

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

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

Contemplation of Surat Al-Hajj

By Dr. Ruqaiya Al-Alwani

All praise and thanks be to Allah,¹ and may His Blessings and Peace be upon Prophet Muhammad, the last of the prophets, and upon his family and companions.

Dear Readers,

May peace and Allah's Mercy and Blessings be upon you.² First of all I would like to congratulate all those who have been honored and chosen by Allah to perform the Hajj and visit His Sacred House. To you all, dear readers, I present these lines in contemplation of a great Qur'an chapter. It is Surat Al-Hajj (chapter 22) which every Muslim ought to comprehend and ponder on its great verses and their meanings.

¹ All Arabs – Muslims as well as non-Muslims – refer to God using the word *Allah* which means the One and Only True God. This term is not subject to gender (male or female) or to plurality – a befitting and consistent emphasis on the transcendence and Divine Majesty of the Creator. It is not only mentioned in the Qur'an but in other religious scripture revealed to God's messengers and prophets such as the Hebrew Old Testament where the word Allah appears 89 times.

² This is the Islamic greeting *As-salamu alaikom wa Rahmat Allahi wa Barakatoh*.

Glossary

ﷺ: صلى الله عليه وسلم May Allah bless him and grant him peace.

عز وجل: Exalted in Might and Glorified is He (Allah).³

RAA: رضي الله عنه/عنها May Allah be pleased with him/her.

SWT: سبحانه وتعالى Far removed is Allah from any imperfection and Most Exalted is He. Another translation: Glorified and Highly Exalted is He.

Dhikr: ذكر Remembrance of Allah by the tongue and/or heart. These include praising, thanking, praying to Allah and asking for His Forgiveness.

Hajj: الحج is the Pilgrimage to Makkah (Mecca). The pilgrims perform a series of ritual acts symbolic of the lives of Ibrahim (Abraham) and his wife Hajar (Hagar) who gave him his first son, Ismael (Ishmael). The acts also symbolize the solidarity of Muslims worldwide.

Hijrah: الهجرة is the migration of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) and the first Muslims from Makkah to Madina due to religious persecution.

Ihram: الإحرام is a state which a Muslim must enter in order to perform the Hajj or the 'Umrah (minor pilgrimage) in which certain practices are prohibited such as sexual intercourse, hunting and using perfume. A pilgrim must enter into this state before crossing the pilgrimage boundary, known as *Miqat*, by performing the ritual cleansing and wearing the prescribed attire.

Ka'bah: الكعبة is the name of the first house of worship established for humanity according to the Qur'an (3:96). It was

³ words of praising and glorifying Allah

rebuilt by by Prophet Abraham together with his son Ishmael (peace be on them).

Rabb: رب Lord of the Universe, the Creator, the Provider, the Sustainer.

Shirk: الشرك is the converse of *Tawheed*, thus an invalidator thereof. To commit *shirk* means to associate partners with Allah or to ascribe to other than Allah what may be ascribed to Him. This is a terrible sin in Islam.

Surah/Surat: سورة is a Qur'an chapter. The ending of the word changes for pronunciation purposes.

Taqwa: تقوى The Arabic word *Taqwa* has all the following meanings: piety, righteousness, fear and love of Allah, being conscious of Him and taking great care to avoid His displeasure.

Tawaf: الطواف is a form of worship that involves walking around the *Ka'bah* in circuits.

Tawheed: التوحيد is Islam's most fundamental concept confirming the Oneness and Uniqueness of the Creator and that none has the right to be worshipped except Him.⁴ According to the Qur'an, this concept was also the main focus of all Allah's prophets and messengers to all nations.

Zakah: الزكاة is a certain amount of one's property that is to be paid to the poor and other recipients mentioned in detail in the Qur'an (9:60).

⁴ i.e., in terms of our deeds, no one is entitled to what Allah is entitled to.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ أَنْقُوا رَبِّكُمْ ۚ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١﴾ يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمَلٍ حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَرَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَرَىٰ وَلَٰكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ ﴿٢﴾ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّبِعُ كُلَّ شَيْطَانٍ مَّرِيدٍ ﴿٣﴾ كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ مَن تَوَلَّاهُ فَأَنَّهُ يُضِلُّهُ وَيَهْدِيهِ إِلَىٰ عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿٤﴾ يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن تَرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِّن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّنْ عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّنْ مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَنُقَرُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشُدَّكُمْ ۖ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يَتُوفَّىٰ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يَرُدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْضِ الْوَعْدِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِن بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا ۚ وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنْبَتَتْ مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ ﴿٥﴾ ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّهُ يُحْيِي الْمَوْتَىٰ وَأَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٦﴾ وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ مَن فِي الْقُبُورِ ﴿٧﴾

The translation:⁵

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

(1) O mankind, fear your Lord. Indeed, the convulsion of the [final] Hour is a terrible thing. (2) On the Day you see it every nursing mother will be distracted from that [child] she was nursing, and every pregnant woman will abort her pregnancy, and you will see the people [appearing] intoxicated while they are not intoxicated; but the punishment of Allah is severe. (3) And of the people is he who disputes about Allah without knowledge and follows every rebellious devil. (4) It has been decreed for every devil that whoever turns to him - he will misguide him and will lead him to the punishment of the Blaze. (5) O People, if you should be in doubt about the Resurrection, then [consider that] indeed, We⁶ created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, and then from a lump of flesh, formed and unformed - that We may show you.⁷ And We settle in the wombs whom We will for a specified term, then We bring you out as a child, and then [We develop you] that you may reach your [time of] maturity. And among you is he who is taken in [early] death, and among you is he who is returned to the most decrepit [old] age so that he knows, after [once having] knowledge, nothing. And you see the earth barren, but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows [something] of every beautiful kind. (6) That is because Allah is the Truth and because He gives life to the dead and because He is over all things

⁵ All translations of Qur'an verses in this book are according to Saheeh International.

⁶ It is to be noted that the reference of God to Himself as "We" in many verses of the Qur'an is necessarily understood in the Arabic language to denote grandeur and power. In the English language this is known as the *Royal We*, where a plural pronoun is used to refer to a single person holding a high office such as a monarch.

⁷ Our power and creative ability

competent (7) And [that they may know] that the Hour is coming – no doubt about it – and that Allah will resurrect those in the graves.

This great *surah* is considered by the interpreters of the Qur'an to be unique. Some of its verses were revealed to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) during the daytime and some at night, when he was traveling and when he was not, in Makkah (Mecca) as well as in Madina, during peace and in wartime. It is the only chapter with a title that matches the name of one of the pillars of Islam.⁸ There are no chapters with the titles: Prayer, Fasting or *Zakah* – only Hajj.

One of the greatest purposes of Surat Al-Hajj is to establish *Taqwa*⁹ in the heart. The verses develop *Taqwa* in our souls in a step-by-step approach throughout the entire *surah* which starts with verses that do not seem at a first glance to be directly linked to its title (the Hajj).

O mankind, fear¹⁰ your Lord. Indeed, the convulsion of the [final] Hour is a terrible¹¹ thing. (22:1)

The first verse addresses all humanity, not only believers. Allah (SWT) asks us all to establish *Taqwa*. The 'convulsion of the [final] Hour' refers to the Day of Judgment forgotten by

⁸ The Five Pillars of Islam are the framework of the Muslim life. They are the testimony of faith, prayer, giving *zakah*, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the pilgrimage to Makkah once in a lifetime for those who are able.

⁹ See the glossary.

¹⁰ The original Arabic word is a verb derived from the word *Taqwa*.

¹¹ awesome and overwhelming

many, who are completely absorbed in their worldly life, though they are heading towards this Day every hour and minute. Everyone will witness this Day, no matter how much one tries to escape or deny its existence. It is coming with all its horrors that will make a nursing mother turn her attention away from her own baby (22:2). People will be in a state of shock and distress which will make them appear as if they were intoxicated.

Here one should reflect: What can I offer to save myself from such horrors? Is there a way to salvation? What deeds can I do and what qualities can I develop while I am still here in this worldly life that will save me on this terrible Day?

Surat Al-Hajj provides the answers to all of these pressing questions and concerns in a practical way. The verses show us the source of heedlessness which plagues the mind, making it oblivious of the Day of Resurrection.¹²

The *surah* classifies people into different groups according to their beliefs regarding this Day. Though an indisputable issue, one group denies the existence of such Day. Their claims are baseless and there is no evidence to support their argument. These people follow personal inclinations as well as Satan, who leads them astray by promising them (in their thoughts) that this Day could not be possible, or that it is so far away.

Belief in the Resurrection is a cornerstone of faith – without it one's faith is never complete. It is crucial because all one's

¹² The Day of Resurrection is another name for the Day of Judgment. On this day, Allah will resurrect everyone to be judged according to what they did in this worldly life.

decisions and actions in this life depend on it. This belief also alleviates the burdens of life and reinforces the fact that this worldly life is meant for toil, not for reward – a fact which we sometimes forget.

Is there anyone who has never had a moment when one felt that he (or she) was unjustly treated by others? Who has never felt that the world lacks true and absolute justice? Who has never felt that there must be a fair reckoning for what goes on in this life; a fair court that is not based on subjective human standards? Belief in the Resurrection makes negative feelings (of frustration) stop where they should and the believer continues to do good deeds, entrusting the Creator with one's rights when human courts fail to defend them. There is a Day of Judgment, a Day of Recompense when every soul will be paid in full that which it has earned.¹³ There will be no injustice on that Day for there will be no sovereignty or judgment except Allah's and He is the Prevailing, the Just.¹⁴

I may do great good deeds but not reap the fruit of my labor in this life for one reason or another. I may exert my utmost effort but not get anything in return. My effort might not be justly appreciated by my family, at work, or by my community. Who will reward and compensate me? It is Allah (SWT). The Day of Judgment is a day of rest and happiness for believers – for the truthful ones whose hard work in this life was sincere.

Besides, when man lacks belief that there is a Watcher Who observes him or a Recompense for whatever was earned of good or evil in this life; when man feels far away from all these

¹³ an expression from the Qur'an such as in 2:281

¹⁴ *Al-Qahhar* (the Prevailing) and *Al-Adl* (the Just) are among the names of Allah.

forms of supervision, his soul may entice him to commit offences against others, to violate the rights of others, to spread corruption and injustice in the earth. Belief in the Day of Judgment deters man from committing such evils.

Verse 5 addresses the arrogant person who argues about Allah and the Resurrection without knowledge. The verse addresses him through logic and sense, not through faith – which only works with a believer.

O People, if you should be in doubt about the Resurrection, then [consider that] indeed, We¹⁵ created you from dust, then from a sperm-drop, then from a clinging clot, and then from a lump of flesh, formed and unformed - that We may show you....(22:5)

How can you argue about the Resurrection or question the ability of Allah (ﷻ) to give life to people after death? How can you argue when it is He (SWT) who created humans from dust? Adam was created from dust. What room is left for argument when you see how an embryo grows, passing through stages which the Qur'an mentioned hundreds of years before these facts were discovered by scientists? Who has made these astonishing stages? Who has perfected them? Who other than Allah (SWT) can change a sperm-drop into a clinging clot and a clinging clot into a lump of flesh?¹⁶ Who dares to question the Almighty's ability to resurrect after this?

¹⁵ See footnote 6.

¹⁶ The original Arabic word which was translated into 'a lump of flesh' is the word *mudghah* which means a 'chewed substance'. This is because of the somites at the back of the embryo that "resemble teeth marks in a chewed substance" as mentioned in *The Developing Human*, Moore and Persaud, 5th ed., p.8.

