



# Study Circle

The opportunity to learn, connect  
and spiritually grow with your  
family during the month of Ramadan

**WEEK 1**

ISLAMIC SOCIETY OF BRITAIN  
PRESENTS

*A 30-day study  
circle programme*

This pack consists of:

- A series of reminders
- Tafsirs on short surahs of the Quran
  - Attributes of God
- Short stories of the prophets (peace be upon them)

*Version 1.0*

## *How to use this pack*

- This resource has been created in order to allow families to come together during Ramadan and hold a study circle.
- The purpose of this is to help bring families together in worship and remembrance of God in a constructive and aided way, especially at a time when it is difficult for us to be together as families and friends, and in places of worship.
- This resource can be used as an aid or as a comprehensive guide. No prior level of knowledge is required. You may use the information provided as little or as much as you feel necessary, at your own discretion.
- We would suggest that families sit together regularly, every day during Ramadan to do the circle in order to benefit from this circle. Set a fixed time every day if you can!
- The circle is designed to take 30 minutes. This can of course be extended to suit interests and circumstances.
- We would encourage families to take a circle regularly with wider family or friends through online interfaces. This will bring together families regularly in worship and the remembrance of God.
- Each pack covers a week of Ramadan. To obtain the next pack please visit [isb.org.uk](http://isb.org.uk).
- For your ease, each day is divided into 3 sections. This includes the following; Quran, a story with a message from Islam, a reminder or reflection and a summary of one of the 99 names of God.



The Islamic Society of Britain is a community based national charity. We are a membership organisation with members spread across the whole of the UK. Established in 1990, we were one of the first organisations that sought to evolve a uniquely British flavour to Islam. In order for this to happen, we felt that Muslims would have to think seriously about understanding their faith in a British context.

Our aims are:

- To promote greater understanding and awareness of Islam
- To organise, educate and enhance the development of British Muslim communities
- To encourage positive contribution to British society and the promotion of social justice



*The Islamic Society of Britain has four key areas of focus over the coming two years:*

- Connecting families & building brotherhood/sisterhood*
- Developing youth and young adults*
- Encouraging social action*
- Developing and enhancing civic engagement*

*Our youth section (11-17) is called Young Muslims*

*Our young adult (18-26) section is called Campus*

*Please do become a member or join our mailing list*


*isb.org.uk*

*isbcampus.org.uk*

*ymuk.net*

*info@isb.org.uk*

*0300 365 10 9 8*



*We hope you will find this guide  
can structure some of the worship  
we commit to in Ramadan but also  
help us in staying connected as  
families and friends, growing  
closer to God.*

# Glossary

- Hadith*** Refers to reports of what Prophet Muhammad said and did (literally: statements or news)
- Islam*** Has two meanings intertwined: 'peace' and to 'give one's will to God'
- Pbuh*** Peace be upon him. When used for Muhammad, it means 'peace and blessings be upon him'
- Quran*** The Muslim scripture (literally: recitation)
- Ramadan*** The 9th month of the Islamic calendar, when Muslims observe fasting
- Salah*** Ritual prayer, alone or in a group (literally: link or communication)
- Sawm*** The act of fasting. The fast begins before sunrise and ends at sunset each day
- Sunnah*** The practice and traditions of Prophet Muhammad (literally: trodden path)

***Surah*** A chapter of the Quran (literally: divider)

***Swa*** Subhanahu Wa Ta'ala, meaning May He be praised and exalted

***Tafsir*** Commentary of the Quran

***Zakat*** A charitable contribution of 2.5% of wealth donated to the poor and needy (literally: purification)



# *Video Conferencing Guide*

Family meetups are usually a prominent feature of our lives during Ramadan. Due to the current circumstances, however, this is not feasible for many of us. Thankfully, it is still possible to connect with family members who do not live in the same household and organise study circles with them, through the utilisation of video conferencing facilities.

These facilities allow the user to create a secure, virtual 'room' into which they can invite family, friends, and anyone else they wish. The invitees can then connect to the room using a variety of different devices, but ideally one with a microphone, a speaker/audio output, and a camera. When a user is connected, it is entirely within their discretion whether or not they allow their video and/or audio feed to be broadcasted.

The content for the circles can then be broadcasted in real time by one of the members of the group. This is done through the use of the 'screen-share' feature. In the context of a study circle, this allows for all members of the group to see the same text and images of this booklet at the same time, so that they are able to follow what is being said or commented on. The circle can then proceed as normal.

*There are many different software solutions which offer conferencing software. A few of these are listed below:*

Platform	Price	Link to use/download	Notes
Skype	Free	<a href="https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype/">https://www.skype.com/en/get-skype/</a>	
Google Hangouts	Free	<a href="https://hangouts.google.com/">https://hangouts.google.com/</a>	Requires a Google account. Without a G-Suite account, video calls with up to 10 people are supported.
Google Hangouts Meet	Free*	<a href="https://gsuite.google.com/intl/en_uk/pricing.html">https://gsuite.google.com/intl/en_uk/pricing.html</a>	Please note that Google Hangouts <b>Meet</b> is a different service from Google Hangouts (above). *Hangouts Meet will be made free by Google from 'early May' until 30/09, meaning that anyone with a Google account will be able to host and schedule meetings.
Zoom	Free*	<a href="https://zoom.us/">https://zoom.us/</a>	*The free versions supports group calls up to 40 mins only.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

# Day 1

Reminder: The Beautiful Sajdah

Tafsir: Surah Ash-Shams

99 Names of God: Al-Wakeel (The Guardian)

## ***Reminder: The Beautiful Sajdah***

The Messenger of God (pbuh) said, “Whenever a Muslim prostrates before God for His sake, God raises him one degree by it, and absolves him of one evil deed”. (Muslim, Ibn Majah)

Prayer is central to the lives of Muslims. As one of the Five Pillars of Islam, the importance and reason for prayer is much spoken about. During times of both hardship and ease, individual prayers unlock a certain inner power that draws us nearer to God. The Messenger of God (pbuh) said, “A creature does not draw near to God by anything more excellent than by prostration in private”. (Ibn al Mubarak, Mursal)

Abu Hurairah said, “The nearest a creature is to God is when he prostrates: so, do much supplication on this occasion”.

The act of prayer is integral to Islam. It was the first act of worship that was made obligatory by God. Its obligation was revealed directly to the Prophet (pbuh), during his ascension to heaven. The Prophet (pbuh) said, “The head of the matter is Islam, its pillar is the prayer, and the top of its hump is jihad [striving] in the way of God”. (Tirmidhi 2616)

We are closest to God when we are in prostration to Him. God says, “Their foreheads show the mark of prostrations”.  
Quran (Surah Al-Fath, 48:29)

It is that the prayer is, 'the light of humbleness, for it shines from within to the surface', and is a purely personal action that reflects our individual relationships with God. The Messenger of God (pbuh) said, “If Islam were stripped away, piece by piece, people would hold tight to each piece. The first piece taken would be the ruling and governance and the last would be the prayer”. It is the final thing that the Prophet recommended to the Muslims before he died, saying, “Prayer, prayer and what your right hand possesses”. (Ibn Hibban)

During sajdah we say, ‘Subhaana rabbiyal a’alaa’, which means, ‘glory be to God, the Most High’. We should take the time during prostration to reflect on these words, using our prayer as a means of glorifying God.

***Discussion:***

Think for a minute: reflect on why we pray or how prayer has helped you in the past. Share these reflections between yourselves.

***Surah: Ash-Shams (The Sun)***

وَالشَّمْسِ وَضُحَاهَا

By the sun in its morning brightness

وَالْقَمَرِ إِذَا تَلَاهَا

And by the moon as it follows it,

وَالنَّهَارِ إِذَا تَجَلَّاهَا

By the day as it displays the sun's glory

وَاللَّيْلِ إِذَا يَغْشَاهَا

And by the night as it conceals it

وَالسَّمَاءِ وَمَا بَنَاهَا

By the sky and how He built it

وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا طَحَاهَا

And by the earth and how He spread it,

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا

By the soul and how He formed it

فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

And inspired it [to know] its own rebellion and  
piety!

قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا

The one who purifies his soul succeeds

وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

And the one who corrupts it fails.

كَذَّبَتْ ثَمُودُ بِطَغْوَاهَا

In their arrogant cruelty, the people of Thamud  
called [their messenger] a liar,

إِذِ انبَعَثَ أَشْقَاهَا

When the most wicked man among them rose [against him].

فَقَالَ لَهُمْ رَسُولُ اللَّهِ نَاقَةَ اللَّهِ وَسُقْيَاهَا

The messenger of God said to them, '[Leave] God's camel to drink,'

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَعَقَرُوهَا فَذَمْدَمَ عَلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُم بِذَنبِهِمْ فَسَوَّاهَا

But they called him a liar and hamstrung her. Their Lord destroyed them for their crime and levelled them.

وَلَا يَخَافُ عُقْبَاهَا

He did not hesitate to punish them.



## ***Tafsir: Surah Ash-Shams (The Sun)***

Surah Ash-Shams is a short surah which covers ideas about the nature of humankind, their knowledge, free will, and responsibility for their ultimate fate. A story about the people of Thamud is used to illustrate these ideas.

