

What is Islam? (Abridged)

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The author, translators, editors and typesetters humbly request your duas for them, their parents, families, asaatiza and mashaaiikh.

What is Islam?

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Introduction

People all over the world are looking for guidance and direction, peace of mind and contentment of the heart. The answer to man's confusion is Islam.

Islam is a way of life which was brought into this world by Allah (God), via the last messenger, Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him].

Thus a Muslim is one who accepts the faith and practices that way of life. Those who are ignorant of the teachings of Islam, or do not act upon them, are not real Muslims.

There are two things necessary for anyone to be a true Muslim. Firstly, to learn the proper knowledge and teachings of Islam. Secondly, to believe in these teachings and thirdly to live accordingly.

May Allah, The Almighty, grant us the ability to learn Islam, practice Islam and to pass it onto others, with all sincerity.

We hope this booklet will serve as a brief introduction to Islam and its beautiful teachings. We pray that it leads to a greater desire to learn, practice and teach Islam.

This book may be an ideal gift to a person who is not a Muslim and is interested in knowing more about Islam and its principles.

Lesson One

Imaan (The Kalimah)

لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ مُحَمَّدٌ رَّسُولُ اللَّهِ

Laailaaha illallahu Muhammadur Rasulullah

Translation: There is none worthy of worship besides Allah and Muhammad [Peace be upon him] is the messenger of Allah.

Saying this statement is the door to Islam and the foundation of one's faith and belief. By accepting it and reciting it with sincerity and conviction, a lifelong disbeliever or polytheist (idol worshipper) can become a Muslim (a believer) and thereby earn his salvation (safety from hell).

However, the condition is that he should believe with full understanding, the Oneness of Almighty Allah and the prophet-hood of the final Messenger Muhammad [Peace be upon him]. Thus, if a person merely recites this kalimah (phrase) without understanding the Oneness of Almighty Allah or the prophet-hood of Muhammad [Peace be upon him], will not automatically become a Muslim. It is, therefore, necessary to understand the meaning and the requirements of the kalimah (phrase).

The first part of the kalimah

This kalimah has two parts. The first part *Laailaaha illallah* contains the belief in the Oneness of Almighty Allah. It means that none except Almighty Allah is to be worshipped. Allah Alone is that Being whom we should worship and obey because He is our Creator and Sustainer. He gives life and death, sickness and good health, wealth and poverty. In short, all success and failure, every gain and loss is only in His control. Besides Him, all that which is in the heavens and on earth be they men or angels are all His slaves and creation. He has no partner or helper nor can anyone change or interfere with His plans and commands. He Alone is worthy of being worshipped and to Him alone should we pray and beg for our needs.

He Alone is the real owner of the heavens and the earth, the King of all kings, the Supreme Being. It is incumbent on us to carry out all His commands. In no way should we go against His commands in trying to obey someone other than Him, be they our parents or rulers, our dear friends or our own desires. Once we have realised and accepted that Almighty Allah alone is worthy of worship, then accordingly should we behave. So much so that if anyone were to see us, then at once he/she would conclude that we are indeed the servants of Allah, The Most High, carrying out His commands and that our existence is solely for Him and due to Him.

This kalimah, *Laailaaha illallah* is the first step into Islam and has been the first and most important teaching of all the messengers of Allah. The Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has said, "Faith has more than seventy branches. The most superior and highest of them is to believe in *Laailaaha illallah...*"

In one narration, it is mentioned that Allah, The Most High gave the following reply to Prophet Moosa (Moses) [Peace be upon him], "O Moosa! If the seven heavens and the seven earths and all that is contained in them were to be placed on one side of the scale¹ and

¹ On the day of Judgement all good and bad deeds will be weighed. If one's good deeds are heavier, one will go to paradise and if one's evil deeds are heavier, one will go to hell.

Laailaaha illallah on the other side, then the side on which *Laailaaha illallah* is placed will turn out to be heavier.” The virtue and weight of *Laailaaha illallah* is due to the fact that it contains the Oneness of Almighty Allah, the promise and the declaration that we shall worship and obey Him Alone. This is the soul and the life of Imaan (Faith) and Islam. It is for this reason that the Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has advised the Muslims to refresh their faith by frequently reciting this phrase (kalimah). It is narrated that Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] once said, “Renew your Faith!” Upon this his companions asked, “O Messenger of Allah! How do we renew our Faith?” Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] replied, “Recite *Laailaaha illallah* frequently.”

The second part of the kalimah

Muhammadur-Rasulullah. Translation: Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] is the messenger of Allah. In this phrase is the belief that Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] is the messenger of Allah. This means that he was sent by Almighty Allah for the guidance of the entire world and that which he has passed on to us is absolutely true and free of any doubt.

For example, there should be no doubt with regards to the Qur-aan being from Allah, the existence of the angels, the approach of Qiyaamah (the Last Day), life after death, resurrection, the day of judgement, Jannah (paradise) and Jahannam (hell). All this has been conveyed to us by our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] through divine revelation from Allah.

The guidance and laws that He has shown us are actually divine guidance and divine laws that were revealed to him from Allah. Accepting the messenger of Allah, automatically implies that we accept each and every instruction of his, because it is for this reason that Allah appoints someone to be His messenger. Through the messenger the commands of Allah are conveyed to mankind. Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, “*We have sent every*

messenger so that he be obeyed by the order (permission) of Allah.”

The Kalimah – A Promise and a Declaration

In reality, this kalimah *Laailaaha illallah Muhammadur Rasulallah* is a promise and a declaration. It is an agreement that we will obey all the commandments of Allah alone, whom we believe to be our only Creator. Our lives will be according to the way shown to us by our Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him], whom we believe to be the last and final messenger of Allah. This pledge and declaration will make us true Muslims and will entitle us to salvation (from hell) and entrance into Jannah (paradise).

The messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has said, “*Allah has forbidden the fire of hell for the one who believes with a truthful heart the kalimah Laailaaha illallah Muhammadur Rasulallah.*”

Lesson Two

Salaah (Prayer)

The first duty of Islam, after one has believed in the Oneness of Allah and the prophet-hood of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him], is **Salaah** (prayer). There are numerous verses of the Qur-aan and teachings of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] instructing us with Salaah and describing it as a pillar of Islam.

If Salaah (prayer) is performed in a proper manner, with devotion, concentration and the awareness of Allah, then it has that special effect of cleansing the heart, correcting one's life, removing sins, causing piety and attaching the heart to Almighty Allah. Thus, in Islam, great emphasis has been placed on salaah.

Therefore, when any person came to Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] to accept Islam, the first promise Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] took from him after explaining to him the oneness of Almighty Allah was that he will offer Salaah with punctuality.¹

¹ It was the practice of the Prophet [Peace be upon him] that when anybody accepted Islam at his hands, the first thing he taught him was Salaah.

Warning to those who neglect Salaah

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has said, *“It is only Salaah that separates a believer from disbelief.”*

This narration warns us that if a Muslim were to give up Salaah, he will be associated with disbelief.

- He has also said, *“He who does not offer Salaah has no share in Islam.”*

From this narration we can understand how unfortunate is that person who neglects Salaah. He is heading for destruction and doom.

- Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him], whilst emphasising the performance of Salaah, said, *“Whoever will offer Salaah properly and regularly, it will be a source of light for him on the day of Judgement, a proof for him and a means of salvation. On the other hand, whoever will not offer it carefully and regularly, it will neither be a source of light for him nor a proof of his faith, nor a means of his salvation, and the end of such a person will be with Qaaron, Fir’aun, Haamaan and Ubayy bin Khalaf.”*¹ Can we imagine what our end will be if we failed to cultivate the habit of performing Salaah correctly and regularly? May Almighty Allah save us all. Aameen

Disgrace on the day of Judgement (The Last Day) for those who neglect salaah

Those who do not perform Salaah, will have to suffer disgrace on the day of Judgement. The Qur-aan has described it as follows:

“The day when the shins will be exposed and people will be called to bow down but will be unable to. Their gazes will be lowered and disgrace shall overcome them. Indeed they used to be called to bow down when they were hale and healthy but they refused.”

¹ These were rebels who openly defied the teachings of God in different eras and are doomed eternally for hell fire.

The verse informs us that on the day of judgement, when all of mankind, from the first to the last, will be raised and gathered, Almighty Allah will reveal to them a special part of His beauty and glory and they will all be called to bow down before Allah in wonder.

The fortunate believers who were regular in performing Salaah in the world and were thus accustomed to bowing down before Allah, will at once go down in prostration. However, those who, in spite of being healthy and strong had not offered Salaah in their lifetime, will find that their backs have suddenly grown stiff like planks and they will remain standing with the disbelievers, unable to go down in prostration. They will be covered with disgrace and their gazes will be cast down. They will not be able to even look up. Before the punishment of hell, they will have to bear the punishment of disgrace and humiliation. May Almighty Allah save us all from His punishment. Aameen.

In reality, a person who continues to neglect Salaah (prayer) is, to a certain extent, a rebel against Almighty Allah. Thus, he is deserving of whatever humiliation and punishment that comes to him.

We should understand well, that without Salaah in our lives, we cannot claim to be true Muslims. Salaah is that special action in Islam that links us with Almighty Allah and entitles us to His Grace.

Blessings of Salaah

When a person stands before Allah five times a day with his arms folded, he praises and glorifies Allah. He bows down and prostrates before Allah and he begs from Allah. Then he becomes worthy of Allah's special love and mercy. His sins are forgiven with every salaah that he performs, his heart is spiritually enlightened and his life becomes one of purity. Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] once asked his companions: *"Do you think that any dirt can remain on a person bathing five times a day in a stream running in front of his door?"* The companions replied: *"No dirt can remain on his body."* Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] thereafter said: *"This is exactly the effect of Salaah offered five times a day. With the grace of Almighty Allah, it washes away the sins."*

Emphasis and Superiority of performing Salaah in Congregation

It is mentioned in a narration of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him], that one very important condition to attain the full virtue and blessings of Salaah, is to perform it at the mosque in congregation (this law applies to MALES only). Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] laid such emphasis on this, that once he mentioned with regards to those who absent themselves from the congregation due to laziness or indifference, that: *“I have considered setting fire to their houses.”*

From this narration it can be gauged as to how it is disliked by Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] to abandon performing Salaah in congregation at the mosque.

With regards to the virtues of Salaah in congregation, Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said: *“Salaah performed in congregation is twenty seven times superior than Salaah performed individually.”*

It should be noted that the superiority of offering Salaah in congregation is only for men. Women earn a greater reward by saying their Salaah at home rather than at the mosque.

Apart from reward in the hereafter, there are many other benefits for men offering Salaah in congregation. For instance:-

1. He develops the ability of performing his five daily Salaah with punctuality on time.
2. It also enables all the Muslim brothers of the locality to assemble at one place five times a day.
3. Pious obedient servants of Almighty Allah will be present in the congregation. It is hoped that when Almighty Allah will grant acceptance to their prayers, then He will accept the prayers of the rest of the congregation as well.

Humility and Submission

Offering our Salaah with humility and submission means us believing that Almighty Allah is All-Present and All-Seeing. Our Salaah should be offered in such a way that our hearts are filled with the love of Almighty Allah, and overwhelmed with awe and fear by the thought of His Majesty and Greatness. When we stand in Salaah, we should imagine that we are in the presence of Allah, standing out of respect for him. When we lower our head and bow down in ruku (a posture of bowing down) or when we kneel down and prostrate in sajdah, we should think that all of these are being carried out in front of Allah as an expression of our submission and reverence to His greatness.

It would be more appropriate that whatever is recited during the various postures of Salaah should be done with a full understanding of its meaning. This will help us to appreciate the true beauty of Salaah. It is not difficult at all to learn the meaning of those phrases that are generally recited in Salaah. Humility and submission in Salaah, and for the heart to be focussed towards Allah, constitutes the very soul and life of Salaah.

Before performing Salaah, we should make a proper wudhu (ablution) keeping this in mind that it is extremely necessary that we cleanse and wash ourselves before we present ourselves in the court of Almighty Allah.

So much was the concern of our Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] for his followers to be particular in the performance of Salaah, that even during his last moments, when it had become extremely difficult for him to speak, he took great pains to urge and caution his followers to be steadfast on their Salaah.

Muslims who neglect their Salaah and make no effort to establish it in their lives and the lives of others, should ponder and reflect as to how are they going to face our Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] on the day of resurrection after having completely disregarded his final words of advice.

Note: The performance of wudhu and Salaah must be learnt from our Ulama (Learned Scholars in Islam).

Lesson Three

Zakaat (Charity)

Among the fundamental teachings of Islam, Zakaat (charity) is the third most important after Imaan and Salaah. It is known as the third pillar of Islam.

Zakaat means that a Muslim who is in possession of a certain amount of wealth (exact details to be queried from the Muslim Scholars) in excess to his needs is required to spend one-fortieth (2½%) of it at the end of every (lunar) year on the poor and the needy Muslims as ordered by Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him].

The importance and the compulsory nature of Zakaat

At several places in the Qur-aan, Zakaat has been emphasised alongside with salaah. We are commanded to, “*Establish Salaah and discharge Zakaat*”, and at times the Qur-aan describes the necessary characteristic of Muslims to be, “*Those who establish Salaah and discharge Zakaat.*” From this we learn that those who do not perform Salaah and do not discharge Zakaat are not true Muslims for they do not have the distinguishing features and characteristics of a true Muslim in them.

The habitual neglect of Salaah and the failure to discharge Zakaat are, according to the Qur-aan, not the qualities of a Muslim, but of a disbeliever and a polytheist.

Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan:

“Establish Salaah and do not be from the polytheists.”

“And destruction be to the polytheists who does not pay Zakaat and who disbelieves in the hereafter.”

The punishment for not discharging Zakaat

Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“And those who hoard (amass) gold and silver and do not spend it in the way of Allah, then give them news of a painful punishment. The day when it (the gold and silver) will be heated in the fire of Jahannam and their foreheads, their sides and their backs will be branded with it. (It will then be told to them) this is what you had hoarded for yourselves, so taste (the punishment for) what you hoarded.”*

Evading Zakaat is injustice and ingratitude

Zakaat is the right of the poor and the needy. By us not paying our Zakaat, we are depriving them of their due right which is actually injustice and oppression.

Looking at it from another angle, whatever we have by way of wealth and property, has been granted to us by Allah, and we ourselves are the servants and the creation of Almighty Allah. Thus if Allah were to ask us to sacrifice all our wealth or even our life itself, then our duty would be to sacrifice it all without a word of complaint. It is indeed the kindness and favour of Almighty Allah that He has ordered us to give away in Zakaat only one-fortieth (2½%) of the wealth which He has bestowed on us.

