

Aqáid **(Beliefs)**

Lesson 1

Sifāt ath-Thubutiyya & Sifāt as-Salbiyya

In Book 5 we studied some of the attributes of Allāh (sifāt ath-Thubutiyya) and some of the qualities that cannot be attributed to Allāh (Sifāt as-Salbiyya). In this lesson, we will review them again as a revision. You should now memorize all these Sifāt and if you do not understand any of them, you should review Aqāid Lessons 2 & 3 in Book 5.

Sifāt ath-Thubutiyya

		<u>What It Means</u>
1.	Al-Qadeem	Allāh is Eternal
2.	Al-Qādir	Allāh is All-Powerful
3.	Al-Aalim	Allāh is All-Knowing
4.	Al-Hayy	Allāh is Ever-Living
5.	Al-Mureed	Allāh does as He pleases
6.	Al-Mudrik	Allāh is All-Aware
7.	Al-Mutakallim	Allāh is the Master of Speech
8.	As-Sādiq	Allāh is always Truthful

Sifāt as-Salbiyya

		<u>What It Means</u>
1.	Shareek	Allāh has no partner
2.	Murakkab	Allāh is not made up of anything
3.	Makān	Allāh is not in any fixed place
4.	Hulool	Incarnation of Allāh is impossible
5.	Mahal al-Hawādith	Allāh is not subject to change
6.	Mar'i	Allāh is not visible
7.	Ihtiyāj	Allāh has no need
8.	Sifat az-Zāid	Allāh's Sifāt are not additional to Him

Lesson 2

'Adālah

Al-'Adālah refers to the Justice of Allāh. All Muslims believe that Allāh is just and fair. However most Sunni Muslims believe that when we say 'whatever Allāh does is just and fair' it means even if Allāh decides to punish the good and reward the evil, that is just and fair because He is our Creator and He can do as He pleases. The Shi'ah Muslims however do not believe this.

The Shi'ah Muslims follow the family (Ahl al-Bayt) of Rasulullāh (s) who taught that whatever Allāh does is fair and just *according to our human understanding of justice and fairness* even if at present we don't understand the reason(s) behind Allāh's actions. In other words, we must always believe that there is wisdom behind all actions of Allāh and that Allāh does not act without purpose. That is why Allāh will judge all people on the Day of Judgement in a manner they understand i.e. with witnesses and the weighing of deeds.

Allāh also tells us to be fair and just to others. It would be hard for people to believe Allāh is Just if He says, 'you have to be fair and just but I can do as I please'. Also, Allāh tells us never to lie and He also tells us in the Qur'ān that He never lies. So if Allāh has promised to reward the good and punish the evil, it is not possible that Allāh would break His promise, even though He is All-Powerful and no one can stop Him from doing as He pleases.

In other words, according to the Imāms from the Ahl al-Bayt ('a), if we see something that seems to be unfair, instead of assuming Allāh is doing as He pleases, we must assume that there is some wisdom and a very good reason for this that Allāh knows but we do not know or understand.

This of course doesn't mean Allāh cannot do as He pleases. However there is a big difference between what Allāh *can* do and what Allāh *will* do, just as there is a lot of difference between what you can do and what you actually do as an intelligent and responsible human being.

Allāh's Actions Based on Wisdom

Here is a story to explain this:

Once upon a time, there lived a jeweller and a thief in the same town. One day, the thief decided he would rob the jeweller.

One the first day, it snowed heavily. The thief decided not to go to the jeweller because it would be hard to escape with all the snow. The jeweller however had no customers that day because of the snow and he was very upset. Of course if the thief had showed up, it would be very easy to rob the jeweller because he was all alone.

The next day, the jeweller was going to work when his car broke down. The thief had set out to rob him but when he got there, the place was shut so he went back home.

On the third day, it rained heavily and the thief fell ill and he had to go to a doctor. The thief began thinking perhaps Allāh was trying to tell him something. So he decided he would not steal again.

In the meantime, the jeweller had no customers for three days and kept wondering why Allāh is not helping him earn his livelihood.

From their individual, human perspective, each person was upset because they couldn't get the profit they wanted. But only Allāh knew how they were affecting each other's lives and how, if they knew the future, they would actually be very grateful to Allāh.



Jeweller



Thief

Why Allāh can Never be Unjust

The Shi'ah, who follow the teachings of the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) insist that even though Allāh has the power to do as He pleases, He never acts unjustly and He is never unfair to any of His creatures. Usually when people act unfairly, there is a reason for it. Some of the reasons for being unjust and unfair are:

- a) Ignorance: sometimes people don't know that what they are doing is unjust. They may even be unjust as a parent or a judge or a police officer. But being unjust out of ignorance cannot apply to Allāh because He knows everything (He is al-Aalimu).
- b) Need and Greed: sometimes people need something desperately or are greedy for it and they cannot get it easily so they decide to take it by force even if it means being unjust to others. Allāh however has no need for anything and He is never desperate. To Him belongs everything in the heavens and in the earth. He is needless (al-Ghaniyyu).
- c) Force: some people may be forced to act unjustly. A tyrant ruler may force his people to torture others or even force his army commanders and soldiers to invade another country. Of course the people being forced always have a choice to refuse but they may lack courage or feel they have no choice. Allāh however cannot be forced by anyone. He is All-Powerful (al-Qādiru).
- d) A person may be cruel and find it amusing and may act unjustly only for 'fun'. But Allāh is All-Wise (al-Hākimu). None of His actions are done without purpose or in vain.

Any reason you can think of why someone would be unjust or unfair, does not apply to Allāh. Allāh also has no negative attributes like selfishness, meanness, lying or breaking promises, and so on. And He promises in the Qur'ān to reward the good and punish the evil and He also says:

﴿... وَعَدَ اللَّهُ لَا يُخْلِفُ اللَّهُ الْمِيعَادَ﴾

...a promise of Allāh. Allāh does not break His promise.

- Surah az-Zumar, 39:20

﴿...وَعَدَ اللَّهُ حَقًّا وَمَنْ أَصْدَقُ مِنَ اللَّهِ قِيلًا﴾

...a true promise of Allāh, and who is truer in speech than Allāh?

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:122

The Qur'ān on 'Adālah

Many verses of the Qur'ān talk about the justice of Allāh. Here are some:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ النَّاسَ شَيْئًا وَلَكِنَّ النَّاسَ أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ﴾

Indeed Allāh does not wrong people in the least; rather, it is people who wrong themselves.

- Surah Yunus, 10:44

This means some of the injustices we see happening all around us comes from people who deny others their rights. If we see poverty around us, it is because of the rich who don't give charity, khums and zakāh or because of those who charge interest to others. If we see ignorance in people it is often because others do not give them a chance to educate themselves.

Allāh also says in the Qur'ān:

﴿إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَظْلِمُ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ وَإِن تَكُن حَسَنَةً يُّضَاعِفْهَا وَيُؤْتِ مِنْ لَدُنْهُ أَجْرًا

عَظِيمًا﴾

Indeed Allāh does not wrong [anyone] [even to the extent of] an atom's weight, and if it be a good deed He doubles it[s reward], and gives from Himself a great reward.

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:40

﴿وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَامَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِن كَانَ مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ

خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ﴾

We shall set up the scales of justice on the Day of Resurrection, and no soul will be wronged in the least. Even if it be the weight of a mustard seed We shall produce it and We suffice as reckoners.

