

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

In the Name of Allah, The Beneficent, The Merciful

5th Taraweeh Summary, Ramadan 1447 Hijri

Summary of Verses 4:148 – 5:120

Sura An-Nisa (Women) (Verses 4:148-4:176)

Allah disapproves of criticizing or insulting people unless it is done by someone who has been wronged. Even then, if the wronged person chooses to be magnanimous, that is best in the sight of Allah. After all, if Allah forgives us repeatedly for our mistakes, why can't we do the same? When we forgive others for wrongs done to us, we become more deserving of Allah's forgiveness. *"Allah does not like the public mention of evil except by one who has been wronged. And Allah Hears and Knows all things. Whether you do a good deed openly or secretly, or pardon others for their wrongs, surely Allah is ever-forgiving, all-powerful."* (4:148-149)

When the Jews claimed they had killed Prophet Isa (AS), the Quran refutes this claim: *"But they had neither killed him, nor crucified him, but it was made to seem that they did. Those who disagree about it are confused. They have no knowledge of it, going by conjecture since they had certainly not killed him. Allah raised him up to Him. Allah is exalted in power and wise."* (4:157)

The Quran refutes the arguments of Jews and Christians who deny the legitimacy of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) and Islam. Allah addresses the Prophet, confirming: *"We have sent you revelation as We sent to Nuh and to the prophets who came after him. We also sent revelation to Ibrahim, Ismail, Ishaq, Yaqub, the Tribes, and to Isa, Ayub, Yunus, Harun, Sulaiman and Daud, to whom We gave the Psalms."* (4:163) But not all prophets are

named in the Quran, clarified in the next verse: *"There are messengers whose stories We have told you and others We have not ..."* (4:164). The same truth is repeated in verse (16:36): *"We surely sent a messenger to every community ..."* and in verse (40:78): *"We already sent messengers before you (O Muhammad). We have told you the stories of some of them, while others We have not ..."*

(The number of messengers and prophets mentioned in the Quran is 25. They are Adam, Idris, Nuh, Hud, Saleh, Ibrahim, Lut, Ismail, Ishaq, Yaqub, Yusuf, Ayub, Shuaib, Musa, Harun, Daud, Sulaiman, Ilyas, Alyasa, Yunus, Zulkifli, Zakaria, Yahya, Isa and Muhammad. Since the Quran is silent on the exact number of prophets sent by Allah to guide humankind, it is better not to speculate. Both messengers (*rasul*) and prophets (*nabi*) warned their people to worship One God and shun false gods. The difference between a *rasul* and a *nabi* is that a messenger received a Book of Revelation along with inspiration, while a *nabi* received only inspiration but not a Book of Revelation. A messenger also had a *Ummah* or an organized community for which he instituted laws. By this definition, all messengers are prophets but not all prophets are messengers.)

The Quran addresses Christians and Jews to confirm the Truth: *"O People of the Book! Commit no excesses in your religion and say nothing but the truth about God. Isa, the son of Mary, is no more than a messenger of God, and His Word, which He bestowed on Mary, and a spirit proceeding from Him. So believe in God and His messengers and do not say God is three. Desist for your own good. Allah is but One God. He is far too glorified to have a son. To Him belong all things in the heavens and on earth. And enough is Allah as a Disposer of affairs."* (4:171)

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(Sura Al-Maida is a Madani Sura)

Sura Al-Maidah (The Table Spread of Food) (Verses 5:1-5:120)

The Sura contains general rules and commands for establishing an Islamic society, as well as specific rules on cleanliness and on identifying and consuming wholesome foods. It contains sixteen exhortations to believers, two to the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), and five to the People of the Book.

The first part of the first verse (5:1) contains one of the most comprehensive commands from Allah: "*O you who believe! Fulfill all obligations.*" Our obligations begin with Allah for the grace and mercy with which He has blessed us. Then there are the obligations we owe one another through promises or contracts, including social contracts such as marriages and business contracts with employees, employers, and partners. As members of the larger society, we also have civil obligations. We must fulfill all these interconnected obligations to gain the pleasure of Allah.

(Some Muslim scholars suggest that a portion of (5:3) of Sura Maidah contains the last chronological revelation to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w), marking the final stage of his Prophethood in this earthly life: "*This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My favor upon you, and have chosen Islam as your religion.*" Some scholars think that the verse was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w) during his farewell sermon on the plains of Arafat on the 9th of *Dhul-Hijjah* in the 10th Hijri, while others think it was revealed after the conclusion of the Treaty of Hudaibiyah in the 6th Hijri. Other scholars suggest that the last Quranic verse revealed chronologically to Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) was verse (2:281). We will be wise not to speculate and instead focus on conducting our lives based on the Message of

the Quran.)

