometimes looked at strangely, or even criticized, because he or she is “not keeping up with the community.”

But Islam is not a culture. **Islam is guidance from above, while culture is usually pressure from the side.** That does not mean that culture is by definition wrong. On the contrary: many customs are beautiful and enriching, as long as they do not contradict the revelation. The problem arises when culture takes the place of Allah’s Word, and the voice of the community sounds louder in our hearts than the voice of the Qur’an.

The correct attitude is therefore not: to completely reject culture, but to subject culture to revelation. And that requires critical reflection *and* courage.

Practical guidelines for this balance:

1. **Test everything against Qur’an and Sunnah.** Ask yourself regarding habits and rituals: “Does this have a basis in the revelation, or only in tradition?”
2. **Preserve the good.** Cultural customs that bring beauty, respect, or solidarity, and that do not clash with Islam, may certainly be kept.
3. **Dare to let go of the bad.** If a custom leads to financial pressure, social injustice, or religious distortion, then it is our duty to choose “Allah says” over “we always do it this way.”
4. **Communicate with wisdom.** Breaking through culture requires softness and *hikmah*. Detaching people from habit is harder than detaching them from wealth. So speak patiently, with knowledge and example.
5. **Make room for renewal.** Islamic identity is dynamic. We can develop habits that fit our time and place, as long as the core of the revelation remains leading.

The message is clear: **culture is subservient, never decisive.** When culture is in line with Qur’an and Sunnah, it is an enrichment. But when culture replaces or drowns it out, it becomes an idol in the hearts. Then we must have the courage to return to the revelation, even if that means going against “what people always do.”

33.5 Conclusion

The tension between **culture and revelation** is not a theoretical debate it is a **daily reality**. Every wedding, every funeral ritual, every social expectation confronts us again with the same question: **Do I follow Allah, or do I merely follow people?**

Islam does not call for a total break from culture, but for a **reordering of priorities**. Beautiful customs may remain as long as they **support and harmonize** with the Qur'an. But once culture begins to **replace revelation**, it becomes our duty to choose **Allah over habit**.

Islam came as **light amidst the darkness of tradition**. The Prophet ﷺ liberated his people from racism, tribal pride, and blind imitation of forefathers. Today, we face that very same struggle only now within our **own communities**. Whoever truly wants to understand Islam must learn to **distinguish between religion and routine**, between **Qur'an and culture**. And that begins with the courage to **question what we have come to take for granted**. Not everything our parents did is wrong but not everything they did is automatically right.

Chapter 34 – The Mosque: Between Community and Emptiness

34.1 Observation

As someone who prays daily in the mosque *and* visits mosques worldwide, I have learned to recognize a painful pattern: **many mosques are built to pray in, but not to live in.**

When I conducted research on behalf of the Flemish minister into a possible imam training program in Flanders, I visited more than ten mosques for interviews and observations. What I heard and saw there confirmed what I had known for a long time: **the majority of our mosques are not ready for the future.**

Chairmen and imams, often from the first generation, see the mosque as a place to perform the five prayers, give Qur'an lessons in Arabic, and occasionally organize an *iftar*. But **more than that? Difficult. Almost impossible.**

I remember how I wanted to give a Dutch lecture for young people in Ghent. I received permission only with difficulty. The message was clear: young people are not a priority. Ironically, it is often the children of those very same chairmen whom you no longer see in the mosque, or worse, who have ended up completely on the wrong path.

Many mosques function as **closed village clubs**, governed by people with a deep-rooted mentality from the country of origin. Change? Only when someone from the second generation breaks through into the board. I remember how I once started translating the Friday **sermon for young people, and a chairman** wanted to stop me *during* the sermon. Only thanks to a brother from the younger generation could that be prevented.

And you see this worldwide: **little enthusiasm, no vision, no dynamic. Everything stays as it is.** Often mosques are even managed as **political apparatuses**. Chairmen cling frantically to their power, and young people get no voice. Imams are often sent from the country of origin, do not speak **the local language**, do not know the context, and pass on religion as if they are still in the village of the past.

What is perhaps most painful: **the silence on Palestine.** In many mosques, you **hear not a word about Gaza.** No *khutbah*. No support. Sometimes not even a *dua*. Why? Because the mosque is **linked to a government** that has close ties with Israel, and thus the subject is avoided. But *we* do speak about it, every single week, as long as the genocide continues. And I believe that **every imam, every mosque all over the world** must let their voice be heard. Gaza is a touchstone for our morality.

The result of all this is painfully visible. **No tafsir lessons** are organized, meaning the community barely understands the Word of Allah beyond the recitation. There is **no theological deepening** that nourishes hearts and sharpens intellects. There is **no youth work** that guides the next generation and protects them against the storms of doubt, secularization, and temptation. There is no **social**

guidance that supports families in their struggles and offers the poor and vulnerable a place of hope. And there is no **education that responds** to the needs of society and the challenges of our time. What remains is an empty shell: mosques and institutions that have walls, but little substance, and communities that bear traditions, but barely any vision. And these are scenes and patterns that we see everywhere in the world.

And so young people grow up on the streets, detached from the mosque. Many young people **do not even know what their mosque** does. Instead of one strong *ummah*, we see more than twenty mosques emerging in Ghent, split up by ethnicity, each with its own board, pride, and walls.

Everyone wants to build. Everyone wants their own place. But **who is building the human being?**

In America, I saw it differently. Mosques there were educational centers. They thought in terms of vision, community, youth, and financial independence. They even bought land for Islamic villages. And here? **We build stones. They build people.**

34.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat At-Tawbah (9:18)

إِنَّمَا يَعْمُرُ مَسَاجِدَ اللَّهِ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ وَلَمْ يَخْشَ إِلَّا اللَّهَ

“Only those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish prayer, give zakāh, and fear none but Allah, maintain the mosques of Allah.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that *‘imārah* (maintaining) in this verse is more than just preserving the physical structure of a mosque. It means **bringing the mosque to life** filling it with knowledge, guidance, education, and service to the community. True believers, he says, do not limit their **connection to the mosque to prayer alone, but see it as a center of transformation and growth.**
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that this verse serves as a **spiritual test.** Whoever is truly connected to Allah will naturally strive to make the mosque a living space of **learning, compassion, and societal development.**
- **Al-Qurṭubī** states that the verse implies a warning: an **empty or inactive mosque** is a sign of **weak faith (īmān)** within the community.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Al-Jinn (72:18)

وَأَنَّ الْمَسَاجِدَ لِلَّهِ فَلَا تَدْعُوا مَعَ اللَّهِ أَحَدًا

“And indeed, the mosques belong to Allah; so do not invoke anyone along with Allah.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that this verse is not only a theological warning against *shirk* (associating partners with Allah) but also an **institutional reminder:** the mosque belongs to Allah alone. It does not belong to any **ethnic group, family, or political faction.**

- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that this verse rejects all forms of **power abuse within mosques**. Whoever uses the mosque for personal status, political gain, or clan identity has betrayed its sanctity.
- **Ar-Rāzī** stresses that **everything** in the mosque from the *khutbah* (sermon) to community programs must align with **tawḥīd and sincere worship**, not with human ego or prestige.

34.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

أَحَبُّ الْبِلَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَسَاجِدُهَا، وَأَبْغَضُ الْبِلَادِ إِلَى اللَّهِ أَسْوَاقُهَا

“The most beloved places to Allah on earth are the mosques, and the most detested places to Allah are the marketplaces.”

(Muslim)

Reflection: This Verse reveals that the mosque is meant to be a **place of light, tranquility, connection, and spirituality**. Ibn Rajab explains that this means mosques should occupy the **central place in the believer’s life**, just as they did in **Madīnah** during the time of the Prophet ﷺ where the mosque served not only as a place of worship, but also as the **heart of education, community care, justice, and social life**.

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِذَا رَأَيْتُمُ الرَّجُلَ يَعْتَادُ الْمَسَاجِدَ فَاشْهَدُوا لَهُ بِالْإِيمَانِ

“When you see a man who frequents the mosque regularly, bear witness to his faith.”

(Tirmidhī – Ḥasan Ṣaḥīḥ)

Reflection: This narration shows that connection to the mosque is a sign of true iman. But what if the mosque itself is no longer an inviting place? Then it loses its function and the community loses its heart.

34.4 Reflective Layer

The mosque was meant to be **the beating heart of the community**, yet in many places that heart barely beats anymore. Where the Qur'an speaks of 'imārah bringing the mosque to life through faith, prayer, knowledge, and service we often limit ourselves to **walls and rituals**. The result is clear: **young people drift away, families find no support**, and the **mosque loses its spiritual attraction**.

The Qur'an's warning is sharp: The **mosque belongs to Allah**, not to any ethnic group, political movement, or family dynasty. Yet, we too often see personal prestige, cultural pride, or foreign political agendas shaping the tone and function of mosques. When that happens, the mosque ceases to be a **source of unity** and becomes a **source of division**.

The Prophet's ﷺ Verse reminds us that **the mosque is the most beloved place to Allah** but only when it is filled with what Allah loves: **pure worship, Qur'anic recitation, knowledge, brotherhood, and social care**. If the mosque remains nothing more than a **place of prayer without vision**, without youth programs, without theological development or community outreach, then it cannot possibly serve as the **moral compass** that the ummah so desperately needs.

We must therefore return to the **model of Madinah**, where the mosque was not just a prayer hall but a **center of education, social welfare, justice, and community life**. It was within the mosque that the **Ṣaḥābah** (Companions) learned, grew, and served. Only when our mosques once again become such places, spaces of light, learning, and care, will **young people return, families find support**, and **the community regain its strength from its spiritual heart**. The real question, then, is not whether **we have mosques**, but whether **our mosques truly have us**. Are they truly **houses of Allah**, or have they become merely **buildings of men**?

34.5 Conclusion

When the mosque loses its purpose, the **ummah loses its backbone**. The mosque was never meant to be an empty hall of stone and carpet. It is an **āyah of Allah on earth** a place where **hearts are shaped**, where **young people discover their identity**, where **families find support**, and where the **ummah gathers around the Qur'an and the Sunnah**. When the mosque becomes an **ethnic clubhouse** or a **platform for power struggles**, we lose not only our youth, but also the **soul of our community**.

The Qur'an teaches that **only those who truly believe in Allah and fear Him** are worthy of maintaining the mosques. And the Prophet ﷺ reminded us that **the mosque is the most beloved place to Allah**. This means that every generation carries the **duty to revive the mosque** with **knowledge, spirituality, social care**, and a **clear voice for justice**.

Mosques that follow this path will become **sources of strength, unity, and light**. Those that do not will remain **trapped within walls and traditions**, but **devoid of heart and purpose**. The **future of our ummah** depends on the choice we make whether we rebuild **mosques of stone**, or **mosques of souls**.

Chapter 35 – Qur’an Memorization and Madrassas Between Honor and Emptiness

35.1 Observation

When I began memorizing the Qur’an, I was **23 years old**. I already had a family, a child, and a demanding job yet I knew this path was calling me. Not for a celebration or a title, but because I longed to **live with the Qur’an**: not only to recite it with my tongue, but to understand it with my heart. Since I did not speak Arabic at the time, I studied the **Dutch interpretation** alongside the Arabic verses, so that I could at least grasp their meaning.

But what I saw around me was often the complete opposite. In my class were boys and girls aged **10 to 15**, memorizing verses **without understanding a single word**. One day, I asked a 13-year-old boy why he was learning the Qur’an by heart. Without hesitation he said: “Because I’ll get a big party when I finish.”

In Belgium, I’ve noticed a recurring pattern: **children start hifz but rarely finish**, because they don’t feel its deeper value. The Qur’an becomes a **competition**, a **status symbol**, or a **cultural ornament**, rather than a **living guide**.

One of the most painful things I witnessed was a young *ḥāfiẓ* in a nightclub only a few months after completing his memorization. This is not an isolated case; it’s a **global phenomenon**. Young people are celebrated as *ḥuffāẓ* yet lose all connection with what they have memorized soon after.

Even in my theological work, I noticed the **tragic gap between memorization and comprehension**. A dedicated volunteer from our organization in **Cameroon**, recognized internationally, could not explain the *tafsīr* of *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*. When I mentioned it to his father, he agreed with me completely: “*We must emphasize understanding, not just recitation.*”

Another deeply rooted problem lies in the **pedagogy of some madrassas**. In many parts of **Africa**, **Asia**, and even in earlier generations across **Europe**, the use of the whip or **physical punishment** was considered normal in Qur’anic education. Children grew up **fearing the shaykh**, **resenting the mosque**, and even **hating the Book** they were forced to memorize.

In addition, during a **field study** I conducted across **ten mosques in Belgium**, one striking finding was that **over 50% of parents** used Sunday schools or madrassas as **childcare facilities**. They hardly knew what their children were learning, rarely followed up, and many could barely read the Qur’an themselves. They expected their children to embody something they had **never modeled**. Without example, motivation becomes **fragile**, and in the long run, **empty**.

The result? Many children see the **mosque as a playroom**, the **madrassa as detention**, and the **imam** as a frustrated teacher dealing with classes full of unwilling students. That frustration sometimes leads to anger and while I understand the pressure, **anger or physical discipline can never be justified pedagogically**. True Qur’anic education must **nurture hearts, not break spirits**.

35.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat al-Qamar (54:17)

وَلَقَدْ يَسَّرْنَا الْقُرْآنَ لِلذِّكْرِ فَهَلْ مِنْ مُدَكِّرٍ

"And indeed, We have made the Qur'an easy for remembrance; so is there anyone who will take heed?"

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** explains that Allah has made the Qur'an **uniquely easy in its language**, meaning, rhythm, and effect on the heart. The word "*lidb-dhikr*" refers not only to recitation but also to *understanding, reflection, and moral transformation*. The repetition of this verse throughout the sūrah emphasizes humanity's responsibility to engage with it.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** interprets this verse as a **sign of divine** mercy: Allah did not make His revelation burdensome, but accessible. Yet many turn away despite its ease. Its repetition serves as a divine reproach to those who neglect it.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights that the verse is not merely a statement of fact but a **call to action** *who will respond to this divine offer?* The word "*muddakir*" implies one who actively seeks meaning, not one who passively recites.

Verse 2 – Sūrat Ṣād (38:29)

كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ مُبَارَكٌ لِيَدَّبَّرُوا آيَاتِهِ وَلِيَتَذَكَّرَ أُولُوا الْأَلْبَابِ

"A blessed Book which We have revealed to you, so that they may reflect upon its verses and that those of understanding may take heed."

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** notes that "*li-yaddabbarū*" reveals the **purpose of revelation**: not mere memorization or recitation, but **contemplation and depth**. *Ulū al-albāb* people of intellect are those who combine reason with faith.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** stresses that deeds **without understanding carry little weight**. The verse shows that the Qur'an was revealed to *guide*, not to decorate shelves or ceremonies. *Tadabbur* deep reflection is the key to spiritual growth.
- **Ar-Rāzī** adds that the *blessed nature (mubārak)* of the Qur'an is not found in its physical presence, but in its **moral, spiritual, and intellectual impact**. To memorize the Qur'an without reflecting upon it is to miss its essence.

Verse 3 – Sūrat al-Muzzammil (73:4)

وَرَتِّلِ الْقُرْآنَ تَرْتِيلًا

"And recite the Qur'an in measured, rhythmic tones."

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** explains that *tartil* means more than slow recitation; it refers to reciting in a way that **touches the heart** and allows for reflection. It involves rhythm, pauses, and mindfulness.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** says this style was prescribed not for beauty alone, but to *enhance comprehension and reflection*. A rushed, mindless recitation is considered contrary to the Qur'an's purpose.

- **Ar-Rāzī** points out that the Prophet ﷺ was commanded to recite calmly so that he could internalize and convey the meanings properly. Thus, recitation has both *spiritual* and *educational* dimensions.

Verse 4 – Sūrat al-Jumu‘ah (62:5)

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ حُمِّلُوا التَّوْرَةَ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَحْمِلُوهَا كَمَثَلِ الْإِجْمَارِ يَحْمِلُ أَسْفَارًا

"The example of those who were entrusted with the Torah but failed to uphold it is that of a donkey carrying books."

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse warns against possessing divine revelation without understanding or living by it. It **criticizes form without substance**: memorizing verses yet failing to act upon them. Such a person is like a donkey carrying books bearing the weight of knowledge without its value.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that although this verse addresses the Jews of old, it also **mirrors Muslims** who recite or teach the Qur’an without understanding or practice. It is a grave admonition against superficial religiosity.
- **Ar-Rāzī** states that this metaphor exposes the **absurdity** of *religious symbolism without inner transformation*. Carrying knowledge without letting it transform the soul is both *empty* and *humiliating*.

Synthesis and Reflection; These four verses reveal that the **Qur’an was never meant to be memorized without understanding**, but to be *pondered, internalized, and lived*. Allah reminds us that He has made the Qur’an *easy* but for whom? For those who *seek to learn, reflect, and be guided*. Without comprehension, **memorization becomes a shell without a soul**. The classical scholars unanimously agree: the true honor of the Qur’an lies **not in how many verses reside in one’s memory**, but in how deeply those verses **penetrate the heart and inspire action**.

When children and even adults memorize the **Qur’an without understanding or applying** it, sacred knowledge becomes an *empty ritual*. In madrassas where learning is *harsh, mechanical*, and devoid of love or spiritual guidance, **learning turns into suffering**. And when parents outsource religious education without embodying it themselves, **expectation replaces inspiration**. Thus emerges a generation that knows the Qur’an **by tongue but not by heart** a generation where knowledge no longer brings light, but *emptiness*; where the sacred becomes detached from life itself.

35.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

خَيْرُكُمْ مَنْ تَعَلَّمَ الْقُرْآنَ وَعَلَّمَهُ

"The best among you are those who learn the Qur’an and teach it."

(Al-Bukhārī)

Reflection: This prophetic statement is one of the most frequently quoted Verses in mosques and madrassas. Yet, it is often **narrowed down to mere memorization and transmission**. In truth, its meaning is far broader and deeper.

- The term “**ta‘allama**” does not simply mean *to learn* intellectually, but to **internalize** to absorb the Qur’an into one’s heart and character.
- The term “**‘allama**” does not merely mean *to teach*, but to *guide, inspire, and transform*.

Thus, the *best* among people are those who **embody the Qur’an** who study it with understanding, reflection, and sincerity and who then **convey its message to others** with wisdom, compassion, and purpose.

In the context of this chapter, this Verse reminds us that **Qur’anic education is not an industrial process** for producing *ḥuffāz* (memorizers). It is a **spiritual, ethical, and pedagogical mission** aimed at forming souls, not just storing verses. The *best* person, therefore, is **not the one who carries the most verses in memory**, but **the one whose character, outlook, and actions are shaped by the Book of Allah**.

35.4 Reflective Layer

The problem with Qur’anic education today is rarely a lack of motivation it is the lack of **vision and depth**. We live in a time where Qur’an memorization is often treated as an achievement, a cultural trophy, or a parental expectation, rather than as a path to transformation.

For Parents:

Many parents want their children to become *ḥuffāz* (memorizers of the Qur’an), yet they themselves **are not connected to the Qur’an**. Some barely know *Sūrat al-Fātiḥah*, yet they enroll their child in *ḥijz* classes and expect immediate results. Some even use the *madrassa* as a kind of childcare. But how can a child learn to love the Qur’an if that love is **never lived or seen at home?**

Without a good example, religious upbringing becomes pressure and pressure leads to resistance. A child who never sees the Qur’an opened at home, yet constantly hears, “You must memorize,” will **eventually grow distant from the Book of Allah**.

For Mosques and Teachers:

The imam or *shaykh* is often left with twenty children in one class, half of whom are there unwillingly. Without structural support, pedagogical training, or a clear vision, Qur’anic education becomes *mechanical*. When frustration takes over, some revert to outdated methods shouting, humiliation, or even physical punishment practices that do far more harm than good and can **alienate children from the mosque for years**.

Qur’anic education should **never resemble a military drill**. It must be an environment where a child learns to know Allah, builds trust with the teacher or imam, and associates the Qur’an with peace, love, and guidance.

For Youth and Students:

Many memorize verses without understanding their meaning. Some become *ḥuffāz* for the sake of honor, celebration, or cultural prestige only to forget what they learned once the journey is over. And some, tragically, complete memorization only to turn their backs on **the Qur'an afterwards**. Their memories were full but their hearts were empty.

The Qur'an is not a collection of verses to be recited; it is a Book to be *lived*. Without understanding, memorization is mere sound. Without application, recitation becomes only *echo*.

35.5 Conclusion

Memorizing the Qur'an is a noble act but it must never become an end in itself. The Qur'an was revealed to *illuminate hearts, transform lives, and reform societies* not to be recited mechanically by children who do not understand its meaning, in classrooms devoid of spirituality, imposed by parents who themselves lack a living relationship with the Book.

The verses of Allah are not syllables to be collected; they are *signs* to be reflected upon. The *tartil* (measured recitation) that Allah commands, the *tadabbur* (deep reflection) that He desires, and the *ta'allum* (learning) that the Prophet ﷺ praised all point toward an ***inner spiritual journey***.

What we need today is not an increase in *ḥuffāz* who carry the Qur'an in their minds, but believers in whose ***character, behavior, and decisions the Qur'an has taken root***. **Qur'anic education that truly centers on the Word of Allah must be *gentle, purposeful, and spiritually profound***. It should nurture young souls into *bearers of light*, not into external reciters with no inner connection.

The future of Qur'anic education depends on:

- **Parents** who first lead by example.
- **Imams** who are supported both pedagogically and spiritually.
- **Madrassas** that value understanding more than rote memorization.
- **Youth** who learn not only to *recite* the Qur'an, but to ***embody it***.

Chapter 36 – Gaza: The Conscience of the Ummah

36.1 Observation

The Organized Destruction of Gaza

What is happening in Gaza is not an ordinary humanitarian crisis. It is not the result of chaos, confusion, or failed diplomacy. What we are witnessing is a *systematically executed strategy* of starvation and annihilation. Everything indicates that this is not a conventional war, but a carefully designed siege aimed at breaking a people *physically, spiritually, and morally*.

There is no distinction made between military and civilian targets. Bakeries, farms, hospitals, refugee camps all are bombed. Food and medicine are deliberately blocked. Even hunger is used as a weapon not only to weaken bodies, but to erase hope, resistance, and human dignity.

Thousands of children are malnourished. Families starve. Even journalists trying to report from Gaza feel the hunger in their own flesh. Gaza is exhausted, yet refuses to bow.

What is happening is no accident. It is *intentional destruction*. Israel executes it, the United States funds it, Europe watches and continues to act as if nothing is happening. Meanwhile, Arab regimes like Egypt and Jordan serve as gatekeepers, blocking aid and suppressing every form of solidarity.

International diplomacy has not merely failed it has *abandoned* Gaza. Humanitarian aid is treated like a negotiation, when under international law it is a basic right. Gaza was not forgotten. It was *betrayed*.

Gaza is a *mirror*. And what we see reflected in it is not only the suffering of a people but the *shame of the world*.

Our Brother in Jabalia

At *Gardens of the Sincere*, we don't work with anonymous networks or paper reports. We work with *real people* on the ground. One of them is **Mohamed Bursh**, from **Jabalia** in northern Gaza. He is not just a contact person he is a brother of the heart, someone who appears in my dreams, because *he is there... while we are here*.

He manages our projects in Gaza. We send funds through indirect channels, and he purchases whatever is locally available. Sometimes he pays sky-high prices during blockades, sometimes he can buy normally during temporary ceasefires.

Since **October 7, 2023**, by Allah's grace, we have raised and delivered **more than €500,000** for Gaza. We have shared videos, updates, and photos. But despite all these efforts, what pains me most is not Gaza's suffering itself it is **the silence of the Ummah**.

The Silence of the Ummah

People ask me: “How do you even get aid inside? Isn’t everything sealed off?” As if logistical doubt justifies the closing of the heart.

Others say: “I don’t watch anymore. I can’t bear those horrific images.” And then they scroll to videos of cats, sports, make-up, or comedy.

What I see is painful. Mosques remain silent or give shallow sermons. Schools organize nothing no lessons, no awareness, no collective supplications. Even in Muslim homes, Gaza is no longer discussed. It’s replaced by parties, vacation plans, and idle chatter.

The media plays its part: genocide may be mentioned briefly, only to be buried under trivial news a fire at a festival, a celebrity scandal, a new Netflix release.

The Boycott Is the Minimum

The boycott alone won’t end the conflict but it *is* a clear moral stance. I understand it’s hard to avoid every brand tied to Israel. We live in a globalized world full of subsidiaries. But some companies like **McDonald’s, Starbucks, and Coca-Cola** have shown such *explicit* support for Israel that ignoring them is inexcusable. And yet, during ‘*Ummah*, I saw Muslims some even dressed in Islamic attire walking into Starbucks. McDonald’s was packed, a stone’s throw from the Ka’bah. What are we doing?

The same scenes unfold in **Tangier, Kuala Lumpur, Istanbul, Dubai, Jakarta...** the list goes on. And so I ask myself: *what has our Ummah become?*

In **Antwerp, on Abdijstraat**, so-called “Muslim” shops still sell Coca-Cola and other products from companies that publicly support Israel while our phones show us skeletal babies dying from hunger. Are these products really more precious than our brothers and sisters?

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“He is not a believer who eats his fill while his neighbor goes hungry.” And today, **Gaza is our neighbor.**

The Prophet ﷺ also said: “The Ummah is like one body; when one part suffers, the whole body feels the pain.” But today, many hearts seem *anesthetized*. As if the pain of others no longer reaches us.

An ordinary citizen may not be able to stop a missile, but he *can* decide where his money goes. Every euro is a vote. Will you give it to the oppressor, or will you use it to support the oppressed? Boycott is not heroism; it is the bare minimum.

What Ordinary People *Can* Do?

We cannot topple governments or stop tanks. But we *can* act. We can write a post. Create art that speaks. Share verified news. Email a politician. Join a protest. Skip a meal in solidarity. Donate. Pray. And above all *do not be silent*. Silence is not neutrality. Silence is a *choice*. And in times like these, **silence is *complicity***.

To Speak or to Stay Silent?

In this time of genocide and injustice, some debate: “Is it permissible to protest? Can we criticize Muslim leaders?” They cite classical texts about obedience, unity, and avoiding rebellion. But they forget the difference between *armed revolt* and *peaceful truth-speaking*.

Islam forbids fitnah, chaos and violent rebellion against righteous rulers. But that is *not* the same as staying silent about injustice, corruption, or complicity in the killing of innocents.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“The best form of jihad is a word of truth before a tyrannical ruler.” This is not a call to arms it is a call to *courage*. To speak the truth, even when it is uncomfortable.

If leaders in the Muslim world sign billion-dollar deals with the enemies of the Ummah, block aid, or ignore Gaza’s martyrs then silence is *not* a virtue. Then speaking up is a *duty*.