- Surah an-Anbiyā, 21:47

Even though Allāh does not need a scale or balance, He says He will do this because it is what humans are used to; so it will be used to show them that no one will be punished unjustly.

Why Evil and Suffering Exist in the World

The most common argument against the justice of Allāh is the constant tragedies and suffering that occur in the world. If Allāh is just, kind and loving, why does He let this happen and why doesn't He stop them from happening?

There are several reasons why suffering exists in this world and why even the good and innocent suffer:

1. Suffering caused by Cause and Effect. Our world runs on a system of cause and effect. For example, there may be good reasons why an earthquake or volcanic eruption takes place and even benefits to these occurrences. But our limited knowledge makes us look at only the harm they cause. We don't see the bigger picture and how one event is linked to many other events. Another example would be death. It is a great tragedy for us when our loved ones die. But death is necessary for the world to continue and for others to come into existence and for humans to change and progress rapidly.
2. Suffering we cause ourselves. Allāh has given us freewill and intelligence. But sometimes, knowingly or unknowingly we make decisions that cause us harm. For example, we dress poorly and go out in the cold. Then we fall ill and suffer because of that decision. This is a suffering we caused ourselves. We may expect Allāh not to make the weather cold but that is because we are not thinking of others and how the cold weather helps animals and other creatures of Allāh, how it kills a lot of disease and prepares the earth and trees for Spring, how it affects the oceans and the mountains, and so on.
3. Suffering caused by others. Because of the freewill given to us by Allāh so that He may test us in this world, sometimes some people hurt others out of greed, fear or simply because of being cruel. They may deny others their rights or even inflict harm on them.

For example, out of greed for profit, they may destroy the environment, which in turn may cause a lot of disease and problems for others. Or out of greed for wealth and control, they may prevent medical advancements or cheaper medication from becoming available to others. Of course Allāh will punish the wrongdoers in the Hereafter but if He stops people from doing any wrong in this world then there would be no freewill and no test for anyone and it would never be known, who is good and who is bad, who helps the oppressed and who oppresses others, and so on. Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

﴿ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ لِيُذِيقَهُمْ بَعْضَ الَّذِي
عَمِلُوا لَعَلَّهُمْ يَرْجِعُونَ﴾

Corruption has appeared in land and sea because of the doings of the people's hands, that He may make them taste something of what they have done, so that they may come back.

- Surah ar-Rum, 30:41

Imām Ali ('a) also once said, 'if you see a person starving, it is because some has taken his share (by not paying his khums or zakāh or giving charity).' This means Allāh has provided enough for everyone but some people take or withhold the rights of others.

4. Suffering builds character. When we win, we feel good but it doesn't make us better. When we suffer, especially through no fault of ours and after doing our best, it is an opportunity to become better. We always claim to love Allāh and have faith in Him. Suffering is a chance for us to show Allāh that we really love Him and have faith in Him and that we can prove what we claim. The real nature of hypocrites becomes known during suffering and afflictions. They start blaming Allāh and their words and actions show that they never actually had any faith in Allāh. People who never suffer are weak and shallow. They are only happy when things are going well for them. Suffering teaches people to be patient, to struggle and to become wise and humble. Instead of being selfish, they begin to help others who may also be suffering like themselves. Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

﴿...فَعَسَىٰ أَنْ تَكْرَهُوا شَيْئًا وَيَجْعَلَ اللَّهُ فِيهِ خَيْرًا كَثِيرًا﴾

...maybe you dislike something while Allāh places in it an abundant good.

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:19

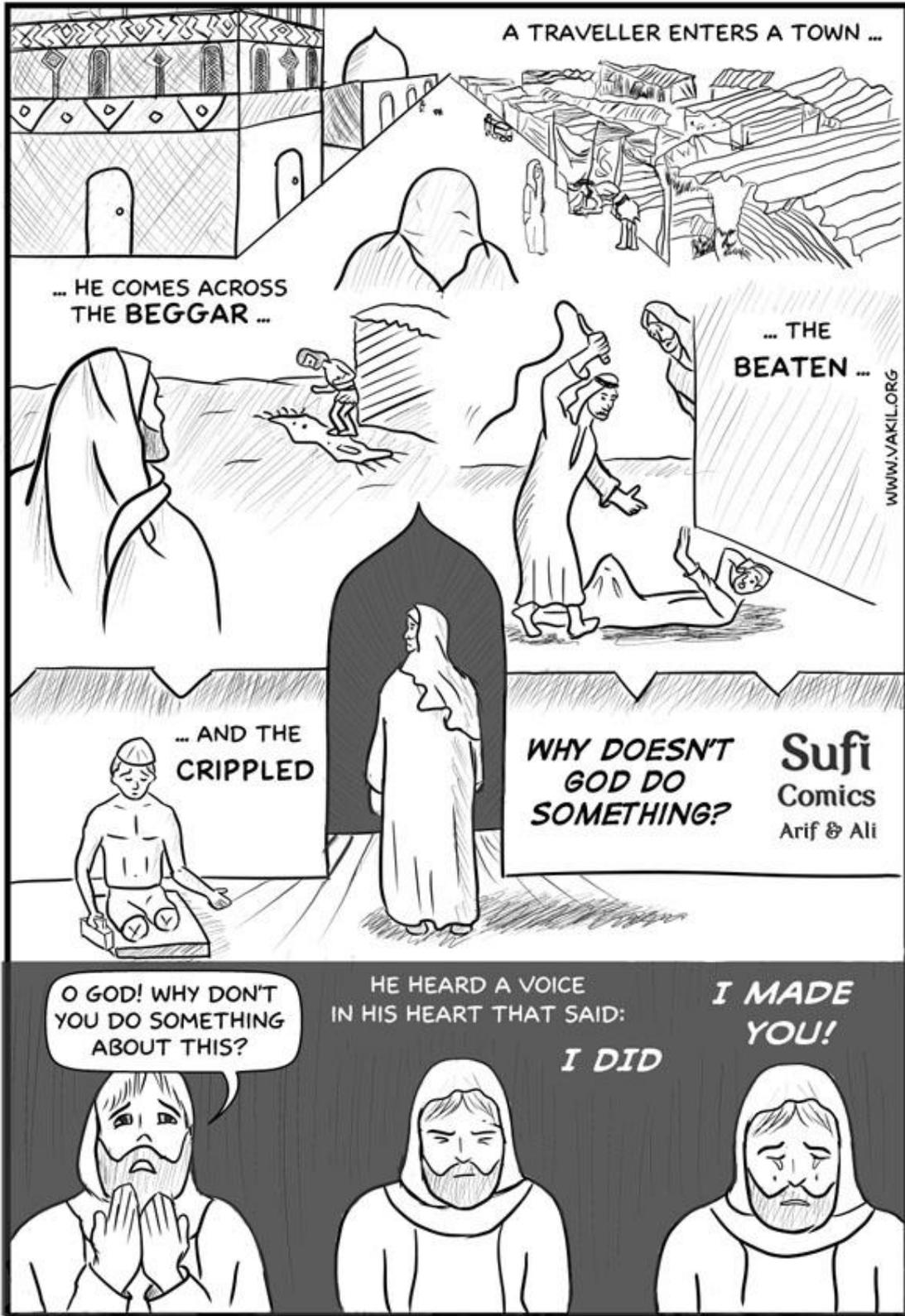
5. Suffering brings us closer to Allāh. When people enjoy a lot of ease and comfort, they forget Allāh and become lazy and heedless. They begin to think they are independent of Allāh and don't need Him. They may even become proud and arrogant. Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

﴿كَلَّا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لِرَبِّهِ لَكَنَّاظٍ﴾

Indeed man becomes rebellious when he considers himself without need.