The reward for paying Zakaat

It is the favour of Almighty Allah that He rewards us for the Zakaat and charity that we give, considering that what we give is from the wealth given to us by Allah Himself.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“The example of those who spend in the way of Allah is like a grain which grows seven ears, in every ear (there are) a hundred grains (like this, whatever a person spends will be multiplied seven hundred times). Allah increases (more than seven hundred times) for those whom He wills.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said: *“There are three things, whoever acquires them, acquires the sweetness of Imaan (Faith), i.e. to worship Allah alone, to believe sincerely in “Laailaaha illallah” and to pay the Zakaat willingly on one’s excess possessions every year.”*

The worldly advantages of paying Zakaat

Apart from the reward and recompense in the hereafter, we will enjoy worldly advantages as well for paying our Zakaat regularly. For example, one who discharges his obligation of Zakaat properly, experiences a unique feeling of satisfaction and peace in his heart and the poor do not feel jealous over his wealth. Rather, they wish him well, they pray for his welfare and look towards him with love and admiration. The world respects him, everyone likes him and is attracted towards him and Almighty Allah grants him abundant blessings and multiplies his wealth.

Lesson Four

Saum (Fasting)

The importance of Fasting

After Imaan, Salaah and Zakaat, the most important duty in Islam is Saum (Fasting). It is the fourth pillar of Islam.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan: *“O you who have Imaan! Fasting has been made compulsory for you just as it was made compulsory for those before you (the Christians and the Jews), so that you may develop Taqwa (self-restraint and piety).”*

Fasting is obligatory for the Muslims in the month of Ramadhaan (Islamic month). Failure to observe the fast on any day, without a valid reason during this month, is a grave sin.

- Our Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said: *“Whoever does not keep fast on a single day during the month of Ramadhaan, without a valid excuse or illness, will not be able to make amends for it, even if he has to fast his entire life.”*

The Reward for Fasting

During the fast, a Muslim abstains from eating, drinking and sexual relations with his marriage partner from Subh Saadiq (dawn) to sunset with the sole intention of worship. He sacrifices his lawful

needs and desires only for the pleasure of Almighty Allah. Thus Allah rewards him in most unique ways.

- It is reported in a narration: *“All the previous sins of a person are forgiven, who keeps the fast of Ramadhaan with complete faith and with the object of pleasing Allah and earning His reward.”*
- It is reported in another narration: *“Fasting is a shield against the fire of hell and a strong fortress (which will protect a person from the punishment of the hereafter).”*

The Special Benefits of Fasting

Fasting promotes piety and righteousness in a person. It produces in a person the ability to control his/her physical desires. It teaches a person to subject his carnal (sexual) desires and the longing of his/her heart to the will of Almighty Allah. It is extremely effective in disciplining the soul.

Together with abstaining from food and drink, he should also stay away from major and minor sins. He must neither quarrel, nor utter a lie, nor engage himself in slander and backbiting. In short, he should avoid all sinful deeds, whether apparent or hidden.

Another outstanding feature of fasting is that it raises the status of man above that of beasts. To eat and drink as per desire and to engage in sexual relations whenever the urge comes is actually the way of animals. On the other hand, to be free of any desire for food, drink and intercourse, is the quality of angels. When a person fasts, he rises above the existence of the animals and he develops angelic qualities.

Lesson Five

Hajj (Pilgrimage)

The Compulsory injunction of Hajj

Almighty Allah mentions in the Holy Qur-aan: *“Hajj (pilgrimage) to the House (The Kabah - House of Allah in Makkah) is a duty that the people who are able to find a way there owe to Allah. Whoever rejects (this command), then surely Allah is independent of the entire universe.”* (Allah does not need mans’ worship. Man benefits only himself by worshipping Allah).

In this verse, while the Hajj has been declared obligatory, it has been made clear that it is applicable only to those who possess the means to carry it out. Almighty Allah is not in need of their pilgrimage. No loss comes to Allah by them not performing Hajj. The loss will be entirely theirs. They will deprive themselves of His mercy, and Allah forbid, a most tragic fate will be awaiting them in the hereafter.

Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said: *“A person whom Allah has given the means to perform Hajj, but still fails to do so, then it does not matter at all whether he dies a Jew or a Christian.”*

A fraction of Imaan and Islam in our hearts or some form of attachment to Almighty Allah and Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] is sufficient to encourage us to perform our Hajj

(pilgrimage) the moment we have the means to do so. There should be no delay from our side.

The Virtues and the Blessings of Hajj

- It is reported in a narration: *“Those who perform Hajj and Umrah (the lesser pilgrimage) are the guests of Almighty Allah. If they pray to Almighty Allah, their prayer will be accepted and if they seek forgiveness, they will be forgiven.”*
- It is reported in another narration: *“He who performs Hajj and commits no obscene or indecent act in it, nor does he disobey Allah, he will thus return as pure and clean from sin as he was the day he was born.”*

The Immediate Enjoyments of Hajj

That joy and delight one feels and experiences on seeing the Kabah (the house of Allah in the city of Makkah) and on visiting those special places in Makkah where the memories of Prophet Ebrahim (Abraham) [Peace be upon him], Prophet Ismail (Ishmael) [Peace be upon him] and Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] are still existent. These are bounties of Jannah (paradise) in this very world.

Thereafter, we can experience the good fortune of presenting ourselves at the grave of the Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]. We can offer our sincere greetings and perform Salaah in his very own mosque. We can walk through the streets and alleys of Madinah, stepping on its blessed soil and enjoy its fragrant air. Tears of happiness are shed over the fond memories of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]. These are the immediate treasures and delights of a pilgrim, provided he is blessed by Almighty Allah with a heart worthy enough to feel them.

Lesson Six

Taqwa (Piety, Self-Restraint)

Taqwa (piety of the heart) is part of the basic essentials of Islam. It allows a person to carry out all the commands of Almighty Allah and to avoid all those actions that are forbidden, due to the firm belief of accountability and the fear of Almighty Allah. It also allows us to fulfil the rights of mankind. Great emphasis has been laid on Taqwa in both the Holy Qur-aan and the teachings of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]. Some of the verses of the Qur-aan are:

- *“O you who believe! Fear Allah as He should be feared and do not die except as Muslims.”*
- *“So fear Allah as much as you can, listen (to His commands) and obey (them all).”*
- *“O you who believe! Fear Allah and let every soul see what it has sent ahead for tomorrow. Fear Allah! Indeed Allah is informed of what you do.”*

The Qur-aan further informs us of Allah’s help, friendship and favours on those who adopt this inner Taqwa (fear):

- *“And for the one who fears Allah, he prepares a way out, and he provides for him from sources he could never imagine.”*
- *“Behold! Verily for the friends of Allah there shall be no fear nor shall they grieve. (The friends of Allah are) those who have Imaan (faith) and adopt Taqwa (piety). For them shall be good news in the life of this world and in the hereafter.”*
- *“Without doubt, those with Taqwa (piety) will have a pleasant abode, eternal gardens, with the doors opened for them. They will recline there, asking for the abundance of fruit and drinks. They shall have with them wives with eyes downcast, and of the same age. This is what you have been promised, for the day of reckoning. Indeed, these are our favours, which will never come to an end.”*

Similarly, it has been reported in the teachings of our Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]:

- *“Nearest and dearest to me are those who possess the virtue of piety, no matter what race or nationality they belong to or which country they live in.”*
- *“Piety is the root of all virtue. It is the measure of goodness. We will be as good and noble and as free from that which is evil and corrupt as long as there is piety in us.”*
- *“The fortunate and the successful ones are indeed those who fear Allah and prepare for the life to come.”*
- *“Never can he go to hell who weeps in the fear of Allah.”*

Ways to develop Taqwa in us

The most effective way of bringing Taqwa into our lives is to adopt the company of the pious servants of Allah, those who have Taqwa, they fear Allah and obey His commands.

