

(168) *"O' Mankind! Eat of what is lawful and clean on the earth"* Allah (SWT) is alone the Sustainer of all creation and He has allowed His servants to eat any of the lawful things on earth and avoid unlawful things. Unlawful things are not only those prohibited by Allah (SWT) but even lawful things acquired unlawfully - by usurpation, by theft and cheating etc. And Allah (SWT) says: *"And do not follow the footsteps of Satan."* i.e. do not follow the ways and methods with which he misguides people and follow only the way of Allah (SWT) which has been shown by the Prophet (SAW). *"Surely he is your open enemy."* i.e. the Satan invites his followers towards sin and immorality so that they may become the inmates of Hellfire.

(169) *"For he commands you what is evil and shameful and that ye should say of Allah that of which ye have no knowledge."* The Satan commands his followers to commit evil acts like adultery, theft, gambling, usury and even worse than that i.e. saying something about Allah (SWT) without knowledge. Satan makes them believe in superstitions and baseless and unfounded customs as a part of their religion, although there is no proof that they are from Allah (SWT). Like the *Jews* who prohibited the meat of camel when it was not made unlawful by Allah (SWT) or the pagan Arabs who would prohibit some animals because of ascribing them to one of their idols and gods.

(170) *"When it is said to them: "Follow what Allah (SWT) has revealed" they say: "Nay! we shall follow the ways of our fathers."* This *ayah* strongly condemns blind following of those traditions of the ancestors which do not tally with the *Qur'an* and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (SAW). Allah (SWT) states that when the disbelievers are asked to follow the way of Allah (SWT) and His Prophet (SAW), they say that we will only follow our forefathers who

also worshipped idols and were disbelievers. So Allah (SWT) says : *“What! even though their fathers were void of wisdom and guidance.”* i.e. will they still follow their forefathers and imitate their practices even when they know that those whom they follow had no knowledge and guidance.

(171) *“The parable of those who reject faith is as if one were to shout like a goat-herd to things that listen to nothing but calls and cries.”* i.e. a disbeliever is devoid of understanding and preaching before him is like preaching to the cattle – who only listen to the sounds but are incapable of understanding their meaning. So Allah (SWT) says, *“Deaf dumb and blind they are void of wisdom.”* - those who cover themselves with the dark veil of ignorance are deaf, dumb and blind. That is to say, those who reject faith are like dumb driven cattle who can merely hear calls, but cannot distinguish intelligently between meaning and absurd discourse or subtle differences of values.

(172) *“O’ you who believe! eat of the good things that We have provided for you and be grateful to Allah (SWT), if you only worship Him.”* Allah (SWT) commands the believers to eat from the pure and lawful things He has provided for them on this earth, if they truly are His servants. Indeed, gratitude for Allah’s (SWT) gifts is an important form of worship.

(173) *“He has only forbidden you dead meat.”* i.e. dead animals who die before they are slaughtered but dead animals of the sea are excluded from the ruling as the Prophet (SAW) said: *“Its water is pure and its dead are permissible..”*<sup>1</sup> And *“and blood and the flesh of swine”* Whether slaughtered or not *“and that on which any other name has been invoked besides that of Allah (SWT).”* i.e. any Offerings or sacrifices in the name of anyone or anything other than Allah (SWT). *“but if one is forced by necessity without willful disobedience nor transgressing due limits then he shall incur no sin. For Allah (SWT) is Oft-Forgiving*

*Most Merciful.*" Allah (SWT) has, however, permitted to eat from things which are prohibited in the time of utter necessity. For instance when it is needed for survival on account of an illness or when there is absolutely nothing lawful available. But the permission has been given on two conditions. Firstly one should not have a desire to eat what Allah (SWT) has prohibited, and secondly only that much should be taken which meets the bare minimum requirement for survival.

(174) *"Those who conceal Allah's revelations in the Book and purchase for them a miserable profit-they swallow into themselves nothing but fire."* Allah (SWT) criticizes the *Jews* for concealing the prophethood of Muhammad (SAW). As mentioned earlier, the *Jews* recognized Prophet Muhammad (SAW) as a Messenger of Allah as they recognized their own sons but they hid the truth so that they might retain the joys and delights of this earthly life. *"Allah (SWT) will not address them on the Day of Resurrection nor purify them and they will have a painful punishment."* i.e. they have earned Allah's (SWT) wrath so He will not look at them nor speak to them on the *Day of Resurrection* and will punish them with a severe torment. Grievous will be the penalty of rejecters of faith and Allah (SWT) will not purify them.