The first few verses of the surah contain a number of oaths. The general purpose of using oaths in the Quran is to bring emphasis and attention to the topic explored after them. While humankind is only allowed to take an oath to God, God may Himself take an oath to any part of the creation that He pleases. This surah begins by taking oaths to the sun and the moon; the day and the night; and the heavens and the earth. These all, in one way or another, contrast each other. For example, the sun, visible during the day, contrasts with the moon, which is visible during the night. This juxtaposition is continued when the surah moves on to discussing the idea of the soul, and how it can tell right from wrong; as well as how a soul kept pure, or a soul corrupted, will result in success or ruin respectively.

The surah concludes by giving an example of this principle, where the people of Thamud were explicitly instructed by God to allow a camel of miraculous nature to take a drink of water, but in their arrogance and stinginess, refused and hamstringed it in order to prevent it from doing so. This special camel had been sent to them by God as a sign - they had asked for it to be

sent to them to prove God's power – and yet they still rejected His message when God sent them the camel.

In their arrogance and disobedience, the people of Thamud had corrupted their souls and brought about their own ruin: they were subsequently destroyed by God. This is a simplified account; a more detailed one can be found in the story of the Prophet Saleh (pbuh).

A lesson that can be taken from this surah is one of the free will which has been given to every human being, and how this gives us a responsibility for our ultimate fates. We have been given the gift of being able to choose to do as we please. Together with the knowledge we have in the divine revelation, this gift allows us to choose between doing good deeds and doing bad deeds. Surah Ash-Shams tells us that to do good will ultimately result in our success, while to do bad deeds will ultimately result in our failure.

It may not seem like this is the case on the scale of any individual action we commit. For example, sometimes being truthful about a mistake we made might result in our parents becoming angry with us, but ultimately, God knows what is best for us, and instructs us to be truthful in all but the most exceptional of circumstances: it could transpire that telling the truth in that situation helped to prevent something much worse from happening.

Ultimately, God will reward us for following his instruction and being truthful, whether it be in this life, or the next.

In general, when faced with any dilemma, it might seem from our limited perspectives to be more beneficial to act in a way that is against God's instructions, but God's knowledge encompasses everything: He knows all that we know, as well as what is hidden from us. He knows what is best for us, so we should heed His instructions and put our trust in God, knowing that it will ultimately result in success.

***Discussion: Free Will versus Determinism***

The philosophical debate of 'free will versus determinism' is centred on the question of to what extent our actions as human beings are dictated by forces which we have no control over, as opposed to being purely a result of our own choices.

We have learned from Surah Ash-Shams that human beings have been given free will to decide their fates. However, elsewhere in the Quran, it is stated that God knows all that has happened and all that will; this would appear to be contradictory to the idea of free will: if God knows what will happen to us, surely we can't really choose our own fates?

Discuss among yourselves how you think these two principles could be reconciled. Below are some questions which could be useful to think about:

- God exists outside of our limitations of space and time. Could this make it difficult for us to properly understand the idea that God knows all that could/will happen to us?
- When God says that He knows all that will happen, does that mean it cannot be influenced by our choices and actions?

Here is a link to an article with more information on the topic:  
<https://yaqeeninstitute.org/justin-parrott/reconciling-the-divine-decree-and-free-will-in-islam/>

## 99 Names of God: Al-Wakeel (the Guardian)

الوكيل  
جَلَّ جَلَالُهُ

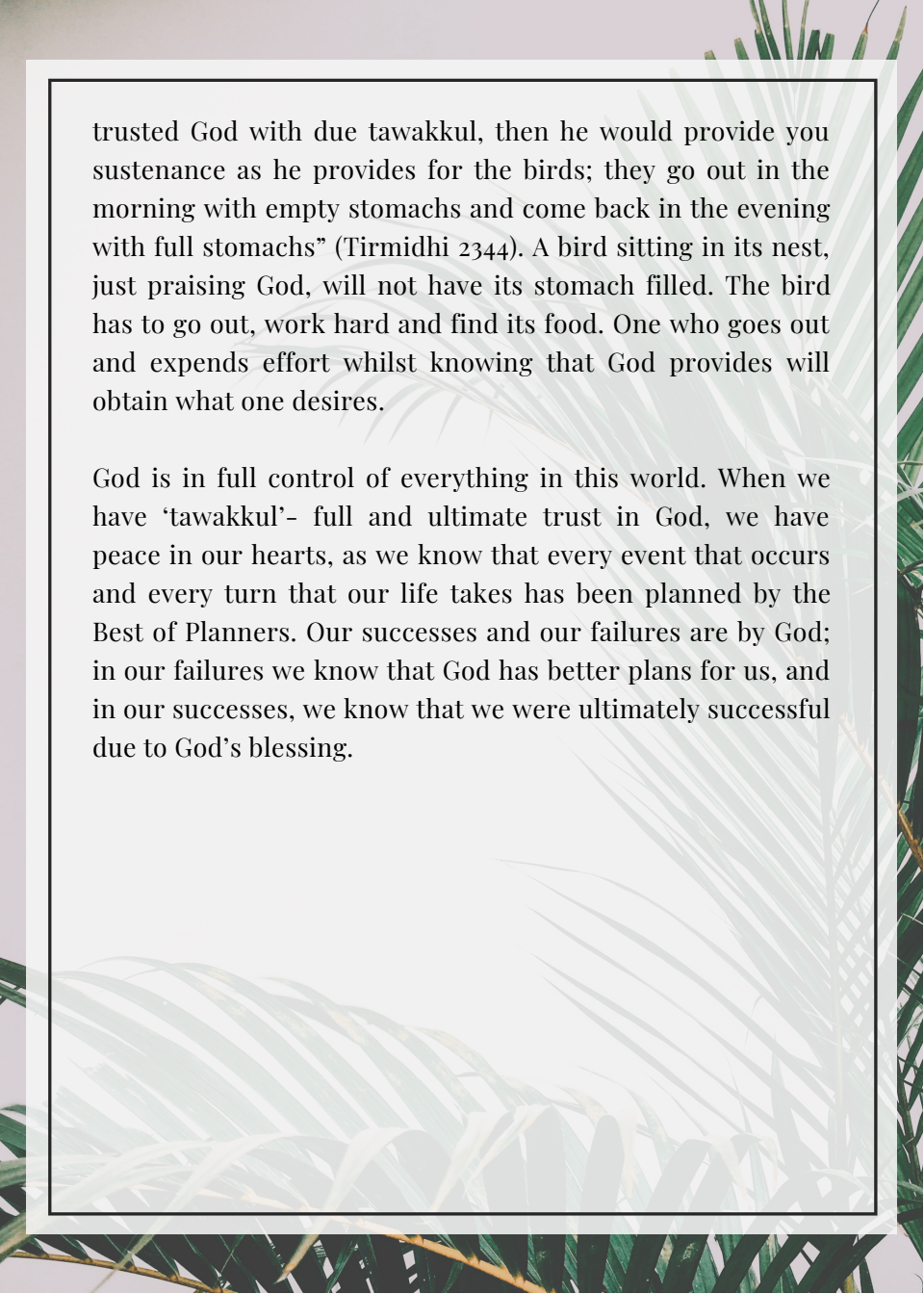
Al-Wakeel stems from the root 'w-k-l' which signifies ideas of 'entrusting something for care or management', 'being a guardian', and 'having reliance upon' something. The same root w-k-l also gives rise to the word 'tawakkul' - indicating trust in God, and 'mutawakkileen'- the ones who entrust.

Al-Wakeel is the Ultimate Trustee, the Disposer of Affairs and the Guardian. It states in the Quran that:

“But it increased them in faith, and they said, ‘sufficient for us is God, and He is the best Disposer of affairs.’”

Quran (Surah Ali 'Imran, 3:173)

Tawakkul is thus putting trust in Al-Wakeel, whilst also implementing the means that have been permitted; so, you endeavour and strive to overcome difficulties and hardship, whilst simultaneously taking God as your support. Umar Ibn al-Khattab heard the Messenger of God (pbuh) saying, “If you

The background of the image features a soft-focus, light green and white pattern of palm fronds. A white rectangular box with a thin black border is centered on the page, containing two paragraphs of text.

trusted God with due tawakkul, then he would provide you sustenance as he provides for the birds; they go out in the morning with empty stomachs and come back in the evening with full stomachs” (Tirmidhi 2344). A bird sitting in its nest, just praising God, will not have its stomach filled. The bird has to go out, work hard and find its food. One who goes out and expends effort whilst knowing that God provides will obtain what one desires.

God is in full control of everything in this world. When we have ‘tawakkul’- full and ultimate trust in God, we have peace in our hearts, as we know that every event that occurs and every turn that our life takes has been planned by the Best of Planners. Our successes and our failures are by God; in our failures we know that God has better plans for us, and in our successes, we know that we were ultimately successful due to God’s blessing.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

# Day 2

Reminder: Gender Equality in Islam

Quran: Surah Al-Balad (The City)

Tafsir: Surah Al-Balad (The City)

## ***Reminder: Gender Equality in Islam***

There are many eloquent verses of the Quran that point to the sexes as equal before God and partners in the lifelong struggle to love and the worship of God whilst living in an imperfect world.

