

# **Wisdom (al-Hikmah) A Paradigm for Social Sunan – A Fresh Look at Islam –**



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Actions not Wishes

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### Wisdom and Islam

Al-Hikmah or wisdom means a total insight and having sound judgment concerning a matter or situation through understanding cause and effect phenomena. Al-Hikmah constitutes one of the three major teachings of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Verse 2:129 of the Qur'an, below, expresses Prophet Muhammad's mission with the three major categories: Al-Kitab (The knowledge of the Holy Qur'an), al-Hikmah (the wisdom) and al-Tazkiyah (the inner-self purification). Each category is dependent upon the other. These three fundamental teachings combined are the foundations required to make up the character of a true Muslim.

Our Lord! Send among them an Apostle of their own, who shall rehearse Your signs to them and instruct them in the Holy Qur'an (al-Kitab) and wisdom (Hikmah), and sanctify them (yuzakeehim), for You are the Exalted in Might, the Wise.

(See our article, [Inner-Self Purification on Tazkiyah](#).)

Teaching wisdom is an integral part of the mission of the earlier Prophets as well. The Qur'an speaks of Prophets Abraham, Moses and Jesus (PBUH) and how they were sent to teach wisdom along with their respective scriptures. For example, God speaks of Abraham (PBUH) saying:

“But We had already given the family of Abraham the Scripture and wisdom. Qur'an, 5:54

Similarly, God bestowed wisdom and knowledge upon Prophets Moses, Jesus, Lot, David and Solomon (PBUH):

And when he (Moses) attained his full strength and was (mentally) mature, We bestowed upon him wisdom and knowledge. Qur'an, 28:14

And (remember O Jesus) when I taught you writing and wisdom and the Torah and the Gospel. Qur'an 5:110

And to Lot We gave wisdom and knowledge. Qur'an, 21:74

And to each (of them: David and Solomon) We gave wisdom and knowledge. Qur'an, 21:79

Sound judgments and placing things where they belong are actions not bound by place or time. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) encouraged the believers to use wisdom in their approaches to the fullest extent. He said:

Wisdom is like a precious commodity that is lost. A believer must always be in search of it. Wherever he finds it, he must act upon what it dictates.” Al-Termithi, Majma'a Al-Fawa'd wa A'athab Al-Mawarid, volume 1, page 38

The above Islamic principles establish that al-Hikmah constitutes a major part of the Muslim's belief. Indeed, to understand and practice al-Hikmah is to understand much of the essence and practices of Islam. To substantiate this claim, we must first define al-Hikmah and examine its faculties.

### Definitions of Al-Hikmah:

Some scholars like Imam Shafi'i interpret the word 'al-Hikmah' in verse 2:129 above, as the Tradition or Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Other scholars, such as the great Muslim scholar Ibn al-Qay'im al-Jawziyah in his book, Madarij al-Salikeen, defined 'al-Hikmah' scientifically and practically as shown below. This article is based on the latter interpretation

of al-Hikmah by Ibn Al Qay'im al Jawziyah.

#### Scientific Definition:

"Knowing and understanding the genuine nature of matters; the knowledge of relating results (effects) to causes as relevant to the physical composition and function of the matter, and with respect to Allah's natural law (qadarun) and revealed law (shar'an)."

#### Practical Definition:

"Doing what is required in the right manner, at the right time, and in the right place."

The definitions above explain al-Hikmah's distinct dynamic faculty, which adapt easily to the ever changing condition of people and their worlds. Al-Hikma's faculties of approach can be used to manage any matter, at any time, in any place and under any circumstance.

#### Al-Hikmah and Islamic Jurisprudence

One of the spheres of al-Hikmah that facilitate Muslims affairs is in the area of jurisprudence. Jurisprudence in Islam is drawn from the Holy Qur'an and the Sunnah (Traditions) of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). The Holy Qur'an provides supreme guidance for Muslims. Some of the guidance is specific while others serve as guidelines. The Sunnah explains many of the Qur'anic injunctions in detailed form. However, not all details of life are addressed in the Qur'an, nor the Sunnah, or the schools of thoughts and the books of law. This is where al-Hikmah, with its elastic nature, can be adapted to fulfill the needs for the unknown religious verdicts. This assumption can be accomplished by satisfying the two conditions of al-Hikmah (stated above) in two steps: knowing the matter's natural composition (qadarun) and by examining the results in the light of cause and effect (wisdom).

Here is how the concept works: Step 1, obtain full knowledge of the matter or the situation addressed to satisfy the physical and natural issues surrounding the condition of the matter (qadarun). Step 2, apply the cause and effect rule by considering the Islamic grand rule, "harm shall not be inflicted upon oneself or others," 'la dharara wa la dherar.' After the information collected for Step 1, the unknown religious verdict can be reached by realizing whether or not the matter is harmful to anyone or to others. The method can be tested, for example, in the use of cocaine and whether is it allowed in Islam or not, since cocaine was not known during the time of the Prophet. Now by nature toxicants, including cocaine, are chemicals or natural substances known to adversely affect the normal function of the brain. This information about cocaine satisfies Step 1 above. In the light of the grand rule of Step 2 that, "Harm shall not be inflicted on oneself or on others," it is given that cocaine impairs the normal function of the brain, which is the cause, and renders it injury and harm, which becomes the effect. As a result: a Muslim cannot consume cocaine, otherwise he or she violates the Islamic grand rule of Step 2 by harming ones own self.

In conclusion, any issue or matter encountered in life is subjected to this simple approach; the resulting action will be, always, within the boundaries of the Islamic Law or Shari'ah.

#### Al-Hikmah and Management

Making decisions based on al-Hikmah is fulfilling much of the inter-dimension of Islam. Al-Hikmah dictates that a true Muslim is a person who manages his or her work with reason and rationality. He or she must thoroughly, precisely and earnestly study and evaluate each circumstance or situation on a matter and then apply what is appropriate at the right time, in the right place and in the right manner. Decisions based on this approach will not fail. Prophet Muhammad (p) is the Muslim's example and model. The following sections are cases showing his wise approaches and management of his affairs.