(175) *"They are the ones who buy error in place of guidance and torment in place of forgiveness."* Instead of believing in Prophet Muhammad (SAW), they rejected him and preferred error and misguidance over the truth and punishment over forgiveness because of their stubbornness and arrogance. *"Ah! what boldness (they show) for the Fire!"* i.e. They know what torture and woeful torment they will suffer but still persist in their misguidance and ignorance.

(176) *"because Allah (SWT) sent down the Book in truth but those who seek causes of dispute in the Book are in a schism far (from the purpose)."* i.e. Allah (SWT) sent

*Qur'an* to Prophet Muhammad (SAW) and His other Books to Prophets before him which brought guidance and truth and exposed falsehood. But they rejected the Messenger (SAW) and the Book revealed to him and those who disagree about it are in extreme schism-and this is why Allah (SWT) says they deserved the torment and the punishment.

(177) *"It is not righteousness that you turn your faces toward East or West"* The theory and a complete holistic definition of piety and righteousness has been mentioned in this *ayah* and it gives a comprehensive and clear description of the righteous and Allah-fearing man. As for the context of this *ayah* is concerned, Allah (SWT) first commanded the Muslims to change the *Qiblah* from *Bayt Al-Maqdis* (Jerusalem) to the *Ka'bah*. This change did not go well with the *Jews*, but Allah (SWT) clarified the wisdom behind this change: that there is no real virtue in the mere act of turning your faces to the east or to the west in the prayer unless it is commanded by Allah (SWT). But Allah (SWT) says: *"the righteous man is he who believes in Allah (SWT) and the Last Day, in the Angels and the Book and the Messenger; who for the love of Allah (SWT) gives his wealth to his kinsfolk, to the orphans, to the needy, to the wayfarer and to the beggars and for the redemption of slaves, who attends to his prayers (salah) and pays the alms-tax (zakah); who is true to his promises and fulfills all agreements and contracts and remains steadfast in trial and adversity and in times of war."* Far from deadening formalism the real virtue and righteousness is that a person should obey all the salutary regulations, and should make his sincere motive the love of Allah (SWT) and the love of his fellow men for the sake of Allah (SWT). Here we have four elements of righteousness : (a) One's faith should be true and sincere, (b) one should be prepared to show it in deeds of charity and kindness to fellow men, and one must be a good citizen by supporting charitable institutions and social organizations, (c) one must pray regularly and pay obligatory annual poor-due, and (d) one must be steadfast and unshakeable in all

circumstances. It is clear, therefore, that righteousness is not merely a matter of void utterances, it must be found on strong Faith and constant practice. It must cover the person's thinking and action and extend to his inside and outside life, to his individual and corporate affairs<sup>2</sup>. Further Allah (SWT) says: *"Such are the people of truth and righteousness."* i.e. whoever acquires the above qualities, only they are truthful in their faith and are pious and Allah-fearing.

(178) *"O' you who believe! the law of equality in retaliation is prescribed to you in cases of murder, the free for the free the slave for the slave the woman for the woman. But if any remission is made by the brother of the slain then grant any reasonable demand and compensate him"* In this *ayah* the law of 'qisas'<sup>3</sup> i.e. the principle of equality of the value of human life, has been set forth in detail. Before the advent of Islam, the practice after a murder was a chain of brutal and bloodthirsty reactions. The families and the tribes of both the slayer and the slain used to engage themselves into a war, generation after generation and they would take the lives of innocent men, women and children from the clan of the murderer. Islam, through the Holy Prophet (SAW) put an end to this barbaric human behavior and gave a just and kind system of justice where the retribution of a murder is not to be determined by the rank of the slain or the murderer but with equality and justice. It has therefore, been clearly stated that the murderer himself shall be made to pay for the blood but the heirs of the slain have the choice to pardon the murderer if someone on his behalf pays them the blood price. And *"with handsome gratitude."* i.e. the heirs of the slain should accept the compensation in rightful manner. Allah (SWT) says: *"this is a concession and a Mercy from your Lord."* i.e. this concession in punishment is an alleviation from Allah (SWT) which was not allowed for any other nation. *"After this whoever exceeds the limits shall be in grave penalty."* This warning is for those heirs of the slain who accept the blood money and

still kill the murderer in retaliation. The whole penalty can be remitted if the aggrieved party agrees, out of brotherly love. In meeting that demand the culprit should equally be generous and acknowledge the good will of the other side. He that transgresses thereafter shall face stern punishment.

(179) *"In the law of equality there is life to you O' you men of understanding! that you may restrain yourselves."* i.e. The purpose of ordaining penalty for the crime is to make people abstain from evildoing.