Believing men and believing women are supporters and protectors of each other:

They enjoy goodness and forbid evil;

They establish prayer and give charity;

They obey God and His Messenger.

God will shower mercy upon them.

Truly, God is almighty and wise.

Quran (Surah At-Tawbah, 9:71)

When one of the Prophet's (pbuh) wives conveyed to him an often-heard female complaint that males seemed to dominate religious life, the following comprehensive verse was revealed:

Truly, those who submit, men and women,

those who have faith, men and women,

those who are devout, men and women,

those who are true, men and women,

those who show patience, men and women,

those who humble themselves, men and women,

those who give in charity, men and women,

those who fast, men and women,



those who guard their chastity, men and women,  
those who remember God often, men and women:  
for them has God prepared forgiveness and great reward.

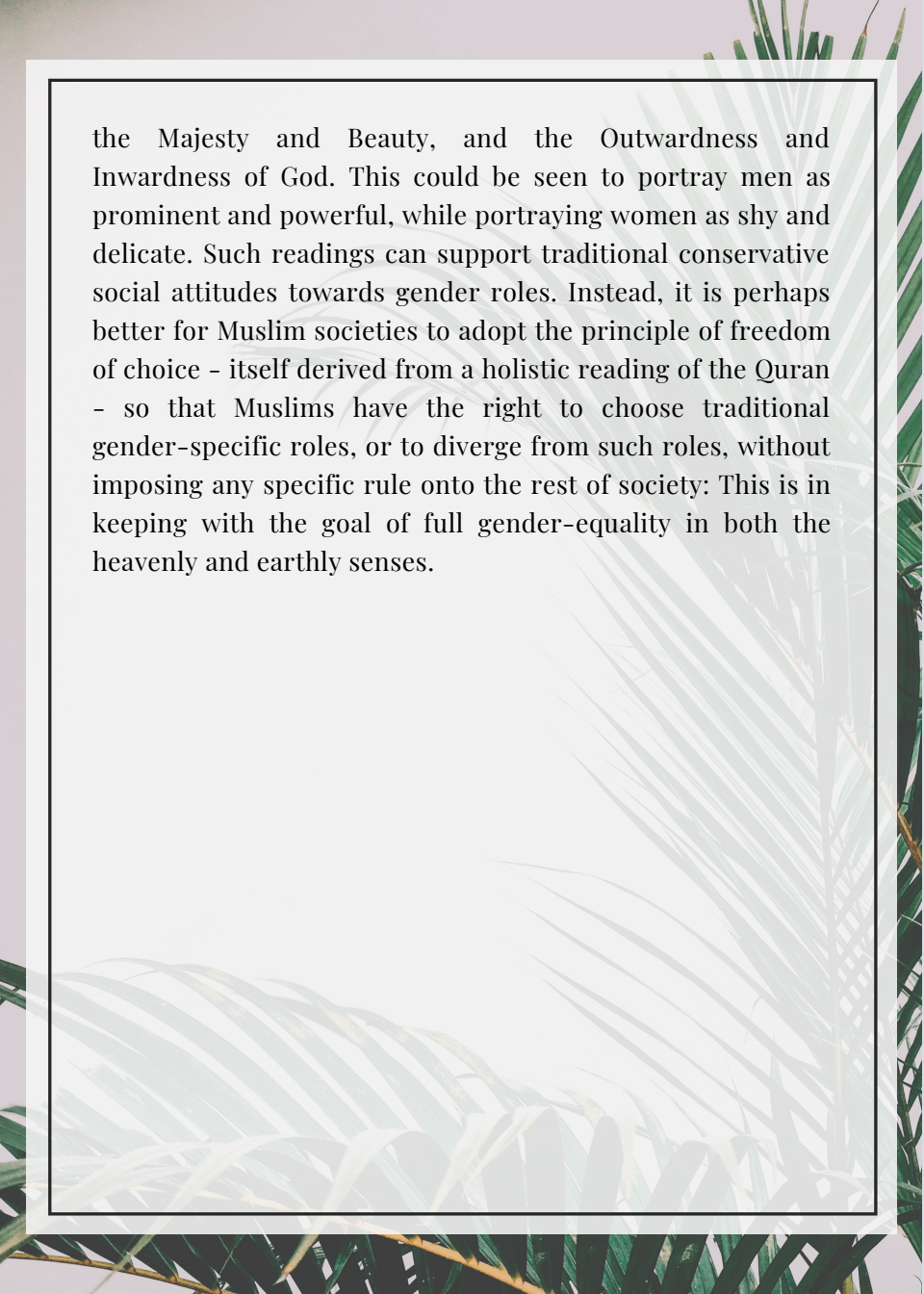
Quran (Surah Al-Azhab, 33:35)

Another important area of thinking about equality is in gender relations. It is sometimes thought that Muslim women are treated as less worthy by their religion. The Quran states (in Surah Ali 'Imran, 3:195), 'I shall not lose sight of the efforts of any of you who work in My way, be it man or woman; each of you is from the other'. This makes clear that for God, both men and women are equal in their worldly actions as well as in their spiritual status.

Equality spans both the private and public spheres; women in early Islamic society were encouraged to take part, and indeed were active, in the public realm.

The Prophet's (pbuh) wife Aisha and his daughters were considered great scholars of Islam. The Prophet's first wife, Khadija, was a successful businesswoman who in fact proposed marriage to him. Sadly, this ethos of equality is not always turned into a reality in the way Muslims live to-day, and so much needs to be done to realise it.

Some mystical readings of the Quran see the sexes as reflections of the innumerable Divine Names. So, for example, men and women are meant to respectively reflect



the Majesty and Beauty, and the Outwardness and Inwardness of God. This could be seen to portray men as prominent and powerful, while portraying women as shy and delicate. Such readings can support traditional conservative social attitudes towards gender roles. Instead, it is perhaps better for Muslim societies to adopt the principle of freedom of choice - itself derived from a holistic reading of the Quran - so that Muslims have the right to choose traditional gender-specific roles, or to diverge from such roles, without imposing any specific rule onto the rest of society: This is in keeping with the goal of full gender-equality in both the heavenly and earthly senses.

## *Quran: Surah Al-Balad (The City)*

I swear by this city, Makkah -

لَا أُقْسِمُ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ

And you, [O Muhammad], are free of restriction in this city -

وَأَنْتَ حِلٌّ بِهَذَا الْبَلَدِ

And [by] the father and that which was born [of him]

وَوَالِدٍ وَمَا وَلَدٌ

We have certainly created man into hardship.

لَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ فِي كَبَدٍ

Does he think that never will anyone overcome him?

أَيَحْسَبُ أَنْ لَنْ يَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ أَحَدٌ

He says, "I have spent wealth in abundance."

يَقُولُ أَهْلَكْتُ مَالًا لُبَدًا

Does he think that no one has seen him?

أَيَحْسَبُ أَنْ لَمْ يَرَهُ أَحَدٌ

Have We not made for him two eyes?

أَلَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ عَيْنَيْنِ

And a tongue and two lips?

وَلِسَانًا وَشَفَتَيْنِ

وَهَدَيْنَاهُ النَّجْدَيْنِ

And have shown him the two ways?

فَلَا افْتَحَمَ الْعَقَبَةَ

But he has not broken through the difficult pass.

وَمَا أَدْرَاكَ مَا الْعَقَبَةُ

And what can make you know what is [breaking through] the difficult pass?

فَلِكُ رَقَبَةٍ

It is the freeing of a slave

أَوْ إِطْعَامٍ فِي يَوْمٍ ذِي مَسْغَبَةٍ

Or feeding on a day of severe hunger

يَتِيمًا ذَا مَقْرَبَةٍ

An orphan of near relationship

أَوْ مِسْكِينًا ذَا مَتْرَبَةٍ

Or a needy person in misery

ثُمَّ كَانَ مِنَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالصَّبْرِ وَتَوَاصَوْا بِالْمَرْحَمَةِ

And then being among those who believed and advised one another to patience and advised one another to compassion.

أُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ الْمَيْمَنَةِ

Those are the companions of the right.

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِنَا هُمْ أَصْحَابُ الْمَشْأَمَةِ

But they who disbelieved in Our signs - those are the companions of the left

عَلَيْهِمْ نَارٌ مُّؤَصَّدَةٌ

Over them will be fire closed in.

## ***Tafsir: Surah Al-Balad***

This surah discusses the nature of human existence, expressing ideas of the struggles of this life, the ingratitude and arrogance of humankind in the face of the numerous blessings afforded to them, and finally how humans can ascend the 'difficult path' to success by following particular practices.

