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We welcome all scholarly contributions to The Light.

I Shall Love All Mankind.

The Call of the Messiah

by **Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad**



The Promised Messiah and Mahdi

(Editor's note: Any quotations from the Quran are translated from the author's explanations and are not literal translations of the verse quoted. This extract is from the English translation of a lecture he delivered in 1904 in Lahore, now in Pakistan, taken from the Lahore Ahmad-iyya publication 'Essence of Islam', p. 79 - 84 where the Promised Messiah puts forward arguments and signs about his claim.)

Signs of the Latter Age

There are other considerations of importance in determining the truth of a claim to prophethood. Whether the claimant has appeared at the time of need i.e., at a time, when the need of a guide was felt by the world, whether he has come exactly at the prophesied hour, whether he receives assistance from God, whether he has fully refuted the objections brought forward by his opponents against his claim, are points which go a long way to prove the truth or falsehood of his claim. If all these questions are satisfactorily answered, they would be evidence of his truth. Now it is clear that at the present moment, the need of a guide and Reformer is very strongly felt by the whole world. Islam needs the soothing hand of a Reformer who should bring about union and agreement among the contending sects and the strong hand of one who should defend it against hostile attacks, while the world generally needs a spiritual guide who should restore to it the spirituality which it has lost and re-establish the certainty which has vanished from its face, and thus strengthening faith release people from the bondage of sin and turn them to paths of righteousness.

These are facts which no one can deny unless he is blinded by prejudice. Thus, I clearly fulfil the first of the conditions enumerated above, viz., the condition of coming in time of need. In the second place, it requires to be seen whether I have come at the prophesied hour. In

point of time, the clearest prophecy is that relating to the appearance of the Promised Messiah at the end of the sixth and the commencement of the seventh thousand from Adam. Computing the lunar year, the seventh thousand has begun and by the solar year the sixth is coming to a close. Besides this the Holy Prophet had said, as reported in an authentic tradition, that among the Muslims a Reformer would appear at the commencement of every century to give fresh life to the holy religion of Islam. But more than a fifth of the fourteenth century has passed away, and no other Reformer can be pointed out who has claimed an authority under the tradition referred to above. Thirdly, it is to be seen whether God has assisted the claimant or not. This condition is eminently fulfilled in me, for opponents stood up against me from among every community and left no stone unturned to bring me to naught and made all sorts of plots against me, but all their designs and plans were hopelessly shattered by Almighty God.

There is no community which can say that it did not exert itself to destroy me. But against their wishes Almighty God gave me honour and made thousands of men my followers. What, if not heavenly assistance, is it, when upon earth no efforts were spared to blot me out? The stronger the opposition grew, the more I was made to flourish, until my following now exceeds two hundred thousand. Had not a hidden hand been in my support, and had my mission been based on human machinations, I would have been long before shot by one of the arrows of which I was made an aim. Being utterly destroyed, no trace of mine would have been left today.

For there is no doubt that an impostor does not prosper, but meets with destruction in one way or another, because God Himself is his enemy. But Almighty God guarded me from every evil that was designed against me in accordance with His promise which He had made twenty-four years before. What a wonderful assistance from the Almighty that He first informed me in my loneliness and solitude that He would assist me and bring thousands of men to me and disappoint my enemies in their evil designs against me; and then brought all this to fulfilment as He had foretold. How manifest is His assistance and how clear this sign! Can it be within the power of man or devil that he should, when quite helpless, foretell his mighty success in the future,

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and that this should be fulfilled notwithstanding the efforts of numerous enemies who rise against him for his destruction. The fourth condition, viz, that the objections of the opponents should be fully refuted, has also been fulfilled, has also been fulfilled by me.

The greatest objection that has been put forward against my claim is that Jesus is alive and that he himself must come back into the world in fulfilment of the prophecy relating to the advent of the Promised Messiah in the last ages. It has been shown by me in refutation of this objection that Jesus is dead and he cannot come back.

For the Muslims, the authority of the Holy Quran (5:117) is conclusive which says: **فلما توفيتى كنت انت الرقيب عليهم**. The occasion of this verse is that on the Day of Judgment, God would question Jesus if he said to his people that they should take him and his mother for Gods and worship them. In answer to this, Jesus would say that he had said to them only what God had commanded him to say, viz., that they should worship God alone and consider him as His apostle only, and that he knew what they did so long as he was among them, "but since You did cause me to die, You witnessed their doings and I was ignorant of what happened after me."

