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# PURPOSE OF LIFE

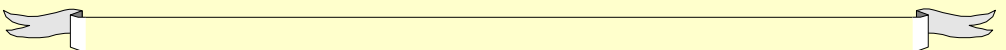
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in the light of the Quran



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## Table of Contents

Nothing in the universe is without a purpose.....	2
Purpose of Creation of Mankind is <i>Al-ibada</i> (الْعِبَادَةُ) .....	3
<i>Al-ibada</i> (الْعِبَادَةُ) is not merely ‘worship’ .....	4
Allah does not need anything from humans.....	8
Purpose of <i>Ibada</i> (عِبَادَةٌ) is <i>Taqwa</i> & <i>Falah</i> .....	12
<i>Taqwa</i> is about doing things right & doing the right things .....	13
<i>Falah</i> is about achieving self-actualization, success and prosperity ....	17

## Nothing in the universe is without a purpose

Allah says in the Quran:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لِعِبِينِ

*And We have not created the heaven and the earth and whatever is between them, in jest (or without seriousness).*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 21, VERSE 16]

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا بَاطِلًا ۗ ذَٰلِكَ ظَنُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا

*And We have not created the heaven and the earth and whatever is between them aimlessly. That is an assumption of those who do not acknowledge the truth.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 38, VERSE 27]

Human beings are also not created without a purpose:

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا

*So, did you think that We created you without any purpose.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 23, VERSE 115]

## Purpose of Creation of Mankind is *Al-ibada* (الْعِبَادَةُ)

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

*And I have created the Jinns and the Mankind to comply with My Commands<sup>1</sup>*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 51: VERSE 56]

إِنِ الْحُكْمُ إِلَّا لِلَّهِ أَمَرَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ

*The Ultimate Command/Authority/Sovereignty belongs to none but Allah; He has ordained that you serve none but Him alone (by compliance with His Commands).*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 12: VERSE 40]

خَلَقَ الْمَوْتَ وَالْحَيَاةَ لِيَبْلُوَكُمْ أَيُّكُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا

*He created the death and the life to put you to test to reveal which of you is better in work.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 67: VERSE 2]

<sup>1</sup> The term 'Ibada' is very comprehensive. Detailed explanation of the term 'Ibada' is given next in the text.

## *Al-ibada* (الْعِبَادَةُ) is not merely 'worship'

The root of the word '*ibada*' is E-B-D (ع-ب-د), which has several meanings according to the Arabic dictionaries, including: (1) to worship; (2) to adore; (3) to become a devotee; (4) to serve; (5) to venerate; (6) to obey with humility and submissiveness; (7) to comply with the commands (of a master); (8) to be a slave or in a state of slavery; (9) to idolize or deify; (10) to accept the impression (of something/someone).

The second verb form (*abbada*) (عَبَّدَ) means: (1) to take someone as a slave; (2) to enslave; (3) to bring someone under control; (4) to subdue; (5) to render (someone) submissive so that he does the work of slaves; (6) to subjugate ( someone); (7) to beat or tread a path or road to make it even or easy to walk or ride upon; (8) to render (a camel) submissive or tractable; (9) to harness, control or direct a camel (or horse) so that its power is utilized for useful purpose. From this, it is said that '*Tbada*' (in the sense of compliance with Allah's Commands) results in the harnessing, direction and control of man's power, energy or abilities to useful purpose, and also keeps him from exceeding the just limits or from being immoderate, inordinate, exorbitant or straying away from the Right Path.

In Surah Al-Baqara, the word '*al-abd*' (الْعَبْدُ) has been used in the meaning of **the slave** in contrast to the word '*al-hurr*' (الْحُرُّ) [i.e. **the free person**].

