

The Quran Speaks

BAHIS SEDQ

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*This book is dedicated to the hope and vision
of a world undistracted by religious divisions—
a truly wonderful world!*

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Author's Note

The Quran is perhaps the most influential book of all time. In addition to that, it also contains critical information about Muhammad, who in his own right is amongst the most dominant personalities in history. On either score, the Quran is a “must-read.”

The fact that it is in a language unfamiliar to most* could pose a problem, but there are plenty of translations in virtually all languages. The real challenge is to identify the more authentic amongst the translations. This was the first task to confront the author; which translations should be trusted? After much deliberation, I chose the following.

- **Syed Abul Ala Maududi:** *The Meaning of the Qur'an*¹

Maududi is the founder of the Jamaat-i-Islami[†] in British India but is influential in other parts of the globe as well—particularly the Arab world and amongst Muslims living in the West.² He stands out for providing a most readable translation of the Quran, assisted by a detailed commentary. Maududi's work thus was a fairly obvious choice.

* Even Arab Muslims find it hard to understand the Quranic Arabic, as it is quite different from the everyday spoken Arabic.

† The Islamic Party

- **Abdullah Yusuf Ali:** *The Meanings of the Holy Quran*³

Yusuf Ali also qualifies with ease, as his translation is possibly the most widely known in the English-speaking world. He is popular across the board, but particularly amongst moderate Muslims who see him as representing the liberal face of Islam.

We shall rely on Yusuf Ali's original translation, but it may be mentioned that there is also a recent revision that makes changes to the original work to bring it "within the current understanding and interpretation of the Qur'an."⁴ We shall occasionally refer to the latter as well.

- **Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall:** *The Koran*⁵

Pickthall, an Englishman who converted to Islam while in the service of the Nizam of Hyderabad, too has delivered a translation that is highly regarded. Additionally, he brings the perspective of a Westerner who converted to Islam. I therefore feel that he should also be included in the list.

- **Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din al-Hilali and Muhammad Muhsin Khan:** *Translation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur'an in the English Language*⁶

This translation is sponsored by the Saudi government and is distributed free. Because of such patronage, it has become quite popular in recent years. It is therefore not easy to ignore this translation, either—though it is not the most popular amongst liberal Muslims.

Apart from being well regarded, these translations carry the attribute that they cannot be considered anti-Islamic and may be consulted without fear on this score. The other advantage is that, together, they represent varying shades of the spectrum, from the conservative to the more liberal, and one therefore hopes to capture all colors.

I would have liked to engage all translations in every discussion, but recognizing that this would overly burden the dialogue—particularly because all four translations are in

agreement on most verses—I found that some compromise was necessary. Keeping this in perspective, the book adopts the following approach: It uses Maududi's translation throughout and often also refers to his commentary. Without exception, however, Yusuf Ali's translation is also carried in the endnotes or in the main discussion. On the more critical issues, particularly where there is any mentionable disagreement amongst the translators, all four translations are consulted. Where that is not the case, translations by Pickthall and Hilali-Khan of all verses quoted in the book can be found in the appendix. This should demonstrate that in a vast majority of cases, the conclusion in this text is not dependent on any particular translation.

*

To assist the reader, this book at times draws attention towards the more relevant aspects of a quoted text through appropriate emphasis. Unless specifically stated otherwise, all such emphasis is provided by me and is not part of the original text.

*

Lastly, I would like to inform the reader that this book is written under a penname meaning "seeker of the truth". In resorting to this technique, I do not mean to doubt that an overwhelming majority of Muslims would allow me the license to express the views noted in this book, which in any case are founded on the Quran.

MUHAMMAD: THE LAST PROPHET

O Prophet, We have made lawful to you your wives ... and those women who come into your possession out of the slave girls granted by Allah, and the daughters of your uncles and aunts, who migrated with you, and the believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet. ... This privilege is for you only, not for other believers ... so that there may be no hindrance to you; and Allah is All Forgiving, All Merciful. (33:50–51)¹

Muhammad, unquestionably, is amongst the most influential personalities in history. Many analysts would even place him at the very top.² To his followers, though, he must also be acknowledged as the finest ever.

It is pertinent, therefore, to see Muhammad through the eyes of his present-day followers. This is how they tend to view him:

- *Sadiq and Ameen*: Even before prophethood, Muhammad was widely regarded as *sadiq* and *ameen*—The Truthful and The Trustworthy.
- *Steadfast*: After being rewarded with prophethood, Muhammad tirelessly spread the word of Allah, unfazed by the unbearable hardship thrown his way.

- *Last Prophet*: Even Allah acknowledges Muhammad's exceptional qualities, by choosing him to be the last prophet—clearly a case of the best being reserved for last!
- *Selfless*: Muhammad selflessly served the cause of Islam for 23 years, never once using the platform for personal gains.
- *Leader par Excellence*: Muhammad commanded unparalleled respect amongst his companions and followers, exactly as one would have expected.
- *Gentle and Forgiving*: Despite facing hostility in the spread of Islam, Muhammad remained gentle and forgiving—more so than any other person in history.
- *Miracle Powers*: Some of Muhammad's followers (but not all) also believe that Muhammad had certain signs/miracles, which were meant to prove his prophethood.
- *Perfect*: Last but not least, it is believed that Muhammad was not just a great leader but was also perfect in his personal life, particularly in his dealings with the holy wives.

This is an impressive list, which explains the absolute hold that Muhammad commands over his followers today, but is it also true? We must consult the Quran to find out. Fortunately, there are enough traces in it for one to reconstruct Muhammad as he really was. The other advantage, of course, is that the authenticity of the Quran as a source in comparison to other accounts cannot be doubted.

Let us then take these attributes one by one and test them against disclosures made by the Quran.

SADIQ AND AMEEN

Muslims believe that Muhammad was regarded as 'The Truthful and The Trustworthy even before he declared his prophethood.*

* They believe that when Muhammad was to declare his prophethood, he first asked his tribe (the Quraysh) to certify that they considered him *sadiq* and *ameen* and only once they confirmed did he announce that Allah had chosen him to spread the message of Islam. His followers hence believe that

They ask, can a person with such immaculate reputation be expected to lie that he was the messenger of Allah?

This is based on what Muslim historians have recorded, but does the Quran also confirm that Muhammad was regarded as *sadiq* and *ameen*? As a matter of fact, it doesn't. This on its own may not have attracted attention, as the Quran was not expected to state facts known to all, but what makes the omission notable is that the Quran states other facts that also were well known—such as that Muhammad was illiterate³ and that the Quran is written in Arabic (which is repeated numerous times). When seen in this particular light, the omission to state that Muhammad was regarded as The Truthful and The Trustworthy becomes more meaningful.

But there is also perhaps a more positive indication in the Quran that Muhammad may not have been regarded as *sadiq* and *ameen*.

They say, “Why was not this Qur’an sent down to one of the great men from the two cities?”* Is it they who distribute the mercy of your Lord? (43:31–32)⁴

One suspects that the disbelievers may not have spoken in this manner if Muhammad had carried the aforesaid reputation. The Quran at least should have retorted by reminding the disbelievers that Muhammad was indeed the best amongst them, that they themselves regarded him as The Truthful and The Trustworthy—provided, of course, it was true. That the Quran made no such attempt leaves one in some doubt.

Knowing, as well, that despite preaching in Mecca for thirteen years, Muhammad (as disclosed in the Quran) managed only a few supporters, one wonders if this too may have been different had Muhammad carried the reputation now attributed to him. It may

Muhammad commanded this reputation even before he was chosen to be Allah's messenger.

* The “two cities” are understood by Muslim scholars to refer to Mecca and Ta'if (as noted in the translation by Hilali-Khan, for instance).

thus be that Muhammad only posthumously came to be regarded as *sadiq* and *ameen*.*

It is also important to make the point that even if Muhammad was truly regarded as *sadiq* and *ameen*, it does not follow that the Quran must therefore be the word of Allah. The following possibilities must also be considered.

- Muhammad may have viewed himself as a reformer who understood that any transformation he may present as his own would be rejected. Aware of the fact that lasting imprints were left by those who claimed to be prophets, he may have opted for a “noble lie.”
- Muhammad may have had genuine visions of Gabriel delivering to him the “word of Allah,” without there being any objective reality to it. Many people report similar experiences, though we treat them less charitably.
- Muhammad may have presented himself as the prophet of God for personal gain.

In principle, all these possibilities need to be weighed alongside the one that Muhammad was truly Allah’s messenger. We defer assessment as to which is the most plausible possibility until Chapter 11.

HARDSHIP IN THE WAY OF ISLAM

The proposition put forward by his followers is that Muhammad would not have endured intolerable pain to spread the message of Islam unless he was truly the messenger of Allah. One is not sure whether to agree, considering that the adversity a person is prepared to face is indicative at best only of how strongly he pursues his views. It is no guarantee that the views are correct.†

* This should explain why Abu Talib, Muhammad’s uncle and benefactor, never converted to Islam and preferred to die a pagan. Earlier to that, he may also have turned down Muhammad’s proposal for his daughter Fakhita. (Armstrong: *Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*, p. 79)

† Muhammad’s opponents also fought for their faith, and many of them even died in the process. Are we to hold that they too were divinely inspired?

It should also be informative to reconstruct the exact troubles Muhammad confronted. We shall do so by placing reliance on the Quran. Our focus will be on the thirteen (largely barren) years Muhammad spent preaching in Mecca before migrating to Medina, which is where he found success. Let us see what the Quran documents.

- ***Forbidden from praying at the Ka'ba***

Amongst the first troubles faced by Muhammad and documented by the Quran is that he was forbidden to pray at the Ka'ba: "Have you seen the one who forbids a servant when he prays?" (96:9–10).⁵

The reference here is to Abu Jahl, a leader of the Quraysh, who forbade the Prophet. Abu Jahl must have found it objectionable that, despite abandoning the religion of the Quraysh and speaking foul against their gods and goddesses, Muhammad was still praying in their revered compound—which at the time was home to 360 idols. But then, people across the globe like to keep their places of worship "pure." Non-Muslims today are not even allowed to enter the holy cities of Mecca and Medina.

One is thus not sure whether this is truly a hardship worth mentioning.

- ***Slander***

We learn next that Muhammad may also have been slandered occasionally.

Abu Lahab ... was doomed to utter failure. ... Certainly he shall be cast into a blazing Fire, and (along with him) his wife too, *the bearer of slander*. (111:1–4)⁶

Incidentally, the italicized words are an interpretation, and the actual words—"carrier of the wood"—may hold other meaning too.* Assuming the Quran meant to refer to slander, it does

* Maududi includes the following explanation:

The words in the original are *hammalat al-batab*, which literally mean:

appear odd that Abu Lahab and his wife should be doomed to utter failure and should be cast into a blazing fire just for that!

We learn that Abu Lahab was Muhammad's uncle and also father-in-law to two of his daughters. Muslim historians have recorded that when Muhammad started preaching Islam, Abu Lahab instructed his sons to divorce the wives, which they did.⁷ That may possibly be the true reason why Abu Lahab finds special mention in the Quran. The charge of slander alone appears insufficient.

- ***Ridicule***

The Quran also mentions that the disbelievers used to ridicule the believers:

The culprits used to laugh at the believers in the world. They would wink at one another when they passed by them. When they returned to their kinsfolk they returned jesting and when they saw them, they would say, "These are the people gone astray", although they had not been sent to be guardians over them. Today the believers are laughing at the disbelievers, as they recline on couches and gaze at them. Have not the

'carrier of the wood'. The commentators have given several meanings of it. Hadrat `Abdullah bin `Abbas, Ibn Zaid, Dahhak and Rabi` bin Anas say: She used to strew thorns at the Holy Prophet's door in the night; therefore, she has been described as carrier of the wood. Qatadah, Ikrimah Hasan Bari, Mujahid and Sufyan Thauri say: She used to carry evil tales and slander from one person to another in order to create hatred between them; therefore, she has been called the bearer of wood idiomatically. Sa`id bin Jubair says: The one who is loading himself with the burden of sin, is described idiomatically in Arabic as: Fulan-un Yahtatibu ala zahri bi (so and so is loading wood on his back); therefore, hummalat al-hatab means: 'The one who carries the burden of sin.' Another meaning also which the commentators have given is: she will do this in the Hereafter, i.e. she will bring and supply wood to the fire in which Abu Lahab would be burning. (Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 4 to *Surah Al-Lahab*, Volume 6, pp. 619-620)

However, Hilali-Khan also support Maududi's interpretation: "And his wife too, who carries wood (thorns of Sadan which she used to put on the way of the Prophet, or used to slander him)."

disbelievers been duly rewarded for that they used to do?
(83:29–36)⁸

These verses reassure the believers that they will have the last laugh when they are rewarded in the Hereafter for forbearing the ridicule. Note, however, that the Quraysh inflicted no more than gentle ridicule—*laughing, winking, and jesting!*

- ***Exile***

We move next to a more serious charge against the polytheists of Mecca—that they banished the Prophet from their city. Muhammad did migrate to Medina after preaching in Mecca for thirteen years, but the question is whether this was voluntary or forced.

The following verses are the first to draw our attention in this regard. They were revealed in Mecca.

And these people have persistently been trying to uproot you from this land and exile you from it, but if they do so, they will not be able to stay here much longer. (17:76)

These people (i.e. the disbelievers of Makkah) are devising some plans, and I, too, am devising a plan. So leave the disbelievers, O Prophet; leave them to themselves for a while. (86:15–17)⁹

These verses record that the Quraysh were “trying to uproot ... and exile” the believers and were “devising some plans,” but would the Quran have stated it thus had the plans been implemented? It is also worth noting the evidence on the basis of which the Quran concludes that the disbelievers were devising such plans: nothing more than eavesdropping by angels!

Have they decided to contrive a plan? Well, we too, shall contrive. Do they think that We do not hear their secret talk and their whisperings? *We hear everything and Our angels at their sides are recording it.* (43:79–80)¹⁰

Could it even be that the fears were largely imaginary? Certainly, had the Quraysh made any concrete efforts to displace

Muhammad, the Quran may not have relied on angels to prove the plans.*

Also instructive are certain verses that were revealed after the Prophet's migration to Medina. The Quran could now definitively document all the torture suffered in Mecca, as this was a matter of the past. Instead, it notes only the following:

It is worthwhile to remember the time when those who rejected the Truth, were *making plots* against you *to capture you or to slay you or to exile you*. They were plotting their plots and Allah was devising His schemes: and Allah's schemes are most effective of all. (8:30)¹¹

The Quran does not clarify whether the plot was to capture or slay or exile, but, more importantly, even in hindsight, the Quran accused the Quraysh only of “making plots,” not of implementing them. This proves that even if such plots were devised (which is speculative), they were not implemented. The Quran would otherwise have stated things differently.

The following verse revealed in Medina is equally telling. It also confirms that despite thirteen years of preaching in Mecca, Muhammad found only a few followers.

Recall to mind that time *when you were few in number* and were regarded as weak in the land *and were fearful lest the people should do away with you*; then Allah provided you with a place of refuge, strengthened you with His succor and bestowed pure and good provisions upon you so that you may be grateful. (8:26)¹²

The Quran reminds believers of the time when they were “few in number” in Mecca and “were fearful lest the people should do away with you.” While such anxiety is quite natural—many minorities live under similar fears—the question is: would this have been stated thus if the Quraysh actually had done away with the believers? Or even some of them? This was also the perfect occasion for the Quran to list the violence committed by the

* We will see in Chapter 8 that exactly the same kind of evidence was employed to banish the Jewish tribe Bani Nadir from Medina. The charge in that case was that they were conspiring to kill Muhammad.

Quraysh, but it mentions only that the believers “were fearful”—not that what they feared ever materialized!