(180) *"It is decreed when death approaches any of you if he leave any wealth that he make a bequest to parents and next of kin equitably, This is a duty incumbent on the righteous."* When the *ayah* of inheritance in surah *An-Nisa* was revealed, this *ayah* was abrogated. So the deserving inheritors receive their fixed shares as prescribed by Allah (SWT) in surah *An-Nisa* and it is not incumbent anymore on Muslims to make a bequeath for their parents or their kin. But according to the sunnah of the Prophet (SAW), a person is allowed to make a will for charitable purposes and for those relatives that do not qualify as inheritors.

(181) *"If anyone changes the bequest after hearing it the guilt shall be on those who make the change. For Allah (SWT) hears and knows all things."* To alter or change a will is a major sin and guilty will be those who change it and the dead person who made the will is not to blame. And Allah (SWT) knows what the dead person had bequeathed and who are those who hide or change the will.

(182) *"But if anyone fears partiality or wrong-doing on the part of the testator and makes peace between the parties; he incurs no guilt, for Allah (SWT) is Oft-Forgiving Most Merciful."* If any injustice has been done to the rightful heirs or those in whose favor the bequeath has been made then it is allowed to alter or

change the will to make a proper settlement between the parties, within the provisions of Islamic law and also respecting what the dead person had wished for. Allah (SWT) is Forgiving and Merciful.

(183) *“O’ you who believe! fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you”* Allah (SWT) says that He has ordained fasting for Muslims as He ordained it for previous nations namely the *Jews* and the Christians. *“So that you may learn self-restraint.”* Fasting is a means for restraining and controlling the *nafs* <sup>4</sup>, which purifies the souls and cleanses them from the evil and ill behavior. Through fasting a believer is able to guard himself against evil.

(184) *“(Fasting) for a fixed number of days. But if any of you is ill or on a journey the prescribed number (should be made up) from days later. For those who can do it (with hardship) is a ransom: the feeding of one that is indigent.”* The injunctions related to Fasting were revealed gradually. In the beginning Prophet Muhammad (SAW) instructed the Muslims to observe fast for every three days in a month but it was not made obligatory. Then the command of fasting in Ramadan was revealed but there was an option for a sick person, a traveler and for those who did not wish to fast, to pay Fidyah instead (feeding a poor person). But this concession was later abrogated in the next *ayah*. *“But he that will give more of his own free will it is better for him”* i.e. whoever can feed an extra person will be well rewarded. *“and it is better for you that you fast if you only knew.”* This was abrogated in the next *ayah* when fasting in Ramadan was made obligatory.

(185) *“Ramadan is the month in which was sent down the Qur'an”* The month of Ramadan is that in which the complete *Qur'an* was revealed to the Holy Prophet (SAW) in the night of decree (*Layla-tul-Qadr*). As mentioned earlier, *Qur'an* was revealed in two stages over a period of 22 years. At first,

Allah (SWT) sent the *Qur'an* down all in one go (i.e. in its totality) from the Preserved Tablet to the House of Might (*Baytul-Izzah*), which is in the heaven of this world. Then it came down in parts to the Messenger of Allah (SAW) in the context of the historical incidents that occurred over a period of twenty two years. *“as a guide to mankind also clear signs for guidance and judgment (between right and wrong).”* This Book is the guidance for *Muttaqun* (Allah-fearing and the righteous) who believe in it and follow its commands and it contains clear and unambiguous signs and criterion between right and wrong for those who understand and have discerning minds. *“So everyone of you who is present during that month should spend it in fasting”* This *ayah* abrogated the *ayah* that allows a person either to fast in Ramadan or pay *Fidyah*. *“but if anyone is ill or on a journey the prescribed period (should be made up) by days later.”* This *ayah* indicates that a sick person or a traveller is allowed not to fast, but he will have to compensate the missed fast on other days. *“Allah (SWT) intends every facility for you and He does not want to put you to difficulties. (He wants you) to complete the prescribed period and to glorify Him in that He has guided you, so that you may be grateful to Him.”* Allah (SWT) has made matters easier for His servants and through His mercy He allows a sick person or a traveller to refrain from fasting in Ramadan and then complete the number in other days, so that His servants glorify Him and be grateful to Him for these concessions. This shows that fasting in Ramadan has not only been prescribed as a form of worship or training of a Muslim but also to show gratitude for the great favor of the revelation of *Qur'an* in the holy month of Ramadan.

(186) *“When my servants ask thee (O' Muhammad) concerning Me. Tell them I am indeed close to them. I listen to the prayer of every suppliant when he calls on Me.”* Allah (SWT) is very near to a man, even nearer than the jugular vein. He is so near to His servants that He even answers those requests and prayers which a person does not express verbally but keep within the innermost

recesses of the heart. He hears every cry of help and gives to His devotee that which is best in his interest, known to Him alone in His infinite wisdom. This *ayah* further affirms the principle that Allah (SWT) is near and close to each person, and accordingly there is no need for any external link or intercession between servants and Him. Further Allah (SWT) says: *"Therefore, they should respond to Me and put their trust in Me, so that they may be rightly guided."* This means, a person should answer and reciprocate by acting on the commandments of Allah (SWT), and have firm belief in Him so that he may be guided to the right path and veridical knowledge.