الْحُرُّ بِالْحُرِّ وَالْعَبْدُ بِالْعَبْدِ

*The free for the free and the slave for the slave...*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 2: VERSE 178]

It is clear from Surah 2 verse 178, that ‘*Ibada*’ (i.e. slavery or bondage) is the opposite of ‘*hurriyat*’ or freedom. Hence, ‘*Ibada*’ refers to ‘*acknowledging someone other than oneself as holding authority or supremacy and surrendering one’s freedom and independence to him*’. Since the primary duty of a slave is to comply with the commands of his master or to carry out his wishes, the term ‘*ibada*’ carries the sense of *obedience with humility and submissiveness along with sense of respect, regard and adoration for the master*. Other examples from the Quran where the word ‘*abd*’ has been used in the meaning of a slave are as follows:

وَلَا تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكَةَ حَتَّىٰ تُؤْمِنَ ۚ وَلَا مَلَائِمَةً مُّؤْمِنَةً خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكَةٍ وَلَا أَعْجَبَتْكُمْ ۚ وَلَا  
تَنْكِحُوا الْمُشْرِكِينَ حَتَّىٰ يُؤْمِنُوا ۚ وَلَعَبْدٌ مُّؤْمِنٌ خَيْرٌ مِّنْ مُّشْرِكٍ وَلَا أَعْجَبَكُمْ

And do not marry polytheistic women until they believe. And a believing slave woman is better than a polytheist, even though she might please you. And do not marry polytheistic men [to your women] until they believe. And a believing slave is better than a polytheist, even though he might please you.

[AL-QURAN SURAH 2: VERSE 221]

وَأَنْكِحُوا الْأَيَامَىٰ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِنْ عِبَادِكُمْ وَإِمَائِكُمْ

AND [you ought to] marry the single from among you as well as such of *your male slaves and female slaves as are fit [for marriage]*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 24: VERSE 32]

In the above given examples, the word ‘*abd*’ has been used as a ‘slave’ of an individual. The same term has also been used for the subjugation of an entire nation by a ruler such as Firaun.

أَنْ عَبَّدتَّ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ

(And Musa said to Firaun) that **you have enslaved (or subjugated) the Children of Israel (by bringing them under your control and governance)**

[AL-QURAN SURAH 26: VERSE 22]

فَقَالُوا أَأَتُومِنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِنَا وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عِبِيدُونَ

They (i.e. Firaun and his chiefs) said, "Should we believe two men (i.e. Musa and Haroon) like us while their people are **in our servitude/subjugation/governance?**"

[AL-QURAN SURAH 23: VERSE 46]

No doubt, the term ‘*ibada*’ has also been used in the Quran in the sense of ‘*worship*’ when it refers, e.g., to idols but Allah is not an idol to be worshipped but He an Authority to be obeyed with adoration. Idols cannot give any guidance, laws or commands to humans whereas Allah has given His guidance, laws and commands to human beings for their preservation, prosperity and self-actualization. That is why, the term ‘*ibada*’ has been linked with ‘obedience’ to Allah in several verses of the Quran, such as follows:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَاعْبُدِ اللَّهَ مُخْلِصًا لَهُ الدِّينَ

Surely We have revealed to you the Book with the Truth, **therefore serve Allah, being sincere to Him in obedience.**

[AL-QURAN SURAH 39: VERSE 2]

The word ‘*deen*’ has many meanings but when it comes with the preposition ‘*laam* (ل)’, it means ‘obedience’<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Mufradat-ul-Quran by Raghīb

One of the characteristics of *Allah's servants* as mentioned in the Quran is that they **act according to His Commands**.

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَانَہٗ ۚ بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ  
لَا يَسْبِقُونَهُ بِالْقَوْلِ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِہٖ يَعْمَلُونَ

And they say, "The Most Gracious has taken unto Himself a son"! Limitless is He in His glory! Nay, [those whom they regard as God's "offspring" are but His] honored **servants**: they speak not until He has spoken unto them, and **they act according to His Command**.