- Surah al-'Alaq, 96:6-7

Suffering reminds a *mu'min* or *mu'mina* that the world is a place of trial. It makes them turn to Allāh for help and brings them closer to Allāh. Suffering does not drive the faithful away from Allāh. It brings them closer because they begin to give even more importance to prayers and asking Allāh for help at all times. In many ahādith we are told that Allāh only tests those He loves and the more a person increases in faith, the greater his or her test in life will be. Imām Husayn ('a) once said, if three things were not there, people would not worship Allāh: helplessness, sickness and death.



Lesson 3

Miracles of the Prophets

Concept of Miracles

A miracle is called *mu'jiza* in the Arabic language. *Mu'jiza* literally means 'that which people are unable to do.' So in Islamic terminology, a *mu'jiza* is an act that people are unable to do but Allāh shows it at the hands of someone He has chosen as proof of their being a prophet (Nabi), messenger (Rasul) or Imām appointed by Allāh.

A *mu'jiza* may appear either before or after the birth of a Nabi, Rasul or Imām; during his childhood or after his growing into an adult; either before the declaration of his Nubuwwah, Risālah or Imāmah or after such declaration or just at the time of such a claim, either in his life time or after his passing away; either on his body or in such things which have any connection with him like clothes, house or grave. It makes no difference whether that *mu'jiza* appears to be his own direct action or the action of Allāh.

In all such conditions, any action that proves the truth of the claim of nubuwwah, risālah or Imāmah is called a *mu'jiza*.

When we say that ordinary people are unable to perform a *mu'jiza* we mean they cannot perform it without external help. For example, doctors today may be able to cure the blind but only with the help of special equipment, medicine, research and so on. But Nabi Isa ('a) used to cure the blind only by praying for them or touching their eyes. This was a *mu'jiza* of Nabi 'Isa ('a) because no one could cure the blind in his time and even today, doctors cannot cure the blind in this manner. Some miracles cannot be imitated even with technology, science and research. For example, Rasulullāh (s) had many miracles but his greatest living *mu'jiza* is the Qur'ān, which can never be imitated.

The Qur'ān challenges anyone to try and imitate it and says no one can bring its like even if all the men and jinn came together. We will study more about the Qur'ān as a miracle in Book 7.

Differences between Miracles (Mu'jiza) and Magic

It is known that many people like magicians, astrologers, hypnotists, etc. do perform many extraordinary feats and acts which common people are unable to perform, and which baffle even intelligent persons. So what is the difference between a mu'jiza and such extraordinary feats? How can we tell the difference?

There are several conditions for a mu'jiza that easily show the difference between a miracle and magic:

1. A mu'jiza occurs only to prove the truth of the claim of Nubuwwah, Risālah or Imāmah. Therefore, it is necessary that the person who shows the mu'jiza should be claiming either to be a prophet, messenger of Imām during his lifetime.
2. A mu'jiza does not happen by accident. The person showing the mu'jiza should also will for the mu'jiza to occur as proof of his claim.
3. A mu'jiza can never be surpassed by any other person's extraordinary feat. In other words, mu'jiza should always remain beyond the reach of the people of the time and should always remain unchallenged and undefeated. If a mu'jiza is real, no magic can overcome it.
4. The religion that the person claims to bring from Allāh must be sensible according to the views of the right thinking people of his time based on perfection and intelligence.
5. The person performing the mu'jiza must himself practice and obey the rules of that religion himself.
6. The ethical, moral and social life of the person who claims to show the mu'jiza must be beyond reproach, most perfect and most noble in the eyes of the right thinking people of his time.
7. His behaviour in private should not differ from that in public; his private life should be as blameless as his public life.
8. The challenge given in connection with that mu'jiza should not be limited to a time. It must remain a challenge during the entire period that the person's nubuwah, risālah or imāmah is supposed to continue.

The Different Types of Miracles

Every Nabi, Rasul or Imām did not perform the same mu'jiza. It was necessary that the mu'jiza should be something that the people can relate to but also something that is beyond anyone in their time.

For example, in the days when people only travelled by horses and camels, if it took a person months to travel from one city to another and a person travelled the same distance in one day, we could see it was a miracle. But if someone did that today, it wouldn't be a miracle because anyone can travel that distance in a day using an airplane.

Since the purpose of a mu'jiza is to convince the people that such a thing could not occur without the authority of Allāh, it was also essential that a mu'jiza should supersede every branch of knowledge or expertise which was the most advanced in the time of a Nabi, Rasul or Imām. Otherwise, the learned people would not be convinced.

To convince people that a mu'jiza was genuine, Allāh always gave such powers or miracles to His representatives that even the experts of that era could easily judge and be a witness that the claim of the mu'jiza was genuine and that it was impossible for a man to make up such things himself.

For example, in the days of Nabi Musa ('a), the magicians were very powerful and advanced in their skills. They could make people believe that pieces of ropes were snakes. So Allāh gave Nabi Musa ('a) the ability to change his walking stick into a huge serpent that was real and could even swallow the sticks and ropes of the magicians.

In the days of Nabi 'Isa ('a), medicine was very advanced but the physicians had no cure for blindness and leprosy. So Allāh gave Nabi 'Isa ('a) the miracle of curing lepers without medicine, giving eyesight to those who were born blind and even the ability to bring the dead back to life.

During the time of Rasulullāh (s), the Arabs were very proud of their language. They would compose poetry of a very high standard without any previous preparation. They called non-Arabs 'Ajam' which means 'dumb'. They thought that non-Arabs were dumb in comparison to

themselves because of their language skills. Poets were held in high esteem. Seven odes were put on the walls of Ka'bah and were treated as sacred.

At that time, Allāh gave Rasulullāh (s) the miracle of the Qur'ān. It was quite separate from all the styles of their literature. It is neither poetry nor ordinary prose. And it so impressed the Arabs that when Surah al-Kawthar (the shortest surah of the Qur'ān) was put on the walls of the Ka'bah, the most renowned poet wrote under it "these are not the words of a human being". And the seven odes were promptly taken down.

Since Rasulullāh (s) was the final Messenger (Rasul) of Allāh, his miracle of the Qur'ān is still a living miracle even today. Over 1400 years later, no one has been able to find any contradictions in the Qur'ān or to imitate and produce anything like it.

Lesson 4

Rusul & Anbiyā

The Difference between Rasul and Nabi

Allāh sent 124,000 anbiyā (singular: nabi) to guide mankind. The first Nabi was Nabi Adam (‘a) who was also the first man. The last Nabi was Rasulullāh Muhammad (s).

Every Rasul (Messenger) is also a Nabi (Prophet). But every Nabi is not necessarily a Rasul. The plural of Rasul is Rusul and the plural of Nabi is Anbiyā.