#### Wisdom (Al-Hikmah) In the Actions of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)

In analyzing Prophet Muhammad's management of his affairs, one readily finds that all of his actions were based on wise decisions and approaches. This fact is illustrated in his relations with his family, friends as well as foes and throughout his da'wah. This article is not designed to examine every action of the Prophet to prove its point but a review of a few of his examples that will give us a good grasp of the Prophet's exemplary approach. The author selected and grouped some of the Prophet's approaches in these categories: flexibility in approach, addressing people, selection of personnel and al-Hikmah practice in rituals.

#### Flexibility in Approach

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) teaches that rationality and flexibility are integral parts of Islam. He

demonstrated this belief in many ways. Consider for example the Prophet's story upon returning from al-Ta'iff back to Mecca during the 9th year of his prophethood.

After leaving Mecca to deliver his message in the city of al-Ta'iff, about 90 miles south of Mecca, Prophet Muhammad was turned down by the leaders of the city and had to return to Mecca, heartbroken. However, per Arabia's customs he could not re-enter Mecca without the protection of a respected tribal leader, otherwise his life would be in danger. The Prophet, therefore, sent his servant Zayd bin Harithah to seek tribal leaders for their protection. Al-Mu'ti Ibn 'Addi, a respected leader, but Idolater, accepted Muhammad's request for protection. In staying with tradition, al-Mu'ti Ibn 'Addi called on his strong sons to take the Prophet into Mecca and to circle al-Ka'bah seven times announcing to Quraysh their protection of Muhammad.

For the following three years and until the Prophet migrated to Medina, he was under the protection of al-Mu'ti Ibn 'Addi. During this period the Prophet's approach in reaching-out (da'wah) and in managing his affairs with Quraysh was different from his earlier approach. This time, he did not speak low of the idols as much; neither did he introduce himself to the people of Quraysh in the manner and frequency he used to. Instead, he concentrated his da'wah work on the people who visited Mecca, especially during the season of pilgrimage. The Prophet's newer course of action was very much driven by his recent visit to al-Ta'iff, which made him more vulnerable to Quraysh's attacks, and forced him to be under the protection of a distant Idolater.

This modified approach of the Prophet did not mean that he approved of the idols or that he was pleased with Quraysh, it simply meant that one must maintain flexibility and rationality. Also, God created more than one strict way to deal with a problem. Although the Prophet's new approach showed softness towards Quraysh, but in reality it served a far more significant and pressing issue, the Prophet's own safety, for which Islam's survival was dependent on. Moreover, the Prophet gave more attention to the people outside the city for da'wa. In doing this, Islam grew in Yathrib rapidly after the Prophet contacted some of its people.

The safety of the Prophet and the continuity of da'wa are far more important than acting on what might be considered a digression of matters and less pressing issues, which can be addressed at a later time. In fact, this was exactly what happened. Several years later, Quraysh, in its entirety, embraced Islam and the idols were destroyed as ten thousand Muslims peacefully opened the city of Mecca. In contrast to stiffness, flexibility in approach may indeed go well beyond its intended function.

#### Addressing People

On the issue of addressing people, there are literally hundreds of examples that illustrate how Prophet Muhammad (p) foresightedly conveyed the right information, managed affairs and used al-Hikmah faculties in governing the processes. Here are a few examples:

##### a- Muhammad's Journey and Quraysh- Genuine Issue What Matters

The first example took place after the return of the Prophet from his journey to Jerusalem, where he also ascended to the Heavens, known as "Isra' and Mi'raj." In Jerusalem he led the previous prophets of God in a prayer at the Aqsa Mosque, and then he ascended to the heavens. In the Heavens he was in the presence of God and there he received the obligation of the Muslim five daily prayers. Historians of the biography of the Prophet reported that after his miraculous journey to Jerusalem and ascension to the Heavens, the Prophet did not tell Quraysh the full story of his journey. Instead, he related to them only about the journey to Jerusalem. Only his companions were privy to the entire story of his journey.

The Prophet illustrated al-Hikmah's criterion of understanding the genuine issue of the matter and the near and far dimensions of its causes and effects. Quraysh were amused at hearing the Prophet's story of his journey to Jerusalem, even though he told them of several specifics of the route to Jerusalem, about Jerusalem itself and about their own caravan coming from Jerusalem and the exact timing of its arrival to Mecca. However, when they witnessed the caravan's arrival at the time the Prophet spoke of, they accused him of being a magician. Nevertheless, the Prophet's wise action in refraining from telling Quraysh the story of his ascension to heaven, at that time, eliminated unnecessary discourse with them, which would surely further hinder his purpose of advancing his mission.

Furthermore, his meeting with the prophets in heavens, the various news of his ascension to the Heavens and the obligation of the five daily prayers he received can be of no value to the Idolaters. The wisdom dictates that when particular information does not fit the time and place

nor serve the purpose, that information should not be addressed. This faculty of al-Hikmah in today's world is a science called Reliability or the study of how reliable an act or a design is.

#### b- Hudaybiyah Peace Treaty Negotiation

The second example took place prior to the negotiations that led to the Hudaybiyah peace treaty between the Muslims and Quraysh. For many years the Prophet had been seizing opportunities to introduce his message to people and for many years Quraysh had been working to spoil his chances and work. During the fifth year after his migration to Medina, the Prophet intended to visit Mecca to perform the Lesser Pilgrimage, Umrah, and to give the Muslims a chance to practice their faith and to show the Meccans Islam's high qualities.

The Muslims set out for their journey to Mecca, all dressed uniformly in white clothes and brought with them the sacrifices to be slaughtered at the Ka'bah. Quraysh, however, refused to allow them to enter the city. The Muslims camped at a place called Hudaybiyah on the outer skirts of Mecca and negotiated with Quraysh a peace treaty that called, among other things, for no Umrah that year and instead return the following year to perform it. During the initial course that led to this treaty, Quraysh sent five different messengers to the Prophet to convey their objection to his visit. In return, the Prophet conveyed to these messengers his clear intent for visiting the Ka'bah.

When the first three messengers did not change Quraysh's position in denying the Muslims' right to pilgrimage, the Prophet started modifying his approach and improving the mechanisms in conveying his intent. Prior to the arrival of each of the following messengers, the Prophet set up a reception stage to suite the character and personality of the messenger, so as to increase the effect in persuading Quraysh to let the Muslims complete their Umra.

