

**PART 2: THE NATURE OF REVELATION & THE
REVEALED ‘*DHIKR*’**

Kitāb at-Tawḥeed
(book of monotheism)

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11. The *Sunnah* as an independent source of law

There are many rulings that have been established solely by the Prophetic *Sunnah*. They are referred to in the glorious Qur'ān in other contexts in which they are stated as being part of Allah's law and that they are as binding as the rulings stipulated in the Qur'ān. The following are only a few examples of such rulings:

Establishment of the first Qibla

It is known by necessity and historical fact that the first *Qibla* which was faced towards was that at Jerusalem, *Bayt-ul-Maqdis*. Significantly though, there is not a single verse in the Qur'ān which details this original command. *Bayt-ul-Maqdis* was a *Qibla* for all Muslims established solely by virtue of the command rendered from the Prophet (peace be upon him). As it was obligatory to face it in prayer Allah mentioned it within the context of its abrogation, where he ordained facing *Masjid Al-Ḥaram* instead. The verse makes explicit that the first *Qibla* was being made by Allah. Allah tells us:

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَاكُمْ أُمَّةً وَسَطًا لِتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ عَلَيْكُمْ شَهِيدًا وَمَا جَعَلْنَا الْقِبْلَةَ الَّتِي كُنْتَ عَلَيْهَا إِلَّا لِنَعْلَمَ مَنْ يَتَّبِعِ الرَّسُولَ مِمَّنْ يَنْقَلِبُ عَلَى عَقْبَيْهِ وَإِنْ كَانَتْ لَكَبِيرَةً إِلَّا عَلَى الَّذِينَ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُضَيِّعَ إِيمَانَكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرَءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ

And thus We have made you a well-balanced just nation that you may be the bearers of witness to the people and (that) the Apostle may be a bearer of witness to you; and We did not make that

*which you would have to be the Qibla but that We might distinguish him who follows the Apostle from him who turns back upon his heels, and this was surely hard except for those whom Allah has guided aright; and Allah was not going to make your faith to be fruitless; most surely Allah is affectionate, merciful to the people.*¹

The Rebuke of Allah

Allah rebuked the believers for not paying heed to the Prophet (peace be upon him) when he was about to deliver the Friday sermon while standing. This strong reprimand indicated that the believer's actions were not permissible, for if it were allowed, they would not have been reprimanded. This means that they must have committed something prohibited. As Allah had not mentioned in the Qur'ān anything about the Friday sermon before that, rendering it obligatory or desirable was by virtue of Prophetic tradition not by virtue of a Qur'ānic text. It is true that the Qur'ān did mention it as an obligatory deed in the same context of reprimanding the believers, but the former definitely came prior to the revelation of the latter.

It is also known that the *Adthān* was used to call people for Friday prayers as well as other congregational prayers prior to the revelation of the related verses. Those verses refer to the *Adthān* as the established legal way of calling people to prayer. So whenever the call to Friday prayer is heard, it is obligatory on people to rally to perform it and leave any other business as expressed in the following verse:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِذَا نُودِيَ لِلصَّلَاةِ مِنْ يَوْمِ الْجُمُعَةِ فَاسْعَوْا إِلَىٰ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَدَرُوا الْبَيْعَ ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ، فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ، وَإِذَا رَأَوْا تِجَارَةً أَوْ لَهْوًا انفَضُّوا إِلَيْهَا وَتَرَكُوكَ قَائِمًا قُلْ مَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ مِنَ اللَّهْوِ وَمِنَ التِّجَارَةِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ

O you who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know. But when the prayer is ended then disperse about in the land and seek of Allah's grace and remember Allah much, that you may be

¹ Qur'ān 2: 143

*successful. And when they see merchandise or sport they break up for it and leave you standing. Say: What is with Allah is better than sport and merchandise and Allah is the best of sustainers.*²

Battle of Uḥud

After the crisis that befell the Muslim army at the battle of *Uḥud* and the withdrawal of the Qurayshi army, Abu Sufyān, the leader of Quraysh, regretted that he withdrew before completing vanquishing the army against him. So he pondered upon attacking them again to root them out. After this crisis the Prophet (peace be upon him) called out all Muslims and despite their injuries and losses, they managed to chase and fight the Qurayshi army covering a considerable distance. The news about their advancement reached Abu Sufyān, whose heart was immediately filled with terror that he preferred to flee back to Mecca. Consequently, the Muslims returned safe without fighting or suffering any new injuries. Allah commended those who responded to the Prophetic summons despite the injuries they suffered. Concerning this incident he said:

يَسْتَبْشِرُونَ بِنِعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَفَضْلٍ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُضِيعُ أَجْرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ، الَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِلَّهِ وَالرَّسُولِ مِن بَعْدِ مَا
أَصَابَهُمُ الْقَرْحُ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا مِنْهُمْ وَاتَّقُوا أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ

They rejoice on account of favour from Allah and (His) grace, and that Allah will not waste the reward of the believers. (As for) those who responded (at Uḥud) to the call of Allah and the Prophet after the wound had befallen them, those among them who do good (to others) and guard (against evil) shall have a great reward.³

Thus, some were deemed responsive to Allah and to the Messenger (peace be upon him), although summoning them was made by reason of the Prophet's decision without a single letter of Qur'ānic text being revealed to him.