Ibn al-Qayyim said:

“The Shari‘ah is built upon justice, mercy, benefit, and wisdom. Anything that departs from these is not Shari‘ah, even if it is called so.”

And the Prophet ﷺ said:

“Whoever sees injustice, let him change it with his hand. If he cannot, then with his tongue. If he cannot, then with his heart and that is the weakest of faith.”

So if we *can* speak and we *choose* silence what does that say about our faith?

The Minbar That Lost Its Voice

Perhaps what is more tragic than the bombs on Gaza is *the* silence of our own mosques. Too few imams dare to speak about Palestine in their Friday sermons. Too few mosques collect donations. Too few supplications rise sincerely and powerfully from the hearts of the believers.

The *minbar* the pulpit of the mosque was meant to awaken the community, to speak *haqq* (truth). Yet in many places, it has become a safe stage for dry talks about ritual details. While children in Gaza die, sermons drone on about the technicalities of *nuḍū’*.

Many imams in Europe are appointed or paid by foreign governments or recognized institutions. They fear losing their position, their subsidies, or a letter from the Ministry of Interior. But where is their *fear of Allah*?

The Prophet ﷺ said:

“The leader of the martyrs is Ḥamza, and the one who speaks the truth before a tyrannical ruler and is killed for it.”

What will we answer on the Day of Judgment when Allah asks:

“What did you do with your *minbar*? You had a microphone where was your voice when My servants in Gaza were being slaughtered?”

Every mosque that limits its sermons to *fiqh* while the Ummah bleeds has forgotten its purpose.

Imams Who Sell Their Souls

As if the silence weren't enough, some so-called *imams* even travel to Israel in the name of “peace” and “dialogue.” They sing, they smile, and they pose for photos with the oppressor. While they sit at lavish tables, children in Gaza die not for lack of food, but because food is *deliberately withheld*.

What else can that be but *betrayal*? They say: “We came for peace.” But where were their voices when aid convoys were bombed? Where was their outrage when hospitals were destroyed? They sang. They laughed. They ate. They posed. They look like religious leaders but their actions expose their loyalties.

The Numb Generation

Sometimes my students tell me: **“Sir, we’re brainwashed. We just scroll on. No emotions left. Our hearts are harder than stone.”**

And that may be even sadder than the silence of the mosques. Because who still *cries* during their *du‘ā*? Who still *loses sleep* over Gaza? Who still *feels responsible*?

We sleep, we eat, we complain about the weather while others have no water to wash their dead. Gaza is not just a place under fire. It is a *mirror*. It is a *test* for the soul of the Ummah.

Stand on the right side of history.

36.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ (28:5)

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضِعُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ

“And We willed to bestow favor upon those who were oppressed on earth, and to make them leaders and inheritors.”

- Ibn ‘Āshūr emphasizes that this verse conveys the **divine promise of reversal** those who are oppressed today may become leaders tomorrow, provided they remain steadfast in faith and perseverance.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that Allah does not simply express sympathy here, but a *plan and a promise*: the oppressed will play a decisive role in Allah’s future design.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights the **spiritual** power of *istid‘af* (being oppressed), seeing it as a process of **purification** and preparation for elevation.

Verse 2 – Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:214)

...أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُدْخَلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ

“Or do you think that you will enter Paradise while such trials have not yet come to you as came to those who passed away before you?”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse reminds the Ummah that trial is **the price** of deliverance. Gaza lives this verse every single day.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** calls it a warning against complacency Paradise is for those who endure, not for those who look away.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes that trials serve as the ultimate test of sincerity: true believers remain firm in pain, not only in comfort.

Verse 3 – Sūrat al-A‘rāf (7:129)

قَالُوا أُوذِينَا مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ تَأْتِيَنَا وَمِنْ بَعْدِ مَا جِئْتَنَا قَالَ عَسَىٰ رَبُّكُمْ أَنْ يُهْلِكَ عَدُوَّكُمْ وَيَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ

“They said: ‘We were harmed before you came to us and after you came to us.’ He (Moses) said: ‘Perhaps your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors upon the earth, then He will see how you act.’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** describes this verse as **an interaction between despair and prophetic leadership**. The people, crushed by years of oppression, voice their frustration to Mūsā (Moses). His response is both *pedagogical* and *spiritual*: he offers no false promises, but says “‘asā rabbukum” “perhaps your Lord...” rekindling hope while teaching humility. Ibn ‘Āshūr notes the key phrase: “فَيَنْظُرَ كَيْفَ تَعْمَلُونَ” “then He will see how you act.” **Freedom itself is a test**. The issue is not only what Pharaoh does, but what *you* will do when *you* hold power.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that Mūsā’s words are not mere comfort they are a **warning**: “If Allah destroys your enemy, it is not the end it is the beginning.” The phrase “يَسْتَخْلِفَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ” refers to *khilāfah* stewardship of the earth not just in the political sense, but as a moral responsibility. Allah wishes to see how people act when they can no longer blame their oppressors. Al-Qurṭubī criticizes the victim mentality of those who dwell on suffering without reflecting on their own moral duties.
- **Ar-Rāzī** points out the **rhetorical wisdom in Mūsā’s** use of “‘asā” (*perhaps*), which shifts the focus from guarantees to divine will. For him, the central message is that **the test does**

not end with liberation it begins there. Oppression **purifies a people**, but power tests **their souls**.

In other words: the greatest test only comes when you receive responsibility yourself.

The words of Mūsā (‘alayhi as-salām) to his people, spoken at the depth of their oppression, still echo in Gaza today. His people complained: “We were harmed before you came, and after you came nothing has changed.” But he replied with both *hope* and *accountability*: “Perhaps your Lord will destroy your enemy and make you successors upon the earth and then He will see how you act.”
(*Sūrat al-A‘raf* 7:129)

This divine lesson is profoundly relevant to Palestine.

The Palestinian people, like Banū Isrā’īl under Pharaoh, live under a merciless occupier. The bombings, blockades, and humiliations have scarred generations. And just as Banū Isrā’īl were told, the message to Gaza remains: **perhaps Allah will destroy your oppressor and make you inheritors of your own land.**

Yet the verse reminds us *liberation is not the end; it is the **beginning of responsibility***. What will we do with freedom when it comes? Will we build a society grounded in justice and taqwā, or fall into division, corruption, and moral decay? There is a bitter irony in history: **Banū Isrā’īl**, once whipped under Pharaoh’s tyranny, have themselves become Pharaoh a people who survived the Holocaust now perpetrate their own, with tanks, drones, and propaganda. They were once victims of the world’s silence; now they are the perpetrators in a world that remains silent again.

But betrayal does not only come from the outside. Within the **Muslim world, many leaders** -heirs of Ṣalāḥ ad-Dīn and ‘Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb- have become caretakers of their own palaces instead of shepherds of their people. They close deals with the occupiers and their backers. They ally with the West while their people cry.

And so, history repeats itself. But whoever understands this verse knows that **Allah is watching. Not only what is done to us, but what we do when power is placed in our hands.**

36.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَثَلُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ فِي تَوَادُّهِمْ وَتَرَاحُمِهِمْ وَتَعَاطُفِهِمْ مَثَلُ الْجَسَدِ، إِذَا اشْتَكَى مِنْهُ عُضْوٌ، تَدَاعَى لَهُ سَائِرُ الْجَسَدِ بِالسَّهْرِ وَالْحَمَى

“The believers, in their love, mercy, and compassion for one another, are like a single body: when one limb suffers, the whole body responds with sleeplessness and fever.” (Muslim)

Reflection; This Verse sets the bar for **empathy** in the Ummah: believers are like one body. If one part feels pain, the whole suffers. Ibn Hajar says that this is not a metaphor but reality: whoever carries true *īmān* **feels** the suffering of his brothers and sisters. If we continue to sleep peacefully while Gaza bleeds, then there is something wrong, not with them, but with **our heart**. True *īmān* means that their pain keeps us awake and moves us to deeds and *dua*

36.4 Reflective Layer

Gaza is not just a geographical place, but a **spiritual barometer**. It is a mirror in which we see our own *īmān*: our steadfastness, our sincerity, and our moral compass. While Gaza is being physically destroyed by bombs, blockades, and hunger, the rest of the world is being tested with something more subtle but at least as dangerous: **indifference**.

The pain of Gaza exposes three things:

- **“Leaders”** who have strayed far from justice.
- **Our slogans** that are often not followed by real deeds.
- **Our ease** in saying: “We cannot do anything anyway.”

But amidst destruction, Gaza also sends out a message that no army can destroy: **sabr, tawakkul, and honor**. Children suffering from hunger, mothers losing their babies, hospitals having to continue without electricity, and yet they refuse to give up their dignity.

Silence is not neutrality

The Ummah must acknowledge: **silence is not neutrality, it is complicity**. And our helplessness is often not the result of powerlessness, but of the priorities we make ourselves: luxury over justice, comfort over responsibility.

For upbringing and education

For our children, Gaza means that we must not only teach them to be charitable, but also to **stand in justice**. They must grow up with Qur’an in their hearts *and* with the pain of the Ummah in their consciousness. For schools, it means that stories like those of Musa and Fir‘awn must not be treated as mere history, but as **living lessons about power, oppression, and moral responsibility**.

For ourselves

For ourselves, Gaza means that we must constantly ask ourselves: what am I doing with the freedom, safety, and resources that I have? Do I use them to help and to serve, or to look away? Gaza asks not only for food and money, it asks for a **restoration of our conscience**.

The story from Lombok

I remember a meeting in Lombok, Indonesia. A young man who worked in a resort spontaneously gave me his moped so I could go to the mosque on time. During our conversation he said: “I am extremely troubled by Gaza, but I can do little. Therefore I try, when I see Muslims in this resort, to be as good as possible to them – perhaps *they* can do something, such as a donation.” His words touched me deeply. He had no millions, no great power, but he did what he could. That is exactly the message: **do something, however small**.

Practical tools

What can you do, even from a distance?

- **With your consumption:** boycott as much as you can, especially companies that openly support Israel.
- **With your voice:** write messages, share testimonies, create art or media that shows the truth.
- **With your deeds:** donate, sponsor an orphan, skip a meal in solidarity.
- **With your community:** organize or join protests, talk about it in your mosque, provide education and awareness.
- **With your heart:** make *dua*, read Qur’an, raise your hands and beg Allah for relief.

Gaza asks not for our pity, but for our **deeds**. No silence, but a voice. No excuses, but choices. And whoever stands before Allah tomorrow, might receive the question: “Where were you, when My servants in Gaza were dying of hunger?”

The Prophet ﷺ said: “The believers in their love, mercy, and compassion for one another are like one body: if one part feels pain, the whole body suffers along.” (Muslim)

If we calmly scroll on while children are dying, then there is something wrong not with Gaza, but with our heart.

36.5 Conclusion

Gaza today is not merely a place on the map; it is a *moral compass* that exposes the true faces of people, leaders, and communities. In a world where injustice is broadcast live yet collectively ignored, Gaza stands as a living indictment not only against the oppressor but also against the *silence* of the world.

The question that confronts us is not only: **“What does the oppressor do with his power?”** It is, above all: **“What do we do with our freedom, our platforms, our resources, and our voice?”**

We possess safety, abundance, and freedom of speech yet often we remain silent. We complain about trivial inconveniences, while in Gaza, children are buried beneath the earth. And yet, amidst rubble and hunger, a strength rises that cannot be destroyed: *steadfastness, trust in Allah, and dignity.*

The tragedy of our time is that many with power world leaders, Arab regimes, even religious institutions remain silent or complicit. But within that silence, their *moral bankruptcy* is exposed. At the same time, Gaza shows that *true power does not lie in weapons or wealth*, but in *faith and perseverance.*

Therefore, we must ask ourselves: If Allah were to grant us power and resources, would we act with justice? Or would we, like so many before us, become leaders in name but slaves to ego and worldly desire?

The lesson of Gaza is that the struggle is not merely between oppressors and oppressed. It is a struggle between *truth and hypocrisy*, between *sincerity and opportunism*, between *hearts that remember and hearts that forget.* Gaza is the **test of our conscience.** History will forget our slogans, but it will remember our silence. And Allah the All-Knowing sees not only what we *say*, but what we *do.*

May Allah make us people of *truthfulness* those who do not look away, but remain steadfast, act, and hope, even when no one is watching.

“And be patient, for indeed, Allah is with the patient.” (*Sūrat al-Baqarab, 2:153*)

Chapter 37 – Materialism & Consumerism: When Possession Becomes an Idol

37.1 Observation

We live in an age where material wealth is seen as the ultimate goal of life. People work themselves to exhaustion to buy things they don't need, with money they don't have, to impress people they don't even know. Young people measure their worth by brands, cars, clothes, and social media likes. Even charity is often considered only *after* one has “enough” for oneself yet that “enough” keeps shifting further and further away.

What is even more troubling is that **young people today take out loans just to drive luxury cars not out of necessity, but to be *seen***. Status has become more important than stability. Image outweighs balance. Instead of investing in knowledge, skills, or projects that uplift the community, many invest in appearance, trends, and temporary impressions.

Even in the realm of housing, ownership has become more than a need. **People no longer buy a single home through interest-based loans, justified by certain European fatwas as a “necessity,” but two or three or more** turning what was once a concession into a profit model built on doubtful grounds. While the Prophet ﷺ taught us simplicity and prioritizing the poor, many have become addicted to a lifestyle of expansion, possession, and comfort at the cost of *barakah*, spiritual serenity, and moral clarity.

The modern world revolves around consumption. Advertising, social media, and even identity itself are now built around what we buy, wear, eat, or display. What is painful is that many Muslims have also become *consumers* passive users of technologies, brands, food, entertainment, and ideas produced by others.

Whether its **clothing labels, fast food, digital trends, or social media** the average Muslim is rarely the creator, but the consumer. Even our religious experience is often *consumed* through popular apps, short clips, and influencers frequently without deep knowledge or reflection.

In countries like the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, thousands of Muslims work in major corporations such as **Google, Meta, Apple, Amazon, Microsoft, OpenAI, and Tesla**. Many are skilled engineers, developers, AI specialists, or data strategists and yes, they are Muslim. But instead of using that knowledge and experience to *build* something of their own, many remain within systems where they are merely another cog in someone else's production machine.

Our *Ummah* once had a history of creativity, innovation, and leadership. The golden age of Islamic civilization produced minds like **Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna), Al-Khwārizmī, Al-Fārābī, Ibn Rushd, Al-Bīrūnī, Al-Jāhīz**, and many more. They wrote books, founded schools, designed instruments, and laid the foundations of modern science. Today, we must ask ourselves: What do *we* produce as a community? Are we builders of ideas, institutions, and technology or merely users of what others create for us?

Materialism is not only love of possessions it is the *loss of creativity, initiative, and purpose*. It is waiting for change instead of *creating* it. The way forward lies not only in *moderating consumption* but in rediscovering our duty to be **waqfi** devoted to something greater than ourselves: to knowledge, progress, and service to the *Ummah*.

The love for *dunyā* has sunk deeply into the heart. While wealth can be a blessing, it often becomes a trial or worse, an idol. The Qur'an warns sharply against wastefulness, greed, and attachment to possessions. Islam teaches us to *use* wealth, not to *worship* it.

We live in a time when consumption no longer merely defines our shopping habits it shapes our worldview, our relationships, and even our *faith*. People have become so accustomed to choosing and rejecting based on personal preference **cherry-picking** that this attitude has crept into their religious practice. Faith has become a **bricolage**, a self-made collage of spiritual fragments, assembled according to taste rather than submission to Divine guidance.

On platforms like TikTok and YouTube, we see this phenomenon spreading widely: People post videos about *gratitude, love, and positive energy*, while neglecting the fundamental pillars of faith prayer, justice, humility, and avoidance of sin. **Religion is reduced to an aesthetic or emotional fragment**, stripped of its moral and legal framework.

This form of *spiritual consumerism* prioritizes comfort over submission, and selective spirituality over complete devotion. But can a faith that one assembles for oneself still be called obedience to the Creator or is it merely a reflection of the ego?

37.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah Al-Humazah (104:1–3)

﴿وَيْلٌ لِّكُلِّ هُمَزَةٍ لُّمَزَةٍ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِي جَمَعَ مَالًا وَعَدَّدَهُ ﴿٢﴾ يُحْسِبُ أَنَّ مَالَهُ أَخْلَدَهُ﴾

"Woe to every slanderer and backbiter the one who gathers wealth and keeps counting it, thinking that his wealth will make him immortal."

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** describes these verses as a denunciation of arrogance born from wealth. The person mentioned makes his possessions **a reason for self-glorification**. According to Ibn 'Āshūr, this is a spiritual disease because the heart becomes dependent on something perishable.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** points out that this person not only counts his **wealth** but *trusts* in it as his **source of security**. The fault lies not in ownership itself, but in believing that wealth makes one independent of Allah.
- **Ar-Rāzī** calls **the illusion that money extends or protects life** one of the **greatest idols** of the human soul. He connects this verse to the false notion that material success automatically indicates divine approval.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Al-Isrā' (17:26–27)

﴿وَلَا تُبْذِرْ تَبْذِيرًا ۚ إِنَّ الْمُبْذِرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ﴾

"And do not be wasteful, for indeed, the wasteful are the brothers of the devils."

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** defines *tabdhīr* as **spending wealth outside its rightful purpose** even if one possesses much. Wastefulness, he says, is not an economic problem but a spiritual disorder: a denial of the responsibility that comes with wealth.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** considers *tabdhīr* a form of **ingratitude**. Whoever wastes shows that he does not recognize the blessings of Allah. He also links it to arrogance and indifference toward the poor.
- **Ar-Rāzī** warns of **overconsumption** as a moral habit. The connection with the *shayāṭīn* (devils) symbolizes the loss of control over one's desires. Wastefulness is the opposite of *iqtiṣād* (moderation), a quality the Qur'an praises.

Verse 3 – Sūrah Al-Kahf (18:46)

﴿الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ﴾

"Wealth and children are but adornment of the worldly life, but the everlasting righteous deeds are better in reward and better in hope."

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** explains that the Qur'an here does not condemn wealth or children, but **puts them in perspective**. The issue arises when **possessions** and status become *ends* rather than *means* for righteous deeds.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** highlights the verse's reminder of worldly transience. He stresses that *al-bāqiyāt aṣ-ṣāliḥāt* (the everlasting righteous deeds) are **what truly count** on the Day of Judgment.
- **Ar-Rāzī** compares worldly life (*dunyā*) to a **dream** dazzling during sleep, but meaningless upon awakening. The real life, he says, is in the Hereafter; whoever lives as if the *dunyā* were eternal is deceived.

Verse 4 – Sūrah Al-Muzzammil (73:19)

﴿فَأَمَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اتَّخَذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا﴾

"And whoever wills, let him take a path toward his Lord."

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** explains that this phrase highlights human **freedom of choice**: one can either take the path toward Allah a path of obedience, submission, and effort or be led by laziness, desires, and selective belief. The true servant is the one who directs himself entirely toward his Lord, not toward comfort or preference.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** interprets this as an implicit call to complete sincerity and devotion, and a **warning against superficial faith or partial submission**. One cannot claim belief while following only the easy or appealing aspects of religion. The “path to Allah” demands sincerity, self-discipline, and perseverance.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that “taking a path to one’s Lord” does not mean a half-hearted effort or a mix of convenience and truth. It signifies a deliberate and **serious commitment**. Whoever bases religious practice on personal preference rather than divine guidance has not embarked on this path but wanders without direction.

In an era when faith is often filtered through personal taste or trending hashtags, this verse reminds us that the *path to Allah* is a conscious, disciplined choice not a lifestyle trend or passing mood.

Selective religiosity is not a path to the Lord, but a path to the *self*.

The modern believer often acts as a *consumer of faith* choosing what feels comfortable and discarding what challenges. But this verse calls for something far greater: **not consumption, but commitment. Not bricolage, but submission.**

37.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

حُبُّ الدُّنْيَا رَأْسُ كُلِّ خَطِيئَةٍ

"The love of this world is the root of every sin."

(Bayhaqī, Ḥasan)

Reflection: The Prophet ﷺ made clear that the origin of many sins lies in the **obsession with the worldly**. From greed and jealousy to injustice and betrayal, the root is often a sick heart that has attached itself to *dunya*.

37.4 Reflective Layer

Materialism is not merely a matter of behavior; it is a **disease of the heart** disguised as success. It is a mindset in which possessions define identity, status outweighs substance, and comfort overshadows responsibility. The most dangerous part is that all of this has begun to seem **normal**. We live in a world where things determine the worth of people; the car you drive, the brand you wear, the neighborhood you live in. Even among Muslims, these standards have seeped deep into our lives: loans for luxury cars, homes purchased through questionable *fatwas*, and a constant hunger for recognition through appearances. But where is the **barakah**? Where is the soul in our wealth? What is the purpose of our possessions?

The Prophet ﷺ lived simply, gave away what he owned, and taught that wealth is not a blessing if it leads to arrogance or negligence. He never forbade wealth he commanded mastery over it. In Islam, wealth is an **amānah** a trust, not an identity; a means, not an end; a test, not a triumph.

Therefore, our approach to education and upbringing must change. Young people must learn that dignity does not come from what they wear but from who they are before **Allah**. True wealth lies in *knowledge, humility, action, and service* to the community. Parents must realize that the desire for comfort must not devolve into an **addiction to luxury**.

As a community, we must ask ourselves: What are we *building* today that will last tomorrow? What do we do with our knowledge, our resources, our networks? Where is our creative and intellectual voice in a world increasingly shaped by others?

Our predecessors built **civilizations**. Today, we buy products. They wrote books. We scroll endlessly through images. For them, knowledge was **ibādah** worship. For us, a diploma is too often nothing more than a passport to social mobility.

This must change. The Ummah does not need Muslims competing in the race for possessions. It needs **ambassadors of simplicity**, builders of knowledge, and servants of the community. People who live **waqfi** devoted to higher purposes beyond personal comfort.

How do we do this concretely?

- **Practice simplicity:** Don't always buy what you can afford. Sometimes, leave it even if you can easily pay for it.
- **Use wealth as a means, not an end:** Before every purchase, ask yourself does this bring me closer to Allah or only to status?
- **Invest in knowledge and community:** Support education, libraries, youth initiatives, Qur'an programs. Build not only houses build *people*.
- **Cultivate gratitude:** Replace the urge for more with the awareness that what you already have is a blessing.
- **Give generously:** The Prophet ﷺ gave without fear. Generosity purifies the heart and frees it from the grip of *dunyā*.

For the love of dunya is not in our cars or houses. It is in **our hearts**.

37.5 Conclusion

Materialism is not merely an obsession with possessions; it is a *loss of direction*. It turns the human being into a consumer, his heart into a warehouse, and his life into a race without purpose. The Prophet ﷺ **lived on sand**, slept on mats, and left behind a *Ummah* not a palace.

Materialism is not just a lifestyle choice; it is a *silent poison* that **weakens the soul** and paralyzes the *Ummah*. It makes us appear great in wealth, yet small in action. While the Qur'an repeatedly reminds us that the Hereafter is the true destination, many remain trapped in the endless chase for luxury and status.

The way forward is clear: **Use wealth as a means, not as an end**. Our money, our homes, and our resources must become *instruments to build people, spread knowledge, and strengthen justice*. True wealth is not in what we *accumulate*, but in what we **leave behind** for Allah and for the generations to come.

﴿كَلَّا بَلْ تُحِبُّونَ الْعَاجِلَةَ، وَتَذُرُونَ الْآخِرَةَ﴾

"No! You love the immediate (worldly life), and neglect the Hereafter."
(*Sūrah Al-Qiyāmah*, 75:20–21)

Chapter 38 – Social Justice & Inequality – The Ummah and Its Weakest

38.1 Observation

The **world today is deeply divided** not only between rich and poor, but also between power and powerlessness, between the elite and the forgotten. In many Muslim countries, this gap becomes even more painful due to **corruption**, favoritism (*ma'rifa*), and injustice that is often openly tolerated. In countries such as Algeria, Egypt, or Pakistan, it is not uncommon that you only receive help if you “know someone.” Rights are often *sold*, and justice is often *bought*.

When traveling by car through some Muslim lands, you are sometimes stopped on the road not for safety reasons, but in the hope of receiving a bribe. Government officials, police, and even hospital staff sometimes function as if justice were a luxury product.

Meanwhile, we see thousands of **orphans, refugees, widows, and oppressed** people within our own Ummah often ignored, sometimes exploited. Children are born in refugee camps without identity papers, without education, without a future. Women flee from war, violence, or abuse, but find no protection or voice. And in the face of all this, a haunting question remains: **Who will stand up for these people?**

38.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah An-Nisā' (4:135)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا كُونُوا قَوَّامِينَ بِالْقِسْطِ شُهَدَاءَ لِلَّهِ وَلَوْ عَلَىٰ أَنفُسِكُمْ أَوِ الْوَالِدِينَ وَالْأَقْرَبِينَ﴾

"O you who believe, stand firmly for justice, as witnesses for Allah, even if it be against yourselves, your parents, or your relatives."

- **Ibn 'Ashūr** describes this verse as the foundation of **universal moral justice** in Islam. It demands that the believer be objective, even when truth harms his own interests or those of his loved ones. No emotion, kinship, or social tie should distort the truth.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that *qist* (justice) here goes beyond legal matters. It includes **every situation** in which truth is threatened political, familial, or social especially in defending **the weak** and marginalized.
- **Ar-Rāzī** calls this verse a **test of sincerity**: whoever demands justice from others but does not apply it to himself or his circle is a hypocrite in the sight of Allah.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Al-Balad (90:12–16)

﴿فَكَرَّبَّةٍ، أَوْ إِطْعَامٍ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْعَبَةٍ، يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ، أَوْ مَسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ﴾

"[The path of goodness is:] freeing a slave, or feeding on a day of hunger, an orphan near of kin, or a needy person lying in the dust."

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** states that these actions **liberating, feeding, protecting form the core of Islamic social justice**. It is not merely about giving charity but about actively restoring the dignity of the weakest members of society.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** points out that the verse specifies **“an orphan near of kin”** implying not distant sympathy but personal involvement and responsibility. True compassion begins close to home.
- **Ar-Rāzī** stresses that real justice is not found in speeches or debates but in **deeds that alleviate suffering**. Islam demands concrete action, not symbolic solidarity.

Verse 3 – Sūrah An-Nisā’ (4:75)

﴿وَمَا لَكُمْ لَا تُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمُسْتَضْعَفِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ وَالنِّسَاءِ وَالْوِلْدَانِ﴾

"And why should you not fight in the cause of Allah and [for] the oppressed among men, women, and children?"