Al-Hulath bin Alqamah was the next messenger. He was the Ahbash leader in Mecca. The Ahbash tribes had made an agreement with Quraysh to be their alliance, in return, Quraysh allowed them to be the attendees of the pilgrims.

When the Prophet learned that al-Hulath bin Alqamah was the messenger to be sent to him, he said: "He is from the people who praise God," and he asked his companions to graze their animals of sacrifice at a near distance from him. When al-Hulath observed the Muslims dressed in the pilgrim white clothes and the animals to be sacrificed grazing by them, he was not only convinced of the pure Muslims' intent for pilgrimage but felt that Quraysh breached the agreement between them by refusing pilgrim's entry into Mecca. He, therefore, returned to Quraysh without even meeting with the Prophet. He addressed Quraysh saying:

O people of Quraysh, by God our alliance with you was not based on preventing people from making pilgrimage. How could you prevent people from entering the House of God? By the One whom Hulath's soul in His hand you are to allow Muhammad to do what he has come for, or I will call upon all Ahbash to rebel against you and break our alliance." Quraysh replied: "Be patient, we will resolve this matter with Muhammad in a manner that would please all of us.

The improvements in the reception of al-Hulath seemed to work well. However, Quraysh was still dissatisfied and sent another messenger; this one was Urwah ibn Masoud al-Thaqafi, a leader of Thaqef in the city of al-Ta'iff. Urwah was treated by his people much like a king by his entourage. Urwah's reception stage took on a different face, and was attended by several of the Prophet's companions, including Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah, the cousin of Urwah. Some of the companions were acting as guards while others were setting around the Prophet as counselors.

During the course of negotiation, Urwah attempted to physically grasp and shake the Prophet's beard as a sign of intimidation. Upon this, Mugheerah intercepted his hand and said: "Stop your hand from reaching the face of the Prophet or you will have no hand." Then Urwah asked the Prophet who was this man talking to him in such manner? The Prophet replied: "He is your cousin, Mugheerah ibn Shu'bah." Urwah was astonished to learn that one of his own relatives was so unfaithful to him, but yet treats Muhammad with such respect. In a similar manner, other Muslims displayed their deep love, loyalty and respect to the Prophet. During the time for prayer, some of the Prophet's companions used the same water that he used for ablution on them as a sign of love and as blessing.

The Muslims changed Urwah's impression as a result of their staging as can be seen from his address to Quraysh:

Oh leaders of Quraysh: I visited Caesar in his castle and Hercules in his kingdom and Negus and his people, but, by God I have never seen a king among his people loved as much as Muhammad amongst his companions. By God they will not allow an atom of harm to reach him. I see that you reconsider your position with Muhammad.

Al-Hulath and Urwah were more instrumental in conveying the message of the Prophet to Quraysh than the previous messengers. The attitudes of Quraysh were changed towards the Muslims. These changes were the primers to the peaceful treaty of Hudaybiyah that took place in the following few days. The Prophet was successful—he spoke the language that his people understood and placed things where they belong. This was not all the valuable criteria the Prophet has shown. Listed below are others:

- Rationality and flexibility.
- Work on issues directly relevant to the problem.
- Consider fine details, specifics, not vague approaches.
- Creativity; invent, improve and fix the method of work.
- Efficiency; use available means effectively, even when they seem minute or insignificant.
- Prayers and supplications are not substitute for genuine actions and earned labor.

More information about the peace treaty of Hudaybiyah, please see our article, “[Early History of Islam, A Refreshing Look at the Sirah, The Agreement of Hudaybiyah](#).”

#### c- Personnel Selection and Management

The possibility of success in managing a particular task goes up if people for the task are properly chosen. The Prophet's criteria in selecting a person to manage a task, plan for a mission, or make a decision, was primarily based on taking the options that would make the possibility of task failure remote. The Prophet's instructions to Mu'adh ibn Jabal as he was leaving to Yemen for da'wah, was:

Be positive and full of courage; be not negative and full of discouragement; make things easy and simple, not complicated and difficult.

This golden rule is indeed in harmony with the basic nature of people, and this was the beginning of Mu'adh's road to success. As an example of the Prophet's selection of people, let us examine his selection of ambassadors to the leaders of the nations within and surrounding Arabia. A partial list of these ambassadors follows.

Abdullah al-Sahmi ambassador to Cyrus, King of Persia.

Duhiyah al-Kalbi ambassador to King Hercules of Byzantine Empire.

Amr al-Haddrami to King Negus of Abyssinia.

Ala' al-Hadhrami ambassador to Munther ibn Sawa the ruler of Bahrain.

Amr ibn al-'as ambassador to Jeefer al-Jandali King of Oman.

Hatib Ibn Abi Balta'ah ambassador to al-Mukawvis the leader of the Christian Copt of Egypt.

Close examination of the characters of these ambassadors reveals that these individuals were eloquent in speech and fit for diplomacy. These traits are essential criteria in our modern world. Furthermore, the selection of these individuals by the Prophet were not only based on the above two criteria but there were other factors which were as important to the success of their mission. Let us examine some of these factors that the Prophet considered.

Duhiyah al-Kalbi was the ambassador to King Hercules of Rome. He was a tall and handsome individual, who would have more appeal to Europeans. It was said that Angel Gabriel used to come to Prophet Muhammad in a human form that resembled Duhiyah al-Kalbi. Thus, the Prophet's choice of al-Kalbi appears to be also a choice of relevant physical appearance.

Historians noted that King Hercules received Duhiyah and the Prophet's letter well. He carried out a long conversation with Duhiyah and asked him many questions about the character and the description of the Prophet and his teachings. He then told Duhiyah:

“If what you said is true, this Prophet will own the place where I stand.” Later on, Hercules called the people close to him for a meeting to announce his acceptance of the call of the Prophet but during the meeting and when he realized that his people did not approve of his proposal, he told them that he was only testing them. See Habash, Muhammad, *Sirat Rasoulallah*, Page 230.