Jesus is here replying that his followers did not set up the false belief of his divinity until after his death. If, therefore, it is held by a Muslim that Jesus is still alive, he shall also have to admit that the Christian doctrine is true. Moreover, here Jesus displays an ignorance of the condition of his followers after his death. This fact, which is inconsistent the theory of his re-advent, because in the latter case he could not remain ignorant of the doctrines invented by the Christians after his death. The belief that Jesus would come back into the world, and joining with the Mahdi, slay the infidels, falsifies the Quranic verse quoted above, and must, therefore be rejected. Nor can it be held that Jesus would conceal before God the fact that he had gone into the world, lived there for forty years and slain the Christians, for that is far from the dignity of a prophet. Besides nothing would remain concealed on the day of judgment. If anyone has true faith in the Holy Quran, he can see that the whole plot of Mahdi's murderous deeds and Jesus' descent from heaven to assist him in that bloody task, is brought to naught by a single verse. ([Return to contents](#))

Does Islam prohibit a woman from travelling without a close relative?

by Mrs Fauqia Aziz and Dr Zahid Aziz

Talk presented at the UK Lahore Ahmadiyya Centre, 3rd March 2019



We will look at a hadith in Sahih Bukhari, in which the Holy Prophet Muhammad is reported to have said:

"A woman should not travel except with a *mahram*." (Bukhari, hadith 1862)

By a *mahram* of a woman is meant someone from her very close male blood relatives, so close that she cannot marry them, such as her father, her brothers, and her sons. When this term is used anywhere, it often includes a woman's husband, as in this hadith (even though he is not *mahram* in the sense of being one of the closest relatives whom she cannot marry). Sometimes the husband is mentioned distinctly.

Just two hadith later, in h. 1864, four things are mentioned. Two of them are relevant to our topic, and these are:

"No woman should travel without her husband or without a *mahram* for a two-day journey."

"A journey should not be undertaken except to three mosques: Masjid al-Haram (in Makkah), my Masjid (at Madinah) and Masjid al-aqsa (in Jerusalem)."

This second instruction applies to all Muslims, men as well as women.

(Note: These reports are also found in other Hadith books such as Sahih Muslim.)

In another place in Bukhari, there is a group of three hadith, from 1086 to 1088. We read there:

"A woman should not travel for more than three days except with a *mahram*." (h. 1086, h.

1087)

“It is not permissible for a woman who believes in Allah and the Last Day to travel for one day and night except with a *mahram*.” (h. 1088)

Now notice that there are four different versions of this instruction about a woman travelling without a *mahram* accompanying her:

- She cannot travel at all,
- She can travel for up to one day and night,
- She can travel for two days,
- She can travel for three days.

This suggests the following questions: Could it be that the Holy Prophet was giving different advice to different people according to their circumstances and so he set different time limits? Or could it be that he gradually increased the length of time because travel was becoming safer?

Let us consider what a woman can still do, even if these travelling limits are applied literally and rigidly. The limits of one, two or three days don't affect a woman who travels by herself to work every day and comes home. Then there is the fact that these days any place in the world can be reached in much less than three days from anywhere else in the world! So a woman can travel from her home to any place in the world without a *mahram* accompanying her. At least she can travel from her home without a *mahram* to visit and stay with her close blood relatives anywhere in the world.

But think now of the days of the Holy Prophet, and travelling for more than one day in those times. You needed supplies with you, and money, and you needed to know how to find the way, where to stop for rest, where to spend the night, etc. Would it be possible for a woman to do that alone? In those days, the most trustworthy companions who could help her with the difficulties of the journey would be a *mahram*. Even today, in the most advanced countries of the world, women are warned to avoid travelling alone through certain places at certain times.

The Holy Prophet said in another hadith in Bukhari:

“Journey is a kind of torment. It deprives you of eating, drinking and sleeping. When a person on a journey completes his work, he should make haste in returning to his home.” (h. 1804)

Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali, in his Urdu translation of Bukhari, writes the following note

under h. 1862, which was the first hadith quoted at the outset of this article:

“In h. 1860, just above, it has been reported that Umar allowed the wives of the Holy Prophet to travel for *Hajj* accompanied by men who were not *mahram* to them. No one objected to this action by Umar nor did the wives of the Holy Prophet refuse to go with them. This shows that a woman can travel even a long distance without a *mahram*. All that it amounts to is that if there is safety for a woman she can travel on her own. Again, it depends on the nature of the journey. Different hadith reports mention different lengths of journeys which a woman should not undertake without a *mahram*: it is one day in h. 1088, two days in h. 1864, and three days in h. 1086. A journey shorter than this can be undertaken without a *mahram*. It is also agreed that a woman can travel with other women. All this shows that, if there is safety in a journey for a woman, she can travel without a *mahram*. Otherwise a *mahram* is required.”

So that is the explanation given by Hazrat Maulana Muhammad Ali.

Now let us turn to the following hadith, also mentioned in the beginning:

“A journey should not be undertaken except to three mosques: Masjid al-Haram, my Masjid and Masjid al-aqsa.”

This hadith applies to both men and women. It occurs alongside the one which says: “No woman should travel without her husband or without a *mahram* for a two day journey”.