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** interprets this verse as a moral reproach a divine rebuke for the believers’ **passivity while others suffer**. True faith demands more than prayer or sorrow; it requires moral courage and action.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that **“striving”** here does not refer only to armed **struggle**, but to every effort legal, political, or social undertaken to defend the oppressed. The believer must be actively engaged.
- **Ar-Rāzī** sees this verse as the essence of bravery: to fight for those without a voice, for the invisible, and for the forgotten. This is the real *jihād* not for pride or vengeance, but for **justice**.

38.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

هَلْ تُنصَرُونَ وَتُرزُقُونَ إِلَّا بِضُعْفَائِكُمْ

"Are you not given victory and provision except through your weak ones?"
(Bukhārī)

Reflection: This Verse reveals a profound truth: the *barakah* (divine blessing) of a community does not come from its wealth, strength, or influence but from how it treats its weakest members. They are the reason for divine support or its withdrawal.

38.4 Reflective Layer

The Qur'an and the Sunnah make one truth unmistakably clear: the true measure of a community is not found in its buildings, its wealth, or its political influence but in how it treats its most vulnerable members. **Orphans, widows, the poor, refugees, and those without a voice these are the real test of our faith.**

Today, we see how easily these groups are ignored. In some countries, rights are sold as if they were commodities those without money or connections are literally left out in the cold. Elsewhere, charity has been reduced to a photo opportunity, a polished project for social media, but devoid of the structural care and proximity that Allah commands from us.

The Qur'an, however, leaves no room for passivity. In *Sūrah Al-Balad*, Allah teaches that the path of righteousness runs **through** hardship freeing the enslaved, feeding the hungry, being close to the orphan, and supporting the destitute. It is not about eloquent words or shallow sympathy; it is about **concrete action that relieves pain and restores dignity.**

The Prophet's ﷺ Verse is equally powerful: our victory and sustenance do not come from our successful entrepreneurs or influential politicians, but from the prayers and presence of the weakest among us. **They are not a burden they are the source of our *barakah* (divine blessing).**

The lesson is clear:

- If we neglect our orphans, we lose our future.
- If we ignore our poor, the blessing will disappear from our wealth.
- If we mistreat or overlook our refugees, we undermine our own humanity.

We must teach people that bringing children into the world without providing them with dignity, love, and protection is a betrayal of trust. We must teach youth that an orphan is not a burden, but an opportunity for mercy. And we must train our communities not to react only during crises, but to stand *structurally* for those who are oppressed and forgotten.

To rebuild our moral compass, we must learn to see as Allah commands us to see not the *status* of a person, but their *vulnerability*. Justice in Islam is not an abstract principle; it is the **active responsibility to protect those who cannot protect themselves.**

38.5 Conclusion

Justice in Islam is not a luxury it is an obligation. **Whoever turns away from the weak, turns away from Allah's test.** The Qur'an commands us to stand firm in *qist* (justice), even when it goes against ourselves or those we love. The Sunnah teaches us that the *barakah* of the Ummah rests not in the hands of its powerful or wealthy, but in the hands of its weakest members.

The true question, then, is not whether we are capable of great heroic acts but whether we are willing to perform the small, consistent acts that save lives and heal hearts: to stand by the orphan, to feed the hungry, to defend the oppressed. **Whoever serves them, serves Allah. Whoever forgets them, loses themselves.**

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ﴾

*"Indeed, Allah commands justice and excellence."
(Sūrah An-Nahl, 16:90)*

Chapter 39 – Media, Image Formation & Influence – Who Controls Your Gaze?

39.1 Observation

We live in an age where information is abundant, yet truth has become increasingly difficult to discern. What we know about wars, poverty, religion, or social issues is often **filtered through media narratives**. The media not only decide *what* we see, but also *how* we see it. Palestinians are portrayed as “terrorists,” oppression is rebranded as “self-defense,” and Islamic values are consistently associated with extremism or backwardness.

Social media have deepened this problem. Algorithms feed us exactly what reinforces our existing preferences. Many people form their opinions based on short clips, viral quotes, or popular voices not on study, depth, or context.

A dangerous trend among Muslims today is the rise of “short-form religiosity”: **people watch sixty-second videos about Islam and believe they’ve grasped the entire faith.** They begin judging others based on superficial knowledge, oblivious to the richness of the Islamic intellectual tradition. Knowledge must now be *quick* and *snackable*. **But who still reads books?** Who still listens to full lectures? Let alone a series of lessons on *‘aqidah*, *fiqh*, or *tafsir*?

This superficiality has serious consequences. **People think they know, but lack understanding.** They quote without context. They correct others without ever having corrected themselves. then there is the endless scrolling the so-called *brain rot*. From one video to another, from humor to *haram*, from an Islamic clip to music, from a Qur’anic verse to a dancing influencer. Time disappears, focus evaporates, and the heart becomes numb. You check your phone stats at the end of the day: **four, five hours** on social media. And that’s not even counting what you might have seen along the way temptation, lust, jealousy-inducing luxury, sins packaged as pleasure.

Another growing issue is **the normalization of sin through influencers.** Women who present themselves as “Muslim content creators,” yet appear immodestly dressed and dance for millions of followers. Men who post religious quotes only to flaunt luxury, pride, and gossip in the next story. Sins are repackaged as lifestyle choices under the guise of “inspiration.”

Trends now dictate what feels halal or haram not the Qur’an. What’s popular seems right. What goes viral feels true. And whoever speaks against it is labeled “extreme” or “outdated.”

Then there’s the role of the tech giants themselves. Companies like Instagram, Facebook (Meta), Google, and YouTube **actively suppress posts about Gaza**, shadow-ban Palestinian voices, and manipulate public discourse. At the same time, **they pour millions into collaborations with pro-Israel lobby groups** and normalization campaigns. Anyone who still thinks these platforms are neutral is deeply mistaken they are instruments in the war against truth, justice, and the moral conscience of the Ummah.

The Qur’an warns us powerfully about this: do not follow blindly, do not be swayed by every voice. Use your hearing, your sight, and your reason for Allah will ask you about them.

39.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah Al-Isrā' (17:36)

﴿وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا﴾

"And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge. Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart all of those will be questioned."

- **Ibn 'Ashūr** interprets this verse as a stern **warning** against **spreading unverified information**. Anyone who speaks or acts without knowledge becomes accountable for falsehood even if unintentionally.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that this verse encompasses **gossip, spying, and slander**. He emphasizes that every sense used unjustly will be held accountable before Allah.
- **Ar-Rāzī** adds that this verse establishes **knowledge as a moral obligation**. To follow impressions, emotions, or public opinion without critical reflection is not just an intellectual error; it is a spiritual one.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Al-An'ām (6:116)

﴿وَإِنْ تَطِيعَ أَكْثَرَ مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يُضِلُّوكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ﴾

"And if you were to obey most of those on earth, they would lead you away from the path of Allah."

- **Ibn 'Ashūr** states that **public opinion is often driven by desires, emotions, and worldly interests**. Truth is rarely the standard of the majority. Islam calls us to follow what is *right*, not what is *popular*.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** warns against blind obedience to majorities whether **political powers, media narratives, or social trends**. Widespread acceptance does not equal truth.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights that truth is not **determined by numbers**. **True** guidance demands courage the courage to stand apart from the crowd if necessary.

39.3 Verse Reflection

The Prophet ﷺ said:

كفى بالمرء كذباً أن يُحدِّثَ بكلِّ ما سمع

It is enough falsehood for a person to repeat everything he hears.”
(Muslim)

Reflection: The Prophet ﷺ warns here against the careless transmission of information. Repeating everything you hear without verification or discernment makes you complicit in spreading lies and harm, even if you were not the original source.

39.4 Reflective Layer

The media world we live in today is far **from neutral**. It shapes our emotions, our opinions, our convictions, and even our understanding of faith. Every image, every sound, every piece of news influences us. Islam teaches **that our hearing, sight, and heart are *amānah*** sacred trusts for which we will be held accountable.

Allah says:

﴿إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا﴾

"Indeed, the hearing, the sight, and the heart all of those will be questioned."
(Sūrah Al-Isrā', 17:36)

We must train ourselves and our **youth to be resilient against manipulation, misinformation, and superficiality**. This requires cultivating three essential spiritual disciplines:

1. **Tabayyun (Verification):**

Don't believe everything. Don't forward everything. Don't follow every influencer, no matter how religious they may appear. In a world of filters and deception, *verification* is an act of worship (*ibādah*).

2. **Tafakkur (Deep Reflection):**

Pause to ask: *Why am I seeing this? What does it do to my heart? How does it shape my view of the world?* Tafakkur is the opposite of mindless scrolling; it is the act of conscious awareness and self-correction.

3. **Samt (Silence and Digital Self-Control):**

Not every moment needs noise. Not every void needs to be filled with TikToks or Reels.

The Prophet ﷺ said: **“Whoever believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent.”** Silence is a spiritual detox; digital restraint is a form of *‘ibādah*.

In our education and parenting, we must teach youth that not everything appealing is beneficial. They need training not only in critical thinking but also in *spiritual discipline*.

- Track your time.
- Filter your content.
- Recognize temptation.
- Develop self-control.

Whoever fills their day with faces, music, trends, and viral nonsense must ask themselves: *Where is the Qur’an in my heart? Where is dhikr? Where is focus?*

We must reexamine our digital **lifestyle**:

- What is my *digital diet*?
- What am I feeding my eyes, ears, and heart every day?
- Am I a follower of Allah or a follower of algorithms?

The screen in your hand is not a toy. It is a doorway either to *Jannah* or *Jahannam*. The likes on your videos will carry no weight on the scales of the Day of Judgment. But the words you speak, share, or choose to withhold they will.

39.5 Conclusion

The **struggle for truth today is not only a journalistic struggle**, but a **moral struggle**. We live in a world where **silence is sometimes wisdom**, and speaking can sometimes be **betrayal**, when words are not rooted in knowledge and truth.

The media are no longer neutral mirrors. They shape reality, color our emotions, determine who we see as perpetrator and who we see as victim. They **normalize sin**, present temptation as innocent, and make superficiality a lifestyle.

Whoever allows himself to be swept away in this current without resistance, loses his soul without realizing it. Whoever watches everything, listens to everything, and forwards everything, becomes hardened and blunted. The heart loses its sensitivity and the eyes lose their shame.

The Qur’an, however, teaches us that **guidance comes not from viral voices, but from revelation**. Not from trends, but from truth. Not from popular influencers, but from prophetic principles. That is why Allah calls upon us to take three steps:

That is why Allah calls us to take three conscious steps:

- **Tabayyun (Verification):** Verify what we hear do not believe everything.

- **Tafakkur (Reflection):** Reflect on what we see and how it affects our hearts.
- **Taqwā (God-consciousness):** Remember that we will be held accountable for what we share and say.

For the **eyes that look will testify, the fingers that scroll will speak, and the tongue that shares will be judged.** The true Muslim is not the one who dissolves into the noise, but the one who dares to become silent and dares to remain steadfast upon the truth.

Allah teaches us to pray:

﴿وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا﴾

“*And say: My Lord, increase me in knowledge.*”
(Sūrah Ṭā-Hā, 20:114)

Chapter 40 – Addiction (Social Media, Gaming, Pornography)

40.1 Observation

We live in an age where **addiction no longer revolves only around drugs or alcohol** it now thrives on **screens, clicks, dopamine, and digital worlds**. Addiction has shifted from the streets to the living room, from the needle to the swipe but the effect remains the same: **loss of control, isolation, and disconnection from Allah**.

One of the most widespread yet underestimated forms of addiction today is **social media**. This has been discussed before, but it remains relevant: people scroll for hours, become mentally numb, and lose time, focus, and spiritual sensitivity.

But there is another rapidly growing addiction, especially among both youth and adults: **gaming**. Online games such as *Brawl Stars*, *Mobile Legends*, *FIFA*, *Call of Duty*, *Fortnite*, or *Valorant* **consume time, relationships, and even identity**. Young people spend hours a day in digital worlds, meet their “friends” online as if it were a sport, and some **even set up entire rooms as gaming zones**. What began as entertainment has become, for many, an **escape** from what they cannot handle in real life: stress, failure, family pressure, or expectations?

Even **fathers men with families** become addicted. They neglect their responsibilities, avoid real life, and hide behind a virtual world that gives them a false sense of “control” and “reward” while silently **draining their soul**.

Then there is the **silent destruction** spreading through our communities: **gambling addiction**. In countries like Indonesia, this has become a growing tragedy apps like *Djute Slot* and other online betting platforms are **destroying families**. Men take loans, lose everything, sink into debt, and eventually lose their dignity. And in our own countries? Betting shops, sports gambling, and casinos often run by people who call themselves Muslim. How did it come to this? Yet the most devastating and silent killer inside our homes is undoubtedly **pornography**.

It is everywhere on phones, in bedrooms, among teenagers and even married couples. It is addictive, destructive, and spiritually devastating. I have known students just 14 or 15 years old who watch pornography daily. Their view of marriage, women, love, and intimacy becomes completely distorted. Some become so addicted that they delay or avoid marriage altogether because their desires are artificially fed without responsibility. And when they do marry, they bring those images, expectations, and damage into their relationship leading to dissatisfaction, distance, shame, or even addiction within marriage itself.

What makes this even worse **is that children today at just nine or ten years old are already familiar with sexual terms**. Many use words they barely understand but which already shape their perception of sexuality and relationships. Even school-based “**sex education**,” though often well-intentioned, contributes to early exposure **without** providing an ethical framework. Meanwhile, social media, games, and YouTube bombard them with ideas of sexuality that have nothing to do

with **dignity, love, or responsibility**. This is not a minor issue. It is an **epidemic within the Ummah**, and we have normalized it under the excuses of “it’s unavoidable” or “it’s personal.” But the soul suffers and so does the community. Beyond social media, gaming, and pornography, there is another addiction that often goes unnoticed because it is socially accepted: **smoking, vaping, shisha, and nitrous oxide (“laughing gas”)**.

In many cities, Muslims themselves open **shisha bars** places where people gather to smoke, vape, and inhale gas under the guise of relaxation and “halal” socializing. These spaces are often decorated with Arabic calligraphy, Islamic designs, and halal snacks, as if that makes the habit less harmful or even “culturally justified.”

The danger lies in this normalization even within **Muslim communities**. In countries like **Indonesia, Turkey, Lebanon, or Syria, smoking** is not taboo but culture. In Lebanon, shisha is a normal social ritual. Youth in Jakarta, Istanbul, or Damascus see cigarettes or vapes as something “everyone does.” It’s not viewed as addiction but as a **rite of passage** or a sign of **manhood**.

What’s even more tragic is seeing men who have just finished praying, standing outside the mosque smoking. And when you speak to them, they say: “Brother, it’s only *makruh* (discouraged), not *harām*. Vaping and shisha are often seen as “innocent alternatives,” yet they are **addictive, harmful, and a betrayal of the body** that Allah has entrusted to us. Laughing gas and similar substances directly damage the brain **used by youth out of boredom or to escape reality**.

The greatest irony of our time? Young Muslims who would rather spend their money on smoke, vapor, and emptiness than on knowledge or Qur’an lessons. Parents who worry about their children’s faith but quietly approve when they “just hang out” at a shisha bar. Meanwhile, the Ummah cries for reform, clarity, and responsibility.

Moreover, then comes another addiction one that seems harmless but eats away at the heart: **binge-watching series**, Netflix dramas, or anime. What begins as one episode turns into a night, a season, and then a habit that consumes the heart. Fictional characters receive more attention than the biography of the Prophet ﷺ. Human stories receive more love than the Word of Allah.

The results are visible:

- Prayers delayed until the last moment,
- Qur’ans left unopened,
- Minds filled with images but hearts left empty.

This kind of addiction may not always be *harām* in a legal sense, but it **extinguishes the inner light**. Love for Allah doesn’t disappear overnight; it fades slowly through constant distraction. And that is precisely what the culture of the screen does; it fills your eyes and ears until there is no room left for **dhikr**, for silence, for Allah.

Addiction is not just a habit. It is a **modern form of idolatry** the surrender of your time, peace, desires, and ultimately your heart to something other than Allah. And idolatry, in any form, always comes with a price.

40.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah Al-Jāthiyah (45:23)

﴿أَفَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَهَهُ هَوَاهُ وَأَضَلَّهُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ وَخَتَّمَ عَلَىٰ سَمْعِهِ وَقَلْبِهِ وَجَعَلَ عَلَىٰ بَصَرِهِ غِشَاوَةً فَمَنْ يَهْدِيهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ﴾

"Have you seen the one who has taken his own desires as his god? Allah has left him astray despite knowledge, sealed his hearing and his heart, and placed a veil over his sight. Who can guide him after Allah? Will you not then reflect?"

- **Ibn 'Ashūr** describes this verse as depicting the *lowest stage of spiritual degeneration* when a **person worships their own desires as if they were divine commands**. Even knowledge cannot protect someone who allows his *hawā* (passion) to dominate revelation. This is the essence of addiction: the mind knows it is wrong, but the heart is locked.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that this person **humiliates himself by elevating his lusts** above Allah's authority. The sealing of the heart, hearing, and sight is a punishment for stubborn persistence in sin despite repeated warnings.
- **Ar-Rāzī** interprets it as **spiritual blindness** born from egocentric stubbornness. Whoever follows his *hawā* without repentance is left to himself the most severe form of misguidance.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Al-A' rāf (7:179)

﴿وَلَقَدْ ذَرَأْنَا لِجَهَنَّمَ كَثِيرًا مِّنَ الْجِنِّ وَالإِنسِ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ لَّا يَفْقَهُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْيُنٌ لَّا يُبْصِرُونَ بِهَا وَلَهُمْ آدَانٌ لَّا يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا أُولَئِكَ كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ﴾

"And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand, eyes with which they do not see, and ears with which they do not hear. They are like cattle; no, they are even more astray. They are the heedless ones."

- **Ibn 'Ashūr** calls this verse a description of *ghaflab* (heedlessness). These people are not unintelligent; they simply **refuse to reflect**. Their addiction to the world and to desire has numbed their spiritual senses.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** likens them to cattle, responding only to **basic impulses**: eating, sleeping, and pleasure. They no longer use their intellect for its divine purpose, which makes them even worse than animals.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that this is the state of **those addicted to sin and worldly amusement**. They hear the truth but reject it; they see the signs but ignore them. Their hearts have become sealed against divine guidance.

Verse 3 – Sūrah Ṣād (38:26)

﴿وَلَا تَتَّبِعِ الْهَوَىٰ فَيُضِلَّكَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَضِلُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ شَدِيدٌ بِمَا نَسُوا يَوْمَ الْحِسَابِ﴾

"Do not follow your desires, for they will lead you away from the path of Allah. Indeed, those who stray from the path of Allah will have a severe punishment for having forgotten the Day of Reckoning."

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** emphasizes that following *hawā* is a **constant threat** to a believer’s spiritual integrity. Those in positions of influence leaders, parents, and teachers must be especially cautious, for their misguidance affects others.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that this verse was revealed concerning **Prophet Dāwūd** (David) ﷺ and serves as a reminder that even the most righteous are not immune to temptation. Forgetting the *Akhirah* is often the first step toward addiction.
- **Ar-Rāzī** views *hawā* as an **internal enemy**, dangerous precisely because it disguises itself as “comfort,” “freedom,” or “self-expression,” while in truth it gradually drags one away from the Straight Path.

40.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

حُفَّتِ الْجَنَّةُ بِالْمَكَارِهِ، وَحُفَّتِ النَّارُ بِالشَّهَوَاتِ

"Paradise is surrounded by hardships, and the Fire is surrounded by desires."

(**Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim**)

Reflection: In this profound Verse, the Prophet ﷺ reveals a timeless truth: the road to *Jannah* is not lined with ease, but with **struggle against one’s own nafs (ego) and hawā (desires)**. Addictions whether digital, physical, or psychological promise momentary satisfaction, yet they lead the soul away from Allah’s path. The test of faith lies not in avoiding desire altogether, but in mastering it.

40.4 Reflective Layer

In Islam, the body is not your personal property to use as you wish; it is an **amānah** (trust) entrusted to you by Allah ﷻ. Every breath you take, every heartbeat you feel, is a gift and every gift

will be accounted for on the Day of Judgment. Whoever consciously inhales smoke, vapor, or gas claims freedom, but in reality betrays a divine trust.

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«لَا ضَرَرَ وَلَا ضِرَارَ»

"There should be no harm, nor reciprocating harm."

(Ibn Mājah, *ḥasan*)

When young people smoke, vape, or use shisha sometimes even right after prayer or at the entrance of the mosque they reveal a deep misunderstanding of both faith and health. And often, this behavior is excused with *fiqh* phrases like: "It's only *makrūb*." But this is precisely the problem: we have begun to use religious language **not to deepen our *taqwā*, but to justify our complacency.**

Shisha bars have become a refuge for many yet instead of peace, they find addiction; instead of clarity, they find haze; and instead of brotherhood, they find spiritual emptiness. Islam, however, offers pure and life-giving alternatives: ***dhikr*, Qur'an, physical activity, knowledge, and true companionship rooted in sincerity.**

Practical Steps toward Recovery

1. Education in Mosques

Awareness programs should be directed not only at youth, but also at parents. They must understand that smoking, vaping, and shisha are not "harmless habits," but both spiritual and physical harm.

2. Spiritual Detox Programs

Teach youth that true calm does not lie in smoke, but in *ṣabr*, *dhikr*, and *taqwā*. The purification of the body begins with the purification of the heart.

3. Parental Supervision and Guidance

Parents must dare to set boundaries, monitor, and correct with love, but also with firmness. Comfort and shame are the enemies of effective parenting.

4. Breaking Social Pressure

The normalization of sin is one of the greatest dangers of our age. We must re-learn to say *no* to trends, even when the group says *yes*.

5. Courageous Leadership

Imams and teachers must speak openly about these issues not with judgment, but with wisdom, compassion, and sincerity.

The essence is this: **nothing in this dunya is free**. Not the smoke of a shisha, not the likes on a video, not the fleeting comfort of a habit. Everything comes with a price, and every choice is weighed. The body we carry is an *amānah*, and the honor we give it reflects our **gratitude to Allah**.

40.5 Conclusion

Addiction in all its forms, whether digital stimulation, gaming, pornography, smoking, or nitrous oxide is not merely a health issue, but a **spiritual amputation**. It is an addiction of the heart a condition where the heart detaches from Allah and becomes entangled with a *dunyā* that constantly demands more, yet never satisfies.

Addiction is the **idolatry of our age** not because people bow before statues, but because they devote their **time, love, energy, and attention** to whatever distracts them from Allah.

The Qur'an teaches us that the **heart, hearing, and sight** all carry responsibility. Addiction destroys that sacred balance it deafens the soul to truth, blinds it to divine signs, and dulls it to repentance.

If we want our *Ummah* to revive, we must:

- **Take the battle against addiction seriously.**
- **Strengthen our youth intellectually and spiritually.**
- **Heal our families from digital and moral damage.**
- **And above all, recenter Allah in our lives.**

True freedom is not doing whatever you want it is being free from whatever keeps you away from Allah.

Whoever restrains his *nafs*, disciplines his desires, and reconnects his soul to the Qur'an will discover that true peace never comes from pixels, but from ***dhikr, ṣabr, 'ilm, and taqwā***.

﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ خَافَ مَقَامَ رَبِّهِ وَنَهَى النَّفْسَ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ۗ فَإِنَّ الْجَنَّةَ هِيَ الْمَأْوَىٰ﴾

"But as for the one who fears standing before his Lord and restrains himself from [evil] desires indeed, Paradise will be his home."

(*Sūrah An-Nāzi'āt*, 79:40–41)

Chapter 41 – Identity in the West

How do you preserve your Islamic identity in a secular society?

41.1 Observation

I am the son of a Belgian father who left his Christian background for atheism, and an Algerian mother who was culturally Muslim but practiced her faith little. I grew up in Ghent among Belgians, Turks, Moroccans, and other communities.

As a teenager, I went through phases of trying to fit into every group. First, I hung out with Belgians, then Turks, then Moroccans... but I never truly felt at home anywhere. My identity was fragmented, unclear a reflection of others rather than of myself.

Until I truly came to know Islam not through culture or family, but through the **Qur'an**, **knowledge**, and **conscious awareness**. That was the moment I understood: *this is who I am*. From that day forward, I was no longer a follower of others, but a servant of Allah; a person with direction, conviction, and balance.

And that is exactly what I recognize today in many of my students. They feel trapped between three worlds:

- The **home culture**, often confused between Islam and tradition.
- The **Western school environment**, where religion is seen as outdated or suspicious.
- And the **fragmented notions of Islam** they absorb through TikTok, friends, or mosques often inconsistent or contradictory.

Without a firm Islamic identity, young people become a reflection of what others expect from them. But with **knowledge**, **love for Allah**, and a **deep connection to the Qur'an**, something powerful emerges: **stability**, **inner peace**, and **clarity of purpose**.

41.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah Al-Baqarah (2:208)

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً

"O you who believe, enter into Islam completely."

- **Ibn 'Āshūr** emphasizes that this command is directed at believers who risk **reducing** their **faith to cultural symbols** or partial observance. To “enter Islam completely” means not fragmenting religion not separating belief at home, at school, or in public life.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that this verse warns against “**partial Islam**” **selecting** what fits within a Western or social context and ignoring what feels difficult or unpopular.

- **Ar-Rāzī** views it as a warning against **hypocrisy**: appearing to be Muslim while inwardly living according to other value systems.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Fuṣṣilat (41:30)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ ثُمَّ اسْتَقَمُوا تَتَنَزَّلُ عَلَيْهِمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ

"Indeed, those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah,' and then remain steadfast upon them the angels descend..."

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** states that this verse refers to people whose **identity does not depend on their surroundings**. They declare “*Rabbunā Allah*” “Our Lord is Allah” and remain loyal even when that stance is socially difficult or dangerous.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** calls this steadfastness (*istiqāmah*) the **highest form of devotion**: not only knowing who you are, but remaining true to it regardless of peer pressure, loss of status, or ridicule.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights that such stability comes from **inner strength** a clear conviction that does not waver with trends or opinions. These are the people who receive tranquility from the angels, support from Allah, and peace within their hearts.

41.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ
"يَأْتِي عَلَى النَّاسِ زَمَانٌ، الصَّابِرُ فِيهِ عَلَى دِينِهِ كَالْقَائِضِ عَلَى الْجَمْرِ"

"A time will come upon the people when the one who remains patient upon his religion will be like one holding a burning coal in his hand."

(At-Tirmidhī)

Reflection: These prophetic words perfectly describe the experience of **Muslims living in a secular society**. Holding on to one’s faith can sometimes feel like holding burning coal the heat of judgment, misunderstanding, and pressure is real. Yet those who remain steadfast in such times are counted among the truly patient and will be rewarded by Allah in ways beyond measure.