The next story is the Prophet's choices in selecting the ambassador to King Negus of Abyssinia. For this position, the Prophet selected Amr al-Haddrami, who was not a handsome person but rather an old friend of King Negus. Amr al-Haddrami was not a well known figure amongst the companions of the Prophet but his background and friendship with King Negus reveals the Prophet's wisdom in choosing him. History tells us that when King Negus' father died, Negus was young, his uncles took over the kingdom and the young Negus escaped the country into Arabia. In Arabia, he worked as a sheppard for the tribe of al-Haddrami at the wells of Badr. There, Amr al-Haddrami and Negus built their good friendship.

The deep effect of their friendship became apparent in the choice of words that Amr used when he met with King Negus. Amr's choice of words was his usage of the old name of the King, Asmahah as it was in the old days. Here is a run down of Amr's frank address to the king: "O Asmahah, I will talk, you are to listen; you are in kindness to us as if you were one from amongst us; our trust in you is the same as your trust in your own self; our strong conviction of you is because of your own good character..." See Habash, Muhammad, *Sirat Rasouliallah*, Page 233

If this example of the selection of ambassadors reveals anything, it reveals the level of the Prophet's thoughtful nature and the depth of study he had conducted on the candidates before he selected them. We must realize that the Prophet's success did not become real, just because he was merely a Prophet, but in addition to that he earned work to achieve success.

#### **Al-Hikmah Practice in Rituals**

As a sign of the magnitude of the importance of al-Hikmah, Allah made its effect to be an integral part of worship. This fact is realized in the formal Prayer (Salat) and in the rituals of Umra.

##### **a) Reading Silently in the Formal Prayer (Salat) is a Practice of al-Hikmah**

During the rise of Islam, Prophet Muhammad and his companions faced severe hardship and execution by the leaders of Quraysh. To minimize violence and Quraysh's hostility against Muslims, the Prophet made few changes to his approach in da'wah. He asked his companions not to openly proclaim their faith among Quraysh and during the course of the day he asked them to conduct their daytime prayers silently instead of loudly, so as to reduce violence and hostility with Quraysh. On the other hand, the evening and early morning prayers were kept as they were, loud. These prayers were mainly performed in privacy or at home where hostility was less and unlikely.

As a sign of the significance of this step in reducing hostility, this circumstantial act for silencing the daytime prayers has became a permanent part of Muslim's noon and afternoon prayers (salat). This simple but important action is solid proof of the usage of al-Hikmah for profiting Islam and da'wah. Each Muslim must have the vision of the ultimate goal of Islam, not be side tracked with digressive issues. He or she must utilize all possible means to serve their faith. Furthermore, silencing the daytime prayers proves Islam's policy in pursuing peace and preventing violence. (For more on this topic, please see the article, "Islam: Legacy of Peace".)

##### **b) Jogging in Umrah Ritual: Practice of al-Hikmah**

An essential part of the Umrah (Lesser Pilgrimage) rituals is the circling around the Ka'bah seven times at the beginning and end of Umrah. This circulation is known as Tawaf. While circling the Ka'abah, Muslims are required to dress in white cloths with their right shoulder exposed and to jog at a certain section of the round known on of the corners of the ka'bah, as al-Ruken al-Yamani. This dressing style and jogging came about as a result of practicing al-Hikmah by the Prophet.

Since the rise of Islam, especially after the migration of Muslims to Medina, Quraysh leaders worked hard to prevent their people from contacting the Muslims and embracing Islam. On the other hand, the Prophet was seizing every peaceful opportunity to introduce his faith to the people. During the sixth year of Hijra, as a result of Quraysh's refusal to allow the Muslims to enter Mecca to perform the Lesser Pilgrimage, the Prophet signed a treaty with Quraysh known as the treaty of Hudaybiyah.

This treaty insured the Muslims the ability to conduct the Lesser Pilgrimage in the following year. There, the Prophet and the Muslims would be able to fulfill their duties and indirectly introduce their faith to the people of Mecca during Umrah. When Umrah time approached in the following year, Quraysh leaders spread false propaganda in Mecca that the were plagued by the Yathrib Fever. They asked their people to avoid the Muslims and to leave Mecca for three days while the Muslims conduct their Umrah. Quraysh's plan of isolating their people from the Muslims however, was not very effective. Many people stayed in the city and watched the Muslims and their own relatives perform the rituals.

The Prophet along with 1400 Muslims was uniformly dressed in white clothes. Very much like athletes, the Prophet instructed his people to wear the white cloths around their upper left side while their upper right side and shoulder were exposed to rebuke Quraysh's propaganda that Muslims are weak and have the Yathrib Fever. Furthermore, before they started, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

God will give mercy to the one who will show them (Quraysh) strength.

The Muslims continued in a steady motion, collectively chanting a rhythmic song: "Here we are for Your service oh God, Who has no partners, here we are to praise You oh God." During the circulation and when the Muslims faced the crowd of Quraysh watching them, the Prophet jogged instead of the usual walk, showing Quraysh Muslims' healthy condition and high spirit, even if it means a change in the form of the ritual.

The Muslims completed seven rounds in the direction of the sun's orbit. They were in tune with the motion of the cosmos—taking the right direction walking one part and jogging another.

What is special for us in this story is that the Prophet (PBUH) used the act of worship to promote Islam, even if the act of worship had to be modified in the process. This is a significant point that Muslims must realize, and be not rigid and side tracked. The foresight of the Prophet in this example is to always act in furthering the growth of Islam and that profiting Islam and da'wah is higher in the sight of God than the functional form of the prayer. This Prophetic vision should be the vision of every Muslim.

This is not a call for people to modify prayers. In fact, no Muslim should modify their prescribed worship acts, however there are many issues around Muslims lives where they can change their rank of priority and modify things if need be to profit da'awh and Islam.

As a result of the Prophet's actions during Umrah he attracted many of Quraysh's youth to Islam and paved the road for more of Quraysh and their leaders to accept Islam.