[AL-QURAN SURAH 21: VERSE 26-27]



## Allah does not need anything from humans

The compliance with Allah's Commands is in man's own interest. Allah is free from all wants and certainly does not need our worship. He instructs us to comply with His commands and follow His guidance for our own benefit. He makes it clear in the Quran that if anyone does something good, it is in his own interest and if anyone does something bad it is for his own detriment. Even a disbelief or denial by all the inhabitants of the earth does not make any difference to His Being because He is All-Sufficient and free from all wants. He says:

إِنْ تَكْفُرُوا أَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ

*If you and whoever is on the earth disbelieve or show ingratitude<sup>3</sup>, all together, even then He is free of all wants and worthy of all praise.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 14: VERSE 8]

وَاللَّهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مَلَائِكَةُ رُسُلًا أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الَّذِينَ يُعَذِّبُونَ الْمُكَفِّرِينَ بِلَا إِتْقَانٍ وَالْمُلْهِمِينَ بِأَن يَتَّقُوا اللَّهَ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْغَنِيُّ الْحَمِيدُ

*And to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And We have instructed those who were given the Scripture before you and yourselves to guard against the harmful consequences of disobeying Allah<sup>4</sup>. But if you disbelieve - then to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth. And Allah is ever Free of all wants and worthy of all praise.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 4: VERSE 131]

<sup>3</sup> The term 'kufir' has several meanings including: disbelief, denial, ingratitude.

<sup>4</sup> Detailed explanation of the term 'taqwa' will be given later in the text.

Allah created man and also sent a Book of guidance to him through His chosen Messengers. If he follows that guidance, it is for his own benefits; if he does not follow that guidance, it is for his own loss. Allah is free from all Wants, and He says in the Quran:

إِنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ بِالْحَقِّ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ  
عَلَيْهَا

*Surely, We revealed the Book to you with the truth for (the guidance of) people. So he who takes guidance takes it for his own benefit, and he who goes astray, he strays to his own detriment.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 39: VERSE 41]

قُلْ يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنِ اهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِي لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ  
ضَلَّ فَإِنَّمَا يَضِلُّ عَلَيْهَا

*Say: O Mankind! The Truth has indeed come to you from your Sustainer; so whoever gets the guidance, does so for his own benefit; and whoever goes astray, does so for his own loss.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 10: VERSE 108]

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا بَغْيُكُمْ عَلَيَّ أَنْفُسِكُمْ

*O Mankind! Your violation (of the Divine Guidance) is against your own interest.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 10: VERSE 23]

قَدْ جَاءَكُمْ بَصَائِرٌ مِنْ رَبِّكُمْ ۖ فَمَنْ أَبْصَرَ فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ عَمِيَ فَعَلَيْهَا

*Means of insight have indeed come to you from your Sustainer; so whoever beholds does so for his own benefit; and whoever turns a blind eye, does so for his own harm.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 6: VERSE 108]

إِنْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ أَحْسَنْتُمْ لِأَنْفُسِكُمْ وَإِنْ أَسَأْتُمْ فَلَهَا

*If you do any good, you do so for your own selves; and if you do any evil, so it is (bad) for the same.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 17: VERSE 7]

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ

*And whoever strives hard, he strives for his own benefit; Surely Allah is not dependent upon anything in the worlds.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 29: VERSE 6]

مَنْ كَفَرَ فَعَلَيْهِ كُفْرُهُ ۖ وَمَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِأَنْفُسِهِمْ يَتَهَدُونَ

*Whoever disbelieves (or denies the Truth), will bear the consequences of his disbelief; and who perform any good deed, they will pave the way for their own benefit.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 30: VERSE 44]

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ۚ وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِظَلَّامٍ لِلْعَبِيدِ

*Who performs any good deed, he does so for his own benefit and who does evil, does so for his own detriment; And your Sustainer/Lord is not unjust to His subjects.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 41: VERSE 46]