41.4 Reflective Layer

In a society where identity has become fluid and confusing, Islam offers stability. Islam is not a cultural label or a checkbox on a form it is a **source of direction, moral clarity, and inner strength**.

What young Muslims today need is not shallow integration or cultural assimilation, but a deep rooting in faith. The question is not: *“How do I fit in?”* but rather: *“How do I remain true to who I am a servant of Allah within this world?”*

This requires a conscious approach to upbringing and education:

- **At home:** Parents must teach their children that their first and greatest identity is *“abd Allah”* a servant of Allah not their nationality or ethnicity.
- **Faith with pride:** Teach youth that being Muslim is not a burden, but an honor.
- **Safe space for questions:** Allow young people to voice doubts without shame and respond with knowledge, empathy, and wisdom.
- **Visible practice:** Live your Islam calmly and confidently, even in secular settings.
- **Supportive circles:** A strong identity grows in healthy environments with friends walking the same path.

When young Muslims develop **inner confidence** in their Islamic identity not arrogance, but conviction they cease to be followers of the crowd. They become **bridge-builders, leaders of character, and sources of light** in a world searching for direction.

41.5 Conclusion

Islamic identity is not a sum of cultural habits or outward symbols. It is a **living relationship with Allah**, visible in conviction, behavior, and direction. In a society that often tries to reduce religion to folklore or to a private choice without societal value, holding on to this identity is not a matter of course, but an act of **steadfastness, courage, and consciousness**.

Islamic identity means that you do not let yourself be defined by the trends of the time, the pressure of the group, or the expectations of society. It means that your answer to the question “Who am I?” begins with: **“I am a servant of Allah.”** That anchor gives direction in all storms.

It is not about choosing between East or West, between home or school, but about remaining true to the core: **Rabbuna Allah, Our Lord is Allah**. Whoever realizes that deeply, learns to navigate without distorting. Not by disappearing into the majority, but by standing firm as a **beacon of faith, peace, and direction** for oneself *and* for others.

Therefore, identity requires three things:

1. **Consciousness:** knowing that your deeds and choices always trace back to your faith.
2. **Pride without arrogance:** standing firm in your Islamic values, without looking down on others.
3. **Responsibility:** realizing that your identity not only carries you, but also forms the community in which you live.

Identity is not a form that you wear. **It is an anchor that carries you.** And whoever places this anchor firmly in the ground of the Qur'an and the Sunnah, is not swept away by the waves of doubt, fashion, or group pressure, but remains firmly anchored, all the way to Allah.

Chapter 42 – Capitalism and Individualism – Possession and the Illusion of Security

42.1 Observation

We live in a world where **money** is no longer a means, but the **ultimate goal**. Everything is measured by wealth: status, dignity, influence, even access to health and education. Whoever is poor, barely counts. Whoever is rich, is admired, followed, and imitated.

What is striking is that **individualism** goes hand in hand with this. People are becoming increasingly focused on themselves:

- Parents are rarely visited,
- Family gatherings are seen as a burden,
- And neighbors hardly greet each other anymore.

In large cities, **millions of people live close together**, yet **emotionally they live further apart than ever before**. You can live in an apartment block where 200 people live... and no one knows each other. This has led to harrowing situations: such as that notorious example in China, where a man died on the street and no one reacted, because it was not their “business”. (NB: There are effectively multiple documented cases, among others the incident in Foshan with the girl Yue Yue, where passersby ignored her.)

In **traditional villages** we see the opposite: families live close to each other, people share meals, care for each other’s children, and are ready to help in sickness or need. Of course, this also has its downsides such as gossip or social pressure, but there is a **human warmth** that has been lost in capitalist city life.

We have switched from **community thinking to hyper-individualism**. From “we” to “I”. From the *ummah* to the selfie.

The capitalist mentality is deeply etched in our hearts and heads: **possessions = security, success = wealth**. Children are trained from a young age to ‘become something’, which usually means: earning well, making a career, and building up assets. Identity is linked to diplomas, titles, luxury brands, and travel destinations. And if the economy crashes? If a war breaks out or health fails despite millions in the bank? Then everything collapses, because the foundation is brittle.

Meanwhile, the system is running at full speed. Everyone **tries to pull themselves up, on the back of another**. Multinationals make billions, while workers worldwide are underpaid. In the Gulf States, impressive skylines have been built on the backs of oppressed and poorly treated workforces. Slavery is now called ‘work’, and people are replaceable.

Modern man has been put in a **golden cage**: you work for 40 years, pay tax on every breath; wages, food, housing, fuel, banking transactions, even death is taxed. In Belgium, we belong to the

most taxed countries in the world. Do you not pay? Then come bailiffs, fines, prison sentences. And yet people call this ‘freedom’.

But **who really rules this world?** Not the politicians we elect. They are merely executors. The real power lies with a handful of hyper-rich families, banks, tech giants, and arms lobbies. Think of companies like Raytheon, Lockheed Martin, or Northrop Grumman, giants in the arms industry. Every war means profit for them. Wars are not always waged to bring peace, but for raw materials, strategic control, or pure economic gain.

They have the technology, the nuclear weapons, the means of communication, the media. **They create fear and then sell ‘security’.** They destabilize regions and subsequently send ‘peacekeeping forces’, all financed with our tax money.

The **Zionist lobbies such as AIPAC** openly influence the foreign policy of world powers. War crimes are trivialized, genocide is denied or kept quiet, as in Gaza. The US, which speaks about human rights, simultaneously delivers billions in weapons to oppressive regimes.

Tech giants like Apple, Meta, Microsoft, and Google meanwhile control what we see, hear, and believe. They collect our data, form our worldview, and determine what is visible and what is not. With the arrival of artificial intelligence, this control becomes even more subtle and massive. Even our desires can be steered.

The **world** today has become **one big spiderweb.** We think we are free, but we are stuck, in debts, taxes, pressure to perform, and digital addiction. And who built the web? The ultra-rich, multinationals, arms industries, lobby groups, algorithms, and political puppets. The great powers use wars to get richer, influence elections, and hold entire populations captive in a system where the poor fight each other while the rich laugh.

And then we still speak about democracy? About freedom? We live in a **world that is directed by capital.** The new Pharaohs do not wear a crown, but a tailored suit. The new temples are banks and stock exchange buildings. And we? We kneel, sometimes unconsciously, before idols that Allah has never permitted.

42.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah Al-‘Ankabūt (29:41)

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ اتَّخَذَتْ بَيْتًا وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ

"The example of those who take protectors other than Allah is that of the spider who builds a house; but truly, the weakest of all houses is the house of the spider if only they knew."

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that Allah uses a powerful metaphor here: people who place their trust in systems or powers other than Allah such as money, **capitalism, or worldly authorities** are building something as fragile as a **spider’s web.** What appears stable from afar collapses upon the slightest touch.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** points out the **egoistic nature** of the spider: it lives in isolation, consumes its own offspring, and builds its web solely for self-benefit. Similarly, in capitalist societies, people often act out of self-interest, competition, and even a willingness to sacrifice others to advance themselves.
- **Ar-Rāzī** sees in this verse a profound metaphor for those who believe they possess power independent of Allah. Political, economic, or military structures may appear strong, but they are spiritually hollow and structurally unstable. He adds that the verse also refers to **mental idols** things people seek security in, such as careers, possessions, or alliances. These “houses” are illusions; when crisis strikes, they collapse into nothing.

Just as a spiderweb can barely withstand a gust of wind, so too can banks collapse, wars break out, or markets crash, and then it turns out that the capitalism people relied on has nothing to offer. Just as the spider catches its prey in a web that the fly does not see, so too **are people in the modern world invisibly caught in a system of debts, taxes, pressure to perform, and digital addiction, without realizing it.** The spider catches flies that sometimes have better eyesight, but do not notice the web. Likewise, people with a "clear view" sometimes still do not see that they are trapped in a life without spiritual meaning..

Symbolism of the Spider:

- The spider **lives alone** → egoism and self-reliance without community.
- The spider **consumes its partner or offspring** → competition and exploitation in modern economies.
- The web **appears strong but is weak** → external success masking inner emptiness.
- The web is **invisible to the fly** → capitalism traps people subtly, without their awareness.
- The spider **builds strategically** → capitalist systems embed themselves cleverly in schools, apps, laws, and even religious spaces.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Al-Ḥadīd (57:20)

أَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا لَعِبٌ وَلَهُمْ زِينَةٌ وَتَفَاخُرٌ بَيْنَكُمْ وَتَكَاثُرٌ فِي الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَوْلَادِ

"Know that the life of this world is but play and amusement, adornment, boasting among you, and rivalry in wealth and children..."

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes the temporary nature of *dunyā*. Everything people chase wealth, prestige, possessions has no true value unless connected to the Hereafter.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** describes this verse as a portrayal of **the stages of worldly life**: from play, to indulgence, to vanity, to arrogance, to greed. It is a divine warning against materialism.

- **Ar-Rāzī** interprets this verse as an analysis of human psychology: **our innate tendency toward wanting more**. Allah unveils the illusion behind these desires and calls us to awareness.

Verse 3 – Sūrah At-Takāthur (102:1–2)

أَلْهَاكُمْ التَّكَاثُرُ ﴿١﴾ حَتَّىٰ زُرْتُمُ الْمَقَابِرَ

"You are distracted by your rivalry for more, until you visit the graves."

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that this is a direct indictment of greed. The word *alḥākum* signifies being preoccupied or diverted our obsession with accumulation **distracts us from our true purpose** until death wakes us.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that people endlessly count and compare: their wealth, successes, and children. Yet none of these will follow them into the grave.
- **Ar-Rāzī** states that this verse compels us to reflect on the meaning of life. Any **system** built purely on endless growth and material gain is a path of delusion one that leads nowhere but to spiritual ruin.

42.3 Verse Reflections

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

النَّبِيُّ ﷺ قَالَ: «لَوْ كَانَ لِابْنِ آدَمَ وَادِيَانِ مِنْ مَالٍ، لَابْتَغَىٰ وَادِيَا ثَالِثًا، وَلَا يَمْلَأُ جَوْفَ ابْنِ آدَمَ إِلَّا التُّرَابُ، وَيَتُوبُ اللَّهُ عَلَىٰ مَنْ تَابَ»

"If the son of Adam were to possess two valleys filled with gold, he would desire a third. Nothing fills the belly of the son of Adam except dust. Yet Allah accepts the repentance of those who repent."

(Bukhārī & Muslim)

Reflection: This Verse exposes the **depth of human greed**. Even one who owns two treasures still craves a third. In capitalism, this tendency is glorified growth, profit, more, better with no endpoint. But the only true final stop is the earth itself: the grave. The real liberation, therefore, does not come from accumulating more, but from *tawbah* (**repentance**), **return to Allah**, and **contentment** (*qanā‘ah*).

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ: «لَوْ كَانَتِ الدُّنْيَا تَعْدِلُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ جَنَاحَ بَعُوضَةٍ، مَا سَقَىٰ كَافِرًا مِنْهَا شَرْبَةً مَاءٍ»

"If this worldly life were worth even the wing of a mosquito in the sight of Allah, He would not have given a disbeliever a sip of water from it." (At-Tirmidhī)

Reflection: This Verse puts **our worldly obsessions** into perspective. What we consider to be “everything” is, in Allah’s sight, worth less than a mosquito’s wing. Yet many sacrifice their faith, morals, and family for this fleeting world. Capitalism deifies the temporary, turning *dunyā* into a god, while the believer knows this life is merely a passage not the destination.

Verse 3

The Prophet ﷺ said:

«قَالَ النَّبِيُّ ﷺ: «لَيْسَ الْغِنَى عَنْ كَثْرَةِ الْعَرَضِ، وَلَكِنَّ الْغِنَى غِنَى النَّفْسِ»

"True wealth does not lie in having many possessions, but true wealth is the richness of the soul." (Bukhārī & Muslim)

Reflection: Capitalism measures success by what you own; Islam measures it **by who you are**. True wealth is contentment, tranquility, and trust in Allah even with few means. In a world consumed by jealousy, anxiety, and pressure to perform, this Verse offers a divine counterbalance: **spiritual stability is worth more than material prosperity**.

42.4 Reflective Layer

We live in a world where man believes himself to be free, yet in reality he is trapped caught in a web of **control, consumption, and competition**. Like the fly that unknowingly enters the spider’s web, the modern human moves toward traps designed to keep him distracted until death.

Capitalism offers no peace only the illusion of success. Every new purchase, promotion, or investment demands more: more hours, more debt, more fear of losing what one owns. Allah calls this world *dunyā* the lowest, the transient and yet many sacrifice their families, their prayers, and even their souls for it.

The Qur’an compares this worldly life to the **house of the spider**: intricate in appearance, yet fragile at its core. People build their lives upon systems of **interest, status, stocks, and likes**, while in truth they are building on quicksand. What remains is **burnout, loneliness, and spiritual emptiness**.

We witness people becoming rich at the expense of others, wars being waged for profit, leaders remaining silent for the sake of power, and technology being used for surveillance and control. **Freedom cannot exist without a moral compass**. Democracy becomes hollow when bought with billions, and religion is mocked unless it can be monetized.

In such times, **qanā‘ah (contentment)**, **taqwā (God-consciousness)**, and **‘ibādah (sincere worship)** are the true forms of resistance. Returning to **simplicity, community, and justice** is not weakness; it is strength. A Muslim is not a consumer; he is a servant of Allah. His honor lies not in what he owns, but in the purity of his heart and the justice of his actions. **Practical reminders:**

- **Limit your desires:** not everything that glitters brings *barakah*.
- **Invest in deeds, not in image:** what endures are your prayers, charity, and good words.
- **Seek tranquility in dhikr and Qur'an:** not in scrolling, binge-watching, or shopping.
- **Redefine success:** not by what people say about you, but by what Allah writes for you.

As the Prophet ﷺ said:

“Whoever makes the world his goal, Allah will make his affairs confused, poverty before his eyes, and he will only receive from the world what has been decreed for him. But whoever makes the Hereafter his goal, Allah will ease his affairs, enrich his heart, and the world will come to him in submission.” (Bukhārī & Muslim)

42.5 Conclusion

Capitalism has turned the world into a marketplace where **everything is for sale** even principles, morality, and humanity itself. Freedom has been replaced by **consumption**, community by **competition**, and worship by **ambition**. In such a world, it has become difficult to discern who is truly free and who is merely a **well-dressed slave**.

The **Qur'an** teaches us that **wealth itself is not the problem**; the **love of wealth** is. It is not what you possess that destroys you, but **what possesses you**. The true Muslim does not measure success by euros, houses, or stocks, but by **purity of heart, honesty in trade, and service to Allah**.

We must teach our children that **wealth is a means, not a goal** that **simplicity is strength**, and **contentment is true richness**. When the world seeks to imprison you, **Allah offers liberation** in prayer, in knowledge, in community, and in sincerity.

Whoever takes **Allah as his Lord**, makes **no idol** of anything or anyone. **Whoever sees through the illusion of the dunya**, builds for the **Ākhirah**.

“The life of this world is nothing but play and amusement. But the Hereafter is better for those who fear (Allah). Do you then not understand?” (*Qur'an – Sūrah Al-An'ām, 6:32*)

Chapter 43 – Islamic Economics: Integrity & Accountability

43.1 Observation

We live in a time when many Muslims outwardly display their religious **identity a beard, a headscarf, an Islamic quote on the wall yet the moment money enters the picture**, many principles vanish. In our cities, **people open night shops**, cafés, betting centers, and shisha bars, often **decorated with religious symbols**: a framed *Sūrah Yā-Sīn*, a *Bismillah* at the entrance, or a photo of the Ka‘bah. As if these symbols could somehow make the *haram* suddenly *halāl*.

In car garages, you often hear people say they prefer going to a non-Muslim mechanic rather than a Muslim one out of fear of being cheated. Why? Because of bad experiences: hidden costs, half-finished repairs, lies. Even in workplaces, the lack of **amānah (trustworthiness)** is evident. Employees get paid yet spend hours on **TikTok, online shopping, or watching series**. Then they wonder why their *rizq* (sustenance) seems restrictive. It starts much earlier in school: **children who cheat on exams, copy assignments, and deceive others**. Whoever does not learn honesty at a young age will not suddenly practice it later in work or business.

Then there is the **system itself**: many Muslims take advantage of **social benefits** healthcare, unemployment allowances, public housing without contributing actively. **Undeclared work, tax evasion, falsified documents**... even people who for years refuse to work, hiding behind excuses or fake medical certificates. Meanwhile, they benefit from public funds that others pay through taxes.

Ironically, many of these same **people pray five times a day in the mosque**. But when it comes to money, **their faith seems to go on pause**. They build homes with interest-based **loans, start businesses with prohibited financing, twist the truth**, and justify it with: “Everyone does it.”

Even worse, many live off **European welfare systems** for decades without ever truly working yet they travel multiple times a year to their home countries, enjoying **luxury at others’ expense, with zero work ethic**. Not old-age fatigue, but **lifelong laziness**. When housing authorities send letters asking whether they own property abroad, they respond without hesitation: **“No.”** Yet they rent out multiple apartments or lands in Morocco, Algeria, or Turkey.

At the same time, these are often the same people who harshly judge others those who, after years of reflection, buy a house through a mortgage based on a European *fatwa*. The latter are condemned, while those who **abuse public systems** and live off other people’s money **wash their hands in innocence**.

And this phenomenon is not limited to Europe. In many Muslim-majority countries, we see a **deeply ingrained passivity toward work and responsibility**. Instead of taking initiative or seeking solutions, men often lie for hours in the shade, blaming the heat yet nothing stops them from volunteering, starting small businesses, or studying. Laziness has become cultural, almost a normalized lifestyle. As a result, these societies remain poor, dependent, and structurally stagnant.

This is the reality of a community that places **money and comfort above integrity**. As long as that remains, there will be no *barakah* (divine blessing) nor dignity in our economic life. The crisis of the Islamic economy is not an isolated issue; it runs across three levels: **families, communities, and institutions**.

At the family level: We see how consumption spirals out of control. Muslims who pray five times a day still waste enormous amounts of food during ifṭār dinners, weddings, or in all-inclusive hotels. Restaurants throw away kilos of halal food daily, while children in Gaza or Africa starve. This is not merely waste it is a **spiritual disease: the heart learns to enjoy abundance but forgets gratitude and moderation**.

At the same time, the opposite disease appears: **greed**. People hoard their wealth, spend little on zakāh or ṣadaqah, and prefer luxury over generosity. Even within families, **injustice occurs in inheritance**: daughters are excluded, second or third wives ignored, children from other marriages deprived of their rights. This is not just a family dispute it's a social fracture. The Qur'an established inheritance to **circulate wealth**, not to trap it among the elite. *Polygamy*, too, had a redistributive function to spread wealth and responsibility, not to serve lust. Today, that wisdom is forgotten.

At the community level: We see **rising inequality**. When wealth accumulates among a small elite, social decay follows. In Algeria, for example, a handful of families hold the nation's wealth while the masses live in poverty. The result is predictable: people turn to loans and interest, sink into debt, despair, and eventually crime theft, prostitution, drugs, and alcohol. Neighborhoods decline, housing prices crash, families collapse, and the state spends millions on police and prisons. **Thus, an economy collapses not only financially but morally and socially**.

Another issue is the **lack of work ethic**. From our experience as a non-profit, we see many people who want to receive but are rarely willing to take responsibility or exert effort. They expect aid, donations, or relief but refuse to build independence and sustainability. This attitude breeds dependency, undermines initiative, and **drains the Ummah's potential**. Islam teaches that work is a form of *'ibādah* (worship), yet in practice we see complacency and passivity a silent disease as destructive as corruption or waste.

At the institutional level: We witness a painful lack of integrity. Mosques holding millions in funds yet offering no financial transparency. NGOs collecting donations without public accountability. Leaders spending community funds on prestige projects instead of real needs. The result: **mistrust and division**. Where money circulates without *amānah*, *barakah* disappears.

All of this creates a **vicious cycle**: waste at the bottom, laziness and apathy in the middle, and corruption at the top all eroding the moral and economic foundations of the Ummah.

These patterns are not unique to Muslims. Across **the world in Nepal, Indonesia, and the Philippines** uprisings have erupted due to unbearable inequality. The causes are always the same: an elite hoards wealth, ordinary people drown in debt, corruption becomes normalized, and youth lose hope. The consequences are predictable: mass protests, violence, and instability.

This shows that **Islamic economic principles** zakāh, the prohibition of interest, fair trade, and the equitable distribution of wealth are not luxuries. They are **necessities** for a just and stable society.

Yet there are hopeful counterexamples. Farms, villas, and water-well projects that are managed transparently show that an **Islamic economic model can be both ethical and sustainable.** **Gardens of the Sincere** seeks to embody this model: no money lost in dark holes, but **waqf-like structures** that generate returns and reinvest in the community. This is the essence of **Islamic economics** wealth is not an endpoint but a **means** to spread justice, strengthen families, and uplift societies.

The Islam teaches us that **honesty and pure income are as essential as prayer itself.** Prayer purifies the heart but dishonesty corrupts the soul. Whoever truly fears Allah must show it **at the cash register, in the workplace, and on the tax form.**

43.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah Al-Muṭaffifīn (83:1–3)

﴿وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ ﴿١﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَكْتَالُوا عَلَى النَّاسِ يَسْتَوْفُونَ ﴿٢﴾ وَإِذَا كَالُوهُمْ أَوْ وَزَنُوهُمْ يُخْسِرُونَ﴾

“Woe to those who give less [than due], who, when they receive by measure from people, take in full; but when they measure or weigh for them, they cause loss.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that this verse condemns **hypocrisy in trade** and underscores that **justice in mutual dealings** is fundamental to a healthy society.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that the word “*Wayl*” denotes a **severe divine warning** even minor dishonesty in trade is harshly condemned.
- **Ar-Rāzī** describes this behavior as **socially destructive**, breeding mistrust and eroding fair cooperation.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Al-Baqarah (2:275)

﴿الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ﴾

“Those who consume interest will not stand [on the Day of Judgment] except as one stands who is being beaten by Satan into insanity.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that interest (*riba*) is a **spiritual disease** that blurs the lines between right and wrong.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** states that *ribā* destroys **social justice**, **enriching** the rich and impoverishing the poor.
- **Ar-Rāzī** adds that *ribā* leads to **spiritual hardening**; outward wealth conceals inward emptiness.

Verse 3 – Sūrah Al-Baqarah (2:188)

﴿وَلَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُم بَيْنَكُم بِالْبَاطِلِ وَتُدْلُوا بِهَا إِلَى الْحُكَّامِ لِتَأْكُلُوا فَرِيقًا مِّنْ أَمْوَالِ النَّاسِ بِالْإِثْمِ﴾

“Do not consume one another’s wealth unjustly or use it to bribe authorities in order that you may wrongfully consume a portion of other people’s property, knowingly.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that this verse condemns **institutional corruption**, particularly when power or judicial authority is involved. Misusing influence adds an additional sin atop theft.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** calls bribery of judges one of the **gravest forms of corruption (fasād)**, as it destroys trust in justice.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that once leadership begins to legitimize **injustice, society collapses; corruption** at the top poisons the entire community.

Verse 4 – Sūrah At-Tawbah (9:34)

﴿وَالَّذِينَ يَكْنِزُونَ الذَّهَبَ وَالْفِضَّةَ وَلَا يَنْفِقُونَهَا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَبَشِّرْهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ أَلِيمٍ﴾

“And those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah – give them tidings of a painful punishment.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that wealth is a **test** from Allah; failure to share it is failure in that test.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that even **lawfully earned wealth becomes sinful** if withheld from zakāh or charity.
- **Ar-Rāzī** reminds that wealth is a **means, not an end**; when it fuels greed, it becomes a burden rather than a blessing.

Verse 5 – Sūrah Al-A‘rāf (7:31)

﴿كُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ﴾

“Eat and drink, but do not be wasteful. Indeed, He does not love the wasteful.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse calls for **balance**: enjoying halal is allowed, but excess kills gratitude and hardens the heart.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** interprets it as a **universal prohibition of waste**, whether in food, clothing, or wealth wastefulness signals ingratitude.
- **Ar-Rāzī** links it to **social stability**: overconsumption leads to inequality and injustice; excess for some deprives others of their due.

Verse 6 – Sūrah Al-Baqarah (2:233)

﴿وَعَلَى الْمَوْلُودِ لَهُ رِزْقُهُنَّ وَكِسْوَتُهُنَّ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ﴾

“And upon the father is their provision and clothing, according to what is reasonable.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** identifies this as the **foundation of financial responsibility (nafaqah)**. Providing for one’s family is a divine duty, not a personal choice.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that expenditures must be **“bil-ma ‘rūf”** moderate and fair, neither stingy nor extravagant.
- **Ar-Rāzī** draws a moral lesson: neglecting one’s family deprives wealth of *barakah*; the family is the **first circle of justice**.

Verse 7 – Sūrah Al-Mulk (67:15)

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ذَلُولًا فَامْشُوا فِي مَنَاكِبِهَا وَكُلُوا مِن رِّزْقِهِ﴾

“He is the One Who made the earth manageable for you so walk in its pathways and eat of His provision.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** views this as an invitation to **travel, trade, and explore**. One must seek *rizq* actively, not passively.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** links it to **entrepreneurship** travel, investment, and work are acts of worship when done with pure intention.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that provision (*rizq*) is **not centralized** in one place; Allah spread it out so that people would move, learn, and cooperate.

Verse 8 – Sūrah Al-Muzzammil (73:20)

﴿وَأَخْرَجُوا يَظْرِبُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَبْتَغُونَ مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَأَخْرَجُوا يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ﴾

“And others travel throughout the land seeking Allah’s bounty, while others fight in the cause of Allah.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** sees this as divine recognition that **commerce and economic activity**, when done with pure intention, hold equal value to striving (*jihad*) in Allah’s path.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** shows that this verse establishes **balance between worldly and spiritual duties**; both trade and struggle are forms of *ibādah* when done for Allah’s sake.
- **Ar-Rāzī** interprets trade and labor as a **form of jihad against laziness and dependence**, a struggle to preserve dignity and self-sufficiency.

Verse 9 – Sūrah An-Nisā’ (4:11)

﴿يُوصِيكُمُ اللَّهُ فِي أَوْلَادِكُمْ لِلذَّكَرِ مِثْلُ حَظِّ الْأُنثِيَيْنِ﴾

“Allah instructs you concerning your children: for the male is the share of two females.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that inheritance is not arbitrary but **divinely ordained**, ensuring fair circulation of wealth.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** calls injustice in inheritance **one of the gravest sins**, as it breaks both family ties and social justice.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains the wisdom behind it: inheritance laws **prevent wealth concentration** within an elite and uphold equality.