It is impossible to take this literally. How can a Muslim, man or woman, not undertake any journey whatsoever except to these mosques in Makkah, Madinah and Jerusalem? So Muslim scholars had to interpret it in some other way.

One interpretation is that the “journey” it is talking about is when you undertake a special journey to visit a sacred place, believing that you are going to a holy place, sanctified by Allah, to obtain spiritual blessings. This hadith is a warning to Muslims not to treat other mosques and shrines and tombs as if they were places of pilgrimage on a par with these three mosques.

You may ask, what about when we, members of this organization, undertake a special journey to attend our annual gathering in Lahore for spiritual inspiration?

In that case, the people who go there don't

consider our Centre as a place which is in itself sacred. At one time people went to Ahmadiyya Buildings in the inner area of Lahore for this annual gathering, but since the past 45 years they go to Darus Salaam in a suburb of Lahore. So it is not the physical location which they consider sacred, but it is the gathering which, because of its aims and objectives and collective worship, inspires them spiritually and refreshes their faith and commitment to the cause of Islam.

In explanation of this hadith there is an article, in the form of a fatwa, at the website www.islamqa.info. It says that it is not allowed for Muslims "to visit places that are regarded as holy in other religions". It also says that it is not permissible for a Muslim to visit a non-Muslim country except for reasons such as "travelling for medical treatment that is not available in a Muslim country, or travelling to study something that is not available in a Muslim country, or travelling for business purposes".

This article also says: "As for travelling for tourism (meaning to non-Muslim countries), that is not permissible, because the Muslim has no need of that."

As you can see, the restrictions mentioned in this article are impractical, ridiculous and damaging. This is why you don't see Muslims obeying them.

When Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad instituted the annual gathering of his followers at Qadian at the start of the 1890s, a maulvi published a fatwa to say that going to such a gathering was prohibited in Islam because a Muslim is not allowed to travel anywhere except to the three mosques as mentioned in Hadith. Hazrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad wrote in his reply:

"Every Muslim ought to pray that God rid Islam soon of those maulvis who show such treachery (to the cause of Islam). For, this is a critical time for Islam, and these foolish friends wish to make Islam a target of ridicule and mockery by making statements which every person, with his light of reason, finds to be untrue."

The entire reply given by him is well worth reading.

So just as we cannot take *literally* this hadith that a Muslim cannot undertake a journey except to these three mosques, we also cannot take *literally* these hadith about a woman not being allowed to go on a journey without a *mah-*

ram if the journey is longer than a certain number of days.

Turning to the Quran, such restrictions are not found anywhere in it. What we find in the Quran are the following examples:

Abraham under Divine command left his wife and infant in the wilderness which is now Makkah. A Companion of the Holy Prophet says in a hadith in Bukhari: "During those days there was nobody in Makkah, nor was there any water" (h. 3364). This comment shows that her being in Makkah was just like she was on a journey. It happened sometime later that the people of a certain tribe passed by. After asking permission from Abraham's wife, they settled there. Who was the *mahram* present with his wife, either before or after these people settled there? She had no *mahram* there. And all this happened under the command of God.

The story of Mary, the mother of Jesus, is given in the Quran. It says that when she became pregnant with Jesus, she went to "a remote place" (19:22). The famous Muslim scholar Maulana Maudoodi writes under this verse as follows: "She left all her relatives and went **alone** to a distant place to give birth". So Maulana Maudoodi confirms that no *mahram* went with her. Mary received revelation from Allah during this journey (19:24-26) but Allah did not advise her against going on this journey alone, without a *mahram*.

Going back to Bukhari, we find that it contains a prophecy made by the Holy Prophet Muhammad which helps greatly in resolving this issue. Someone by the name of Adi ibn Hatim says that a man came to the Holy Prophet and complained about highway robberies taking place, making travelling unsafe. The Holy Prophet said to Adi:

"Have you been to Al-Hira?"

Al-Hira was a city in Iraq, and was under the Persian empire during the life of the Holy Prophet, but was conquered by Muslims shortly after his death. Adi replied that he had not seen this city but only heard of it. The Holy Prophet said:

"If you should live for a long time, you will certainly see that a woman in a *howdah* travelling from Al-Hira will perform the *Tawaf* of the Ka'bah (i.e., making circuits around it), fearing none but Allah."

A *howdah* is a carriage, like a little enclosure or booth, which is placed on a camel's back to

carry people.

Adi says that when he heard this from the Holy Prophet, the thought came to his mind:

“What will happen to the robbers of the tribe of Tai who have spread evil throughout the country?”