This great verse then presents another image which stirs man deeply, ringing alarm bells to awaken him from his oblivion. It is a picture that makes him certain that the Day of Judgment will inevitably come – no matter how much he may try to escape or avoid it. The verse presents an image which we see before our eyes day and night:

And you see the earth barren but when We send down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows [something] of every beautiful kind. (22:5)

To sense the greatness of this verse, we need to contemplate the universe around us. Everything in it speaks of the Supreme Power of its Creator. Who revives the dry and lifeless earth? With His Power, Allah (SWT) sends down upon it rain that gives life back to it and makes it fruitful. If man links the words of this verse to his observations of the universe, he will abandon his arrogance, his stubbornness and baseless insistence regarding Allah's ability (SWT) to bring us back to life.

After belief in the Resurrection has been established; after knowing that *the Hour is coming – no doubt about it – and that Allah will resurrect those in the graves (22:7)*; now that you know that there will be a fair trial where people are going to be judged according to their deeds and behaviors, you are left to choose your path in this life. Do what you will, but always remember that you will be judged for everything you do. Surat Al-Hajj reinforces this truth, which is absent from many minds.

But one may wonder why the verses discuss belief in the Resurrection when the *surah* is about the Hajj. Glorified is Allah, the Almighty! The Qur'an is miraculous and unique in every way: the harmony between the verses and the chapters, the order of the verses in every chapter, the parables, etc. The link between the Resurrection and the Hajj is that the latter is a preview of the Day of Resurrection, on a small scale. The rites of the Hajj are one of the most powerful things that instill in us the belief in the Day of Resurrection. If you want to get the feel of this, you should perform the Hajj. What one sees in the Hajj summons the Day of Resurrection to the mind: big crowds standing, waiting, looking sleepless, weary and fragile; the submissiveness of people to Allah; their simple clothing that does not distinguish between rich and poor, or black and white. Those pilgrims left behind them their worldly life – their businesses, their children and everything that distracts them from their Creator. All supplicate constantly, humbly asking Allah (SWT), the One God, the King. They all seek one common thing: mercy and forgiveness from the Generous Lord.

These awesome scenes remind us of the Day of Resurrection. But pilgrims gathering in the sacred sites – Arafat, Mina, Muzdalifah, etc. – still belong to this world where one has a chance to do good deeds and correct one's paths. The Hajj itself is a great deed. On the Day of Resurrection, however, we will gather but that will not be the time for deeds and only judgment will be awaiting us. This is the link that everyone performing the Hajj should remember. Everyone standing at Mount Arafat should remember the horrific situation which will inevitably come. A pilgrim moving from Mina to Arafat to Muzdalifah should remember the progression from one station to another on the Day of Resurrection. Remind

yourself of the state you will be in and never forget that you still have the chance to do good before it is too late.

Belief in the Resurrection is present throughout Surat Al-Hajj, thus emphasizing the importance of *Taqwa*. This belief should become the main motivation that drives man to work hard in this life and be equipped for the Hereafter – sacrificing worldly things for an immortal life. When a pilgrim summons these meanings, he or she can perform Hajj *Mabroor*.¹⁷ The only reward for such a Hajj is Paradise.

¹⁷ It is the Hajj accepted by Allah – one which was performed without doing any wrong.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُّنبِئٍ
 ٨ ثَانِي عَطْفِهِ لِيُضِلَّ عَن سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ
 وَنُذِيقُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ٩ ذَلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْتَ يَدَاكَ
 وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَمٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ ١٠ وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ
 حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ ١١ وَإِنْ أَصَابَتْهُ فَتْنَةٌ أُنْقَلَبَ عَلَىٰ
 وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ١٢ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ ١٣
 يَدْعُوا مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُ وَمَا لَا نَفْعَ لَهُ ١٤ ذَلِكَ هُوَ
 الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ ١٥ يَدْعُوا لَمَن ضَرُّهُ أَقْرَبُ مِن نَّفْعِهِ ١٦ لَيْسَ
 الْمَوْلَىٰ وَلَيْسَ الْعَشِيرُ ١٧ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا
 الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِن تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ ١٨ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ
 ١٩ مَن كَانَ يَظُنُّ أَن لَّن يَنْصُرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ
 بِسَبَبِ إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ لْيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهُ مَا يَغِيظُ
 ٢٠ وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ ءَايَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَن يُرِيدُ ٢١

The translation:

(8) And of the people is he who disputes about Allah without knowledge or guidance or an enlightening book [from Him], (9) Twisting his neck [in arrogance] to mislead [people] from the way of Allah. For him in the world is disgrace, and We will make him taste on the Day of Resurrection the punishment of the Burning Fire [while it is said], (10) "That is for what your hands have put forth and because Allah is not ever unjust to [His] servants." (11) And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to the other direction]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what the manifest loss is. (12) He invokes instead of Allah that which neither harms him nor benefits him. That is what the extreme error is. (13) He invokes one whose harm is closer than his benefit - how wretched the protector and how wretched the associate. (14) Indeed, Allah will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds to gardens beneath which rivers flow. Indeed, Allah does what He intends. (15) Whoever should think that Allah will not support [Prophet Muhammad] in this world and the Hereafter - let him extend a rope to the ceiling, then cut off [his breath],¹⁸ and let him see: will his effort remove that which enrages [him]? (16) And thus have We sent the Qur'an down as verses of clear evidence and because Allah guides whom He intends.

¹⁸ i.e., hang himself

The verses then present another group of people who may believe in the Resurrection, but this belief has no real effect on their lives. Their faith is weak, unable to prevent them from being subservient to this worldly life and its demands. Allah (SWT) describes this group of people as follows:

And of the people is he who worships Allah on an edge. If he is touched by good, he is reassured by it; but if he is struck by trial, he turns on his face [to the other direction]. He has lost [this] world and the Hereafter. That is what the manifest loss is. (22:11)

Here the relationship with Allah (ﷻ) is one based on benefit. These people worship Allah as long as this worship brings worldly benefits such as increase in wealth, good health and blessed children. The more Allah (SWT) increases worldly benefits for this group of people, the more they become pious and draw themselves closer to Him. However, when things do not go their way and the tide begins to turn, they start to grumble and fall behind in their duties towards Allah (ﷻ). With trials and afflictions, their confidence in their Lord begins to wane. One may address the Lord saying, “O *Rabb*, I pray to you more than ever, I performed the Hajj and became more devout. But the more I try to get closer to You, the worse my lot in this life becomes?!”

Such reproach is not acceptable. My relationship with Allah (ﷻ) should be consistent, not dependant on circumstances. I love Him in good times and in bad times, in prosperity and in poverty, in health and in sickness, and I love Him when the world is going my way and when it is going against me. My criteria should not be linked to the world; the real criteria

should be my trust and absolute belief in Allah (SWT). This unshakable trust in the Lord makes me confident that when He prevents me from having what I desire, it is for my own good. I may not comprehend the wisdom of a calamity that befalls me, a setback in business, wealth or health; but for a believer, everything that befalls him or her has a good outcome. During good times the believer is grateful and drawing closer to Allah (ﷻ) while during hardship he is patient. In both cases he is a winner.

The verses of Surat Al-Hajj aim at developing this kind of relationship between man and Allah. It is a relationship of absolute trust in Allah (SWT) and an unshakable faith that He does not choose for His believing servants except what is best. This trust is part of perfect worship.

In Hadith Qudsi¹⁹ our Lord (SWT) says,

«أَنَا عِنْدَ حُسْنِ ظَنِّ عَبْدِي بِي»

I am as My servant expects me to be.

We should, therefore, expect our supplications to be answered when we ask Allah (SWT) and we should expect His forgiveness when we repent (as Al-Qurtubi says).

Consider the situation of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) when he was attacked and driven out from At-Ta'if by its people. He travelled to them, undergoing pains to call them to Islam, but was met with rejection. Moreover, they made their boys

¹⁹ Hadith Qudsi is a saying by Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) where the words are attributed directly to Allah (SWT).

throw stones at him. Did he give up? Was his trust in his Creator (SWT) shaken? Not for one moment. He complained to his *Rabb* (SWT) with words that included the following:

« إِنْ لَمْ يَكُنْ بِكَ غَضَبٌ عَلَيَّ فَلَا أُبَالِي... لَكَ الْعُتْبَى حَتَّى تَرْضَى، وَلَا حَوْلَ وَلَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِكَ. »

If Your anger is not directed at me, then I care not (what they do). I will keep asking for Your forgiveness until You are pleased with me. And there is no might or power except with You.

This is the steadfast faith. This type of faith is what we need. Weak trust in Allah (SWT), the lack of it or not expecting what is best of Him leads man to seek help from created beings or objects instead of the Creator. This is a great flaw in *Tawheed*.

He invokes instead of Allah that which neither harms him nor benefits him. That is what the extreme error is. He invokes one whose harm is closer than his benefit – how wretched the protector and how wretched the associate. (22:12-13)

Weak trust in Allah (SWT) drags man to be under the control of others depending on them, not on the Creator, for provision and support. His heart becomes attached to another created being *whose harm is closer than his benefit – how wretched the protector and how wretched the associate.*

In the Hajj, one sees the constant supplications of humans to their Creator. The rich and the poor, the strong and the weak, the distinguished and the humble, the old and the young, the black and the white, the Arab and the non-Arab – all feel in

need of the Creator (*SWT*). This revives in the soul the feeling that there is no helper but Allah, no giver except Him, no defender other than Him. And this is also the feeling that the verses of Surat Al-Hajj develops in the soul.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّٰبِغِينَ وَالنَّصِرَىٰ وَالْمَجُوسَ وَالَّذِينَ
 أَشْرَكُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيٰمَةِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ
 شَهِدٌ ﴿٧٧﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ مَن فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَمَن فِي
 الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالْدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ
 مِّنَ النَّاسِ ۗ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ الْعَذَابُ ۗ وَمَن يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ مِن مُّكْرِمٍ ۚ
 إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَآءُ ﴿٧٨﴾ هٰذَا خِصْمَانِ اٰخْتَصَمُوْا فِي رَيْبٍ
 فَالَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا قُطِعَتْ لَهُمْ ثِيَابٌ مِّنْ نَّارٍ يُّصْبُ مِنْ فَوْقِ رُءُوسِهِمْ
 الْحَمِيْمِ ﴿٧٩﴾ يُصْهَرُ بِهٖءَا مَا فِي بُطُوْنِهِمْ وَالْجُلُوْدُ ﴿٨٠﴾ وَهُمْ مَّقْمَعُ مِنْ
 حَدِيْدٍ ﴿٨١﴾ كَلِمًا اَرَادُوْا اَنْ يَخْرُجُوْا مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ اُعِيْدُوْا فِيْهَا وَذُقُوْا
 عَذَابَ الْحَرِيْقِ ﴿٨٢﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ اٰمَنُوْا وَعَمِلُوْا
 الصَّٰلِحٰتِ جَنَّتْ جَنَّتٍ تَجْرٰى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْاَنْهٰرُ تُخَلَّوْنَ فِيْهَا مِنْ اَسَاوِرَ مِنْ
 ذَهَبٍ وَّلُوْلُوْا ۗ وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيْهَا حَرِيْرٌ ﴿٨٣﴾ وَهُدُوْا اِلَى الطَّيِّبِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ
 وَهُدُوْا اِلَى صِرَاطِ الْحَمِيْدِ ﴿٨٤﴾ اِنَّ الَّذِيْنَ كَفَرُوْا وَيَصُدُّوْنَ عَن سَبِيْلِ
 اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِي جَعَلْنٰهُ لِلنَّاسِ سَوَآءَ الْعٰكِفِ فِيْهِ وَالْبَادِ
 وَمَنْ يُرِدْ فِيْهِ بِالْحَادِ بِظُلْمٍ نُّذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ الْاَلِيْمِ ﴿٨٥﴾

The Translation:

(17) Indeed, those who have believed and those who were Jews and the Sabians²⁰ and the Christians and the Magians²¹ and those who associated with Allah - Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed Allah is, over all things, Witness. (18) Do you not see [i.e., know] that to Allah prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the moving creatures and many of the people? But upon many the punishment has been justified. And he whom Allah humiliates - for him there is no bestower of honor. Indeed, Allah does what He wills. ﴿²² (19) These are two adversaries who have disputed over their Lord. But those who disbelieved will have cut out for them garments of fire. Poured upon their heads will be scalding water (20) By which is melted that within their bellies and [their] skins. (21) And for [striking] them are maces of iron. (22) Every time they want to get out of Hellfire from anguish, they will be returned to it, and [it will be said], "Taste the punishment of the Burning Fire!" (23) Indeed, Allah will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds to gardens beneath which rivers flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearl, and their garments therein will be silk. (24) And they had been guided [in worldly life] to good speech, and they were guided to the path of the Praiseworthy. (25) Indeed, those who have disbelieved and avert [people] from the way of Allah and [from] al-Masjid al-Haram, which We made for the people - equal are the resident therein and one from outside; and [also] whoever intends [a

²⁰ followers of an old monotheistic religion (Mandaeism)

²¹ Zoroastrians

²² This sign indicates an occasion for prostration (Sujood in Arabic).

deed] therein²³ of deviation [in religion] or wrongdoing - We will make him taste of a painful punishment.