A Rasul brings a special message from Allāh with changes in the laws of practice (*shari’ah*) whereas a Nabi who is not a Rasul simply follows the Book brought by the previous Rasul and reminds people of the laws (*shari’ah*) taught by the previous Rasul. Of course the main message of all the Anbiyā and Rusul was the same: the message of Tawhid, that there is no god but Allāh and none should be worshipped but Allāh.

A Rasul therefore holds a higher rank than a Nabi. Five of these Rusul who hold a special status and are also called the five Ulil ‘Azm (People of Determination) Prophets are:

1. Nabi Nuh (‘a)
2. Nabi Ibrāhim (‘a)
3. Nabi Musa (‘a)
4. Nabi ‘Isa (‘a)
5. Nabi Muhammad (s)

Many Anbiyā and Rusul received books or scrolls of instructions from Allāh. Four of these divine scriptures are mentioned in the Qur’ān by name:

1. Tawrāt. This was revealed by Allāh to Nabi Musa (‘a)
2. Zabur. This was revealed by Allāh to Nabi Dāwud (‘a)
3. Injil. This was revealed by Allāh to Nabi ‘Isa (‘a)
4. Qur’ān. This was revealed by Allāh to Rasulullāh (s)

The Qur'ān also mentions other scriptures but does not give their names. For example, the scripture of Nabi Ibrāhim ('a):

﴿صُحُفَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَمُوسَى﴾

The scriptures of Ibrāhim and Musa.

- Surah al-'Ala, 87:19

Sent to Different Nations and Times

Allāh sent 124,000 anbiyā to different tribes and communities in the world. Each Nabi was sent to his own people so that he could talk to them in their own language and relate to their culture and way of life.

It was important that Allāh should send anbiyā to every major community in the world so that no group of people can say on the Day of Judgement that they were not warned. Allāh says this in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا رَسُولًا يَتْلُوا عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَىٰ إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ﴾

Your Lord would not destroy the towns until He had raised a messenger in their mother city to recite to them Our signs. We would never destroy the towns except when their people were wrongdoers.

- Surah al-Qasas, 28:59

When Allāh sent the final Messenger, Rasulullāh (s), even though he initially preached to the Arabs in and around Makkah, Allāh sent him for the whole of mankind. That is why Allāh says to Rasulullāh (s) in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعَالَمِينَ﴾

We did not send you but as a mercy to all the nations.

- Surah al-Anbiyā, 21:107

One of the reasons why Rasulullāh (s) was called 'a mercy' is because after his coming, Allāh does not instantly punish people for their disobedience and wrongdoings. In past, as soon as people disobeyed

Allāh stubbornly, they would be warned by the Nabi of their time and then punished by Allāh if they refused to repent. For example, the people of Nabi Nuh (‘a) were drowned in a flood for their sins. Similarly, the people of Nabi Hud (‘a), Nabi Sālih (‘a), and Nabi Lut (‘a) were all destroyed because of their sins.

Why do we need Anbiyā?

The Anbiyā and Rusul, *alayhim as-salām* (peace be on them all) are like a bridge between us and Allāh.

Allāh talks to the Anbiyā and Rusul in one of three ways:

1. Directly e.g. with Nabi Musa (‘a) (who was called Kalimullah – one who speaks with God directly).
2. Through a dream e.g. with Nabi Ibrahim (‘a) (who dreamt Allāh was commanding him to sacrifice his own son Nabi Ismāil (‘a)).
3. Through the angel Jibrāil (‘a) e.g. with Rasulullāh (s) and with all other anbiyā and rusul.

The anbiyā then tell people what Allāh has told them.

So the anbiyā are there to show us the right way and to guide us. Some people say human beings already know by their instinct what is good and bad, why do they need a nabi? But this is not always true. People understand good and bad depending on where they were born and the culture they were raised in. What some people believe to be good in China might be regarded as bad in America, and so on.

Secondly, let us take an example of a very intelligent person who wishes to become a surgeon. Even though he or she may be very intelligent, it would take him or her a very long time to realize and learn everything on his or her own. However with a teacher, he or she can benefit from the experience and knowledge of others and can quickly learn everything he or she needs to know and then teach others. Similarly, even if we are ‘good at heart’, the teachings of Nabi guide us along the shortest and fastest path to success so that we don’t have to learn by constantly making mistakes. Furthermore, there are matters related to the Hereafter, such as the Day of Judgement, Paradise and Hellfire, that we

cannot see or know about unless a Nabi who is given hidden knowledge by Allāh tells us about them and how to prepare for them.

In the past, some people used to refuse to follow and obey a Nabi because they said, 'how can he be a prophet of Allāh when he is just like us? Why doesn't Allāh send an angel from the heavens so we can know he is really a prophet?'

But Allāh wanted the anbiyā and rusul to be human like us and to feel pain and pleasure like we do so that we can see how they live and not feel it is impossible to imitate them. It would not be possible for a nabi or rasul to be a role model for us if they were angels or non-human.

Allāh mentions this in the Qur'ān as well:

﴿وَقَالُوا مَا لِهَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ
فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا﴾

And they say, 'What sort of a messenger is this who eats food and walks in the marketplaces? Why has not an angel been sent down to him so as to be a warner along with him?'

- Surah al-Furqān, 25:7

﴿وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ كِتَابًا فِي قِرْطَاسٍ فَلَمَسُوهُ بِأَيْدِيهِمْ لَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا
سِحْرٌ مُّبِينٌ. وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ وَلَوْ أَنْزَلْنَا مَلَكًا لَقُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ ثُمَّ لَا يُنظَرُونَ.
وَلَوْ جَعَلْنَاهُ مَلَكًا لَجَعَلْنَاهُ رَجُلًا...﴾

Had We sent down to you a Book on paper so they could touch it with their [own] hands, [still] the faithless would have said, 'This is nothing but plain magic.' And they say, 'Why has not an angel been sent down to him?' Were We to send down an angel, the matter would surely be decided, and then they would not be granted any respite. And had We made him (i.e. the messenger) an angel, We would have surely made him a man...

- Surah al-An'ām, 6:7-9

Even though the anbiyā were human, but they were also special in many ways. For example:

- A Nabi is chosen by Allāh
- A Nabi can receive messages (revelation – called *wahy* in Arabic) from Allāh
- A Nabi is *ma'sum*, meaning they never commit sins
- A Nabi is able to perform miracles to prove his nubuwwah
- A Nabi is the most perfect person of his time in morals (*akhlāq*) and knowledge (*'ilm*)

In summary therefore, we need guidance from Allāh through messengers and prophets because:

1. Justice of Allāh: So that no one can complain on the Day of Judgement that they had no means of finding out the truth.
2. Grace of Allāh: Just as Allāh provides for our physical needs (air, food, warmth, family, etc.) out of His grace and kindness, similarly, He provides us with guidance because it is the need of our souls.
3. People forget or change the message brought by previous prophets. Therefore it becomes necessary to remind people through other prophets. The final message (Qur'ān) is protected by Allāh from any change:

﴿إِنَّا نَحْنُ نُزَكِّي الدِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ﴾

Indeed We have sent down the Reminder (i.e. the Qur'ān), and indeed We will preserve it.

- Surah al-Hijr, 15:9

4. We may know a little about the things in this world and perhaps we can guess how to behave or live in society but the real life is yet to come after death and that is hidden from us. Only someone who can communicate with Allāh (i.e. a prophet or messenger) can tell us about those realities. Without their guidance, we would never know what to expect and how to succeed in the Hereafter where we will live forever.