Then Adi goes on to say that he saw this prophecy fulfilled many years later. He says:

“I saw a woman in a *howdah* travelling from Al-Hira till she performed the *Tawaf* of the Ka’bah, fearing none but Allah.” (h. 3595)

These words “fearing none but Allah” mean that there was no danger from anyone that she faced in her journey alone, as the country had become that safe. The distance from Al-Hira to Makkah is about 1000 miles. So her journey was more than one month in duration.

In the end this important point of principle should be emphasized. In understanding statements made in Hadith, we cannot make a general rule based on looking at just one hadith. We have to consider other hadith as well that are relevant, and then see what conclusion all of these collectively lead us to. Most importantly, we must check to see whether the Quran supports or contradicts the conclusion we are drawing from a hadith. [\(Return to contents\)](#)

Is the Holy Bible the Same as the Holy Quran?

By Mr Omar Raja



It has been asked whether the Quran and the Bible are the same.

Though not the same, the Quran does accept the Divine origin of all previous scripture, and as such claims to be a “*verifier*” of all previous scripture. So naturally, we will find many points of connection and commonality between the two. Referring to this “connection,” the Quran says:

“**And certainly We have made the Word to have many connections for their sake, so that they may be mindful**” (Quran 28:51).

But what is this connection? It is that every prophet that had ever appeared in the world

came with the same cardinal teaching: serve God and shun evil.

The fundamental difference, however, between the Quran and the Bible is that the Quran’s address is for **all of humanity** and not for one nation. Declaring the unity of the human race, it says:

“**Mankind is a single nation**” (Quran 2:213).

And so, because God sent prophets to all nations of the world (“For every nation there is a messenger” says the Quran, 10:47), the path towards salvation was open to **all** from the very beginning and not limited to a particular people, race or nation. That is the profound difference between Islam and other faith traditions in that it asserts that God did not deprive any nation on this earth of this spiritual blessing. The Quran gives us the great example of the Prophet Abraham, who *preceded* the religions of Judaism and Christianity, and reminds us that his path toward salvation was by wholly submitting himself to the one and only God and by doing good to others.

As such, the Quran does not preach “Praise be to the LORD God, the God of Israel” (Psalms 72:18) but rather “Praise be to Allah, the **Lord of the worlds**” (1:1).

And because God is “Lord of all the worlds,” He gifted all of humanity with Divine revelation and not just the nation of Israel. In Islam there can be thus be no “chosen race” as that kind of belief would only lead to treating others in an undignified and inferior way. So He not only provided for the physical nourishment of all nations but so too did He provide for their spiritual nourishment with the sending of prophets to all nations of the world who were models of goodness and virtue by their own practical examples.

And so the Quran, which also claims to be “**guardian**” over previous scripture, has preserved the original principles taught by every prophet that were of permanent or universal application which include the very essential beliefs regarding the existence and unity of God, accountability for one’s actions, and the practice of dealing justly and charitably towards others.

The Quran as a “**guardian**” over previous scripture also corrects the mistakes found therein due to loss and alteration. For example, the Quran vindicates Eve and does not cast

blame on her for the “fall of man.” It does not say Adam put the blame on his wife (“The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it.” — Genesis, 3:12). It does not say: “And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner – 1Timothy 2:14.

Rather we read in the Quran:

“The devil made an evil suggestion to them...” 7:20

“The devil made them slip from it.” – 2:36.

“He caused them to fall by deceit.” – 7:22.

At one place, in fact, the Quran places emphasis on Adam as being the one more culpable of blame by stating:”

“We gave a commandment to Adam before, but *he forgot*... And **Adam disobeyed his Lord**, and was disappointed” – 20:115, 121).

And so true to its claim, the Quran has also come to “**judge**” previous scripture and decide their differences (16:64).

The Quran presents a true portrayal of the prophets that could never be guilty of deliberate wrongdoing because they were sent by God to inspire faith and bring about true reformation in the lives of their people. Despite the Bible having attributed some of the most heinous sins and crimes to these very prophets of God, it has still preserved passages regarding their purity and morality.

Now while it is true that all the Prophets came with the same basic universal message of Divine Unity and essential truths, circumstances and requirements of the people, dictated the extent to the progressiveness of the revelation; sometimes a subsequent prophet would arise among the same nation and cast further light on religious truths and provide further guidance; guidance that would allow a nation to further progress in different areas of civilization, and not just socially, materially and intellectually, but morally and spiritually as well. But after a long passage of time, nations began to believe that prophets were only ever sent to their particular nations and that God favored their particular nation over all other nations of the world (“chosen nation” so to speak).

And so the Quran also claims to have come to “**perfect**” previous teachings. For example, it says to not only to do good towards your neighbor known amongst your own people, but also to do good towards your “alien” neighbor as

well, i.e. those belonging to a different race or country.

“Be good to . . . the neighbor belonging to your people and the *alien* neighbor” (Quran 4:36).