The verses continue to strengthen the belief in the Resurrection until we reach verse 18 where we read the following words:

Do you not see [i.e., know] that to Allah prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the moving creatures and many of the people? But upon many the punishment has been justified.²⁴ And he whom Allah humiliates - for him there is no bestower of honor. Indeed, Allah does what He wills. ﴿۲۱﴾ (22:18)

After instilling the belief in the Resurrection in the believer's heart and soul, the verses take us to the realm of praising the Creator (SWT) and prostrating to Him. To this realm belongs everything in the universe: the trees, the moon, the stars, the mountains, etc. They pay adoration to Allah, submit and surrender to Him. But why does man refuse to submit his will to Allah like everything else in the universe? Why is it that we do not feel the Greatness the Creator and follow His commands like the rest of the creation? The sign for prostration (﴿۲۱﴾) at the end of verse 18 has great significance. Reflect on these words:

²³ whether inside its boundaries or intending from afar to do evil therein

²⁴ and therefore decreed

And he whom Allah humiliates - for him there is no bestower of honor.

Whoever is too proud to prostrate before the Creator (SWT) and submit to Him is in fact humiliating himself, for one will definitely submit to another mortal being or object, and that is the peak of humiliation. On the other hand, the peak of dignity is in one's submission to the Creator. The peak of dignity is to prostrate before the Creator (SWT). In prostration, the forehead touches the ground and the heart surrenders to the Almighty Whose Power controls everything in the universe.

These²⁵ are two adversaries who have disputed over their Lord. But those who disbelieved will have cut out for them garments of fire. Poured upon their heads will be scalding water. (22:19)

The final Judgment is a repeated theme throughout Surat Al-Hajj. Disbelievers are reminded of the punishment that awaits them. As to the believers, it is reward:

Indeed, Allah will admit those who believe and do righteous deeds to gardens beneath which rivers flow. They will be adorned therein with bracelets of gold and pearl, and their garments therein will be silk. (22:23)

It was mentioned before that Surat Al-Hajj aims at developing *Taqwa* in the heart. The *surah* also aims at creating a humble, submissive heart that keeps going back to the Lord (SWT). The most effective way to achieve this is to keep the Day of Resurrection and the final Judgment present in our thoughts

²⁵ believers and disbelievers

and minds. The Prophet (ﷺ) always reminded his companions, of the Hereafter and the final Judgment. He wanted this issue to be always present in their thoughts as if they were actually living it. He wanted to keep their hearts attached to Heaven, not to be distracted by this world's temptations and distractions.

عن أَنَسِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ قَالَ: أُهْدِيَ لِلنَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ جُبَّةٌ سُنْدُسٌ وَكَانَ يَنْهَى عَنِ الْحَرِيرِ فَعَجِبَ النَّاسُ مِنْهَا فَقَالَ: « وَالَّذِي نَفْسُ مُحَمَّدٍ بِيَدِهِ لَمَنَادِيلُ سَعْدِ بْنِ مُعَاذٍ فِي الْجَنَّةِ أَحْسَنُ مِنْ هَذَا. »

Narrated Anas (RAA): A *Jubba* (i.e. cloak) made of fine silk was presented to the Prophet (ﷺ). The Prophet used to forbid (men) to wear silk. So people were fascinated to see it. The Prophet said, “By Him (Allah) in Whose Hands the soul of Muhammad is, the handkerchiefs of Sa’d bin Mu’adh²⁶ in Paradise are better than this.”²⁷

What made the Prophet (ﷺ) mention the handkerchiefs of Sa’d in Paradise on this occasion? He wanted to change people’s focus in a swift and powerful way from this worldly issue (the silk cloak) that they were looking at to another issue associated with the Hereafter (the handkerchiefs of Sa’d in Paradise).

When the Hereafter is always present in our minds, this motivates us to work and sacrifice in return for Paradise.

²⁶ Sa’d bin Mu’adh (RAA) was one of the greatest companions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). He died after his injury in the Battle of the Trench.

²⁷ narrated by Bukhari

عَنْ أَنَسِ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُ أَنَّ عَمَّهُ غَابَ عَنْ بَدْرِ فَقَالَ: غَيْبْتُ عَنْ أَوَّلِ قِتَالِ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ. لَئِنْ أَشْهَدَنِي اللَّهُ مَعَ النَّبِيِّ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ لَيَرِيَنَّ اللَّهُ مَا أُجِدُّ. فَلَقِي يَوْمَ أُحُدٍ فَهَزِمَ النَّاسُ، فَقَالَ: اللَّهُمَّ إِنِّي أَعْتَذِرُ إِلَيْكَ مِمَّا صَنَعَ هَؤُلَاءِ - يَعْنِي الْمُسْلِمِينَ - وَأَبْرَأُ إِلَيْكَ مِمَّا جَاءَ بِهِ الْمُشْرِكُونَ. فَتَقَدَّمَ بِسَيْفِهِ فَلَقِيَ سَعْدَ بْنَ مُعَاذٍ فَقَالَ: أَيْنَ يَا سَعْدُ، إِنِّي أُجِدُّ رِيحَ الْجَنَّةِ دُونَ أُحُدٍ؟ فَمَضَى فَقَتِلَ فَمَا عُرِفَ حَتَّى عَرَفَتْهُ أُخْتُهُ بِشَامَةٍ أَوْ بِبِنَانِهِ وَبِهِ بَضْعٌ وَثَمَانُونَ مِنْ طَعْنَةٍ وَضَرْبَةٍ وَرَمِيَةٍ بِسَهْمٍ.

Narrated Anas (RAA): His uncle (Anas bin An-Nadr) was absent from the battle of Badr and he said, "I was absent from the first battle of the Prophet (i.e., the Battle of Badr), and if Allah should let me participate in (a battle) with the Prophet (ﷺ), Allah will see how strongly I will fight." So he witnessed the Battle of Uhud. Some Muslims fled and he said, "O Allah! I appeal to You to excuse these (i.e., the Muslims) for what they have done, and I disavow (disown) myself from what the polytheists have done." Then he went forward with his sword and met Sa'd bin Mu'adh, and asked him, "Where are you going, O Sa'd? I detect the fragrance of Paradise before Uhud." Then he proceeded on and was killed. Nobody was able to recognize him till his sister recognized him by a mole on his body or by the tips of his fingers. He had over eighty wounds caused by stabbing, striking or shooting with arrows.²⁸

Why have we become today so detached from the Hereafter? Why do we cling to this world so strongly, unable to sacrifice any of its temporal pleasures? What has made us reach this state? The reason is the absence of the Hereafter and Paradise

²⁸ narrated by Bukhari

from our thoughts and hearts. Therefore, if you move to a new house, remember the houses and palaces of Paradise. When you wear something new, remember the silk clothes in Paradise. When you smell a beautiful scent, remember the fragrance of Paradise. When you see a beautiful natural scene, remember Paradise and its rivers. Keeping the Hereafter and Paradise alive in our thoughts is what we need in order to acquire true faith that will bring *Taqwa* into our hearts, our lives and our behavior. This is what Surat Al-Hajj develops in our souls, verse after verse.

And they had been guided [in worldly life] to good speech, and they were guided to the path of the Praiseworthy. (22:24)

The Recompense is always there, and it is related to the nature of the deed. Before doing a good deed, Allah shows you the reward. The verses then move to the main theme of the surah – the Hajj:

Indeed, those who have disbelieved and avert [people] from the way of Allah and [from] al-Masjid al-Haram,²⁹ which We made for the people - equal are the resident therein and one from outside; and [also] whoever intends [a deed] therein³⁰ of deviation [in religion] or wrongdoing - We will make him taste of a painful punishment. (22:25)

The verses move from the opposing scenes of the Hereafter to opposing attitudes in this life. Just as there are, in this world, believers whose lives are dedicated to guiding people *to the path of the Praiseworthy*, there are others whose main goal is

²⁹ This is translated as ‘the Sacred Place of Worship’, referring to the *Ka’bah*.

³⁰ whether inside its boundaries or intending from afar to do evil therein

to spread evil and disbelief, turning people away from the path of Allah and from *Al-Masjid Al-Haram*.

The verses about the Hajj start by discussing the sanctity of this great place which Allah also calls in other verses the 'Sacred House'. Allah (SWT) has forbidden all forms of evil in this place, including terrorizing those who come to it. He has made it a House of peace and safety;³¹ a sanctuary where people feel secure about their lives, their money, their honor and their dignity. Allah (SWT) made it safe even in the *Jahiliyyah*³² to the extent that the ancient Arabs would not attack anyone in this sanctuary, not even the murderer of one's own father, out of reverence to this great House – the Sacred House.

Allah called it a House and made it sacred so that one would find there serenity and purity. It is a place where a believer recovers his spiritual self. In this place, all worries and tribulations fall off the believer's shoulders and there is nothing but peace, security, serenity and tranquility. This is a promise from the Lord of the worlds.

On the other hand, *whoever intends [a deed] therein of deviation [in religion] or wrongdoing - We will make him taste of a painful punishment (22:25)*. This place is unique in that the mere intention of sin therein – whether or not it is actually carried out – is sufficient to bring punishment from Allah. This is to preserve the sanctity of this great place, and to preserve its status in the hearts and souls of believers who *come from every distant pass (22:27)* seeking peace, tranquility and calm.