Objectively speaking, the Quraysh may not perhaps have been so antagonistic towards the believers as is commonly assumed. The Quran corroborates this assessment by mentioning that the believers, even after migrating to Medina, remained on friendly terms with the disbelievers of Mecca:

O you who have believed, if you have come out (from your homes and emigrated) in order to fight in My way and to seek My goodwill, then do not make friends with My enemies and your enemies. *You show them friendship even though they have refused to believe in the Truth that has come to you, while they drive out the Messenger and you away only because you believe in Allah, your Lord. You send them friendly messages secretly, whereas I know full well whatever you do secretly and whatever you do openly.* Whoever from among you does so, has indeed gone astray from the right way. (60:1)¹³

He only forbids you to take for friends those who fought you in the matter of religion, and drove you out of your homes, and cooperated with others in your expulsion. Those who take them for friends are indeed the wrongdoers. (60:9)¹⁴

This, too, shows that the Quraysh may not have been so ruthless.¹⁵

- ***Murder attempt***

Muslim historians, however, insist that the Quraysh even attempted to murder Muhammad, specifically on the night he planned to leave for Medina, and that only Allah’s help saved the Prophet.*

* Maududi explains:

This plot was made at the time when the Quraysh realized that the Holy Prophet also was going to migrate to Al-Madinah. They felt that if he succeeded in emigrating from Makkah, he would be out of their reach and become formidable. Accordingly they held an urgent meeting of their chiefs in Dar-un-Nadvah (Council House) to discuss the matter and come to a final decision in regard to him. Some were

It is fair to note certain facts before concluding that the Quraysh did attempt to kill the Prophet. For instance, it is noteworthy that Muhammad lived amongst the Quraysh for thirteen years, during which he openly preached the message of Islam that was less than charitable to the religion practiced by the Quraysh, and yet there is absolutely no suggestion, whether in the Quran or in the accounts recorded by Muslim historians, that there was ever an attempt on his life prior to this last evening. The Quran does not even testify that any of his companions were ever killed or physically tortured.¹⁶ It seems unlikely, therefore, that the Quraysh would have attempted to kill Muhammad on the very night when, dejected by lack of success in Mecca, he himself planned to leave.

Equally significant is that Muhammad left his family, including his wives, daughters, and Ali, in Mecca. If the Quraysh were intent on killing or capturing Muhammad, they could have used the family to force him to return. They did nothing of the sort, indeed

of the opinion that he should be chained and imprisoned for life. But this plan was not approved for it was feared that his Companions would go on working for the mission and would do their best to release him, even at the risk of their own lives, as soon as they would gain some power. The others proposed that he should be exiled from Makkah for that would at least relieve them of the “disorder” he was creating among them. Then it would not matter for them where he lived and what he did. But the chiefs rejected this plan, saying, “This man possesses the art of a charming speech and of winning hearts. If he leaves this place, he may go to the other Arab clans and win them over to his side, and then after gaining power, he may attack Makkah.” At last Abu Jahl, putting forward his plan, said, “Let us select from each of our families one strong, stout and smart young man of high rank. They should all attack Muhammad at one and the same time and kill him. In this way, the responsibility for his blood will be divided equally among all the families of the Quraysh, and it will not be possible for Banu ‘Abd Manaf, the family of Muhammad, to fight with all of them and they will be forced to accept blood-money for him.” They approved this plan unanimously and nominated young men to kill him at the appointed time. Accordingly, the would-be murderers reached their places on the night fixed for the crime, but the Holy Prophet, throwing dust in their eyes, escaped safely from Makkah. Thus their plot ended in utter failure at the eleventh hour. (Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur’an*, note 25 to *Surah Al-Anfal*, Volume 2, pp. 139–140)

even allowing the family to join him in Medina a few months later—except for his daughter Zaynab, who chose to stay in Mecca until after the battle of Badr!¹⁷

Most decisively, however, it is the Quran itself that refutes the charge that the Quraysh attempted to murder Muhammad. Consider the following verses, which were revealed long after the Prophet's migration to Medina:

If you do not help your Prophet, (it does not matter): Allah did help him before *when the disbelievers forced him to go away from his home*, and he was but the second of the two, when the two were in the cave. (9:40)

Will you not fight such people who have been breaking their solemn pledge, *who conspired to banish the Messenger* and were the first to transgress against you? (9:13)¹⁸

The Quraysh are accused in these verses of breaking pledges, of conspiring to banish the Prophet, and of being the first to transgress against the believers—but not of conspiracy or attempting to kill the Prophet!¹⁹ It is thus fair to conclude that the charge regarding attempted murder is not well founded. The Quran at least does not corroborate it, and even gives indications of the contrary.

- ***Ibn Ishaq on hardship suffered by Muhammad***

The above assessment is based on Quranic disclosures, but even according to Ibn Ishaq (the earliest biographer of the Prophet), the worst that Muhammad ever faced at the hands of the polytheists of Mecca is as noted below:

Yahya b. Urwa ... on the authority of his father ... told me that the latter was asked what was the worst way in which the Quraysh treated the apostle. He replied: "I was with them one day when the notables had gathered in the *Hijr* and the apostle was mentioned. They said that they had never known anything like the trouble they had endured from this fellow; he had declared their mode of life foolish, insulted their forefathers, reviled their religion, divided the community, and cursed their gods. What they had borne was past all bearing, or words to

that effect.” While they were thus discussing him the apostle came towards them and kissed the black stone, then he passed them as he walked round the temple. As he passed they said some injurious things about him. This I could see from his expression. He went on and as he passed them the second time they attacked him similarly. This I could see from his expression. Then he passed the third time, and they did the same. He stopped and said, “Will you listen to me O’ Quraysh? By Him who holds my life in His hand I bring you slaughter.” This word so struck the people that not one of them but stood still or silent. ... on the morrow they assembled in the *Hijr* again, I being there too ... while they were talking thus the apostle appeared, and they leaped upon him as one man and encircled him, saying “Are you the one who said so-and-so against our gods and our religion?” The apostle said, “Yes, I am the one who said that.” And I saw one of them seize his robe. Then Abu Bakr interposed himself weeping and saying, “Would you kill a man for saying Allah is my Lord?” Then they left him. *That is the worst that I ever saw the Quraysh do to him.*²⁰

*

To sum up, it is apparent that, apart from Muhammad’s being forbidden to pray at the Ka’ba, receiving occasional ridicule, and possible banishment from Mecca, the Quran does not document any significant hardship imposed on Muhammad or his followers. Even regarding banishment, the more plausible possibility is that Muhammad chose voluntarily to leave Mecca, perhaps under the impression that the Quraysh were conspiring to banish him, but largely because he had not succeeded in developing a sizeable following despite thirteen years of preaching. He may have reckoned it was time to move on.

The Quraysh may not have been entirely friendly, of course. The Prophet, after all, was preaching against their religion, and it would be natural for them to practice some kind of social isolation, which is probably what the Quran is referring to when it says that the believers were forced to leave their homes. But on relative scale, considering what the world has seen through the

ages and even in recent times, this kind of persecution is hardly worth listing.

It is difficult, therefore, to concede that Muhammad endured unbearable hardship of the kind that only a true prophet could.* Ironically, the above discussion may even show that the Quraysh were a rather tolerant lot. Muhammad's own approach towards other religions will be discussed in Chapters 7 and 8.

THE LAST PROPHET

Muslims firmly believe that Muhammad is not only a prophet but the very last prophet.²¹ This belief exalts his stature above all other prophets—the inference is that Allah must surely have reserved the absolute best for last! The following verse is quoted as decisive of the issue:

(O people) Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the Prophets and Allah is the knower of everything. (33:40)²²

Interestingly, when one consults the full context of the above verse, one finds that this critical declaration, that Muhammad is “the last of the Prophets,” emerges in the midst of a discussion that is otherwise entirely about Muhammad's marriage to the divorced wife of his adopted son.† This is not the best setting one

* In fact, just in recent times, Nelson Mandela (who suffered twenty-six years of imprisonment) and Bobby Sands (who, for reasons good or bad, starved himself to death) endured far more to make their respective points. Neither declared himself to be divinely inspired.

† Verses 33:37–40 (also discussed later in the chapter in a different context):

O Prophet, remember the time when you were saying to the man, whom Allah as well as you had favored “Keep your wife and fear Allah.” You were at that time keeping hidden in your heart that which Allah intended to reveal; you were fearing the people, whereas Allah has a greater right that you should fear Him. So when Zaid had fulfilled his desire of her, We married (the divorced woman) to you so that there remains no hindrance for the believers in regard to the wives of their adopted sons when they have fulfilled their desire of them. And Allah's Command had to be carried out. There is no harm for the Prophet to do a thing which Allah has ordained for him. The same has been the way of Allah with regard to all the Prophets who

would recommend for such a vital announcement. Other verses do provide a more suitable setting—for instance, the one that mentions that Muhammad was a messenger who appeared after a long time,²³ or the one that points out that he appeared after many messengers before him.²⁴ These latter verses provided a more natural context to state that Muhammad was the last prophet and that there would be none after him. The opportunity, however, was not availed.

One also discovers that what is interpreted by Maududi (together with Hilali-Khan) as “the last of the Prophets” should more accurately be translated as “Seal of the Prophets” (which is how Yusuf Ali and Pickthall translate it).²⁵ The exact words used by the Quran are *khaataman-nabiyyiin*, and because the word *khaatam* is also used in other verses, such as the following, we can get an exact feel of what it means.

If Allah were to take away your hearing and your sight and set a seal upon your hearts ... (6:46)²⁶

The exact translation, therefore, is “Seal of the Prophets,” which does not have the same connotation (not necessarily, at least) as “the last Prophet.”

There is, at best, enough doubt for the matter to also be looked at in light of the following.

- ***Could the Quran have been clearer?***

It has to be said that the Quran could certainly have been clearer in stating that there shall be *no other messenger* after Muhammad. It is surprising that more trivial matters (such as how to perform ablution) have been expressed with greater precision.²⁷ The fact that the critical issue of Muhammad being the final messenger has

have gone before, and Allah’s Command is an absolute settled decree. (This is the way of Allah for those) who convey His messages, who fear Him alone and fear none but One God: Allah is enough to take account. *(O people) Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the Prophets* and Allah is the knower of everything.

been addressed so casually in comparison suggests that the Quran did not consciously declare Muhammad as the last prophet.

- ***Lack of emphasis***

The Quran is not shy of repetition. Whether regarding the Oneness of Allah or the instruction to establish *salat* and *zakat* or to fast during the holy month or to perform *hajj*; regarding the stories of Moses, Lot, or Abraham; or regarding the assertion that Allah has created everything in pairs, messages are repeated many times. In absolute contrast, however, when it comes to the declaration that Muhammad is the last prophet, not only is the language vague and the context unnatural, but the message is not repeated—not even once.

- ***Told in Arabic***

The Quran repeatedly announces that it is sent down in Arabic so that the Arabs should “understand it well.”* It even explains:

* For instance, *Surah Yusuf* verse 2, *Surah Ar-Raad* verse 37, and *Surah Ta-Ha* verse 113:

We have sent it down as Quran in Arabic so that you (Arabs) may understand it well. (12:2)

It is with this instruction that We have sent this Command in Arabic to you. (13:37)

And, O Muhammad, thus have We sent this down as an Arabic Quran and have given therein warnings in various ways, perhaps these people may be saved from the perverseness or that this may help arouse understanding in them. (20:113)

Yusuf Ali’s translations follow:

We have sent it down as an Arabic Qur’an, in order that ye may learn wisdom. (12:2)

Thus have We revealed it to be a judgment of authority in Arabic. (13:37)

Thus have We sent this down—an arabic Qur’an—and explained therein in detail some of the warnings, in order that they may fear Allah, or that it may cause their remembrance (of Him). (20:113)

The same point is then made in *Surah Ash-Shuaraa* verses 193–195, *Surah Az-Zumar* verse 28, *Surah Ha-Mim As-Sajdah* verse 3, *Surah Ash-Shura* verse 7, and *Surah Ad-Dukhan* verse 58.

Had We sent this Qur'an in a foreign tongue, the people would have said, "Why have not its verses been well expounded? What! The scripture in a foreign language and the listeners are Arabs?" (41:44)²⁸

But with such naked focus on the Arabs, are we to conclude that the Quran truly meant to depict itself as Allah's last word for all of mankind?²⁹

- ***Indication of prophets to come***

The following verse, targeted at the Jews, also throws some informative light on the issue:

Give the good tidings of a painful chastisement to those *who reject Allah's revelations and slay His Prophets unjustly* and are deadly against those who rise up from among the people to enjoy right and justice. (3:21)³⁰

There are two ways to interpret this: *either* the Quran holds the Jews of Arabia blameworthy for the slaying of prophets that must have occurred centuries earlier (considering that the Quran itself mentions that no prophet had appeared to guide mankind for a long time before Muhammad)—which of course would be unreasonable, as the Jews who lived alongside Muhammad may have been guilty of rejecting Allah's revelations (i.e., the Quran) but not of slaying His prophets—*or* the verse is extending a warning to those who may in the future "slay His Prophets unjustly." In that case, could Muhammad be the last Prophet?

- ***Kalima***

Finally, reference may be made to the *kalima*, which is recited to mark a person's entry into the Islamic faith. This is how it reads:

None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, *and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.*³¹

There is no mention, however, of Muhammad as the last prophet.

What this shows is that Muhammad may not have presented himself as the last prophet, and that this credential may perhaps have been added to his attributes after his death.*

A SELFLESS MAN

Muslims hold Muhammad in high esteem for serving Islam with total selflessness. Even if true, it should not necessarily mean that he was the messenger of Allah and the Quran His word. However, we must also find out through the Quran whether Muhammad was really as selfless as believed by his followers.

- *Entitlement to spoils of war*

The battle of Badr, the first in the name of Islam, provides a useful starting point. This took place soon after the Prophet's migration to Medina. Accounts corroborated by the Quran³² tell us that the Prophet was planning to raid a trade caravan of the Quraysh returning from Syria that was led by Abu Sufyan. Because similar raids had taken place in the past, Abu Sufyan suspected the designs and sent for help.† Thus provoked, the

* There are accounts that after Muhammad's death, others made claims of their own prophethood but were swiftly put to the sword by Abu Bakr. It is possible that this is when Muhammad came to be regarded as the last prophet.

† Ibn Ishaq records the story as follows:

Then the apostle heard that Abu Sufyan was coming from Syria with a large caravan of Quraysh, containing their money and merchandise, accompanied by some thirty or forty men. ... When the apostle heard about Abu Sufyan coming from Syria, he summoned the Muslims and said, "This is the Quraysh caravan containing their property. Go out to attack it, perhaps God will give it as a prey." The people answered his summons, some eagerly, others reluctantly because they had not thought that the apostle would go to war. When he got near to the Hijaz, Abu Sufyan was seeking news, and questioning every rider in his anxiety, until he got news from some riders that Muhammad had called out his companions against him and his caravan. He took alarm at that and hired Damdam and sent him to Mecca, ordering him to call out Quraysh in defense of their

Quraysh decided it was time to take decisive action against the “caravan raiders.” According to Muslim historians, the Quraysh gathered an army of about 1,000 that was confronted by 300 or so believers (though the Quran says that the disbelievers were twice the number of believers, which shows that the disparity recorded by Muslim historians is exaggerated).³³ All accounts are, however, agreed that the believers were victorious in the battle.

The question thus arose regarding the entitlement of spoils. The Quran initially declared that these belonged to Allah and His Messenger.* This may not have satisfied the believers, though, who appear to have demanded a definite share as well. The Quran clarified in a succeeding verse of the same *Surah*:

And know that whatever spoils you have got, *the fifth of these is for Allah and His Messenger and for the relatives and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarers.* (8:41)³⁴

The revised formula now allocated four-fifths of the bounty to those who participated in the battle and one-fifth to the Prophet and “*the relatives and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarers.*”[†] This was definitely a more acceptable division for the believers and also provided them the incentive to participate in future expeditions, which may have numbered between thirty-eight and sixty, according to Muslim historians. Very few of these expeditions were defensive in nature.