A Short Story to Explain Nubuwwah

Two men were travelling together and became friends. When they reached their town, one of them invited the other to his house for dinner the next day.

However, he did not give him his address or phone number. His friend wanted to go to his house for dinner, but how could he? He did not know how to get there.



When Allāh created us, it was so that we should worship Him.

If Allāh had not appointed the Anbiyā ('a) to guide us, how would we have known what to do to please Him or how to come closer to Him?

It was because He wanted us to find Him that He sent so many Anbiyā ('a) to teach and guide us how to reach Allāh.

A Nabi or Rasul must therefore always be obeyed. A person who rejects a Nabi or Rasul disobeys Allāh:

﴿وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا لِيُطَاعَ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ...﴾

We did not send any messenger but to be obeyed by Allāh's permission....

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:64

As homework, read the following verses (āyāt) of the Qur'ān:

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:136
- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:285
- Surah Aal-i Imrān, 3:84

Can you see from these verses how Islam is different from all other religions in the world and how a Muslim believes in all Prophets and Books of Allāh?

The Duties of a Nabi

1. To give people good news of Jannah (Paradise) and to warn them about Hellfire and to call people to Allāh:

﴿يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِنَّا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ شَاهِدًا وَمُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا وَدَاعِيًا إِلَى اللَّهِ بِإِذْنِهِ
وَسِرَاجًا مُنِيرًا﴾

O Prophet! Indeed We have sent you as a witness, as a bearer of good news and as a warner and as a summoner to Allāh by His permission, and as a radiant lamp.

- Surah al-Ahzāb, 33:45-46

2. To judge between people when they disagree so as to guide them:

﴿...فَبَعَثَ اللَّهُ النَّبِيِّينَ مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَأَنْزَلَ مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ
لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَ النَّاسِ فِي مَا اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ...﴾

...then Allāh sent the prophets as bearers of good news and as warners, and He sent down with them the Book with the truth, that it may judge between the people concerning that about which they differed;

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:213

3. To purify the souls of people and give them wisdom:

﴿هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ
وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ﴾

It is He who sent to the unlettered [people] a messenger from among themselves, to recite to them His signs, to purify them, and to teach them the Book and wisdom, and earlier they had indeed been in manifest error.

- Surah al-Jumu'ah, 62:2

4. To explain the laws of Allāh i.e. the *shari'ah*) so people do not go astray:

﴿... يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ أَنْ تَضِلُّوا وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ﴾

Allāh explains [the laws] for you so you should not go astray, and Allāh has knowledge of all things.

- Surah an-Nisā, 4:176

5. To establish justice in society by putting the laws into practice:

﴿لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مَعَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْمِيزَانَ لِيَقُومَ النَّاسُ

بِالْقِسْطِ...﴾

Certainly We sent Our messengers with manifest proofs, and We sent down with them the Book and the Balance, so that mankind may maintain justice;

- Surah al-Hadid, 57:25

6. To teach and guide people so that they come out of darkness (falsehood) into light (truth):

﴿كِتَابٌ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ...﴾

[This is] a Book We have sent down to you that you may bring mankind out from darkness into light, by the permission of their Lord...

- Surah Ibrāhim, 14:1

7. After telling people what Allāh has revealed, to explain and clarify the verses that have been revealed so that people can think about them and understand them better:

﴿... وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ﴾

We have sent down the reminder to you so that you may clarify for the people that which has been sent down to them, so that they may reflect.

- Surah an-Nahl, 16:44

Lesson 5

Imámah

Why do we need Imāms?

In Book 5 we already learnt about the meanings of ‘Imām’ and ‘Khalifa’ and we explained how an Imām is appointed by Allāh to lead and guide the Muslim ummah after Rasulullāh (s) by preserving the message of the Qur’ān and the teachings of Rasulullāh (s).

Many people question the need for an Imām. If a Nabi or Rasul has already brought all the laws of Allāh, what then is the need for more spiritual leaders? Cannot the Qur’ān and the ahādith and practices (*sunnah*) of Rasulullāh (s) be enough?

To answer this, we need to think about the following:

1. The Need for a Religious Guide. Although human beings are given a natural conscience to understand right from wrong and then given a Book from Allāh and the teachings of a Nabi, it is still possible for people to have different views about God and religion and to even fight about them, as we see today. If the Qur’ān and hadith is sufficient to remove all differences then why do we have so many sects in Islam today?

The only way to stop this disunity is to agree to follow one leader (Imām). It makes sense that the leader that everyone agrees to follow should be the most learned, the most just, the bravest and the most pious. It also makes sense that since Allāh has been sending Anbiyā and Rusul since He created human beings, that He would not suddenly leave humans on their own to find their own guidance. Instead, as part of His grace (*lutf*), He would ask His last Nabi to inform people whom to follow next after him and who their Imāms and guides should be.

The grace (*lutf*) of Allāh means the kindness and mercy of Allāh through which people get more than just the bare minimum so that they have a better chance of remaining on the right path. An Imām is a *lutf* of Allāh to give human beings the benefit of continuously having a guide who is guided by Allāh and who can

tell them the real interpretation of the Qur'ān in every age and era.

2. The Need for a Guardian of Islam. After a Nabi passes away and the religion he taught begins to spread to other countries and cultures and thousands of years pass, it is very easy for his original teachings and message to be lost. A lot of culture, superstitions and innovations are added to the original teachings. In fact this is exactly how the teachings of previous anbiyā before Rasulullāh (s) changed and why Allāh kept sending more prophets and messengers. Those who preach religion as scholars are sometimes unable to see what has changed from the original Islam. All this proves there is a need for an Imām who has a direct connection to the Qur'ān and the teachings of Rasulullāh (s) through previous Imāms and who has been given special knowledge from Allāh to understand the truth and to guide others to the original message.

Imām Ali ('a) said in a sermon (Nahj al-Balāgha Sermon 147) that the earth would never be without a person who is the proof of Allāh, whether he is known or hidden (in ghaybah), so that the Divine message is not lost forever. It is in fact impossible for the earth to exist without a representative of Allāh even for a twinkling of an eye, from the day Allāh put Nabi Adam ('a) on the earth until the day life on earth comes to an end.

3. The Need for a Political and Social Leader. For human beings to reach perfection, they need to live in a just and progressive society. For Muslims this nation or society is called the Muslim Ummah. An Ummah must be led by one who not only knows religion but also knows how to prevent social injustice and how to lead the people in political matters in accordance to the Will of Allāh. Of course the Muslims must deserve this by first recognizing such a just leader (Imām) and be willing to let him lead them.
4. The Need for a Proof of Allāh at all Times. An Imām is a Proof (Hujjah) of Allāh over His creatures. This means he serves as Allāh's 'Proof' against those who go astray so that they cannot complain to Allāh on the Day of Judgement they there was no one to guide them. It is however the duty of people to find who the Imām of their time is and not the other way around. The existence

of a Proof (Hujjah) only means that no one can have an excuse because Allāh has ensured there is always a guide from Him in the world at all times. Even when such a Proof is in ghaybah (i.e. not known by the public), his representatives guide people.

5. The Need for a Connector to Divine Grace. An Imām connects the society to Allāh through Rasulullāh (s) and his own special position. The existence of Rasulullāh (s) and the Imāms is like the existence of the heart that pumps blood throughout the body and keeps all the organs alive and healthy.

