

## I. The Concept of Trust

### A. I am Creating Khalifa on Earth

In Surat Al-Baqara (2:30), Allah<sup>SWT</sup> declared His intention to create a Khalifa (deputy) on Earth. When the angels questioned the wisdom of placing beings on Earth capable of violence and corruption, Allah<sup>SWT</sup> assured them that He had knowledge beyond their comprehension. The angels, having witnessed the corruption and evil among the Jinn, doubted the potential goodness of humankind. These Jinn, created before humans and endowed with free will, all turned corrupt, leaving no good among them. Allah<sup>SWT</sup> then dispatched an angelic army to subdue and confine the corrupt Jinn to desolate parts of the oceans. The angels anticipated that humans would mirror the Jinn's tendencies towards corruption and violence.

### B. Divine Understanding beyond Angelic Knowledge

Allah replied to the angels that He possesses knowledge they cannot fathom. This knowledge pertains to the potential and purpose of humans as Khalifa on Earth. Allah knew that humans are capable of the exact opposite of shedding blood and spreading corruption, which is spreading fairness and kindness. During their struggle to establish fairness and justice, they would do good deeds and Allah is interested into these good deeds. This is the purpose of creation. Allah knew that humans, endowed with intellect and free will, could act contrary to violence and corruption. He created Adam and bestowed upon him knowledge of all things, granting the ability to comprehend, classify, and utilize creation for worship and benefit. The angels, in contrast, could only glorify and sanctify Allah, lacking the capacity to comprehend why a being with free will, intellect, and moral responsibility was necessary. They feared this being would only bring corruption and bloodshed, similar to the Jinn's actions. However, Allah assured them that He possessed knowledge beyond their understanding, including the hidden aspects, future outcomes, and ultimate purposes of His creation. He knew that among humans, there would be prophets, messengers, saints, martyrs, righteous individuals, and believers dedicated to sincere worship, obedience, message spreading, and striving for His cause. These righteous individuals would uphold the trust of being Khalifa on Earth and be rewarded with Paradise in the Hereafter. Hence, the knowledge Allah possesses, unbeknownst to the angels, encompasses His infinite wisdom, power, and mercy in creating humans as noble and honorable creatures.

### C. Purpose of Life

To elucidate life's purpose, consider this analogy. Envision having a young daughter who approaches you and asks, "Daddy, could you please give me \$100?" Curious, you inquire, "Why do you need the money?" She responds, "Because I want to buy you a gift." Overwhelmed with joy by her thoughtful gesture, you gladly provide the money, accompany her to one of your many stores (since you own them all), and she purchases the gift for you. Even though the money and the store are yours, including everything inside, the gift she presents fills your heart with immense happiness. This analogy reflects what Allah values—a focus on the gifts, symbolizing good deeds. This emphasis on virtuous actions is the essence of why Allah created the entire universe.

### D. Understanding Khalifa on Earth

The term Khalifa mentioned in the Ayah signifies someone entrusted by Allah to represent Him as deputies on Earth, implementing His principles, laws, and rulings. Allah's beautiful names encapsulate

His manners, portraying kindness, justice, generosity, grace, forgiveness, gentleness, and love. He desires for humanity to mirror these qualities in their interactions. Allah entrusted humanity with free will, the responsibility of caring for the Earth and its inhabitants, the capacity to learn and acquire knowledge, and the obligation to follow His commandments. Humans were entrusted with the care of natural resources, animals, justice, and the control of their temptations. A simple analogy to elucidate the concept of trust is that of a master who raises and nurtures two slaves since infancy. To discern between them, the master entrusts both with \$5000, a car, and three days to undertake an Umra pilgrimage to Mecca. One slave complies with the master's instructions, utilizing the resources for the pilgrimage, while the other squanders the money in vices in Las Vegas. The latter sells the car to fund further indulgence in his desires. Refusing to return out of fear of the master's wrath, the master sends the angel of death to apprehend and bring the erring slave back to authority. The obedient slave is generously rewarded, while the disobedient one faces severe punishment.

#### E. The Laws of Nature and the Laws of Islam

The laws of nature are beyond human control, governed solely by Allah, shaping the entire universe's behavior. These laws constitute fundamental principles governing the natural world, governing celestial motions, gravity, precipitation, and more. The laws of nature remain inviolable, except when Allah manifests a miracle. In contrast, the laws of Islam lie within human control, allowing individuals to choose compliance or defiance. Allah empowered humans with the ability to decide their actions, yet their bodies remain subject to the laws of nature. Human lifespan, health, and essential bodily functions are governed by these laws. Metaphorically, the laws of Islam represent a space within the laws of nature that humans are tasked with filling. It symbolizes the gap between Allah's commandments and human actions. These gaps offer opportunities to fulfill responsibilities and make choices reflecting trust and loyalty to Allah. Moreover, they represent our circle of influence, varying in size from person to person. For instance, the president of the United States possesses a far-reaching circle of influence compared to a slave in poverty. The president's choices impact the world, whereas the slave's choices are confined to their limited resources.

Another analogy to elucidate trust is likening it to a substitute teacher. Just as in the case of substitutes, there are two types: one where a teacher arranges a substitute due to their absence, and the other where a teacher brings in a substitute while being present to assess the substitute teacher's performance. In the context of trust, we are referring to the latter scenario. Allah is present, observing how proficiently we manage the responsibility He has placed in our care.

One may question why Allah doesn't grant humans control over the laws of nature as well. The answer lies in the immense evil and corruption that freedom of choice has spawned. Our history bears witness to the devastation caused by human choices, resulting in wars, genocides, and stark economic inequalities. 176 million human beings were killed in the previous century due to world war I, world war II, atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Hitler, Mao, Stalin, spread of communism, civil wars and 72 major wars same size as Vietnam war. All these wars were motivated by political insanity. The difference of income between countries as well as the difference of income between citizens of the same country are overwhelming. Some live in poverty while others live in obscene luxury. The wealth is accumulated in the hands of few while the majority of humans live in poverty.