Secondly, we should read good and authentic Islamic literature. Thirdly, we should sit in solitude and ponder over death, the reward for good deeds, the punishment for sin, the questioning in the grave, resurrection and giving an account before Almighty Allah on the day of Judgement.

Lesson Seven

Honesty in monetary dealings

A true Muslim is he who is honest in his business and other financial dealings. He keeps to his word and fulfils his promises, avoids fraud and deceit, does not trample the rights of others, does not weigh less, does not give false evidence, does not present a false case in court and protects himself from usury (interest) and bribery. The one in whom these vices are found, then according to the Qur-aan he cannot be a true believer. Rather he is referred to as a major sinner and to some extent a hypocrite.

Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan:

- *“O you who believe! Do not unjustly consume the wealth of one another.”*

This verse forbids Muslims from earning money through corrupt and unjust means. A severe warning is given in the following verse to traders who cheat in weights and measures:

- *“Destruction be to the cheaters who, when they take measure from mankind, they demand in full. (However) if they measure or weigh for people, they reduce. Do such people not consider that they will be raised unto an awful day, the day when all of*

mankind will stand before the Rabb (Sustainer - Allah) of the universe?"

- Almighty Allah describes the distinguishing feature of Muslims as, *"Those who give due regard to trusts and promises."*
- Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] often used to say in his sermons, *"Remember, there is no faith in him who is not trustworthy, there is no place for him in religion who cares not for his pledged word or promise."*
- It is reported in another narration, *"The signs of a hypocrite are three: When he speaks, he lies, when he promises, he fails to keep to his promise and when he is trusted, he is unfaithful."*
- Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] once came upon a trader with a heap of corn in the market of Madinah and he thrust his hand into it. His fingers felt some dampness. On being asked, the trader replied that rain had fallen upon it. Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] mentioned, *"Why did you not, then, keep (the wet portion of) it above the dry corn so that men may see it? He who deceives is not one of us."*

Thus, traders who deceive by showing customers a false sample or by concealing the defects of the article are not true Muslims in the words of our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him].

- It is mentioned in another narration, *"The seller must explain to the buyer the defects, if any, in the quality of the article offered for sale. Should this not be done, the seller will permanently be under the anger of Almighty Allah."* According to another narration, *he will always be cursed by the angels.*

Likewise, bribery, interest and usury, are totally impermissible and prohibited.

- It is reported in a narration, *"The curse of Almighty Allah rests on him who offers a loan with interest, and on him who receives the interest, and on those who are witnesses to the interest-based transaction, and on the writer who records it."*

- Regarding bribery, it is mentioned in a narration, *our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] cursed the giver and taker of bribes.*”

Worst still is usurping the property and goods of the next person by force or fraud or dishonest lawsuits.

- Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“Whoever unjustly occupies land belonging to another, will be sunk into the ground along with that plot of land on Judgement Day till he reaches the lowest layer of the earth.”*
- It is mentioned in another narration, *“Whoever laid his claim on a thing that was not his, is not of us. He will do well to reserve a place for himself in Hell.”*
- It is narrated that one day, after the morning prayers, our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] stood up and said thrice in a distinct manner, *“Giving false witness has been made equivalent to polytheism (believing in many Gods).”*

The evil and the impurity of ill-gotten wealth

- It is mentioned in a narration, *“If a person acquires some forbidden wealth (through some unlawful means) and then gives a part of it in charity, his act of charity will not be accepted and if he will spend from it (on his needs) there will be no blessings in it, and should he leave it behind upon his death, as inheritance, then it will be for him as a means of hell. Be convinced, Almighty Allah does not erase evil with evil (charity from ill-gotten gains can never be a means of the forgiveness of sins). Rather evil is erased by virtue. One impurity cannot remove another impurity and make it pure.”*
- It is mentioned in another narration, *“If a person buys a garment for ten dirhams and of them, one dirham is tainted (it has been earned dishonestly), none of his salaah will be accepted by Almighty Allah as long as he wears it.”*
- It is mentioned in yet another narration, *“That body which has been fed with unlawful wealth, cannot go to paradise.”*

These narrations are sufficient to deter us from all types of unlawful earnings. Even if we have the smallest iota of faith (Imaan) in our hearts, we will ensure that all our earnings are lawful and earned through honest dealings.

Clean earnings and honest trading

- Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has said, *“The best food is that which has been earned by the labour of one’s own hands. The messenger of Allah, Dawood [Peace be upon him] used to work with his own hands to earn his sustenance.”*
- Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has said, *“The truthful and honest trader will (in the hereafter) be in the company of the Prophets, the righteous and the martyrs.”*

Kindness and compassion in monetary dealings

- Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has said, *“Allah’s mercy descends on one who is gentle at the time of buying, selling and requesting payment.”*
- Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has said, *“The one who grants respite to a poor person (in the payment of his debt) or writes off the debt (entirely or partially) will be granted protection by Almighty Allah from the agonies of the Day of Judgement.”*

The above two narrations are meant for merchants and other wealthy men from whom money is borrowed in the hour of need. As for the borrowers, the Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] used to urge them to do their best to pay back their debts quickly, lest they should die in a state of having debts unsettled.

- Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has said, *“If a person is killed in the path of Allah, then all his sins will be forgiven (by virtue of martyrdom). However if he owes anyone anything, even martyrdom will not save him from it.”*

Lesson Eight

Social conduct and mutual relations

Etiquette, good manners and respecting the rights of others, form an important part of Islamic teachings. A person can only become a true and good Muslim when he/she completely follows the social code of Islam. For instance, what should the attitude of parents be towards their children and of children towards their parents? What sort of conduct should exist between brothers and between brothers and sisters? How should a husband and wife live together? How are we to treat those who are older than us and those who are younger than us? What are the rights of neighbours upon us? How should the rich behave towards the poor and the poor towards the rich? What type of relationship should be maintained between a master and his servant?

Islam provides us with the most precise and complete way of fulfilling our social responsibilities and dealing with the different classes of people with whom we come into contact.

Rights of Parents

The most primary relationship in this world exists between a person and his parents. In Islam the rights of parents have been described as next only to the rights of Almighty Allah.

Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“Your God (Allah) has commanded that you worship only Him and that you treat your*

parents kindly. If any one of the two (your parents) or both of them reaches old age with you, (especially) then do not even tell them ‘oof!’ (or anything else that may cause them hurt) and do not scold them (even though they may be at fault). (Always) speak gently to them (never raise your voice when speaking to them). Lower for them the wings of humility out of compassion and say, ‘O Allah! Show mercy to them (my parents) as they had (been merciful towards me when they) raised me when I was young.’