Qualities of an Imām

We studied the qualities that an Imām must have in Book 5. We will now review this topic again but with some more explanation.

1. 'Ismah: Being free from sin and error. An Imām, like a Nabi or Rasul, must be *ma'sum* or free from sins. The Imām is a guide for others and people look to him for leading them to the right path. An Imām who commits sins is himself in need of guidance and cannot guide others. Allāh says in the Qur'ān:

﴿... أَفَمَنْ يَهْدِي إِلَى الْحَقِّ أَحَقُّ أَنْ يُتَّبَعَ أَمَّنْ لَا يَهْدِي إِلَّا أَنْ يُهْدَىٰ فَمَا لَكُمْ كَيْفَ تَحْكُمُونَ﴾

Is He who guides to the truth worthier to be followed, or he who guides not unless he is [himself] guided? What is the matter with you? How do you judge?

- Surah Yunus, 10:35

When we say an Imām is *ma'sum* we mean his conviction in Allāh and his constant awareness of Allāh is so great that he never even thinks or considers committing a sin. Ma'sum does not mean that he is not able to commit a sin or that Allāh is forcing him not to. It is just like the case of a sane intelligent person who would never consider drinking poison or harming himself physically. No one stops him but he knows how harmful it is. An Imām never sins because he knows and sees exactly how sin affects a person's soul

and a person's life in the Hereafter. What prevents a ma'sum from sin is his piety and awe before Allāh. This is so strong in him that he becomes sinless. It is also necessary that a person appointed by Allāh to guide others should not sin otherwise people would be confused about his actions and not know what to follow and what to ignore.

If an Imām sins, then it will be wājib on his followers to correct him and stop him. This means the Imām will have to follow and obey the people and they will disrespect him and hold him in contempt. Allāh condemns those who tell others to do good but don't do it themselves:

﴿تَأْمُرُونَ النَّاسَ بِالْبِرِّ وَتَنْسَوْنَ أَنْفُسَكُمْ وَأَنْتُمْ تَتْلُونَ الْكِتَابَ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ﴾

Do you command others to piety and forget yourselves, even though you recite the Book? Do you not think?

- Surah al-Baqarah, 2:44

2. A'lam: Most Knowledgeable Person of his Time. An Imām must know the Qur'ān entirely. He must also know all the sciences of Islam and he should in fact be able to answer any question he is asked. If a person cannot answer a question or he needs to ask someone else, then he cannot be the Imām because people would need another Imām to answer the questions he cannot. One of the proofs that Imām Ali ('a) was the rightful successor of Rasulullāh (s) is that others asked him for advice and help with questions they couldn't answer but Imām Ali ('a) never asked anyone for answers after Rasulullāh (s).
3. Tafdil: Superior in All Good Qualities. The Imām must be the most excellent person of his time in all virtues like piety, bravery, justice, courage, generosity, etc. If there is anyone in his time who is superior to him in these qualities then it means he would be inferior to that person and the other person is more deserving to be the Imām. One who is inferior to others cannot be a leader to those superior to him.
4. Zuhd: Free from Love of the World. A person interested in worldly pleasure and attracted to it cannot be an Imām. Such a person will also be greedy to amass wealth and to gain power over others. He can then mislead others and even be unjust because of his interest

in the world and it will interfere with his mission. An Imām is free from such distractions. He cannot be tempted or influenced or even threatened by the world because the world has no value in his eyes. An Imām will never build palaces for himself. Instead his clothes, food, lifestyle will all be very simple and like that of the poorest of his followers.

5. Mu'jiza: Performance of miracle. An Imām should be able to perform miracles as proof that his Imāmah is from Allāh through Rasulullāh (s) and/or the previous Imām. This ensures that even if a person is very knowledgeable and claims to be sinless, he cannot claim to be the Imām without proving it through a miracle.
6. Nusus: Appointment by Allāh and His Messenger (s). An Imām cannot be chosen by the people or elected by a council or take over leadership by force. Allāh must appoint him either by asking Rasulullāh (s) to declare him as the Imām or the previous valid Imām appoints him as his successor. This designation is called *nass* (plural: *nusus*) and ensures a continuous chain of appointment from Allāh.

Lesson 6

Death & Barzakh

Barzakh

In Book 5 we learnt about the importance of death and the necessity of the Day of Judgement. However, when people die, there is another world they must live in until the Day of Judgement. This middle world is called Barzakh.

The world of Barzakh is on the earth as well but those of us who are still alive in our physical bodies cannot see it.

For some people, when they die and go to the world of Barzakh, their souls only lie asleep until the Day of Judgement. This may be for example people who were mentally handicapped or people who were good but never really knew about Islam or followed the truth. Allāh will judge their case on the Day of Judgement.

For those who knew the truth about Islam and were either very good or very evil, the first thing that happens in Barzakh is the Questioning in the Grave.

Questioning and Squeezing of the Grave

As soon as a person dies and is buried and people leave the cemetery, two angels called Munkar and Nakir come to the soul of the person who has just been buried and start questioning him or her. This happens in the world of Barzakh so those still alive in this world cannot see what is happening.

The questions that Munkar and Nakir ask are for example, 'who is your Lord? What is your religion? Who is your Nabi? What is your Book? What is your Qibla? Who is your Imām?'

If a person was evil and sinful, even if he was a Muslim, he will get confused and forget everything he knew in this world and will not know what to answer.

Those who answer correctly are blessed by the angels and told to rest and rejoice until the Day of Judgement when their reward will be even greater. Doors of bliss are opened for them in their grave and they can sense the breeze of Paradise (Jannah) and they are overjoyed and eagerly wait for the Day of Judgement. They pray to Allāh for those who are still in this world and ask Allāh to unite them in Paradise. In particular the Qur'ān mentions this about those who die sacrificing their lives for Allāh:

﴿وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ قُتِلُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ أَمْوَاتًا بَلْ أحيَاءٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ يُرْزَقُونَ. فَرِحِينَ بِمَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَيَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَلْحَقُوا بِهِمْ مِنْ خَلْفِهِمْ أَلَّا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ. يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةِ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ﴾

Do not suppose those who were killed in the way of Allāh to be dead; rather, they are living and provided for near their Lord, rejoicing in what Allāh has given them out of His grace, and rejoicing for those who have not yet joined them from [those left] behind them that they will have no fear, nor will they grieve. They rejoice in Allāh's blessing and grace, and that Allāh does not waste the reward of the faithful.

- Surah Aal-i Imrān, 3:169-171

﴿... قَالَ يَا لَيْتَ قَوْمِي يَعْلَمُونَ. بِمَا غَفَرَ لِي رَبِّي وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُكْرَمِينَ﴾

He said, 'Alas! Had my people only known for what my Lord forgave me and made me one of the honoured ones!'

- Surah Yā Sin, 36:26-7

Those who cannot answer the questions of Munkar and Nakir correctly are cursed by the two angels and doors of punishment are opened for them in their graves and even while they suffer in Barzakh, they are even more frightened of the Day of Judgement that will be even more severe.

If a person loved the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) then they get to meet the Imāms after they die and the Imāms come to visit them just like they used to go and meet the Imāms (for ziyārah) when they were alive in this world.