Verse (5:6) contains instructions for wudu: *"O you who believe! When you prepare for prayer, wash your face and your hands and arms to the elbows. Rub your head with water and wash your feet to the ankles ..."*

(Wudu is not a ritual but a practice that helps the believer not only clean the external limbs but also orient the inner being toward the Infinite. A hadith holds that on the Day of Judgment, believers will be marked by the glow of wudu on their limbs.)

Establishing an Islamic society requires Muslims to fulfill all obligations to Allah, to believe in His Oneness and serve Him alone, to be worthy of emulation by others through words and deeds, and to promote justice: *"O you who believe! Stand out firmly for Allah as witnesses to fair dealing and let not the hatred of others make you swerve to wrong and depart from justice. Be just, that is next to piety, and be mindful of Allah, for Allah is well-acquainted with all that you do."* (5:8).

Fair dealing and justice are two hallmarks of believers. Fair dealing ranges from personal relationships to business contracts and everything in between. To stand for justice means to ignore positive biases toward loved ones or negative biases toward those we dislike. Justice honors the truth, whatever the consequences may be. Justice tempered by mercy is at an even higher level. From this verse, we can think of fair dealing and justice as two flowing rivers merging into the ocean of *Taqwa*.

A promise follows this command: *"To those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, Allah has promised forgiveness and a great reward."* (5:9)

This promise is repeated in a subsequent verse: *"... Allah guides all who seek*

His good pleasure to ways of peace and safety and leads them out of darkness by His will, unto the light that guides them to the Straight Path.”
(5:16)

Allah sent Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) to continue His Message after a break of about 600 years from the time Prophet Isa preached the Oneness of Allah: *“O people of the Book! Now has come unto you, making things clear to you, Our Messenger, after the break in our messengers, in case you say, ‘There came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no warner.’ But now has come unto you a bringer of glad tidings and a warner, and Allah has power over all things.”* (5:19) (Note that there was a gap of about 1300 years between Prophet Musa and Prophet Isa.)

Societies will fall apart if people kill each other without accountability. To underscore its seriousness, the Quran states: *“Whoever kills a human being, other than as a punishment for murder or for the spreading of corruption on earth, it shall be considered as though he has killed the whole of mankind. And whosoever saves a human life shall be deemed as if he has saved the whole of mankind.”* (5:32)

How do we attain prosperity? *“O you who believe! Do your duty to Allah, seek the means of approach to Him, and strive in His cause, that you may prosper.”* (5:35)

(The word *Taqwa* that appears in this verse – *Aamanut Taqul Laha* – indicates that ‘Fear of Allah’ is to be understood not in the ordinary sense of the word ‘fear,’ which makes us avoid the object of fear, but as a deep desire to avoid anything that displeases Allah. *Taqwa* is the basis of prosperity for believers.)

Allah has made diversity among people a sign of His Creativity: “... *To each among you We have prescribed a Law and an Open Way. If Allah had so willed, He would have made you a single people, but His plan is to test you in what He has given you, so strive as in a race to all virtues.*” (5:48)

(For perspective, read also verse (49:13): “*O mankind! We created you from a single pair of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other ...*”)

The universality of Allah’s revelation and its relevance to us are emphasized in this verse, as in verse (2:62): “*Those who believe in the Quran, those who follow the Jewish scriptures, and the Sabians and the Christians, any who believe in Allah and the Last Day, and work righteousness, on them shall be no fear nor shall they grieve.*” (5:69)

(This verse carries the profound implication that any form of religious chauvinism – mine is the ‘right’ religion and yours is not - cannot be justified in Islam.)

Muslims must chart a middle path, leaning neither toward materialism nor toward monasticism, neither toward hedonism nor toward asceticism, neither toward extremism nor toward laxity. We cannot forbid what is permissible and permit what is forbidden. The Quran says, “*O you who believe! Make not unlawful the good things that Allah has made lawful for you and commit no excess for Allah does not love those given to excess. Eat of the things which Allah has provided for you, lawful and good ...*” (5:87-88).

(Note that in the Quran, “O you people!” (*Ya Ayyuhan Nas*) appears 20 times while “O you who believe!” (*Ya Ayyuhal Lazina Amanu*) appears 90 times. The first is addressed to humankind in general and the second, to Muslims in

particular. The first is generally a characteristic of Makkan Suras, while the second is a characteristic of Madani Suras. And while verse (5:87) addresses all believers regarding the mistake of making forbidden what Allah has made lawful, note that verse (66:1) addresses Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w) directly regarding making the same mistake. The third category, "O people of the Book!" (*Ya Ahl al-Kitab*), appears 13 times in the Quran, mentioned in such verses as (2:62, 3:64, 3:113-114, 98:1). It is addressed to adherents of those religions who received a divine revelation from Allah in the form of a holy scripture. They are identified as Jews, Christians and, according to some interpretations, Sabians and Zoroastrians. In most cases, "People of the Book" refers to Jews and Christians with whom Islam shares many values, guidelines, and principles. "O Prophet!" (*Ya Ayyuhun Nabi*) occurs 13 times while "O Messenger!" (*Ya Ayyuhar Rasul*) occurs 3 times in the Quran.)