³¹ *And whoever enters it shall be safe.* (Qur'an 3:97)

³² Days of Ignorance (before Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ))

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ
 لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿١٦﴾ وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ
 بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَىٰ كُلِّ ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ
 ﴿١٧﴾ لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَفِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَةٍ عَلَىٰ مَا
 رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۗ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْبَائِسَ الْفَقِيرَ ﴿١٨﴾ ثُمَّ
 لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلِيُوفُوا نُذُورَهُمْ وَلِيَطَّوَّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿١٩﴾ ذَلِكَ
 وَمَنْ يُعَظِّمْ حُرْمَتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ ۗ وَأَحَلَّتْ لَكُمْ الْأَنْعَامَ
 إِلَّا مَا يُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ ۗ فَاجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ
 الزُّورِ ﴿٢٠﴾ حُنَفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا حَرَّمَ
 السَّمَاءَ فَتَخَطَفُهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهْوَىٰ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ ﴿٢١﴾ ذَلِكَ
 وَمَنْ يُعَظِّمْ شَعَائِرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَىٰ الْقُلُوبِ ﴿٢٢﴾ لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَفِعٌ إِلَىٰ
 أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَا إِلَى الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿٢٣﴾ وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا
 لِيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ بَهِيمَةِ الْأَنْعَامِ ۗ فَإِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهُ وَاحِدٌ
 فَلَهُ أَسْلِمُوا ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُخْبِتِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾ الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَّتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ
 وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَصَابَهُمْ وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنْفِقُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

وَالْبَدَنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُمْ مِّنْ شَعْتِيرِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ ۖ فَادْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ
 عَلَيْهَا صَوَافٍ ۖ فَإِذَا وَجَبَتْ جُنُوبُهَا فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطْعِمُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ ۗ
 كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرْنَاهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾ لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومَهَا وَلَا
 دِمَآؤَهَا وَلَكِنَّ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ ۗ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ
 عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَيْنَاكُمْ ۗ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾ ۖ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْفِعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ
 ءَامَنُوا ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ ﴿٢٨﴾

The translation:

(26) And [mention, O Muhammad], when We designated for Abraham the site of the House, [saying], "Do not associate anything with Me and purify My House for those who perform Tawaf and those who stand [in prayer] and those who bow and prostrate. (27) And proclaim to the people the Hajj [pilgrimage]; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass – (28) That they may witness benefits for themselves and mention the name of Allah on known days over what He has provided for them of [sacrificial] animals. So eat of them and feed the miserable and poor. (29) Then let them end their untidiness and fulfill their vows and perform Tawaf around the ancient House." (30) That [has been commanded], and whoever honors the sacred ordinances of Allah - it is best for him in the sight of his Lord. And permitted to you are the grazing livestock, except what is

recited to you.³³ So avoid the uncleanness of idols and avoid false statement, (31) Inclining [only] to Allah, not associating [anything] with Him. And he who associates with Allah - it is as though he had fallen from the sky and was snatched by the birds or the wind carried him down into a remote place. (32) That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols [i.e., rites] of Allah - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts. (33) For you the animals marked for sacrifice are benefits for a specified term;³⁴ then their place of sacrifice is at the ancient House. (34) And for all religion We have appointed a rite [of sacrifice] that they may mention the name of Allah over what He has provided for them of [sacrificial] animals. For your god is one God, so to Him submit. And, [O Muhammad], give good tidings to the humble [before their Lord] (35) who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts are fearful, and [to] the patient over what has afflicted them, and the establishers of prayer and those who spend from what We have provided them. (36) And the camels and cattle We have appointed for you as among the symbols [i.e., rites] of Allah; for you therein is good. So mention the name of Allah upon them when lined up [for sacrifice]; and when they are [lifeless] on their sides, then eat from them and feed the needy and the beggar. Thus have We subjected them to you that you may be grateful. (37) Their meat will not reach Allah, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is piety from you. Thus have We subjected them to you that you may glorify Allah for that [to] which He has guided you; and give good tidings to the doers of good. (38) Indeed, Allah defends those who have believed. Indeed, Allah does not like everyone treacherous and ungrateful.

³³ See Qur'an 5:3.

³⁴ i.e., they may be milked or ridden (in the case of camels) before the time of the slaughter.

After discussing the stature and sanctity of the Sacred House, the verses discuss its history, reminding us that this building is not just stones and bricks put on top of each other:

And [mention, O Muhammad], when We designated for Abraham the site of the House, [saying], “Do not associate anything with Me and purify My House for those who perform Tawaf³⁵ and those who stand [in prayer] and those who bow and prostrate.” (22:26)

The Sacred House is linked to Prophet Ibrahim³⁶ (peace be on him). This link reminds us of *Tawheed* which is the foundation upon which this House was built thousands of years ago – *Do not associate anything with Me*. It was cleansed of *shirk*³⁷ before it was cleansed of material impurities. When we perform the Hajj, we are reminded by this great building that the message of *Tawheed* is a timeless, deep-rooted message in the history of humanity; and that polytheism, *shirk* and disbelief are all temporary appearances. *Tawheed*, on the other hand, is humanity’s natural inclination.

Do not associate anything with Me.

Before starting the rites of the Hajj and before wearing the prescribed attire of *Ihram*, a believer coming to this great House needs to purify his or her heart, removing from it all forms of *shirk* – whether visible or not – in keeping with the purity of this House. You need to cleanse the heart so that it would not turn to other than Allah (SWT) in matters of faith,

³⁵ See the glossary.

³⁶ Abraham

³⁷ See the glossary.

seeking support or sustenance. You also need to remove from the heart all forms of malice. With this filtration and purification, the heart can humble itself before its Creator – Exalted is He.

It was Ibrahim, forefather of many Prophets, (peace be upon him) who made the everlasting glorious call for the Hajj:

And proclaim to the people the Hajj [pilgrimage]; they will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every distant pass. (22:27)

The pilgrims are guests, invited by their Creator to visit His Sacred House. They answered the call and came to enjoy the hospitality of the Most Merciful (SWT). If you intend to perform the Hajj, to become a guest of the Most Merciful, remember how a guest should behave.

When one is invited by a king or a dignitary, one dresses up, wearing one's best and most expensive clothes. But when pilgrims visit Allah's Sacred House, they wear simple inexpensive clothes that resemble burial shrouds. Kings and dignitaries are humans who are affected by appearances but Allah (SWT) does not look at our forms or our clothes; He looks into our hearts which He alone knows all about. Therefore, before a pilgrim sets off on this journey to the House of Allah, he should adorn his heart with piety, vitalize it with clearness of conscience, cleanse it of malice and evil, and return other people's belongings to them. By doing so, the pilgrim puts the garment of *Taqwa* on and becomes ready for the journey to Allah. Consider these words of Allah in Surat Al-A'raf:

﴿وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ﴾

But the clothing of righteousness³⁸ – that is best. (7:26)

Taqwa is referred to as clothing. This garment of piety is not manufactured in factories but in a submissive repenting heart that humbles itself before the Lord (SWT).

When you set off on this journey, you leave behind your children, money, job, business and many other things which occupy your heart and mind. These things you leave behind voluntarily. But the day will come when you will not have any choice but to leave. We will all leave without a suitcase or clothes except the garment of *Taqwa*. Such great meanings of the Qur'an should be present in our minds as we take the *neyyah*³⁹ to perform the Hajj and as we get ready for this journey. We should live the last days before this journey with these thoughts in mind.

Verse 28 mentions benefits:

That they may witness benefits for themselves... .

These benefits can be materialistic, but it is the spiritual benefits that are the most important. A pilgrim may do some business or shopping, but the real profit and the best business is the one done with Allah (SWT). How great are the benefits of coming back from this journey with forgiven sins and

³⁸ The original Arabic word in the Qur'an text is *Taqwa*.

³⁹ intention

accepted pilgrimage. This is a profit that will never perish,⁴⁰ unlike the transactions of this life. In a verse related to Hajj in Surat Al-Baqara Allah says:

﴿ وَتَزَوَّدُوا فَإِنَّ خَيْرَ الزَّادِ التَّقْوَىٰ ۚ وَاتَّقُونِ يَا أُولِيَ الْأَلْبَابِ ﴾

And take provisions,⁴¹ but indeed, the best provision is fear of Allah.⁴² And fear Me, O you of understanding. (2: 197)

The above verse addresses people of wisdom and vision, who can reflect on the meaning and purpose of the Hajj, transforming it from an ordinary journey into a journey of a lifetime, a journey of this life and the Hereafter, a journey of forgiven sins in which we conduct the most profitable trade.

The hours, minutes and seconds of the Hajj are the most precious moments of our lives. Therefore, a pilgrim should not occupy his heart, tongue or mind with anything of this world; only with the *dhikr* of Allah (SWT). Contemplate the following words of the Almighty:

That they may witness benefits for themselves and mention the name of Allah on known⁴³ days... . (22:28)

This should be continuous *dhikr* by the tongue and the heart. Hajj is an honorable invitation by a Generous Lord – the King of kings – to visit His House. This is a great honor and every

⁴⁰ This expression appears in the Qur'an in Surat Fatir 35:29.

⁴¹ Take provisions with you for the journey of the Hajj such as money, clothes, etc.

⁴² The original text of the Qur'an says that the best provision is *Taqwa* – also translated as piety and righteousness.

⁴³ appointed

moment is very precious so do not waste it in anything but praising, thanking, praying to Allah and asking for His Forgiveness. The following verses from Surat Al-Baqarah emphasize this meaning:

﴿ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَبْتَغُوا فَضْلًا مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ ۚ فَإِذَا أَفَضْتُمْ
مِّنْ عَرَفَاتٍ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ عِنْدَ الْمَشْعَرِ الْحَرَامِ ۗ وَاذْكُرُوهُ كَمَا
هَدَانَكُمْ وَإِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنْ قَبْلِهِ لَمَنِ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿١٩٨﴾ ثُمَّ أَفِيضُوا مِنْ
حَيْثُ أَفَاضَ النَّاسُ وَاسْتَغْفِرُوا اللَّهَ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿١٩٩﴾ فَإِذَا
قَضَيْتُمْ مَنَسِكَكُمْ فَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَذِكْرِكُمْ ءَابَاءَكُمْ أَوْ أَشَدَّ ذِكْرًا ۗ
فَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا ءَاتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَمَا لَهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ مِنْ
خَلْقٍ ﴿٢٠٠﴾ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن يَقُولُ رَبَّنَا ءَاتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ
حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ ﴿٢٠١﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ نَصِيبٌ مِّمَّا كَسَبُوا ۗ وَاللَّهُ
سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٢٠٢﴾ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْدُودَاتٍ ۚ فَمَنْ تَعَجَّلَ فِي
يَوْمَيْنِ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ وَمَنْ تَأَخَّرَ فَلَا إِثْمَ عَلَيْهِ ۚ لِمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ ۗ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ
وَأَعْلَمُوا أَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْهِ تُحْشَرُونَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾ ﴾

(198) *There is no blame upon you for seeking bounty⁴⁴ from your Lord [during Hajj]. But when you depart from 'Arafat,*

⁴⁴ i.e., profit from trade or business

remember Allah at al-Mash'ar al-Haram.⁴⁵ And remember Him, as He has guided you, for indeed, you were before that among those astray. (199) Then depart from the place from where [all] the people depart and ask forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. (200) And when you have completed your rites, remember Allah like your [previous] remembrance of your fathers or with [much] greater remembrance. And among the people is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world," and he will have in the Hereafter no share. (201) But among them is he who says, "Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire." (202) Those will have a share of what they have earned, and Allah is swift in account. (203) And remember Allah during [specific] numbered days. Then whoever hastens [his departure] in two days – there is no sin upon him; and whoever delays [until the third] – there is no sin upon him – for him who fears Allah. And fear Allah and know that unto Him you will be gathered. (2:198-203)

Therefore, do not let your tongue, heart or thoughts stop *dhikr* for a moment for this is the real profitable trade. Verse 28 then discusses the rite of slaughtering sacrificial animals:

... And mention the name of Allah on known days over what He has provided for them of [sacrificial] animals.⁴⁶ So eat of them and feed the miserable and poor.⁴⁷ (22:28)

⁴⁵ which is Muzdalifah – an area near Makkah

⁴⁶ These are cattle, sheep, goats and camels – the meat of which are eaten and distributed to the poor and needy.

⁴⁷ Another translation: feed the wretched poor.

This is not about slaughtering animals. The purpose is to remember Allah and the great meanings of *Tawheed*, for it is Allah (SWT) Who has subjected⁴⁸ everything in this universe – including cattle – for humans so that they worship Allah and submit their will to Him. This issue takes us back to the story of the first sacrifice – the story of Ibrahim (peace be upon him). The Qur’an tells us that Ibrahim, forefather of many Prophets, did not hesitate to sacrifice his dear son Ismail⁴⁹ after having a dream about this. In Surat As-Saffat we read Ibrahim’s words to his son:

﴿ قَالَ يَبْنَئِي إِنِّي أَرَى فِي الْمَنَامِ أَنِّي أَذْبَحُكَ ﴾

...He (Ibrahim) said, “O my son, indeed I have seen in a dream that I [must] sacrifice you... .” (37:102)

Without any hesitation, his son replied:

﴿ قَالَ يَا أَبَتِ افْعَلْ مَا تُؤْمَرُ ﴾

He (Ismail) said, “O my father, do as you are commanded... .”