(187) *"Permitted to you on the night of the fasts is the approach to your wives."* In the beginning Muslims who observed fast supposed that they were not allowed to eat, drink or have sexual intercourse with their wives after *Isha* prayer, but Allah (SWT) made the matters easier for them and allowed eating and drinking, along with having sexual activities, during any part of the night until the light of dawn is distinguished from the darkness of night. *"They are your garments. And you are their garments."* i.e. As clothes and the body are closed to each other, in the same way husband and wife are closely related to each other and a source of mutual comfort to each other. *"Allah (SWT) knows what you used to do secretly among yourselves, but He turned to you and forgave you, so now have conjugal relations with them and seek what Allah (SWT) hath ordained for you"* Although Muslims used to refrain from sexual intercourse after *Isha* prayer, but still there were some Companions (RAA) who confessed to the Holy Prophet (SAW) that they had some food and had sexual intercourse with their wives during the Ramadan nights. So this *ayah* was revealed and Allah (SWT) forgave them and gave them permission to approach their wives during the night of Ramadan. Further Allah (SWT) says: *"and eat and drink until the white thread of dawn appear to you distinct from its black thread, then complete your fast till the night"*

appears." The Muslims were given permission to eat, drink and have sexual intercourse in the night until the light of dawn is distinguished from the darkness of the night. The sunnah of the Prophet (SAW) indicate the encouragement of eating Suhur<sup>5</sup> just before dawn. *"But do not approach your wives while you are in retreat in the mosques."* This *ayah* refers to those who stay in *I'tikaf*<sup>6</sup> in a mosque. Allah (SWT) prohibited the Muslims to have sexual intercourse with their wives until one finishes his *I'tikaf*. *"Those are limits (set by) Allah (SWT), do not ever violate them. Thus Allah (SWT) makes His revelations clear to mankind so that they may guard themselves against evil."* Allah (SWT) has made clear His revelations to Mankind. He explained in detail what He has allowed and what He has prohibited in fasting. And He commanded His servants not to transgress the limits set by Him, so that they may acquire righteousness.

(188) *"And do not eat up one another's properties by unjust means nor use it as bait for the judges with intent that you may eat up wrongfully and knowingly a little of other people's property."* One should not try to grab the properties of others through illegal means or by bribing the judges. It may also be possible that the judge may decide in favor of the transgressor because of someone being more persuasive in presenting the argument, but it does not change the fact that the property unjustly earned by the transgressor remains unlawful for him. It is reported in the Two Sahihs (Bukhari and Muslim) that Umm Salamah narrated that Allah's Messenger (SAW) said: *"I am only human! You people present your cases to me, and as some of you may be more eloquent and persuasive in presenting his argument, I might issue a judgment in his benefit. So, if I give a Muslim's right to another, I am really giving him a piece of fire; so he should not take it."*<sup>7</sup> A judge is only a human and he may make a mistake but the unjust person will still be accountable on the Day of Judgment for acquiring

others properties unlawfully and the judgment of the authorities in any case does not change the reality of the true position.

### Foot Notes

[1] Musnad Ahmed 5 : 365, Al-Muwatta 1 : 22, Abu Dawud 1 : 64.

[2] Cf. 'Ethical Virtue in the Qur'anic perspective', by Dr. Absar Ahmed, included in his book 'Knowledge-Morality Nexus'.

[3] Literally, qisas means "equal" or "balanced". In the book Tafsir al-Qurthubi, qisas is also explained as "to follow the track of mark", and it comes therefore to mean that the treatment of the offender should be the same as his offence. Qisas, according to Islamic legal terminology, is "specified punishment imposed by Shari'a as an obligation to be implemented in order to carry out the right of mankind."

[4] *Nafs* (pl. Anfus or Nufus) lexically means soul, the psyche, the ego, self, life, person, heart or mind. (Mu'jam, Kassis).

[5] Eating and drinking during the night of Ramadan. Its time starts from Isha until the light of dawn, but preferred time according to the Sunnah is just before dawn.

[6] Retreat in the Mosque during the last ten days of Ramadan. One confines himself to the mosque and devotes one's whole time to prayer and meditation along with the prescribed religious duties.

[7] Sahih Bukhari and Sahih Muslim Cf. Tafsir Ibn Kathir, explanation of Surah AL-Baqarah, ayah 188..