² *Qur'ān* 62: 9/11

³ *Qur'ān* 3: 171/172

Distribution of Zakāt

When some of the hypocrites resented the way the Prophet (peace be upon him) distributed the *Zakāt* they slandered, backbit and censured the Prophet (peace be upon him). Whereupon, Allah disclosed what they did and informs us in the Book of the following:

وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَلْمِزُكَ فِي الصَّدَقَاتِ فَإِنْ أُعْطُوا مِنْهَا رَضُوا وَإِنْ لَمْ يُعْطُوا مِنْهَا إِذَا هُمْ يَسَخَطُونَ، وَلَوْ أَنَّهُمْ رَضُوا مَا آتَاهُمُ اللَّهُ وَرَسُولُهُ وَقَالُوا حَسْبُنَا اللَّهُ سَيُؤْتِينَا اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَرَسُولُهُ إِنَّا إِلَى اللَّهِ رَاغِبُونَ

And of them there are those who blame you with respect to the alms; so if they are given from it they are pleased and if they are not given from it, lo! They are full of rage. And if they were content with what Allah and His Apostle gave them and had said: Allah is sufficient for us; Allah will soon give us (more) out of His grace and His Apostle too; surely to Allah do we make our petition.⁴

The verse explicitly states that what the Prophet (peace be upon him) distributed to them, whether they received anything or not, was their legitimate right, just as it was the will of Allah the exalted and his gift to them. That is why he said: ‘*what Allah and his Messenger gave them*’. A distribution given by the Prophet is also a distribution of Allah, although we know by necessity that no Qur’ānic verse had been previously revealed in this regard. Therefore this gift was based on a revelation other than that of the Qur’ān.

The ‘Secret Talk’

Allah the exalted has said:

وَإِذْ أَسَرَّ النَّبِيُّ إِلَىٰ بَعْضِ أَرْوَاجِهِ حَدِيثًا فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَتْ بِهِ وَأَظْهَرَهُ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ عَرَفَ بَعْضُهُ وَأَعْرَضَ عَنْ بَعْضٍ فَلَمَّا نَبَّأَهَا بِهِ قَالَتْ مَنْ أَنْبَأَكَ هَذَا قَالَ نَبَّأَنِيَ الْعَلِيمُ الْخَبِيرُ

⁴ Qur’ān 9: 58/59

And when the prophet secretly communicated a piece of information to one of his wives-- but when she informed (others) of it, and Allah made him to know it, he made known part of it and avoided part; so when he informed her of it, she said: Who informed you of this? He said: The knowing, the aware, informed me.⁵

The Qur'ān though does not contain a single letter of this secret private talk, about which Allah informed his Prophet (peace be upon him). Therefore, this provides a conclusive proof that he (peace be upon him) had received a revelation from Allah other than that of the Qur'ān even in this private situation.

Early Prayers

Allah blessed and sanctified are his names tells us:

أَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي يَنْهَى ، عَبْدًا إِذَا صَلَّى ، أَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ كَانَ عَلَى الْهُدَى

Have you seen him who forbids a servant when he prays? Have you considered if he were on the right way?⁶

The above are some verses of the earliest revealed from Mecca. Therein it contains conclusive evidence that the Prophet (peace be upon him) was praying in a manner of which a disbelieving leader of the Quraysh disapproved of. By necessity this shows that prayer, the *Ṣalāt* was already legislated, whether as an obligatory or a recommend act. It was performed in a manner similar to that of the prayers we perform today, or rather in an abrogated manner prior to the revelation above of these verses, which were among the earliest verses revealed. None of the verses prior to these include any reference to prayers. Therefore, *Ṣalāt* the pillar of the *Deen* was initially legislated by virtue of the Prophetic command, i.e. a revelation other than that of an explicit verse in the Qur'ān. After that, Qur'ānic verses and *ḥadith* recurred

⁵ Qur'ān 66: 3

⁶ Qur'ān 96: 9/11

stressing that prayers are mandatory and highly glorified, describing its prerequisites and completing its rites.