Also, other corruptions were introduced that undermined the true concept of God such as by raising the status of humans to godhead. For example, the groundwork for the concept of the Trinity came about with the Council of Nicea in 325 AD. And so the Quran, declaring the absolute unity of God, says:

“Say: He, Allah, is One. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He has no offspring, nor is He born (of anyone); and none is like Him” (Quran, Chapter 112).

Now under the Divine scheme there would come a time when the world would be ready to receive its world-prophet, one who would come to unite all nations of the world and attest to the truth of all previous prophets that went before him and thereby lay down the basis and foundation of a universal brotherhood between all nations of the world; this would be a time when the highest form of revelation would find perfection; this world-prophet and final prophet would not only beckon mankind to the roots and forgotten principles of religion and restore the true concept of God, but also come with an all-comprehensive message to meet the needs of an ever advancing humanity.

In conclusion, the difference between the Quran and Bible naturally lies in the universality of the message and address for all of humanity. The Quran, revealed to the last prophet, came for everyone, and gives us the great reminder that God Who is the Lord and the Nourisher to perfection of all creation, gave the means for everyone to advance morally and spiritually and attain to salvation from the very outset by sending Prophets as guides to all nations of the world. [\(Return to contents\)](#)

Cutting Hands

(Note: This article discusses the widely held belief among Muslims and non-Muslims that the only punishment in Islam for theft is cutting off of hands. It is taken from a series – Misconceptions about Islam.)

The verse in question will be given, then a discussion will be presented. It should be noted that like all punishments relating to members of a society, they are only enforceable if such a society is governed by the laws of the Quran. In such a society, it is a requirement for believers to provide for those in need [2:177, 2:215, 2:219, 5:89, 59:7].

The male thief, and the female thief, you shall mark, cut, or cut-off their hands/means as a recompense for what they earned, and to serve as a deterrent from God. God is Noble, Wise. Whoever repents after his wrongdoing and makes amends, then God will relent on him. Truly, God is Forgiving, Merciful. [5:38-39]

The above verses are commonly translated to mean physical cutting off the thief's hand or hands, however whilst this understanding is a theoretical possibility, when all the information is reviewed it is only one of several possibilities, hence the above translation. Firstly, it should be noted that the verse makes clear whoever commits theft but repents after and makes amends, then this is acceptable to God, thus no punishment can be administered in this case. This of course would only apply to those who do this before they have to be tried and found guilty. To prove this, see the verse below in which being punished is contrasted to relenting:

There are some who await God's decree whether He will punish them or relent on them. God is All Knower, All Wise. [9:106]

And how repenting and making amends shows a true repentance, thus reinforces the notion that a true/sincere repentance is accepted:

And whoever repents and takes corrective action, certainly he turns toward God with true repentance. [25:71]

The Arabic word translated as "cut" in 5:38 is *iqtaa* and occurs 14 other times in the same verb form (Qa Ta A) in the Quran, and with the exception of 59:5 and possibly 69:46 all other occurrences mean the non-physical or metaphorical action of "cutting off relationship" or "ending" [2:27, 3:127, 6:45, 7:72, 8:7, 9:121, 13:25, 15:66, 22:15, 27:32, 29:29, 56:33].

The derivatives that are read in the 2nd verb form (QaTTaA) occur 17 times. This form, which expresses intensity or frequency of the action, is used both to mean physical cutting off [5:33, 7:124, 20:71, 26:49, 13:31] and metaphorical cutting off [2:166, 6:94, 7:160, 7:167, 9:110, 47:15, 47:22, 21:93, 22:19, 23:53] as well as

physically cutting/marking [12:31, 12:50]. It is interesting to note that even though 12:31 uses the more intensive verb form and both "cut" and "hands" together, it does not mean "cut off". The less intensive form is used in 5:38.

Secondly, the Arabic word for "hands" (*aydi*) is often used in the Quran in a metaphorical/metonymical manner [some examples are 2:195, 2:237, 3:3, 3:73, 5:64, 6:93, 8:70, 9:29, 23:88, 28:47, 30:36, 38:45, 48:10, 48:24, 111:1], and often has a meaning of power/means/sustenance. Interestingly, when it means "sustenance" the plural is always used, as used in 5:38.

It should also be noted that this word is in the Arabic plural, meaning 3 or more hands, whilst only two people are referenced: the male and the female thief. Some have commented that this plural usage causes problems for the common interpretation of hand cutting.

Thirdly, the word يَد (singular: *yad*, plural: *aydi*) in Arabic can refer to any part of the human arm; up to and including the shoulder joint. Therefore, it can refer to the hand from the fingertips up to the wrist, or up to the elbow, or up to the shoulder joint. There is no specification in verse 5:38 as to the point at which the *aydi* should allegedly be severed - which is unusual - whereas for ablution in 5:6 it specifies how much is to be washed (e.g. it says "wash your *aydi* up to the elbows").