More relevantly, the Prophet also secured a good enough share in the revised formula—even if not as healthy as the one the

property, and to tell them that Muhammad was lying in wait for it with his companions. (Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 289)

* *Surah Al-Anfal* verse 1:

They ask you concerning the bounties? Say, “The bounties belong to Allah and His Messenger. So fear Allah and set things aright among yourselves; obey Allah and His Messenger, if you are true believers.” (8:1)

Yusuf Ali’s translation:

They ask thee concerning (things taken as) spoils of war. Say: “(such) spoils are at the disposal of Allah and the Messenger. So fear Allah, and keep straight the relations between yourselves: Obey Allah and His Messenger, if ye do believe.”

† It is not entirely clear why the Prophet’s relatives should have deserved this privilege, though.

Quran had initially declared. To compensate for this reduction, on the odd occasion when the enemy surrendered without putting up a fight, as in the case of Bani Nadir,* the Quran increased the share of the Prophet and “the kinsfolk and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarers” to 100%.³⁵

It is from such spoils that Muhammad thenceforth made his living. He did not indulge in any other trade or profession. Indeed, as more battles were fought and won—though the primary purpose of such battles must have been to spread Islam—the disposable income of the Prophet gradually increased. There is, however, a contrary indication in the following verse that some battles and raids may have had a different purpose. This is addressed to those who declined to accompany the Prophet on a certain occasion,† and the punishment prescribed for them was that they would not be allowed to accompany the Prophet when he set out to take spoils:

When you set out to take the spoils, those who were left behind, will surely say to you, “Allow us too to go with you.” They wish to change Allah's decree. Tell them plainly, “You shall not come with us. Allah has already said this before.” (48:15)³⁶

Does this suggest that there were battles and raids meant only for taking spoils, and not so much for the spread of Islam?

In any case, there is evidence that Muhammad’s financial position improved perceptibly with time. As recorded by Ibn Ishaq:

When the apostle distributed the captives of *B. al-Mustaliq*, Juwayriya fell to the lot of Thabit, or to a cousin of his, and she gave him a deed for her redemption. She was a most beautiful woman. She captivated every man who saw her. She came to the apostle to ask his help in the matter. ... He said,

* Bani Nadir and Bani Qainuqa were two of the three main Jewish tribes living in Medina. Their banishment is discussed in Chapter 8 (The Jews of Medina).

† When he went for *umrah* in 6 AH, resulting ultimately in the peace treaty at Hudaibya, a number of believers declined to accompany him, perhaps fearing that there would be a war with the Quraysh.

“Would you like something better than that? I will discharge your debt and marry you,” and she accepted.³⁷

The Prophet had accumulated enough resources to pay Juwayriya’s ransom and could also afford this addition to his household—which may explain why “the relatives and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarers,” who had a share together with the Prophet in one-fifth of the spoils, were not always happy with the division, as we shall see later.

- ***Restriction to four wives***

Muhammad soon accumulated enough savings from the banishment of Bani Qainuqa and Bani Nadir and from other raids to sustain an expanded household. The problem in taking additional wives was not financial anymore; it was that the Quran placed a limit of four wives, which Muhammad had reached. The following verses were revealed at this stage to remove the bar from the Prophet:

O Prophet, We have made lawful to you those of your wives, whose dowers you have paid, *and those women who come into your possession out of the slave girls granted by Allah*, and the daughters of your paternal uncles and aunts and of your maternal uncles and aunts, who migrated with you, and the believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet, if the Prophet may desire to marry her. *This privilege is for you only, not for other believers. We know what restrictions We have imposed on other believers concerning their wives and slave girls. (You have been made an exception) so that there may be no hindrance to you; and Allah is All Forgiving, All Merciful.* You are granted the option that you may keep aside any of your wives you please, and keep to yourselves any of them you please, and call back any of them you had set aside; there is no blame on you in this regard. Thus, it is expected that their eyes will be cooled and they will not grieve, and they will all remain well satisfied with whatever you give them. Allah knows whatever is in your hearts and Allah is All-Knowing, All Forbearing. *No other women are lawful to you after this, nor are you allowed to have other wives instead of them, even if their*

beauty may be very pleasing to you. You may however have slave girls.
 Allah is Watchful over everything. (33:50–52)³⁸

Although these verses (ostensibly) place limits on women lawful to the Prophet—which may have been to placate the holy wives who must have resented the continual erosion of their status as other spouses were added to the household—it is the exceptions to the rule that are more intriguing. Muhammad, in addition to keeping slave girls, could take as many wives as he liked from the following categories:

- “women who come into your possession out of the slave girls granted by Allah”
- maternal and paternal cousins “who migrated with you”
- “the believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet”

Muhammad availed himself of all three categories, too.* As recorded by Ibn Ishaq, he married thirteen times in all.³⁹ Resultantly, Muhammad’s wives must have lived in perpetual anticipation of new additions. Ibn Ishaq records an interesting

* As noted by Maududi:

Besides making the fifth wife lawful for the Prophet, Allah in this verse also granted him the permission to marry a few other kinds of women.

(1) The women who came into his possession from the slave girls granted by Allah. According to this the Holy Prophet selected for himself Hadrat Raihana from among the prisoners of war taken at the raid against Bani Quraizah, Hadrat Juwairiyah from among the prisoners of war taken at the raid against Bani al-Mustaliq, Hadrat Safiyyah out of the prisoners of war captured at Khaiber, and Hadrat Mariah the Copt, who was presented by Maqauqis of Egypt. Out of these he set three of them free and married them, but had conjugal relations with Mariah on the ground of her being his slave girl. In her case, there is no proof that the Holy Prophet set her free and married her.

(2) The ladies from among his first cousins, who ... had migrated in the way of Allah for the sake of Islam. The Holy Prophet was given the *chance* to marry any one of them he liked. Accordingly, in A.H. 7 he married Hadrat Umm Habibah. ...

(3) The believing woman who gives herself to the Prophet ... On account of this permission the Holy Prophet took Hadrat Maimunah as his wife in A.H. 7. (Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 88 to *Surah Al-Abzab*, Volume 4, p. 124)

account regarding the last illness of the Prophet. He notes this in the words of Aisha:

The apostle of Allah returned from the cemetery to find me suffering from a severe headache and I was saying, “O my head!” He said, “Nay, Aisha, O my head!” Then he said, “Would it distress you if you were to die before me so that I might wrap you in your shroud and pray over you and bury you?” I said, “Methinks I see you if you had done that returning to my house and spending a bridal night therein with one of your wives.” The apostle smiled.⁴⁰

Muhammad died shortly afterwards. Aisha, barely nineteen at the time and already married for thirteen years, would remain a widow for another fifty-six years,⁴¹ as “Mothers of the believers” (as the holy wives are designated) were not permitted to marry again.

- ***Marriage to Zaynab***

Amongst Muhammad’s thirteen wives was his cousin Zaynab, earlier married to his adopted son Zayd. According to Arab custom, the divorced wife of an adopted son fell in the prohibited category. The Quran, however, removed the bar just before Muhammad was to marry Zaynab:

Allah has not put two hearts in a persons [sic] body ... *nor has made your adopted sons your real sons.* These are the things which you utter from your mouths, but Allah says that which is based on reality and He alone guides to the Right Way. *Call your adopted sons by their father’s [sic] names, this is more just in the eyes of Allah.* (33:4–5)⁴²

Muhammad proceeded to marry Zaynab, but objections were raised. The Quran stepped in to categorically state that Muhammad had acted under Allah’s command. The believers were also assured that, unlike some other privileges, this one was not confined to the Prophet—they too could avail themselves of it:

O Prophet, remember the time when you were saying to the man, whom Allah as well as you had favored “Keep your wife and fear Allah.” You

were at that time keeping hidden in your heart that which Allah intended to reveal; you were fearing the people, whereas Allah has a greater right that you should fear Him. So when Zayd had fulfilled his desire of her, We married (the divorced woman) to you *so that there remains no hindrance for the believers in regard to the wives of their adopted sons when they have fulfilled their desire of them. And Allah's Command had to be carried out. There is no harm for the Prophet to do a thing which Allah has ordained for him.* The same has been the way of Allah with regard to all the Prophets who have gone before, and Allah's Command is an absolute settled decree. (This is the way of Allah for those) who convey His messages, who fear Him alone and fear none but One God: Allah is enough to take account. (O people) Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last of the Prophets and Allah is the knower of everything. (33:37–40)⁴³

These verses were clearly intended to address the objections against Muhammad's marriage to the divorced wife of his adopted son, but they raise a more important question: What was the Prophet hiding? Had he secretly desired Zaynab while she was still married to Zayd? The following incident is recorded by Muslim historians:

One afternoon Muhammad had gone to visit Zayd, who happened to be out. His wife Zaynab opened the door and because she was not expecting visitors was very lightly clad. Zaynab was now in her later thirties but was still said to be extremely beautiful and on this occasion Muhammad succumbed to her charms. He turned away hastily, muttering something that sounded like, "Praise be to God who changes men's hearts."⁴⁴

According to these accounts, Zayd, upon learning of the incident, offered to divorce Zaynab so the Prophet could marry her. Muhammad declined initially but then relented and married Zaynab.

The account seems corroborated by the Quran: ("O Prophet, remember the time when you were saying to the man, whom Allah as well as you had favored 'Keep your wife and fear Allah.' You were at that time keeping hidden in your heart that which

Allah intended to reveal.”) It is difficult to make sense of these words except in the context of the above incident. The occurrence must also have been widely known for the Quran to refer to it so openly.

Maududi, however, is unable to accept that the Prophet could desire a married woman:

Some people have misconstrued this sentence to mean this: The Holy Prophet desired to marry Hadrat Zainab and wanted that Zaid should divorce her. But when Zaid came to the Holy Prophet and said that he wanted to divorce his wife, the Holy Prophet stopped him only half-heartedly. At this Allah said: “You were keeping hidden in your heart that which Allah intended to reveal.” The real meaning however is contrary to this.⁴⁵

He offers the following explanation:

Allah had hinted to His Prophet [*in order to remove a social evil pertaining to adoption*] that when Zaid had divorced his wife, he would have to marry the divorced lady. But since the Holy Prophet knew what it meant to marry the divorced wife of the adopted son in the contemporary Arab society, and that too at a time when apart from a handful of the Muslims, the entire country had become jealous of him, he was hesitant to take any step in that direction. That is why when Hadrat Zaid expressed his intention to divorce his wife, the Holy Prophet said to him, “Fear Allah and do not divorce your wife.” What he meant by this was that Zaid should not divorce his wife so that he was saved from facing the trial, otherwise in case the divorce was pronounced he would have to comply with the command, and thus provoke a severe storm of criticism and vilification against himself. But when the Holy Prophet deliberately forbade Zaid to divorce his wife so that he himself might be saved from what he feared would cause him defamation, Allah found this below the high position that He wanted His Prophet to enjoy, whereas Allah intended to effect a great reform through this marriage of the Prophet. The words “You were fearing the people, whereas Allah has a greater right that you should fear Him,” clearly point to the same theme.⁴⁶

Maududi's explanation is problematic. To begin with, it is entirely speculative and contrary to accounts recorded by Muslim historians. Maududi then suggests that the words "You were at that time keeping hidden in your heart that which Allah intended to reveal; you were fearing the people, whereas Allah has a greater right that you should fear Him" disclose the Prophet's reluctance (not his desire) to marry Zaynab. If so, the Quran cannot be commended for clarity. Most significantly, however, Maududi's explanation suggests that Muhammad dared play games with Allah—that he instructed Zayd not to divorce Zaynab in order to evade a situation *decreed by Allah*, simply because that would have proven embarrassing!

One also wonders whether adoption was really such a critical "social evil" to require instant corrective action at the hands of the Prophet, when other issues far more demanding of intervention were left entirely to Muslim jurists to fight. The Quran does not, for instance, bar slavery, as we shall see in Chapter 5. It is intriguing as well that the above-quoted verses address the case only of adopted sons, not of adopted daughters. Could this be because Muhammad's situation did not demand a verdict regarding the latter? The end result at least is that there is no clear bar regarding adoption of girls, though the "social evil" should be equivalent.

- ***Entitlement to prisoners of war***

As noted above, Muhammad was allowed to marry "women who come into your possession out of the slave girls granted by Allah," and also to additionally "have slave girls" (33:50–52). There was also no restriction on numbers, as noted by Maududi:

This verse explains why one is permitted to have conjugal relations with one's slave girls besides the wedded wives, and there is no restriction on their number. ... Here, of course, the Holy Prophet is being addressed and told: "It is no more lawful for you to take other women in marriage, or divorce any of the present wives and take another in her stead; slave girls, however, are lawful." This shows that no restriction has been imposed in respect of the slave girls.⁴⁷

Muhammad availed himself of this license, too. Mention may particularly be made of Rayhana and Safiya, who were both admitted to the Prophet's household as slave girls, though Safiya would later marry Muhammad.

Rayhana belonged to Bani Qurayzah, the unfortunate Jewish tribe whose story is documented in the Quran and narrated in Chapter 8. After the Battle of Trench, all adult men of the tribe, including Rayhana's husband, were slaughtered and the women and children enslaved. While distributing the spoils, Muhammad chose for himself Rayhana, who remained his slave until the end.*

Safiya was the wife of Kinana, the chief of the Jewish tribe of Khaybar. Her account as recorded by Ibn Ishaq follows:

When the apostle had conquered al-Qamus the fort of B. Abul Huqayq, Safiya d. Huyayy was brought to him along with another woman. Bilal who was bringing them led them past the Jews who were slain; and when the woman who was with Safiya saw them she shrieked and slapped her face and poured dust on her head. When the apostle saw her he said, "Take this she-devil away from me." He gave orders that Safiya was to be put behind him and threw his mantle over her, so that the Muslims knew that he had chosen her for himself. I have heard that the apostle said to Bilal when he saw this Jewess behaving in that way, "Had you no

* Ibn Ishaq notes:

Then the apostle divided the property, wives and children of B. Qurayza among the Muslims ... and took out the fifth. ... Then the apostle sent Sa'd b. Zayd with some of the captive women of B. Qurayza to Najd and he sold them for horses and weapons.

The apostle had chosen one of their women for himself, Rayhana d. Amr, one of the women of B. Qurayza, and she remained with him until she died, in his power. The apostle had proposed to marry her and to put the veil on her, but she said: "Nay, leave me in your power, for that will be easier for me and for you." So he left her. She had shown repugnance towards Islam when she was captured and clung to Judaism. So the apostle put her aside and felt some displeasure. While he was with his companions he heard the sound of sandals behind him and said, "This is Tha'laba b. Sa'ya coming to give me the good news of Rayhana's acceptance of Islam" and he came up to announce the fact. This gave him pleasure. (Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 466)

compassion, Bilal, when you brought two women past their dead husbands?" ... When the apostle married Safiya in Khaybar or on the way, she having been beautified and combed, and got in a fit state for the apostle by Umm Sulaym d. Milhan, the apostle passed the night with her in a tent of his. Abu Ayyub, Khalid b. Zayd passed the night girt with his sword, guarding the apostle and going round the tent until in the morning the apostle saw him there and asked him what he meant by his action. He replied, "I was afraid for you with this woman for you have killed her father, her husband and her people, and till recently she was in unbelief, so I was afraid for you on her account."⁴⁸

When Safiya was initially admitted to the Prophet's household as a slave girl, her husband was still alive. It was only subsequently that he was captured and killed. The Quran, however, ensured that this did not create a legal hurdle:

And forbidden to you are the wedded wives of other people, *except those who have fallen in your hands (as prisoners of war)*. (4:24)⁴⁹

*

What is remarkable, perhaps, is that Muhammad is still credited with serving Islam with total selflessness.

IN THE EYES OF THE COMPANIONS

From the absolute hold Muhammad commands over his followers today, it is but natural to conclude that this must also have been the case with his companions—those who were privileged to live alongside him. It should therefore be interesting to see what the Quran has to reveal.