Verse 10 – Sūrah Al-Isrā’ (17:26–27)

﴿وَاتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ وَلَا تَبْذُرْ نَبْذِيرًا ﴿٢٦﴾ إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ﴾

“Give the relative his due, and the needy, and the traveler; but do not squander wastefully. Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** interprets this as a **direct command** to the wealthy and to leaders to ensure just distribution of resources. To withhold is injustice; to waste is satanic.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** highlights that leaders are **responsible for social equity**, linking this verse to family, charity, and collective responsibility.
- **Ar-Rāzī** connects it to public policy: **when wealth is hoarded** or wasted, **inequality and chaos** inevitably follow.

Verse 11 – Sūrah Al-Ḥashr (59:7)

﴿كَيْ لَا يَكُونَ دُولَةً بَيْنَ الْأَغْنِيَاءِ مِنْكُمْ﴾

“...so that wealth may not merely circulate among the rich among you.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** calls this the **core principle of economic justice** in Islam: wealth must circulate and benefit all, not remain confined to elites.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** considers it a **foundational rule** for zakāh, war gains (*ghanimah*), and fair economic structures in the Ummah.
- **Ar-Rāzī** warns that when wealth stays only with the rich, **society decays poverty, crime, and revolt soon follow**.

43.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"من غش فليس منا"

"Whoever deceives is not one of us." (Muslim)

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"المؤمن القوي خير وأحب إلى الله من المؤمن الضعيف، وفي كل خير"

"The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer, though there is good in both." (Muslim)

Reflection: True strength in Islam is not arrogance or domination, but **the ability to act with justice, to work with sincerity, and to contribute positively to society.** A believer who is trustworthy in business, steadfast in worship, and generous in charity reflects the true balance between *din* (faith) and *dunyā* (worldly responsibility).

43.4 Reflective Layer

The Qur'an presents an **economic worldview** that is neither capitalist nor communist but one of **justice, balance, and accountability.** The wealth we possess is not absolute ownership but an **amānah** a trust from Allah ﷻ. Prayer purifies the heart, but it is through our dealings with money that the sincerity of that heart is truly revealed.

The Qur'anic verses teach us **three foundational attitudes:** Avoid wastefulness, Care for others, and ensure the circulation of wealth.

Whoever eats and drinks without restraint trains the heart to depend on abundance. Whoever amasses wealth yet neglects family, the poor, or the community loses the *barakah* (divine blessing) of their possessions. And when wealth circulates only among elites, society is destined for **inequality, corruption, and revolt.**

Even in its inheritance laws, Islam established a **system that prevents the concentration of wealth** in the hands of one family or group. Inheritance is not a private matter but a **divine ordinance** ensuring justice and the redistribution of resources. Through its detailed distribution rules giving rightful shares to children, parents, and relatives the Qur'an continuously renews economic balance within society. This structure prevents the rise of closed dynasties and promotes the broad sharing of prosperity, strengthening social stability and curbing inequality.

These are not abstract warnings. Today, we witness how **economic inequality** leads to protests and instability across the world. Where wealth is hoarded by a few, poverty multiplies among the many. Where consumption becomes endless, gratitude dies. Where laziness and dependency grow,

initiative disappears. The Qur'an shows that **economics is not separate from spirituality**; it is a **mirror of our soul and moral compass**.

The Prophet ﷺ said: *“Whoever deceives is not one of us.”* Thus, honesty is not merely a social virtue but a **religious obligation**. The Prophet ﷺ also taught that *“The strong believer is better and more beloved to Allah than the weak believer.”* Strength here includes **economic independence, creativity, and initiative**.

What does this demand of us today?

- **Moderation and Gratitude:** Teach families and youth to consume consciously. No extravagance at weddings, buffets, or hotels instead, build a culture of **simplicity and sharing**.
- **Responsibility within the Family:** Spending on one's wife, children, and parents is not luxury; it is *'ibādah* (worship). The first circle of justice begins at home.
- **Work and Trade as 'Ibādah:** Work is more than survival; it is a means to build independence, establish ethical businesses, and create jobs for others. Don't remain merely an employee; develop **vision and entrepreneurship**.
- **Circulation of Wealth:** Ensure wealth does not remain in the hands of a few. This happens through **zakāh, inheritance, waqf**, and mutual economic support: buy from one another, invest in one another, and strengthen the community.
- **Institutional Accountability:** Mosques, associations, and NGOs must be **financially transparent**. Money without accountability brings no *barakah*.

The Qur'an is not an economic textbook in the Western sense; it does not offer spreadsheets or market formulas. It offers **principles**: moderation, honesty, equity, and solidarity. When these are applied, they produce not only wealth but also **barakah, justice, and social harmony**.

It is time for Muslims to stop imitating systems that enslave us. We are called to **build our own ethical structures**: halal financing, *waqf*-based projects, cooperatives, and transparent institutions. **Gardens of the Sincere** seeks to embody this vision through investments in farms, halal financing, and water wells that generate not only profit but also **community benefit**. This is the **Qur'anic model**: wealth as a **means**, not an end.

Guidelines for the Ummah Today:

1. Live simply, give generously, and act transparently.
2. Initiate projects that serve the community, not just yourself.
3. Build *waqf*-like systems so that wealth continues to circulate.
4. Encourage youth to be creative and entrepreneurial, not dependent or passive.
5. Buy from one another and invest within the community.

6. View working, giving, and investing as acts of worship.

The Qur'an teaches us that **wealth is a test**; it can **elevate us through justice** or **destroy us through greed**. The choice is ours.

43.5 Conclusion

The **Islamic economy** is not a theory of profit maximization nor a glorification of poverty. It is a path of **justice, moderation, and barakah (divine blessing)**. Whoever trades honestly, provides for their family, allows their wealth to circulate, and avoids wastefulness contributes to building a **stable, just, and resilient society**.

The Qur'an teaches us that wealth is **not an identity but a trust (amānah)**. Those who neglect or misuse it harm not only themselves but the entire community. The solution does not lie in copying capitalist or communist systems, but in **reviving our own divine principles** *zakah*, inheritance, *waqf*, solidarity, and ethical entrepreneurship.

The **Ummah** does not need Muslims who depend on the systems of others; it needs **builders** people who work honestly, innovate creatively, support one another, and reinvest their success into their communities. Only then will wealth once again become a **blessing**, not a burden.

Chapter 44 – Unity of the Ummah -Division as a Disease, Unity as the Cure

44.1 Observation

Today, the global Muslim population numbers around **two billion people**, roughly **one quarter of humanity**. Yet despite our quantitative presence, our **collective strength is fractured**. We are unable to deliver food to Gaza, let alone stop the ongoing genocide. Many leaders in the Muslim world are **weak, compromised, or subservient** to the interests of foreign powers. The old colonial strategy of **“divide and rule”** is still effectively used against us today.

However, this division is not only visible on a **global scale**; it is felt locally as well. In **Ghent**, for example, two mosques stand separated only by a **river; once one community**, now divided. The **Turkish community** is fragmented into Diyanet, Milli Görüş, Süleymançı, and others. The same pattern repeats everywhere: every ethnicity and sect builds its own mosque, often with **little substantive spiritual or educational impact**.

Even in countries with small Muslim populations, such as **Vietnam**, I have seen two mosques merely a few meters apart, divided not by distance but by **ideology**. Meanwhile, in other parts of the country, there is **barely a single mosque** to be found.

Ideological differences further widen the gap: the **length of the beard**, the **style of clothing**, or **minor jurisprudential disagreements** become grounds for division, alienation, and mutual condemnation. In this chaos, we lose sight of our **true purpose to worship Allah, to shoulder collective responsibility, to enjoin good, and to forbid evil**.

The Ummah has not been weakened by external enemies alone, but by **our internal fragmentation, our obsession with labels, and our failure to embody the unity that Allah and His Messenger ﷺ commanded**.

44.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah Al-Anfāl (8:46)

وَأَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ وَلَا تَنَازَعُوا فَتَفْشَلُوا وَتَذْهَبَ رِيحُكُمْ وَأَصْبِرُوا ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

"And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute with one another lest you lose courage and your strength depart. And be steadfast. Indeed, Allah is with the steadfast."

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that this verse contains a *strategic command*: **division weakens** not only hearts but also the collective **strength and societal influence** of the Ummah.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes that **“the wind”** (*riḥukum*) in Arabic imagery symbolizes **victory and honor** both of which vanish when people fall into disputes.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** interprets this verse as a **warning** to the Ummah: **political or social conflicts** pursued without sincere intention lead to **failure both in this world and the next**.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Āl ‘Imrān (3:103)

وَأَعْتَصِمُوا بِحَبْلِ اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا وَلَا تَفَرَّقُوا

"And hold firmly to the rope of Allah, all together, and do not be divided."

- **Al-Qurṭubī** calls this verse the **constitution of unity**: it is not merely advice, but a **divine command** binding upon the believers.
- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that the image of the “rope” (*ḥabl Allāh*) is a metaphor for the **central truth and revelation** that connects all believers regardless of culture, race, or background.
- **Ar-Rāzī** warns that whoever lets go of Allah’s rope and clings instead to **nationalism, sectarianism, or ideological fanaticism** becomes an active cause of the **Ummah’s decline**.

Verse 3 – Sūrah Al-Anfāl (8:73)

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بَعْضُهُمْ أَوْلِيَاءُ بَعْضٍ ۚ إِلَّا تَفْعَلُوهُ تَكُن فِتْنَةٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَفَسَادٌ كَبِيرٌ

"And those who disbelieve are allies of one another. If you (believers) do not do the same, there will be turmoil on earth and great corruption."

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse highlights how disbelievers, despite internal **differences**, **always** find ways to **cooperate** politically, economically, and militarily. When Muslims fail to treat each other as **allies (awliyā’)**, they create internal weakness that **empowers their enemies**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** interprets *fitnah* here as more than spiritual confusion; it also means **social chaos and oppression**. If the Ummah remains divided and does not support one another, it becomes a **tool in the hands of external powers**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** stresses that this verse imposes a **clear political and social duty upon Muslims**: to form systems of **mutual protection and cooperation**. Neglecting this obligation inevitably leads to *fasād kabīr* widespread injustice and societal decay.

44.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

الْمُؤْمِنُ لِلْمُؤْمِنِ كَالْبُنْيَانِ يَشُدُّ بَعْضُهُ بَعْضًا

"The believer to another believer is like a building; each part strengthens the other." (Bukhārī & Muslim – *Muttafaqun 'alayh*)

Reflection: A building without **cohesion collapses**. Our strength lies in mutual support. When we weaken, criticize, and divide one another, we lose not only political power but also **barakah** (divine blessing) and **spiritual unity**.

44.4 Reflective Layer

The Qur'an and Sunnah are unequivocal: **division is not a minor issue it is a disease** that paralyzes the entire Ummah. A community that prays but curses one another has already lost its strength. A community that builds mosques but erects walls between ethnic groups or sects is not building an *Ummah*; it is building **parallel villages**.

Unity does not mean uniformity; it means **shared purpose** worshipping Allah, carrying responsibility together, enjoining good, and forbidding evil. It is the **ḥabl Allāh** *the rope of Allah* that binds us. Anything built outside that rope nationalism, sectarianism, pride of group or lineage will inevitably lead to cracks and collapse.

Today, division paralyzes our actions. We are **two billion Muslims**, yet we cannot send a **single food convoy to Gaza** without international permission. Local communities have dozens of mosques, yet no unified youth work. Families fracture into tribes and subgroups, even though the Qur'an teaches that **diversity is a sign of Allah**, not a reason for hostility. Disbelievers have networks, alliances, and institutions often despite deep ideological differences while Muslims fragment over ethnicity, sect, or minor jurisprudential points. The result is exactly what Allah warned of: **fitnah** (confusion, oppression) and **fasād** (moral and social decay).

A striking example of the Qur'anic concept of **awliyā'** (mutual allies) can be seen in the **United States** today. Despite internal conflicts and divisions, there is a strong culture of **mutual cooperation** and **economic collaboration**. Citizens are encouraged to start businesses, talents from around the world are welcomed, and innovation is widely shared. Muslims from India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan often IT experts or engineers find ample opportunities in large tech companies. Domestic mobility is easy: one can travel, study, and work across states without barriers, stimulating trade, education, and enterprise.

Europe has partially replicated this model through the **European Union**: borders have been softened, exchange has been made easier, and economies interconnected. The outcome? A **collective strength** greater than what any nation could have achieved alone.

The Qur'an states that **“the disbelievers are allies of one another”** (8:73). They strengthen each other despite differences in language, culture, or history. If we Muslims fail to do the same, the result is **fitnah and fasād**. Reality confirms this: our divisions weaken us, our borders suffocate our potential, and our bureaucracy stifles our creativity.

Imagine if:

- One Muslim nation shared its technological and **IT expertise** with others.
- Another provided **natural** resources transparently and ethically.
- Yet another specialized in **agriculture, engineering, or healthcare**.
- And Muslim youth could move freely for study, work, or enterprise without walls of bureaucracy or ethnic rivalry.

This is precisely what Allah ﷻ commanded when He told us to be **awliyā'** of one another not only spiritually, but **socially, economically, and strategically**. A **Muslim Union** based on cooperation and shared values would make the Ummah **stronger, fairer, and freer from dependency** on external powers.

The Prophet ﷺ **always built unity based on faith and values**, not lineage or tribe. The **Muhājirīn** and **Anṣār** came from vastly different backgrounds, yet one faith made them brothers. Today, we do the opposite: we share one faith, but divide it into tribes, languages, and slogans.

This calls for a **new mindset**:

- **Recenter our loyalty** to Allah and His Messenger ﷺ before ethnicity, sect, or ideology.
- **Choose cooperation over pride** one strong shared school or mosque is better than ten empty institutions.
- **Teach unity** our youth must learn that differences in fiqh or culture are not reasons for hostility.
- **Practice solidarity** buy from one another, support each other's projects, pray together, work together. The *building* of the Ummah stands or falls on such actions.

True strength does not come from numbers, but from **cohesion**. A handful of arrows can be broken easily, but a **bundle of arrows remains unbreakable**. Our **spiritual education must teach us that while diversity is natural, we remain one body**. As the Prophet ﷺ said: *“The Ummah is like one body: when one part suffers, the entire body feels the pain.”*

44.5 Conclusion

The division of the Ummah is not a minor issue; it is the **fundamental cause of our weakness**. Allah ﷻ warns us that dispute **leads to the loss of strength and dignity, and that true unity can only exist when we all hold firmly to His rope**. The Prophet ﷺ made it clear: *we are one building*, and a building without cohesion inevitably collapses.

We must therefore ask ourselves: **What binds us together?** Is it lineage, culture, political affiliation or is it truly the **Qur'an and the Sunnah**? As long as we allow ourselves to be divided over secondary matters, our strength will continue to evaporate. But when we unite around the core **faith, truth, and justice** a **barakah** emerges greater than numbers or resources.

The Ummah today is in need of **leadership, cooperation, and vision**, but above all, **brotherhood**. True unity begins small in our **families**, in our **mosques**, in our **cities** and from there it grows to the world. When we **tear down the walls between us, the Ummah can once again become a beacon of strength, mercy, and justice**.

Chapter 45 – Relations with People of Other Faiths- Balancing Faithfulness to Islam with Justice toward Others

45.1 Observation

Today, Muslims live **side by side with people of various religions and worldviews**. In the **West**, Muslims often form a **minority**, while in other regions such as **Africa** and **Asia**, Muslims themselves form the **majority**, coexisting with Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, or atheists.

In our time, we see **two extremes** in how some Muslims relate to non-Muslims:

1. **Isolation and hostility** – some **withdraw completely**, isolate themselves, and regard every non-Muslim as hostile or inferior.
2. **Assimilation and compromise** – others **lose their Islamic identity** out of fear of being labeled “radical,” or out of a desire to be accepted by society.

Between these extremes lies the **balanced path of Islam** a path of **loyalty to faith** combined with **justice and respect** toward others.

Politics often influences how we view “the other.” Events in **Palestine, Syria**, and other regions sometimes cause Muslims to perceive all non-Muslims as enemies. This leads to **polarization, distrust**, and a **loss of moral clarity** a dangerous mindset that replaces spiritual discernment with emotional reaction.

I myself grew up in a **mixed-faith household**. This gave me a strong sensitivity and ability to **build bridges** between people. Later, as an **Islam scholar in Flanders**, I visited schools to teach about Islam as part of **Interreligious Dialogue (ILD)** programs. Through these experiences, I learned that **misunderstandings about Islam rarely stem from hatred**, but from **ignorance**.

Often, **honest explanation, a respectful attitude**, and **open dialogue** are enough to open hearts.

A beautiful historical example that I often refer to is the **Constitution of Medina** (*Sahīfat al-Madinah*). The Prophet ﷺ established in Medina a **groundbreaking social contract** considered by many scholars to be the **first written constitution for coexistence** among people of different faiths.

It **consisted of about 52 clauses** and laid out principles such as:

- Freedom of religion,
- Shared responsibility for peace,
- Equal rights for Muslims, Jews, and other residents of Medina,
- And an inclusive definition of the Ummah: “Those who live in Medina belong to one community.”

This document shows that the Prophet ﷺ did not build a society on exclusion or superiority, but on **justice, mutual responsibility, and coexistence grounded in faith**.

Today, some claim that it is forbidden to live in a “kāfir land.” But ironically, many stay because of economic benefits. And moving to “Muslim countries” is by no means always a just alternative; often there is no equal treatment, for example in Saudi Arabia, where non-Saudis rarely have the same rights as citizens. In Europe, Muslims **often do have the right to education, safety, and freedom of speech**, something we must not forget.

45.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Surah Al-Mumtahanah (60:8)

اللَّهُ لَا يَنْهَىٰكُمْ عَنِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يُقَاتِلُوكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ وَلَمْ يُخْرِجُوكُمْ مِّن دِيَارِكُمْ أَن تَبَرُّوهُمْ وَتُقْسِطُوا إِلَيْهِمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُحِبُّ الْمُقْسِطِينَ

“Allah does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who do not fight you because of religion, nor drive you out of your homes. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse establishes a **fundamental moral principle**: as long as a person does not show hostility toward Muslims, the believer is **obliged to show goodness (birr) and justice (qist)** toward them.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that this verse does not call for naïveté, but for **moral excellence** justice is a defining feature of Islam, even in dealings with non-Muslims.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights that the word “**birr**” used here is the same term used in *birr al-wāliḍayn* (goodness toward parents), indicating a **deep, sincere compassion and integrity** in conduct.

Verse 2 – Surah Al-‘Ankabūt (29:46)

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ

“And do not argue with the People of the Book except in a manner that is best.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that the Qur’an commands that **invitation to Islam and dialogue** must always be conducted with **respect, beauty, and gentleness**; a principle that remains fully valid for modern **interfaith dialogue**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** remarks that even in **intellectual debate**, a Muslim must **never resort to insult or arrogance**, for the goal of **dialogue is guidance**, not victory.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that the focus is on **ḥikmah (wisdom)** and **ḥusn al-khulq (noble character)**. True da‘wah lies not in argument, but in embodying the beauty of Islam through conduct and speech.

45.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ آذَى ذِمِّيًّا فَأَنَا خَصْمُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ

“Whoever wrongs a non-Muslim under Muslim protection (dhimmi), I will be his opponent on the Day of Resurrection.” (Narrated by Al-Khatib, graded Hasan by Al-Albani)

Reflection: The Prophet ﷺ personally declared himself as the **defender** of any non-Muslim who suffers injustice under Muslim rule. This shows the **moral depth of Islamic ethics**: even when someone does not share our faith, they are entitled to **safety, respect, and justice**. A true Muslim’s faith manifests not only in his worship, but in how he treats others especially those who are different.

45.4 Reflective Layer

The Qur’an and the Sunnah clearly show that interaction with people of other faiths is not based on fear or hostility, but on **justice, respect, and dignity**. The Prophet ﷺ himself built a community in Medina wherein Muslims, Jews, and even non-believers lived together under clear agreements. His attitude was never aimed at exclusion, but at creating a climate in which everyone knew: this is a place of justice and responsibility.

The verses we read make this concrete. **Allah does not forbid us from being good to those who do not fight us** (60:8). That means that a Muslim should precisely be a source of trust and kindness for his neighbor, colleague, or classmate, regardless of his faith. **Disputing must only be done with beauty, wisdom, and respect** (29:46), not with insults or arrogance. And the Verse in which the Prophet ﷺ says that he himself will accuse the one who wrongs a **dhimmi**, shows how far the protection goes: justice does not stop at the borders of the Muslim community, but extends to everyone who lives under our responsibility.

This gives us three clear guiding principles for our time:

A. Responsibility for Our Conduct We represent Islam whether we intend to or not.

An honest merchant, a reliable employee, a respectful student these are **the first forms of da‘wah**. Our example often speaks louder than a thousand sermons.

B. Building Bridges Instead of Walls

Interfaith dialogue, as I personally experienced in Flanders, does not begin with theological debates but with **listening**. Misunderstandings usually stem from **ignorance, not hatred**. A kind gesture, a patient explanation, or even a smile can open more hearts than a harsh lecture

C. Unity without Losing Identity

We do not have to hide our faith to coexist. The Qur’an teaches us to **preserve our identity** while being **just and respectful** toward others. Not assimilation, not isolation but **standing firm in faith while being a bridge of peace and cooperation**.

When Muslims embody this balanced attitude, they become a **community that commands respect** rather than suspicion. Avoiding both extremes hostility and loss of identity is the Qur'anic path. If we find this balance, we cease to be a source of fitnah (discord) and become a **source of trust and hope**, both for the Ummah and for the wider society we live in.

How we interact with people of other faiths is a **litmus test of our faith**. Where hatred and distrust grow, the Qur'an calls us to **justice and respect**. Where fear of losing identity paralyzes us, the Sunnah reminds us that true strength lies in **steadfastness and openness**.

The Prophet ﷺ showed that a community does not become stronger by closing itself off, but by being founded upon **justice and responsibility**. We do not lose our identity by being kind or cooperative; we lose it when our faith becomes **empty rituals without moral substance**.

The path forward requires a **dual posture**:

- **Loyalty to Allah** in faith and moral principles, and
- **Justice and respect** toward the society in which we live.

In doing so, Muslims around the world can become not a source of tension, but of **stability, trust, and peace**. And that is our divine mission: to be an **Ummah that preserves its spiritual identity** while **building bridges of trust and harmony** with the rest of humanity.

45.5 Conclusion

Gaza today is not merely a place on the map it is a *moral compass* that exposes the true faces of people, leaders, and communities. In a world where injustice is broadcast live yet collectively ignored, Gaza stands as a living indictment not only against the oppressor but also against the *silence* of the world.

The question that confronts us is not only:

“What does the oppressor do with his power?”

It is, above all:

“What do we do with our freedom, our platforms, our resources, and our voice?”

We possess safety, abundance, and freedom of speech yet often we remain silent. We complain about trivial inconveniences, while in Gaza, children are buried beneath the earth. And yet, amidst rubble and hunger, a strength rises that cannot be destroyed: *steadfastness, trust in Allah, and dignity*.

The tragedy of our time is that many with power world leaders, Arab regimes, even religious institutions remain silent or complicit. But within that silence, their *moral bankruptcy* is exposed. At the same time, Gaza shows that *true power does not lie in weapons or wealth*, but in *faith and perseverance*.

Therefore, we must ask ourselves: If Allah were to grant us power and resources, would we act with justice? Or would we, like so many before us, become leaders in name but slaves to ego and worldly desire

The lesson of Gaza is that the struggle is not merely between oppressors and oppressed. It is a struggle between *truth and hypocrisy*, between ***sincerity and opportunism***, between ***hearts that remember and hearts that forget***.

Gaza is the test of our conscience. History will forget our slogans, but it will remember our silence. And Allah the All-Knowing sees not only what we *say*, but what we *do*.

May Allah make us people of *truthfulness* those who do not look away, but remain steadfast, act, and hope, even when no one is watching?

“And be patient, for indeed, Allah is with the patient.” (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, 2:153)

Chapter 46 – Knowledge: The Key to Worldly Responsibility and Spiritual Growth

46.1 Observation

Knowledge remains one of the biggest stumbling blocks in the Muslim community today. Both religious knowledge and worldly knowledge are often weakly developed, and rarely present in balance. Many young people, and even adults, barely know the Qur'an. Many do not know what the Qur'an is actually about. They have never studied a complete surah with *tafsir*, let alone understood the coherence or the historical context. Some can recite a few verses, but without meaning. Faith then becomes something of sound, but not of insight.

In our time, “knowledge” is often replaced by **fragments of content**: quick TikToks, Instagram reels of 60 seconds, videos with slogans about halal and haram, or emotional motivational speeches. Everything must be short, fast, superficial, but **depth is missing**. And so a generation arises that lives on **religious “snacks,”** but has never consumed a serious meal.

At the same time, a **worrying division** is emerging:

- **On the one hand**, there are conservative Muslims who speak mainly about rules, prohibitions, and duties. They cite verses or *verse* literally, often without context, without understanding of *maqasid* (objectives) or spiritual essence. They discuss details, but miss the whole. Questions about love for Allah, God-consciousness, or spiritual deepening are often dismissed as “soft” or irrelevant. But if you then ask: “What do you know of the Qur'an yourself?”, or “Which surah have you ever studied in depth?”, it often remains silent. There is much talk, but little learning.
- **On the other hand**, you have liberal Muslims who experience their religion as a feeling. For them, Islam is a spiritual atmosphere, an identity of the heart, without need for texts, guidelines, or obligations. Rules are quickly seen as inhibiting, old-fashioned, or cultural. But without knowledge, that spirituality is often **boundless and formless**, and thus also vulnerable to confusion or adaptation to one's own desire.

The result? A community that **on the one hand suffocates in little rules without heart and on the other hand disappears in feelings without a hold**. A repetition of what the Qur'an describes about earlier communities: the Jews who kept the letter but lost the soul and the Christians who sought the spirit but without form and limit. But the Qur'an asks us for something else: **knowledge with guidance, spirituality with responsibility**.

Also on the worldly level, there is a major crisis. In the West, many Muslims get opportunities for higher education, but a large number of young people prefer to choose direct work, convenience, or financial independence in the short term. “I want to earn money fast.” Studies seem superfluous, boring, a waste of time.

Meanwhile, young people in Africa or Asia **would give everything to be allowed to study**. In countries like Bangladesh for example, where I spoke with local brothers, there is precisely an

oversupply of motivated students, but too few jobs. There, people with master's degrees simply end up at home. The contrast is painful: **where there are opportunities, ambition is missing. Where there is ambition, opportunities are missing.**

Another remarkable reality is how people **make major life decisions without any prior knowledge:**

- They marry without knowing what Islam says about marriage.
- They have children without ever having read anything about upbringing.
- They start businesses or investments without any *fiqh* or ethical awareness.
- They act, react, post, and decide; without study, without source, without realization.