Pre-Badr Skirmishes

Before the major battle of Badr, Allah commanded his Messenger (peace be upon him) to send out troops to encounter the enemies, though some believers strongly resented the idea and feared the consequences of fighting the powerful tribe of Quraysh, the leaders and 'bankers' of Arabia. It was considered the strongest polity in the Arabian Peninsula at that time. Muslims feared fighting them especially after hearing the news about the marching of their army. Then Allah granted them a promise of either seizing the caravans of the Quraysh or vanquishing their army. This came through a revelation other than the Qur'ān, which does not contain a single word of it. Nevertheless, Allah recorded it in the Qur'ān *after* the end of the battle, as Allah whose attributes are sanctified says:

كَمَا أَخْرَجَكَ رَبُّكَ مِنْ بَيْتِكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّ فَرِيقًا مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ لَكَارِهُونَ ، يُجَادِلُونَكَ فِي الْحَقِّ بَعْدَمَا تَبَيَّنَ كَأَنَّمَا يُسَافُونَ إِلَى الْمَوْتِ وَهُمْ يَنْظُرُونَ ، وَإِذْ يَعِدُكُمُ اللَّهُ إِحْدَى الطَّائِفَتَيْنِ أَنَّهَا لَكُمْ وَتَوَدُّونَ أَنَّ غَيْرَ ذَاتِ الشَّوْكَةِ تَكُونُ لَكُمْ وَيُرِيدُ اللَّهُ أَنْ يُحِقَّ الْحَقَّ بِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَيَقْطَعَ دَابِرَ الْكَافِرِينَ

Even as your Lord caused you to go forth from your house with the truth, though a party of the believers were surely averse; they disputed with you about the truth after it had become clear, (and they went forth) as if they were being driven to death while they saw (it).

And when Allah promised you one of the two parties that it shall be yours and you loved that the one not armed should be yours and Allah desired to manifest the truth of what was true by His words and to cut off the root of the unbelievers.⁷

The Command to Fight

⁷ Qur'ān 8: 5/7

The explicit command not to fight was authorised by the Prophet (peace be upon him) to his Companions while still in Mecca. After migration to Medina, this order was rescinded, with the authorisation being explicitly given to fight. As is chronicled in the following verse:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ قِيلَ لَهُمْ كُفُّوا أَيْدِيَكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ فَلَمَّا كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقِتَالُ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِنْهُمْ يَخْشَوْنَ
النَّاسَ كَخَشْيَةِ اللَّهِ أَوْ أَشَدَّ خَشْيَةً وَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لِمَ كَتَبْتَ عَلَيْنَا الْقِتَالَ لَوْلَا أَخَّرْتَنَا إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ قُلْ مَتَاعُ الدُّنْيَا قَلِيلٌ
وَالْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ لِّمَنِ اتَّقَىٰ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ فَتِيلًا

*Have you not seen those to whom it was said: withhold your hands, and keep up prayer and zakāt; but when fighting is prescribed for them, lo! a party of them fear men as they ought to have feared Allah, or (even) with a greater fear, and say: Our Lord! Why have you ordained fighting for us? Wherefore didst Thou not grant us a delay to a near end? Say: the provision of this world is short, and the hereafter is better for him who guards (against evil); and you shall not be wronged the husk of a date stone.*⁸

One can clearly discern by the necessity of reason and perception from the aforementioned Qur'ānic proofs that have been cited, without recourse to any text from the *Sunnah*, that they prove decisively that the Prophet (peace be upon him) is *ma'ṣoom* (infallible) in his conveyance of the divine message from Allah. All his sayings, acts and approvals are considered as being an infallible revelation from Allah. Therefore, it is all an infallible revelation emanating from Allah. Revelation should not therefore only be limited to that of the Qur'ān only; it also includes that which was also revealed to Muḥammad (peace be upon him), namely the Prophetic *Sunnah*, consisting of the total sum of his words, deeds and acknowledgements or approvals. Taken holistically, the *waḥy* which is the Qur'ān and the Prophetic *Sunnah* is authoritative and binding. Or expressed in another way, the Prophetic *Sunnah* is not merely a particular revelation from Allah; rather it is a formulated expression of an infallible Prophetic revelation that has come from Allah.

The Qur'ānic text itself is an explicit categorical revelation sent down from Allah upon Muḥammad (peace be upon him); whose recitation is considered as worship and its style

⁸ Qur'ān 4: 77

inimitable. Greater detail upon this will be outlined in a separate section. Suffice is to say that the Qur'ān is self-contained, nothing being subtracted or entering into it. Alongside it though is the noble Prophetic *Sunnah*, revelation other than the Qur'ān. All of this is affirmed categorically thus to dispute it would render an individual to exit the fold of Islam completely. That the revelation which descended upon Muḥammad (peace be upon him) is not only limited to text of the glorious Qur'ān as found between its pages but also includes the Prophetic *Sunnah* of Muḥammad (peace be upon him) consisting of the total sum of his words, deeds and acknowledgements or approvals.