- ***Routine interactions***

In routine interactions, at least, one learns from verses revealed long after the Prophet migrated to Medina that the companions did not extend Muhammad any special respect. They treated him

like any other and would even address him in raised voices.⁵⁰ To similar effect are verses revealed at the time the believers were preparing for the battle of Trench⁵¹ and other verses⁵² in which the believers are coaxed to respect the Prophet. Muhammad thus seems not to have commanded respect on his own—the Quran had to instruct the believers.

- ***Secret consultations***

Matters get a bit more serious when the believers are accused of secret consultations against the Prophet:

Have you not seen those who were forbidden to hold secret consultations, yet they persist in what they were forbidden? They converse secretly together of sin and transgression and disobedience to the Messenger. And when they come to you, they greet you in a way in which Allah has not greeted you, and say to themselves, “Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?” Hell is enough for them: they will become its fuel. What an evil end! O you who have believed, when you talk secretly together, then do not talk of sin and transgression and disobedience to the Messenger but talk of virtue and piety, and fear the God before whom you shall all be mustered together. Conspiring secretly is the work of Satan. This is done in order to cause grief to the believers, whereas it cannot harm them at all unless it be by Allah’s leave. And let the believers put their trust in Allah alone. (58:8–10)⁵³

One may think that these verses refer to the hypocrites,* but the Quran does state: “O you who have believed, when you talk secretly together, then do not talk of sin and transgression and disobedience to the Messenger.” This suggests that some true believers must also have been suspected of indulging in the practice. What is also significant is that these verses were revealed after the Battle of Trench, a good eighteen years after the declaration of prophethood. It seems that Muhammad still did not command anywhere near the kind of reverence he receives today.

* The hypocrites are a convenient punching bag for Muslim scholars every time something goes wrong, whether at Uhud or during the Tabuk expedition or the slander incident, as we shall see below. It is always the hypocrites who are held responsible.

The other possibility is that Muhammad was simply paranoid and that the believers did not hold any secret consultation against him. This idea is not flattering, either, but it does at least help one understand the following command against backbiting:

Do not spy, nor should any one backbite the other. Is there any among you who would like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? (49:12)⁵⁴

This command is perhaps best understood as reflective of the Prophet's mistrust of the believers, as one would not normally place backbiting on par with eating a dead brother's flesh.

- **Warfare**

Did the believers show greater respect to Muhammad during times of war?

Our first inquiry in this regard relates to the Battle of Uhad.* It is reported that 1,000 men of Medina initially committed to join the Prophet in the battle but 300 of them withdrew at the last moment under Abdullah bin Ubbay. Only the more steadfast went to the battlefield.

Muslim historians record that once the Prophet reached Uhad, he assigned fifty archers to protect a strategic location to prevent the enemy attacking from the rear. He also instructed the archers to guard their position no matter how the battle turned.† These

* This was the “revenge match” staged by the Quraysh, who lost the first battle at Badr and challenged the believers to a sequel—though there are accounts that this too was in response to continuing raids on Meccan trade caravans. (Rogerson: *The Prophet Muhammad*, pp. 153–154)

† Ibn Ishaq records:

He [*the apostle*] put his camels and army towards Uhad and said, “Let none of you fight until we give the word.” ... There were 50 archers, and he said, “keep the cavalry away from us with your arrows and let them not come on us from the rear whether the battle goes in our favor or against us; and keep your place so that we cannot be got at from any direction.” The apostle then put on two coats of mail and delivered the standard to Mus’ab b. ‘Umayr. ... Then God sent his help to the Muslims and fulfilled His promise. They slew the enemy with the sword until they cut them off from their camp and there was an obvious rout. ... There was nothing at

archers, however, upon seeing that the believers had made some initial gains, disobeyed the command and left the spot. This allowed the enemy to attack from the rear, resulting in a massive defeat for the believers.

The Quran confirms that the believers suffered defeat and explains that this was “so that Allah may test from among you who were believers and choose the righteous witnesses of the Truth.”⁵⁵ This seems fine, except that the Quran had earlier promised the believers: “Allah will help you with (not three thousand but) five thousand angels, known by certain marks, *in case of a sudden attack from the enemy.*”⁵⁶ But when the sudden attack did take place, the angels were slow to react, resulting in a major defeat for the believers.

The Quran also then tells us how the Prophet’s companions behaved in the midst of the battle. Remember, the following account is regarding the more steadfast believers, as the hypocrites had already withdrawn before the battle.⁵⁷

Allah did fulfill His promise (of help) to you in the initial stage of the battle, it was you who were killing them by Allah’s leave *until you lost heart and disputed about your duty and disobeyed your leader, when Allah showed you what (the spoils) you coveted, for there were among you some who bankered after the life of this world, and others who cherished the Life-after-death.* Then Allah caused your retreat before the disbelievers in order to test you, but the fact is that even then Allah pardoned you, for Allah is very gracious to the believers. *Recall how you were fleeing in such a panic that you did not even look back at one another, and the Messenger in your rear was calling out to you.* Consequently, Allah inflicted upon you one sorrow after the other so that you may learn this lesson for the future that you should not grieve for what you have lost and for any misfortune that might befall you: Allah is fully aware of all that you are doing. (3:152–153)⁵⁸

These verses make the following important disclosures:

all to prevent anyone seizing them when the archers turned aside to the camp when the enemy had been cut off from it (T. making for the spoil). Thus they opened our rear to the cavalry and we were attacked from the behind. (Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 373, 379)

- *The believers “disobeyed” the Prophet.* This is not something one expects from their successors today, which goes to show that Muhammad did not perhaps command the same respect amongst his own companions that he now does.
- *The believers had “disobeyed” because of the spoils.** This raises the question: Did the believers not trust the Prophet with equitable distribution? This, at least, is what the Quran suggests: “It is not conceivable that a Prophet should ever commit breach of trust” (3:161).⁵⁹ Maududi, too, clarifies in respect of this verse:

This is the answer to the suspicion of the archers about the honesty of the Holy Prophet in regard to the division of the spoils. When they saw their companions plunder the enemy, the archers feared that the former would get the whole of the spoil and they would be deprived of it at the time of division; just because they had not taken part in the plunder. That is why they spontaneously deserted their posts.⁶⁰

- *The believers fled while “the Messenger in your rear was calling out to you.”* If there were any who stayed to defend the Prophet, the Quran does not mention them. Uthman, the third Caliph and twice the Prophet’s son-in-law, is clearly listed by Muslim historians amongst those who fled.⁶¹

One may have thought that there was no greater honor for a believer than to embrace martyrdom in the very presence of the last Prophet, and yet they fled, those who lived alongside Muhammad, leaving the Prophet stranded![†] The Quran tells us further that these deserters also subsequently doubted the whole strategy adopted by the Prophet.⁶² It is absolutely unimaginable that today’s Muslims would behave in similar fashion.

We move next to the last phase of the Prophet’s career—to the *Tabuk* expedition against the “people of the Book,” which is also mentioned in Chapter 7 (The Sword Verses). The Prophet needed

* As noted in the above verses: “when Allah showed you what (the spoils) you coveted, for there were among you some who hankered after the life of this world.”

† According to historical accounts, the Quraysh left the battlefield under the impression that Muhammad had been killed.

a sizeable contingent to accompany him for the expedition to be successful, but many believers declined to go. *Surah At-Taubah* reports this:

O you who believed! What was amiss with you that, when you were asked to march forth on the Way of Allah, you clung to the earth? What! Did you prefer the life of this world to the life of the Hereafter? (9:38)⁶³

A long tirade spread over ninety-odd verses criticizes those who did not accompany the Prophet. Much of it is addressed to the hypocrites, but the true believers are not spared, either. The above verse, for instance, is clearly addressed to the believers, and there are other verses, as well.⁶⁴

One can't help but note that today's misguided suicide bombers, who routinely kill themselves in the mere hope (admittedly false) that Muhammad will receive them as martyrs, at the gates of paradise, show far greater regard for the Prophet than did those who actually lived alongside him.

- ***The Friday sermon***

The battlefield has its own dynamics, not always conducive to bringing out the best in people. One must not, therefore, be too critical of the believers who fled at Uhud and of others who failed to accompany the Prophet to Tabuk. But what about the Friday sermons that Muhammad used to deliver? They surely presented a very different setting. One would expect the believers to be totally immersed in the experience, catching each and every word uttered by the last Prophet. This is not exactly the picture painted by the Quran:

O you who have believed, when the call is made to the Prayer on Friday, hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off your trading. This is better for you only if you knew. Then when the Prayer is over, disperse in the land and seek Allah's bounty, and remember Allah much; perhaps you may achieve success. *And when they saw some merchandise and sport they broke off to it and left you standing.* Say to them, "That which is with Allah

is far better than sport and business, and Allah is the best of all providers.” (62:9–11)⁶⁵

Maududi elaborates:

This is the incident because of which the commandment pertaining to the Friday congregational prayer has been enjoined in the previous verses. ... A trade caravan from Syria arrived in Madinah right at the time of the Friday Prayer and its people started playing their drums to announce their arrival. The Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah’s peace) at that time was delivering the Sermon. Hearing the drum the people in the congregation became impatient and rushed out towards Baqi’ where the caravan had halted, except for 12 men.⁶⁶

If one goes by the other three translations (which are somewhat as follows: “But when they see some bargain or some amusement, they disperse headlong to it and leave thee standing”), it seems that the Quran is not referring to an isolated incident but a more regular feature.*

- *As judge and decision maker*

Despite the above discussion, one may not have imagined that the believers, after presenting their disputes to Muhammad for adjudication, would be resentful of his verdict. One expects, rather, that they would *always* have bowed to his decisions with total submission. The Quran has the following to say, however:

Nay, O Muhammad, by your Lord, they can never become Believers until they accept you as a judge for the decision of disputes between them, and then surrender to your decision

* Maududi (see: *The Meaning of the Qur’an*, commentary to *Surah Al-Jumuah*) suggests that this incident must have taken place during the early period in Medina (when the believers were not so well trained), but if the remaining verses of this short *surah* (in which the Jews are severely criticized—this was never the case during the early period of Medina) are any indication, the incident took place much later. Most scholars, in fact, date the *surah*, or at least the rest of it, to the seventh year after migration.

with entire submission without feeling the least resentment in their hearts. (4:65)⁶⁷

The above verse deals with disputes referred to the Prophet for adjudication. The following regards decisions by Muhammad generally:

It does not behoove a believing man and a believing woman that when Allah and His Messenger have given their decision in a matter, they should exercise an option in that matter of theirs, and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger has indeed strayed into manifest error. (33:36)⁶⁸

If one accepts this account, this means that the believers used to exercise options of their own even once Muhammad had given a decision in the matter! The practice must also have been common enough for the Quran to address it.

- ***Distribution of sadaqat***

Sadaqat include *zakat*, spoils of war, and also, interestingly, the amount the believers were advised by the Quran to contribute (if they could) when seeking consultation with the Prophet: “O you who have believed, when you consult the Messenger in private, you should give something in charity before your consultation” (58:12).⁶⁹ Muhammad, as the head of the community, distributed the *sadaqat* amongst the deserving while keeping a share for himself as permitted by the Quran. Could this have raised the slightest suspicion or controversy? Absolutely not! (One would think.) The Quran, however, has the following to say:

O Prophet, there are some who find fault with you concerning the distribution of *sadaqat* (*zakat* collection): if something is given to them thereof, they are pleased and if they are not given anything thereof, they become *angry*. (9:58)⁷⁰

This seems a huge departure from the pagans of Mecca, who are said to have regarded Muhammad as *sadiq* and *ameen*. Could it be the special privileges extended to Muhammad by the Quran that ultimately took a toll?

- ***The slander incident***

Mention must in particular be made of the “slander incident.” This relates to the Prophet’s wife Aisha. Ibn Ishaq quotes Aisha in this behalf:

When the apostle intended to go on an expedition he cast lots between his wives which of them should accompany him. He did this on the occasion of the raid on B. al-Mustaliq and the lot fell on me, so the apostle took me out. ... When the apostle finished his [return] journey on this occasion he started back and halted when he was near Medina and passed a part of the night there. Then he gave permission to start and the men moved off. I went out for a certain purpose having a string of Zafar beads on my neck. When I had finished, it slipped from my neck without my knowledge, and when I returned to the camel I went feeling my neck for it but could not find it. Meanwhile the main body had already moved off. I went back to the place where I had been and looked for the necklace until I found it. The men who were saddling the camel for me came up to the place I had just left and having finished the saddling they took hold of the howdah thinking that I was in it as I normally was, picked it up and bound it on the camel, not doubting that I was in it. Then they took the camel by the head and took off with it. I returned to the place and there was not a soul there. The men had gone. So I wrapped myself in my smock and then lay down where I was knowing that if I were missed they would come back for me, and by Allah I had but just lain down when Safwan b. al-Muattal al-Sulami passed me; he had fallen behind the main body for some purpose and had not spent the night with the troops. He saw my form and came and stood over me. He used to see me before the veil was prescribed for us, so when he saw me he exclaimed in astonishment “The apostle’s wife” while I was wrapped in my garments. He asked me what had kept me behind but I did not speak to him. Then he brought up his camel and told me to ride while he kept behind. So I rode it and he took the camel’s head going forward quickly in search of the army, and by Allah we did not overtake them and I was not missed until the morning. The men had halted and when they were rested up came the man leading me and

the liars spread their reports and the army was much disturbed. But by Allah I knew nothing about it.

Then we came to Medina and immediately I became very ill and so heard nothing of the matter. The story had reached the apostle and my parents, yet they told me nothing of it though I missed the apostle's accustomed kindness to me. When I was ill he used to show compassion and kindness to me, but in this illness he did not and I missed his attentions. When he came in to see me when my mother was nursing me, all he said was, "How is she?" so that I was pained and asked him to let me be taken to my mother so that she could nurse me.

Aisha mentions that she learned of the slander while at her parents' house. She then continues her narration:

The apostle ... came in to see me. He called Ali and Usama b. Zayd and asked their advice. Usama spoke highly of me. ... As for Ali, he said: "Women are plentiful, and you can easily change one for another. Ask the slave girl, for she will tell you the truth." So the apostle called Burayra to ask her, and Ali got up and gave her a violent beating, saying, "Tell the apostle the truth,"* to which she replied, "I know only good of her. The only fault I have to find with Aisha is that when I am kneading dough and tell her to watch it she neglects it and falls asleep and sheep comes and eats it!" Then the apostle came in to me. My parents and a woman of the Ansar were with me and both of us were weeping. He sat down and after praising God he said, "Aisha you know what people say about you. Fear God and if you have done wrong as men say then repent towards God, for he accepts repentance from his slaves." As he said this my tears ceased and I could not feel them. I waited for my parents to answer the apostle but they said nothing. ... When I saw that my parents would not speak I asked them why, and they replied that they did not know what to answer, and by Allah I do not know a household which suffered as did the family of Abu Bakr in those days. When they remained silent my weeping broke out afresh and then I said: "Never will I repent towards God of what you

* This may explain the cause of the battle between Ali and Aisha a few years later, as referenced in Chapter 1.

mention. By Allah, I know that if I were to confess what men say of me, God knowing that I am innocent of it, I should admit what did not happen; and if I denied what they said you would not believe me.” ... so I said “I will say what the father of Joseph said: ‘My duty is to show becoming patience and God’s aid is to be asked against what you describe.’”