The surah begins with God making a few oaths. These are usually done in the Quran to emphasise the importance of the information which follows them. While humans are allowed to only take an oath to God, God Himself may take an oath to any part of the creation. The oaths in Surah Al-Balad are made firstly to the city of Mecca – this is clear from the fact that this is where the surah was revealed. God then states that it is the city where the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) resides, and finally makes an oath to 'parent and offspring'. Mecca is, of course, a holy city which is the site of the Ka'ba, a testament to peace and monotheism, and Muhammad is God's final messenger. These are both, therefore, worthy oaths to make. The next oath can be interpreted in various ways: it could refer to the Prophet Ibrahim and his son, Ismail (peace be upon them both), since they had previously been protectors of the Ka'ba. It could also be a more general statement which refers to the miracle of human procreation, which is relevant to the wider theme of human life explored in the surah.

The fourth verse speaks of how humankind will always live with difficulties and struggles: this life is designed to test us in different ways from cradle to grave. It is how we go about our lives and deal with our tests and trials that God will judge. These tests do not necessarily have to take the form of difficulty; God can also test us with blessings of wealth and power. The next few verses explore this, questioning those who become arrogant of their power and wasteful with their wealth, who refuse to accept that these are blessings from God which they should be grateful for. God goes on to question why such people, who have been given the blessings of eyes, lips and a tongue, as well as the free will to decide their own fates, refuse to follow the guidance of Islam. This idea of free will sets us apart from other (known) creatures living on Earth; it gives us great power, but with that comes the responsibility of choosing between right and wrong: it is up to us alone to decide what our ultimate destinations will be in the hereafter. This idea is also explored in the subsequent surah, Ash-Shams.

Having established the idea of free will, God then continues by giving some guidance on how to follow what He calls 'the difficult path' which leads towards success in the hereafter, and to being with those on 'the right-hand side'. God advises us to free slaves, feed orphans and the poor during a famine, to believe, and to urge one another to have patience and compassion.

The advice to believe is vital since, without it, we would have no feeling of ultimate accountability to God for our actions, meaning that there is little incentive to do good deeds. The advice on feeding the needy during a famine is important because it would show strength of faith to share our food when it is scarce for us as well. Finally, in urging one another to have patience and compassion, we are doing more than simply incorporating these admirable qualities in our daily lives, we are spreading them across our communities: this can result in a much longer-reaching benefit to society. God ends the surah by making clear that those who reject this advice (and the revelation as a whole) will reside in the hellfire.

It has been stated multiple times in the Quran (e.g. in 3:104) that we should 'enjoin that which is known to be good and forbid that which has been rejected'. We need to remember that, while it is certainly crucial to observe core Islamic principles such as the belief in God and the prayer, God also requires us to engage with those living in our communities (whether Muslim or non-Muslim), and try to have a positive impact on their lives, as well as on society at large.

### ***Discussion Points***

- 1. Can you think of any examples of how principles of patience and/or compassion are exemplified in the society you live in?*
- 2. What do you think you can do personally to follow the advice given in Surah Al-Balad?*



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

# Day 3

Reminder: The Importance of Prayer

Story & Discussion: Islam as an Eternal  
Message

99 Names of God: Al-Baari (The Originator)

## ***Reminder: The Importance of Prayer***

The prayer is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is also the first matter that we will be questioned about on the Day of Judgement. The Prophet (pbuh) said: 'The first thing to be reckoned with on the Day of Judgement will be the prayer...'

(Abu Dawood)

God commands us, 'Establish prayer for my remembrance...'

Quran (Surah Taha, 20:14)

God also tells us, 'Remember me and I shall remember you...'

Quran (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:152)

If we sincerely remember God in our prayers, we are guaranteed that He will be remembering us. What better honour can we have than this?

The prayer acts as a way of taking time out from our day. It reminds us, at least five times a day, what we are living for. The phrase 'Allahu akbar' literally translates to 'God is greater', with emphasis on the word 'greater'. We leave our worries in the hands of God from the very first phrase we utter in prayer, 'Allahu akbar', and we raise our hands to our head in surrender: God is greater than any problem, any success, or any failure racing through our minds before we start our prayer.

The prayer serves as a continuous reminder of God's presence, helping Muslims to do good deeds and avoid bad deeds. It also acts as a method of purification for a believer.

The Prophet (pbuh) said the following to his companions: 'The five set prayers may be compared to a stream of fresh water, flowing in front of your house, into which you plunge five times each day. Do you think that would leave any dirt on your body?' When they replied: 'None at all!', the Prophet (pbuh) said: 'Indeed the five prayers remove sins, just as water removes dirt.'

(Bukhari, Muslim)

Abandoning the prayer does not affect God, but our own souls. By abandoning it, we are disobeying God's direct command, and can even begin to become forgetful of him.

'Believers, do not let your wealth and your children distract you from remembering God: those who do so will be the ones who lose.'

Quran (Surah Al-Munafiqun, 63:9)

There are so many distractions in our lives that if there were no set prayers, most would likely forget God. Humans have been created as forgetful beings, and so prayer is the medication prescribed to us by God so that we do not forget his favour upon us. God is our Creator; He gave us everything that we have, and without Him we would not exist. Remembering God keeps a believer on the straight path, which is for the benefit of their soul.



***‘Recite what has been revealed to you  
of the Scripture; keep up the prayer:  
prayer restrains outrageous and  
unacceptable behaviour.  
Remembering God is greater: God  
knows everything you are doing.’***

***Quran (Surah Al-‘Ankabut, 29:45)***

## *Islam as an Eternal Message*

For Muslims, the teachings of Islam have as much importance and relevance today as they did when the revelations first came to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) 1,400 years ago. Islam is not seen as set of rigid rules that were set in the 7th century, but rather a path of guidance that cultures and communities will make their own throughout time.

The message of Islam is for all times and all places. In its opening chapter, the Quran describes the religion as being the straight path and presents a picture of a guiding path that runs alongside time (Surah Al-Fatihah, 1:6-7). The Quran also acknowledges that the divine message has been sent to those who came before Muhammad, affirming the continuity of the divine message:

‘People of the Book, believe in what We have sent down to confirm what you already have before We wipe out [your sense of] direction, turning you back, or reject you, as We rejected those who broke the Sabbath: God’s will is always done.’

Quran (Surah An-Nisa, 4:47)

The core beliefs and rituals of Islam can be seen to consist of eternal truths and practices. The Quran gives examples of how different prophets were chosen by God throughout history to teach the same message: to worship and serve the same true God. This common thread in all divine messages is acknowledged in the Quran: ‘



*He has ordained for you of religion what He enjoined upon Noah and that which We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], and what We enjoined upon Abraham and Moses and Jesus - to establish the religion and not be divided therein. Difficult for those who associate others with God is that to which you invite them. God chooses for Himself whom He wills and guides to Himself whoever turns back [to Him].'*

*Quran (Surah Ash-Shuraa, 42:13)*

Islam is an eternal message: the fundamental principles of Islam of the oneness of humanity (Quran, Surah An-Nisa, 4:1; Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:213), dignity of human beings (Surah Al-Isra, 17:70), universalisation of natural resources (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:29), justice (Surah An-Nisa, 4:135; Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:8) and peace (Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:16; Surah Al-An'am, 6:127) remain constant and relevant. However, most things in the vast arena of human social interaction are subject to change and reinterpretation for the purpose of human welfare. We can see this in areas of politics, economics, gender relations and family life, where debates have changed in accordance with shifts in social norms. We cannot just ignore these debates; we must consciously engage with them using our own ijtihad (reasoning). The empiricism in modern natural and social sciences is a known reality of the Quranic theory of knowledge. This is made clear in the Quran:

'And do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge; for every act of hearing, seeing, or (feeling in) the heart will be inquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).'

Quran (Surah Al-Isra, 17:36)

In other words, it is our Quranic responsibility to use all methods of inquiry to come to a conclusion - the decisions we make in all aspects of our lives must be based on neither superstitions nor hearsay.

## ***Discussion:***

*The Islamicity Indices compiled by the Islamicity Foundation, a U.S.-based non-profit, measure world governments by how well they adhere to the Islamic principles set forth in the Quran, including the adherence to interest-free finance, equality of education, property rights and animal rights, among others. They don't include the personal duties required of Muslims, like prayer, fasting and pilgrimages.*

*New Zealand was placed as No. 1, followed by Sweden and Iceland*

*In the most recent survey, the highest-ranking country with a Muslim majority is the United Arab Emirates at No. 45 (The U.S. ranks at No. 23).*

- 1. Do these placements surprise you?*
- 2. Should some principles be weighted higher than others?*
- 3. What should these be?*
- 4. Where do you think the UK has been placed in the index?  
(Answer: 17th)*
- 5. Is it applicable to ask 'how Islamic' a country is?*
- 6. Think about what it means to 'live an Islamic life'. To what extent has this been included in the index?*

*(Feel free to research more into this index on [www.islamicity-index.org](http://www.islamicity-index.org))*