Islam, however, teaches: “Seek knowledge *before* you speak or act.” And what is knowledge? Not just books or diplomas, but understanding what Allah wants from you, what the human being needs, and how you apply that in the right way in your time.

We must stop being consumers of other people's thinking, other people's products, other people's systems. We must become producers, **while retaining *imān***. As we said in earlier chapters: the Muslim must strive for **the good in this world and the good in the hereafter**. But how is that possible without knowledge of both?

46.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Surah Az-Zumar (39:9)

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي الَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ إِنَّمَا يَتَذَكَّرُ أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ

“Say (O Prophet): Are those who know equal to those who do not know? Only those who possess understanding will truly take heed.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** sees this verse as one of the **foundational principles** of the Qur'an: knowledge does not merely differentiate people in **status**, but also in **spiritual awareness**. The interrogative form is rhetorical clearly, those who possess knowledge are not equal to those who do not.

He explains that “*ulū al-albāb*” (those endowed with intellect) refers to people who **combine knowledge with reflection** those who think with pure hearts and clear minds, who do not treat religion as **ritual** alone but as a conscious act of understanding.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** highlights that this verse is not only a *praise of knowledge* but also a *declaration of accountability*: **knowledge entails responsibility**. Whoever knows the truth must live by it.

He refers to other verses, such as *Surah Faṭīr* 35:28, which states that the scholars are those who truly fear Allah. He connects this verse to the practical value of religious **knowledge without**

knowing *ḥalāl*, *ḥarām*, and the principles of faith and worship, one remains vulnerable to error. **Knowledge is the condition for proper guidance.**

- **Ar-Rāzī** stresses that *‘ilm* (knowledge) here does not refer to superficial information but to **deep, transformative understanding** knowledge that leads to awareness, action, and reflection.

He also links this verse to the **need for balance between *shar‘ī* (religious) and *‘aqlī* (intellectual or worldly) knowledge**. True harmony, he says, can only be achieved when both forms of knowledge are **pursued together**.

For Ar-Rāzī, this verse is a call to move beyond **blind imitation (*taqlīd*) to seek, question, analyze, and discern truth independently**.

This verse poses a simple yet powerful question: “Are those who know equal to those who do not know?”

The answer is crystal clear. No. In the Qur’an, **knowledge is the foundation of everything:**

- Without knowledge, there is no **true faith**.
- Without knowledge, there is no **valid prayer**.
- Without knowledge, there is no **justice**.
- Without knowledge, there can be no **responsible stewardship** of the world.

This verse reminds us that **knowledge is the gateway to awareness**, and that only *ulū al-albāb* those who combine intellect and sincerity are truly receptive to divine reminders. Not because they are smarter, but because they allow their knowledge to **penetrate their hearts**.

In a world filled with misinformation, superficiality, and emotional impulsiveness, this verse calls the Ummah to return to **knowledge rooted in reflection, learning grounded in humility, and study aimed at drawing closer to Allah and becoming more beneficial to humanity**.

Verse 2 – Surah Fāṭir (35:28)

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى اللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ الْعُلَمَاءُ

“Indeed, it is only those among His servants who have knowledge that truly fear Allah.”

- **Ibn ‘Ashūr** explains that this verse shows that **true reverence for Allah (*khawf* and *khashyah*) is only possible through knowledge**. It is only when one understands Allah’s Names, Attributes, Power, and Justice that genuine awe and humility arise. He clarifies that *‘ulamā’* here are not merely formal scholars but **those who reflect, observe, and use their knowledge to serve Allah**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** points out that this verse does not mean *only* scholars fear Allah, but that they fear Him **as He deserves to be feared**. Many fear Allah out of emotion or cultural habit,

but the *‘ālim* fears Him through **conscious recognition of His greatness**, His law, and His justice in the Hereafter.

He adds that *‘ilm* (knowledge) here encompasses both **textual knowledge** (Qur’an and Sunnah) and **knowledge of Allah’s signs in creation** such as reflection on nature, science, and the cosmos.

- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights that this verse distinguishes between **superficial religiosity** and **deep, thoughtful devotion**. True servitude (*‘ubūdiyyah*) is only complete when built upon insight. He says: “The more a person knows, the greater their awe of Allah unless their heart is diseased.”

He reminds us of the *Companions of the Cave (Aṣḥāb al-Kahf)*: they **were not scholars**, yet their **faith and devotion** were immense. The same applies today many simple believers may know little *fiqh* or *tafsīr*, but their **hearts are pure**, their **tongues remember Allah**, and their **souls remain connected to Him**.

What do we learn from this verse?

- Not **all knowledge** leads to fear of Allah.
- But **true knowledge, when used correctly**, *deepens* that fear.
- A person without formal learning can still be a friend of Allah.
- And a “scholar” without reverence can be among the most misguided.

Islam therefore honors both the *‘ālim* (**scholar**) and the *‘ābid* (**devout worshipper**) but the highest rank belongs to the one who combines both: **Knowledge with sincerity, and understanding with submission**.

46.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَنْ سَلَكَ طَرِيقًا يَلْتَمِسُ فِيهِ عِلْمًا، سَهَّلَ اللَّهُ لَهُ بِهِ طَرِيقًا إِلَى الْجَنَّةِ

“Whoever travels a path in search of knowledge, Allah will make easy for him a path to Paradise.” (**Muslim**)

Reflection: This Verse of the Prophet ﷺ makes clear that **knowledge is not only a worldly added value**, but a spiritual act that is directly connected to the Hereafter.

The expression “treading a path” refers both to the physical going to a study circle or teacher, and to the intellectual and **spiritual path of learning, asking questions, memorizing, and understanding**.

Through this search, Allah makes the path to Paradise **easier**, because:

- Knowledge leads to correct worship

- Knowledge protects against error
- Knowledge evokes fear of God
- Knowledge brings stability in deeds and choices

In our time, the “paths of knowledge” are more numerous than ever: books, lessons, videos, online platforms. But at the same time, **the true intention** is harder to maintain.

This Verse reminds us that **every step in seeking knowledge** (even opening a book or attending a lesson) is a step towards Allah, if the intention is pure.

46.4 Reflective Layer

Knowledge in Islam has never been a luxury it is a **necessity for life**. Without knowledge, a community cannot worship Allah as He commands, cannot administer justice as He decrees, and cannot build a civilization that endures. The Qur’an makes this clear: “*Are those who know equal to those who do not know?*” and “*Only those who have knowledge truly fear Allah.*”

Yet today, we face a painful paradox: **Muslims are numerous, but often ignorant**. We have more access than ever before books, videos, courses, online lectures yet **less depth, patience, and reflection**. Many consume religious snippets like fast food, without ever **tasting the full meal of tafsīr, fiqh, and spiritual understanding**. This produces a fragile generation easily moved by emotion but lacking a foundation to stand firm.

The Qur’an was not revealed to be recited only as a melody at funerals or background sound in daily life. It was sent to be **understood, lived, and applied**. One of the greatest diseases of our time is that the Qur’an has been reduced to *sound*, while its true purpose is *message*.

The Qur’an speaks to everyone:

- To the believer seeking growth,
- To the doubting soul searching for answers,
- To the hypocrite who must recognize himself,
- To the sincere non-believer seeking truth,
- To both the oppressed and the oppressor.

This is the miracle of the Book: **it reaches everyone**, but only those who approach it with understanding truly benefit.

Therefore, the most honest advice remains: **Return to the Qur’an with guidance, with tafsīr, and with deep reflection**. Whoever allows the Qur’an to speak will, in reality, hear Allah speak. It is no coincidence that the first revelation was “**Iqra**” **Read!** The very first command from Allah to the Prophet ﷺ and to humanity was a call to learn, explore, and understand. The message did not begin with “pray” or “fast,” but with **knowledge**. This establishes a divine principle: **Worship without knowledge is empty, and knowledge without worship is cold.**

The Islamic tradition has always been built on **balance** between *‘ilm* (knowledge) and *‘amal* (action), between *dīn* (faith) and *dunyā* (worldly expertise). Our great scholars were not only jurists they were also **astronomers, physicians, philosophers, and architects**.

They saw knowledge itself as a form of ***‘ibādah* (worship)**: every **discovery, formula**, or experiment was a way to better understand Allah’s signs in creation. This balance, unfortunately, has largely been lost.

Hence, the current reality demands **concrete steps**:

- **Return to Qur’an and Sunnah with depth** not just recitation, but *tafsīr*, context, and application.
- **Invest in education** mosques, schools, and universities must become centers of learning, not just spaces of prayer.
- **Balance religious and worldly knowledge** we need imams who understand technology and engineers who understand Qur’an.
- **Promote self-reliance** train youth not only to be employees but **entrepreneurs**, innovators, and founders of *waqf*-based projects that strengthen the Ummah.
- **Rebuild a culture of learning** parents must give children not only smartphones and clothes, but **books, mentors, and intellectual ambition**.

The Prophet ﷺ taught us that ***“Whoever sets out to seek knowledge, Allah will ease for him the path to Paradise.”*** This means that **learning itself is an act of worship**. Every page you read with sincere intention, every class you attend to serve Allah better is a step closer to Him.

The Ummah will only regain its dignity when it stops living on **emotional fragments and viral slogans**, and once again builds a generation that **thinks, researches, understands, and acts** with the **Qur’an in one hand, worldly knowledge in the other, and Allah as the ultimate goal**.

46.5 Conclusion

The first revelation **“Iqra”** was no coincidence: Allah made it clear that the path to Him begins with knowledge. But knowledge is only valuable when it is connected to action, pure intention, and responsibility. Our Ummah will not **advance through slogans, emotions, or superficial content, but through true knowledge that illuminates hearts and builds societies**.

Therefore we must return to the Qur’an as a **guide and message**, not merely as sound or decoration. We need a generation that understands the Qur’an, applies the Sunnah, and at the same time masters worldly knowledge to offer solutions in technology, economy, and education.

True strength lies in the combination of ***‘ilm* (knowledge), *‘amal* (action), and *taqwā* (God-consciousness)**. Whoever learns for the sake of Allah, acts upon what he learns, and deploys that for the community, makes himself and the Ummah stronger. Only then will we become a

community that does not lag behind weakly, but takes its place in the world with dignity and wisdom.

Chapter 47 – Equal but Not Identical: The Roles of Men and Women in the Qur'an

47.1 Observation

The position of women remains one of the most debated topics worldwide not only between Muslims and non-Muslims, but even **within the Muslim community itself**. What is striking is that today we are confronted with **two extremes**, each manifesting at opposite ends of the world: **oppression and misuse in traditional societies, versus boundless individualism in the Western context**.

In Underdeveloped Countries: Religion as an Excuse for Oppression

In countries such as Afghanistan, parts of Pakistan, and certain regions of Africa and the Middle East, women are still structurally **deprived of their fundamental rights**:

- Education for girls is prohibited or severely restricted.
- Women are not allowed to study, hold public office, or even leave their homes without a male guardian.
- In some places, women are literally pushed out of public life, and these restrictions are justified **in the name of Islam**, even though they stem far more from **culture than religion**.

Certain leaders, movements, and even parents misuse **the name of Allah** to prevent women from exercising their right to knowledge, work, mobility, or dignity. They ignore the fact that **the very first revelation** in Islam was a **call to knowledge (Iqra' – “Read!”)**, and that the women around the Prophet ﷺ such as 'Ā'isha, Khadijah, and Umm Salama were **teachers, businesswomen, and active contributors to society**, without losing their femininity or modesty.

In the West: Freedom without Boundaries but at a Price

On the other hand, in Europe and the broader Western world we see a **completely different problem**: freedom has **become limitless**, and many natural or spiritual balances have been lost.

- Women travel alone or with friends to tourist destinations, often with little awareness of spiritual boundaries or responsibilities.
- The workplace has become the new arena for self-validation, where some women become so absorbed in career and independence that **family life, parenting, and spiritual growth** are neglected.
- The idea of **“I don't need anyone”** is glorified leading to **shallow relationships and broken families**.

Although this freedom emerged as a **reaction to centuries of oppression**, it now brings a different kind of imbalance: **a loss of direction**, where women (and men) no longer **know their role** within the family, the community, or before Allah.

A World of Contrasts

Thus, what we see is that in many **traditional Muslim countries the woman is oppressed in the name of religion**, while in the West **the role of the woman is disconnected from religion**. In both cases, the balance is broken:

- There: no voice, no freedom, no development.
- Here: no direction, no boundaries, no structure.

But the Qur'an teaches us that men and women are **equal in value**, but **different in nature and responsibility**. They are **each other's partners**, not competitors. And their **taqwā, knowledge**, and **effort** are the standard, not their gender or social position.

47.2 Qur'anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah An-Nisā' (4:1)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اتَّقُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ مِنْ نَفْسٍ وَاحِدَةٍ وَخَلَقَ مِنْهَا زَوْجَهَا وَبَثَّ مِنْهُمَا رِجَالًا كَثِيرًا وَنِسَاءً...

“O mankind, fear your Lord, Who created you from a single soul and created from it its mate, and from the two spread many men and women throughout the earth...”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that this verse highlights the **equality in origin** between men and women. Both were created from a *single soul (nafs wāḥidah)*, sharing the same human dignity and worth.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that the verse is addressed to *all humanity (yā ayyuhā an-nās)*, indicating its **universal message**, not limited to Muslims.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that this shared origin should lead to **mutual respect, responsibility, and connection** not to domination or rivalry.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt (49:13)

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِنْ ذَكَرٍ وَأُنْثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا ۗ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ أَتَقَاكُمْ

“O mankind, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into peoples and tribes so that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the one with the most God-consciousness (taqwā).”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that differences in gender or lineage are *not a basis for superiority*. True worth in the sight of Allah lies in **taqwā** which means that both men and women have **equal spiritual opportunity**.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** points out that this verse was revealed in a context of *tribal arrogance and sexism* during the age of **Jāhiliyyah (ignorance)**, **breaking** that mentality by making *piety* the only measure of honor.
- **Ar-Rāzī** teaches that the combination of *ta'āruf* (mutual understanding) and *taqwā* (God-consciousness) calls for **cooperation in diversity**, not exclusion or conflict.

Verse 3 – Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb (33:35)

إِنَّ الْمُسْلِمِينَ وَالْمُسْلِمَاتِ وَالْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتِ... وَالصَّادِقِينَ وَالصَّادِقَاتِ... وَالصَّائِمِينَ وَالصَّائِمَاتِ... أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةً وَأَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

“Indeed, the Muslim men and the Muslim women, the believing men and the believing women... the truthful men and the truthful women... the fasting men and the fasting women Allah has prepared for them forgiveness and a great reward.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** describes this verse as a **powerful correction** to the cultural mindset that undervalued women, affirming their *complete spiritual equality*.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that the Qur’an deliberately lists **men and women side by side for each** spiritual quality something rare in scripture to underline the *importance of female faith and virtue*.
- **Ar-Rāzī** observes that the structure of this verse reminds us that *deeds*, not gender, determine how Allah judges human beings.

These verses together offer a holistic and balanced Qur’anic view of gender: **Sūrah An-Nisā’ (4:1)** begins by affirming the *shared origin* of man and woman. **Sūrah Al-Ḥujurāt (49:13)** establishes their **equal moral and human worth**. **Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb (33:35)** concludes with their **spiritual equality** before Allah where **reward** and forgiveness are based solely on faith and righteous action, not gender.

47.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

إِنَّمَا النِّسَاءُ شَفَائِقُ الرِّجَالِ

“Women are the twin halves of men.”

(*Abū Dāwūd 236, authenticated by Al-Albānī*)

Reflection; This Verse means that women share the same *spiritual* and *human essence* as men. It refers to **equal responsibility** in worship, morality, and social contribution without implying that they must be identical in every respect. Ibn al-Qayyim said: “A woman is responsible for her soul just as a man is. What brings her closer to Allah is not her gender, but her taqwā (God-consciousness).”

A. Women and Work – What Does Islam Say?

Islam has **never forbidden women from working**, as long as it is done within *ethical and religious boundaries*.

Some historical examples include:

- **Khadījah رضي الله عنها**, the first wife of the Prophet ﷺ, was a **respected businesswoman** whose wealth and integrity helped support Islam in its earliest days.
- During the Prophet’s time ﷺ, women worked as **nurses, farmers, and battlefield assistants** such as **Rufaydah al-Aslamiyyah** and **Umm ‘Atiyyah**, who served the wounded during battles.
- **Al-Qurṭubī**, in his *tafsir* (commentary on 4:34), stated that women may work *as long as it does not lead to fitnah (moral corruption) and does not cause neglect of their religious duties*.

At the same time, Islam warns that **work must never become an excuse** for neglecting family responsibilities for *both* men and women. The pursuit of income or career cannot come at the cost of the *moral and emotional stability of the home*.

B. Women and Travel – Classical and Contemporary Perspectives

The well-known Verse states:

“A woman must not travel without a maḥram over a distance of three days (or nights).”

(al-Bukhārī & Muslim)

Context and Explanation

- The **reason** behind this restriction during that era was **safety**: roads were dangerous, there were no hotels, and travelers were exposed to bandits or harm.
- **Contemporary scholars**, including **Yūsuf al-Qaraḍāwī**, **Ibn Bāz**, and **Salman al-‘Awdah**, have explained that:
 - If **the journey is safe**, **The purpose is lawful**, and **No sin** is involved, then traveling without a maḥram *may be permissible*.
- **Shaykh Ibn al-‘Uthaymīn (رحمه الله)** stated: “If the journey is safe and there is no danger, then the Verse should be understood as advice, not an absolute prohibition.”

Key Principle These rulings were revealed to **preserve dignity and safety**, not to restrict women unfairly. Islam’s framework aims to **protect**, not **confine**. The purpose is to ensure that both men and women live with *honor, security, and responsibility*, while maintaining their God-given rights and roles in balance.

47.4 Reflective Layer

The relationship between **men and women** is one of the most misunderstood and misused topics both by those who deny **women their rights in the name of religion** and by those who view every form of **structure or distinction as oppression**.

The **Qur’an**, however, chooses a **middle path**: a path of **justice, spiritual equality, and mutual responsibility**.

In some cultures such as parts of **Afghanistan, Somalia**, or rural regions of **Asia and Africa** women are prohibited from studying, traveling, or working. People hide behind the word “*Shari’ah*”, but in reality, this is often **cultural domination disguised as religion**. Women are reduced to the status of a man’s property, while the Qur’an speaks of her as a **partner (zawj one half of a pair)**, as a bearer of **taqwā (God-consciousness)**, and as an **independent moral agent** responsible for her own deeds.

At the same time, in the **Western world**, the concept of freedom has become detached from responsibility. Women are encouraged to be independent, but that independence often leads to **exhaustion, loneliness, and the loss of spiritual and familial grounding**. Many feel crushed by the pressure to “do it all”: career, travel, beauty, social media, family... What appears to be liberation is, in reality, a **new form of enslavement** to societal expectations, trends, and superficial ideals.

Islam recognizes the natural differences between men and women biologically and psychologically but bases rights and duties not on superiority, but on **capacity and role**.

- A woman has the right to **work, travel, seek knowledge, own property, and contribute to society**, as long as it takes place within the framework of *ḥaya’* (modesty), responsibility, and healthy family agreements.
- Likewise, a man is urged to fulfill his role as **leader and protector** with **justice and empathy**, not tyranny or arrogance.

Rather than viewing the opposite gender as a rival or threat, the Qur’an calls both to **grow together in taqwā**:

“The believing men and the believing women are allies of one another...” (*Sūrah At-Tawbah* 9:71)

This partnership begins in the **home**, extends to the **community**, and bears fruit in the **Hereafter**. Only when we read the Qur’an with a **pure heart** and a **clear mind** will we rediscover the balance between being man and woman as servants of Allah, each walking their own unique path.

Practical Reflections & Tips

1. **Read the Qur'an with clarity and sincerity.** Do not look through the lens of culture or ideology but through the **Word of Allah Himself**.
2. **Start within the family.** True partnership means that husband and wife support each other in *taqwā*, in raising children, and in sharing responsibilities.
3. **Education is not optional.** It is a duty for both men and women since **knowledge is the foundation of accountability**.
4. **Freedom is incomplete without responsibility.** Choices must be guided by the **boundaries and wisdom of the Shari'ah**.
5. **Leadership is service, not privilege.** The man is not elevated above the woman he is **entrusted** to lead with **justice, care, and compassion**.
6. **Respect differences.** Biological and psychological distinctions are not causes for inequality but **grounds for cooperation and harmony**.

47.5 Conclusion

The Qur'an does not present a *battle model* between men and women, but a *partnership model* one in which both genders are honored and entrusted with responsibility. Allah makes it clear that it is **not one's gender** that grants dignity or elevation, but one's **taqwā** awareness of him and **sincerity in action**.

We must move away from the **two extremes**:

- On one side, the **oppression of women** in the name of culture or religion;
- On the other, the **denial of natural differences** in the name of absolute equality.

The Prophet ﷺ treated women with profound respect. He **consulted them, educated them, defended their rights**, and **honored their position** in family life, in society, and in religion.

At the same time, he taught men to embrace their role as *qanwāmin* **protectors and caretakers** not as dictators, but as **servant-leaders**.

A society only flourishes when **men and women do not compete**, but **complement one another** when both strive toward Paradise, each on their own path, without belittling the other.

Islam does not call for women to become men, nor for men to lose their masculinity. It calls for both to remain true to their **fitrah** their God-given nature and to seek Allah **together**.

“Whoever does righteous deeds whether male or female and is a believer, we will surely grant them a good life.” (*Qur'an 16:97*)

That is our ultimate destination: **not worldly dominance**, but **meeting him** as man or woman, as a sincere servant devoted to Allah.

Chapter 48 – Zina and Sexual Temptation – The Normalization of Desire

48.1 Observation

The normalization of desire: Zina as a global plague

Wherever I travel, no matter the country, from **Africa to Asia**, from **Brussels to Jakarta**, one problem keeps reappearing: **zina** (fornication and adultery). Not as an exception, but as a **social norm**. It has become a global phenomenon, manifesting in different forms but always stemming from the same root: the **abandonment of modesty, boundaries, and responsibility**.

When I was young, Muslim youth still felt ashamed to be seen walking with someone of the opposite sex. Today, that sense of shame is gone. Young people post publicly on **social media** that they are in relationships outside of marriage, and other Muslims *like* those posts as if it were completely normal. It has gone so far that students in classrooms openly tell me they are in relationships, without the slightest hesitation or embarrassment.

Zina is no longer just normalized. it has been commercialized. The **beauty industry** is booming. Young girls, often very young, are shaped by a visual culture that teaches them their worth lies in **attention and appearance**. Lips, noses, skin, hair, nails everything must be flawless. Filters have become the new reality. Boys, in turn, flood the gyms, take supplements, or inject hormones to make their bodies more attractive. Everything revolves around **physical appeal**. For many, **Istanbul** is no longer a destination of spiritual reflection, but the city for **hair transplants and nose surgeries**.

The **social pressure** is overwhelming. Young people are growing up in a **digital world** where female nakedness is omnipresent. Eyes are no longer lowered. Boundaries fade. Lust reigns. And the consequences are devastating. **Abortion centers** are overflowing including with Muslims. We live in a world where **desire rules**, where **marriage is delayed, complicated, or made nearly impossible**, while zina is available on every corner or with a single swipe on an app.

Even in **Africa**, this crisis is rampant. Many young people cannot afford drugs, alcohol, or luxury their only form of pleasure is sexual activity. But access to contraception or abortion is almost non-existent. The result? **Orphaned children, abandoned women, broken families**. Men refuse responsibility. A child is seen as an “accident” and discarded. And then organizations like ours come in with food packages **mopping while the tap is still open**.

Even in **Jakarta**, a city that at first glance seems deeply religious filled with headscarves and mosques the reality beneath the surface is **rotten**. Zina is everywhere. The rules exist, but **the brakes are gone**.

And what, then, of **marriage**? How can someone later remain faithful to one partner after years of jumping from one relationship to another relationships without commitment or depth? How can there be loyalty when the heart has never known chastity?

The core of the problem is this: **Zina has been made easy. Marriage has been made hard.**

Marriage requires money, responsibility, approval, and preparation. Zina is quick, free, without obligation, and instantly accessible there are even **apps designed for it**. Parents make **halal difficult**, while society makes **haram easy**. Thus, the **Ummah** is weakened at its foundation not by external enemies, but by the **internal erosion of honor, marriage, and chastity**.

48.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah An-Nūr (24:30)

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ ۗ ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ

“Tell the believing men to lower their gaze and guard their chastity. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is All-Aware of what they do.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that Allah begins with the command to men because **men are naturally visually** stimulated the first step toward sin. Lowering the gaze protects the heart and marks the beginning of *tazkiyah* (spiritual purification).
- **Al-Qurṭubī** emphasizes that **the eyes are the gateway to the heart**. Whoever fails to control their gaze opens the door to desire. This verse demonstrates that Islam does not forbid only the act of *zina* itself, but also the *path* leading to it starting with the eyes.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that the command does not mean to close one’s eyes entirely, but **to lower them from what is forbidden**. Looking for necessity or respectful interaction is permitted, but lustful gazes are prohibited.

Verse 2 – Sūrah An-Nūr (24:31)

...وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze, guard their chastity, and not expose their adornment except that which [necessarily] appears thereof...”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that **women are naturally inclined to display beauty** as a form of **attraction**. Allah acknowledges this but sets divine limits. The verse serves as protection for society from the arousal of lust.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** mentions that **zina begins with the eyes, is fueled by beauty, and culminates in the act itself**. Women are instructed not to display their adornments publicly, except what is naturally visible (such as the face and hands, according to some scholars).
- **Ar-Rāzī** clarifies that both men and women share responsibility: **men must control their gaze, women** must guard their beauty. Each has their own nature, and Allah assigns a fitting command to each.

Verse 3 – Sūrah An-Nūr (24:2)

الرَّانِيَةَ وَالرَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةَ جَلْدَةٍ وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ۗ وَلْيَشْهَدْ عَذَابَهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

“The woman and the man guilty of fornication flog each of them with a hundred lashes. Do not let compassion for them prevent you from carrying out Allah’s law, if you truly believe in Allah and the Last Day. And let a group of believers witness their punishment.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** states that this verse highlights the **severity** of *zina*. The punishment is not only legal but moral a deterrent to protect society from open immorality.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** stresses **the strict evidentiary requirement** (four witnesses or confession), showing that Islam is **morally firm but judicially cautious**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** explains that the of the punishment serves as a **communal warning** preventing the normalization of sexual corruption.

Verse 4 – Sūrah An-Nūr (24:4)

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ

“And those who accuse chaste women and fail to produce four witnesses flog them with eighty lashes and never again accept their testimony. They are indeed the corrupt.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that this verse **protects human dignity** from false accusations, and that the severe penalty prevents slander and humiliation.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** notes that the requirement of four witnesses prevents **chaos and public scandal**. In practice, this condition is **nearly impossible** to meet, which shows that Allah **intends to protect people from public exposure of sins**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** adds that this rule is not meant to **hide sin, but to build a moral barrier against the spread** of corruption and indecency.