## Other Hikmah Social Sunan

The well-being of a community or a nation has its respective place in the Islamic tradition. Shaping and improving believers communities and organizations reflect improvement on all members of the community. The Prophetic Tradition outlined for this communal purpose carry greater weight over other individual or personal type traditions, such as the non-obligatory. For example, if one has a rightful duty to one's family or community, one must not dwell on one's personal, non-obligatory duties, while failing to meet the obligations due to the family or community. Islam teaches that one must not profit at the expense of harming others. Furthermore, failure of the group effects directly or indirectly all members of this group. Therefore, these Prophetic Traditions must be given their due place and priority with respect to the personal Traditions.

### 1- Preparing for One's Mission in Life (the Sunnah of Qualification)

The Sunnah of Qualification for appointment is a social but less common practiced sunnah, while its re-establishment in society is an essential beginning step to societal reform. Muslims in today's world are taught that washing their hands and face is sunnah but Muslims are not taught that the four to five years of the Prophet's frequent visits to the cave of Hiraa' for meditation and contemplation, prior to his receiving the first Revelation, were a period of preparation is also a sunnah. The appointment of Muhammad (PBUH) to his role of Prophecy to deliver the message of Islam was approaching. Muhammad (PBUH) had to be qualified and conditioned to receive the Words of Allah. He had to be able to withstand spiritually and mentally the coming of the Revelation. He must be extremely close to Allah in his soul, heart and mind. This closeness required much meditation and contemplation; hence the cave of Hiraa' and its school of contemplation.

Our substitution for the cave of Hiraa' is the establishment of regular training in thikruallah and the practice of contemplation. Similarly, in Surah al-Muzzammil (73) we see that Allah the Almighty, had enjoined upon the Prophet (PBUH) long night prayers. The purpose for that, Allah revealed, was the upcoming revelation of a heavy and weighty Message. Read below and learn from these Qur'anic verses:

Oh you in folded in garments! Stand (to prayer) by night, but not all night, half of it or a little less, or a little more; and recite the Qur'an in slow, measured rhythmic tones. Soon We shall send

down to you a weighty Message. Truly the rising by night (in prayers) is most potent for governing (the soul), and most suitable for (framing) the word (of prayer and praise).

It is very clear from these first revealed verses, that the Prophet (PBUH) was asked to do heavy training in night prayers to prepare him to face hard tasks such as receiving and delivering the message: "Soon We shall send down to you a weighty Message," verse 5 above. This sunnah of qualification and preparation of people for a particular task is forgotten by the majority of Muslims today. It is self-evident today across the Muslim world that people are appointed to positions for which they are not qualified. From as high as leaders of countries and communities down to drivers of automobiles, lack of qualification for jobs or appointments is evident. It is no wonder we are failing. Why is so much importance given to the physical sunnah like ablution, about which many spend time and energy arguing and fighting about its correct performance, while the sunnah of qualification, which leads to triumph and safety, is not practiced or even considered? Why is one sunnah picked and one dropped? Taking the sunnah of Qualification from a different perspective, we observe that a true Muslim must not hold a position for which he or she is not qualified. The Prophet (PBUH) warns against appointing people to where they should not be, saying:

**Whoever appoints a person over a group of people, while among that group there is another person who is more acceptable to Allah than the appointed one, indeed, has betrayed the trust of Allah and His Messenger and the believers.**

## 2- Building Common Ground

Another political and social but less known and practiced sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH) is the Sunnah of building common ground and changing enemies into friends. Prophet Muhammad's wisdom in dealing with his opponents is based on achieving fruitful results and correcting what is in the hearts of his opponents. He did this peacefully, not as a result of battles and bloodshed.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) married his worst enemy's daughter, the widowed Ummu Habeebah daughter of Abu Sufian, in order to demolish and diminish her father's animosity to Islam. What is important to know here is that Ummu Habeebah was in Ethiopia at the time of her husband's death, while Muhammad (PBUH) was in Medina, in the Arabian peninsula, about one thousand miles away. Ummu Habeebah and her husband, Abdullah ibn Jahsh, had earlier emigrated to Ethiopia to escape the torture of the Quraysh, the tribes that ruled Mecca at that time. After her husband's death, Muhammad (PBUH) sent a messenger to Ethiopia carrying his request to marry her. Why would a man marry a widow residing one thousand miles away from him? Were there not enough women in Arabia or in the city of Medina? The answer to this is better put from the mouth of his enemy, her father Abu Sufian, who said: "The healthy strong (male) camel is not to be prevented from mating with the she camel." This language is nowhere near his earlier position that, "Muhammad must be killed."

Muhammad's (PBUH) wisdom is that he employed the highly respected, social blood-tie resulting from marriage that is still in existence in the Arab culture today to improve his relationship with one of his worst enemies. Any time a person marries from a clan outside his own, he becomes honored and protected by the entire tribe of the bride. Later, when the Muslims entered Mecca without bloodshed, the Prophet announced: "Anyone who enters the house of Abu Sufian is safe." In taking this approach, the Prophet was in effect acknowledging the stature of the leaders of Mecca and that Muslims were not to abuse the social and family structure of people. As a result of this wise and compassionate work of the Prophet toward Abu Sufian, he embraced Islam.

In a different matter and before the coming of Islam, Ibn al-'Atheer, in his book Al-Kamil fi al-Tareekh, reported that several Arabian tribes, amongst them the tribe of Bani Hashim (the Prophet's family tribe), met and formed Hilf al-Fudhool, the Alliance of Virtue, to help the oppressed and remove injustice in and around Mecca. After Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) clearly spoke about Hilf al-Fudhool and said:

**I had witnessed (before Islam), along with my uncles, a meeting of the Alliance (of Fudhool) in the house of Abdullah bin Jud'an, whom I loved more than the most precious thing, and if I were to be called to join it in Islam, I would join.**

If things in common are not available to improve relations, the sunnah of Muhammad (PBUH) demonstrates that we should create social common bonds in order to build upon as yet non-existent relationships.

### 3- Accepting Humiliation for Avoiding Catastrophes

Beyond the Sunnah of building common grounds with other communities, there are other Sunan that are instrumental for preventing crises. One of those sunan is accepting humiliation so as to avoid war and collision. Perpetrators of evil often use superficial and false statements, accusations and intimidation to bring about their evil acts of war and destruction. In contrast, deep insight, with proper calculations and consideration, with focus on the long term victory, not just the present conflict is the sunnah of the Prophet (PBUH).