## 99 Names of God: Al-Baari (The Originator)



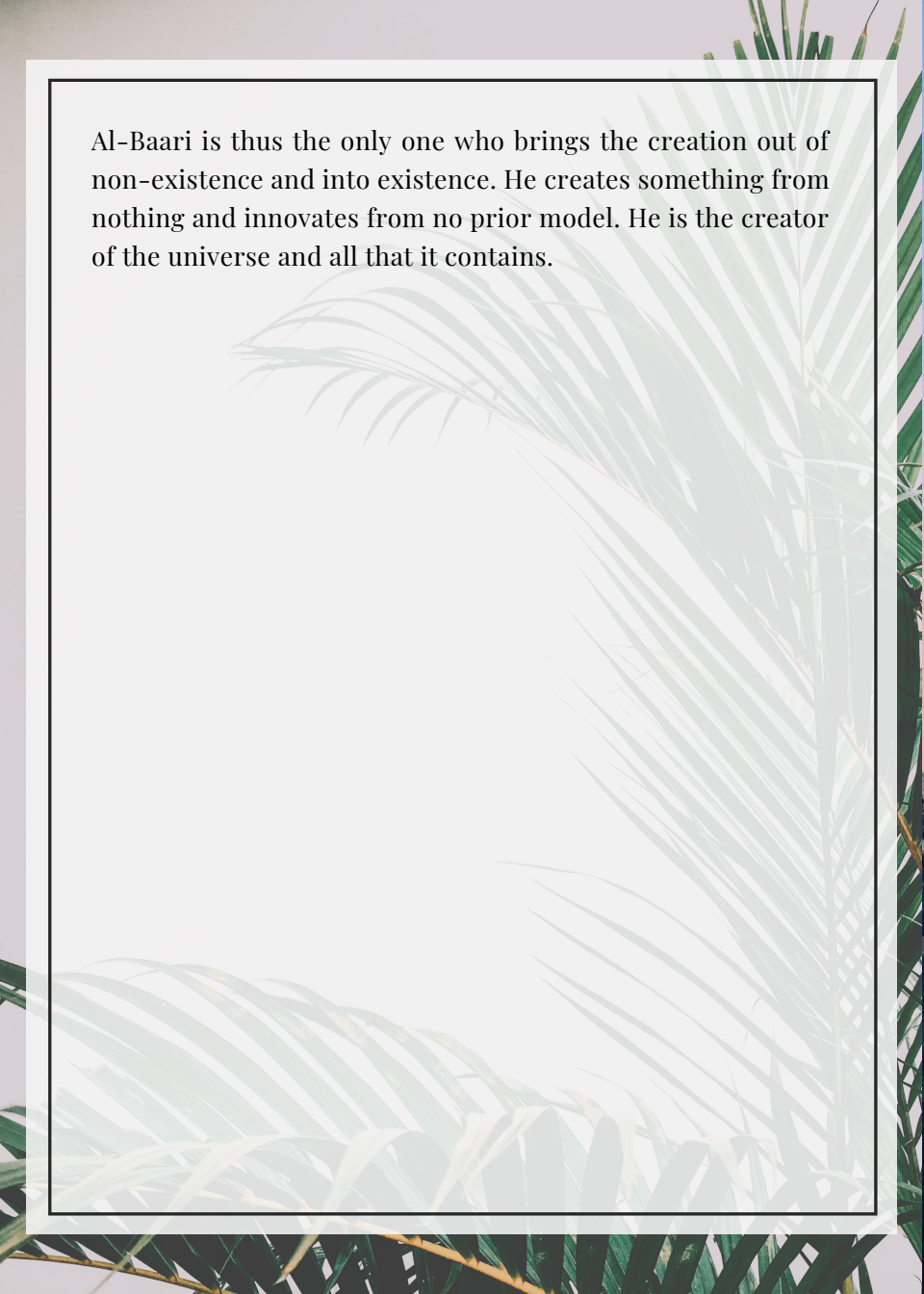
Al-Baari means The Originator, The Maker and The Evolver. Baari comes from the root ba-ra-a which has the classical Arabic connotations of creating something from nothing, to evolve using pre-existing matter and to be individual and free from fault and blemish. Other words which stem from this root are 'tabaara'a' meaning 'disown' and 'baree'un' meaning 'free.'

God says in the Quran: 'God, the Creator, the Inventor, the Fashioner; to him belong the best names.'

(Surah Al-Hashr, 59:24)

God also states: 'Those deities whom you call besides God cannot create a single fly, even if they combined all of their forces.'

(Surah Al-Hajj, 22:73)



Al-Baari is thus the only one who brings the creation out of non-existence and into existence. He creates something from nothing and innovates from no prior model. He is the creator of the universe and all that it contains.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

# Day 4

Reminder: Giving through Zakat

Discussion: Can Zakat be considered a type of tax?

99 Names of God: Ar-Razzaq (The Provider)

## ***Reminder: Giving through Zakat***

Zakat is a form of almsgiving which is considered to be an obligation for Muslims. Zakat Al-Fitr is a compulsory payment made at the end of the month of Ramadan by fasting Muslims which is equivalent to one day's meals for one person. Zakat which takes the form of a wealth tax is often given during the month of Ramadan as well, although this is not inherently required. Of course, charity and generosity are virtues to be practised all year round and not just in Ramadan.

The root word of Zakat means to purify. God tells us that the property and possessions we have in this life are not ours in an absolute sense. This is why the 'purification' of wealth through the giving of Zakat is important as a reminder to us that hoarding wealth is not the purpose of this life, as well as reminding us of the importance of looking after our own communities.

One purifies one's property and assets through paying a percentage (customarily 2.5 per cent) of their total value to the poor and needy.

- The heart of the man or woman who gives is purified from selfishness, greed, lack of concern for others and materialism.

- The heart of the recipient is also purified from jealousy and hatred against those who are wealthy but do not share what they have.
- There is also a purification of society at large from the problems of class struggle, social injustice and lack of concern. If the rich become richer and the poor become poorer without any redistribution of wealth, a fertile ground for the development of subversive ideologies is created.

God alone is the ultimate and absolute owner of everything and, therefore, whatever God has blessed us with is a trust in our hand. Nevertheless, God refers to 'your' property and 'your' wealth in the Quran because the nature of human beings is to work hard for the means to live comfortably.

But the accumulation of wealth is a test. We will be asked what we have spent our wealth on. God states that if a person spends part of their wealth for the needy, it is described as if the person has made a loan to God.

The word Zakat (in Arabic) is also seen as a noun derived from the verb 'Zaka', which means 'grew' or 'increased'. Muslims believe that giving charity does not really diminish wealth. In fact, everything one gives is considered an investment for the next life. Islam does not discourage people from earning well or becoming rich.

However, the teachings remind us that our wealth should never dominate us but should be seen as a trust to be spent positively.

There is dignity in giving and receiving charity. Just as in the Biblical tradition, Muhammad taught us that one who gives should aspire to give 'with their right hand so the left hand should not know' (Al-Bukhari). This suggests that it should be encouraged to give charity privately rather than publicly. He also encouraged the recipient of the charity to strive towards self-reliance and to seek ethical earning and an independent livelihood: 'Giving is better than receiving' (Sahih Muslim).

As Muslims, we are meant to be mindful of the fact that we cannot take our wealth and possessions to the grave; the only things that endure, and are of everlasting credit to us are our good deeds and the things given in charity out of a love for God and our fellow human beings.

### ***Discussion***

*Zakat is due from every Muslim who owns wealth which exceeds a minimum value (known as the Nisab) for a year.*

*'Alms are meant only for the poor, the needy, those who administer them, those whose hearts need winning over, to free slaves and help those in debt, for God's cause, and for travellers in need. This is ordained by God; God is all knowing and wise.'*

*Quran (Surah At-Tawbah, 9:60)*

*After reading the reminder, and bearing in mind anything else you may already know, do you think that Zakat can be considered a type of tax?*