Another verse of the Qur-aan mentions that if the parents of a person are non-Muslims and they want him to follow their faith, he must not obey them, but even then he should treat them well.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“If they (your parents) force you to ascribe such partners to Me, about which you have no knowledge, then do not obey them but cordially associate with them in this world.”*
- It is reported in a narration of our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him], *“The pleasure of Allah lies in the pleasure of the father, and the displeasure of Allah lies in the displeasure of the father.”*
- Once our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“Every time a dutiful son/daughter looks with love and respect towards his or her mother or father, Allah writes for him/her the reward of an accepted Hajj (pilgrimage to the Holy lands of Makkah).” Upon this, some of his companions enquired, “Our master! Suppose a person does so a hundred times each day, will he, even then, be given the reward of an accepted Hajj for every glance he casts?” Allah’s Messenger [Peace be upon him] replied, “Yes! Allah is most great, most pure (there is no shortage in the treasures of Allah).”*
- In another narration it is mentioned, *“Paradise lies under the feet of the mother.”*
- Once our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] told the companions that the worst of sins are, *“To associate anyone as partners to Allah, to disobey parents and to give false evidence.”*

Rights of Children

Just as Islam has established the rights of parents on children, in the same way there are some rights of children on parents as well. As far as the responsibility of feeding and clothing our children is concerned, this we normally carry out. However we are generally careless and neglectful when it comes to their Islamic and moral upbringing.

Islam has made it imperative that we bring up our children in such a way that after they die they do not enter the fire of hell.

- Almighty Allah commands in the Qur-aan, *“O you who believe! Save yourselves and your families from the fire (of hell).”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“No better gift can there be from a father to his children than bringing them up correctly.”*

Some parents are fonder of their sons than daughters. Daughters are sometimes considered to be a burden. For this reason Islam has paid special attention to the upbringing of girls and has exalted it as an act of great virtue.

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has said, *“Anyone who has a daughter or a sister and he treats her well and he carefully sees to her care and welfare and he gets her married (appropriately), Allah will reward him with paradise.”*

Mutual Rights between Husband and Wife

Conjugal (marriage) relationship plays an important position in the day to day lives of people. It is such a strong and intimate bond that it enables the husband and wife to enter into a lifelong partnership. Islam has thus given us complete guidance in respect of this relationship. The wife is required to be obedient and also be a complete well wisher to the husband. She is not to betray him in her trust.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan-e-Kareem, *“Therefore, the righteous women are obedient (to Almighty Allah and to their husbands by protecting their chastity, dignity and wealth) and in*

(the) *absence* (of their husbands), *are protective* (of their chastity and the property of their husbands).”

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, “*The woman who dies in a state that her husband is pleased with her, shall enter paradise.*”

The husband is asked to show his wife complete love and affection, and according to his means, feed and clothe her. He should not fall short in showing her kindness. He is also required to provide shelter for her.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Holy Qur-aan, “*And live with them (your wives) in kindness (treating them well).*”
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, “*From amongst the Muslims, the most perfect believer is the one whose character is good and he is loving towards his family.*”

Rights of Relatives

- Our beloved Prophet, Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, “*He who violates the rights of relatives and shows no respect for his family ties in his conduct, shall not go to paradise.*”

If a relative cuts off ties with us, even then we should continue to fulfil our obligation towards him.

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, “*If a near relative treats you indifferently and ignores the family ties, then you should not break up ties from him. You should keep on discharging your part of the obligation of kinship towards him.*”

Rights of the old and the young

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, “*He is not from amongst us, who is neither affectionate towards the youngsters nor respectful towards the elders.*”
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, “*That youngster who will honour an elderly man because of his age, Almighty Allah will appoint for him such people who will honour him in his old age.*”

Rights of neighbours

Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“Show kindness to parents, relatives, orphans, the destitute, near neighbours, distant neighbours and those at your side.....”*

Three categories of neighbours have been mentioned in the above verse. “Near neighbours” denotes neighbours who may also happen to be our relatives. “Distant neighbours” denotes those with whom we have no family ties. “Those by your side” means persons with whom we come into contact with temporarily, during the course of our daily activities, like a friend, a teacher, a class mate or a colleague from whichever religious group he may be. Islam reminds us that we have an obligation to be friendly and sympathetic towards all three categories of neighbours.

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“He who believes in Allah and the Last Day will never harm his neighbour.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“He is not a Muslim who eats his full and lets his neighbour go hungry.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“That person shall not go to paradise who causes harm to his neighbours.”*

Rights of the weak and poor

Islam has given certain special rights to the weaker and poorer section of the community. It has been made the duty of the well-to-do to see to their well-being in whichever way they can.

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“He who sees to and assists the widows and the needy is like one who strives in the path of Allah and in reward he is equal to the one who permanently fasts during the day and spends the nights in prayers.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“Help the distressed and be a guide to those who have lost their way.”*
- It is narrated that once Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] joined two of his fingers and said, *“He who supports an orphan*

shall be as close to me in paradise as these two fingers are to each other.”

No distinction has been placed in the above narrations between a Muslim and a non-Muslim. All poor and needy persons have a right over us. In some narrations, Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has encouraged us to show kindness to animals as well and a great reward has been promised for those who take pity on these creatures of Almighty Allah.

Islam is truly a blessing to the entire universe and to all of the creation.

Rights of Muslims

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“Every Muslim is a brother to the next Muslim. He should neither harm him nor leave him alone (when someone else does harm to him). Rather, he should try his best to help and protect him). Whoever among you will fulfil the need of his brother, Allah will take it upon himself to fulfil his needs, and a Muslim who will remove the distress of a Muslim brother, will in return find a distress of his removed by Allah on the day of judgement, and anyone who will conceal the faults of a Muslim, Allah will on the day of judgement conceal his faults.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“Do not bear grudge or have hatred against each other, do not be jealous of one another and do not backbite. Live like brothers and the servants of one Almighty Allah. It is not allowed for a Muslim to stop talking to another Muslim for more than three days.”*

If we have failed to fulfil the rights of anyone, let us seek his forgiveness and make amends for it in this life, otherwise it will cost us dearly in the life to come.

Lesson Nine

Good Character and Noble Qualities

Good manners and noble character form an integral part of the teachings of Islam. Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] was sent to complete and perfect man's character.

The Virtue and the Importance of Good Character

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“The best of you are those who possess the best character.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“On the day of judgement, good character will be the most weightiest of deeds on the scales.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“A believer with good character receives the same reward as one who fasts during the day and spends the night in Salaah (prayer).”*

The evil of Bad Character

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“No sin is more hated by Allah than bad character.”*

Truthfulness

In addition to speaking the truth, a Muslim is also encouraged to always keep the company of the truthful.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“O you who believe! Fear Allah and stay with the truthful.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“Speak the truth even though you see your ruin and death in it, because in reality salvation and life lie in the truth alone and abstain from lies, even though outwardly you see success and salvation in it, because the end result of lies is failure and disappointment.”*
- Once Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] was asked, *“What is the special quality of the people of paradise?”* Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] replied, *“Truthfulness.”*

Fulfilling Promises

It is also a part of truthfulness that when a promise is made, it should be fulfilled. Our faith demands of us never to go back on our promises.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“And fulfil the pledge (pledges made with people as well as pledges made with Allah). Certainly, questioning shall take place (on the day of judgement) with regards to pledges (and people will be taken to task for breaking their pledges).”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“He who does not fulfil promises made by him has no share in faith.”*

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness stems from truthfulness.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“Verily Allah instructs you to return trusts to their rightful owners.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] used to mention in his sermons, *“People! The one in whom there is no trustworthiness; it is as though he has no faith.”*

Justice

In Islam we are commanded to be just and fair even towards our enemy.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“O you who believe! Stand upright for Allah whilst giving testimony with justice. Let not (your) hatred for a nation (people) cause you to be unjust (towards them). Be just! It is closer to Taqwa (piety).”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“The most beloved of men in the sight of Allah, on the day of judgement and the nearest to Him, shall be the just leader, and the one furthest away from Allah and deserving of severe punishment on that day, shall be the oppressive ruler.”*

Compassion and Forgiveness

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“Show kindness and kindness shall be shown to you. Forgive and you shall be forgiven.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“The Most Merciful Allah will have mercy upon those who show mercy. Have mercy on the dwellers of the earth, the One in the heavens will have mercy on you.”*

We need to be kind and compassionate towards friends and foes alike, and to all the creatures that exist on earth.