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَنْ أَسَاءَ فَعَلَيْهَا ثُمَّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكُمْ تُرْجَعُونَ

*Who performs any good deed, he does so for his own benefit and who does evil, does so for his own detriment; Then all of you will be returned to your Sustainer/Lord.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 45: VERSE 15]

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا لُقْمَانَ الْحِكْمَةَ أَنْ اشْكُرْ لِلَّهِ وَمَنْ يَشْكُرْ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ ۗ وَمَنْ كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ  
اللَّهَ غَنِيٌّ حَبِيدٌ

*And surely, We blessed Luqman with wisdom and sound judgment (and said to him:) 'Be grateful to Allah. And whoever shows gratitude, does so for his own good; and whoever shows ingratitude, then surely Allah is Free of all wants, Worthy of all praise.'*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 31: VERSE 12]

وَمَنْ تَزَكَّىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَتَزَكَّىٰ لِنَفْسِهِ

*And whoever does self-purification and personal development<sup>5</sup>, he does so for his own benefit.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 35: VERSE 18]

It is clear from the above given verses that Allah is free from all wants and also has no need for our worship. If we do anything good it is for our own benefit and if we do anything bad, it is for our own harm. Now the question is what is our benefit if we comply with His commands?

<sup>5</sup> The root of the term 'tazkiya' is z-k-w (زكوى), which primarily means 'to grow or develop' (in goodness).

## Purpose of *Ibada* (عِبَادَةٌ) is *Taqwa* & *Falah*

*Al-ibada* or the compliance with Allah's Commands results in our '*Taqwa*' and our '*Falah*'.

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

*O Mankind! Comply with the Commands of your Sustainer, Who created you and those who came before you, so that you may attain Taqwa.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 2: VERSE 21]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

*O you who believe! Bow down, be submissive, serve your Sustainer (by complying with His Commands) and do good deeds so that you may attain Falah.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 22: VERSE 77]

It is clear from Surah 2/verse 21 and Surah 22/verse 77, that the ultimate result of *ibada* is '*taqwa*' and '*falah*' of the humankind. It is important to know in detail what do the terms '*taqwa*' and '*falah*' mean?

## *Taqwa* is about doing things right & doing the right things

The root of the term *Taqwa* (تقوى) is W-Q-Y (و-ق-ي). The first verb form (I) of the verb (وَقَّى) has the following meanings: (1) to guard (something/someone); (2) to preserve (something/someone); (3) to take good care (of something/someone); (4) to take precautionary measure (to protect something); (5) to safeguard, shield, preserve, shelter or protect (someone) from (something); (6) to set (a matter) right.

The term *Taqwa* (تقوى) is related to the 8<sup>th</sup> form (VIII) of the verb, which is *Ittaqa* (اتَّقَى). This form of the verb implies the action of the verb *for oneself or for one's own advantage*. This verb form also implies *diligence* in the action of the verb. Hence, the verb *Ittaqa* (اتَّقَى) and its related noun *Taqwa* (تقوى) literally mean: *To safeguard, preserve, shield or protect oneself diligently (from something harmful)*. *Muttaqi*, in general, refers to someone who is *cautious and conscientious*. It may also refer to someone who while walking along a thorny passage takes every possible care that his clothes are not caught or torn by the thorns. In the Quran *Muttaqi*, at most places, refers to someone *who takes every possible care to protect himself from the harmful consequences of disobeying Allah's laws and Commands*. The Arabic phrase *ittaqa –al-matr* (اتَّقَى المطر) means: He sought shelter for himself from the rain. *ittaqoo –an-naar* (اتَّقُوا النار) means: protect yourself from fire. *ittaqoo-(A)llah* (اتَّقُوا الله) means: protect yourself diligently from (the harmful consequences of disobeying) Allah('s Laws and Commands). The Arabic word, *wiqaaya* (وقاية) means a preservative. *Taqwa* (تقوى) also means preservation (of one's self) from disintegration, or preserving one's integrity.