This is the scene we need to summon and reflect upon as we offer the sacrifice, which is not restricted to pilgrims. It is a *sunnah*⁵⁰ to be observed once every year during the season of the Hajj, whether we go or not. When we offer the sacrifice, we remember the sacrifice of Ibrahim (peace be on him).

⁴⁸ made serviceable to humans

⁴⁹ Ishmael – Abraham’s first son

⁵⁰ Any saying or act of the Prophet (ﷺ) is called a *sunnah*. Additionally all sayings and acts of others that the Prophet (ﷺ) approved of is also considered a *sunnah*.

Ibrahim was utterly prepared to sacrifice his son, driven by his unshakable faith in Allah as well as his submission and surrender to Him.⁵¹ (He passed this difficult test successfully – without having to lose his son – and was rewarded by Allah (SWT). The ritual slaughtering of sacrificial animals is, therefore, a practical reminder of this story and its great significance.)⁵²

Then let them end their untidiness⁵³ and fulfill their vows and perform Tawaf around the ancient House. (22:29)

Every ritual in the Hajj is of significance and has an impact on the pilgrim. When a pilgrim is in the state of *Ihram*, he is forbidden to use perfume. He sees animals that he can hunt, but is forbidden to kill them. His hair might inconvenience him, but he is forbidden to cut it. All this is done in reverence for Allah's commands.

That [has been commanded], and whoever honors the sacred ordinances of Allah - it is best for him in the sight of his Lord. And permitted to you are the grazing livestock, except what is recited to you.⁵⁴ So avoid the uncleanness⁵⁵ of idols and avoid false statement.⁵⁶ (22:30)

In *Ihram*, the issue is not the perfume, the hunt or any of these restrictions for their own sake. The issue is the

⁵¹ The word *Islam* means 'surrender to Allah.'

⁵² The rest of the story is in Surat As-Saffat (37:103-113).

⁵³ unkemptness

⁵⁴ Lawful meat but not game is allowed during the Hajj. See Qur'an 5:3.

⁵⁵ filth

⁵⁶ The food prohibitions are meant for health and cleanliness but the worst abominations to shun are those of false worship and false speech.

reverence of Allah's sacred ordinances. Honoring the command is honoring the commander, not just the command itself. Therefore, when we honor the sacred ordinances of Allah, we are glorifying Allah (SWT) Himself. This is why some Islamic scholars advised us not to consider the insignificance of a sin by saying for example, "It's just a tiny lie" or "a harmless lie." Instead, consider the Greatness of the One you sin against – Glorified and Exalted is He.

The Hajj is a great school; an intensive course. We take great care not to violate any of the rules of *Ihram*. We perform *Tawaf*, walking around the Ka'bah seven times, taking great care to do it as instructed by our Lord. Imagine if we extend this great desire to obey Allah to our lives after we come back, holding the commands of Allah in reverence in every aspect of our lives. How would our lives be if we do not transgress the bounds set by Allah (ﷻ) without arguing? How would our businesses be? How would the world be?

The Hajj is a school that graduates humble and obedient servants who seek perfection in matters of faith and who honor the sacred ordinances of Allah (ﷻ). Hence the words: *and whoever honors the sacred ordinances of Allah - it is best for him in the sight of his Lord (22:30).*

Then we come again across *Tawheed*, which is constantly present in Surat Al-Hajj:

Inclining⁵⁷ [only] to Allah, not associating [anything] with Him. And he who associates with Allah - it is as though he had fallen

⁵⁷ The original word is the plural of the word *haneef*, explained in footnote 59.

*from the sky and was snatched by the birds or the wind carried him down into a remote place.*⁵⁸ (22:31)

Surat Al-Hajj revives *Tawheed* in our hearts. The level of *Tawheed* sometimes increases or decreases in our hearts, and this is related to our actions and behavior. Sometimes the heart has an inclination towards people, not Allah, feeling that mortals have the power to harm or benefit us without Allah's consent. Weak faith, frail trust in Allah or having low expectations of Him (SWT) also indicates defects in our *Tawheed*. Surat Al- Hajj addresses these defects, bringing us back to *Al-Hanifiyyah As-Samhah*⁵⁹ as practiced by Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon him).

*That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols [i.e., rites] of Allah*⁶⁰ - indeed, it is from the piety⁶¹ of hearts. (22:32)

Honoring the rites is an issue related to the *Taqwa of the hearts*. Hence, the House of Allah and the rites from Mina to Arafat to Muzdalifah and then to Mina again, etc. are all sacred. We hold these rites in reverence, not for their own

⁵⁸ A parable full of meaning: The one who falls from the worship of Allah is like a man who falls from heaven. His being taken up with false objects of worship is like the falling man being picked up in the air by birds of prey. This false worship is also like being snatched by a fierce blast of wind – the Wrath of Allah – that throws him into a place far, far away from any place he could have imagined, i.e., Hell.

⁵⁹ *Al-Haneefiyyah* is an attribution to the religion of Ibrahim. The word *Haneef* implies turning away from anything that is false. *As-Samhah* means that which is easy upon the self and not burdensome like monasticism. Therefore, *Al-Hanifiyyah As-Samhah* describes Islam.

⁶⁰ The Arabic word *sha'air* indicates the rites set by Allah – emphasizing here in this verse the rites of sacrifice. Such sacrifice is symbolic as it reminds us of the dedication and piety of Ibrahim (peace be on him).

⁶¹ The original Arabic word is *Taqwa*.

sake, but because Allah commanded us to honor them. It is a matter related to our faith, obedience, submission and surrender to Allah (SWT).

Among the rites is *Ramy Al-Jamarat*⁶² in Mina. We perform this rite in obedience to Allah's commands. The Prophet (ﷺ) threw pebbles at these *Jamarat* and told us to follow his example. On the other hand, when we circumambulate the Ka'bah (*Tawaf*), we stop at the Black Stone⁶³ and kiss it – if we can – following the example of the Prophet (ﷺ) and this is why 'Umar⁶⁴ (RAA) said, "No doubt, I know that you are a stone and can neither benefit anyone nor harm anyone. Had I not seen Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) kissing you, I would not have kissed you."

But these are all stones, so why do we deal with them differently? We do this in obedience and submission to Allah (SWT) who commanded us to hold these rites in reverence. What drives us is the *Taqwa*, not the glorification of the stones or the places for their own sake. Consider the importance given to national flags. The real value lies obviously in what the flag represents, not in the piece of cloth. Similarly – and

⁶² At Mina the pilgrims perform *Ramy al-Jamarat*, throwing pebbles to signify their defiance of the Devil. This symbolizes the trials experienced by Abraham while he was going to sacrifice his son. The Devil attempted to dissuade him three times, and three times Abraham refused. Each of these *Jamarat* marks the location of the appearance of the Devil before him.

⁶³ The Black Stone is an original part of the outer walls of the Ka'bah which Abraham built together with his son Ishmael (peace be on them). Muslims believe that this stone came from *Jannah* (the Garden) with Adam.

⁶⁴ 'Umar (Omar) bin Al-Khattab was one of the closest companions to Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ). He ruled the Muslims after the death of the Prophet and Abu Bakr.

for Allah is the highest attribute⁶⁵ – honoring these rites and these places stem from the reverence for Allah’s commands and because these rites were set by Him (SWT).

Here we need to be reminded that our role in preserving the sanctity of these sacred sites includes keeping them clean. It is shameful that some Muslims throw food remains in these sites. Pilgrims should refrain from such behavior because it shows an indifferent attitude towards the rites set by Allah.

Just as Allah (SWT) granted these places sanctity and reverence in the hearts of Muslims, He granted a sanctity and great status to a Muslim.

عَنْ ابْنِ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ خَطَبَ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ النَّحْرِ فَقَالَ: « يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ، أَيُّ يَوْمٍ هَذَا؟ » قَالُوا: يَوْمٌ حَرَامٌ. قَالَ: « فَأَيُّ بَلَدٍ هَذَا؟ » قَالُوا: بَلَدٌ حَرَامٌ. قَالَ: « فَأَيُّ شَهْرٍ هَذَا؟ » قَالُوا: شَهْرٌ حَرَامٌ. قَالَ: « فَإِنَّ دِمَاءَكُمْ وَأَمْوَالَكُمْ وَأَعْرَاضَكُمْ عَلَيْكُمْ حَرَامٌ كَحُرْمَةِ يَوْمِكُمْ هَذَا، فِي بَلَدِكُمْ هَذَا، فِي شَهْرِكُمْ هَذَا. » فَأَعَادَهَا مِرَارًا، ثُمَّ رَفَعَ رَأْسَهُ فَقَالَ: « اللَّهُمَّ هَلْ بَلَغْتُ؟ اللَّهُمَّ هَلْ بَلَغْتُ؟ » قَالَ ابْنُ عَبَّاسٍ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنْهُمَا: فَوَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ إِنَّهَا لَوَصِيَّتُهُ إِلَى أُمَّتِهِ فَلْيُبَلِّغِ الشَّاهِدُ الْغَائِبَ: « لَا تَرْجِعُوا بَعْدِي كُفْرًا يَضْرِبُ بَعْضُكُمْ رِقَابَ بَعْضٍ. »

Ibn Abbas (RAA) said that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) addressed the people on the Day of Sacrifice⁶⁶ and said, “O people! What day is this?” They said, “The Sacred Day.” He

⁶⁵ An expression confirming that we can never compare Allah (SWT) to anything.

⁶⁶ the first day of Eid-ul-Adha

said, "And what place is this?" They said, "The Sacred Place."⁶⁷ He said, "And what month is this?" They said, "The Sacred Month." He said, "Indeed your blood, your property and your honor are sanctified and protected as this Day is sanctified in this Sacred Place in this Sacred Month." He repeated this several times and then he lifted his head and said, "O Allah, have I conveyed (Your Message) to them? O Allah, have I conveyed it?" Ibn Abbas (RAA) said, "By the One Who has my soul in His hand, it was his legacy to his nation: 'Let those who are present convey it to those who are absent. Do not revert to being disbelievers after I have gone, cutting each other's throats.'"⁶⁸

A Muslim should not transgress against a fellow Muslim in these sacred places under the pretext of overcrowding, the heat, fatigue, etc. Transgressing against Muslims is *haram*⁶⁹ at all times, but more so in these sacred places and on these special days. Allah (SWT) said the following words in Surat Al-Baqarah:

﴿ الْحَجُّ أَشْهُرٌ مَّعْلُومَاتٌ ۖ فَمَنْ فَرَضَ فِيهِنَّ الْحَجَّ فَلَا رَفَثَ وَلَا فُسُوقَ
وَلَا جِدَالَ فِي الْحَجِّ ﴾

Hajj is [during] well-known months, so whoever has made Hajj obligatory upon himself therein [by entering the state of Ihram], there is [to be for him] no sexual relations and no disobedience and no disputing during Hajj. (2:197)

⁶⁷ Makkah (Mecca)

⁶⁸ narrated by Bukhari

⁶⁹ unlawful

Not one unkind word against a Muslim is allowed nor any attempt to hurt others in any way.

عَنْ أَبِي هُرَيْرَةَ قَالَ: قَالَ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ: « مَنْ أَتَى هَذَا
الْبَيْتَ فَلَمْ يَرْفُثْ وَلَمْ يَفْسُقْ رَجَعَ كَمَا وُلِدَتْهُ أُمُّهُ. »

Abu Hurairah reported that the Messenger of Allah (ﷺ) said, “He who came to this House and therein abstains from obscene acts and words, wickedness and sins, returns so purified from sins as he was at birth.”⁷⁰

This veneration for Allah’s sacred ordinances and commandments can only come from a pious, humble heart that submits to Allah (SWT). As the pilgrims move from one place to another, they must never forget how they should behave. Unfortunately due to overcrowding, one might lose one’s temper and utter a word that does not befit the sanctity of the situation. One must repent immediately, forgive others and pray for forgiveness, not just for oneself, but also for those Muslims who pushed or transgressed against him. We forgive and expect reward from our Generous Creator.