There are also two places in the world of Barzakh where the souls of the good and the evil can visit other souls. The good souls visit a place called Wādi as-Salām (The Valley of Peace). Here they meet the souls of those who had died before them and they talk to each other and ask each other about those who are still alive in this world and they pray for them. The evil souls visit a place called Wādi al-Barhut (The Valley of Torment) where they see other evil souls and they only curse each other and suffer more punishment.

We are also told in some narrations that everyone who dies is squeezed in the grave. Those who are good feel the squeeze like two brothers hugging each other on the day of Eid! But those who are evil suffer tremendous pain because of the squeezing from all sides of their graves.

In many ahādith we are told that our deeds come with us to Barzakh. So after we are buried, we will see our Salāh, our Sawm, our Hajj, our Zakāh, our love for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) and so on, in the form of beautiful people. They will keep us company, give us light in the dark grave and protect us and make us happy and give us good news of Paradise. But for those who do evil and never repent, their deeds will come to them in Barzakh in the form of wild dogs, snakes, scorpions, etc. who will continuously bite them and torture them.

This is why we must not take our actions lightly. We have to believe that whatever we do becomes real in the world of Barzakh and on the Day of Judgement.

If we wish to make our Salāh to be very beautiful and strong so it can help us in Barzakh, then we must take our Salāh seriously and do wudu carefully and pray with focus and attention, sincerely for Allāh only. Similarly, those who get to take their love for the Ahl al-Bayt ('a) in their graves are the ones who will be happiest. If we make a mistake or commit a sin, we should immediately ask Allāh for forgiveness (*istighfār*) and repent (*tawbah*) so that the fire or the wild beast we have created for our self in Barzakh is extinguished or dissolved.

If someone we love from our family has died, we can help them in Barzakh but doing good deeds on their behalf. For example, if we give some charity (sadaqa) on their behalf or if we recite a Surah of the Qur'ān for their thawāb, then they receive it as a beautiful gift in Barzakh. When they are told that so-and-so has sent you this present, they are extremely pleased and they pray for us as well.

If a person does not teach his children to recite Qur'ān or to be good and give charity then of course they will never remember him when he dies. Then he will be very sad in Barzakh because there will be no one to send him gifts that can reduce his punishment or increase his rewards.

We should pray for those Muslims in our family and community who have died so that one day others will remember us in their prayers when we are in Barzakh!

Thawāb Jāriya

Finally, it is important to know that once a person dies, they no longer have the chance to do good or undo their sins through repentance. They now depend on others to pray for them and do good on their behalf. There is however one option:

A person can do certain good deeds in this world that will continue to earn him or her spiritual reward (thawāb) even after he or she is dead. These "Ongoing Rewards" are called in Arabic "Thawāb Jāriya". Some examples of Thawāb Jāriya are:

1. Building a masjid, madrasah or Islamic library and even helping to build or establish part of it. As long as the building stands and people worship in it or benefit from it, a person gets thawāb for it even if he or she is dead.
2. Planting a tree. As long as the tree stands and people benefit from its shade or fruits, a person gets thawāb.
3. Writing or publishing a copy of the Qur'ān or any book of useful knowledge. As long as even one page of this book exists and people read it and benefit from it, a person gets thawāb.

4. Leaving behind a pious child. If a person raises his or her child to be religious and teaches the child to recite Qur'ān, then as long as the child lives and does good deeds, the parent gets a share of the thawāb. And even when the child teaches others who teach others, the parent still gets thawāb for that because of being the original cause of that good deed.
5. Teaching others Islam. Every time a student practices something Islamic they learnt from the teacher, the teacher gets thawāb even if he or she is dead. And even when the student grows up and teaches others, the teacher still gets some of the thawāb.
6. Building a well or water supply for people. As long as people drink and use the water from that well or supply, the person who helped build or pay for it continues to get thawāb.

Kirāman Kātibeen

When we are in this world, everything we say or do is recorded by two angels who sit on our right and left side. These two angels are together known as Kirāman Kātibeen, which means 'Honourable Scribes' or 'Noble Writers'. The angel on the right side is always in charge and records all our good deeds as soon as we do it.

When we do something wrong, the angel on the left side asks the angel on the right side if he should record our sin and the angel on the right side tells him to wait for a bit to see if we ask Allāh for forgiveness. If we do istighfār and tawbah, then they don't write it. Or if they write it and we later do istighfār and tawbah then they erase it.

Allāh is so kind that when we think of doing something good, He tells the angels to record it as one good deed. The angels know we are thinking something good because a fragrant smell comes from our souls to the angels. And if we actually do it, then the angels record the reward ten times.

And when we think of doing something wrong, they don't write anything but they know it because a stench comes from our souls. And if we do it then they record it unless we do tawbah.

Allāh mentions these two angels in the Qur'ān:

﴿وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكُمْ لَحَافِظِينَ . كِرَامًا كَاتِبِينَ . يَعْلَمُونَ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ﴾

Indeed, there are over you watchers, noble writers, who know whatever you do.

- Surah al-Infitār, 82:10-12

﴿مَا يَلْفِظُ مِنْ قَوْلٍ إِلَّا لَدَيْهِ رَقِيبٌ عَتِيدٌ﴾

he (a human being) says no word except that there is a ready observer beside him.

- Surah Qāf, 50:18

Because of this last ayah of Qur'ān, some scholars say the individual names of these two angels are Raqib and 'Atid.

Rasulullāh (s) taught to always live our lives as if we have two very pious people walking on our right and left side all the time. When we want to commit a sin, we should feel ashamed that these two honourable, noble scribes are watching us.

From other ahādith we learn that each person has four angels. Two who record our deeds of the day and two who record our deeds at night.

The angels of day come to a faithful (*mu'min*) at the time of dawn (fajr) prayers. When they descend, the two angels appointed for the night ascend. When the sun sets (at maghrib time), the two angels appointed to write in the night descend and the two angels who write by day ascend with his scroll (of deeds) to Allāh. And this to-and-fro of theirs does not stop until the time of a person's death at which time they say to the person who is righteous: 'May Allāh reward you for being such a good companion. How many a righteous act you showed us and how many beautiful words you made us hear, and how many excellent gatherings (majlis) you made us attend! We, this day, stand (as witnesses) on what you love and are intercessors (for you) to your Lord.' And if he was sinful they say to him: 'May Allāh repay you for being such an evil companion. You used to annoy us. How many evil acts you made us see and how many evil words you made us hear and evil gatherings

you made us attend! And we, this day, are witnesses (against you) before your Lord.¹

The great Shi'ah scholar Mulla Fayd Kāshāni wrote that the two angels who record our deeds are called 'Noble Writers' (Kirāman Kātibeen) because they rush to write our good deeds and hesitate to write our sins, in the hope that we may repent and seek forgiveness. When they write a good deed, they rush to ascend with it to the heavens and proudly show it to Allāh, the Exalted, and they bear witness to that saying, "Your servant so-and-so has done such-and-such a good deed!" And when they write a person's sin, they ascend with it to the heavens with grief and sorrow. Allāh, the Exalted, asks, "What has My servant done?" But they remain silent until Allāh asks a second and a third time. Then they say, "Our Lord! You are the Concealer (of sins) and have commanded your creatures to conceal their shameful deeds. Conceal their shameful acts, for You are the Knower of all that is hidden!" And it is for this reason that they are called '*noble writers, who know whatever you do*' (Qur'ān 82:11-12).²

¹ Huwayzi, *Tafsir Nur*; Ibn Tāwus, *Sa'd as-Su'ud*.