In short, the term ‘*Taqwa*’ has two main significations:

- (1) *Guarding against evil, bad or forbidden deeds; Being careful and cautious; Acting like the one who walks through the thorny bushes very carefully; Preservation; Guarding against bad consequences of evil deeds;*
- (2) *Doing the right things; Uprightness; Righteousness; Integrity.*

In the Quran (Surah 5: Verse 2), the term *Taqwa* (تقوى) has been used in contrast with the term *udwaan* (عدوان).

وَتَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْبِرِّ وَالتَّقْوَىٰ ۖ وَلَا تَعَاوَنُوا عَلَى الْإِثْمِ وَالْعُدْوَانِ

*And always support one another in (the works of) piety and righteousness, but do not become accomplices in (works of) sin and transgression.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 5: VERSE 2]

*udwaan* refers to a wrong, unjust, injurious or tyrannical act of aggression or transgression. In contrast, *Taqwa* refers to a righteous, just, upright, legitimate and lawful conduct. Equity and justice have been linked to *Taqwa* in Surah 5: Verse 8.

إِعْدِلُوا هُوَ أَقْرَبُ لِلتَّقْوَىٰ

*Be just; that is nearer to righteousness.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 5: VERSE 8]

In Surah 91: Verse 8, the term *Taqwa* has been used in contrast with *fujoor* (فجور). *fujoor* primarily means disintegration, decay or deterioration. In contrast, *Taqwa* refers to integration and preservation. *fujoor* also refers to moral decay whereas *Taqwa* also refers to moral integrity. Allah has endowed human personality (نفس) with two possibilities, i.e. to suffer from decay and decadence (فجور) or to preserve its moral integrity (تقوى).

فَالْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا

*Then he endowed it with (possibility of) its disintegration/decadence or its preservation.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 91: VERSE 8]

Some of the key attributes of those who have attained *taqwa*, are given in Surah 2, verse 177:

لَيْسَ الْبِرَّ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا وُجُوهَكُمْ قِبَلَ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَلَكِنَّ الْبِرَّ مَنْ آمَنَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ  
الْآخِرِ وَالْمَلَائِكَةِ وَالْكِتَابِ وَالنَّبِيِّينَ ۖ وَآتَى الْمَالَ عَلَى حُبِّهِ ذَوِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْيَتَامَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ  
وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ ۖ وَالسَّائِلِينَ ۖ وَفِي الرِّقَابِ ۖ وَأَقَامَ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَى الزَّكَاةَ ۖ وَالْمُوفُونَ بِعَهْدِهِمْ  
إِذَا عَاهَدُوا ۖ وَالصَّادِقِينَ فِي الْبُيُوتِ وَالضَّرَّاءِ ۖ وَحِينَ الْبَأْسِ ۗ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا ۗ وَأُولَٰئِكَ  
هُمُ الْمُتَّقُونَ

*Righteousness is not that you turn your faces toward the east or the west, but [true] righteousness is [in] one who believes in Allah , the Last Day, the Malaika, the Book, and the Prophets and gives wealth, in spite of love for it, to relatives, orphans, the needy, the traveler, those who ask [for help], and for freeing slaves; [and who] establishes salah and gives zakah; [those who] fulfill their promise when they promise; and [those who] are patient in poverty and hardship and during battle. Those are the ones who have been true, and it is those who are al-muttaqoon.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 2: VERSE 177]

It is clear, that man was created to comply with Allah's commands, and compliance with Allah's commands leads him to his '*taqwa*' and '*falah*'. Notice the link between *ibada*, *taqwa* and *falah* in the following verses:



وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

*And I have created the Jinns and the Humankind to comply with My Commands.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 51: VERSE 56]

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

*O Mankind! Comply with the Commands of your Sustainer, Who created you and those who came before you, so that you may attain Taqwa.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 2: VERSE 21]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