Our great care not to violate *Ihram* rules, by cutting one’s hair or using perfume, should not stop there. Our dread of uttering an unkind word, hurting another fellow Muslim or throwing a piece of paper or food remains on the ground should match our dread of violating the Hajj rules.

The next verses discuss the rite of sacrifice:

⁷⁰ narrated by Bukhari and Muslim

(32) That [is so]. And whoever honors the symbols [i.e., rites] of Allah - indeed, it is from the piety of hearts. (33) For you the animals marked for sacrifice are benefits for a specified term; then their place of sacrifice is at the ancient House. (34) And for all religion⁷¹ We have appointed a rite [of sacrifice] that they may mention the name of Allah over what He has provided for them of [sacrificial] animals.⁷² For your god is one God, so to Him submit. And, [O Muhammad], give good tidings to the humble [before their Lord]. (35) Who, when Allah is mentioned, their hearts are fearful,⁷³ and [to]⁷⁴ the patient over what has afflicted them, and the establishers of prayer and those who spend from what We have provided them. (22:32-35)

Thus the issue is not the slaughter of a sheep or a camel; it is an issue of the heart that humbles itself before the Creator; it is an issue of *Tawheed for your god is one God* (22:34); and it is an issue of mentioning the name of Allah,⁷⁵ for it is Allah Who has made these animals – as well as everything else in the universe – subject for our benefit.

And the camels and cattle We have appointed for you as among the symbols [i.e., rites]⁷⁶ of Allah; for you therein is good. So mention the name of Allah upon them when lined up [for sacrifice]; and when they are [lifeless] on their sides, then eat from them and feed the needy and the beggar. Thus have

⁷¹ for every nation following a prophet

⁷² cattle

⁷³ Another translation: whose hearts tremble with awe.

⁷⁴ And give good tidings to the patient. This verse is the continuation of verse 34.

⁷⁵ Allah's name is mentioned before an animal is slaughtered.

⁷⁶ See footnote 60.

We subjected them to you that you may be grateful. Their meat will not reach Allah, nor will their blood, but what reaches Him is piety⁷⁷ from you. Thus have We subjected them to you that you may glorify Allah for that [to] which He has guided you; and give good tidings to the doers of good. (22:36-37)

Thus, it is *Taqwa* which drives a Muslim to rid himself of the stinginess of the soul.⁷⁸ *Taqwa* makes him learn to give, to share part of his wealth and to feel for others – *the needy and the beggar* (22:36). As mentioned before, the rites of sacrifice are not just about the slaughtering of animals. The Hajj produces improved souls: selfless, generous, patient, tolerant and humble souls. Through the Hajj, one learns the meaning of sacrifice and tastes the sweetness of parting with things for the sake of Allah (SWT). One who feels angry or upset because someone in the crowd has pushed or stepped on one's foot, but restrains oneself from uttering an unkind word for the sake of Allah (SWT), and even prays for those who have hurt him or her, is one who possesses a great soul. This is the soul that has graduated from the school of Hajj with a grade of *Ihsan*.⁷⁹ Hence the words:

*... and give good tidings to the doers of good.*⁸⁰ (22:37)

⁷⁷ The original Arabic word is *Taqwa*.

⁷⁸ an expression from the Qur'an as in 59:9

⁷⁹ See the following footnote.

⁸⁰ The original Arabic text is: the doers of *Ihsan*. Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ) said that *Ihsan* is "to worship Allah as if you were seeing Him. For even if you do not see Him, [be aware that] He sees you."

A heart that was shaped by Surat Al-Hajj and then graduated from the school of the Hajj with grades of *Ihsan*, repentance and humbleness to Allah (SWT), is definitely a new heart. Congratulations to the believing graduates who achieved these results! Hence the verses about the Hajj end with giving good tidings to the doers of *Ihsan*. Congratulations to the pilgrims who have learned the meaning of sacrifice and whose hearts and tongues did not cease to remember and mention Allah. Blessed are the hands that were extended, not to harm other Muslims, but to shake their hands. Blessed are the hands that were refrained from throwing a piece of paper or a grain of rice out of respect for the sacred sites. Blessed are the hearts that forgave and sacrificed in obedience to Allah. Blessed is everyone who held the rites set by Allah in reverence. Congratulations! *And give good tidings to the doers of good*. Those who have graduated from the school of Hajj also deserve to be defended by Allah:

Indeed, Allah defends those who have believed. Indeed, Allah does not like everyone treacherous and ungrateful. (22:38)

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقْتَلُونَ بِإِنِّهِمْ ظَلَمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾
 الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا
 دَفَعُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ هَدَمْتَ صَوَامِعَ وَبِيَعَ وَصَلَوَاتٍ وَمَسْجِدٍ
 يُذَكَّرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ كَثِيرًا وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ
 لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٤٠﴾ الَّذِينَ إِنْ مَكَّنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوْا
 الزَّكَاةَ وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ ﴿٤١﴾

The translation

(39) Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought,⁸¹ because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. (40) [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, "Our Lord is Allah." And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned [i.e., praised]. And Allah will surely support those who support Him [i.e., His cause]. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might. (41) [And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give zakah and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters.

⁸¹ referring here to the companions of Prophet Muhammad (ﷺ)

After the verses about the Hajj, come the verses about jihad,⁸² *Hijrah*⁸³ and the continuous conflict between Truth and falsehood. Here we need to ask – before we start the discussion on jihad – what is the relationship between the Hajj and jihad?

Both Hajj and jihad aim at spreading the Truth and what is good. The Hajj is the greatest conference through which the values of Islam can spread: the universality, the peace, the tolerance, the equality, etc. Similarly, jihad aims at protecting the Truth and its values. Some previous verses of Surat Al-Hajj mentioned those who try to divert people from the path of Allah – those whose most important goal is to mislead others. Believers possessing the right values and principles, who have been disciplined and shaped by Surat Al-Hajj are the best ones to stand up to these aggressors. But before striving against others, one needs first to carry out jihad (i.e., to strive) against one's own self and this is what the Hajj teaches. The Hajj produces powerful pious hearts that can stand firm defending the Truth against falsehood and its advocates.

Ibn Al-Qayyim⁸⁴ has valuable words regarding the issue of jihad. In his commentary on the last verse of Surat Al-'Ankabut:

﴿ وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا ۚ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴾

⁸² The Arabic word *jihad* means 'to strive.' There are many forms of jihad such as striving against the inclination of oneself, striving against Satan, as well as military combat against oppression and oppressors.

⁸³ See the glossary.

⁸⁴ Ibn Al-Qayyim (1292-1350 CE) is one of the greatest scholars of Islam.

And those who strive for Us⁸⁵ – We will surely guide them to Our ways. And indeed, Allah is with the doers of good. (29:69)

Ibn Al-Qayyim says that Allah (SWT) has made guidance dependent upon jihad (i.e., striving), so the most perfect guidance comes to people whose jihad is the greatest. The most obligatory forms of jihad are those carried out against one's own self⁸⁶ (i.e., against the unlawful inclinations of the soul) and against the *Shaytan*.⁸⁷ Whoever strives in these areas for the sake of Allah will be guided to Allah's ways that lead to Paradise, and whoever leaves jihad will miss some guidance in proportion to what he or she leaves. One cannot be successful in one's struggle against outside enemies unless if one carries out jihad against those inner enemies. Internal victory is the prerequisite for external victory.

This explains the order of the verses of Surat Al-Hajj where jihad comes after Hajj, the latter being a school that teaches us how to carry out jihad against one's own self. An example of this form of jihad is restraining the tongue from uttering unkind words when one is angry in obedience to Allah. The believer who has been disciplined and shaped by these verses is the one who deserves to raise the flag of jihad; for jihad is an honor and a great value.

⁸⁵ The original Arabic text can be literally translated into: those who have carried out jihad in Us (in Allah's cause). It is worth mentioning here that Surat Al-'Ankabut (chapter 29) was revealed in Makkah before permission for military jihad was given to the Muslims. Therefore, the verb *jahadu* here refers to the other forms of jihad.

⁸⁶ *Jihad-u-nafs* in Arabic

⁸⁷ Satan

Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought,⁸⁸ because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right - only because they say, "Our Lord is Allah." And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned [i.e., praised]. And Allah will surely support those who support Him [i.e., His cause]. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might. (22:39-40)

Therefore jihad is the struggle to protect the Truth and sacrifice for its sake. True believers have learned to sacrifice. Believing in Allah (ﷻ), in the Truth, and in moral values and principles only in times of ease, and then becoming feeble and retreating when hard times come reflect shallowness of faith. True faith remains firm in times of ease and hardship, and is strengthened (and increased) by difficulties and adversities that require sacrifice. Such was Ibrahim's faith (peace be upon him). When the time to sacrifice came, he did not hesitate or retreat. What is your position when your Lord (ﷻ) asks you to sacrifice defending the Truth that you believe in? Do you become feeble? Or do you stand firm? Hence the promise:

And Allah will surely support those who support Him [i.e., His cause]. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might. (22:40)

You support Allah (ﷻ) when you stand firm supporting the Truth you believe in, when you do not relinquish your values but defend them and stand up to the advocates of falsehood

⁸⁸ See footnote 81.

and their deceitful plots. The outcome is victory and empowerment:

[And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give zakah and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters. (22:41)

It is the victory of the Truth against falsehood and with this victory the word of the Allah⁸⁹ remains the uppermost and different houses of worship are protected (22:40). Islam confirms freedom of worship and protects houses of worship and holy sites. Jihad is not about killing, destroying or treating others unjustly. This great religion teaches its followers that *authority in the land* does not mean superiority over others, the enslavement of other peoples, or looting their resources – nay it is reform. Optimal reform is achieved when Allah (ﷻ) empowers those humble believers who understand the meaning of *Tawheed* and are servants only to the One True God for they *establish prayer and give zakah and enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong* (22:41). Their motto is ‘Reform’ and this is materialized in their actions and behavior. Fair people of other faiths (including historians) have given their testimony regarding those Muslim conquerors who ruled many parts of the old world.⁹⁰ They conquered, not by the

⁸⁹ This includes *Tawheed* and justice.

⁹⁰ From Spain to China, Muslims carried the torch of civilization when Europe was going through the Dark Ages. No Muslim armies ever went to Indonesia, Malaysia, China, and many other countries where Muslims are in millions today. The Jewish community flourished in Spain when it was ruled by the Muslims before the Inquisition. The Christians of the Middle East, who are the oldest Christians in the world, are in millions today because they have never been forced to convert to Islam. The majority of Indians today are Hindu, though Muslims ruled over India for

power of the sword, but by winning the hearts and minds of other people. Islam spread by justice and great moral values at the hand of those who practiced, not just believed in, these values and principles. These values were not just preached in eloquent speeches, but materialized into deeds and behaviors witnessed by people of other faiths who saw the Truth that these Muslims believed in and defended.

The following verses present examples of the conflict between the Truth and falsehood confirming that no matter how long falsehood stays in power, it eventually perishes. On the other hand, the Truth and its defenders will always be empowered by the Almighty no matter how long they suffer.

more than seven centuries, because Islam guarantees freedom of religion. Muslim conquerors fought only those who wanted to stop Islam from being conveyed and persecuted Muslims such as the Byzantines (East Romans) and the Persians.