*Some points to consider/Further discussion points:*

*How is Zakat given?*

*Why is Zakat given?*

*Is there an equivalent to Zakat in our Western society – and is it a tax?*

## 99 Names of God: Ar-Razzaq (The Provider)



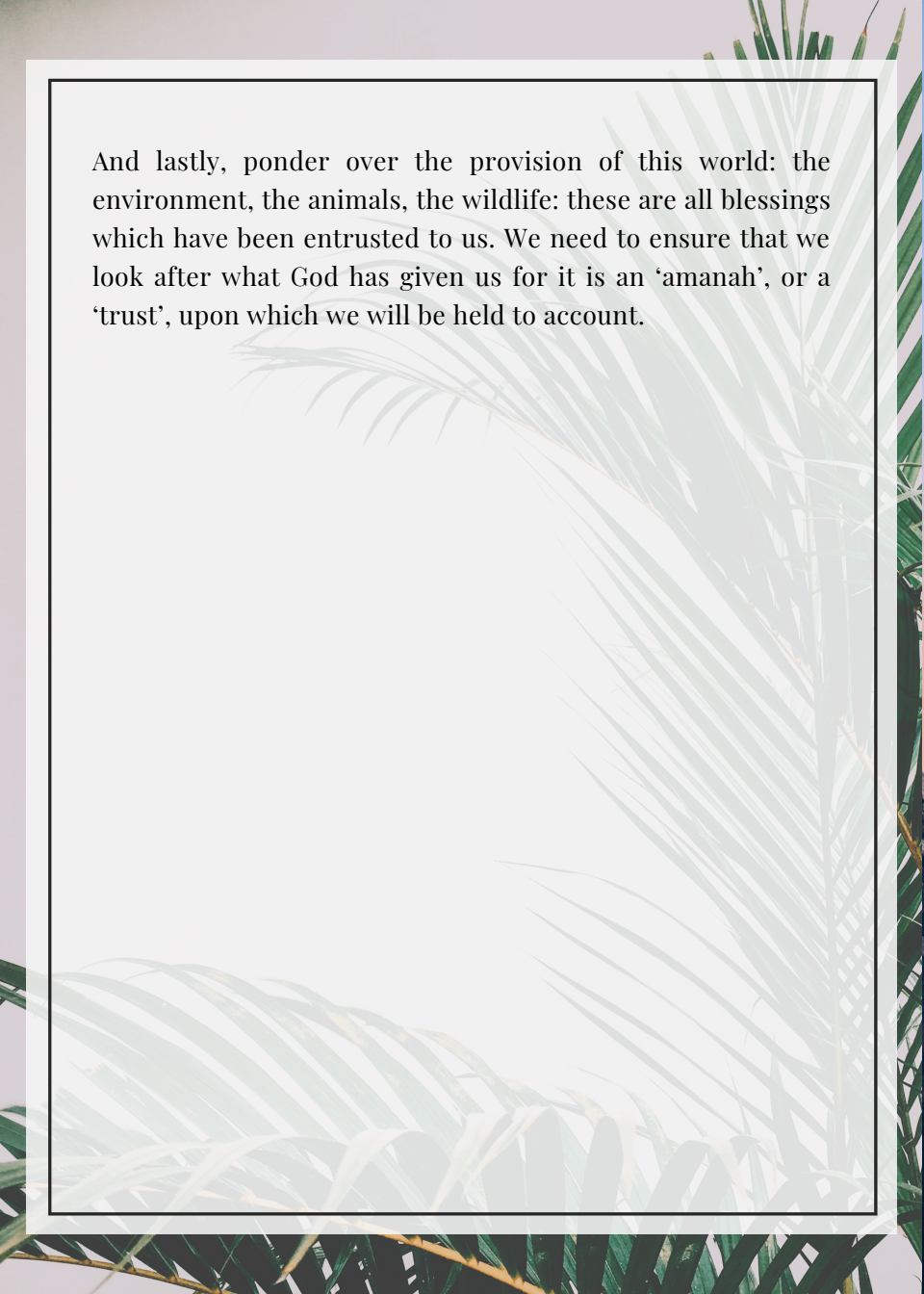
Ar-Razzaq stems from the root ra-za-q which connotes receiving something beneficial, being provided with the necessities of life, and being supplied with a means of subsistence.

‘Rizq’ means provision; it is considered to encompass all things which are beneficial. This includes not just money, but also knowledge and peace of mind. God states in the Quran: ‘There is not a creature that moves on earth whose provision is not His concern. He knows where it lives and its [final] resting place: it is all [there] in a clear record.’

(Surah Hud, 11:6)

We should be satisfied with what God has provided for us and thank Him for it. Our wealth, our health and our families are all huge blessings which we take for granted every day. Use your provisions in the right way; use it to do good and to help others.





And lastly, ponder over the provision of this world: the environment, the animals, the wildlife: these are all blessings which have been entrusted to us. We need to ensure that we look after what God has given us for it is an 'amanah', or a 'trust', upon which we will be held to account.

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

# Day 5

Reminder: Tawhid and the Shahada

Quran: Surah Al-Masad (The Palm Fibre)

Tafsir: Surah Al-Masad (The Palm Fibre)

Story: Prophet Ayub (pbuh)

## ***Reminder: Tawhid and the Shahada***

Tawhid is the key principle of Islam. The word ‘tawhid’ means to unify God. It means that God is only One, and that there is nothing worthy of worship besides Him alone.

‘Obey, adore and worship God, and associate no partner with Him...’

(Surah An-Nisa, 4:36)

Tawhid Ar-Rububiyah is the belief that there is only one God who created, organised and planned the universe and all it contains.

‘Say, “He is God, the One.”’

(Surah Al-Ikhlās, 112:1)

Tawhid Al-Uloohiyah is the belief that no one has the right to be worshipped except God alone.

‘Say, “My prayers and sacrifice, my life and death, are all for God, Lord of all the Worlds; He has no partner. This is what I am commanded, and I am the first to devote myself to Him.”’

(Surah Al-An’am, 6:162-163)

The word ‘shahada’ comes from the root word ‘shahida’, which means to witness something. The shahada is to bear witness to your personal striving and absolute acceptance of tawhid: ‘I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except God, and I bear witness that Muhammad is the messenger of God’.

Recitation of the shahada, the ‘oath’ or ‘testimony’ is the most important of the Five Pillars of Islam for Muslims. A single honest recitation of the shahada in Arabic is all that is required for a person to become a Muslim. This declaration or statement of faith is called the ‘kalima’, literally meaning ‘word’.

It is the central creed of Islam and was at the heart of the message delivered by every one of the many prophets and messengers who have lived throughout human history. Each of them would bear witness to the belief in God as their only Lord. Along with this, the followers were required to express their belief in the prophets and messengers who brought the message of tawhid to them.

‘We never sent any messenger before you [Muhammad] without revealing to him: “There is no god but Me, so serve Me.”’

(Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:25)

Everything we do has to be for the worship of God. Being nice to people is an act of worship. Bringing a smile to someone’s face can be an act of worship, and even keeping away from committing bad deeds can be an act of worship. But all of these acts of worship ought to be for the sake of God alone.

‘... all they are ordered to do is worship God alone, sincerely devoting their religion to Him as people of true faith, keep up the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms, for that is the true religion.’

(Surah Al-Bayyinah, 98:5)

To accept tawhid is to be sincere in the heart and to worship God alone with your heart, as well as by your actions and deeds. The actions and the deeds of a person reflect the sincerity of their intentions. If a person does not have sincerity in their heart and commits a good deed, they will receive a lesser reward than someone who does.

## *Quran: Surah Al-Masad (The Palm Fibre)*

تَبَّتْ يَدَا أَبِي لَهَبٍ وَتَبَّ

May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he.

مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُ مَالُهُ وَمَا كَسَبَ

His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained

سَيَصْلَىٰ نَارًا ذَاتَ لَهَبٍ

He will burn in a flaming fire

وَأَمْرَأَتُهُ حَمَّالَةَ الْحَطَبِ

And his wife [as well], the carrier of firewood,

فِي جِيدِهَا حَبْلٌ مِّن مَّسَدٍ

With a palm-fibre rope around her neck.

## ***Tafsir: Surah Al-Masad (The Palm Fibre)***

Surah Al-Masad is a short surah which is unusual in how it explicitly mentions individuals by name, something which is seldom done elsewhere in the Quran. It was revealed at a time when many in Mecca were strongly opposed to the Prophet Muhammad's (pbuh) message of Islam. Prominent among these were both Muhammad's uncle Abu Lahab – the name meaning 'father of flame', a reference to his flushed skin – and his wife Urwah (nicknamed Umm Jamil). They were a wealthy couple of high status within the city and were extremely abusive towards Muhammad once he started preaching the message of Islam: for example, they would throw stones at him whenever he held a public gathering, and Umm Jamil would lay thorns by the door of his house. Abu Lahab and his wife would also hurl verbal abuse at the Prophet (pbuh), including making fun of him when his only son passed away, remarking that Muhammad's lineage had been cut off. This surah is a retort to Abu Lahab's and Umm Jamil's abusive campaign.

The surah begins by condemning Abu Lahab and the hands he used to hurl so much abuse at the Prophet (pbuh) with. The second and third verses remark that neither the wealth he had at that time (which was a source of much of his pride and power), nor any wealth he accrued afterwards, will be able to help him escape his ultimate fate of the hellfire.

In the final two verses, God turns to Umm Jamil, stating firstly that she too will enter the hellfire. It is then mentioned that she will be 'the carrier of firewood'.

This could be interpreted to mean that she would bring the wood used to burn the fire that Abu Lahab would burn in, symbolising how, just as they had been together in abusing the Prophet (pbuh) during their lifetimes, they would too be together in the hellfire. The surah ends by stating that she will have a 'rope of palm-fibre around her neck'. This could be a reference to how Umm Jamil used to pride herself in wearing a particularly valuable necklace, and how, due to the evil that she committed during her life, said necklace would be replaced with a rope of a quick-burning fibre in the hereafter, emphasising the nature of her punishment.

Since the surah mentions only two very specific individuals, the punishments described in this surah are reserved only for a very specific set of people: those who attack and abuse Muslims who have done no wrong to them in return. In this case, the Prophet (pbuh) was abused by Abu Lahab and Umm Jamil for simply spreading the message of Islam in a peaceful and lawful manner. The fact that he did not himself harm them in any way can be taken to mean that it is not up to us to inflict punishment (outside of any ordinary punishment under whichever legal system we find ourselves in); we leave the ultimate judgement to God alone. Our job is simply to spread the message of Islam in a peaceful, polite, and lawful way.