One other potential problem is created if 5:38 means to physically cut off the hand or hands of the thief, when we consider what were to happen if a person had no hands or had been punished before hence had no more hands to cut/mark or cut off.

Also, when lashes are given as punishment for proven adultery, the Quran states not to let pity/compassion prevent you from carrying out such a punishment [24:2], but it says no such thing for the alleged hand cutting-off verse, when many consider this punishment to be worse. This adds to the possibility that it should not be taken to mean this.

Thus, it is possible to understand the punishment for thieves in four alternative ways:

- (1) cutting off their hands
- (2) cutting or marking their hands
- (3) cutting their means/power to steal, e.g. detention/jail.
- (4) cutting their sustenance, e.g. in order to compensate the value of the theft.

It does seem the punishment could be flexible depending upon the time, circumstances and severity of crime. It is up to the society to choose one of these meanings or a combination of them depending on the severity of the crime and their ability to enforce the penalty.

It should be said, however, that the only working example given in The Quran of theft and its punishment is in the story of Joseph:

They said, "By God, you know we did not come to cause corruption in the land, and we are no thieves!"

He said, "What shall be its recompense, if you are not truthful?"

They said, "Its recompense is that he who has it in his bag, then he is its recompense. Like that do we recompense the wrongdoers." [12:73-75]

Furthermore, 12:79 makes it clear that Joseph (described in 6:84 as one of the guided and a good doer) was acting in accordance with God's law in detaining only the one guilty of theft:

Joseph said: "God forbid that we would detain anyone except he whom we found our belongings with. Indeed, we would then be wrongdoers." [12:79]

Thus, one possible meaning of 5:38 is to apply it in the manner provided by Joseph's example: the suspected thief is given a chance to confess and return the stolen goods, if not, then if found guilty, would be detained, for a set time and/or in order to work off the cost.

Lastly, whatever interpretation is chosen, it is important to keep in mind the recurring theme of equivalence in the Quran, thus the punishment should be proportionate to the crime:

And those who, when gross injustice befalls them, they seek justice. The recompense for a crime shall be its equivalence, but whoever forgives and makes right, then his reward is upon God. He does not like the wrongdoers. [42:40]

To conclude, when all the above information is taken into account, it is clear that to physically cut off the hand or hands of the thief is not the only possible understanding and taking into account the law of equivalence would perhaps only be reserved for significant theft which led to harming others, hence harming the perpetrator. If a Muslim in authority, like Joseph was, were to apply the punishment for theft like Jo-

seph did, then they would be following the example of one of the guided and a good doer, as stated by the Quran.

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The Stigma Caused by Intoxicants on the Human Soul



By Ebrahim Mohamed

The Creation of Man

"So set thy face for religion, being upright (*hanifan*), the nature (*fitra*) made by Allah in which He has created men. There is no altering Allah's creation. That is the right religion — but most people know not." — The Quran, 30:30

The manner in which man has been created by Almighty God is such that his very nature (*fitrah*), according to the Holy Quran, has been endowed with the unique qualities of becoming *hanifan* – i.e. upright, moral beings. This is the goal that will set him on a path of success and bring about a state of wellbeing; happiness; peace of mind. This, we are told, is the way man's very nature has been designed by the Divine Hand and - *there is no altering it* – meaning that if he (man), out of his own accord, decides to go against the natural laws governing his original, pure make-up, he will bring upon himself dire consequences.

No Original Sin in Islam

Islam, therefore, does not support the Christian doctrine of 'original sin' as it goes against the very natural laws of creation as we observe it. Islam teaches that every child whether Jew or Christian or from atheistic parents come into this world in a pure state. That is his natural make-up, described in the Arabic of the Holy Quran as his *fitra*. In fact, this description is from the same root as the creative attribute of Almighty God *Fatir*, the Creator.

The Holy Prophet Muhammad (may peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him) said that every child conforms to the true religion (i.e., the religion of nature or complete submission to the will of God), then his parents make him a Jew, a Christian or a Magian - (Bukhari).

Man has been given discretionary powers to choose between good or bad

Islam teaches that man, after receiving

I Shall Love All Mankind.

guidance from God through His prophets, has the freedom to accept such guidance or not.

“The truth is from your Lord, so let him who please believe, and let him who please disbelieve.” (18:29)

No other creature has been endowed with these discretionary powers which give man dominance over the rest of creation. However, if he violates the natural laws of God, he will deprive himself of that state of peace, bliss and well-being. To use the metaphor of the Holy Quran, he will remove himself from the proverbial ‘Garden’.

How does man attain true morality? (Hanifan)

In order to test man’s moral strength, together with Divine guidance, immoral forces (evil) have been put in place to tempt him by targeting his lower passions. Only when he consciously conquers the lower self by following divine guidance and comes out victorious against such opposing, dark forces that draw him towards behaviours that are in conflict with his original pure nature (*fitra*), does he pass the ‘moral’ test of being upright (*hanifan*).