Prior to the peace treaty of Hudaybiyah between Muhammad (PBUH) and Quraysh, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) patiently took and swallowed all intimidation and harassment. Prior to and during the negotiation of the Hudaybiyah Treaty, the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions were intimidated and attacked. Muslim negotiators were imprisoned and harassed. This agreement would have ceased to exist if the Prophet (PBUH) had responded to the intimidation his enemies engineered for him. Instead, the Prophet (PBUH) practiced humility for the well-being and good of all. The Treaty of Hudaybiyah marks the highest achievement of victory for Muslims. In fact, historians report that the Surah, al-Fat-h, "The Opening," was revealed after this treaty, giving divine endorsement to this successful step.

Subsequent to the treaty, many Quraysh leaders embraced Islam, including Khalid ibn al-Walid, who later was Islam's most successful military leader, who succeeded in liberating Greater Syria from the Roman Empire. Amr ibn al-'As, who liberated and ruled Egypt was another one of Quraysh leaders who accepted Islam after this treaty.

If the closely related Sunnah of Absorbing Intimidation and the deep insight of the affairs of Muslims had been considered prior to the United States' attack on Iraq in 1990, a whole nation of Muslims and all the industry and technology in Iraq could have been saved from devastation. When will the Muslims learn? How could they not see such precious sunnah shining and emitting wisdom, like the sun in the middle of the day, emitting light? Wise political and social sunan of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and all other Prophets are set before our eyes in the Holy Qur'an in its history of nations.

### 4- The Sunnah of Prevention of War, Catastrophes, and Bloodshed

Prevention of violence, wars and bloodshed is engrained in the fabric of Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) sent Abdullah ibn Unais after Sufian al-Huthaly, who was building up to wage war against the Muslims in Medina. When the Prophet (PBUH) learned of his preparations, he sent Abdullah ibn Unais after him. When Ibn Unais found Sufian al-Huthaly, he pretended to be a man of the tribe of Khuza'ah joining him to attack the Prophet (PBUH). After dark, Abdullah ibn Unais killed Sufian al-Huthaly and returned to the Prophet (PBUH). As a result of this action, the process of building the army was stopped and no war was initiated. By this course, many human lives were saved and the fire that was going to turn into a major war was extinguished at its inception, before it flared out of control.

There is more wisdom in this action of the Prophet (PBUH) than simply avoiding a major war. This action destroyed the danger from its point of control and strength. When the snake's head is knocked off, the danger from the rest of its body vanishes. Many more political, military, and social sunan will surface when the life of the Prophet (PBUH) is studied and analyzed in-depth. These sunan must be practiced before the nation, ummah of Islam will see the light. Why is it that most of our emphasis is on the sunan of simple mechanics and details of bodily actions, instead of on the purpose intended by that mechanical function which is by far of more importance? See our article: "[Islam: Legacy of Peace](#)."

Merely listing the events and the mechanics of the life of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) does not do credit to his great achievements. Instead, the wisdom, social theories, and essence of his actions that shows the inter-dimensions of Islam must be considered and studied. When the events and actions of the Prophet (PBUH) are studied and analyzed for their moral, social, and political values, as well as their role in increasing prosperity, many advantages to the Muslim's life affairs will be at hand.

### 5- Reliability and Dependability

Unreliable or half-done work is not trait of a believer. The Prophet (PBUH) clearly outlined a prudent Tradition revealing the principles of reliability and dependability. After his migration to the city of Medina, the Prophet (PBUH) built the first Mosque. A portion of the ground where he built the Mosque was public and a portion was a cemetery and a third portion belonged to the family of Najjar, a family new to Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) asked the family what they wanted for their land, saying: "How much would you want for your garden?" They replied: "We accept no

money for it. We look for rewards from Allah for its price.” The Prophet (PBUH), however, insisted on paying money for the land despite the fact that he was in desperate need for help, since he and his companions have just arrived in Medina after leaving their wealth and belongings behind in Mecca.

When the Prophet could not get the Najjar family to price the land, he called upon his companion Abu Bakr to pay them 10 dinars for the land. This Prophetic approach in purchasing the land rather than taking it free, illustrates the depth of the Prophet’s reliable work.

Here are some points for consideration: Giving free land to the Prophet (PBUH) might be misinterpreted. For example, some members of the family or tribe with premature faith might be unhappy about the loss of the land. This can flurry into major setbacks that would hinder the march of Islam. Another possibility that would bring damage to Islam is that the hypocrites might take the news and say the Prophet is playing on the minds of his followers and stealing their land. Yet, a third possibility, perhaps a more viable one is that the people who give the land, could in the future, when the Islamic state or the city gets rich, claim ownership of a portion of the treasury since they have a share in the Mosque of the Prophet. This story should remind Muslims that actions with no study or with haphazardly study will not be reliable or dependable and will more than likely end up in failure.

#### 6- The Prophetic Tradition of Prioritization

All judgments must be weighed, with consideration given to all possibilities surrounding a matter. Setting out priorities is another Prophetic Tradition among the lost and forgotten Prophetic Traditions. An example of this is that on their way to the Battle of Uhud a group of hypocrites left the Prophet (PBUH) and his men and returned home.

This group initially wanted to stay in the City of Medina to meet the Quraish Army, which came to avenge their dead in the Battle of Badr a year earlier. The hypocritical disobedience and withdrawal from the Muslim army created a split among the Muslims. While this was taking place, the guidance of Allah came with a new revelation outlining an important social Prophetic Tradition: the Tradition of prioritization of affairs based on their relative importance. Read below and ponder the next Ayah:

**Why should you be divided into two parties about the hypocrites? Yet, Allah has upset them for their (evil deeds).**

This Ayah shows that there is a social sunnah that tells us to consider and prioritize our affairs in terms of importance. What was important for the believers then was victory in the battle in which they were about to engage. Furthermore, in critical times such as this, believers must be cohesive and united. Nothing must be allowed to hamper the march or lower the morale of the soldiers. The believers must not discuss the defection of the hypocrites; this matter can be discussed later. They must not be distracted but must concentrate on the battle ahead of them, which has a higher priority at this moment.