## ***Discussion Points***

- 1. How should we deal with those who are rude and abusive towards us or others in our everyday lives?*
- 2. What do you think would be a good way to respond to anti-Islamic rhetoric from individuals today?*



## ***Story: Prophet Ayub (pbuh)***

Each and every individual faces difficulties and hardships, but it is our patience that leads to the rewards and mercy of God. The beauty of patience lies within enduring calamities, and it is a virtue that we, as Muslims, can develop by drawing upon examples from the Quran.

Prophet Ayub (pbuh) is an ideal example of the afflicted believer who remained patient and faithful to his Lord. He was known to be a man of wealth who possessed treasures of gold and silver and owned land, farms, fields and cattle. He had a large family with many children.

At the age of 70, his body became afflicted with many different diseases so that none of his body parts were free from difficulty except for his heart and his tongue, which he used for the remembrance of God. Ayub was devoted to the worship of God: he remembered God during the night and day, in both morning and evening.

His illness only grew worse, to the point that all of his friends and relatives parted with him - all except his wife. She tended to him, nursed him and ensured she was always displaying acts of kindness towards him. Ayub's wife remained patient with him through the loss of their children and property, as well as their struggles with finances. She took on the responsibility of working in the village to earn a livelihood with which she could feed herself and her husband.

May God bless her and be pleased with her.

Never did Ayub grow angry or reject the fate which God decreed upon him. Instead, he remained patient, calm and steadfast in his worship. After realizing the physical toll his situation had taken on his wife, Ayub raised his hands and supplicated to God, without complaining to anyone else. Making supplication (dua) does not contradict the idea of being patient at all: a believer is encouraged to make supplication to God, but is also instructed to be wary of complaining and grumbling to people.

***‘Remember Ayub, when he cried to his Lord, “Suffering has truly afflicted me, but you are the Most Merciful of the merciful.”’***

***Quran (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:83)***

After turning to God, calling fervently upon Him and supplicating, without becoming disgruntled or dissatisfied with God’s decree, Ayub’s call was answered. God directed Ayub to drink from and bathe in a cool spring. He was cured and his body was healed.

***‘[So he was told], “Strike [the ground] with your foot; this is a [spring for a] cool bath and drink.”’***

***Quran (Surah Saad, 38:42)***

From this story, we can reflect on the trials and tribulations we face in our own lives, and ensure we are able to remain patient and sincere in our worship. We should use our difficulties as a means to grow closer to God.

***Discussion Points:***

*There are so many examples of sabr (patience) in the Quran. Thinking about the ones that you know of, which one resonates with you the most? Why?*

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

# Day 6

Reminder: Justice as a supreme virtue in Islam

Story: The Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh)

99 Names of God: Al-Jaami (The Uniter)

## ***Reminder: Justice as a supreme virtue in Islam***

God says in the Quran:

“We sent Our messengers with clear signs, the Scripture and the Balance, so that people could uphold justice.”

Quran (Surah Al-Hadid, 57:25)

The books sent to messengers contained balanced rules according to the needs of their particular time and age. The objective of the books and the prophets was to establish justice in the world and end injustice; it is important for us as Muslims to carry this message with us in our day-to-day lives.

There are two words for justice in Islam: al-‘Adl, which comes from the root meaning ‘to be equal’, and al-Qist, which comes from the root meaning ‘to distribute’. In English, these terms correspond with equality and equity respectively; they reflect different but complementary notions of justice.

The Quran teaches us to overcome injustice when we are dealing with our closest relatives, or even ourselves:

“O you who have faith, stand firm in equity as witnesses for God, even if it were against yourselves, or your parents, or your relatives. Whether rich or poor, God best takes care of both. Follow not your desires, so that you may be just. And if you distort [justice] or refuse [to give it], then indeed God is

well-acquainted with all that you do.”

Quran (Surah An-Nisa, 4:135)

Be just, even if it is against your self-interests or the interests of those close to you. With a strong faith in God, one can be elevated beyond narrow-mindedness. These verses remind us that the real protector of the interests of all people is God; we will be protected when we follow God’s command to be just. The justice demanded by Islam permits no favouritism.

Appreciation for Islam’s approach to justice is not only seen in the Muslim community. The verse given above is on display above the entrance of the Faculty Library of Harvard Law School in the United States, where it features prominently next to quotations from the philosopher Augustine of Hippo and from the Magna Carta, which was the first European civil rights treaty. These quotations were chosen by Harvard Law faculty and its students for their ‘testimony to the endurance of humanity’s yearning for fairness and dignity through law’.

Whilst the Quran teaches us to be just when it comes to those we love; it also commands us as Muslims to be just towards those whom we may not:

“O you who have faith, stand firm for God as witnesses in equity, and let not the hatred of people cause you to not be just. Be just, for that is nearer to righteousness. And be mindful of God. For God is well-acquainted with all that you do.”

Quran (Surah Al-Ma'idah, 5:8)

In other words, as a Muslim, you cannot perform an injustice even when you are dealing with someone who dislikes you. According to this verse, we must be fair in our treatment of others as a principle of righteousness. It is a command to the believers that dislike towards others cannot be used as an excuse for committing injustices against them, with the added reminder that God is always watching.

When we think of justice, we often think about the big picture; we think about a ruler, an authority, a government. But in Surah Al-Hujuraat, God mentions the case of a person who brings two sides together that are in disagreement. This is something that could happen in our families, our workplaces or our communities. At the end of the verse, it says, “God loves those who are just” (49:9). And finally, in a Hadith Qudsi, the Prophet (pbuh) said that God has said,

“O My servants, I have forbidden injustice for Myself and forbade it also for you. So avoid being unjust to one another”.

(Sahih Muslim)

### ***Discussion:***

We know that it is crucially important as Muslims to be just when dealing with others. How far does this extend into the notion of justice in our wider communities?

- If we see injustice being done to a member of the public, how should we react?
- What can we do when we see injustice occurring abroad (or anywhere else where we are unable to directly take action)?
- Do you think it is the responsibility of Muslims to vote in elections?



## ***Story: Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham, pbuh)***

Islam itself is referred to as 'millat Ibrahim', which means the 'religion of Abraham', in the Quran, and Ibrahim (pbuh) himself is known as 'Khalil-Allah', which means the 'friend of God' (Surah An-Nisa, 4:125).

There are many Hadith of Prophet Muhammad praising Prophet Ibrahim (peace be upon them both); we repeat this praise even in our daily prayer, right before we say our salaams at the end of them. There are many important lessons we can learn from the life of Prophet Ibrahim (pbuh); two of which are the importance of rational reasoning in Islam and having faith in God.

Ibrahim lived about 4,000 years ago in Mesopotamia (modern-day southern Iraq). The Quran describes how Ibrahim as a young man was opposed to idolatry and questioned the practices of his parents and his people, who were idol-worshippers. His father, Azar, was a well-known sculptor of idols. As a young child, Ibrahim used to watch his father sculpting these idols from stone or wood. He would ask his father why they could not move or respond to any request, uncomfortable with simply following his ancestors' rituals without understanding or questioning them.

Ibrahim asked his father, “How can you worship what doesn’t see, or hear, or do you any good?” Quran (Surah Maryam, 19:41-43)

His father replied, “Ibrahim, do you reject my gods? ... Get out of my sight!” Quran (Surah Maryam, 19:46)

To demonstrate the powerlessness of the idols, he smashed the idols in the temple in his town, leaving only the largest one standing with an axe hung around its neck. The polytheists were shocked when they returned and entered the temple. They gathered inside, watching in awe as their ‘gods’ lay broken in pieces. They wondered who might have done this, then they all remembered that the young Ibrahim did not like their idols.

They brought him to the temple and asked him, “Are you the one who has done this to our gods?” Ibrahim replied: ‘Rather, this – the largest of them – did it, so ask them, if they should [be able to] speak.’” Quran (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:62-63)

The polytheists replied, “You know well that these idols don’t speak”.

Ibrahim then questioned them by saying, “Then why do you worship things that can neither speak nor see, nor even fend for themselves? Have you people lost your minds?”

The polytheists were angry that their way of life was being challenged, yelling, “Burn him! Burn him! Take revenge for your gods!” Quran (Surah Al-Anbiya, 21:68)

So, Ibrahim was thrown into a fire. He had not one supporter, not even his own father. But what Ibrahim did have was immense trust in God. Then something incredible happened: God made the fire cool for Ibrahim.

We can only imagine the faith in God that Ibrahim had, both before and after these tests. Ibrahim was brave; he stood up to the false practices of his people, instead choosing to represent what he believed to be true and just. After this, he went on to spread the message of Islam and surrounded himself with a community which represented his values.

***Discussion points:***

- What can we learn from these stories of Prophet Ibrahim about rational reasoning in Islam?
- How is the lesson of standing up for truth and justice applicable in today’s climate?

## 99 Names of God: Al-Jaami (the Uniter)



الجامع

Al-Jaami stems from the root letters j-m-a', which portrays three main meanings. Firstly, 'to congregate', secondly 'to connect', and thirdly 'to reconcile and resolve'. The root also forms the words 'yajma'oona' (they accumulate) and 'jama'oo' (they gathered). Also derived from the root is 'Yawm ul-Jumu'ah' (the Day of Congregation) and 'ijmaa' (scholarly consensus).