Therefore, although man is created pure, in the early stages of the evolution of his soul, there is a stage of weakness that is vulnerable to outside temptations. It is not a fault of creation; it is simply an early stage in his moral growth. This principle is observant in nature all around us, as well. Take a tree, for example. In its infant stage when still a little plant it is easily perishable in strong winds; but when it is big and has strong roots it can withstand such strong winds.

This concept is very well illustrated in the story of the Prophet Joseph in the Holy Quran when he said:

“And I call not myself sinless; surely (man’s) self is wont to command evil (*nafs al-amaarah*), except those on whom my Lord has mercy. Surely my Lord is Forgiving, Merciful.” -12:53

The *nafs al-amaarah*, the prophet Joseph is referring to here, is the ‘commanding’ animal stage of dominating passions where man is most susceptible to evil influences.

The prophet Joseph, it should be noted, is not confessing to any sins here as other Scriptures imply, but merely admitting that, like all

human beings, he too is open to sin.

That he was the victim of the seduction of the chief’s wife and not the guilty one who seduced her, is made clear in the Holy Quran when she confessed after an inquiry into the matter was called for by the King:

The chief’s wife said: “Now has the truth become manifest. **I sought to seduce him (Joseph) and he is surely of the truthful.**” -12:51

Joseph’s statement, therefore, should be viewed in the same light as Jesus’ response when he was addressed as ‘good master’ and said:

“Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone.” - Mark 10:18.

Thus we see that the righteous never attribute any good to themselves, but attribute all good to the Great Source of goodness — God Almighty.

About the sinlessness of the Prophets, the Holy Quran clearly states:

“They are honoured servants, they speak not before He speaks and according to His command they act.” - 21:25-27.

And: “It is not for a prophet to act dishonestly” - 3:160.

Joseph, a prophet of God, thus admirably demonstrated to humankind what it meant to be *hanifan* - morally ‘upright’ in the face of temptation and thus passed the moral test of ‘chastity’ and ‘self-restraint’ with flying colours. If we see just how rife sexual abuse of all kinds, in all ranks of society, from rulers of the mightiest nations to clergy in the Church, has become, then indeed this moral lesson of ‘self-restraint’ of Prophet Joseph should serve as an effective guiding principle for all nations.

Drug abuse accelerates immoral behaviour

Immoral influences and temptations may come from diverse sources — it could be via a beautiful woman, a friend, the media, a relative, even from the least expected such as a parent, clerics, and the government, and of course, ‘the intoxicated’.

Permitting free use of intoxicating drugs — a big mistake in a ‘crime ridden’ society

It is a regrettable fact that drug-related crimes all over the world are on the rise and out of control and especially so in this country (South Africa) and have been so for too long. It is against this deplorable background that the recent Constitutional Court's decision to decriminalize the use of *cannabis (dagga)* within the confines of private homes in South Africa, is indeed regrettable and one might say irresponsible. This logic by the highest court in the land is baffling and beyond any comprehension.

The prophet Joseph pointed out the human weaknesses in man that are prone to evil. To further excite these lower passions with the free use of yet another intoxicating substance – we have seen what alcohol abuse has done to societies - is to throw fuel on a fire that is already out of control.

No doubt there are good uses in the *cannabis* plant as much as there are good uses for alcohol, cocaine, morphine, and other drugs when used on the right occasion for the right purposes.

This is what 'morality' means and that is to do something or use things for the right reasons, at the right time to the right degree or in the right proportions. For example, a sharp knife in the hands of a wanton murderer might be very dangerous to society but not so in the hands of a skilled and dignified surgeon.

The same moral principle applies in the use of intoxicants. The use of alcohol as an anti-septic and as a preservative in certain medicines, are beneficial in this context. Similarly, morphine administered in regulated doses under medical supervision to dull severe pain could be vital in cases of severe trauma. *Cannabis* I understand is effective in treating cancer and anxiety. But when these drugs are used freely for purposes other than that for which it was created, it is suicidal because then it is extremely dangerous and toxic to the body, mind and soul, and as we are already well aware, often results in devastating consequences within society as a whole.

Recent studies by the World Health Organization, as reported by the BBC on 22nd September 2018, indicate that alcohol (even moderate drinking) accounts for over millions of deaths annually worldwide.