Verse 5 – Sūrah An-Nūr (24:19)

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

“Indeed, those who love that immorality should spread among the believers for them is a painful punishment in this world and the Hereafter. And Allah knows, while you do not know.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that *fāḥishah* here refers to **open indecency and sexual immorality**. Allah condemns not only the act itself but also **those who promote or normalize it**.

- **Al-Qurṭubī** highlights that when *ḥayāʾ* (modesty) disappears, the **moral fabric of society collapses**. This is why **Allah imposes strict conditions** to prevent the public spread or normalization of sin.
- **Ar-Rāzī** observes that punishment in both this world and the next shows that **normalizing immorality leads to social decay and divine anger**.

Verse 6 – Sūrah Al-Isrāʾ (17:32)

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّوْجَىٰٓءَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَلْحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا

“And do not even approach adultery. Indeed, it is an abomination and an evil path.”

- **Ibn ʿĀshūr** notes that the phrase “do not approach” implies that not only the act but even its **pathways** temptation, private meetings, immodesty, and free mixing are forbidden. The command is proactive, not reactive.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that *zīna* is not just a personal sin but a **betrayal of social order**. It **destroys families** and breaks trust. Even if done with consent, it remains forbidden.
- **Ar-Rāzī** points out that Allah describes *zīna* as both *fāḥisha* (a vile obscenity) and *sāʾa sabīlā* (a destructive path). The path toward it may seem pleasant and easy, but its **consequences are bitter and lasting**.

Verse 7 – Sūrah Al-Muʾminūn (23:5–7)

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأُزُوجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ
إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ
فَمَنْ أَتَبَعَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ

“And those who guard their chastity, except with their spouses or those whom their right hands possess for then they are free from blame. But whoever seeks beyond that they are the transgressors.”

- **Ibn ʿĀshūr** explains that these verses acknowledge human **sexual desire** but restrict its fulfillment to the sanctity of **marriage**. Beyond that, it becomes a deliberate transgression that inevitably causes harm.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** declares this the **measure of chastity**: any sexual act outside marriage is impure. Even a look or a thought can lead a person toward sin.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that anyone seeking gratification outside marriage crosses a divine boundary and acts in a **socially destructive** manner. The desire is legitimate but the path must be **ḥalāl**.

48.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

لَا يَزْنِي الزَّانِي حِينَ يُزْنِي وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ، وَلَا يَسْرِقُ السَّارِقُ حِينَ يَسْرِقُ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ...

“The adulterer does not commit adultery while he is a believer, and the thief does not steal while he is a believer...”
(*Al-Bukhārī & Muslim*)

Reflection: This Verse highlights the **gravity of zina (fornication and adultery)** when a person deliberately commits this sin without remorse, their **faith temporarily leaves their heart**.

It does not mean that the person becomes a disbeliever (*kāfir*), but rather that their **connection with Allah is severed in that moment**.

- **Imām An-Nawawī** explains that this refers to the **state of faith (*ḥāl al-īmān*)**: when someone commits such a sin, they act as though **Allah is not watching them** a temporary denial of His **presence and power**.
- **Ibn Ḥajar** states that in that moment, *faith “rises like a cloud above the person’s head,”* ready to return as soon as repentance is made.

This Verse shows how a **spiritual disconnect** occurs with major sins like zina. The heart darkens, the conscience weakens, and the soul becomes overpowered by desire.

In our time, this warning is **more relevant than ever**:

- Zina is no longer seen as a serious sin.
- It is rebranded as *love, romance, or freedom*.
- Youth normalize it through *TV series, dating apps, and social media influencers*.

Yet the Prophet ﷺ made it unmistakably clear: **“At that moment, you are not a true believer.”**

This statement should shake us awake.

Faith (*īmān*) is not just an identity badge it is a **living bond with Allah that must be protected**. Every act of disobedience weakens that bond, but zina in particular **severs it**, even if temporarily. To preserve faith is to protect the heart from desires that blind it to the presence of the Divine.

48.4 Reflective Layer

We live in an age where **temptation is no longer the exception it is the constant background of our existence**. *Zina* (fornication and adultery) is no longer confined to dark corners of society; it has invaded our **screens, conversations, fashion, and apps**, wrapped in the language of *freedom, love, and self-expression*.

The Qur’an teaches us that **Allah knows the nature of the human being**. Men are more visually stimulated therefore Allah begins by commanding men to **lower their gaze**. Women are inclined to

attract attention through beauty therefore Allah commands them to **cover their adornment**. Not as a form of **oppression**, but as a form of **protection and dignity**.

The **requirement of four witnesses** for an accusation of *zina* is, in practice, almost impossible to fulfill and that is **by divine design**. This is not meant to normalize sin, but to **protect human honor** and prevent **society** from **descending** into a culture of accusation, gossip, and public humiliation. Allah, in His mercy, does not want sins to become a public spectacle. **Zina** is a sin that, while severe, is meant to be confronted privately with repentance not broadcast openly and shamelessly.

Ibn ‘Āshūr and other classical scholars emphasize that these verses contain not only legal rulings but also **a profound social warning**:

- A community that **normalizes zina** loses its moral shield.
- When **modesty (ḥayā’)** disappears, **family collapse, societal breakdown, and loss of trust** soon follow.
- The requirement of four witnesses is therefore **not a hindrance to justice**, but **a safeguard against moral decay**.

This law is not intended to absolve sinners, but to warn the community: If *zina* is spread openly and without shame, that is **the beginning of the downfall** of society.

Yet our world turns this around. What Allah forbids is normalized. What He commands is mocked. We live with a **hypersexual culture**, in which young people are shaped by what they see and hear, not by what they read or learn about their religion.

We see this everywhere:

- Boys who are raised to chase after every woman.
- Girls who learn that their value depends on their appearance and number of followers.
- Parents who give their children everything except moral boundaries.
- Teachers who no longer have authority.
- Imams who remain silent out of fear of criticism or persecution.

If we do not teach our children about **the dangers of zina**, then social media, music, Netflix, and peers will do so, but with the opposite message. And the consequences are disastrous: broken hearts, unwanted pregnancies, addiction, depression, delay of marriage, loss of trust in relationships, and an Ummah that is **emotionally and spiritually exhausted**.

We must return to a **culture of chastity, early marriage, a sense of responsibility, and God-consciousness (taqwā)**. We must teach our youth that self-control is a sign of strength, that true love waits and is faithful, and that marriage does not need to be difficult or expensive, but is a blessing and protection.

“Marriage must be made easy. Zina must be made difficult.”

As parents, teachers, leaders, and educators, we bear a heavy responsibility in this. As long as the *haram* remains easier than the *halal*, *zina* will remain normalized. The honor of our children is worth fighting for.

48.5 Conclusion

Zina is not an individual mistake it is a **societal crisis**. In a world obsessed with instant gratification, **preserving chastity has become an act of spiritual rebellion**. It means detaching yourself from a culture that treats the human body as a commodity, and returning to a faith that honors the human being as a noble creation of Allah.

The Qur'an sets **boundaries not to oppress, but to protect**. Every society that ignores these divine limits pays the price: families collapse, trust dies, relationships become shallow, and the soul becomes wounded.

The Ummah cannot be strong while its hearts are divided, its families fragile, and its morality fluid. We must rebuild **honor, facilitate marriage, raise awareness about the consequences of zina**, and most importantly, cultivate **a generation that fears Allah in private** when no one else is watching. Whoever guards themselves, guards their honor, their soul, and their future.

Chapter 49 – The Headscarf and the Qur’anic Worldview

49.1 Observation

The **headscarf (ḥijāb)** has become one of the most charged and misunderstood symbols of Islam. In Europe, during the first generation, it was often **imposed by families or communities** not as a conscious act of faith, but as a **cultural expectation**. The result was a **backlash**: as soon as those women experienced independence, many **removed their headscarves** as a symbol of emancipation and freedom.

Today, however, we are witnessing a **reversal**. Some young Muslim women are *returning* to the headscarf precisely **because governments want to ban it**. This time, the headscarf has become a **symbol of identity and resistance**. Yet this, too, raises questions: What kind of headscarf are we wearing now?

We see them in **every color and style**, often paired with **make-up, tight jeans, and fashionable accessories**. The **spiritual essence** of the headscarf has been lost. It has become a **fashion statement** or a **political gesture**, rarely a **manifestation of taqwā** (God consciousness).

In **Africa**, another phenomenon appears: many women wear the headscarf as a **cosmetic extension of their hair** literally as part of their hairstyle. It serves a **decorative** rather than **spiritual** purpose. Similarly, in **countries like Indonesia**, the headscarf is often a **cultural norm** rather than a **Qur’anic conviction**. Some women wear it simply because *“everyone does”*, without knowing its religious foundation or intention.

Meanwhile, **men are rarely included** in these discussions, even though **they, too, have an Islamic dress code**. In summer, many Muslim men wear **shorts above the knees, tight shirts**, or even go **bare-chested**, despite the **sharī‘a explicitly discouraging this**. They may pay great attention to their **beards** or **prayer routines**, yet **ignore the rules of ‘awrah** (the parts of the body that must remain covered).

Islam calls upon **both men and women** to embody **modesty (ḥayā’)**, **dignity**, and **awareness** in how they appear in public not out of restriction, but out of **respect for human honor and social harmony**.

Today, the headscarf represents **many things at once**: a symbol of **resistance, faith, culture, beauty, pressure, or liberation**. But beyond all these competing meanings, one essential question remains: What does the **Qur’an itself** say about the headscarf? What were the **circumstances of its revelation**? And how can we **restore its spiritual essence** in a world obsessed with appearance?

49.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah An-Nūr (24:31)

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا ۖ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَىٰ جُيُوبِهِنَّ

“And tell the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their chastity, and not to display their adornment except what [normally] appears thereof, and let them draw their headcovers (*kbimār*) over their chests (*juyūb*).”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that the word *kbimār* refers to a head covering that women already wore, but they used it incorrectly leaving their chests exposed. This verse therefore corrects an existing custom rather than introducing a new garment. The command is to **extend the scarf over** the chest as a sign of **modesty** and dignity, not as a **restriction**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** identifies this verse as the foundational text of the **Islamic dress code for women**. He elaborates that the “adornments” refer to the hair, neck, earrings, and other visible jewelry, and that a woman should not display her beauty except what cannot be concealed (such as hands and face, according to some companions). The *kbimār* must therefore cover the head and upper body properly.
- **Ar-Rāzī** highlights the sequence of the verse *lowering the gaze* comes before the instruction on clothing showing **that inner purity precedes external modesty**. The goal is not to hide women, but to structure social interactions on the basis of respect rather than desire.

Allah thus commands the use of the headscarf in a manner that covers both the hair and the chest.

This verse links behavior and clothing modesty of the gaze and purity of the body.

The headscarf is not a cultural tradition but a **Qur’anic command** with a deeply spiritual objective: to preserve dignity, inner purity, and the honor of the believing woman.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Al-Aḥzāb (33:59)

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ قُلْ لَأَزُوجِكُمْ وَبَنَاتِكُمْ وَنِسَاءَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ يُدْنِينَ عَلَيْهِنَّ مِنْ جَلَابِيبِهِنَّ ۚ ذَلِكَ أَدْنَىٰ أَنْ يُعْرَفْنَ فَلَا يُؤْذَيْنَ ۗ﴾

“O Prophet! Tell your wives, your daughters, and the women of the believers to draw their outer garments (*jalābib*) over themselves. That is better so that they may be recognized and not be harassed.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** describes *jalābib* as large outer garments that covered the head and entire body a form of cloak that women already possessed. The **command means to let these garments hang loosely**, signaling that the woman belongs to the **community of believers** and deserves to be treated with respect.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** explains that this attire serves not only as protection from the male gaze but also from **harassment or verbal abuse**. Clothing thus becomes a public statement: “I seek to be respected, not objectified.” It is both **personal protection and a social message**.
- **Ar-Rāzī** notes the **psychological** wisdom in this verse **clothing shapes how others perceive and interact with a person**. It acts as a barrier against sexual objectification.

He adds that men are equally required to dress with dignity, since the command to chastity applies to both genders.

This verse reveals that clothing has **protective and social dimensions**. The *jalābīb* or head covering is not a symbol of oppression, but of **honor, identity, and self-respect**. Allah acknowledges social realities and provides a divine response: **dignity over desire, respect over exposure**.

49.3 Verse Reflection

Verse

The Prophet ﷺ said:

"الْمَرْأَةُ عَوْرَةٌ، فَإِذَا خَرَجَتْ اسْتَشْرَفَهَا الشَّيْطَانُ"

"The woman is (entirely) 'awrah (something that must be covered), and when she goes out, Shayṭān focuses his attention on her."

(At-Tirmidhī)

Reflection: This Verse emphasizes that the woman, by her very nature, is **honorable and precious**, and thus **deserving of protection**. Ibn ‘Āshūr explains that these words do not imply suppression, but **protection from sexual objectification**. Shayṭān works through **desire, the gaze, and tempting words** and both the Qur’an and Sunnah call believers to **honor, protection, and self-respect**.

49.4 Reflective Layer

The **headscarf** today stands as one of the most discussed and politicized symbols in the world. To many outside Islam, it appears as a **sign of oppression** or **cultural backwardness**. In reality, it is an **act of obedience to Allah**, a **spiritual choice**, and at the same time, a **visible expression of identity**.

However, in practice, three **distorted trends** often obscure its true meaning:

1. **The imposed headscarf** worn because of family or cultural pressure. This rarely leads to depth, because **where coercion exists, resistance grows**. The Qur’an does not address fathers or brothers it addresses **the believing woman herself**, giving her personal **responsibility and agency**.
2. **The reactive headscarf** worn as a **form of resistance** against governments that seek to ban it. While this can strengthen awareness and pride, there is a risk that the ḥijāb becomes a **political symbol**, while its **spiritual essence fades** into the background.
3. **The headscarf devoid of meaning** combined with **tight clothing, make-up, or behavior** that contradicts the essence of **ḥayā’** (modesty). It becomes a **fashion accessory** rather than a **sign of devotion**.

The Qur'an, however, teaches that the headscarf is **neither a cultural burden nor a restriction**, but a **mark of dignity and conviction** a **form of protection** that a woman **chooses** out of **obedience to her Lord**. It is a means of **manifesting her inner connection with Allah**, not a prison that confines her.

Balance is essential: It is not only women who have a dress code. Islam also requires **men** to dress with **decency**, to **lower their gaze**, and to avoid becoming a **source of temptation** through their appearance, fragrance, or behavior. Just as women are reminded of **ḥayā'**, men are called to **discipline and respect**.

The **essence of the headscarf** lies not in **fabric or fashion**, but in **spirituality, conviction, and responsibility**. It is a **choice that externalizes inner faith**, and when worn with awareness, it becomes a **source of strength and dignity**.

The Headscarf as Identity and Moral Compass

The headscarf is not only a **religious obligation**, but also a **declaration of identity**. In a world where women are often judged by their appearance, the headscarf offers a **powerful alternative** a statement that says: **“I am more than my body. My worth lies in my obedience to Allah, not in the approval of people.”**

For many women, the headscarf becomes an **anchor**:

- It **reminds them who they are** servants of Allah, not slaves to trends or opinions.
- It **connects them to the Ummah** when a woman wears the ḥijāb, she becomes **visibly Muslim**, representing something **greater than herself**.
- It **protects them from objectification** allowing them to be seen as **a person**, not a product.

In a time when female identity is **fragmented** by beauty **standards**, social pressures, feminist ideologies, and marketing tactics, the headscarf offers something **simple, profound, and pure**: an identity rooted in **taqwā (God-consciousness)**, **modesty**, and **faithfulness** to one's beliefs.

49.5 Conclusion

The **headscarf** is not a symbol of oppression, but a **mirror of inner conviction**. It derives its value not through coercion or rebellion, but through a conscious choice to be obedient to Allah. When the headscarf is worn with knowledge, dignity, and chastity, it transcends every political or cultural discussion.

At the same time, we must acknowledge that the message of **ḥayā'** and dignified clothing is not limited to women. Men too bear responsibility in their behavior, their clothing, and their interaction with others. Islam places the emphasis on **reciprocity**: both genders are called upon to lower their gaze, curb their pride, and carry their identity with honor.

Therefore, the discussion around the headscarf must not only be about fabric and rules, but about **spirituality and responsibility**. It is an invitation to serve Allah with conviction, to protect oneself against emptiness, and to remind the community that identity only gains strength when it is connected to faith.

Chapter 50 – LGBTQ+ – Between Compassion and Moral Boundaries

50.1 Observation

In the modern world, Muslims everywhere are increasingly confronted with the issue of **LGBTQ+**, particularly in Western societies where it has become completely **normalized**. What was once considered a **taboo** has now become an **identity marker**, promoted in **schools, media**, and even **children’s cartoons**. Preschoolers are taught that it is normal to love someone of the same gender or to change one’s gender. From a very young age, children are exposed to information and images that confuse them about their natural development. As Muslim parents, one often feels **powerless** in a society where such ideas are not only permitted but even **celebrated as virtues**.

The problem, however, extends beyond external influences. Even **within the Muslim community**, there is a growing number of young people struggling with **sexual feelings** or **gender identity**. Some children display feminine or masculine traits from an early age a phenomenon that was also known during the time of the Prophet ﷺ. Others go further and identify as **homosexual** or **lesbian**. What should a parent do when his son says, “*Dad, I’m gay*”? In many Muslim households both in the West and in the developing world the first reflex is often **exclusion, anger, violence**, or **complete rejection**. Meanwhile, other sins such as **smoking, vaping**, or even **zina** (fornication) are often met with far greater tolerance especially when it concerns boys. This **double standard** is deeply painful and dangerous. It pushes many young people further away into **depression, addiction**, or even **abandonment of Islam** altogether. The real crisis is not only about **the existence of sin**, but about **how we respond to it**. The Qur’an does not call us to hatred or denial, but to a balance between **compassion** and **moral clarity**. The true challenge of our time is not simply to reject what Allah has forbidden, but to do so with **wisdom, justice**, and **mercy** without losing our moral compass, nor our children.

59.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrah Al-A‘rāf (7:80–81)

وَلَوْ طَآءَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَلْحِشَةَ مَا سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ○ إِنكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ ۗ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ مُّسْرِفُونَ

“And [We sent] Lūṭ, when he said to his people: ‘Do you commit such an indecency as none among all the worlds has ever committed before you? Indeed, you approach men with lust instead of women. No, you are a people transgressing beyond all bounds.’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that the Qur’an here speaks of a **collective moral corruption** the normalization of sin that undermines the moral and social fabric of society.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** calls this a “**new sin without precedent**”, connecting it to broader **social and ethical decay**.

- **Ar-Rāzī** focuses on the **arrogance and moral rebellion** of the people of Lūṭnot merely their act, but their public defiance and normalization of what Allah had forbidden.

Verse 2 – Sūrah Ash-Shu‘arā’ (26:165–166)

أَتَأْتُونَ الذُّكْرَانَ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ○ وَتَذَرُونَ مَا خَلَقَ لَكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ مِنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ ۗ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ عَادُونَ

“Do you approach men among all the worlds, and forsake the wives that your Lord has created for you? No, you are a people exceeding all bounds.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** notes that the verse highlights the **natural creation** as the foundation for a healthy and balanced sexual relationship.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** interprets this as a clear **condemnation of abandoning the natural order** established by Allah.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes the word ‘ādūn (“transgressors”), explaining that this signifies not just a **physical** violation, but a **spiritual** rebellion against divine limits.

These verses demonstrate that **sexual relations in Islam** are organized within a spiritual, ethical, and social framework in which **man and woman complement each other**. The Qur’an rejects behaviors that deviate from this structure not out of hatred or restriction, but because of their **harm to the soul, family, and society**. At the same time, the Qur’an continuously calls toward **repentance, correction, and mercy**, not hatred.

Verse 3 – Sūrah Al-Isrā’ (17:70)

وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا تَفْضِيلًا

“And indeed, We have honored the children of Adam, carried them on land and sea, provided them with good things, and favored them greatly above many of those We created.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** highlights the **universal nature** of this honor (**karāmah**): it applies to **all children of Adam**, regardless of faith, color, gender, or sin. This honor is based on the **human form, intellect, and capacity for moral and spiritual growth**. He explains that this verse forms the moral foundation for treating **every human being with dignity**, even when they sin. According to him, no one should be **dehumanized** because of their behavior or identity; Allah Himself granted them dignity, and thus societies must **correct with respect**, never **humiliate**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** identifies three dimensions of this **karāmah**: **Physical dignity** the unique form and appearance of humankind; **Functional dignity** human abilities such as travel and innovation that animals lack; **Moral dignity** reason, conscience, and responsibility. He stresses that this dignity **precedes religiosity**: even a sinner or non-believer possesses a basic level of honor that cannot be denied or violated.
- **Ar-Rāzī** emphasizes that this verse confirms the **unique moral and spiritual status of humanity** above all creation. He adds that this divine honor implies that **no human being should be humiliated**, even in the face of grave sins. Allah endowed every person with the

potential to **learn, repent, and return to goodness** and this potential should never be extinguished. He warns against societies that **demonize sinners**, as doing so extinguishes hope and repentance. True honor carries **moral responsibility**: those who are honored must act honorably.

This Qur'anic principle is **profoundly relevant in the LGBTQ+ context**. Where some respond with **hatred, disgust, or exclusion**, this verse reminds us that the **foundation of human relations** is built upon **dignity and respect**, even in the face of sin.

In some Western families, parents disown a child who expresses same-sex attraction or gender confusion. In parts of Africa and Asia, the situation is even worse **physical abuse, social rejection**, or even **honor killings**. But what follows? Many of these young people fall into **depression, drug use**, or **abandon Islam entirely**.

Yet Allah says:

“We have honored the children of Adam.”

This **honor does not disappear because of a single sin**. Just as we would not banish a son who commits **zina (fornication)**, we should not crush a son or daughter who struggles with identity or desire. The sin remains a sin but the **path back to Allah** must always remain **open**.

It is also vital to understand that **not everyone struggling with these feelings rejects Islam** or adopts a “progressive” identity. Many still **pray, fast, and seek guidance**, wondering how to reconcile their faith with their struggles. They need **guidance, compassion, and wisdom** not **rejection**.

50.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

عَنْ أَبِي عَبَّاسٍ قَالَ: لَعَنَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ ﷺ الْمُخَنَّثِينَ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ، وَالْمُتَرَجِّلَاتِ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ

Ibn ‘Abbās reported: The Messenger of Allah ﷺ cursed the men who imitate women and the women who imitate men. (Al-Bukhārī)

Reflection: Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī explains that this curse applies to those who **intentionally imitate** the opposite gender **out of rebellion, arrogance, or fashion**, not to those who suffer from **natural confusion or psychological struggles**. Imām An-Nawawī also distinguishes between those who **consciously choose** to adopt this behavior and those who **exhibit such traits involuntarily** due to internal conflict or illness.

In other words, the condemnation targets **intentional imitation**, not **involuntary tendencies**. Islam recognizes human complexity and calls for guidance, not humiliation.

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

ارْحَمُوا مَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ يَرْحَمَكُم مِّنْ فِي السَّمَاءِ

“Be merciful to those on the earth, and the One above the heavens will be merciful to you.” (At-Tirmidhī – authenticated by Al-Albānī)

Reflection: This Verse is frequently cited by scholars such as **Shaykh Ibn Bāz**, **Shaykh ‘Abd al-Fattāh Abū Ghudda**, and even modern Muslim educators to stress that **correction in Islam must begin with mercy**, even in the face of major sins. **Exclusion without guidance** often leads to **greater harm** pushing the sinner deeper into despair or rebellion.

According to **Ibn al-Qayyim al-Jawziyyah** and **Imām An-Nawawī**, a person is not sinful merely for **feeling** forbidden desires; sin occurs only when **those desires are acted upon**. Indeed, if one **suppresses** such desires **for the sake of Allah**, that restraint itself becomes a **source of reward**.

True guidance does not begin with condemnation, but with compassion that helps a person rise above their struggles, and return to Allah with dignity.

50.4 Reflective Layer

The challenge of LGBTQ+ issues within the Muslim community especially in the West requires a **deep, balanced, and compassionate approach**. On one hand, it is essential to remain **clear and firm in our theological principles**: homosexual acts are prohibited in Islam, just as other major sins such as *zīna* (fornication) or substance abuse are. However, **sin is not the same as identity**, and a **sinner never loses their right** to dignity, guidance, and love. The Qur’an recounts the story of the people of **Lūṭ (Lot)** in powerful terms of warning and moral decay, yet it does so within a **broader moral context** one of open immorality, public indecency, and rebellion against prophetic guidance. What is often forgotten is that the condemnation of their **acts** does not mean that every person who experiences same-sex attraction is condemned. On the contrary, those who **struggle internally** but strive to remain steadfast in faith **deserve respect, compassion, and support**. **Ibn ‘Āshūr**, in his *tafsīr*, emphasizes that the people of Lūṭ were punished because of their **public defiance, collective corruption, and moral arrogance** not merely for feelings or inner inclinations.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the **psychological and social realities** of our time. Children are growing up in an environment where LGBTQ+ identities are not only normalized but **actively promoted** through **books, films, classrooms, and even toys**. This creates confusion especially among young children who are still discovering their identity and boundaries.

It is therefore not surprising that some Muslim youth experience **inner conflict** and **emotional confusion**, yet find **no safe space** within their community to discuss or seek help.

Exclusion, humiliation, or violence are not Islamic responses. The Prophet ﷺ never turned away from a sinner who came sincerely seeking help or forgiveness. His **mercy, gentleness, and wisdom** were the very means by which hearts were transformed. Consider the young man who once asked the Prophet ﷺ **for permission to commit zina** (fornication). The Prophet ﷺ did not react with anger or hatred; instead, he **guided him with empathy and reason**, appealing to his **conscience** and **spiritual sense**, until the young man repented sincerely. This prophetic model must guide us today.

As a community, our responsibilities are clear:

1. **Teach Islam's position clearly**, without fear, hatred, or mockery.
2. **Create safe spaces** where young Muslims who struggle with these feelings can seek guidance without being condemned.
3. **Provide professional and faith-based counseling**, integrating psychological care with spiritual guidance.
4. **Differentiate between sin and sinner**, between **behavior** and **identity**.

We must also be **self-critical**: Why do so many young Muslims abandon their faith when they are confused about their feelings? Why do they find comfort only on **TikTok**, in secular communities, or among **extremes** that either fully reject or fully affirm everything without balance?

Finally, the visibility of this topic should be a **wake-up call** for the Muslim community.