² Kāshāni, *Tafsir as-Sāfi*, Surah 82:11-12.

Lesson 7

Qiyāmah

Importance of Its Belief in Islam

﴿وَكُلُّهُمْ آتِيهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَرْدًا﴾

And each of them will come to Him alone on the Day of Resurrection.

- Surah Maryam, 19:95

After Tawhid, the most important foundation of Islam and the most emphasized subject in the Qur'ān is the belief in life after death. This is called the belief in Ma'ād or Qiyāmah, which literally means 'The Resurrection'. This will be the Day when all humans are raised to life again and their actions and intentions are judged and thereafter the good are rewarded with eternal bliss and paradise and the unjust are punished with Hellfire. Without belief in Ma'ād, life would have no purpose or meaning.

There are hundreds of verses in the Qur'ān that discuss life after death, the Day of Resurrection (Qiyāmah), the recording of deeds, the scales of judgement, eternal life, paradise and hell, and so on. The various names by which the Qur'ān refers to the Day of Judgement were taught to you in Book 5. Some of these names that are frequently used in Qur'ān and hadith are Yaum al-Qiyāmah (Day of Resurrection), Yaum ad-Din (Day of Judgement) and Yaum al-Aakhir (The Last Day).

The Qur'ān divides the whole of creation into two periods of time: 'The first life' and the Afterlife (or 'Last Day'). Our happiness in this world and success in the eternal, final life depends on our faith in the Last Day. It is because of belief in life after death and the Last Day that we decide not to waste time and to make meaningful use of our precious short lives. Belief in the Hereafter is what makes us generous to others with our wealth, our time and even our lives. We keep away from sins and avoid hurting others or disobeying Allāh because we believe in a Day of Judgement.

People who do not believe there is life after death have no reason to be moral or good in this world. It is because we realize that life does not

end when we die and we still have an important journey ahead of us before we get to Jannah and it is because we believe that we must stand before Allāh for accounting, that we act righteously and it gives us happiness and contentment even when we have to suffer in this world.

The first thing to happen after everyone dies and before the Day of Resurrection starts is the breaking apart of the whole universe and the start of a new world. The Qur'ān describes this vividly:

﴿إِذَا السَّمَاءُ انشَقَّتْ وَأُذِنَتْ لِرَبِّهَا وَحُقَّتْ وَإِذَا الْأَرْضُ مُدَّتْ وَأَلْقَتْ مَا فِيهَا
وَتَخَلَّتْ﴾

When the sky is split open and gives ear to its Lord as it should. When the earth is spread out and throws out what is in it, emptying itself.

- Surah al-Inshiqāq, 84:1-4

And as the mountains become dust and the earth is leveled and made a flat surface and the stars all fall away, everyone will be brought out of their graves and there will be countless human beings scattered everywhere like moths, all gathering together for the accounting:

﴿الْقَارِعَةُ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ وَمَا أَذْرَاكَ مَا الْقَارِعَةُ. يَوْمَ يَكُونُ النَّاسُ كَالْفَرَاشِ الْمَبْثُوثِ.
وَتَكُونُ الْجِبَالُ كَالْعِهْنِ الْمَنْفُوشِ﴾

The Catastrophe! What is the Catastrophe? What will make you know what is the Catastrophe? The day mankind will be like scattered moths, and the mountains will be like carded wool.

- Surah al-Qāri'ah, 101:1-5

Imām Ali b. Abi Tālib ('a) describes the Day of Judgement as follows:

That day would be such that Allāh would collect on it all the previous and later generations, to stand in obedience for accounting and for award of their deeds. Sweat would flow up to their mouths like reins while the earth would be trembling under them. The person in the best condition among them would be he who has found a resting place for both his feet and an open place for his breath.

- Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 101

If you knew what I know of the unknown that is kept wrapped up from you certainly you would have gone out into the open weeping over your deeds and beating yourselves in grief and you would have abandoned your properties without any guard over them. Everyone would then have cared for his own self without paying attention to anyone else. But you have forgotten what was told to you and you feel safe from what you had been warned.

- Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 115

You are still in a place to which those who were before you have been wishing to return. In this world, which is not your house, you are just a traveller in motion. You have been given the call to leave from here, and you have been ordered to collect supplies while you are here. You should know that this thin skin cannot tolerate the Fire (of Hell). So, have pity on yourselves...

- Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 182

...and when the Trumpet will be blown, then every living being will die, every voice will become dumb the high mountains and hard rocks will crumble to pieces so that their hard stones will turn into moving sand and their bases will become level. On that Day there will be no interceder to intercede and no relative or friend to keep off trouble, and no excuse will be of any use.

- Nahj al-Balāgha, Sermon 194

Then everyone will be given his or her Book of Deeds. The good will be given their book in their right hand and the evil will be given their book in their left hand.

﴿فَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِيَمِينِهِ فَيَقُولُ هَٰؤُمِ اقْرَءُوا كِتَابِي . إِنِّي ظَنَنْتُ أَنِّي مُلَاقٍ

حِسَابِي . فَهُوَ فِي عِيشَةٍ رَاضِيَةٍ ﴿

As for him who is given his book in his right hand, he will say, 'Here, take and read my book! Indeed I knew that I shall encounter my account.' So he will have a pleasant life.

- Surah al-Hāqqah, 69:19-21

﴿وَأَمَّا مَنْ أُوتِيَ كِتَابَهُ بِشِمَالِهِ فَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُوتَ كِتَابِيهِ وَلَمْ أَدْرِ مَا حِسَابِيهِ
يَا لَيْتَهَا كَانَتْ الْقَاضِيَةَ مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنِّي مَالِيهِ هَلَكَ عَنِّي سُلْطَانِيهِ خُذُوهُ فَغُلُّوهُ ثُمَّ
الْجَحِيمَ صَلُّوهُ﴾

But as for him who is given his book in his left hand, he will say, 'I wish I had not been given my book, nor had I ever known what my account is! I wish death had been the end of it all! My wealth did not avail me. My authority has departed from me.' [The angels will be told:] 'Seize him, and fetter him! Then put him into hell.

- Surah al-Hāqqah, 69:25-31

﴿وَوُضِعَ الْكِتَابُ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا مَا لِ هَذَا
الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا وَلَا يَظْلَمُ
رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا﴾

The Book will be set up. Then you will see the guilty afraid of what is in it. They will say, 'Woe to us! What a book is this! It omits nothing, big or small, without covering it.' They will find present whatever they had done, and your Lord does not wrong anyone.

- Surah al-Kahf, 18:49

Life is a journey and a journey is only useful when a real destination is expected. The world (First Life) is therefore the departure and Qiyāmah is the arrival. Imām Ali ('a) has said, 'This world is a place to leave behind and the Hereafter, that is the everlasting residence.'

Qiyāmah therefore gives meaning to this world. Movement and struggle have no meaning without a goal. Once we are convinced that there is life after death and that the Hereafter is where we will live forever and ever, how should we live our lives in this world?

Shouldn't we spend most of our short lives here preparing for our life in Jannah instead of living in the world as if it is permanent? If you had to write down a list of things you should set as your goal(s) in this life so that you may succeed in the Hereafter, what would you write?

