

Guiding Light Selections from the *Holy Qur'an*

Comments by Dr. 'Abdul Hamīd A. 'AbūSulymān

Translation

In the name of Allah, the most benevolent, ever merciful.

God commands justice, the doing
Of good, and liberality to kith
And kin, and He forbids
All shameful deeds, and injustice
And rebellion: He instructs you,
That ye may receive admonition.
Surah 16:90

④ * إِنَّا لِلَّهِ يَا مُرَبِّ الْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَانِ
وَأَيَّتَا ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَسَهْمَىٰ عَنِ الْغَشَاءِ
وَالنَّكْرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يُعِظُّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ
تَذَكَّرُونَ

If we look at the above verses we can see that the goal and essence of man's life on earth is to live and follow the right course of life. The essence of this life, on the positive side, is summarized in the first part of Surah 16:90 of the Qur'an. The ultimate is for man to attain a life of justice (*ādī*), sincerity, concern, compassion, responsibility, and perfection (*Ihsān*). In addition, one should exhibit the attributes of generosity and self-sacrifice in rendering help to individuals and groups in every way and with regard to priorities (*itā thawī al qurbā*). On the negative and protective side, man should condemn and refrain from committing or indulging in sinful, flagrant, tasteless, harmful deeds and actions (*al Fahshā' wa al-Munkar*). Likewise he should avoid acts of injustice, usurpation, suppression or oppression against any person or rights of any human being (*baghy*).

Recite what is sent
Of the Book by inspiration
To thee, and establish
Regular Prayer: for Prayer
Restrains from shameful
And unjust deeds;
And remembrance of God
Is the greatest (thing in life)
Without doubt. And God knows
The (deeds) that ye do.
Surah 29:45

⑤ أَنْزَلْنَا مَا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقْرَأَ
الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْغَشَاءِ
وَالنَّكْرِ وَلِذِكْرِ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ
مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

In Surah 29:45 Allah points out the goal of the act of prayer. Prayer is meaningful when it helps man to abstain from the above mentioned negative deeds and actions.

Not so those devoted

To Prayer: –

﴿٢٢﴾ إِلَّا الْمُصَلِّينَ

Those who remain steadfast

To their prayer;

﴿٢٣﴾ الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَاتِهِمْ دَائِمُونَ

And those in whose wealth

Is a recognized right

﴿٢٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ فِي أَمْوَالِهِمْ حَقٌّ مَعْلُومٌ

For the (needy) who asks

And him who is prevented

(For some reason from asking);

﴿٢٥﴾ لِّلسَّائِلِ وَالْمَحْرُومِ

And those who hold

To the truth of the Day

Of Judgment;

﴿٢٦﴾ وَالَّذِينَ يُصَدِّقُونَ بِيَوْمِ الدِّينِ

And those who fear

The displeasure of their Lord, –

﴿٢٧﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مِنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّهِمْ مُشْفِقُونَ

For their Lord's displeasure

Is the opposite of Peace

And Tranquillity; –

﴿٢٨﴾ إِنَّ عَذَابَ رَبِّهِمْ غَيْرُ مَا مُنَّوْنَ

And those who guard

Their chastity,

﴿٢٩﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِفُرُوجِهِمْ حَافِضُونَ

Except with their wives

And the (captives) whom

Their right hands possess, –

For (then) they are not

To be blamed,

﴿٣٠﴾ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَرْوَاحِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ

فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ

But those who trespass

Beyond this are transgressors; –

﴿٣١﴾ فَمَنْ أَتَّبَعِي وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ

الْعَادُونَ

And those who respect

Their trusts and covenants;

﴿٣٢﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ

And those who stand firm

In their testimonies;

﴿٣٣﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ بِشَهَادَاتِهِمْ قَائِمُونَ

And those who guard

(The sacredness) of their worship; –

﴿٣٤﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَىٰ صَلَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِضُونَ

Such will be
The honoured ones
In the Gardens (of Bliss).
Surah 70:22-35

﴿٢٥﴾ أُولَٰئِكَ فِي جَنَّاتٍ مُّكْرَمُونَ

In Surah 70:22-35, the Qur'an shows that the right act, i.e. performance and understanding of prayers, helps man to attain the precious qualities of *giving* and acknowledging the right of the needy and the destitutes in his earnings and property. Prayer also helps man to achieve discipline and righteousness, abstention from sinful sexual act and self-control; honest fulfillment of duties and pledges; the carrying out responsibilities and projecting the right example in one's daily life and actions. These verses also summarize the basis of man's failure in the life of the world, i.e. failure to maintain prayers and failure to help the needy and the destitute.

"What led you
Into Hell-Fire?"