Al-Jaami is the One who gathers us all together on the Day of Judgement. God states:

“This is the Day of Judgement; We will have assembled you (jama 'naakum) and the former peoples.”

Quran (Surah Al-Mursalat, 77:38)

Al-Jaami is also the One who brings hearts together. God states:

*“And hold firmly to the rope of God all together, and do not become divided. And remember God’s favour to you – when you were enemies and He brought your hearts together and you became, by His favour, brothers. And you were on the edge of a pit of the Fire, and He saved you from it. Thus does God make clear to you His verses that you may be guided.”*

*Quran (Surah Ali 'Imran, 3:103)*



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

*In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful*

# Day 7

Reminder: Keeping Good Company

Tafsir: Surah Al-Kafirun

## ***Reminder: Keeping Good Company***

The Prophet (pbuh) explained, “God said: those who love one another for My glory will be upon podiums of light [high positions], and the prophets and martyrs will wish that they had the same”. (Tirmidhi)

Many of us, in an attempt to reach this high level of faith, must try to make and build strong friendships that benefit us and our ummah. In Islam, true friendship is brotherhood or sisterhood - a bond that is strong and enduring. In this bond, men and women can find the sweetness of faith in accordance with what the Prophet (pbuh) has detailed: “There are three things that, once attained, will allow the attainer to find the sweetness of faith: if God and His Messenger are dearer to him than anyone or anything else; if he loves a person solely for the sake of God; and if he hates to return to disbelief after God has rescued him from it as much as he would hate to be thrown into the Fire”. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

The rewards of loving one another for the sake of God are consistent with its importance. Its impact is not simply on the scale of an individual person - it affects society as a whole. For an entire society to exist in harmony and peace, its constituents must be at peace. If we were all to want for our friends that which we want for ourselves, then the world would be a better place. This is what Islam ensures. If there is brotherhood, sisterhood, and unity among the people, then society at large will be united.

The Prophet (pbuh) instilled a deep-rooted love in the hearts of the companions to create a model Islamic society that all Muslims thereafter could emulate. He tried to eliminate hatred, jealousy and rivalry by encouraging brotherhood and sisterhood, sincere love, and friendship. An Islamic society is ideally built upon the foundation of brotherhood and sisterhood, in accordance with what the Prophet (pbuh) advised: “Believers are like a structure, parts of which support one another. The believers, in their mutual friendship, mercy and affection, are like one body; if any part of it complains, the rest of the body will also stay awake in fever”. (Al-Bukhari and Muslim)

When we constantly seek company with a group of people, we naturally seek to be more like them, and act like them. The Prophet (pbuh) highlighted this principle beautifully when he relayed a situation regarding the idea of surrounding oneself with certain types of friends:

The first example is a person whose friend sells a perfume. Either his friend will give him perfume to try on, or he will simply pick up the scent in the store. In both scenarios, he will leave his friend having been perfumed by the scent.

In the second example, the friend is a blacksmith. Either he will work with his friend and become sooty from the kiln, or if he does not work with his friend, the suffocating environment will cause him to leave in a similar state.



Therefore, we should constantly aim to seek good company, as we will naturally seek to be more like them.

Equally, bad company can steer us away from the straight path: we are warned against this in the Quran:

***“On that Day the evildoer will bite his own hand and say, ‘If only I had taken the same path as the Messenger; woe is me! If only I had not taken so and so as a friend - he led me away from the Revelation after it reached me’”.***

***Quran (Surah Al-Furqan, 25:27-30)***

### ***Discussion: Can men and women be best friends?***

A common debate in our modern lives is around whether or not men and women can be best friends. Discuss the issue among yourselves. Remember, there does not need to be a definitive 'yes' or 'no' answer to the question! Bear in mind that there are no Quranic verses which explicitly forbid friendships between men and women, however there are some rules regarding interactions in general. Below are some points you could consider:

- What is the difference between being friends and being best friends?
- If you think men and women can be friends, do you think that there should be limits and boundaries that they respect when interacting? What should these be?
- What are the consequences of forbidding interactions between men and women altogether?
- What do you think the consequences would be of having a best friend of the opposite sex who is not your spouse?

Below are some verses of the Quran which may be useful to get you started:

"Tell the believing men and women to lower their gaze and protect their chastity, for that is bound to render them purer. Allah is aware of all that they do."

Quran (Surah An-Nur, 24:30)

"O you who have believed do not follow the footsteps of Satan."

Quran (Surah An-Nur, 24:21)

"And do not go anywhere near adultery..."

Quran (Surah Al-Isra, 17:32)

Feel free to do your own further research among yourselves to help you reach your conclusions.



***Surah: Al-Kafīrun (The Disbelievers)***

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْكَافِرُونَ

Say, "O disbelievers,

لَا أَعْبُدُ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ

I do not worship what you worship.

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ

Nor are you worshippers of what I worship.

وَلَا أَنَا عَابِدٌ مَّا عَبَدْتُمْ

Nor will I be a worshipper of what you worship.

وَلَا أَنْتُمْ عَابِدُونَ مَا أَعْبُدُ

Nor will you be worshippers of what I worship.

لَكُمْ دِينُكُمْ وَلِيَ دِينِ

For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.

## *Tafsir: Surah Al-Kafirun*

Surah Al-Kafirun is a short surah which was sent as a message to the disbelievers (al-kafirun).

It is important to understand the context behind this surah before analysing its contents: it was revealed at a time when, despite the persistent efforts of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the Meccans refused to accept Islam and were not happy with allowing the Prophet to continue spreading the message of the religion and inviting others to it in a peaceful way. The Meccans offered the Prophet money and power in exchange for him ceasing his preaching, but this was to no avail. They then proposed a compromise, which entailed the Meccans accepting Islam for a year, in exchange for the Prophet accepting their religion for a year. Surah Al-Kafirun is a direct response to this proposal.

The first verse clearly indicates that this surah is addressing the disbelievers. It must be understood, however, precisely who the disbelievers are, since to label someone as a disbeliever is not something which should be taken lightly. The disbelievers are not simply the non-Muslims, but they are those who have received the message of Islam in its full and unmistakable form, have had every opportunity to accept the religion, and yet still refuse. It is important to make this distinction, and realise that the vast majority of non-Muslims certainly do not fall into this group of people, for most have

likely either not been given the message of Islam at all, or have received a distorted version delivered by the media, or by (unfortunately) some of our fellow Muslims. As a result, they have not had a chance to consider the true Islam, and therefore cannot be labelled as disbelievers.

Now possessing a more accurate definition of the disbelievers, we can now analyse the message that God sends them in Surah Al-Kafirun. The second and third verses essentially state the obvious, which is that the Muslims worship something different from the disbelievers. The subsequent two verses, however, while sounding very similar to the second and third, are actually making the different point that the Muslims will never worship that which the disbelievers worship (and vice-versa). This is God's direct response to the compromise offer of the Meccans. In the final verse, God reaches the conclusion that the Muslims and the disbelievers should go their separate ways in terms of their faiths.

The conclusion of this surah can be interpreted in various ways. One of these would be that it demonstrates the tolerance of Islam, since it instructs the Muslims to not force their religion upon others. This is an important concept for Muslims to understand; we are instructed to simply convey the message of Islam in the best way we can to the non-Muslims around us.

Whether or not they decide to accept Islam is their business

alone, and so we should respect that.

On a connected note, there exist verses elsewhere in the Quran which instruct Muslims not to befriend the disbelievers (for example in Surah Ali 'Imran, 3:28). Equipped now with accurate knowledge of who the disbelievers are, we can recognise at once that Islam does not in fact restrict us from forming friendships with the vast majority of non-Muslims living around the world. There are people of good character and bad character from the Muslims as well as the non-Muslims, so it is perfectly possible to keep good company whilst having non-Muslim friends. It is important for all of us to recognise this; we can only ease the tensions that exist between us and non-Muslims around the world by communicating and keeping good relations with them. Therefore, to maintain cordial relations with a non-Muslim of good character does not only potentially result in a great friendship but can also help to maintain the peace and harmony of the communities in which we live.

### **Discussion Points:**

- What kinds of qualities do you personally look for when making friends?
- Do you think a Muslim individual with non-Muslim friends will inevitably begin to lose their Islam?



*Thank you for engaging with our content, we hope it was thought-provoking and will act as the beginning of both further discussion and your own research!*

*The Islamic Society of Britain is a volunteer-led organisation, committed to enhancing family, youth and young adult development through social engagement and civic action, based upon a platform of helping to develop a just and caring society. We are a membership organisation, so please do join us, volunteer for us or help us in whatever way you can, small or large. There is so much need in our society at present, so help us to make the difference! All details can be found on our website: [www.isb.org.uk](http://www.isb.org.uk)*

*There has been a small team that has developed this Study Circle Pack with many different contributors to the content. The aim of this pack is to help families and friends to connect and share some time together whilst learning and reflecting on our faith. If you have noticed any errors or have any feedback, please do send them to*



*at [info@isb.org.uk](mailto:info@isb.org.uk).*

*@BritIslam*



*@BritIslam*



*@BritIslam*