Allowing control over the laws of nature could precipitate similar conflicts over vital resources, just as our struggles for power, wealth, control, and oil have. Allah restrains us from controlling the laws of nature to safeguard the universe from annihilation, providing us with a controlled freedom adequate for testing but not sufficient to obliterate life on Earth.

#### F. Offering the Trust to Other Than Humans

In (Al-Ahzab 33:72), Allah emphasizes that He offered the trust to the heavens, earth, and mountains, and they declined, but humans accepted for the human is a transgressor and ignorant. Humanity, however, is often misguided and lacking in knowledge. Other creations of Allah declined accepting the trust because they feared their ability to uphold it while possessing free will, vulnerable to the influence of Satan and evil desires. Some individuals may claim to reject the trust and testing, but the innate human instinct is to desire both. People seek freedom, but it comes with the responsibility of demonstrating how they will use it—a crucial test prior to obtaining freedoms. Those unwilling to be tested would have to relinquish their freedoms and live as slaves, a notion most reject. On the contrary, humans seek greater freedom, a more challenging test.

This longing for freedom extends to power as well. With power comes responsibility, yet individuals aspire for more power, seeking a tougher test. Similarly, with life, people embrace the trials that come with it, indicating a desire for a more extended and challenging test. Life itself is a test, as evidenced by the absence of tests for those who are no longer alive. Likewise, wealth is pursued, and the responsibility lies in its judicious use. Individuals aim to augment their wealth, opting for a more strenuous test. Those averse to testing should relinquish their wealth and choose a simpler, less affluent life.

#### G. Who Falls Under Partial Exemption from the Trust in Surah An-Nisa'a (4:97-98)?

In Surah An-Nisa (4:97-98) of the Quran, Allah addresses the category of individuals who are granted a partial exemption from specific responsibilities and accountability. This exemption pertains particularly to those unable to migrate for the sake of their faith due to circumstances or limitations beyond their control. The Quran states in (4:97): When the angels take the souls of those who wronged themselves, they will question them about their state, to which they will respond, "We were oppressed in the land." The angels will then inquire, "Was not the earth of Allah spacious enough for you to emigrate therein?" For them, Hell will be the abode, and a wretched destination it is. Allah further elucidates in (4:98): Except for the oppressed among men, women, and children who cannot devise a plan nor are they guided to a way.

In these verses, individuals falling under the partial exemption are those facing oppression, weakness, or the inability to plan and migrate due to their faith. This group encompasses a range of vulnerable individuals in society, including slaves, along with women and children, who find themselves constrained by circumstances, hindering their ability to make decisions concerning migration.

The core emphasis lies in comprehending the circumstances of these individuals and showing compassion, acknowledging that some may be constrained by their situations and thus not held accountable for actions they cannot undertake due to oppression or lack of agency. This exemption underscores the necessity of considering one's circumstances and recognizing the just and compassionate nature of God, who takes into account the unique situations of each individual.

## H. The Covenant Made by Allah with Humanity before Their Earthly Existence

In Surah Al-A'raf (7:172-173), Allah conveys a profound message about a covenant made with every human before their worldly existence. This covenant, not remembered consciously but deeply etched within their conscience and inherent being, ensures an inherent awareness of their devotion to Allah even prior to their worldly existence. Those who corrupt their souls would forfeit this pristine nature and wholesome conscience bestowed upon them through this covenant, making them unable to recognize the beauty of this inherent nature ingrained by Allah. The verses recount a pre-worldly gathering in which Allah took from the loins of all Adam's descendants, making them bear witness to His oneness and their acknowledgment of Him as their Lord. In verse (7:172), Allah says: "And mention when your Lord took from the children of Adam - from their backs - their descendants and made them testify of themselves, saying to them, 'Am I not your Lord?' They said, 'Yes, we have testified.' This - lest you should say on the Day of Resurrection, 'Indeed, we were of this unaware.'" In verse (7:173), Allah continues: "Or lest you say, 'It was only that our fathers associated others in worship with Allah before, and we were but descendants after them. Then would You destroy us for what the falsifiers have done?'"

The key messages from these verses are summarized as follows:

1. **Primordial Covenant and Divine Oneness:** Allah reminds humanity of a primordial covenant, where He engaged all human beings, descendants of Adam, in a covenant, asking them, "Am I not your Lord?" This signifies that from the very beginning, all human souls affirmed the oneness and lordship of Allah, acknowledging Him as their Creator and Sustainer.
2. **Accountability and Awareness:** The purpose of this covenant is to eliminate the possibility of anyone claiming ignorance on the Day of Resurrection regarding their acknowledgment of Allah's oneness. Everyone will be acutely aware of this covenant, and no one can deny it or claim unawareness.
3. **Responsibility and Free Will:** Humans possess free will and the responsibility to recognize and adhere to the truth. They are accountable for their actions and cannot shift blame to their ancestors or circumstances for associating partners with Allah or engaging in falsehood.
4. **Avoidance of False Justifications:** The verses caution against using excuses like "our ancestors were polytheists, and we followed their ways" as justification for engaging in polytheism or wrongdoing. Each individual is accountable for their beliefs and actions, regardless of their family's practices.

In essence, these verses emphasize the inherent recognition of Allah's oneness and our accountability based on that recognition. Individuals are urged to accept responsibility for their faith and actions, rather than deflecting blame or using past practices as excuses. This covenant is etched in the conscience and nature of every human being, ensuring an awareness of their commitment to Allah even before their worldly existence.