And, by God, the apostle had not moved from where he was sitting when there came over him from God what used to come over him and he was wrapped in his garment and a leather cushion was put under his hand. As for me, when I saw this I felt no fear or alarm, for I knew that I was innocent and that God would not treat me unjustly. As for my parents, as soon as the apostle recovered I thought that they would die from fear that confirmation would come from God of what men had said. Then the apostle recovered and sat up and there fell from him as it were drops of water on a winter day, and he began to wipe the sweat from his brow, saying, “Good news, Aisha! God has sent down (word) about your innocence.” I said, “Praise be to God,” and he went out to the men and addressed them and recited to them what God had sent down concerning that (I. “me”). Then he gave orders about Mistah b. Uthaha and Hassan b. Thabit and Hamna d. Jahsh who were the most explicit in their slander and they were flogged with the prescribed number of stripes.⁷¹

Muslim scholars attribute the slander to the hypocrites. Only grudgingly do they concede that some true believers were also involved:

*Besides the hypocrites, some true Muslims also had been involved in this campaign, and among them who took leading part in it, were Mistah, Hassan bin Thabit, the famous poet of Islam, and Hamnah, daughter of Jahsh and sister of Hadrat Zainab.*⁷²

As opposed to that, the Quran is more forthright:

Those who have invented the slander are some of your own people. You should not however regard this matter as evil, for it has good in it for you. Whoso took any part in this, he earned his share of the sin accordingly, and the one who had the greatest share of responsibility in it, shall have a terrible punishment. When

you heard of it, why didn't the believing men and the believing women have a good opinion of themselves, and why did they not say, "This is a manifest slander." Why did the slanderers not bring four witnesses (to prove their charge)? Now that they have not brought witnesses, they themselves are liars in the sight of Allah. Were it not for Allah's grace and mercy towards you in this world and in the Hereafter, a painful scourge would have visited you because of the things in which you were involved (just think how erroneous you were) when you passed this lie on from one tongue to the other and uttered with your mouths that of which you had no knowledge. You took it as a trifling matter whereas it was a great offense in the sight of Allah. Why did you not, as soon as you heard of it, say, "It is not proper for us to utter such a thing? Glory be to Allah! This is a great slander." Allah admonishes you that in future you should never repeat a thing like this, if you are true Believers. Allah makes His revelations clear to you, and He is All-Knowing, All-Wise. (24:11–18)⁷³

These verses are quite obviously addressed entirely to the believers. There is no mention of the hypocrites at all. It may be noted that the Quran does not mince words when it refers to the hypocrites; an entire *surah* in the Quran is thus dedicated to their conduct, but not so here. In this case, the Quran places the blame entirely and only on the believers: "Those who have invented the slander are some of your own people ... why didn't the believing men and the believing women have a good opinion of themselves."

*

All the above accounts are unanimous that Muhammad's stature has risen with time. Those who lived alongside him may not have noticed some of the qualities his followers today are so acutely aware of. They also did not extend him the same respect and reverence that today's Muslims do. The most surprising aspect is that even in respect of an exceedingly sensitive matter, that of Aisha's honor, the believers treated Muhammad with no special regard.

A MAN OF MERCY

Unlike Jesus, who regularly interacted with lepers, or so we are told,⁷⁴ Muhammad may not have extended his sense of kindness this far. Ibn Ishaq records that one of his wives (Asma) was “found to be suffering from leprosy and so returned to her people.”⁷⁵ The following verse may be referring to this incident (though open to alternative interpretation):

You [the Prophet] are granted the option that you may keep aside any of your wives you please ... and call back any of them you had set aside; there is no blame on you in this regard. (33:51)⁷⁶

But that aside, Muhammad is believed by his followers to be the most merciful man in history—who else would have announced a general amnesty upon the conquest of Mecca that those taking refuge in their homes or in the Ka’ba or with his sworn enemy Abu Sufyan would all be forgiven? His followers tend to believe that not a single person was resultantly executed, which stands at the heart of Muhammad’s image as a forgiving man.

It is true that Muhammad did not treat the Meccans like he treated the Jews (as we shall see in Chapter 8), but then, the Meccans were his kith and kin. They may also not have been so ruthless towards the believers as is commonly believed.* It is not surprising, therefore, that the Prophet showed greater sympathy for them than for the Jews. As for Abu Sufyan, it is noteworthy that even he was by now amongst Muhammad’s fathers-in-law. One must not therefore draw too much from the special privilege extended to him on the occasion.

The fact also is that not everyone was forgiven upon the conquest of Mecca. Maududi notes:

At the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet forgave all the people of Makkah except only a few men, and did not kill

* if the discussion in the earlier section “Hardship in the Way of Islam” has merit

more than three or four of even those who had been made an exception.⁷⁷

Incidentally, the exceptions included women too, as we shall see in Chapter 5. The killings, moreover, were exactly as commanded by the Quran:

The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and run about to spread mischief in the land is this: they should be put to death or crucified or their alternate hands and feet should be cut off, or they should be banished from the land. (5:33–34)⁷⁸

The killings were also not unprecedented, as noted by Maududi:

But since in this verse [*Surah Muhammad*, verse 4] it has neither been clearly forbidden to kill the prisoner the Holy Prophet understood this intention of Allah's Command, and also acted accordingly, that if there was a special reason for which the ruler of an Islamic government regarded it as necessary to kill a particular prisoner (or prisoners) he could do so. This is not the general law but an exception to it, which would be applied only when necessary. Thus, the Holy Prophet put to death only 'Uqbah bin AbiMu'ait and Nadr bin Al-Harith from among the 70 prisoners taken at Badr, and only the poet Abu Azzah from the prisoners taken at Uhud. *Since the Bani Qurayzah had surrendered on the condition that they would accept whatever decision Hadrat Sa'd bin Mu'adh would give in their regard, and he had decreed that all the males of the Qurayzah should be killed, the Holy Prophet had them executed.* From among the prisoners taken at Khaiber only Kinannah bin Abi al-Huwait was put to death because of his violating the agreement. At the conquest of Makkah, the Holy Prophet commanded in respect of only a few particular persons from among the inhabitants of Makkah that any one of them who was captured should be put to death. Apart from these exceptions, the Holy Prophet never killed prisoners of war, and the same also continued to be the practice of the righteous Caliphs.⁷⁹

The case of Bani Qurayzah noted in the above passage is special. Because it finds mention in the Quran, it cannot be ignored. We defer full discussion until Chapter 8, but recall that

Rayhana belonged to this tribe and was admitted to the Prophet's household the same evening as her family was slaughtered.

Also listed in the above passage is Kinana (Kinannah), the husband of Safiyya, who was taken into the Prophet's household (initially as a slave girl) when her husband was still alive. According to Ibn Ishaq, Kinana was ultimately captured and ordered by the Prophet to be tortured and killed.* His case does, though, stand at the very center of the following jurisprudential issue, arising from the verse that permits believers to have sexual intercourse with married women taken as prisoners of war. Based on the fact that Safiyya was admitted to the Prophet's household before Kinana could be captured and killed, Muslim scholars have concluded:

Those women who become prisoners of war, while their unbelieving husbands are left behind in the War Zone, are not unlawful because their marriage ties are broken by the fact that they have come from the War Zone into the Islamic Zone. It is lawful to marry such women, and it is also lawful for those, in whose possession they are, to have sexual relations with them. There is, however, a difference of opinion as to whether such a woman is lawful, if her husband is also taken a prisoner along with her. Imam Abu Hanifah and those of his way of thinking are of the opinion that the marriage tie of such a pair would remain intact but Imam Malik and Shafi'i, are of the opinion that it would also break.⁸⁰

* Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 515:

Kinana b. al-Rabi, who had the custody of the treasure of B. al-Nadir, was brought to the apostle who asked him about it. He denied that he knew where it was. A Jew came (T. was brought) to the apostle and said that he had seen Kinana going round a certain ruin every morning early. When the apostle said to Kinana, "Do you know that if we find you have it I shall kill you?" he said Yes. The apostle gave orders that the ruin was to be excavated and some of the treasure was found. When he asked him about the rest he refused to produce it, so the apostle gave orders to al-Zubayr b. al-Awwam, "Torture him until you extract what he has," so he kindled a fire with flint and steel on his chest until he was nearly dead. Then the apostle delivered him to Muhammad b. Maslama and he struck off his head.

Because Kinana was not captured “along with” Safiya, his case cannot be precedent for women in the latter category, and hence the disagreement amongst Muslim scholars on whether women whose husbands are also taken prisoners with them are permissible for sexual relations.

The Prophet did not have to wait the period of four months and ten days to marry Safiya (after her husband had been killed), as this waiting period is prescribed only for widows of the believers. Because Safiya did not fall in this category, there was nothing preventing her being instantly married to the Prophet, as she was.⁸¹

*

One must not be too harsh in judging the Prophet, though. Acceptance of the principle that noncombatants (particularly women and children) must be given special protection and that even prisoners of war are entitled to respect and dignity—which does not allow that they be subjected to sexual intercourse or torture—was centuries away. But, that said, it also seems inappropriate to consider Muhammad as the most forgiving or merciful man in history, as Rayhana and Safiya may have a different opinion.

MIRACLES

The Quran does try to tell us that Muhammad had no miracle powers:

These people ask, “Why has no Sign been sent down to this Prophet from his Lord?” Say, “Allah is able to send down a sign but most of these people do not understand the wisdom underlying it.” As regards Signs, just have a look at any of the beasts that move upon the earth and at any of the birds that fly in the air: they too are species like you. (6:37–38)

They declare with solemn oaths by Allah that if a Sign (i.e. a miracle) comes before them, they will believe in it (your Prophethood). O Muhammad, tell them, “Allah alone can

show Signs.” And what will make you (O Muhammad) realize that, even if the Signs come, they would not believe? (6:109)

As regards their saying, “Why has not a Sign been sent down to this Prophet from his Lord?” tell them “The unseen belongs wholly and solely to Allah. Well, wait (for it): I, too, shall wait with you.” (10:20)

These people who have rejected your Message, say, “Why has no Sign been sent down to this person from His Lord.” You are a warner only and every people has its guide. (13:7)

They say, “Why have Signs not been sent down upon this person from his Lord?” Say, “The Signs are with Allah: I am only a plain warner.” Is this (Sign) not enough for these people that We have sent down to you the book, which is recited to them? (29:50-51)⁸²

Despite these passages, within just a generation of Muhammad’s death, there were accounts regarding how he caused an empty well to fill up with water, how he caused a bunch of dates to multiply until everyone present had their share, how a roasted lamb served to him was enough to feed hundreds of people, and so on. Miracles were also attributed to his birth and adolescence. Notably, many Muslims believe these accounts of miracles to be correct as well, the above verses notwithstanding.

Particular mention must, however, be made of the “splitting of the moon,” as this finds mention in the Quran:

The Hour of Resurrection has drawn near *and the Moon has split asunder*. Yet whatever Sign these people may see they turn away and say, “This is current magic.” They have denied (this too) and followed their own lusts. Ultimately, every matter has to reach an appointed end. (54:1–3)⁸³

Two questions arise in this behalf. One, is the Quran presenting this as Muhammad’s miracle (a sign conferred on him by Allah to prove his prophethood)? Two, did any such occurrence take place?

On the first, Maududi concludes that this is not presented as a sign of Muhammad’s prophethood.* This seems the more

* Maududi notes:

acceptable approach, considering that if the incident took place at the instance of the Prophet and was meant to be a sign/miracle conferred on him, then either the verses quoted at the beginning of this section would have made mention of this or, if the occurrence took place after those verses were revealed, then the Quran would have clarified in other verses that this was the sign the disbelievers were always asking for. Moreover, if this were presented as a miracle belonging to the Prophet, the disbelievers would also then have demanded that it be repeated, but there is no evidence that they made such demand or that the moon was split another time.

On the second question, whether the occurrence took place at all, it is difficult for more objective readers to believe that it did. In fact, even the disbelievers denied it.* But if one is to consider the possibility that something like this may have happened,† it seems likely that the observers mistook Jupiter or Mars as a second moon. Both can look like small moons during certain phases in their orbits (when close enough to the earth, which happens rarely), and the onlookers may just have thought that the moon had been split.

Here, the question arises: What was the real nature of this incident. Was it a miracle that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) performed on the demand of the disbelievers of Makkah as a proof of his Prophet-hood? Or, was it only an accident that occurred on the Moon by the power of Allah and the Holy Prophet had only called the peoples [sic] attention to it and warned them to mark it as a Sign of the possibility and nearness of Resurrection? A large group of the Muslim scholars regards it as among the miracles of the Holy Prophet and holds the view that it had been shown on the demand of the disbelievers. But this view is based only on some of those traditions which have been related from Hadrat Anas. Apart from him no other Companion has stated this. ... Above all, the Qur'an itself also is presenting this event not as a Sign of the Prophet-hood but as a Sign of the nearness of Resurrection. (Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 1 to *Surah Al-Qamar*, Volume 5, p. 247)

* Though the above translation attributes to them the statement "this is current magic," the word actually used by the Quran is *sebr*, which also means "deception and fraud" (as we shall see in Chapter 9). This shows that the disbelievers totally disputed any such occurrence.

† Even though many mythical accounts in history have probably been created out of nothing at all.

THE PERFECT MAN

As there are Muslims who believe that Muhammad was absolutely perfect in every respect, it is worth noting that the Quran does record instances of imperfection, including occasional errors in the recitation of the Quran.⁸⁴ The Quran also instructs the Prophet to seek forgiveness for his errors,⁸⁵ which suggests that he may have made mistakes that could even be categorized as “sinful” (hence the direction to seek forgiveness). The incident of the “Satanic verses” comes to mind in this behalf—more about that in Chapter 10.

There is also the claim that Muhammad was perfect in his relationship with the holy wives. The issue possibly arises on account of the verse (noted in Chapter 6) that allows believers to marry multiple wives (up to four at a time), provided they can do justice to all. Although the Prophet was exempt from the restriction of four wives (and therefore married thirteen times), the expectation is that he would not have done so unless he was able to do justice to all the wives. His current followers therefore believe that he discharged this obligation with perfection.

The following verses containing a thinly disguised threat of divorce to the holy wives tell a different story:

O Prophet, why do you make unlawful that which Allah has permitted for you? (Is it because) you seek the goodwill of your wives? Allah is All-Forgiving, All-Merciful. Allah has already appointed a way to absolve you (people) from your oaths. Allah is your Master, and He alone is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. (And this also is noteworthy that) the Prophet had confided a matter to a wife in secret. Then, when she disclosed the secret (to another) and Allah informed the Prophet (of the disclosure of the secret), the Prophet made known (to the wife) part of it and overlooked part of it. So when the Prophet told her (of the disclosure) she asked, “Who informed you of this?” The Prophet said, “I was informed by Him Who knows everything and is All-Wise.” If you both (women) repent to Allah, (it is better for you) for your hearts have swerved from the right path, and if you supported each other against the Prophet, you should know that Allah is his protector, and after Him Gabriel and the righteous believers

and the angels are his companions and helpers. *It may well be that if the Prophet divorces all of you, Allah will give him in your place better wives, who are true Muslims, who are believing and obedient, penitent, worshipping and given to fasting, be they previously married or virgins.* (66:1–5)⁸⁶

One is intrigued to explore the background to this incident, but first, let us note the elements disclosed by the Quran:

- The Prophet confided a matter to one of his wives in secret.
- Also, he took an oath to abstain from something Allah had permitted him.
- The wife to whom the matter was confided disclosed it to another.
- The issue ultimately spread to all the wives, who seem to have united against the Prophet.
- The holy wives were resultantly threatened with divorce and were also warned “that Allah is his protector, and after Him Gabriel and the righteous believers and the angels are his companions and helpers.”
- Allah reminded the Prophet as well that He “has already appointed a way to absolve you (people) from your oaths,” thereby enabling the Prophet to withdraw from the oath.⁸⁷

The question is, what may have caused such a serious breakdown between Muhammad and his wives? According to Maududi:

Although it has not been mentioned in the Quran as to what it was the Holy Prophet had forbidden himself, yet the traditionists and commentators have mentioned in this regard two different incidents, which occasioned revelation of this verse. One of these related to Hadrat Mariyah Qibbiyyah (Mary the Copt lady) and the other to his forbidding himself the use of honey.