وَإِنْ يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَثَمُودٌ ﴿٤٧﴾ وَقَوْمُ
 إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَقَوْمُ لُوطٍ ﴿٤٨﴾ وَأَصْحَابُ مَدْيَنَ ۖ وَكَذَّبَ مُوسَىٰ فَأَمَلَيْتُ
 لِلْكَافِرِينَ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهُمْ ۖ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ ﴿٤٩﴾ فَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ
 أَهْلَكْنَاهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فِيهَا خَاوِيَةٌ عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا وَبِعْرِ تُعَطَّلَةٍ وَقَصْرٍ
 مَشِيدٍ ﴿٥٠﴾ أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونُ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ
 يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا ۖ فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِن تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي
 الصُّدُورِ ﴿٥١﴾ وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَنْ تُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ ۗ وَإِنَّ
 يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِمَّا تَعُدُّونَ ﴿٥٢﴾ وَكَأَيِّنْ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَمَلَيْتُ
 لَهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهَا وَإِلَى الْمَصِيرِ ﴿٥٣﴾ قُلْ يَتَّبِعُنَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا أَنَا
 لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٥٤﴾ فَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ
 وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٥٥﴾ وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِي ءَايَاتِنَا مُعْجِزِينَ أُولَٰئِكَ أَصْحَابُ
 الْأَجْحِمِ ﴿٥٦﴾ وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى أَلْقَى
 الشَّيْطَانَ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ
 ءَايَاتِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٧﴾ لِيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ
 فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ وَالْقَاسِيَةَ قُلُوبُهُمْ ۗ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٥٨﴾

وَلَيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ فَتُخْبِتَ
 لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٤٢﴾ وَلَا يَزَالُ
 الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِّنْهُ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ
 عَذَابٌ يَوْمٍ عَقِيمٍ ﴿٤٣﴾ الْمَلِكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِّلَّهِ تَخَضَّعُوا لَهُمْ فَالَّذِينَ
 ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ ﴿٤٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا
 بِعَآيَاتِنَا فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ ﴿٤٥﴾

The translation:

(42) And if they deny you, [O Muhammad] - so, before them, did the people of Noah and 'Aad and Thamud deny [their prophets], (43) And the people of Abraham and the people of Lot (44) And the inhabitants of Madyan. And Moses was denied, so I prolonged enjoyment for the disbelievers; then I seized them, and how [terrible] was My reproach. (45) And how many a city did We destroy while it was committing wrong - so it is [now] fallen into ruin - and [how many] an abandoned well and [how many] a lofty palace.⁹¹ (46) So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason and ears by which to hear? For indeed, it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts. (47) And they urge you to hasten the punishment. But Allah will never fail in His promise. And indeed, a day with your Lord is like a thousand years of those which you count.

⁹¹ palaces emptied of their occupants in the past

(48) And for how many a city did I prolong enjoyment while it was committing wrong. Then I seized it, and to Me is the [final] destination. (49) Say, "O people, I am only to you a clear warner." (50) And those who have believed and done righteous deeds - for them is forgiveness and noble provision. (51) But the ones who strove against Our verses,⁹² [seeking] to cause failure - those are the companions of Hellfire. (52) And We did not send before you any messenger or prophet except that when he spoke [or recited], Satan threw into it [some misunderstanding]. But Allah abolishes that which Satan throws in; then Allah makes precise His verses. And Allah is Knowing and Wise. (53) [That is] so He may make what Satan throws in a trial for those within whose hearts is disease⁹³ and those hard of heart. And indeed, the wrongdoers are in extreme dissension. (54) And so those who were given knowledge may know that it is the truth from your Lord and [therefore] believe in it, and their hearts humbly submit to it. And indeed is Allah the Guide of those who have believed to a straight path. (55) But those who disbelieve will not cease to be in doubt of it until the Hour comes upon them unexpectedly or there comes to them the punishment of a barren Day. (56) [All] sovereignty that Day is for Allah; He will judge between them. So they who believed and did righteous deeds will be in the Gardens of Pleasure. (57) And they who disbelieved and denied Our signs - for those there will be a humiliating punishment.

⁹² revelations or signs

⁹³ The 'disease' mentioned here includes doubt, hypocrisy, arrogance and disbelief.

This is the reality of the world with its conflicts, trials and tribulations. These do not weaken the determination of the believers who have learned to sacrifice, defending the Truth they believe in, even when victory seems far away.

Those who have believed and done righteous deeds - for them is forgiveness and noble provision. But the ones who strove against Our verses, [seeking] to cause failure⁹⁴ - those are the companions⁹⁵ of Hellfire. (22:50-51)

It is a settled indisputable issue. Anyone seeking to divert others from the path of Allah (ﷻ) will not prevail and his fate is sealed. A believer has absolute faith in this end result and walks in the light and guidance of Allah whereas disbelievers live in doubt and uncertainty:

But those who disbelieve will not cease to be in doubt of it until the Hour comes upon them unexpectedly or there comes to them the punishment of a barren day. (22:55)

The disbelievers live in doubt⁹⁶ unable to see the Truth in front of them, *for indeed it is not eyes that are blinded, but blinded are the hearts which are within the breasts (22:46)*. Those are the hearts that could not submit to the Creator as everything else in the universe does. But the final Judgment will come:

⁹⁴ i.e., trying to undermine their credibility and thereby defeat their purpose.

⁹⁵ inhabitants

⁹⁶ The penalty of deliberately rejecting faith is that the person doing so closes the channels of mercy that flow from Allah (SWT). He is always subject to doubts and superstitions until the time comes when there will be no time for repentance, i.e., after death.

[All] sovereignty that Day is for Allah;⁹⁷ He will judge between them. So they who believed and did righteous deeds will be in the Gardens of Pleasure. And they who disbelieved and denied Our signs - for those there will be a humiliating punishment. (22:56-57)

The final Judgment exists throughout Surat Al-Hajj – an issue that should always be kept in mind.

⁹⁷ There will be no authority on the Day of Judgment except that of Allah (SWT).

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ قُتِلُوا أَوْ مَاتُوا لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ اللَّهُ رِزْقًا
 حَسَنًا ۗ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾ لِيُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ مُدْخَلًا
 يَرْضَوْنَهُ ۗ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾ * ذَلِكَ وَمَنْ عَاقَبَ بِمِثْلِ مَا
 عُوقِبَ بِهِ ثُمَّ بُغِيَ عَلَيْهِ لَيَنْصُرَنَّهُ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُوفٌ غَفُورٌ ﴿٢٧﴾ ذَلِكَ
 بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يُولِجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُولِجُ النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ
 بَصِيرٌ ﴿٢٨﴾ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنْ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ
 هُوَ الْبَاطِلُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٢٩﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ
 مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَتُصْبِحُ الْأَرْضُ مُخْضَرَّةً ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٣٠﴾
 لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ الْعَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ
 ﴿٣١﴾ أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْفُلْكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ
 بِأَمْرِهِ ۗ وَيُمْسِكُ السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ
 لَرءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٣٢﴾ وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ ۗ إِنَّ
 الْإِنْسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ ﴿٣٣﴾ لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا هُمْ نَاسِكُوهُ ۗ فَلَا
 يُنْزِعُكَ فِي الْأَمْرِ ۗ وَأَدْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ ۗ إِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٣٤﴾ وَإِنْ
 جَدَلُوكَ فَقُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾ اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ

فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ أَلَمْ تَعْلَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ
 وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٦٢﴾ وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ
 دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يُنَزَّلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَمَا لَيْسَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ
 مِنْ نَصِيرٍ ﴿٦٣﴾ وَإِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِ الَّذِينَ
 كَفَرُوا الْمُنْكَرَ يَكَادُونَ يَسْطُونَ بِالَّذِينَ يَتَّبِعُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ
 آيَاتِنَا قُلْ أَفَأَنْتُمْ بِشِرِّ مِّنْ ذَلِكُمْ أَتَّارٌ وَعَدَهَا اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
 وَبئسَ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٦٤﴾

The translation:

(58) And those who emigrated for the cause of Allah and then were killed or died - Allah will surely provide for them a good provision. And indeed, it is Allah who is the best of providers. (59) He will surely cause them to enter an entrance with which they will be pleased, and indeed, Allah is Knowing and Forbearing. (60) That [is so]. And whoever responds [to injustice] with the equivalent of that with which he was harmed and then is tyrannized - Allah will surely aid him. Indeed, Allah is Pardoning and Forgiving. (61) That⁹⁸ is because Allah causes the night to enter the day and causes the day to enter the night and because Allah is Hearing and Seeing. (62) That is because Allah is the Truth, and that which they call upon other than Him is falsehood, and because Allah

⁹⁸ i.e., Allah's capacity to give assistance or victory to the oppressed

is the Most High, the Grand. (63) Do you not see that Allah has sent down rain from the sky and the earth becomes green? Indeed, Allah is Subtle and Acquainted. (64) To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth. And indeed, Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy. (65) Do you not see that Allah has subjected to you whatever is on the earth and the ships which run through the sea by His command? And He restrains the sky from falling upon the earth, unless by His permission. Indeed Allah, to the people, is Kind and Merciful. (66) And He is the one who gave you life; then He causes you to die and then will [again] give you life. Indeed, mankind is ungrateful. (67) For every religion We have appointed rites which they perform. So, [O Muhammad], let the disbelievers not contend with you over the matter but invite them to your Lord. Indeed, you are upon straight guidance. (68) And if they dispute with you, then say, "Allah is most knowing of what you do. (69) Allah will judge between you on the Day of Resurrection concerning that over which you used to differ." (70) Do you not know that Allah knows what is in the heaven and earth? Indeed, that is in a Record. Indeed that, for Allah, is easy. (71) And they worship besides Allah that for which He has not sent down authority and that of which they have no knowledge. And there will not be for the wrongdoers any helper. (72) And when Our verses are recited to them as clear evidences, you recognize in the faces of those who disbelieve disapproval. They are almost on the verge of assaulting those who recite to them Our verses. Say, "Then shall I inform you of [what is] worse than that? [It is] the Fire which Allah has promised those who disbelieve, and wretched is the destination."

Another attribute of believers and example of sacrifice is then presented. It is the *Hijrah* where one leaves one's home for the cause of Allah:

And those who emigrated for the cause of Allah and then were killed or died – Allah will surely provide for them a good provision. And indeed, it is Allah who is the best of providers. (22:58)

Faith requires sacrifice. Our faith in Allah (SWT) is subject to trials and tests. The type of test is not significant; it is the result of the test that is significant. You have to emerge from these tests more powerful, with stronger faith and determination to defend the Truth that you believe in.

Only a believer who has learned to sacrifice is able to leave his homeland, family and loved ones for the sake of Allah alone, associating no partners with Him.⁹⁹ This believer has absolute faith that Allah will compensate him:

Allah will surely provide for them a good provision. And indeed, it is Allah who is the best of providers. (22:58)

Belief in the final Judgment and reward in the life to come makes a believer trust Allah (ﷻ). His unshakable faith makes him confident that what is in store for him or her in the Hereafter is more reliable than what one has in this life; be it money, prestige, power or progeny. This believer is the only one capable of sacrificing everything for the sake of Allah. Verse 60 has a clear promise:

⁹⁹ *Hijrah* is a great deed when it is done for the sake of Allah, such as to protect one's faith, and not for a worldly reason.

*That [is so]. And whoever responds [to injustice] with the equivalent of that with which he was harmed and then is tyrannized – Allah will surely aid him. Indeed, Allah is Pardoning and Forgiving.*¹⁰⁰ (22:60)

Trust in Allah is what motivates and drives a believer in all aspects of life. The verses that follow reinforce this trust.

*(61) That*¹⁰¹ *is because Allah causes the night to enter the day and causes the day to enter the night and because Allah is Hearing and Seeing. (62) That is because Allah is the Truth, and that which they call upon other than Him is falsehood, and because Allah is the Most High, the Grand. (63) Do you not see that Allah has sent down rain from the sky and the earth becomes green? Indeed, Allah is Subtle*¹⁰² *and Acquainted.*¹⁰³ (22:61-63)

We should have absolute faith in Allah's capacity to give assistance and victory (22:60) for it is He Who merges the night into the day and merges the day into the night (22:61). We should also have absolute faith in Allah's provision (22:58) for it is He Who sends down rain from the sky which makes the earth green (22:63). This is vivid and visible evidence that leads to the conclusion that Allah (SWT) will fulfill His promise to the believers.