The injunction not to commit any excess carries a clear warning to believers against all forms of extremism in behavior and action. Those who claim to act in the name of Islam to inflict death and destruction on others are in direct violation of Allah's command. Even in lawful and wholesome pleasures, there is sin in excess. We need to use Allah's gifts with gratitude, but He disapproves of excess in anything. Islam extolls the Middle Path.

A believer keeps his word, shuns intoxicants and gambling, and does not fall prey to shaitan's whispering. *"O you who believe! Intoxicants and gambling ... are abominations, Shaitan's handiwork. Avoid such abominations so that you may prosper. Shaitan plans to excite enmity and hatred between you with intoxicants and gambling and hinder you from the remembrance of Allah and prayer. Will you not then abstain?"* (5:90-91).

(Note that these later verses are stronger than the earlier verse (2:219), in which believers are told that indulging in wine and gambling is a "great sin

with some profit ... but the sin is greater than the profit." It reflects Divine wisdom in weaning people off their sinful habits gradually, rather than abruptly, which flawed and weak human beings may not be able to comply. Allah knows best.)

Belief must be backed by action ("A'manu" followed by "Wa'a Milus Sa'lihatu" occurs 61 times in the Quran.) This injunction is so fundamental that verse (5:93) invokes it *three* times (the only verse to do that in the Quran): *"On those who believe and do deeds of righteousness, there is no blame for what they ate in the past, when they guard themselves against evil and believe and do deeds of righteousness. Then again, guard themselves against evil and believe. Then again, guard themselves against evil and do good. For Allah loves those who do good."*

This also implicitly points out the importance of using time wisely. How tragic it is to waste in frivolous pursuits the hours Allah gives us! Ramadan, in particular, is the month when we should reflect on how best we can use our limited time on earth to serve Allah and His creation.

Sometimes, the ascendance of evil in the world confounds us, but Allah assures us through His prophet that truth will win, and goodness will be restored. *"Say: 'Not equal are bad and good, even though the abundance of the bad may dazzle you. So be conscious of Allah, O you who understand, that you may prosper.'"* (5:100)

Sura Maidah ends with the affirmation of a fundamental tenet of Islam, that there is only One God to whom we must submit in humility. This is illustrated in a sublime dialogue in the Hereafter between Allah and His messengers, particularly Prophet Isa (AS).

"Consider the Day Allah will gather the messengers and say, 'What response did you receive?' They will reply, 'We have no knowledge compared to You. You alone are indeed the Knower of all unseen.' And on Judgment Day Allah will say, 'O Jesus, son of Mary! Remember My favors upon you and your mother, how I supported you with the holy spirit so you spoke to people in your infancy and adulthood. How I taught you writing, wisdom, the Torah, and the Gospel. How you fashioned a bird from clay, by My Permission, and breathed into it and it became a real bird, by My Permission. How you healed the blind and the lepers, by My Permission. How you brought the dead to life, by My Permission. How I prevented the Children of Israel from harming you when you came to them with clear proofs and the disbelievers among them said, 'This is nothing but pure magic.' And how I inspired the disciples, 'Believe in Me and My messenger!' They declared, 'We believe and bear witness that we fully submit to Allah.' And behold! Allah will say: 'O Isa the son of Maryam! Did you tell anyone, 'worship me and my mother for two gods besides Allah?' Isa will say: 'Glory to You! Never could I say what I had no right to say. Had I said such a thing, you would indeed have known about it. You know what is in my heart, though I know not what is in Yours. For You know in full what is hidden. Never did I say to them anything except what You commanded me to say, 'Worship Allah, my Lord, and your Lord. And I was a witness over them while I dwelt among them, and when You did take me up, You were the Watcher over them, and You are a witness to all things.'" (5:109-118)

In this remarkable scene from the Hereafter, we can draw lessons to practice here on Earth. One of these is to acknowledge with humility and gratitude that whatever success we achieve in this life, it is by Allah's Will alone, as all the miracles Prophet Isa (AS) performed in his earthly life were by Allah's Permission (*bi-Iznee*). Another is Prophet Isa's denial that he ever

asked his followers to worship him and his mother alongside his creator. Yet another is to connect deeply with the Quran so that our actions reflect Quranic teachings and commands. The verse that follows summarizes these profound lessons:

"Allah will say, 'This is a day on which the truthful will profit from their truth. Theirs are gardens beneath which rivers flow, their eternal home, Allah well-pleased with them, and they with Allah. That is the highest victory, the fulfillment of all desires.'" (5:119)

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