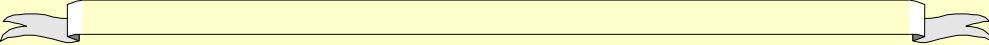
*O you who believe! Bow down, be submissive, serve your Sustainer (by complying with His Commands) and do good deeds so that you may attain Falah.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 22: VERSE 77]

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

*And stay conscious of Allah (Guard yourself from the harmful consequences of violating His Commands), so that you may attain Falah.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 2: VERSE 189]



## *Falah* is about achieving self-actualization, success and prosperity

The root of the Arabic word '*falah*' is f-l-h (ف-ل-ح), which means: (1) to cleave, split, cut, slit or crack (▲ something); (2) to furrow or plough or till the ground (الارض the land), to cultivate it; to till and break open the surface of the earth and make its productivity-power active. (3) to unfold something in order to reveal its intrinsic properties.

*Falah* فلاح primarily refers to: working out latent potentials and faculties to the best ability, just like ploughing of land and cultivation results in the actualisation of the potentialities of a seed. Whatever nobility and goodness is present in us in latent form must come out and whatever is in the form of potentiality in human mind and personality must be converted into actuality. It is to bring to realisation what our Creator has placed in us as a potential.

The growth and actualization of potential of seeds of any plant/crop results in the yield of crops, fruits and flowers, etc., which leads to the success and prosperity of the crop grower. Therefore, the term '*falah*' is also used to refer to '*success, prosperity, welfare and the attainment of that which one desires or seeks or that whereby one becomes in a happy or good state*'. Thereby, the verb form أَفْلَحَ, means: *to thrive, prosper, be successful, attain or acquire that which one desires or seeks*.

The ultimate goal of human life is the achievement of '*falah*', i.e. success and prosperity, which lies in the actualization of all good human potential, through *taqwa* (preservation and manifestation of one's integrity) and *ibada* (compliance with Allah's Commands).

Human personality/software/self/*nafs* is like a seed, endowed with possibility of disintegration/decadence (*fujoor*) (فجور) or preservation (*taqwa*) (تقوى). The purpose of man's life is to grow this seed, and actualize its positive potential. The Arabic root z-k-w (ز-ك-و) primarily means 'to grow' and 'to develop'. Whoever does personal development (تركيه), attains falah (فلاح) and becomes successful. We need to carefully read the following verses of the Quran and ponder upon the use of words, nafs, fujoor, taqwa, falah and zaka.

وَنَفْسٍ وَمَا سَوَّاهَا. فَأَلْهَمَهَا فُجُورَهَا وَتَقْوَاهَا.  
 قَدْ أَفْلَحَ مَنْ زَكَّاهَا. وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ دَسَّاهَا

*And (consider the) human self, and the One Who provided it with poise and perfection, then endowed it with (possibility of) its disintegration/decadence or preservation. He indeed became successful who developed it; and truly lost is the one who buried it and stifled its development.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 91: VERSE 7-10]

Our Creator has endowed us with enormous physical, mental and spiritual potentials, including the potential of Knowledge, Competence, Creativity, Wisdom, Resourcefulness, Beneficence, Love, Compassion, Kindness, Power, Endurance, Grace, Benevolence, Greatness, Generosity, Perseverance, Steadfastness, Resoluteness, Fortitude, Equanimity, Patience, Righteousness, Uprightness, Integrity, Independence, Self-sufficiency, Self-reliance, Fairness, Justice, etc. The fulfilment of human potentials to the optimal balance and perfection can be best accomplished by living a life in compliance with the guidance of our Creator. In doing so, our lives get a Divine colour and our personalities become a reflection of the Divine Attributes.