¹⁰⁰ in spite of His ability to take vengeance. The statement contains a suggestion that the believers pardon as well.

¹⁰¹ See note 98.

¹⁰² The original Arabic word is *Latif*. *Al-Latif* is a name of Allah which means that He is Subtle and Most Kind in His Knowledge, Existence and Acts. Another translation of *Al-Latif* is: He alone is unfathomable (in His Wisdom).

¹⁰³ with His creation and with the needs of His creatures

To Him belongs what is in the heavens and what is on the earth. And indeed, Allah is the Free of need, the Praiseworthy. (22:64)

Do not worship except the One Who is Free of need, the Praiseworthy Who controls the heavens and the earth. Seek help, support and protection only from the King, the One Who has power over all things ¹⁰⁴ for He (SWT) is the True God and the rest are all false.

Do you not see that Allah has subjected to you whatever is on the earth and the ships which run through the sea by His command? And He restrains the sky from falling upon the earth, unless by His permission. Indeed Allah, to the people, is Kind and Merciful. (22:65)

The verses continue to build unshakable faith, *Tawheed*, and thereby *Taqwa* in the heart, through presenting signs in the universe to ponder on and sense Allah's Power and optimal governing.

Do you not know that Allah knows what is in the heaven and earth? Indeed, that is in a Record. Indeed that, for Allah, is easy. And they worship besides Allah that for which He has not sent down authority and that of which they have no knowledge. And there will not be for the wrongdoers any helper. (22:70-71)

These verses make the heart of a believer vibrate with emotions that strengthen one's faith and *Tawheed*. The believer then turns to Allah full of *Taqwa* and sincerity,

¹⁰⁴ an expression from the Qur'an such as in 3:26

associating no partners with Him. Why turn to others for aid when you can turn to Allah, the One Who has all knowledge, dominion and absolute power? Why turn to mortal beings like yourself who cannot aid themselves, let alone others? Even if you think they possess power, wealth or position, they still cannot control what good or harm befalls them and they have no say about their life, death or resurrection. This leads to the following verses that address all humanity.

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ ضُرْبَ مَثَلٍ ۖ فَاسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ ۚ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ
تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ ۗ وَإِنْ
يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَنْقِذُوهُ مِنْهُ ۚ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ
﴿٧٢﴾ مَا قَدَرُوا اللَّهَ حَقَّ قَدْرِهِ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ ﴿٧٤﴾ اللَّهُ
يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمِنَ النَّاسِ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ
بَصِيرٌ ﴿٧٥﴾ يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ ۗ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ
الْأُمُورُ ﴿٧٦﴾ يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا
رَبَّكُمْ وَأَفْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾ وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ
حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ ۗ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ مِنْ حَرَجٍ ۚ
مِلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۗ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا
لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ ۚ
فَأَقِمْوَا الصَّلَاةَ وَءَاتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَانَا ۗ فَنِعْمَ
الْمَوْلَىٰ وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ ﴿٧٨﴾

The translation:

(73) O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued. (74) They have not appraised Allah with true appraisal. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might. (75) Allah chooses from the angels messengers and from the people. Indeed, Allah is Hearing and Seeing. (76) He knows what is [presently] before them and what will be after them.¹⁰⁵ And to Allah will be returned [all] matters. (77) O you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good - that you may succeed. ﷻ¹⁰⁶ (78) And strive for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any difficulty. [It is] the religion of your father, Abraham. He named you "Muslims" before [in former scriptures] and in this [revelation] that the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people. So establish prayer and give zakah and hold fast to Allah. He is your protector; and excellent is the protector, and excellent is the helper.

The following verses address all humanity, urging people to let go of their mortal idols:

¹⁰⁵ Allah's knowledge encompasses every aspect of His creations in the past, present and future.

¹⁰⁶ See footnote 22.

O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him.¹⁰⁷ Weak are the pursuer and pursued.¹⁰⁸ They have not appraised Allah with true appraisal. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might. (22:73-74)

These words are for those who seek help and support from others besides Allah (ﷻ) and those who think that earthly powers – whether superpowers or not – have the ability to harm or benefit them. Allah (SWT) says that those they invoke besides Him cannot create a fly – a despised creature by human standards – even if they combine their efforts. And even if a fly robs them of anything, they could never rescue it from the fly. *Weak are the pursuer and pursued (22:73).*

It is to be noted here that modern scientific studies have proven that flies produce enzymes that immediately break down what they want to consume so that what has been broken down can never be retrieved.

Flies are weak creatures of Allah and so are humans. This comparison is meant for the arrogant, stubborn and ungrateful humans who have not estimated Allah with the estimation that is due to Him (22:74). Such humans may argue *about Allah without knowledge or guidance or an enlightening book (22:8)* or think that their power or marching armies can protect them; but in fact they cannot rescue anything even from a fly. If such arrogant humans think that they can

¹⁰⁷ from the fly

¹⁰⁸ Both the false deities and their worshippers are weak.

challenge Allah's Sovereignty and Power (SWT), they are mistaken. The truth, which this great verse revealed, is that they are extremely weak.

Verse 77, which has the sign for prostration (ﷻ), addresses the believers:

O you who have believed, bow and prostrate and worship your Lord and do good - that you may succeed. ﷻ (22:77)

Believers should understand that the conflict between the Truth and falsehood is a fact of life but Allah's universal laws always prevail. There will always be arrogant disbelievers, so disregard them, *worship your Lord and do good – that you may succeed.*

This worldly life is one of toil and trials, not one of recompense. Do all the good you can and strive to make the Truth supreme. Do not hesitate or allow the advocates of falsehood, with their plotting and scheming, stand in your way. Instead, make the conflict with them become your means to attain a higher degree on the scale of faith and piety. The harder you struggle to defend the Truth, to do good and to spread peace in the earth, the closer you become to Allah (ﷻ).

This great *surah* starts with a call to have *Taqwa* and it concludes with *jihad*:

And strive¹⁰⁹ for Allah with the striving due to Him. He has chosen you and has not placed upon you in the religion any

¹⁰⁹ The original Arabic verb means: carry out *jihad*.

difficulty. [It is] the religion of your father, Abraham. He named you "Muslims"¹¹⁰ before [in former scriptures] and in this [revelation] that the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people. So establish prayer and give zakah and hold fast to Allah. He is your protector; and excellent is the protector, and excellent is the helper. (22:78)

The command to have *Taqwa* appears in the first verse of the *surah* and the epitome of *Taqwa* appears in the last verse. *Taqwa* requires Jihad, striving against one's self. Whoever does not triumph over his desires, the unlawful inclinations of his soul and its attachment to this worldly life will not be able to triumph in other fields of struggle. The real victory is the internal victory. This is a prerequisite to external victory and empowerment in the earth.

The last verse also emphasizes the universality of Islam and the issue of Muslims bearing witness before all humanity. The Hajj has a universal message as it presents to the whole world the true image of Islam: the brotherhood, the unity and the cooperation of Muslims as well as their humbleness and submission to Allah alone. The believer whose forehead touches the ground in prostration before the Creator will never bow or prostrate himself before mortal beings. This believer does not have protectors besides Allah (SWT) for no one can support, help, harm or benefit without Allah's consent.

The universal message of Islam offers peace and great moral values to the world. It bears testimony that the Truth has been conveyed to humanity. Conveying the message is one of the

¹¹⁰ The word Muslim means one who submits his or her will (to the Creator).

greatest duties of Muslims. Every pilgrim should, therefore, keep in mind the fact that he or she is presenting this message to the world. Remember that your behavior and actions speak louder than words. This is true everywhere but especially so in the pilgrimage and the holy sites. If a Muslim errs (even by just throwing an empty bottle or a piece of paper on the ground), the ramifications are not restricted to himself; it becomes an offense against this great message and its universal image. Present Islam to the world in the best possible way. Let people see a beautiful, clean, holy and spiritual picture of the Hajj – one that shows the cooperation and love between the pilgrims and reflects their close relationship to Allah (SWT) Who honored them with this mission. Hence the surah ends with the following words:

So establish prayer and give zakah and hold fast to Allah. He is your protector; and excellent is the protector, and excellent is the helper. (22:78)

Pilgrims should keep in mind that they are in charge of delivering the message of Islam. When the Prophet (ﷺ) performed the Hajj, he said, “O Allah, have I conveyed (the message)? O Allah, be my witness.”

He (ﷺ) conveyed the message of Islam and fulfilled his duty in the most perfect way, and it is our duty today to continue this mission. We should never become the obstacles that prevent the great message of Islam from reaching the world by foolish acts or behaviors that repel others and are not in harmony with our religion. Islam calls for everything that is beautiful, for cooperation and love, for cleanliness and fairness. We have to be sincere and honest when delivering the message of

our fathers Ibrahim and Muhammad – may Allah bless them both and grant them peace – not just through words, but also through our behavior and actions.

I pray to Allah, the Almighty, to bless the pilgrims and guide them to do all that will please Him. I pray that He grants them humble hearts that will submit to His Will. I ask Him to help them present the message of Islam in the best manner. May Allah make the season of the Hajj one of goodness, righteousness, faith and blessings for the Muslims as well as for the whole world.

والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته

May peace and Allah's Mercy and Blessings be upon you.

Some Supplications from the Qur'an

رَبَّنَا ظَلَمْنَا أَنفُسَنَا وَإِن لَّمْ تَغْفِرْ لَنَا وَتَرْحَمْنَا لَنَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْخَاسِرِينَ.

Our Lord, we have wronged ourselves, and if You do not forgive us and have mercy upon us, we will surely be among the losers (7:23)

رَبَّنَا آتِنَا فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ حَسَنَةً وَقِنَا عَذَابَ النَّارِ.

Our Lord, give us in this world [that which is] good and in the Hereafter [that which is] good and protect us from the punishment of the Fire. (2:201)

رَبَّنَا لَا تُؤَاخِذْنَا إِن نَّسِينَا أَوْ أَخْطَأْنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تَحْمِلْ عَلَيْنَا إصْرًا كَمَا حَمَلْتَهُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِنَا رَبَّنَا وَلَا تُحَمِّلْنَا مَا لَا طَاقَةَ لَنَا بِهِ وَاعْفُ عَنَّا وَاعْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا أَنْتَ مَوْلَانَا فَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ.

Our Lord, do not impose blame upon us if we have forgotten or erred. Our Lord, and lay not upon us a burden like that which You laid upon those before us. Our Lord, and burden us not with that which we have no ability to bear. And pardon us; and forgive us; and have mercy upon us. You are our protector, so give us victory over the disbelieving people. (2:286)

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لَنَا ذُنُوبَنَا وَإِسْرَافَنَا فِي أَمْرِنَا وَثَبِّتْ أَقْدَامَنَا
وَانصُرْنَا عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْكَافِرِينَ

Our Lord, forgive us our sins and the excess [committed] in our affairs and plant firmly our feet and give us victory over the disbelieving people." (3:147)

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ. رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي
وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ

My Lord, make me an establisher of prayer, and [many] from my descendants. Our Lord, and accept my supplication. Our Lord, forgive me and my parents and the believers the Day the account is established." (14:40-41)

رَبَّنَا لَا تَزِغْ قُلُوبَنَا بَعْدَ إِذْ هَدَيْتَنَا وَهَبْ لَنَا مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً
إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْوَهَّابُ

Our Lord, let not our hearts deviate after You have guided us and grant us from Yourself mercy. Indeed, You are the Bestower. (3:8)

حَسْبِيَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ عَلَيْهِ تَوَكَّلْتُ وَهُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

Sufficient for me is Allah; there is no deity except Him. On Him I have relied, and He is the Lord of the Great Throne." (9:129)