The incident relating to Hadrat Mariyah is that after concluding the peace treaty of Hudaibiyah one of the letters that the Holy Prophet (upon whom be Allah’s peace) sent to the rulers of the adjoining countries was addressed to the Roman Patriarch of Alexandria also, whom the Arabs called Muqawqis. When Hadrat Hatib Bin Abi Balta took this letter to him, he did not embrace Islam but received him well, and

in reply wrote: "I know that a Prophet is yet to rise but I think he will appear in Syria. However, I have treated your messenger with due honor, and am sending two slave girls to you, who command respect among the Coptics." (Ibn Sa'd). One of those slave girls was Sirin and the other Mariyah (Mary). On his way back from Egypt Hadrat Hatib presented Islam before both and they believed. When they came before the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) he gave Sirin in the ownership of Hadrat Hussain bin Thabit and admitted Hadrat Mariyah into his own household. In Dhil Hijjah AH 8, she gave birth to the Holy Prophet's son, Ibrahim (Al-Isti'ab, Al-Isabah). ... One day the Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) visited the house of Hadrat Hafsa when she was not at home. At that time Hadrat Mariyah came to him there and stayed with him in seclusion. Hadrat Hafsa took it very ill and complained of it bitterly to him. Thereupon, in order to please her, the Holy Prophet vowed that he would have no conjugal relation with Mariyah in future. According to some traditions, he forbade Mariyah for himself and according to others, he also swore an oath on it.

The other incident ... is as follows: The Holy Prophet (upon whom be peace) usually paid a daily visit to all his wives after the Asr Prayer. Once it so happened that he began to stay in the house of Hadrat Zainab bint Jahsh longer than usual, for she had received some honey from somewhere as a gift and the Holy Prophet was very fond of sweet things; therefore he would have a drink of honey at her house. Hadrat A'ishah states that she felt envious of this and spoke to Hadrat Hafsa, Hadrat Saudah and Hadrat Safiyah about it and together they decided that whoever of them was visited by the Holy Prophet, should say to him: "Your mouth smells of maghafir." Maghafir is a kind of flower, which gives out an offensive smell, and if the bee obtains honey from it, it is also tainted by the same odor. They all knew that the Holy Prophet was a man of very fine taste and he abhorred that he should emit any kind of unpleasant smell. Therefore, this device was contrived to stop him from staying in the house of Hadrat Zainab and it worked. When several of his wives told him that his mouth smelt of Maghafir, he made a promise not to use the honey any longer.⁸⁸

The latter explanation is not convincing. It suggests that the Prophet's wives deliberately lied to him as part of a planned scheme, which is not something one expects from ladies who are regarded as the mothers of the believers. It also does not appeal to reason that overstaying with one wife to taste honey would cause such resentment amongst the others so they would all gang up against the Prophet. They too could have acquired honey or waited until the favored wife ran out of supplies. Lastly, this account offers no explanation for the pronouncement "the Prophet had confided a matter to a wife in secret" but that "she disclosed the secret (to another)." The story is devoid of an element that fits this description.

In comparison, the Mariyah Qubiyah story makes perfect sense and meets all the elements disclosed in the Quran. One can perfectly understand why Hafsa may have been upset to find the Prophet spending time with a slave girl, and in her quarters. It is plausible, as well, that the Prophet promised not to have conjugal relations with Mariyah in the future, to placate Hafsa, but desired that the whole affair should be kept a secret and that Hafsa, however, disclosed this to the other wives, who joined hands against the slave girl—she, after all, was not in the same league as them.

One also does not understand the reluctance to accept this version, considering that the Quran allowed the Prophet to have slave girls and it is an accepted fact that he did. In fact, Mariyah Qubiyah even bore him a son (Ibrahim) who died at the age of a year and a half, so there seems no reason to reject this account, which perfectly fits the bill.

But it matters not what may have caused the relationship between Muhammad and his wives to breakdown. What is more significant is that it did—and to such an extent that the wives were even threatened with collective divorce! This much is recorded in the Quran and is therefore not open to debate, and although it is strange that the Quran should be burdened with this matter about Muhammad's dispute with his wives, what this does prove is that Muhammad was not entirely perfect—not even in his personal life.

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The entire discussion in this chapter paints a picture that is different altogether from what Muslims tend to believe about Muhammad. Because it is based on disclosures made in the Quran, the truly perplexing question is, How did Muhammad get lost in history?

- ³⁵ Respectively, *Surah Ar-Ra'ad* verse 3, *Surah Ya Sin* verse 36, and *Surah Adb-Dharyyat* verse 49. Yusuf Ali's translations: "And fruit of every kind He made in pairs, two and two: He draweth the night as a veil o'er the Day. Behold, verily in these things there are signs for those who consider!"; "Glory to Allah, Who created in pairs all things that the earth produces, as well as their own (human) kind and (other) things of which they have no knowledge."; "And of every thing We have created pairs: That ye may receive instruction."
- ³⁶ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Volume 27, p. 233. For other *Encyclopaedia Britannica* editions, see under: Sex and Sexuality/Animals and plants/SEXUAL AND NOSEXUAL REPRODUCTION. Also: *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* (www.britannica.com) (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/536936/sex>) under "Sexual and nonsexual reproduction".
- ³⁷ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Volume 26, p. 616. For other *Encyclopaedia Britannica* editions, see under: Reproduction and Reproductive Systems/PLANT REPRODUCTION/Plant reproductive systems/GENERAL FEATURES OF SEXUAL SYSTEMS. Also: *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* (www.britannica.com) (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/498651/plant-reproductive-system/76161/General-features-of-sexual-systems>) under "General features of sexual systems".
- ³⁸ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Volume 26, p. 617. For other *Encyclopaedia Britannica* editions, see under: Reproduction and Reproductive Systems/PLANT REPRODUCTION/Plant reproductive systems/GENERAL FEATURES OF SEXUAL SYSTEMS/The plant basis. Also: *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* (www.britannica.com) (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/498651/plant-reproductive-system/76163/The-plant-basis>) under the "The plant basis".
- ³⁹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Volume 26, p. 636. For other *Encyclopaedia Britannica* editions, see under: ANIMAL REPRODUCTION. Also: *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* (www.britannica.com) (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/498613/animal-reproductive-system>) under "Animal Reproductive System".
- ⁴⁰ Millius: "Life Without Sex," p. 406
- ⁴¹ One such species on which quite a bit of research has been done is "Class Bdelloidea of the Phylum Rotifera [which] is the largest metazoan taxon in which males, hermaphrodites, and meiosis are unknown." Welch and Meselson: "Evidence for the Evolution of Bdelloid Rotifers Without Sexual Reproduction or Genetic Exchange," p. 1211

Chapter 3: Muhammad: The Last Prophet

- ¹ *Surah Al-Abzab* verses 50–52. These verses are quoted in full later in the chapter. Yusuf Ali's translation is deferred until then.
- ² Michael Hart, for instance, places him at number 1. (Hart: *The 100—A Ranking of the Most Influential Persons in History*)
- ³ *Surah Al-Ankabut* verses 48–49. Maududi's translation: "(O Prophet) you did not read any book before this, nor did you write any with your hand. If it were so, the worshippers of falsehood could have been involved in doubt. These are in fact clear Signs in the hearts of those who have been given knowledge; and none deny Our revelations except the wicked." (29:48–49) Yusuf Ali's translation: "And thou wast not (able) to recite a Book before this (Book came), nor art thou (able) to transcribe it with thy right hand: In that case, indeed, would the talkers of vanities have doubted. Nay, here are Signs self-evident in the hearts of those endowed with knowledge: and none but the unjust reject Our Signs."
- ⁴ *Surah Az-Zukhruf* verses 31–32. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Also, they say: 'Why is not this Qur'an sent down to some leading man in either of the two (chief) cities?' Is it they who would portion out the Mercy of thy Lord?"
- ⁵ *Surah Al-Alaq* verses 9–10. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Seest thou one who forbids—A votary when he (turns) to pray?"
- ⁶ *Surah Al-Lahab* verses 1–4. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Perish the hands of the Father of Flame! Perish he! No profit to him from all his wealth, and all his gains! Burnt soon will he be in a Fire of Blazing Flame! His wife shall carry the (crackling) wood—As fuel!"
- ⁷ Maududi, for instance, notes:
Before the proclamation of Prophet-hood, two of the Holy Prophet's daughters were married to two of Abu Lahab's sons, 'Utbah and 'Utaibah. After his call, when the Holy Prophet began to invite the people to Islam, Abu Lahab said to both his sons: "I would

- forbid myself seeing and meeting you until you divorced the daughters of Muhammad” (upon whom be Allah’s peace and blessings). So both of them divorced their wives. (Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur’an*, introduction to *Surah Al-Labab*, Volume 6, p. 612)
- 8 *Surah Al-Mutaffifin* verses 29–36. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Those in sin used to laugh at those who believed, And whenever they passed by them, used to wink at each other (in mockery); And when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting; And whenever they saw them, they would say, ‘Behold! These are the people truly astray!’ But they had not been sent as keepers over them! But on this Day the Believers will laugh at the Unbelievers: On Thrones (of Dignity) they will command (a sight) (of all things). Will not the Unbelievers have been paid back for what they did?”
- 9 Respectively, *Surah Bani Israil* verse 76 and *Surah Al-Tariq* verses 15–17. Yusuf Ali’s translations: “Their purpose was to scare thee off the land, in order to expel thee; but in that case they would not have stayed (therein) after thee, except for a little while.”; “As for them, they are but plotting a scheme, And I am planning a scheme. Therefore grant a delay to the Unbelievers: Give respite to them gently (for awhile).”
- 10 *Surah Az-Zukhruf* verses 79–80. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “What! have they settled some plan (among themselves)? But it is We Who settle things. Or do they think that We hear not their secrets and their private counsels? *Indeed (We do), and Our messengers are by them, to record.*”
- 11 *Surah Al-Anfal* verse 30. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Remember how the Unbelievers *plotted* against thee, *to keep thee in bonds, or slay thee, or get thee out (of thy home).* They plot and plan, and Allah too plans; but the best of planners is Allah.”
- 12 *Surah Al-Anfal* verse 26. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Call to mind *when ye were a small (band), despised through the land, and afraid that men might despoil and kidnap you,* But He provided a safe asylum for you, strengthened you with His aid, and gave you Good things for sustenance: that ye might be grateful.”
- 13 *Surah Al-Mumtahina* verse 1. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “O ye who believe! Take not my enemies and yours as friends (or protectors), *offering them (your) love, even though they have rejected the Truth that has come to you, and have (on the contrary) driven out the Prophet and yourselves (from your homes), (simply) because ye believe in Allah your Lord! If ye have come out to strive in My Way and to seek My Good Pleasure, (take them not as friends), bolding secret converse of love (and friendship) with them: for I know full well all that ye conceal and all that ye reveal.* And any of you that does this has strayed from the Straight Path.”
- 14 *Surah Al-Mumtahina* verse 9. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Allah only forbids you, with regard to those who fight you for (your) Faith, and drive you out of your homes, and support (others) in driving you out, from turning to them (for friendship and protection). It is such as turn to them (in these circumstances), that do wrong.”
- 15 Muslim scholars understandably attempt to downplay these verses. They assert that these verses are based on an isolated incident involving just one companion (Hatib bin Abi Balta’a), whose family was in Mecca as the final assault against the Quraysh was under preparation by the Prophet. Hatib wanted to gain the sympathy of the Quraysh so his family would not be harmed during the conflict, and he secretly sent a letter to the Quraysh to warn them of the attack. Allah informed the Prophet, however, and the letter was intercepted. According to some Muslim scholars, these verses were revealed after this incident and before the conquest of Mecca. It seems unlikely, though, that such a general and overpowering command would be issued on account of just one companion, unless there was a genuine fear that many more were either already on friendly terms with the Quraysh or were likely to follow suit.
- 16 The following verses (*Surah Al-Buroj* verses 2–10) may be noted, though. Maududi’s translation: “Doomed *were* the people of the ditch, (of that ditch) which had the fire fed by the intensely blazing fuel, when they were sitting by the ditch and witnessing what they were doing with the believers. And their enmity against the believers was for no other reason than that they had believed in that Allah. Who is the All-Mighty, the Self-Praiseworthy, Who is the Owner of the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth; and Allah is watching over everything. For those who persecuted the believing men and women and did not repent of it, there is the torment of Hell and the punishment of burning.” (85:2-10) Yusuf Ali’s translation: “By the promised Day (of Judgment); By one that witnesses, and the subject of the witness; Woe to the makers of the pit (of fire), Fire supplied (abundantly) with fuel: Behold! they sat over against the (fire), And they witnessed (all) that they were doing against the Believers. And they ill-treated them for no other reason than that they believed in Allah, Exalted in Power, Worthy of all Praise! Him to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth! And Allah is Witness to all things. Those

who persecute (or draw into temptation) the Believers, men and women, and do not turn in repentance, will have the Penalty of Hell: They will have the Penalty of the Burning Fire.”

These verses were revealed during the Meccan period. They curse “people of the ditch” as though they are from the past: “Doomed *were* the people of the ditch.” The mythical incident that is the subject matter of these verses is referred by Hilali-Khan as pertaining to earlier times. Ibn Ishaq, too, mentions no such incident in his biography of Muhammad. Rogerson also relates these verses to an incident that happened in AD 523, long before Muhammad was born (*The Prophet Muhammad*, p. 27). These verses do not therefore refer to an incident in Mecca.

¹⁷ Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 314

¹⁸ Respectively *Surah At-Taubah* verses 40 and 13. Yusuf Ali’s translations: “If ye help not (your leader), (it is no matter): for Allah did indeed help him, *when the Unbelievers drove him out*: he had no more than one companion; they two were in the cave.”; “Will ye not fight people who violated their oaths, *plotted to expel the Messenger*, and took the aggressive by being the first (to assault) you?”

¹⁹ Reference may also be made to *Surah Al-Hajj* verse 39-40. Maududi’s translation: “Permission (to fight) has been granted to those against whom war has been waged *because they have been treated unjustly*, and Allah is certainly able to help them. *These are the people who have been expelled unjustly from their homes*, only for the reason that they said, ‘Our Lord is Allah.’” (22:39-40) Yusuf Ali’s translation: “To those against whom war is made, permission is given (to fight), *because they are wronged*, and verily, Allah is most powerful for their aid; (They are) *those who have been expelled from their homes in defiance of right*, (for no cause) except that they say, ‘our Lord is Allah.’” This verse states that the believers were “treated unjustly” and “expelled unjustly from their homes.” Because the Quran is unspecific, however, one needs to rely on other verses to understand how the believers were treated unjustly—and the only positive evidence one finds is of ridicule.

²⁰ Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 130–131

²¹ In fact, should one believe in Muhammad as the Prophet but waver slightly that he was the last, one is excluded from the faith by a vast majority of Muslims.

²² *Surah Al-Abzab* verses 40. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things.”

²³ *Surah Al-Maidah* verse 19. Maududi’s translation: “O People of the Book, this Messenger of Ours has come to you and is making clear to you the teachings of the Right Way after a long interval during which there had come no Messenger, lest you should say: ‘No bearer of good news nor warner came to us.’ Lo, now the bearer of the good news and warner has come. And Allah has power over everything.” (5:19) Yusuf Ali’s translation: “O People of the Book! Now hath come unto you, making (things) clear unto you, Our Messenger, after the break in (the series of) our apostles, lest ye should say: ‘There came unto us no bringer of glad tidings and no warner (from evil): But now hath come unto you a bringer of glad tidings and a warner (from evil). And Allah hath power over all things.’”

²⁴ *Surah Ar-Ra’ad* verse 38. Maududi’s translation: “We have sent many Messengers before you and ... Every age had its book.” (13:38) Yusuf Ali’s translation: “We did send apostles before thee, ... For each period is a Book (revealed).”

²⁵ The other translations follow:

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things. (Yusuf Ali)

Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but he is the Messenger of Allah and the last (end) of the Prophets. And Allah is Ever All-Knower of everything. (Hilali-Khan)

Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but he is the messenger of Allah and Seal of the Prophets; and Allah is Aware of all things. (Pickthall)

²⁶ *Surah Al-Anaam* verse 46. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Say: ‘Think ye, if Allah took away your hearing and your sight, and sealed up your hearts ...’”