Softness

We should have a soft and gentle approach in our monetary dealings and our day to day activities. We should be willing and ready to put others at ease.

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“The fire of hell is forbidden for those who are soft and lenient in their dealings.”*

Tolerance

Tolerance, forbearance, self-restraint, the ability of controlling one's temper and overlooking that which is unpleasant are special qualities that Islam wishes to inculcate in every human being.

- In the Qur-aan, where mention is made of those for whom paradise has been prepared, such people have been specifically referred to as: *“(Those) who suppress their anger and who forgive people.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“Allah will hold back His punishment from him who will hold back his anger.”*

Gentleness in Speech

Islam teaches us to be considerate, accommodating and polite in our speech. We should abstain from being harsh, rude and inconsiderate.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“Speak kindly (and in a good manner) to people.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“To speak politely is a good deed (a virtue) and a type of charity.”*

Humility

Humility is a distinguishing feature of a Muslim. It does not behove a Muslim to look down upon the other servants of Almighty Allah or to think high of himself or to be haughty and proud.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“The slaves of the Most Merciful (Almighty Allah) are those who walk on earth in humility (without pride).”*
- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“This (paradise) is the home of the hereafter, we shall bless to those who do not desire pomp (glory) and corruption on earth.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“The one who adopts humility, Almighty Allah will raise him to such a position that he will reach the highest stage in paradise.”*

On the other hand, pride is so greatly detested by Almighty Allah that Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] has warned us,

- *“Whoever has pride in his heart, even to the weight of a mustard seed, shall not enter paradise.”*

There should be humility when it comes to our personal matters. However, in matters of faith and presenting the truth, we should be firm and bold and there should be no weakness and fear.

Patience

Man is constantly faced with trials, difficulties and problems. In such conditions he should remain firm and patient. His faith and heart should not waver.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan: *“Allah loves the steadfast ones.”*
- *“Verily Allah is with those who exercise patience.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“There is no favour conferred on man more precious than that of patience.”*

Sincerity and the correction of one’s intention

Sincerity is the life and soul of Islam. Sincerity means that all our actions should be done solely for the pleasure of Almighty Allah. There should be no ulterior motive.

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“Allah does not look at your bodies and your appearances. Rather He looks at your hearts.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“He who loves, hates, gives and holds back, for the sake of Allah, has perfected his faith.”*

Almighty Allah is watchful over the intentions in our hearts. It should not be that we spend our wealth on the poor, or our lives in the path of Almighty Allah, but our intention is some worldly name and fame. We should consciously carry out all actions for Allah alone.

Lesson Ten

Love of Almighty Allah, Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] and Islam

It is fundamental to our belief that Almighty Allah, Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] and Islam should be dearer to us than our parents, children, honour and property. What this means is that should there arise a situation where we are forced to make a choice, then we will readily sacrifice all that is dear to us and remain loyal to the commands of Almighty Allah, the way of life of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] and we will adhere to Islam.

- Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“If your fathers, your sons, your brothers, your spouses, your families, your wealth that you have earned, your businesses in which you fear a loss, and your home that you love so dearly are more beloved to you than Almighty Allah, His messenger and striving in His path, then wait for Allah’s punishment to come. Allah does not guide the sinful ones.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“He alone will taste the sweetness of faith who possesses these three qualities; the love of Almighty Allah and His Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] is dearer to him before everything else; his love for others is solely for the sake of Allah; and the thought of him returning to*

disbelief after having accepted Islam is as hateful to him as being thrown into the fire.”

Lesson Eleven

Serving and propagating (spreading) Islam

Together with practicing upon Islam ourselves, it is our duty to make an effort to guide others to this religion as well. Almighty Allah had sent down thousands of Prophets into the world for the moral and spiritual upliftment of mankind. The last Prophet was Muhammad [Peace be upon him]. There will be no Prophet to come after him. Thus the responsibility of serving and propagating Islam now lies on our shoulders, the followers of Muhammad [Peace be upon him].

Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, “*You (the followers of Muhammad [Peace be upon him]) are the best of all nations who have been raised for (the benefit and salvation of) mankind. You command what is right, forbid evil and believe in Allah.*”

The Muslims have been given the honour of being the best of all nations for the simple reason that they, in addition to adopting the path of faith and righteousness, are commanded with the special duty of striving to bring others to also practise what is right and to avoid what is wrong.

Unfortunately the majority of Muslims themselves are not true to Islam. In these circumstances it becomes our primary duty to firstly carry out the mission of moral and spiritual reformation among our own people. After all, the responsibility of looking after the welfare of

our own children and near relations is greater on us than that of looking after the welfare of others.

In the past, people were attracted towards Islam simply by observing the behaviour of Muslims who practically lived an Islamic lifestyle. People were attracted to Islam because of the way the Muslims behaved. The success of the propagation of Islam among non-Muslims is largely dependent on the practical implementation of Islam by the Muslims themselves.

It is necessary for us to devote ourselves in guiding others towards the straight path and bringing them closer to Almighty Allah. We need to sacrifice our comfort, health, wealth, time and abilities in this high and noble effort.

- Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“A person who guides another towards a good deed shall receive the same reward as the doer himself, and there will be no reduction in the reward of the doer because of this.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] also said, *“By the oath of that Being in whose control lies my life, do not neglect the duty of commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong. Remember, if you neglect your duty, it is quite possible that Allah will send down His punishment upon you, and then you will pray to Him and your prayers will not be heard.”*

Let us all resolve that we shall try our best to discharge our duty, which in turn will secure the help of Almighty Allah.

We have been promised in the Qur-aan, *“Allah will certainly assist those who assist Him (i.e. the cause of Islam).”*

Lesson Twelve

Steadfastness on Islam

Once we have accepted the religion of Islam, it is now a special duty we owe to Allah, that we remain firm and steadfast on Islam at all times and in all conditions. We are not to give up Islam for anything.

Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“Verily those who say, ‘Our Sustainer is Allah’ and are then steadfast (on their faith and fulfil all its requisites), angels shall surely descend upon them (when they are about to die, saying to them), neither have any fear (of the future), nor grief (over the past), and rejoice about the paradise that you have been promised. We are your friends in the life of this world, as well as in the hereafter. There (in paradise) you shall have whatever your heart desires, and you shall have whatever you ask for. This is the hospitality from the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.”*

It is related that when the oppression caused by the polytheists of Makkah on the Muslims exceeded all limits, the Muslims approached Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] to turn to Allah in prayer, Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] replied, *“You have become disheartened so soon! Men of Allah before you were subjected to such brutal torture that combs of red hot iron were driven into their heads, and the skulls of some of them were sawed into two and yet they remained steadfast and did not abandon their faith.”*

May Allah allow us, weak servants, the courage to remain steadfast on Islam. Aameen.

Lesson Thirteen

Jihaad (Striving for the cause of Islam)

Muslims are required to make a sincere effort towards spreading, defending and keeping alive the way of Islam and service to Almighty Allah. This, in Islam, is called **Jihaad**. It can take many forms, depending on the circumstances, varying from time to time and place to place.