It is a reminder that we must **invest more seriously in moral education, spiritual formation, and healthy parent-child relationships**. If we fail to offer young Muslims a **safe, compassionate, and faith-based foundation**, then society will hand them **another identity** one that may lead them **further away from Allah** than we could have ever imagined.

50.5 Conclusion

The topic of LGBTQ+ requires from us, as Muslims, a stance that is **principled, empathetic, and wise**. The Qur'an leaves no ambiguity regarding the **prohibition of homosexual acts**, as made clear in the story of the people of Lūṭ (Lot). The **Sunnah** reaffirms this moral boundary. Yet at the same time, our faith also commands **mercy, care, guidance, and justice** even for those who struggle with their desires.

We must be a community that:

- **Draws clear boundaries**, without sowing hatred.
- **Provides care and support** to youth experiencing inner conflict.
- **Creates space for dialogue**, without falling into moral relativism.
- **Raises its children with clarity, love, and spiritual strength**, so that they can stand firm amidst the confusion of their time.

Muslim youth today live in a world saturated with **temptations, ideological influences, and constant stimulation**. If we fail to guide them with **knowledge, warmth, and clear moral frameworks**, we leave them vulnerable to others who will claim to offer them “identity” and “direction” often far removed from their **Fitrah** (natural disposition) and from **Allah**.

Let us, therefore, return to the essence of our religion: **wisdom, purity, compassion, and truth**. And let us continue to see every person as a **child of Adam**, honored by Allah (Q. 17:70) even when they stray, even when they struggle, and even when they seek to return. Whoever speaks the truth with love opens hearts.

Chapter 51 – Environment & Animal Rights

The Human Caliphate: Responsibility for the Earth

51.1 Observation

Anyone who travels through **Africa, Asia**, or the **Middle East** is often confronted with a deeply troubling sight: **waste scattered along the streets, plastic bags fluttering in the wind, burning garbage piles** on the edges of villages, and **stray dogs and cats** rummaging through debris. No one seems to care anymore. Everything is simply thrown outside food leftovers, diapers, bottles, cans and burning it appears to be the easiest option. **CO₂ emissions** from thousands of motorbikes and old vehicles are hardly ever discussed, for in many places there is **little infrastructure or government policy** to handle things differently. Yet this reality touches something deep within. Not only because of its ugliness, but because of its **moral dimension**: How did humanity become so disconnected from its responsibility toward the Earth and its living beings?

In many of these regions, **animals are completely abandoned**. Dogs wander the streets starving, cats are chased away, sick animals die in silence. But who can be blamed when even human beings lack access to basic healthcare?

In the **West**, the situation looks different but the conscience is not necessarily cleaner. Waste management systems exist, yet we still see **illegal dumping, overconsumption, and laziness**: people drive short distances rather than walk, **consume meat daily without reflection**, and **buy new clothes every week** from **fast-fashion industries** that exploit workers and destroy ecosystems. The excess is organized and hidden but the **damage remains real**.

Today, **environmental awareness** is often portrayed as belonging to an “activist camp,” as if caring for the planet were a political choice or lifestyle trend. In reality, however, **it is a Qur’anic and Prophetic command** an integral part of what it means to be a believer and a **khalifah** (steward) of Allah on Earth.

51.2 Qur’anic Verses

Verse 1 – Sūrat al-Baqarah (2:30)

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً

“And when your Lord said to the angels, ‘Indeed, I will place upon the earth a vicegerent (*khalifah*).’”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** emphasizes that the word *khalifah* does not refer only to Adam as an individual, but to **humanity as a whole**. It implies a **moral responsibility** to act justly with all that Allah has entrusted to humankind including the natural environment.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** identifies seven meanings of *khalifah*, among them “caretakers of the earth,” and stresses the necessity of appointing leaders who protect creation rather than corrupt it. He concludes that this verse is **evidence that environmental stewardship is a religious duty**.

- **Ar-Rāzī** discusses why the angels were astonished since humans have the potential to sin and cause harm but explains that Allah’s response reveals humanity’s **capacity to rise to the highest moral rank** through **care, justice, and balance** in fulfilling its role on earth.

Verse 2 – Sūrat al-A‘rāf (7:31)

وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا ۚ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ

“...but do not be excessive. Indeed, He does not love those who are excessive.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** explains that *isrāf* (**extravagance**) applies not only to food and clothing but to **all resources, including nature’s wealth**. Overconsumption and waste of what Allah has created are **forbidden and spiritually destructive**.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** cites this verse as proof that **any form of waste is ḥarām**. He records statements from the *ṣaḥābah* and *ṭābi‘īn* condemning wastefulness in water during *wuḍū‘*, food, or excessive use of wealth.
- **Ar-Rāzī** links *isrāf* to **arrogance and ingratitude** toward Allah’s blessings. Wastefulness, he says, reflects a **heart that lacks thankfulness** and a sense of responsibility.

Verse 3 – Sūrat al-An‘ām (6:38)

وَمَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا طَائِرٍ يَطِيرُ بِجَنَاحَيْهِ إِلَّا أُمَّمٌ أُمَّتُكُمْ

“And there is no creature on earth nor bird flying with its wings but that they are communities like you.”

- **Ibn ‘Āshūr** points out that this verse elevates the **status of animals** by describing them as **‘umam’ (communities)** just like humans. This indicates that they have their own systems, purposes, and interdependence and thus **their rights are divinely established**, not optional.
- **Al-Qurṭubī** states that this verse shows animals live in **organized societies**, much like human beings. He draws a legal conclusion from this: it is **forbidden to harm, kill, or neglect animals** unnecessarily.
- **Ar-Rāzī** reflects that all creatures exist under Allah’s command, and recognizing this should lead humans to **compassion rather than domination**. He views this verse as a **call to humility** before other forms of life. The Qur’an reminds us that we are **trustees, not owners, of the Earth. Wastefulness is forbidden, and animals are full-fledged communities** deserving of care and respect.

Whether it concerns **litter on the streets, the mistreatment of animals, or excessive consumption**, it is our sacred duty to engage with Allah’s creation **with awareness, gratitude, and responsibility**. Environmental consciousness is **not a Western trend** it is a **core Islamic value**, rooted in the Qur’an and the mission of the human *kehalifah*.

51.3 Verse Reflection

Verse 1

The Prophet ﷺ said:

مَا مِنْ مُسْلِمٍ يَغْرِسُ غَرْسًا أَوْ يَزْرَعُ زَرْعًا فَيَأْكُلُ مِنْهُ إِنْسَانٌ أَوْ دَابَّةٌ أَوْ طَيْرٌ إِلَّا كَانَ لَهُ بِهِ صَدَقَةٌ

*“There is no Muslim who plants a tree or sows a crop from which a human, animal, or bird eats, except that it is counted for him as an act of charity (**ṣadaqah**).”*

(Muslim)

Verse 2

The Prophet ﷺ said:

دَخَلَتْ امْرَأَةٌ النَّارَ فِي هِرَّةٍ رَبَطَتْهَا، فَلَا هِيَ أَطْعَمَتْهَا، وَلَا هِيَ تَرَكَتْهَا تَأْكُلُ مِنْ خَشَاشِ الْأَرْضِ

“A woman was admitted into the Fire because she had confined a cat until it died; she neither fed it nor allowed it to eat from the insects of the earth.”

(al-Bukhārī & Muslim)

Reflection: In these statements lies a deep spirituality: planting a tree is *ibadah*, neglecting an animal is a sin. Islamic environmental care is not a modern ‘Western concept’, it is deeply anchored in the Sunnah

51.4 Reflective Layer

The **Qur’an** and the **Sunnah** teach us that caring for the Earth is **not a luxury**, but a **sacred duty**. We are not **owners**, but **stewards (khulafā’)** of what Allah has created. This means that every act from the use of water to the treatment of animals is part of our **servitude to Allah**.

Whoever plants a tree performs a **continuous act of charity (ṣadaqah jāriyah)** that endures through generations. Whoever feeds an animal honors not only that creature, but **the Creator of that creature**. And whoever wastes, neglects, or pollutes **betrays his role as a khalīfah** and harms the creation of Allah.

Today’s environmental crises mountains of waste, air pollution, animal cruelty are not merely **social or ecological issues**; they are **moral and spiritual ailments**. They reveal how far humanity has strayed from its purpose as servant and steward of Allah.

Practical Guidelines

- **Consume consciously:** Buy what you need, not what you crave. Avoid waste in food, water, and energy.
- **Care for animals:** Treat them as *umam* (communities) with rights do not cause unnecessary pain or neglect.

- **Actively green your surroundings:** Planting trees is not trivial; it is *ṣadaqah* that continues to benefit as long as life draws from it.
- **Respect creation:** Avoid pollution, burning waste, or careless littering. These are not minor faults; they are signs of **ingratitude toward the Creator**.
- **Educate and raise awareness:** Teach children that sorting waste, caring for animals, and conserving water are acts of *‘ibādah* (worship).

Islam is **not a faith that neglects creation**; it is a faith that reminds us that **every grain of sand and every drop of water is a trust from Allah**. Whoever respects the Earth, respects his Lord. Whoever destroys it, shows ingratitude for His blessings.

51.5 Conclusion

Islam teaches us that **care for the environment is not secondary**, but an **essential part of faith**. Planting a tree, keeping water pure, feeding an animal, and consuming moderately all of these are **acts of worship**. Conversely, those who waste, pollute, or neglect creation display **ingratitude** toward Allah’s blessings and lose *barakah* (divine blessing) in their lives.

The Qur’an calls us **khalīfah** (stewards) on Earth representatives of Allah who bear responsibility, not owners with unrestricted freedom. Our treatment of waste, energy, food, and animals is therefore **not merely environmental activism**, but a **reflection of our faith (īmān)**.

The future of the Ummah is inseparable from how we treat the Earth. A community that pollutes its surroundings and neglects its animals **cannot be a spiritual leader of humanity**. But a community that embodies **purity, moderation, and respect for creation** will once again become a **bearer of divine light**.

Environmental care, then, is not a choice it is a test. Whoever passes this test shows gratitude to Allah and leaves the Earth as a trust (amānah) for future generations.

From Word to Deed – Final Reflection

The Qur’an is not just a book. It is a guide. A life compass. A light in the darkness for those who are lost. Whoever reads, understands, applies, and contemplates the Book of Allah correctly, will notice that **the Qur’an forms a worldview that touches every dimension of life**: from the interior of the heart to the organization of a society. And that is exactly what this book has intended to show:

the Qur'an is not only a spiritual comfort, but also a practical blueprint for reform, individually and collectively.

We started this book with a clear starting point: everything begins **with the Qur'an. But the Qur'an** is not a loose collection of words. **It is a system of meaning, built around the five pillars, spiritual and mental development, the family, and society. These four pillars form a natural growth:** from the inside out, from the self to society.

For if the **individual** stands weak, entangled in addiction, inner confusion, misunderstanding of his religion, how can we then speak about a strong ummah? If the **family** falls apart, if we do not understand our **role as parents or children**, what kind of society are we building then? And if our communities fall into **cultural practices** that are at odds with the Qur'an, how can we then say that we follow the Book?

From Light to Light

Allah says:

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ... نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ ۗ

“Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth... Light upon Light.”
(Sūrah An-Nūr, 24:35)

Every human being carries an **inner light** the *fiṭrah*, the innate disposition toward goodness. But that inner light can fade, become veiled, or even extinguished through sin, trauma, poor upbringing, or a corrupt environment.

The Qur'an comes to **reignite that light**. When the inner light of the human being reason and a pure soul connects with the Light of Revelation, there arises **nūr 'alā nūr** *light upon light*: clarity of vision, moral **strength, and spiritual** peace.

As Ibn al-Qayyim said:

“The human being possesses a candle, but without oil it goes out. The Qur'an is the oil of the soul.”

Our mission with this book has been to rekindle that light. For some, it is but a flicker; for others, nearly extinguished. But with the Qur'an, with knowledge, and with renewed connection to Allah, that flame can become a **beacon** for oneself and for others.

That is why, at *Gardens of the Sincere*, we say: **The solution begins with reconnection to the Qur'an** but with *understanding, reflection, and action*. Not mere recitation, but contemplation. Not mere admiration, but application.

Our Three Core Investments

1. **Waqf and sustainability** – land, farms, and self-sufficiency. *Independence is a condition for dignity.*

2. **Education and knowledge** books, lectures, and universities. *A people that does not understand, cannot lead.*
3. **Transformation of mindset** through the Qur'an. *There is no revolution without the reformation of thought.*

We believe that if every Muslim despite his flaws and **struggles strives to obey Allah sincerely**, our *Ummah* will grow stronger. Then, and only then, can we bring about true change. Even in the face of horrors like the **genocide in Gaza**, we would not respond with helplessness, but with **purposeful impact**.

We have the perfect example in our beloved Prophet ﷺ A man without wealth, without power, without an army, yet armed with a **Book, faith, and vision**. In 23 years, he **transformed the world how people** thought, ate, spoke, purified themselves, acted, and believed.

His path is our path. And that path begins and ends with the **Qur'an**.

An Ocean of Knowledge

For me personally, this book has been a **journey through the Qur'an**. The more one learns, the more one realizes how little one knows. As the scholars say:

“Whoever truly acquires knowledge becomes humble.”

The Qur'an is like an **ocean**. Memorization touches only the surface. But the **pearls** they are found only by those who dive deep. And no one finds the same pearl. Each diver discovers something unique: Sometimes a lesson in patience, sometimes a call to struggle, sometimes a reminder of love, and sometimes a warning against arrogance.

The Qur'an speaks to **all humanity** believer and skeptic, young and old. One person finds himself within it; another sees his mistakes. But whoever truly listens is transformed. So I always say: **Return to the Qur'an not as melody, but as guidance**. With *tafsir*, with explanation, with reflection.

Our Shared Responsibility

The *Ummah* faces immense challenges. If there is one *Sūrah* that summarizes life itself, it is **Sūrah al-‘Aṣr**:

وَالْعَصْرِ

By Time!

إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَفِي خُسْرٍ

Indeed, mankind is in loss,

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ

Except those who believe and do righteous deeds,

وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْحَقِّ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ

And who enjoin one another to truth and enjoin one another to patience.

These three verses form a **roadmap for success** in this world and the next:

1. **Faith (*īmān*)** – the root.
2. **Righteous deeds (*‘amal ṣāliḥ*)** – the fruit.
3. **Encouraging truth (*ḥaqq*)** – social engagement.
4. **Encouraging patience (*ṣabr*)** – perseverance amidst hardship.

Imām ash-Shāfi‘ī said: “If Allah had revealed only this one Sūrah to humanity, it would have sufficed.”

For loss always threatens loss of time, meaning, and identity. But whoever maintains these four qualities in harmony faith, action, truth, and patience will never truly lose.

Epilogue

This book was an attempt to touch hearts, to open eyes, and to bring the Qur'an closer. No single human can grasp the fullness of Allah's Word, and this work is therefore not an endpoint, but merely a beginning.

The Qur'an is a guide that does not grow old. It spoke to the first generation of Muslims in Mecca and Medina, and it speaks to us today, in a world of technology, abundance, and confusion. And it will continue to speak until the Last Day. It is up to us not only to read that message, but to understand, to live, and to pass it on to future generations.

What we have seen in these pages is that the Qur'an guides us in four crucial areas: in our **relationship with Allah**, in the **purity of our heart**, in our **relationships with parents, marriage, and family**, and in our **role within society**. Together they form the building blocks of a life that is firmly rooted in faith, and at the same time relevant in a rapidly changing world.

May these pages be a key to further reflection, to seeking knowledge, and above all to strengthening our bond with Allah. For the real goal is not to hold the finished book in one's hands, but to carry the lived Book in the heart.

May Allah forgive us for our shortcomings, guide us to the straight path, purify our hearts, heal our relationships, and make us into servants who contribute to a just society. And may He bring us together in the Gardens of Paradise, under the shadow of His Throne, in the company of the prophets, the truthful, the martyrs, and the righteous.

Appendices

Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Meaning
1. Allah	The one true God in Islam; the Creator of all things.
2. Qur'an	The Holy Book of Islam, the Word of Allah revealed to the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
3. Sunnah	The way of life, sayings, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad ﷺ.
4. Verse	Narrations of the sayings and actions of the Prophet ﷺ.
5. Tafsir	Explanation or exegesis of the Qur'an.
6. 'Ibādah	Worship or devotional acts performed for Allah.
7. Imān	Faith; consisting of belief, speech, and action.
8. Islām	Submission to Allah through worship, obedience, and refraining from shirk (associating partners with Him).
9. Taqwa	God-consciousness; awareness of Allah and avoidance of sin.
10. Sharī'ah	Islamic law, derived from the Qur'an and Sunnah.
11. Pillars of Islam	The five foundations of Islam: shahādah, ṣalāh, zakāt, ṣawm, ḥajj.
12. Shahādah	The testimony of faith: "There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah."
13. Ṣalāh	The ritual prayer performed five times a day.
14. Zakāt	Obligatory almsgiving for those able to do so (2.5%).
15. Ṣawm	Fasting, particularly in the month of Ramadan.
16. Ḥajj	Pilgrimage to Makkah, obligatory once in a lifetime for those able to undertake it.
17. Dunyā	The worldly, temporary life; contrasted with the Hereafter (ākhirah).
18. Ākhirah	The Hereafter; life after death.
19. Qadar	Divine predestination; belief that all occurs by Allah's wisdom and decree.

20. Ummah	The global community of Muslims.
21. Sabr	Patience and perseverance in the face of hardship.
22. Shukr	Gratitude toward Allah.
23. Nafs	The self or soul; often associated with desires that must be disciplined.
24. Jannah	Paradise; the eternal reward for the righteous.
25. Jahannam	Hell; the place of punishment for disbelievers and sinners.
26. Tawḥīd	Belief in the absolute Oneness of Allah.
27. Shirk	Associating partners with Allah; the gravest sin in Islam.
28. Bid‘ah	Innovation in matters of religion; generally viewed as blameworthy.
29. Ḥalāl	Permissible according to Islamic law.
30. Ḥarām	Forbidden according to Islamic law.
31. Waqf	An Islamic charitable endowment; property dedicated to a good cause.
32. ‘Ulamā’	Scholars of Islamic sciences.
33. Da‘wah	Inviting others to Islam; spreading the message of faith.
34. Fiṭrah	The innate, natural disposition upon which every human is created inclined toward recognizing Allah.

Biographies of Classical Scholars

- **Ibn Kathīr (1301–1373, Syria)**
 - A renowned Islamic scholar, historian, and expert in Qur’anic exegesis. His work *Tafsīr al-Qur’an al-‘Aẓīm* is among the most influential commentaries in Islamic history. Ibn Kathīr focused heavily on *Verse*-based interpretation, relying on authentic narrations and the explanations of the Prophet’s Companions (raḍiyallāhu ‘anhum). His methodology was precise and evidence-based, emphasizing the authority of transmitted knowledge over speculation.
- **Al-Qurṭubī (1214–1273, Andalusia)**
 - An influential Andalusian scholar and jurist, best known for his monumental work *Al-Jāmi‘ li-Aḥkām al-Qur’an*, which blends Qur’anic exegesis with Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*). His tafsir is especially valued for explaining the **legal and practical implications** of

Qur'anic verses. Al-Qurṭubī focused on how revelation translates into daily life, law, and governance, making his commentary one of the most comprehensive works in classical scholarship.

- **Ibn 'Āshūr (1879–1973, Tunisia)**

- A leading 20th-century scholar known for his magnum opus *Tafsīr al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr*.

He approached tafsir with a **contextual and modern lens**, integrating linguistic, cultural, and social analysis. Ibn 'Āshūr emphasized the **universal relevance of the Qur'an** and its applicability to contemporary challenges, seeking to harmonize timeless revelation with modern realities.

- **Ar-Rāzī (865–925, Persia)**

- A Persian philosopher, theologian, and scholar, author of the monumental *Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr* (*The Great Exegesis*). Ar-Rāzī is known for his **systematic and rational approach**, intertwining Qur'anic commentary with philosophy, logic, and natural science. Though his methods were at times controversial, his intellectual depth profoundly influenced later Islamic and academic thought. He pioneered discussions that merged **metaphysics, theology, and reason**, ensuring that faith and intellect were seen as complementary forces in understanding divine revelation.

References

This book is built upon **classical and modern sources** recognized within the Islamic scholarly tradition as **authentic and authoritative**. The integration of Qur'anic exegesis (*tafsīr*), Verse compilations, and ethical-societal literature reflects the unity of **faith, reason, and lived reality** upon which this work was founded.

Qur'an and Tafsīr

- **The Holy Qur'an** – Arabic text and Dutch translation
- **Tafsīr Ibn Kathīr** – *Ismā'īl ibn 'Umar ibn Kathīr* (14th century)
- **Tafsīr al-Qurṭubī** – *Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad al-Qurṭubī* (13th century)
- **Tafsīr al-Rāzī (Al-Tafsīr al-Kabīr)** – *Fakhr ad-Dīn ar-Rāzī* (12th century)
- **Tafsīr Ibn 'Āshūr (Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr)** – *Muḥammad aṭ-Ṭābir Ibn 'Āshūr* (20th century)
- **Tafsīr al-Alūsī (Rūḥ al-Ma'ānī)** – *Shihābuddīn al-Alūsī* (19th century)
- **Tafsīr al-Baghawī (Ma'ālim at-Tanzīl)** – *al-Ḥusayn ibn Mas'ūd al-Baghawī* (12th century)
- **Tafsīr as-Sa'dī** – *'Abd ar-Raḥmān as-Sa'dī* (20th century)
- **Tafsīr al-Bayḍāwī (Anwār at-Tanzīl)** – *Nāṣir ad-Dīn al-Bayḍāwī* (13th century)
- **Al-Muḥarrar al-Wajīz** – *Ibn 'Aṭīyya* (12th century)
- **Al-Taḥrīr wa al-Tanwīr** – *Ibn 'Āshūr* (complete version)

Verse Collections

- **Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī**
- **Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim**
- **Sunan Abī Dāwūd**
- **Sunan at-Tirmidhī**
- **Sunan an-Nasā'ī**
- **Musnad Aḥmad ibn Ḥanbal**
- **Riyāḍ aṣ-Ṣāliḥīn** – *Imām an-Nawawī*

Classical Theology and Ethics

- **Iḥyā' 'Ulūm ad-Dīn** – *Imām al-Ghazālī*
- **Madārij as-Sālikīn** – *Ibn al-Qayyim*

- *Al-Fawā'id* – *Ibn al-Qayyim*
- *Mu'jam Maqāyīs al-Lughā* – *Ibn Fāris* (for linguistic analysis)
- *Al-Maqāṣid ash-Shar'īyyah* – *ash-Shāṭibī*

Modern Works and References

- *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'an* – *Sayyid Quṭb*
- *Tafsīr al-Manār* – *Muḥammad 'Abdub & Rashīd Riḍā*
- *Qur'anic Worldview* – *Prof. Malīk Badri*
- *The Study Qur'an* – Edited by *Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (English, academic reference)
- *Introduction to the Qur'an* – *M. Abdel Haleem*
- *The Message of the Qur'an* – *Muhammad Asad*

Social and Psychological Sources

- *Islam tussen cultuur en religie* – *Tariq Ramadan*
- *Reclaiming the Mosque* – *Jasser Auda*
- *Spiritual Purification in Islam* – *Imam al-Haddād* (translated)
- *The Fragile Vessels* – *Muhammad al-Jibaly* (on the role of women in Islam)
- Various studies by **Pew Research Center** and **UNICEF** concerning marriage, parenting, LGBTQ+, and developing societies.

Editorial Note

For the structuring, reformulation, and streamlining of certain sections, **limited use of modern artificial tools** was employed always under the **final supervision and authorship** of the writer.

Epilogue – The Qur’anic Worldview in Action

The **Qur’an** is not a book meant only to be read it is a **living compass**. Its worldview calls not merely for understanding, but for **application**. Whoever understands the Qur’an but does not live according to it possesses **knowledge without guidance**. The great challenge of our time is not a lack of information, but a lack of **transformation**. Therefore, the Qur’anic worldview must become **visible** in our **schools**, our **economy**, our **families**, and our **actions**.

Education as the Foundation

Every revival begins with **knowledge**. The Qur’an elevates knowledge to an act of **worship**, teaching that true knowledge **purifies the heart** and **uplifts society**. Our educational systems should therefore not merely transmit information but **form souls** teaching young people to think, feel, and act with **Qur’anic consciousness**.

This is also the mission of **Gardens of the Sincere**: to build **schools, universities, and centers of knowledge** where **faith, science, and ethics** coexist harmoniously. Places where young people learn not only how to succeed in life but how to **live with meaning**. Just as the first generation of Muslims was nurtured in the **school of the Prophet ﷺ**, we too strive to rekindle hearts with knowledge that leads to **responsibility**.

Economy and Responsibility

The Qur’an teaches that **wealth is a test**, not a goal. *Zakāt, ṣadaqah, and waqf* are the foundations of a just economy, where **solidarity** and **trust** stand at the center.

Our organization, **Gardens of the Sincere**, seeks to **revive this Qur’anic model** through sustainable initiatives in **agriculture, water access, education, and economic self-reliance**. We build not only **wells and mosques**, but also **waqf systems** that generate lasting income for future generations. We are also developing a **Halal Bank** and ethical financial platforms, so that Muslims worldwide may access **interest-free loans, honest investments, and an economy of barakah** instead of *riba* (usury).

Our mission goes beyond charity it is about **structural transformation**, so that poverty is not something we fight again and again, but something we **eradicate** altogether.

Activism with Faith and Wisdom

The Qur’an calls upon us to **stand up against injustice**, but to do so with **knowledge, wisdom, and patience**. In the Qur’anic sense, activism is not about **shouting**, but about **serving** not merely **protesting**, but **building**.

At **Gardens of the Sincere**, we seek to turn activism into **sustainable action** through **conferences, publications, social campaigns, and collaborations** with mosques and schools. We aspire to be a **voice for justice, compassion, and knowledge**, writing books, organizing educational programs, and inspiring Muslim youth across the world toward **positive change**. Every act, no matter how small, can **spread light** when it is fueled by **sincerity and trust in Allah**.

A Call to Responsibility

The Qur'anic worldview is not a theory, but a life mission. It asks that we build communities that are led by knowledge, supported by justice, and inspired by love for Allah. Gardens of the Sincere wants to be a practical link in this: between faith and economy, between education and action, between spirituality and responsibility.

We want to work on a generation that is not dependent on support, but offers support, that not only speaks about change, but embodies it.

May Allah make us into servants who not only recite the Qur'an, but bring it to life, in our deeds, in our economy, in our education and in our communities? May He accept our works, purify our intentions and bring us together in the Gardens of Paradise, under the shadow of His Throne, with the Prophet ﷺ, the truthful, the martyrs and the righteous.