Islam Prohibits the Use of Intoxicants

It is for this reason that Islam strongly prohibits the use of **intoxicants**. Addressing the subject, the Holy Quran states:

"They ask thee about **intoxicants** and games of chance. Say: In both of them is a great sin and (some) advantage for men, and their sin is greater than their advantage." - 2:219

"O you who believe, **intoxicants** and games of chance and (sacrificing to) stones set up and (dividing by) arrows are only an uncleanness, the devil's work; **so shun it that you may succeed.**" - 5:90

"The devil desires only to **create enmity and hatred among you** by means of **intoxicants** and games of chance, and to keep you back from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer. Will you then keep back?" - 5:91

Western societies around the world know that, of all the evils in the world, the habit of drinking alcohol is the most difficult to be uprooted, mainly because it is legal in countries under their control. Yet more than 1400 years ago but one word of the Holy Qur'an was sufficient to blot out almost all traces of it from among a whole nation that came over to Islam. History cannot present another instance of a wonderful transformation of this magnitude brought about so easily, yet so thoroughly.

Prohibition of use of intoxicants driven by intolerable harmful consequence on society

The reason why Islam is so strict on the prohibition of the use of all kinds of intoxicants is clear from the horrible consequences that come with it.

Attention is therefore emphatically drawn to the '**dark**' world associated with the use of drugs. And thus we find ...

It is called **unclean, filthy, and impure- the devil's work**. Listening to the stories of drug users in various studies and documentaries you will find that drug abuse is the main factor that leads to numerous kinds of illnesses, most of which are mental. It is the main cause of depression that often leads to suicide, if not treated. The doses that normally exceed any prescribed medicinal use are often toxic and thus impure and extremely harmful. Studies also show that most of the crimes committed in the world are drug related, be it murder, rape, prostitution, theft etc. In our own country drunken driving is the main cause of thousands of deaths on the

roads annually. Alarm bells are already going off as we approach the festive season. So the Holy Quran is correct in calling it *the filthy work of the devil* because that is in fact what it is.

The Holy Quran further says it creates *enmity and hatred* within societies. We see this happening around us every day. When the flames of human passions such as *'anger, lust and greed'* are ignited by the use of drugs - the outcome is inevitable. When the bestial nature of man comes to the fore, he loses control of himself and seeks trouble with everyone he comes in contact with. He starts abusing his wife, his children, his neighbours etc.

Worst of all, the Holy Quran, says:

"It keeps you away from the remembrance of Allah and from prayer" (5:91).

It is a well-known fact that whereas meditations on God and prayers help to pull in the reins of reckless immoral behaviours of the weak souls out there, drug abuse accelerates evil and criminal behaviours.

Connecting to a Higher Power as a means to heal drug abuse

All professional rehabilitation institutions place the establishment of a spiritual connectivity with a Loving, Merciful, and Forgiving Super Power as the primary 'essential' in the treatment of addiction. The Holy Quran says that the remembrance of Allah is *the greatest force* (29:45), not *dagga*, tik, alcohol, cocaine, heroin, etc.

Numerous studies confirm the beneficial effects of the 'remembrance of God' through **meditative prayer and acts of goodness**. It increases the endorphin levels in the body, the chemicals that create euphoria. This euphoria and inner bliss grow stronger and stronger over time as these acts of meditative prayers and acts of goodness to humanity increase — then the state of happiness never leaves you no matter the challenges you have to face. The beauty of it all is you do not need drugs to attain this state of inner contentment, peace, and happiness.

Drugs might give a momentary high to the

user but no sooner afterwards he comes crashing down into a state of depravity, with feelings of depression, loss of self-esteem and dignity. Prayer on the other hand brings **lasting peace of mind**:

"Now surely in Allah's remembrance (*prayers and acts of kindness to humanity*) **do hearts find rest.**" — 13:28

Shun Drugs in order to be successful — Holy Quran

Drug addiction, no doubt, leads to failure in life. The addict can never be successful in his work, or as a married partner or as an example to his children. Unless he takes proactive steps and makes a serious transformation of the self by shunning his enslavement to drugs and embarks on a path of rehabilitation, he will always end up a loser.

According to the Holy Quran, **Almighty God calls man to success** and it is the devil that calls him to failure and beckons him to join the party of losers:

"The devil has gained mastery over them, so he has made them forget the remembrance of Allah. They are the devil's party. **Now surely the devil's party (they) are the losers.**" — 58:19

Do not despair GOD is Most Forgiving, Merciful

The sincere, repentant soul, anxious to find his way back to freedom from addiction, will find Almighty God most Forgiving, Merciful. In Islam, stress is laid on the mercy and love of Allah, such mercy that is all-comprehensive before which the sins of the sincere repentant soul become quite insignificant:

"Say: O My servants who have been prodigal regarding their souls, **despair not of the mercy of Allah; Surely Allah forgives sins altogether. He is indeed the Forgiving, Merciful.**" — 39:53

Millions of victims of drug abuse, who have found themselves on the verge of hopelessness and who have reached out and made this connection with God, have found their way back to permanent recovery and regained their birth-right status of *hanifan* — being 'upright' and at peace with God, their inner selves and with fellow man. **So can you - if you are a victim! (Return to contents)**

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