Suppose there arises a situation in which it becomes difficult for a person or his family or community to practice Islam and remain true to it, then in that case Jihaad will mean doing one's best for oneself, one's family or community to remain firm on Islam.

Similarly, should Muslims, through their own negligence, start drifting away from Islam, then at such a time, to devote one's time and energy for the revival of Islam would also be a kind of Jihaad.

To take Islam to those who are ignorant of it, and to make an effort for them to accept Islam, using wisdom and sympathy, is yet another form of Jihaad.

Should the believers be in the position of power and strength, and there is a need that collective force be used for the defence and assistance of Islam, then in such a case, the use of force for the defence and assistance of Islam, according to the rules laid down for it, will constitute Jihaad.

Two conditions are, however, essential for it. Firstly, this advancement should not be motivated by any personal or national self interest, greed or hatred. The object should be solely to carry out the command of Almighty Allah and to serve the cause of Islam. Secondly, the rules laid down for it must be strictly followed. If force is used without the fulfilment of these conditions, then it will not be Jihaad, rather it will be mischief and corruption.

To speak a just word before an oppressive ruler (be he a Muslim or a non-Muslim) is, again, a form of Jihaad. In the words of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him], it has been referred to as “the best of Jihaad.”

All these forms of religious struggles and efforts, at their proper time and place, are among the obligatory duties of Islam.

Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, “*Strive for Almighty Allah as you ought to strive for Him* (as is required of you, with total devotion, discipline and sincerity). *He has chosen you.*”

Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, “*For anyone of you to rise and participate in the way of Almighty Allah (in the defence and progress of Islam) is better than performing seventy years of worship in the corner of your home.*”

May Almighty Allah allow us to assist the cause of Islam and to earn the promised rewards. Aameen

Lesson Fourteen

The Virtue of Martyrdom

If a servant of Almighty Allah loses his life, either as a result of him remaining steadfast on Islam or in the cause of him struggling for the defence of Islam, then such a servant has attained the high position of being called a martyr in Islam.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“Never consider those killed in Almighty Allah’s way (while striving to uplift, defend and maintain Almighty Allah’s commands) to be dead. Indeed, they are alive, (and are) being sustained by their Rabb (Allah).”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“None among the people of paradise will ever want to be sent back to the world, although all the worldly joys and riches may be his if he is sent back, except one who has been killed in the way of Almighty Allah. Such a man will wish to be returned to the world ten times over so that he may be martyred in the path of Almighty Allah each time. This desire of his will be due to him seeing the status and special favours to be received on account of martyrdom.”*

Every loss or injury suffered, every pain and humiliation undergone for the sake of Islam will be immensely rewarded in the hereafter.

Lesson Fifteen

Life after Death

Everyone knows that whoever is born in the world has to die and leave the world one day. However, no one knows what happens or what will happen after death. This is known to Almighty Allah alone, and Allah revealed this knowledge to His Prophets [Peace be upon them]. The Prophets of Almighty Allah then informed us about it. Every Prophet of Almighty Allah informed his people of the stages they would have to pass after death and how, at each stage, they would be rewarded or punished for their deeds carried out during their earthly life.

There are three stages to follow after death. The first stage is from death to resurrection which is called *Barzakh*. After the death of a person, whether his body is buried in the ground, or is burnt and turned into ashes or is lowered into the flowing waters of a river, his soul does not die and perish under any circumstance. Rather, it is transferred from this temporary world to another realm. In that realm the angels of Almighty Allah will question him. If he is a true believer then he will answer the questions correctly. The angels will give him the good news that he is to live in peace and comfort till the Last Day. If he is not a believer but rather a disbeliever or a hypocrite, then he will be placed under severe punishment and pain till the Last Day.

The next stage comprises of the Day of Judgement and resurrection. The last day means that there will come a time when the entire world will be destroyed by the command of Almighty Allah. Then, after a period of time, Almighty Allah will bring back to life all of mankind. Every person will be called upon to give a full account of his or her worldly life. Those who will be successful will be awarded a place in paradise and those who will be found guilty and deserving of punishment will be sent to hell.

After this, the last stage will commence. The people of paradise will live forever in bliss and comfort in paradise, while the people of hell will have to live permanently in hell, a life of pain and punishment. This will be the last stage after death which will continue forever.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“Every soul shall taste death, and on the day of Judgement you will be given your rewards in full (although partial rewards are received in this world and in the grave). Whoever is saved from the fire of hell and entered into paradise shall truly be successful. The life of this world is merely an enjoyment and a place of deception.”*
- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“Every soul shall taste death, after which you all will be returned to us.”*

Lesson Sixteen

Jannah (Paradise) and Jahannam (Hell)

There will be those Muslims who will have lots of good deeds to their account and no punishment will be given to them on the day of judgement. They will enjoy the shade under the throne of Almighty Allah and they will have an easy entry into paradise.

Then there will be those Muslims who due to their sins will suffer some of the agonies on the day of judgement and they will have to spend some time in hell until they are forgiven. Nevertheless, every Muslim will eventually enter paradise, even though he has an atom's weight of faith. On the other hand the disbelievers and the polytheists will be doomed to live forever in hell.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“The description of paradise that the people of piety have been promised is that it has rivers of water that never becomes spoilt, rivers of milk the taste of which never changes (the milk doesn't rot), rivers of (pure) wine that is extremely palatable to those who drink it (without intoxicating them) and rivers of the purest honey. The people shall also have every type of fruit and forgiveness from their Rabb (Lord).”*
- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“As for those who disbelieve, garments of fire shall be cut out for them and boiling water will be poured over their heads. It will melt whatever is in*

their bellies, as well as their skins. There will be iron hammers for them (to beat them). Whenever they attempt to escape from the punishment out of grief, they will be returned and told, "Taste the punishment of burning."

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] mentioned that Almighty Allah says, *"For my faithful servants I have prepared (in paradise) such things which no eye has seen, nor did any ear hear of nor did the thought cross the heart of any man."*
- He has also said, *"The mildest punishment that will be inflicted on a person in hell is that he will be made to wear a pair of shoes made of fire which will be so hot as to set his brains boiling as if something was cooking in a pot on a stove."*

Life is temporary. One day we all must die. Death is certain, and so is Doomsday. We will surely have to stand before Almighty Allah after death and answer for our deeds on earth. There is still time for us to mend our ways, repent for our misdeeds and make a sincere effort for paradise. Should the rest of our life be spent in sin and unmindfulness, then be sure, the punishment of hell is awaiting us. May Allah save us all. Aameen

Lesson Seventeen

Zikr (The remembrance of Allah)

Islam means submission, where we surrender and hand over ourselves completely to the will of Almighty Allah, at all times.

This can only be possible if we are always mindful of Almighty Allah and our hearts are filled with the love and greatness of Almighty Allah. This will be attained if our tongues are kept moist with the *zikr* (remembrance) of Almighty Allah. It is the nature of man, that his frequent remembrance of someone with the tongue kindles the flame of love and greatness of that person in the heart. It is this love and greatness that will lead one to complete obedience and submission.

- Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“O you who believe! Remember Almighty Allah in abundance and glorify Him morning and evening.”*
- There are two things which lead one to forget Almighty Allah when one gets absorbed in them, namely ones wealth and family. Thus Almighty Allah warns us in the Qur-aan, *“O you who believe! Let not your wealth and your children make you neglect Almighty Allah’s remembrance. Those who do this are certainly losers.”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“For everything there is a polish and the polish of the heart is the zikr*

(remembrance) of Almighty Allah. And there is nothing more effective in saving us from the punishment of Almighty Allah, than the zikr of Almighty Allah.”