²⁷ *Surah Al-Maidah* verse 6. Maududi’s translation: “O Believers, when you rise to offer the Salat, you must wash your faces and hands and arms up to the elbows and wipe your heads with wet hands and wash your feet up to the ankles; and if you have become unclean, cleanse yourselves with a full bath ...” (5:6) Yusuf Ali’s translation: “O ye who believe! when ye prepare for prayer, wash your faces, and your hands (and arms) to the elbows; Rub your heads (with water); and

- (wash) your feet to the ankles. If ye are in a state of ceremonial impurity, bathe your whole body.”
- 28 *Surah Ha-Mim As-Sajadah* verse 44. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Had We sent this as a Qur’an (in the language) other than Arabic, they would have said: ‘Why are not its verses explained in detail? What! (a Book) not in Arabic and (a Messenger an Arab?’”
- 29 In much the same vein, *Surah Yunus* verse 47 suggests that the Quran may not have thought of Muhammad as the last prophet. Maududi’s translation: “There is a Messenger for every ummat then, when its Messenger comes a just judgment is passed on its people and they are not wronged in the least.” (10:47) Yusuf Ali’s translation: “To every people (was sent) an apostle: when their apostle comes (before them), the matter will be judged between them with justice, and they will not be wronged.”
- Although the Quran also states (e.g., in *Surah Saba* verse 28) that Muhammad is a messenger for mankind, even this does not stipulate that other messengers would not follow. Moreover, the Quran’s understanding of all of mankind can be gathered from verse 42:7, which treats Mecca as the “center of habitation” or “Mother of Cities” depending upon the translation. This shows that it had a very local perspective.
- 30 *Surah Al-Imran* verse 21. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “As to those who deny the Signs of Allah and in defiance of right, slay the prophets, and slay those who teach just dealing with mankind, announce to them a grievous penalty.”
- 31 Hilali-Khan: *Translation of the Meaning of the Noble Qur’an in the English Language*, Appendix II, p. 896.
- 32 *Surah Al-Anfal* verse 7 may be referred to. Maududi’s translation: “Remember the occasion when Allah was holding out to you the promise that one of the two hosts would fall to you: *you wished the weaker host should fall to you.*” (8:7) Maududi clarifies: “That is, the trade caravan, or the army of the *Quraish*. That is, the trade caravan, that was accompanied by a guard band numbering between thirty and forty” (Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur’an*, notes 5 & 6 to *Surah Al-Anfal* Volume 2, p. 131). Yusuf Ali’s translation of the above verse: “Behold! Allah promised you one of the two (enemy) parties, that it should be yours: *Ye wished that the one unarmed should be yours.*”
- 33 *Surah Al-Imran* verse 13. Maududi’s translation: “You have already had a Sign in the two hosts which met on the battle-field (at Badr). One of these hosts was fighting for the cause of Allah and the other was of the disbelievers: *the lookers-on saw with their own eyes that the host of the disbelievers, was twice as big as that of the believers,* but (the result of the Battle proved conclusively that) Allah strengthens with His succor whom He wills: there is truly a great lesson hidden in it for those who have eyes to discern.” (3:13) Yusuf Ali’s translation: “There has already been for you a Sign in the two armies that met (in combat): One was fighting in the cause of Allah, the other resisting Allah. *These saw with their own eyes Twice their number.* But Allah doth support with His aid whom He pleaseth. In this is a warning for such as have eyes to see.”
- There are also historical accounts that record that although the Quraysh were initially estimated to be about 1,000, once Abu Sufyan managed to remove the caravan from harm’s way and to send a message to the Quraysh that there was no further need to fight, a number of them withdrew.
- 34 *Surah Al-Anfal* verse 41. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “And know that out of all the booty that ye may acquire (in war), *a fifth share is assigned to Allah, and to the Messenger, and to near relatives, orphans, the needy, and the wayfarer.*”
- 35 *Surah Al-Hasbr* verses 6–7. Maududi’s translation: “And the properties that Allah took out from their possession and restored to His Messenger, are not such that you might have rushed your horses and camels upon them, but Allah gives His Messengers authority over whomever He wills, and Allah has power over everything. Whatever Allah restored to His Messenger from the people of the settlements, belongs to Allah and the Messenger and the kinsfolk and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarers.” (59:6-7) Yusuf Ali’s translation: “What Allah has bestowed on His Messenger (and taken away) from them—for this ye made no expedition with either cavalry or camelry: but Allah gives power to His apostles over any He pleases: and Allah has power over all things. What Allah has bestowed on His Messenger (and taken away) from the people of the townships, belongs to Allah, to His Messenger and to kindred and orphans, the needy and the wayfarer.”

- ³⁶ *Surah Al-Fath* verses 15. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Those who lagged behind (will say), *when ye (are free to) march and take booty (in war):* 'Permit us to follow you.' They wish to change Allah's decree: Say: 'Not thus will ye follow us: Allah has already declared (this) beforehand.'" *Ibn Ishaq: The Life of Muhammad*, p. 493
- ³⁷ *Surah Al-Ahzab* verses 50–52. Yusuf Ali's translation: "O Prophet! We have made lawful to thee thy wives to whom thou hast paid their dowers; and those whom thy right hand possesses out of the prisoners of war whom Allah has assigned to thee, and daughters of thy paternal uncles and aunts, and daughters of thy maternal uncles and aunts, who migrated (from Makka) with thee; and any believing woman who dedicates her soul to the Prophet if the Prophet wishes to wed her; *this only for thee, and not for the Believers (at large); We know what We have appointed for them as to their wives and the captives whom their right hands possess; in order that there should be no difficulty for thee. And Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.* Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest: and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hadst set aside. This were nigher to the cooling of their eyes, the prevention of their grief, and their satisfaction—that of all of them—with that which thou hast to give them: and Allah knows (all) that is in your hearts: and Allah is All-Knowing, Most Forbearing. *It is not lawful for thee (to marry more) women after this, nor to change them for (other) wives, even though their beauty attract thee, except any thy right hand should possess (as handmaidens); and Allah doth watch over all things.*"
- ³⁸ *Ibn Ishaq: The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 792–794:
He married thirteen women: *Khadija* d. *Khuwaylid*, his first wife ... He married *Aisha* in Mecca when she was a child of seven and lived with her in Medina when she was nine or ten. ... *Saada* d. *Zama'a* ... He married *Zaynab* d. *Jahsh*. ... She had been previously married to *Zayd* b. *Haritha*, the freed slave of the apostle ... *Umm Salama* d. *Abu Umayya* ... *Hafsa* d. *Umar* ... *Umm Habiba* ... *Juwayriya* who was among the captives of *B. Mustaliq* ... He married *Sajjida* d. *Huyay* whom he had captured at *Khaybar*. ... He married *Maymuna* d. *al-Harith*. ... He married *Zaynab* b. *Khuzayma*, who was called the "Mother of the Poor" because of her kindness to them and her pity for them. ... The apostle consummated his marriage with eleven women, two of whom died before him, namely *Khadija* and *Zaynab*. He died leaving the nine we have mentioned. With two he had no marital relations, namely *Asma* d. *al-Nauman*, the Kindite woman, whom he married and found to be suffering from leprosy and so returned to her people with a suitable gift; and *Amra* d. *Yazid* the *Kilab* woman who was recently an unbeliever. When she came to the apostle she said "I seek God's protection against you," and he replied that one who did that was inviolable so he sent her back to her people.
- ³⁹ *Ibn Ishaq: The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 678–679
- ⁴⁰ *Rogerson: The Heirs of the Prophet Muhammad*, p. 80
- ⁴¹ *Surah Al-Ahzab* verses 4–5. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Allah has not made for any man two hearts in his (one) body ... nor has He made your adopted sons your sons. Such is (only) your (manner of) speech by your mouths. But Allah tells (you) the Truth, and He knows the (right) Way. *Call them by (the names of) their fathers: that is juster in the sight of Allah.*"
- ⁴² *Surah Al-Ahzab* verses 37–40. Yusuf Ali's translation: "*Behold! Thou didst say to one who had received the grace of Allah and thy favour: 'Retain thou (in wedlock) thy wife, and fear Allah.'* But thou didst hide in thy heart that which Allah was about to make manifest: *thou didst fear the people, but it is more fitting that thou shouldst fear Allah.* Then when *Zaid* had dissolved (his marriage) with her, with the necessary (formality), We joined her in marriage to thee: *in order that (in future) there may be no difficulty to the Believers in (the matter of) marriage with the wives of their adopted sons, when the latter have dissolved with the necessary (formality) (their marriage) with them. And Allah's command must be fulfilled. There can be no difficulty to the Prophet in what Allah has indicated to him as a duty.* It was the practice (approved) of Allah amongst those of old that have passed away. And the command of Allah is a decree determined. (It is the practice of those) who preach the Messages of Allah, and fear Him, and fear none but Allah. And enough is Allah to call (men) to account. Muhammad is not the father of any of your men, but (he is) the Messenger of Allah, and the Seal of the Prophets: and Allah has full knowledge of all things."
- ⁴³ *Armstrong: Muhammad: A Biography of the Prophet*, p. 196
- ⁴⁴ *Maududi: The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 70 to *Surah Al-Ahzab*, Volume 4, p. 112
- ⁴⁵ *Maududi: The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 70 to *Surah Al-Ahzab*, Volume 4, pp. 112–113
- ⁴⁶ *Maududi: The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 94 to *Surah Al-Ahzab*, Volume 4, p. 131
- ⁴⁷ *Ibn Ishaq: The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 515–517

- 49 *Surah An-Nisa* verse 24. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Also (prohibited are) women already married, except those whom your right hands possess."
- 50 Respectively, *Surah Hujaraat* verses 2 and 4. Maududi's translations: "O you who have believed, do not raise your voices above the Prophet's voice, nor speak to him as loud as you speak loud to one another, lest all your works be rendered void, while you do not know." (49:2); "O Prophet, those who call out to you from outside the apartments, most of them have no sense. If only they had had patience until you came out to them, it would be better for them." (49:4) Yusuf Ali's translations: "O ye who believe! Raise not your voices above the voice of the Prophet, nor speak aloud to him in talk, as ye may speak aloud to one another, lest your deeds become vain and ye perceive not."; "Those who shout out to thee from without the inner apartments—most of them lack understanding."
- 51 *Surah An-Noor* verses 62–63. Maududi's translation: "True Believers are those who sincerely believe in Allah and His Messenger and who do not leave him without permission when they are with the Messenger for some common good; only those who ask your permission sincerely believe in Allah and His Messenger. ... O Believers, do not consider the summoning by the Messenger like the summoning among you by one another. Allah knows well those of you who steal away, concealing themselves behind others. Let those who disobey the order of the Messenger beware lest they should be involved in some affliction, or are visited by a woeful scourge." (24:62–63) Yusuf Ali's translation: "Only those are believers, who believe in Allah and His Messenger. when they are with him on a matter requiring collective action, they do not depart until they have asked for his leave; those who ask for thy leave are those who believe in Allah and His Messenger ... Deem not the summons of the Messenger among yourselves like the summons of one of you to another. Allah doth know those of you who slip away under shelter of some excuse: then let those beware who withstand the Messenger's order, lest some trial befall them, or a grievous penalty be inflicted on them."
- 52 *Surah Al-Imran* verses 31–32. Maududi's translation: "O Prophet, tell the people, 'If you sincerely love Allah follow me; then will Allah love you and forgive your sins, for He is Forgiving and Merciful.' Also say to them, 'Obey Allah and His Messenger.' And if, in spite of this, they do not accept your invitation, (warn them that) Allah does not love those who refuse to obey Him and His Messenger." (3:31–32) Yusuf Ali's translation: "Say: 'If ye do love Allah, Follow me: Allah will love you and forgive you your sins: For Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.' Say: 'Obey Allah and His Messenger.' But if they turn back, Allah loveth not those who reject Faith."
- 53 *Surah Al-Mujadilah* verses 8–10. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Turnest thou not thy sight towards those who were forbidden secret counsels yet revert to that which they were forbidden (to do)? And they hold secret counsels among themselves for iniquity and hostility, and disobedience to the Messenger. And when they come to thee, they salute thee, not as Allah salutes thee, (but in crooked ways): And they say to themselves, 'Why does not Allah punish us for our words?' Enough for them is Hell: In it will they burn, and evil is that destination! O ye who believe! When ye hold secret counsel, do it not for iniquity and hostility, and disobedience to the Prophet; but do it for righteousness and self-restraint; and fear Allah, to Whom ye shall be brought back. Secret counsels are only (inspired) by the Evil One, in order that he may cause grief to the Believers; but he cannot harm them in the least, except as Allah permits; and on Allah let the Believers put their trust."
- 54 *Surah Al-Hujaraat* verse 12. Yusuf Ali's translation: "And spy not on each other behind their backs. Would any of you like to eat the flesh of his dead brother? Nay, ye would abhor it."
- 55 *Surah Al-Imran* verses 139–140. Maududi's translation: "Be not faint hearted and be not sorrowful, you will surely gain the upper hand, if you be true believers. If you have received a blow now, your enemy also received a similar blow. These are the vicissitudes of time that We alternate among the people; this has been done so that Allah may test from among you who were believers and choose the righteous witnesses of the Truth." (3:139–140) Yusuf Ali's translation: "So lose not heart, nor fall into despair: For ye must gain mastery if ye are true in Faith. If a wound hath touched you, be sure a similar wound hath touched the others. Such days (of varying fortunes) We give to men and men by turns: that Allah may know those that believe, and that He may take to Himself from your ranks Martyr-witnesses (to Truth)."
- 56 *Surah Al-Imran* verses 124–127. Maududi's translation: "Remember when you said to the Believers, 'Does it not suffice you that Allah should help you by sending down three thousand angels? Yes, if you show fortitude and fear Allah in whatever you do, Allah will help you with (not three thousand but) five thousand angels, known by certain marks, in case of a sudden attack from the enemy. ... (He will succor you) so that He may cut off a flank of the disbelievers or put them to rout with dishonor.'" (3:124–127) Yusuf Ali's translation: "Remember thou saidst to the

Faithful: 'Is it not enough for you that Allah should help you with three thousand angels (Specially) sent down?' Yea, if ye remain firm, and act aright, *even if the enemy should rush here on you in hot haste*, your Lord would help you with five thousand angels Making a terrific onslaught. ... That He might cut off a fringe of the Unbelievers or expose them to infamy, and they should then be turned back, frustrated of their purpose."