Consequently in terms of what constitutes or is considered as being 'revelation', *al-wahy*, there is no essential difference between the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah*. Furthermore both are similarly binding and authoritative, as an example Allah the blessed and exalted says: '*There is no blame on you in seeking bounty from your Lord...*'⁹ relating to the authorisation of trading during the *Hajj* season and where he says: '*And you shall have half of what your wives leave if they have no child...*'¹⁰ both verses stipulating decisive rulings valid until the day of judgement. Similarly, the Prophet's (peace be upon him) statements of '*No bequest must be made to an heir*'¹¹ and '*One-third, yet even one third is too much*'¹² outlining the maximum limit to bequeath, are equally binding and authoritative until the day of judgement. Even if the first examples are borne of the Qur'ān, a revelation by wording which can be recited in prayer; the speech from the necessarily-existent every living eternal creator, while the latter examples are the reported Prophetic words from Muḥammad (peace be upon him) who is mortal and finite both are deemed as revelation being equally binding and authoritative.

Indeed without the slightest doubt the words of the Qur'ān are far above the speech of the creation, it is protection from every form of misguidance, a shield from every *fitna*, for it is the book of Allah the majestic:

لَا يَأْتِيهِ الْبَاطِلُ مِنْ بَيْنِ يَدَيْهِ وَلَا مِنْ خَلْفِهِ تَنْزِيلٌ مِّنْ حَكِيمٍ حَمِيدٍ

⁹ Excerpt from *Qur'ān* 2: 198

¹⁰ Excerpt from *Qur'ān* 4: 12

¹¹ Reported in the *Sunan* collections such as Abu Dāwud, Nasā'i, Ibn Mājah, Tirmidhi as well as others.

¹² A short excerpt from the *hadith* relating to bequeathing one-third for example in a will. It is widely reported and appears in the collections of Bukhāri, Muslim, Nasā'i and others.

Falsehood shall not come to it from before nor from behind it; a revelation from the wise, the praised one.¹³

Contained within it is news of what came before us, what will come to pass and the rulings between us all for the present. It contains matters of serious import which are not for jest, providing guidance and other innumerable bounties from Allah. We cling to the Qur'ān because it is rope of Allah, the *Dhikr* (reminder) and the *Hakeem* (wisdom); it has manifest light and lays out the steps on the straight path. All of creation has marvelled at it, as Allah details the remarks of the *Jinn* for us:

... إِنَّا سَمِعْنَا قُرْآنًا عَجَبًا، يَهْدِي إِلَى الرُّشْدِ فَآمَنَّا بِهِ وَلَنْ نُشْرِكَ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا

....Surely we have heard a wonderful Qur'ān! Guiding to the right way, so we believe in it, and we will not set up any partner with our Lord.¹⁴

Whoever speaks from it assuredly speaks the truth; by acting upon its rulings justice will prevail. It is a healing and an intercession; those who stick to it shall not fail, nor shall they be swayed or corrupted. Those who recite the Qur'ān are rewarded abundantly given that reward has been promised for each letter read as opposed to each word. It is true indeed that the ever-glorious Qur'ān is of the greatest worth, the most unique sanctity and is of a rank that the *Sunnah* does not reach, particularly given that it is the literal revealed speech of Allah, whose recitation is worship and whose style is inimitable, miraculous in nature. Yet it is an independent issue of whether or not the two types of revelation - the Qur'ān and the *Sunnah* - are qualitatively of the same rank in being authoritative and binding. These two issues are independent of whether or not the Qur'ān can be abrogated by the *Sunnah*. All these are different contrasting issues are rationally independent. They should not be confused, otherwise the consequences would be extremely serious, in fact would involve

¹³ *Qur'ān* 41: 42

¹⁴ *Qur'ān* 72: 1/2

being misled away from the straight path, which is disbelief – Allah, the exalted and glorious, forbid!

To argue that the Qur'ān is the *only* sent-down revelation from Allah is a grave misnomer. Just as it is to say that the *Sunnah* is not revelation at all, or to be more precise - that the Prophetic expression is not borne of an infallible revelation from Allah and that it is not considered as a binding authority. Such a view and other similar statements are outright disbelief (*kufr*). Holding such views as doctrinal beliefs would result in a believer exiting the fold of Islam completely, unless that is it was borne of complete ignorance, under compulsion or with any of the other impediments to the pronouncement of disbelief (*takfeer*).