صِبْغَةَ اللَّهِ وَمَنْ أَحْسَنُ مِنَ اللَّهِ صِبْغَةً وَنَحْنُ لَهُ عَابِدُونَ

*Allah's Color! And who could be better in coloring than Allah, and we serve Him by complying with His Commands.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 2: VERSE 138]

*Allah says in the Quran:*

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي

*Indeed I am Allah; there is no divine authority except Me; So serve Me by complying with My commands, and establish As-salah for My remembrance.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 21: VERSE 14]

Allah's ZIKR is the remembrance of Allah Himself as well as remembering, revising, and being mindful of His commands in the Quran. That is why the Quran is also called *Az-zikr*.

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَزَّلْنَا الذِّكْرَ وَإِنَّا لَهُ لَحَافِظُونَ

*Indeed, it is We Who have revealed Az-zikr (i.e. the Quran), and surely it is We Who are its Guardian.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 15: VERSE 9]

Purpose of As-Salah is remembrance of Allah and being mindful of His Commands given in the Quran. This Zikr leads to tranquility, taqwa and falah.

أَلَا يَذْكُرُ اللَّهُ تَطْمِئِنُّ الْقُلُوبُ

*...Verily, with the remembrance of Allah, hearts become tranquil.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 13: VERSE 28]

خُذُوا مَا آتَيْنَاكُمْ بِقُوَّةٍ وَاذْكُرُوا مَا فِيهِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

*Adhere firmly with strength and resolve, to that (guidance) which We have given you and stay mindful of those (injunctions) which are (contained) in it, so that you may attain Taqwa.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 2: VERSE 63; SURAH 7: VERSE 171]

فَإِذَا قُضِيَتِ الصَّلَاةُ فَانْتَشِرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَابْتَغُوا مِن فَضْلِ اللَّهِ وَاذْكُرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

*So when the As-salah is concluded, disperse in the land and seek Allah's bounty (i.e., sustenance). And remember Allah much (always staying mindful of His Guidance) so that you may attain Falah.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 62: VERSE 10]

There are two noteworthy points in the above given verse (62/10): One is that *Az-zikr* leads to *falah* (self-actualization, success, prosperity, welfare etc.) and the other is that *Az-zikr* (i.e. being mindful of Allah and His Guidance) is not just during *As-salah* but also after the *As-salah* (ritual) is over.

وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَى عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ

*And establish As-salah; surely As-salah restrains from indecent and unlawful behavior; And Allah's remembrance (and staying mindful of His Guidance) is of greatest importance; Allah is fully cognizant of what you (pretend to) do.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 29: VERSE 45]

Human prosperity is also meant to result from being mindful of Allah's Guidance and then living accordingly. That is why, turning away from Allah's zikr has been linked with a straitened life.

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى

*And whoever turns away from My ZIKR (i.e. My Guidance in the Quran), his shall be a straitened life, and We will raise him on the day of resurrection, blind.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 20: VERSE 124]

It is clear from the above given verses, that the purpose of *As-salah* is Allah's zikr, which leads to 'taqwa' and 'falah'.

It is also clear from the following verses, that man was created to comply with Allah's commands, and compliance with Allah's commands leads him to his 'taqwa' and 'falah'. There is a noteworthy link between *ibada*, *taqwa* and *falah* in the following verses:

وَمَا خَلَقْتُ الْجِنَّ وَالْإِنْسَ إِلَّا لِيَعْبُدُونِ

*And I have created the Jinns and the Humankind to comply with My Commands.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 51: VERSE 56]

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ اعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَتَّقُونَ

*O Mankind! Comply with the Commands of your Sustainer, Who created you and those who came before you, so that you may attain Taqwa.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 2: VERSE 21]

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمُ وَافْعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

*O you who believe! Bow down, be submissive, serve your Sustainer (by complying with His Commands) and do good deeds so that you may attain Falah.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 22: VERSE 77]

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

*And stay conscious of Allah (Guard yourself from the harmful consequences of violating His Commands), so that you may attain Falah.*

[AL-QURAN SURAH 2: VERSE 189]