- 57 *Surah Al-Imran* verses 166–168 corroborate this. Maududi's translation: "It was by Allah's leave that you suffered the loss on the day the two armies met so that Allah might test the true believers and also the hypocrites. When these hypocrites were told to come and fight in the way of Allah or at least in the defence (of their city), they said, 'Had we known that the fighting would take place today, we would have certainly gone out with you.' At the time they were uttering these words, they were nearer to unbelief than to faith, for they utter with their tongues what is not in their hearts; but Allah knows well what they conceal in their hearts. These are the very people who, while they themselves stayed at home, said of their brethren, who had gone to the battle and had been slain, 'If they had obeyed us, they would not have been slain.'" (3:166–168) Yusuf Ali's translation: "What ye suffered on the day the two armies met, was with the leave of Allah, in order that He might test the believers, And the Hypocrites also. These were told: 'Come, fight in the way of Allah, or (at least) drive (The foe from your city).' They said: 'Had we known how to fight, we should certainly have followed you.' They were that day nearer to Unbelief than to Faith, saying with their lips what was not in their hearts but Allah hath full knowledge of all they conceal. (They are) the ones that say, (of their brethren slain), while they themselves sit (at ease): 'If only they had listened to us they would not have been slain.'"
- 58 *Surah Al-Imran* verses 152–153. Yusuf Ali's translation: "Allah did indeed fulfil His promise to you when ye with His permission Were about to annihilate your enemy, *until ye flinched and fell to disputing about the order, and disobeyed it after He brought you in sight (of the booty) which ye covet. Among you are some that hanker after this world and some that desire the Hereafter.* Then did He divert you from your foes in order to test you but He forgave you: For Allah is full of grace to those who believe. *Behold! ye were climbing up the high ground, without even casting a side glance at any one, and the Messenger in your rear was calling you back.* There did Allah give you one distress after another by way of requital, to teach you not to grieve for (the booty) that had escaped you and for (the ill) that had befallen you. For Allah is well aware of all that ye do."
- 59 *Surah Al-Imran* verse 161. Yusuf Ali's translation: "No prophet could (ever) be false to his trust."
- 60 Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 114 to *Surah Al-Imran*, Volume 1, p. 283
- 61 Rogerson: *The Heirs of the Prophet Muhammad*, p. 241
- 62 *Surah Al-Imran* verse 154. Maududi's translation: "Now they ask, 'Have we also a say in the conduct of affairs?' Say, '(No one has share in this.) The authority over the affairs rests wholly with Allah.' *In fact they are not disclosing to you what they are concealing in their hearts: what they really mean is this: 'If we had a say (in the conduct of) the affairs, none of us would have been slain here.'*" (3:154) Yusuf Ali's translation: "They said: 'What affair is this of ours?' Say thou: 'Indeed, this affair is wholly Allah's.' *They hide in their minds what they dare not reveal to thee. They say (to themselves): 'If we had had anything to do with this affair, We should not have been in the slaughter here.'*"
- 63 *Surah Al-Tanbah* verse 38. Yusuf Ali's translation: "*O ye who believe!* what is the matter with you, that, when ye are asked to go forth in the cause of Allah, ye cling heavily to the earth? Do ye prefer the life of this world to the Hereafter?"
- 64 *Surah Al-Tanbah* verses 119–122. Maududi's translation: "*O Believers*, fear Allah and be with those who are Truthful. It did not behoove the people of Al-Madinah and the Bedouins, dwelling around, to abandon Allah's Messenger and stay at home in order to safeguard their own interests, in utter disregard of him. ... And it was not required that all *the believers* should leave their homes, but why did not some people from every habitation leave their homes in order to understand the Way of Islam and to warn their people when they returned to them, so that they should refrain from un-Islamic conduct?" (9:119–122) Yusuf Ali's translation: "*O ye who believe!* Fear Allah and be with those who are true (in word and deed). It was not fitting for the people of Medina and the Bedouin Arabs of the neighborhood, to refuse to follow Allah's Messenger, nor to prefer their own lives to his. ... Nor should *the Believers* all go forth together: if a contingent from every expedition remained behind, they could devote themselves to studies in religion, and admonish the people when they return to them, that thus they (may learn) to guard themselves (against evil)."
- 65 *Surah Al-Jum'ah* verses 9–11. Yusuf Ali's translation: "*O ye who believe!* When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of

- Allah, and leave off business (and traffic): That is best for you if ye but knew! And when the Prayer is finished, then may ye disperse through the land, and seek of the Bounty of Allah and celebrate the Praises of Allah often (and without stint): that ye may prosper. *But when they see some bargain or some amusement, they disperse headlong to it, and leave thee standing.* Say: ‘The (blessing) from the Presence of Allah is better than any amusement or bargain! and Allah is the Best to provide (for all needs).’”
- 66 Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur’an*, note 19 to *Surah Al-Jumuah*, Volume 5, pp. 541–542
- 67 *Surah An-Nisa* verse 65. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “But no, by the Lord, they can have no (real) Faith, until they make thee judge in all disputes between them, and find in their souls no resistance against Thy decisions, but accept them with the fullest conviction.”
- 68 *Surah Al-Ahzab* verse 36. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “It is not fitting for a Believer, man or woman, when a matter has been decided by Allah and His Messenger to have any option about their decision: if any one disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he is indeed on a clearly wrong Path.”
- 69 *Surah Al-Mujadilah* verses 12–13. Maududi’s translation: “O you who have believed, when you consult the Messenger in private, you should give something in charity before your consultation. This is better for you and purer. However, if you do not have the means to give charity, Allah is indeed All-Forgiving, All-Merciful. Are you afraid that before your consultation in private, you will have to give charity?” (58:12–13) Yusuf Ali’s translation: “O ye who believe! When ye consult the Messenger in private, spend something in charity before your private consultation. That will be best for you, and most conducive to purity (of conduct). But if ye find not (the wherewithal), Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Is it that ye are afraid of spending sums in charity before your private consultation (with him)?”
- 70 *Surah At-Taubah* verse 58. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “And among them are men who slander thee in the matter of (the distribution of) the alms: if they are given part thereof, they are pleased, but if not, behold! they are indignant!”
- 71 Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, pp. 494–497
- 72 Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur’an*, opening commentary to *Surah An-Noor*, Volume 3, p. 281
- 73 *Surah An-Noor* verses 11–18. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Those who brought forward the lie are a body among yourselves: think it not to be an evil to you; On the contrary it is good for you: to every man among them (will come the punishment) of the sin that he earned, and to him who took on himself the lead among them, will be a penalty grievous. *Why did not the believers—men and women—when ye heard of the affair, put the best construction on it in their own minds and say, ‘This (charge) is an obvious lie?’* Why did they not bring four witnesses to prove it? When they have not brought the witnesses, such men, in the sight of Allah, (stand forth) themselves as liars! Were it not for the grace and mercy of Allah on you, in this world and the Hereafter, a grievous penalty would have seized you in that ye rushed glibly into this affair. Behold, ye received it on your tongues, and said out of your mouths things of which ye had no knowledge; and ye thought it to be a light matter, while it was most serious in the sight of Allah. And why did ye not, when ye heard it, say? ‘It is not right of us to speak of this: Glory to Allah.’ This is a most serious slander! Allah doth admonish you, that ye may never repeat such (conduct), if ye are (true) Believers. And Allah makes the Signs plain to you: for Allah is full of knowledge and wisdom.”
- 74 The Quran records this in verse 3:50.
- 75 Ibn Ishaq: *The Life of Muhammad*, p. 794
- 76 *Surah Al-Ahzab* verse 51. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “Thou mayest defer (the turn of) any of them that thou pleasest, and thou mayest receive any thou pleasest: and there is no blame on thee if thou invite one whose (turn) thou hadst set aside.”
- 77 Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur’an*, note 8 to *Surah Muhammad*, Volume 5, p. 17
- 78 *Surah Al-Maidah* verses 33–34. Maududi’s translation: “The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger and run about to spread mischief in the land is this: they should be put to death or crucified or their alternate hands and feet should be cut off, or they should be banished from the land. This is the disgrace and ignominy for them in this world and there is in store for them a harsher torment in the Hereafter, except those, who repent before you have power over them for you should know that Allah is Forgiving and Compassionate.” (5:33–34) Yusuf Ali’s translation: “The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger, and strive with might and main for mischief through the land is: execution, or crucifixion, or the cutting off of hands and feet from opposite sides, or exile from the land: that is their disgrace in this world, and a heavy punishment is theirs in the Hereafter; Except for those who repent before they fall into your power: in that case, know that Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.”

- 79 Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 8 to *Surah Muhammad*, Volume 5, p. 13
- 80 Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 44 to *Surah An-Nisa*, Volume 1, p. 324
- 81 *Surah Al-Baqarab* verse 234. Maududi's translation: "If those of you, who die, leave wives behind, they should abstain (from marriage) for four months and ten days. Then when their waiting term expires, they are free to do whatever they choose for themselves, provided that it is decent." (2:234) Yusuf Ali's translation: "If any of you die and leave widows behind, they shall wait concerning themselves four months and ten days: When they have fulfilled their term, there is no blame on you if they dispose of themselves in a just and reasonable manner."
- 82 Respectively, *Surah Al-Anaam* verses 37–38, *Surah Al-Anaam* verse 109, *Surah Yunus* verse 20, *Surah Ar-Ra'ad* verse 7, and *Surah Al-Ankabut* verses 50–51. Yusuf Ali's translations: "They say: 'Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: '(Allah) hath certainly power to send down a sign: but most of them understand not. There is not an animal (that lives) on the earth, nor a being that flies on its wings, but (forms part of) communities like you.'"; "They swear their strongest oaths by Allah, that if a (special) sign came to them, by it they would believe. Say: 'Certainly (all) signs are in the power of Allah. But what will make you (Muslims) realise that (even) if (special) signs came, they will not believe?'; "They say: 'Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: 'The Unseen is only for Allah (to know), then wait ye: I too will wait with you.'"; "And the Unbelievers say: 'Why is not a sign sent down to him from his Lord?' But thou art truly a warner, and to every people a guide."; "Yet they say: 'Why are not Signs sent down to him from his Lord?' Say: 'The signs are indeed with Allah and I am indeed a clear Warner.' And is it not enough for them that we have sent down to thee the Book which is rehearsed to them?"
- 83 *Surah Al-Qamar* verses 1–3. Yusuf Ali's translation: "The Hour (of Judgment) is nigh, and the moon is cleft asunder. But if they see a Sign, they turn away, and say, 'This is (but) transient magic.' They reject (the warning) and follow their (own) lusts but every matter has its appointed time."
- 84 *Surah Al-Ala* verses 6–7. Maududi's translation: "We shall enable you to recite, then you shall not forget except what Allah wills. He knows what is open and also what is hidden." (87:6–7) Yusuf Ali's translation: "By degrees shall We teach thee to declare (the Message), so thou shalt not forget, Except as Allah wills: For He knoweth what is manifest and what is hidden." Verses 75:15–19 and 20:114 may also be referenced.
- 85 *Surah Al-Mu'min* verse 55. Maududi's translation: "O Prophet: Allah's promise is true. Ask forgiveness of your errors, and glorify your Lord morning and evening with His praise." (40:55) Yusuf Ali's translation: "Patiently, then, persevere: for the Promise of Allah is true: and ask forgiveness for thy fault, and celebrate the Praises of thy Lord in the evening and in the morning."
- 86 *Surah At-Tabrim* verses 1–5. Yusuf Ali's translation: "O Prophet! Why holdest thou to be forbidden that which Allah has made lawful to thee? Thou seekest to please thy consorts. But Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful. Allah has already ordained for you, (O men), the dissolution of your oaths (in some cases); and Allah is your Protector, and He is Full of Knowledge and Wisdom. When the Prophet disclosed a matter in confidence to one of his consorts, and she then divulged it (to another), and Allah made it known to him, he confirmed part thereof and repudiated a part. Then when he told her thereof, she said, 'Who told thee this?' He said, 'He told me Who knows and is well-acquainted (with all things).' If ye two turn in repentance to Him, your hearts are indeed so inclined; But if ye back up each other against him, truly Allah is his Protector, and Gabriel, and (every) righteous one among those who believe, and furthermore, the angels will back (him) up. It may be, if he divorced you (all), that Allah will give him in exchange consorts better than you, who submit (their wills), who believe, who are devout, who turn to Allah in repentance, who worship (in humility), who travel (for Faith) and fast, previously married or virgins."
- 87 *Surah Al-Baqarab* verse 225 and *Surah Al-Maidab* verse 89. Maududi's translation of verse 5:89: "Allah does not take you to task for the inadvertent oaths you swear, but He will surely call you to account for the intentional and deliberate oaths you make. The expiation (of breaking such an oath) is to feed ten indigent persons with the normal food you serve in your own family, or to give them clothes, or to free one slave, and the one who cannot afford any of these let him fast three days. This is the expiation of breaking the solemn oaths you have taken; be mindful of your oaths. Thus Allah makes His Commandments plain to you so that you may show gratitude." Yusuf Ali's translation: "Allah will not call you to account for what is futile in your oaths, but He will call you to account for your deliberate oaths: for expiation, feed ten indigent persons, on a scale of the average for the food of your families; or clothe them; or give a slave his freedom. If that is beyond your means, fast for three days. That is the expiation for the oaths ye have sworn. But keep to your oaths. Thus doth Allah make clear to you His signs, that ye may be grateful."

88 Maududi: *The Meaning of the Qur'an*, note 2 to *Surah At-Tabrim*, Volume 5, pp. 643–644

Chapter 4: The Quran: A Scientific Miracle

- 1 *Surah Al-Hajj* verses 15–16. Yusuf Ali (supported by Hilali-Khan and Pickthall) translates:
 If any think that Allah will not help him (His Messenger) in this world and the Hereafter, let him stretch out a rope to the *ceiling* and cut (himself) off: then let him see whether his plan will remove that which enrages (him)! Thus have We sent down Clear Signs; and verily Allah doth guide whom He will!
 Interestingly, the word used in the above verses is *samaa*, which means “the sky” (as conceded by the other three translators in respect of verse 6:35, for instance)! Maududi’s translation is thus more accurate, even if it makes the Quran look scientifically inelegant.
- 2 Roberts: *The Pelican History of the World*, p. 88
- 3 Sagan: *Cosmos*, p. 205
- 4 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Volume 14, p. 1072. For other *Encyclopaedia Britannica* editions, see under: The Biological Sciences/The history of biology/THE EARLY HERITAGE/The Greco-Roman world/Theories about man and origin of life. Also: *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* (www.britannica.com) (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/66054/biology/48830/The-Greco-Roman-world>) under “Theories about man and the origin of life”.
- 5 Sagan: *Cosmos*, pp. 25–27
- 6 Naik: *The Quran and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible?* p. 34
- 7 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Volume 14, p. 1071. For other *Encyclopaedia Britannica* editions, see under: The Biological Sciences/The history of biology/THE EARLY HERITAGE/Earliest biological records/Biological practices among Assyrians and Babylonians. Also: *Encyclopaedia Britannica Online* (www.britannica.com) (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/66054/biology/48827/Earliest-biological-records>) under “Earliest biological records”.
- 8 We will draw on the discussion contained in: http://www.speed-light.info/relativity_quran.htm, as indicative. The reasoning is convoluted, but we will try to focus on the main features.
http://www.speed-light.info/relativity_quran.htm
- 9 Naik: *The Quran and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible?* pp. 8–9
- 11 Naik: footnote 1 to *The Quran and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible?* p. 4. Dr. Naik may also discover that the ostrich egg, because of its huge size compared to other eggs, has only in recent times, after the shape of the earth has become common knowledge, acquired the description *dahaabaa*.
- 12 *Surah Al-Baqarah* verse 187. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “and eat and drink, until the white thread of dawn appears to you distinct from its black thread; then complete your fast Till the night appears.”
- 13 Naik: *The Quran and Modern Science: Compatible or Incompatible?* pp. 13–14. He does, though, note the following facts as well (in the above referenced work):
 For a long time European philosophers and scientists believed that the earth stood still in the center of the universe and every other body including the sun moved around it. In the West, this geocentric concept of universe was prevalent right from the time of Ptolemy in the second century BC. In 1512, Nicholas Copernicus put forward his Heliocentric Theory of Planetary Motion, which asserted that the sun is motionless at the center of the solar system with the planets revolving around it. (pp. 11–12)
 Copernicus, of course, discovered that it is the earth that orbits the sun, though he mistakenly thought that the sun stood motionlessly at the center of the solar system. This error was corrected subsequently, but his discovery does constitute a watershed. It would be interesting to see on which side of the divide—the age before or after Copernicus—the Quran stands.
- 14 *Surah Ya Sin* verse 40. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “It is not permitted to the Sun to catch up the Moon, nor can the Night outstrip the Day: *Each (just) swims along in (its own) orbit (according to Law).*”
- 15 *Surah Ya Sin* verses 37–40. Yusuf Ali’s translation: “And a Sign for them is the Night: We withdraw therefrom the Day, and behold they are plunged in darkness; *And the sun runs his course for a period determined for him:* that is the decree of (Him), the Exalted in Might, the All-Knowing. And the Moon, We have measured for her mansions (to traverse) till she returns like the old (and