#### 7- The Sunnah of Quality Versus Quantity

In another Islamic social Prophetic Tradition, the consideration of quality as related to quantity, Allah says:

**But those who were convinced that they must meet Allah, said: “How often, by Allah’s will, has a small force vanquished a big one? Allah is with those who steadfastly persevere.**

This Ayah speaks about a small group of believers of the People of the Book who attained victory over an enemy of a greater number and force. After their victory, they realized that Allah granted them this victory for their strong faith in Him and for their perseverance. Thus a believer must seek to achieve quality, not quantity and bring about success through perseverance and thorough hard work, not through irresponsible and sloppy actions. The mass-production of improperly manufactured commodities will bring less consumer satisfaction than the production of fewer commodities of exceptional quality. Consider what Allah says in Surah al Anfal:

**If there are twenty amongst you, patient and persevering, they will vanquish two hundred, if a hundred, they will vanquish a thousand.**

It is clear from this Ayah that people are evaluated by virtue of quality not quantity and that believers must strive to improve their faith, education, economic, industrial, and technological

systems before they can measure high on the scale of evaluation.

#### 8- The Sunnah of Punctuality and Keeping Promises

Many programs and projects fail due to broken promises and lack of punctuality. Often enough programs established by young communities turn into disappointments. Inconsistent attendance and failure to keep promised appointments are prime elements in the decline of these programs or schools. Islam instituted guidelines to protect against this illness. We read in the Holy Qur'an a description of the believers:

**The Believers must eventually win out, those who humble themselves in their prayers, ... And those who are faithfully true to their trusts and to their covenants.**

Also, we note a warning from the Tradition of the Prophet (PBUH) about not keeping appointments. It is reported by Bukhari and Muslim that the prophet (PBUH) said:

**The signs of a hypocrite are three: if he speaks, he lies (in his speech); if he promises, he breaks his promise; and if he is entrusted (with something), he betrays (what he is entrusted with).**

Keeping appointments and being punctual is a Tradition that must be considered and continually practiced to ensure more successful schooling as well as other personal and community activities.

#### 9- The Prophetic Tradition of Consistency

Another Prophetic Tradition closely related to that of punctuality is the Tradition of Consistency. Persistence, continuity and steadiness are the foundation of many successful undertakings. Political and economic indicators are investors' guidelines and green lights for their ventures. Investment risks are high in any country with an unstable government. In the same way, one expects the yield or success of any institution or enterprise with an inconsistent system of operation to be limited and ineffective. This Prophetic Tradition of Consistency calls for continuity and persistence, even with small means, resources, and efforts. The Prophet (PBUH) illustrated this Tradition when he said:

**The actions (undertakings) most pleasing to Allah are those which are most continuous, even if they are small.**

**The blessings derived from consistency result in Almighty Allah's Divine Benediction and foster success.**

#### 10- The Sunnah of Ascertainment of News (Tabayun)

Islam calls for the ascertainment and verification of the truthfulness of any news, especially bad news, before any reaction to it. On the other hand, buhttan is to convey bad news to others without first verifying it. This golden rule of tabayun has many positive impacts on society. First, it discourages those who fabricate news (iffk) from repeating this evil act. Second, it reduces the chance that the originator misunderstood the news. Speaking directly to the originator will eliminate the untrue news. Furthermore, speaking directly to the originator may not only correct this misunderstanding but will also put the source on the spot, in case he or she is guilty of fabrication.

The next time around, this person will think twice before attempting to do such a thing. On the other hand, not facing the originator will encourage this person to do it again, since there was no penalty for doing it the first time. Because this rule is discounted by many Muslims, many rips and tears appear in the fabric of Muslim communities. Allah, in His divine wisdom, warned us of such consequences. He said: Oh you who believe, if a sinner comes to you with news (especially bad news), verify it, so that you don't harm others in ignorance and afterwards regret what you have done.

**Why do Muslims not value and practice this sunnah, which is so elemental for unity? This sunnah of ascertaining the veracity of news must be consciously practiced by every Muslim at all times.**

#### 11- The Sunnah of Reasonable and Gradual Approach

Gradual Approach in all matters, especially Da'wa and education is the essential Islamic groundwork. Do not expect to reach the top level floor without climbing on the steps first. The principles of Wisdom discussed earlier, strictly apply in introducing and propagating Islam to people. Allah commanded:

Invite (all) to the way of your Lord with hikmah (wisdom) and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.

Wisdom dictates that certain matters should be introduced at certain times and in an appropriate manner. In propagating Islam for example, the person being addressed must be addressed beautifully and selectively at his or her level of understanding. Subjects that may turn things negative or promote differences must not be addressed and subjects that are common and promote better relations should be invited and cherished.

A true believer should always be low-key, easy, sensitive, humble, considerate, with a heart alive in loving Allah and His Prophet (PBUH) and with a vision that extends far beyond his or her immediate circle. These are descriptions of a true believer that should be used when inviting people to Islam.

One can learn a great many lessons during the birth of Islam and in the way it was introduced to the people. For example, Islam prohibits alcohol but Almighty Allah did not initiate the teaching of Islam with the prohibition of alcohol. In fact, alcohol prohibition came about in three different stages, the last of which was several years after the migration of the Prophet (PBUH) to Medina. The immediate reason for the Revelation of Surah al Ma'idah, 5:90, which prohibits alcohol, was the marketing of alcohol by two Ansar tribes.

If gradual introduction of a matter is practiced by Allah, why are we so hasty to introduce Islam as the religion of prohibition of alcohol and expect people to quit drinking alcohol the minute we introduce Islam to them? This is just an example. In a similar manner Allah instituted modesty and fasting. Each came years after the first call to Islam.

Islam is a system of many aspects, each of which fits in at a certain time and place. Applying Islamic systems in an untimely or inappropriate manner produces an improper, out of balance Islam.

As long as we pay no attention to the wise policies of Allah, Muslims will fail in schooling and home education as well as in the process of outreach. Believers must not expect a child to run before he or she can walk; neither should they expect to get to the top of the ladder without first climbing the lowest steps.