﴿٢٦﴾ مَا سَأَلَكُمُ فِي سَفَرٍ

They will say:
"We were not of those
Who prayed;

﴿٢٧﴾ قَالُوا لَوْلَا آتَيْنَاكَ مِنَ الصَّالِينَ

"Nor were we of those
Who fed the indigent;

﴿٢٨﴾ وَلَا تَكَ نُطْعِمُ الْيَسِيرِينَ

"But we used to talk
Vanities with vain talkers;
Surah 74:42-45

﴿٢٩﴾ وَكُنَّا نَحُضُّ مَعَ الْكَاذِبِينَ

"This was he that
Would not believe
In God Most High,

﴿٣٠﴾ إِنَّهُ كَانَ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ الْعَظِيمِ

"And would not encourage
The feeding of the indigent!

﴿٣١﴾ وَلَا يَحْضُرُ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْيَسِيرِينَ

"So no friend hath he
Here this Day.

﴿٣٢﴾ فَلَيْسَ لَهُ الْيَوْمَ هُنَا حَمِيمٌ

"Nor hath he any food
Except the corruption
From the washing of wounds,

﴿٣٣﴾ وَلَا طَعَامٍ إِلَّا مِنْ غَسِيلِينَ

“Which none do eat
But those in sin.”
Surah 69:32-37

﴿لَا يَأْكُلُهُ إِلَّا الْخَاطِئُونَ﴾

In Surah 74:42-45 and Surah 69:32-37 the Qur'an further conceptualizes and summarizes the meaning and purpose of man on earth as the belief and also as a Testament of the existence of Allah (*Imān*), and the act of giving, caring, and fulfilling the duties toward the needy and the destitute.

Seest thou one
Who denies the Judgment
(To come)?

﴿أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يُكَذِّبُ بِالذِّكْرِ﴾ ①

Then such is the (man)
Who repulses the orphan
(With harshness),

﴿فَذَلِكِ الَّذِي يَبْدَعُ الْيَتِيمَ﴾ ②

And encourages not
The feeding of the indigent.

﴿وَلَا يَحْضُ عَلَىٰ طَعَامِ الْمِسْكِينِ﴾ ③

So woe to the worshippers

﴿فَوَيْلٌ لِلْمُصَلِّينَ﴾ ④

Who are neglectful
Of their Prayers,

﴿الَّذِينَ هُمْ عَنْ صَلَاتِهِمْ سَاهُونَ﴾ ⑤

Those who (want but)
To be seen (of men),

﴿الَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرَاءُونَ﴾ ⑥

But refuse (to supply)
(Even) neighbourly needs.

﴿وَيَنْعَمُونَ الْمَاعُونَ﴾ ⑦

Surah 107:1-7

Finally we find that Surah 107:1-7 explains and summarizes in a very comprehensive and precise manner, the goal of man, the quality of his life on earth, and the ultimate meaning of the *Dīn* (the totality of the belief in Allah, the holy purpose of man on earth, and the acts, duties and the total way of life of the believers). Also these verses affirm the prayers (*Ṣalāh*, the main and the continuous means for man to experience the awareness of the existence of Allah and holy purpose of life) and the giving and caring for the needs of the poor and the destitute as the ultimate measures for following the *Dīn*, believing in Allah, and understanding the meaning and the purpose of *Ṣalāh*.

Looking again, in all of the verses, we find that the essence of the right life for man is *Imān*. The right act of prayer is maintaining the continual awareness and fulfillment of the holy purpose of man's life on earth. The act

of giving, caring and fulfillment of the duties toward the needy and the destitute is the ultimate measure of *Dīn*, *ʿImān* and *Ṣalāh*. The *Surah al Māʿūn* makes it clear that whoever does not fulfill his duties towards the orphans, the poor and the needy is a hypocrite (*murāʿī*) and not a true believer in the *Dīn* of Islam nor understands, nor is aware of the meaning of prayers (*Sāhī* or *Ghāfil*) – even though he may perform the rituals of prayer (*Ṣalāh*).

A major task of the Muslim social scientists should be to investigate the effect of *ʿImān* and *Ṣalāh* on man and his behavior. In what ways, for instance, do they help to develop certain positive behaviors? How could we enhance these positive behaviors? What are some factors which minimize the effect of *ʿImān* and *Ṣalāh*? Why is *giving*, *helping* and *caring* for the weak, the needy and the destitute considered the ultimate manifestation and measure of *Dīn*, *ʿImān* and *Ṣalāh*. Muslim social scientists, taking up these issues, may enable Muslims to understand themselves and their *Dīn* better and enhance good behavior and positive qualities in themselves, their communities and societies. Thus communities might better plan their cultural and educational courses of action.