It should be understood well, that the actual meaning of zikr is that a person should never be without the remembrance of Almighty Allah. In whatever condition or occupation he finds himself in, he should not allow himself to become unmindful of Almighty Allah and His commandments.

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] was once asked, “O Messenger of Allah! The teachings of Islam are many. Could you tell me something that I may hold fast onto?” Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] replied, ‘Always keep your tongue moist (busy) with the zikr of Allah.’”

As a start, we should seek the advice of a spiritual guide and practice zikr at a fixed time and in a fixed number. Generally the third kalimah (Subhaa – nallaahi – walhamdu – lillaahi – walaa – ilaahaa – illallaahu – wal – laahu – akbar), durood shareef (sending peace and blessing upon Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] and istighfaar (seeking forgiveness) are prescribed. Time should also be set aside daily for the recitation of the Qur-aan.

Lesson Eighteen

Dua (supplication)

Whatever happens in the world happens by the will of Allah and everything that exists, does so with the command of Almighty Allah. Hence, it is only natural for us to pray to Allah for all our needs, big or small.

- Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, *“Call out to me, I shall answer (your prayer).”*
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“For whom the doors of dua have opened (i.e. Almighty Allah gives him the good fortune of turning to him in dua) for him the doors of the mercy of Almighty Allah have opened.”*

Together with *dua* being a means of fulfilling our needs, it is also a high form of worship which earns the pleasure of Almighty Allah. The only condition is that we should not be asking for something unlawful and sinful.

A *dua* made from the depths of one’s heart, with complete humility and having conviction in the power of Almighty Allah, will certainly be accepted by Almighty Allah.

Allah, the Most Merciful, listens to even the prayer of his sinful servants, just as he feeds them and clothes them despite their sins. One should, therefore, not give up begging Almighty Allah, thinking ones prayers to be useless.

It will be foolish to lose heart and stop praying to Allah if our prayer is not answered immediately. Sometimes, for our benefit, there may be a delay or at times in place of what we asked for, something better is granted or a calamity is removed, or better still its rewards and blessings are set aside for us in the hereafter. Thus we should continue praying to Almighty Allah with a firm and positive heart.

Lesson Nineteen

Durood Shareef – Sending peace and salutations upon our Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]

Durood Shareef in actual fact is a prayer that we make to Almighty Allah that He showers His choicest favours and blessings upon Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]. After all, it was Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] who bore the severest of hardships in order to convey Allah's commands to us. Had Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] not borne these trials and sufferings, then the light of Islam would not have reached us. We would have been lost in the darkness of disbelief.

Since Islam is the greatest gift on earth, and we have received it through Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him], thus after Almighty Allah, our greatest benefactor is Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]. We will never be able to repay Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]. The least we can do is pray for him to Almighty Allah as a sign of our loyalty and gratefulness.

Our prayer for Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him], in keeping with his honour and position is, "O Almighty Allah! Shower your special mercy and blessing upon Prophet Muhammad [Peace be

upon him] and continue to raise his stages.” This type of prayer is called **Durood**.

Almighty Allah mentions in the Qur-aan, “*Verily Allah and His angels send durood on Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]* (i.e. Almighty Allah showers special mercies on him and the angels pray for him). *O’ you who believe! Send durood and salaam to him.* (Pray to Allah to shower special mercies and peace on him by reciting the various forms of durood reported in the authentic books).”

In this verse we are informed that Almighty Allah Himself honours Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] and showers him with His special mercy, and that His Angels do the same. They honour Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] and they pray for Allah’s special mercy to be showered upon him. Thereafter we are also commanded in the same verse to send durood upon Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]. Thus, before the command is given, care has been taken to inform us, that this action is indeed pleasing to Almighty Allah and is a special occupation of the Angels. Can there be any Muslim who will fail in his duty of sending durood upon Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him]?

- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said: “*He who will send durood on me once, Almighty Allah will bestow ten favours on him.*”
- In another narration, it has also been said that: “*Allah will forgive ten of his sins and raise him higher in rank by ten stages.*”
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said: “*There are many angels of Allah whose special duty is that they keep on moving in the world and whichever follower of mine sends durood on me, they carry it to me at once.*”
- Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said: “*The closest person to me on the day of Judgement will be he who sends the most durood on me.*”

Whenever we take the name of Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] or talk about him or hear about him from anyone, we should at once say “Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam”. (This is the shortest form of durood).

Lesson Twenty

Taubah (Repentance)

Amongst the believers, there are those who sometimes fall into error. They are misled by the devil or by their own nafs (base desires) into committing sin. For such people Allah has kept the doors of *taubah* (repentance) open.

Taubah means that if a person breaks any command of Almighty Allah and falls into sin, then he should firstly leave out that sin. Secondly he should regret and feel genuinely sorry and ashamed over that sin, and thirdly he should sincerely resolve never to repeat that sin, and he should seek the forgiveness of Almighty Allah with all his heart. In doing this much, the sin is forgiven and the person will earn the pleasure of Almighty Allah.

It is essential to know that *taubah* (repentance) is not a mere verbal utterance of words. Rather, the sorrow must be sincere, the shame and regret must be felt in the heart and the promise not to repeat the sin must be genuine.

For example, suppose in a fit of anger or in a moment of severe mental depression, a person swallows poison with the intention of killing himself. When the poison begins to work and a thousand knives begin to tear his intestines into pieces and he knows that death is near, he repents and cries out in desperation for medical help. Now at that time, his only thought will be that if he survives he will never

touch the poison again or think of ever committing suicide. This exactly should be the state of a man who repents after sinning. His heart should be seized with the fear of divine punishment and he should be firm in his promise not to repeat the sin. If a person feels this, he should be sure that the sin has been washed away and the gates of mercy have opened up for him. After such repentance, the sinner is completely free of his sin and he becomes beloved in the sight of Almighty Allah.

Allah mentions in the Holy Qur-aan, *“Will they not rather turn to Almighty Allah (in repentance) and sincerely seek forgiveness from Him? Allah is Most Forgiving, Most Merciful.”*

Our beloved Prophet Muhammad [Peace be upon him] said, *“Allah extends the arm of mercy and forgiveness every night so that the sinners of the day may repent and seek His pardon, and every day so that the sinners of the night may repent and seek His pardon, and it shall be like this with Allah till the sun rises from the west, close to the last day.”*

From this we learn how merciful and forgiving our Almighty Allah is. This does not mean that we should become bold in committing sins with the hope of having them forgiven. Rather, if a person has fallen in sin, he should not despair and lose hope in the mercy of Allah. He should immediately turn to Allah in repentance and sincerely beg His forgiveness.

We should not delay in repenting. Our good health and young age should not deceive us. Death may strike at any moment. We should consider each day to be our last and lose no time in repenting and begging the forgiveness of Almighty Allah. We should grab the first opportunity, realise the value of life and immediately mend our ways.

If, after offering repentance for a sin, we happen to repeat that sin, then there is no need to become so frustrated that we lose hope in the mercy of Almighty Allah. Rather we should quickly repent again, and if we again repeat the sin, then we should not hesitate to repent once more, even if it be a thousand times. We should remember that

as long as we sincerely turn to Almighty Allah, Almighty Allah will continue to accept and forgive us.

Islam is truly a blessing to the entire universe and to all of the creation.