## 12- The Sunnah of Prerequisites and Maturity

Associated with the Prophetic Tradition of reasonable and gradual approach is the tradition of Maturity. Maturity of faith and of strategy, including military and political, are a prerequisite to the next higher undertaking.

The history of the rise of Islam indicates that there was no forceful retaliation by the Prophet (PBUH) and his companions during the first twelve years of the Makkan period. This policy was vindicated despite all the attacks, tortures, and social and economic boycotts that the Muslims suffered. What could we draw from this? Could this policy imply that forceful encounters with a strong enemy at this early stage pose a measurable risk to the health of the new and few Muslims? Could this policy imply that maturity of an establishment is a prerequisite for it to yield what is expected of it? Undoubtedly, both of these conclusions are correct.

It appears that the twelve years in Makkah were a period of building faith and of training, the period of groundwork and discipline education (tarbiyah). This type of concentrated faith build up is a prerequisite to all obligations and to many establishments of Islam. Take a look at Surah al Muzzammil, which teaches intensive training as a must. After the first Revelation and for the first year from the birth of Islam, Allah, the Almighty commanded Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to stay up praying during the night. Upon this order the Prophet (PBUH) and some of his companions were constantly and intensively offering night prayers, until Allah, with another revelation, lifted this order and made it no longer mandatory. Saa'd ibn Hisham said:

I asked 'A'isha (the wife of the Prophet) to tell me about the Prophet's night prayers. She said, "Did you not read the Surah of al-Muzzammil?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Truly, Allah obliged the Messenger of Allah and his companions (to rise up, at night, in prayer), for twelve months, until their feet were swollen. After the twelve months, Allah relaxed this commandment in a revelation that is at the end of the Surah.

Now read and examine some of the Ayahs of this Surah to establish the purpose of the intensity of night prayer.

Oh you folded in garments! Stand (to prayer) by night, but not all night, half of it or a little less, or a little more; and recite the Qur'an in slow, measured, rhythmic tones. Soon We shall send down

to you a weighty Message. Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul), and most suitable for (framing) the word (of prayer and praise).

It is clear from the Ayahs above that a heavy and major task will be placed upon the shoulders of the Prophet (PBUH) (receiving the Revealed Message of Allah), and that the night prayer is a source of power from which people's faith can draw strength. Let us affirm the purpose of greater night prayer, which is in Ayah five: "Truly the rising by night is most potent for governing (the soul), and most suitable for (framing) the word (of prayer and praise)." Thus greater faith becomes a prerequisite in this case. At the end of the Surah, the Revelation that relaxed the intensity of night prayer beautifully says:

"Your Lord knows that you stand forth (in prayer) almost two-thirds of the night, or half the night, or a third of the night, as does a party of those with you. But Allah appoints night and day in due measure. He knows that you are unable to keep count thereof. So He has turned to you (in mercy). Read, therefore, of the Qur'an as much as may be easy for you. He knows that there may be (some) among you in ill-health; others traveling through the land, seeking Allah's bounty; and yet others fighting in Allah's cause. Read, therefore, as much of the Qur'an as may be easy (for you); and establish regular charity; and loan to Allah a beautiful loan. And whatever good you send forth for your souls (i.e. non-obligatory acts of worship such as thikru-Allah, prayers of the night, additional fasting, etc.), you shall find in Allah's presence, which is certainly better and greater in reward. And seek the Grace of Allah, for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.

One can simply conclude from studying the parts of this magnificent Surah pertinent to the topic of this section that greater faith, is a prerequisite to more severe situations and that one must treat a matter according to its own circumstances, even if the substance of the matter is the same, which in our case is the night prayer. In the beginning of the road to new ventures, it is a prerequisite to develop greater faith and extensive training and preparation. We called this in an earlier chapter the Prophetic Tradition of Preparation. But when conditions are better, as faith develops and there is less deficiencies, the situation can be relaxed.

In the above Ayahs, we see that prayer was continuous most of the night at first. This causes an increase of faith and greater attachment to Allah, which was needed to comfort the believers, especially in the hard times of the initial rise of Islam. Then we see that Allah, the Almighty relaxed His order, but this was a year later. Undoubtedly, during that year, there was such an increase of faith in the hearts of the early Muslims that they must have passed the threshold of danger.

Thus, condensed education and discipline in deep faith is a prerequisite for many tasks, however simple or complex, including political maturity and organization. This is why Muslims should not go to an undertaking when they are unprepared for and ill in faith and can expect no fruitful achievement. Did we not study why the call of Allah to repulse the unbelievers came only after the Prophet (PBUH) first established a strong hold in Medina, and by having alliance of the Christians and Jews around him?

The history of the rise of Islam indicates that the Prophet (PBUH) never engaged in any undertaking knowing that he was not a near-match or that he was less than prepared for it. Even for the battle of Badr which was not expected by the Muslims, the Prophet (PBUH) displayed the best strategies and discipline for that battle's special circumstance. Then, the three hundred Muslims were equipped only to intercept a caravan belonging to Quraysh. They were not equipped to face the one-thousand fighters with whom Quraysh insisted on starting a war with the Muslims. See our article "[Early History of Islam – A Refreshing Look at the Sirah](#)" for more explanation and references. Political strategies and military affairs are no less important than other Prophetic Traditions.

The life of the Prophet is our beautiful model and example to follow. This must hold true not only for the simple act of ablution, but also for well balanced, well conducted, and more complex political, and social undertakings. The author also invites all the readers to read on this website: the Sunnah of Itqan and the Sunnah of Careful Consideration (Tathabbut) articles. These articles are crucial to the Muslim's healthy and fruitful life.

### Actions not Wishes

Moral, social, administrative, and economic Sunan are what made the achievements and triumph of the early Muslims. Many of today's Muslims have been severely diverted and overly concerned with 7th century customs, outward Sunan, politics, tightening the permissibles, making the religion difficult, extreme and unappealing. Such issues, however right, do not form the main

**thrust of true Islam. The triumph of the Muslims lies in the daily application and practice of the realistic Sunnan discussed throughout this article. I pray that Muslims around the world do realize their indisputable divergence, change course and move on, enforced with the wisdom and light emanating from the above considered Sunnan.**