

Repelling Evil with What Is Better: A Qur'anic Principle of Transformative Conduct

Introduction

The thirty-fourth verse of Surah Fussilat (Quran 41:34) provides profound guidance on dealing with evil and animosity, particularly for those who invite people to Allah. It emphasizes the transformative power of good disposition and patience in overcoming enmity. The verse states:

ولا تستوي الحسنة ولا السيئة ادفع بالتي هي أحسن فإذا الذي بينك وبينه عداوة كأنه ولي حميم

"And not alike are the good and the evil. Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend."

This blessed verse provides profound guidance on how to deal with evil and animosity. It emphasizes the transformative power of good disposition and patience in overcoming enmity.

The Core Message: The Inequality of Good and Evil

The verse begins by asserting that **"The good deed and the evil deed cannot be equal."** This highlights a fundamental distinction between positive and negative actions, underscoring that they do not hold the same value or impact. Following this, the verse issues a direct command: **"Repel [the evil] with one which is better."** This means that instead of retaliating with similar evil, one should respond with kindness, tolerance, and superior conduct. The expected outcome of this approach is remarkably transformative: **"then verily he between whom and you there was enmity [will become] as though he was a close friend."**

This method of inviting people to Allah involves eradicating tensions and reciprocating evil acts with good deeds, rather than seeking vengeance. It refutes the notion that time alone makes things forgotten and highlights that positive and negative reactions have distinct impressions on minds. Propagators of religion are advised to confront indifferent and ill-mannered individuals with good disposition and tolerance to succeed in their call.

The verse implicitly states that wrong-doers and the just, believers and disbelievers, monotheists and polytheists, the knowledgeable and the ignorant, and the generous and the close-fisted are not equal. Similarly, truthful and righteous people whose

words are substantiated by their deeds are not equal with the lying and the ill-mannered.

Responding to Evil with Clemency and Kindness

Allah (SWT) commands the Messenger of His Mercy, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), to turn evil and sin into something better and wrath into clemency and conceal sin with forgiveness or words and refute falsehood with truth. This means that even when disbelievers utter slanderous words or do wrong, the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) should respond with clemency, speaking gently and kindly, with the aim of befriending enemies and drawing them to the Islamic faith. The Holy Qur'an reiterates this approach in other verses, such as "**And argue with them in a way that is better.**" (Quran 16:125) The Noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) himself consistently behaved with enemies in a friendly, kind, and gentle manner, which is said to have led many to embrace Islam.

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله): أربع من كن فيه وكان من قرنه إلى قدمه ذنوبا بدلها الله حسنات: الصدق، والحياء، وحسن الخلق، والشكر

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'Four qualities, when possessed by a person, cause Allah to transform his evil deeds into good deeds, even if he is sinful from head to toe. They are: honesty, modesty, good character and thankfulness.'**

— al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 107, no. 7

عن عبد هلال بن سنان، عن أبي عبد هلال (عليه السلام) (أقل: أقل رسول هلال) (صل هلال عليه وآله وسلم) في خطبة أال أخبركم بخير خاليق الدنيا والآخرة؟ العفو عمن ظلمك، وتصل من قطعك، وإلحسان إلى من أساء إليك، وإعطاء من حرمك

From Abdullah bin Sinan, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: **The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said in a sermon: Shall I not inform you of the best characteristics of this world and the hereafter? Pardoning those who wrong you, maintaining ties with those who cut you off, doing good to those who do evil to you, and giving to those who deprive you.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 12, Section 1, Chapter 113, Hadith 15993

The Prophet Muhammad's Character and Conduct

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) is described in Islamic teachings as a person of exceptional moral character, renowned for his kindness,

compassion, and good temper. The Quran praises him for being gentle and merciful, presenting him as a model of moral excellence for all believers. He possessed a compassionate and merciful nature, remaining kind and forgiving even when faced with hardships and calamities, which underscored his strong character and dedication to spreading love and truth.

His interactions were characterized by gentleness and compassion, avoiding harshness or anger, even towards those who opposed him. This exceptional conduct demonstrated his unwavering commitment to forgiveness and kindness, even in the face of adversity, and highlighted the importance of treating others with respect and dignity, regardless of their behavior. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) was known for his humility and simplicity, never considering himself above others. As a result, he was always kind, cheerful, and smiling, never ruthless, argumentative, or flattering. No one ever became disappointed in him, and whoever sought him never returned hopeless. He would tolerate uninformed individuals who spoke roughly and would let others finish their speech, advising his companions to grant requests to those in need.

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله): ألا أخبركم عن الأجود الأجود ؟ الله ﷻ الأجود الأجود ، وأنا أجود ولد آدم ، وأجودكم من بعدي رجل علم علما فنشر علمه ، يبعث يوم القيامة امة وحده ، ورجل جاد بنفسه لله ﷻ عزوجل حتى يقتل

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'Shall I inform you who the absolutely most generous one is Allah is the Absolutely Most Generous One, and I am the most generous of Adam's offspring, and the most generous from amongst you all after me is the man who has been taught knowledge and subsequently spreads his knowledge to others. He will be raised on the Day of Resurrection as a community in himself, and after him is the man who is generous in giving up his life for Allah, Mighty and Exalted, and is killed for Him.'**

— al-Tarhib wa al-Tarhiib, v. 1, p. 119, no. 5

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله): السخاء خلق الله ﷻ الأعظم

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'Allah has made generosity the greatest moral virtue.'**

— Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 15926

عن أبي عبد الله الصادق عليه السلام: "أن الله تبارك وتعالى خص رسول صلى الله عليه وآله بمكارم الاخلاق فامتنحوا أنفسكم فإن كانت فيكم فاحمدوا الله عزوجل وارغبوا إليه في الزيادة منها، فذكرها عشرة: اليقين والقناعة والصبر والشكر والرضا وحسن الخلق والسخاء والغيرة والشجاعة والمروءة

Aba Abdullah Sadiq (A) said: **"Indeed God, the Blessed and Sublime, has granted God's Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) noble characteristics. Examine yourselves. If you have them, praise God, the Honourable and Exalted, and ask Him for their increase. Then Imam Sadiq (A) mentioned the following ten: certitude, contentment, perseverance, gratitude, contentedness, being good-tempered, generosity, zeal, bravery and chivalry."**

— Bihar al-Anwar Volume: 69 Page: 368.

كان رسول الله (ص) أجود الناس كفا وأكرمهم عشرة، من خالطه فعرفه أحبه.

Amir al-Mu'minin Imam Ali (as) said: **The Messenger of Allah (saww) was the most munificent of people in giving and the most noble in companionship. Whoever mingled with him and came to know him, loved him.**

— Makarim al-Akhlaq by Hasan bin al-Fadl al-Tabrisi, Volume 0, Page 17

This disposition allowed him to capture hearts and reconcile millions with Allah (SWT).

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) was a gentle, lenient, and tolerant individual, possessing a good character, as stated:

عن عيل بن موسى الرضا، عن أبيه عن آبيه، عن عيل بن أبي طالب (عليهم السلام) اقل: اقل رسول هلا (صل هلا عليه وآله وسلم): المؤمن هين لين سمح، له خلق حسن، والكافر فظ غليظ له خلق سيئ وفيه جبرية

From Ali ibn Musa al-Ridha, from his father, from his forefathers, from Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon them) who said: **The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: "The believer is gentle, lenient, and tolerant, having good character; while the disbeliever is rough, harsh, having bad character and contains arrogance."**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 12, Section 1, Chapter 106, Hadith 15946

Furthermore, he emphasized the importance of moral behavior and forbearance in dealings with others, stating,

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله): أمرني ربي بمداواة الناس كما أمرني بأداء الفرائض

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'Allah has commanded me to treat people amicably just as He has commanded me to fulfil the religious obligations.'**

— al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 117, no. 4

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه وآله): امرت بمداواة الناس كما امرت بتبليغ الرسالة

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'I have been commanded to be amicable towards people as much as I have been commanded to deliver the Message.'**

— Tuhaf al-'Uqul, no. 48

عن عبد هللا بن سنان، عن أبي عبد هللا (عليه السلام) اقل: اقل رسول هللا (صلل هللا عليه وآله): أمرني ربي بمداواة الناس. كما أمرني أبدأ الفرائض

From Abdullah bin Sinan, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: **The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: My Lord commanded me to be courteous with people just as He commanded me to perform the obligations.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 12, Section 1, Chapter 121, Hadith 16081

Interacting with Disbelievers and Enemies

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) was instructed to invite people to God's path with wisdom and good admonition, engaging in arguments and debates in a way that is better. He consistently behaved well with people of other faiths, including infidels and dualists, and explicitly commanded Muslims to do the same. This principle extends to the People of the Book (Jews, Christians, and Zoroastrians), whom Muslims are encouraged to treat with mercy and kindness, striving for companionship, and engaging in respectful, gentle dialogue, avoiding insults.

His approach to enemies varied based on the situation: if an enemy came with a sword, he met them with courage; if they came for a scholarly debate, he engaged them with superior wisdom and kindness. This nuanced approach demonstrates that while firmness might be necessary in defense, the default in interaction was kindness.

When the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) entered Mecca with his troops, he treated his enemies with kindness and did not seek revenge. Instead of punishing them, he offered general amnesty and pardons to all his opponents, even making the house of Abu Sufyan, a former arch-enemy, a sanctuary of peace. He also granted a grace period of four months to his enemies. His instruction to Imam Ali (peace be upon him) highlights his unwavering commitment to peace and da'wah (inviting to Islam), prioritizing guidance and protection of human rights over immediate combat, even in the face of aggression.

Responding to Slander and Injustice

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) consistently responded to insults, slander, and mistreatment with kindness and forgiveness, rather than anger or retaliation. He taught that kindness and mildness can beautify even the most difficult situations, while responding with anger and aggression only leads to more harm.

When faced with opposition and harassment, he remained patient and tolerant. Despite being accused of falsehood and subjected to physical harm, he diligently continued his prophetic mission. When given the opportunity to exact revenge on his enemies, he chose instead to pray for their guidance and mercy. An example illustrates this: when a group of Jews came to him with an insult, he remained calm and composed, and instead of reacting, he invited the man to embrace Islam and offered to teach him verses of the Quran.

The teachings emphasize responding to those who are unjust or unkind by repelling their evil with what is best, rather than reciprocating with similar behavior. This approach is explicitly mentioned in the Quran, advising Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) to **"repel evil with that which is best, and promised that if he did so, his enemies would become like intimate friends"** (Quran 41:34). He said to behave well with those who mistreat you.

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله): أحسن إلى من أساء إليك

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'Do good unto the one who has wronged you.'**

— Kanz al-Fawa'id li al-Karajiki, v. 2, p. 31

It is important to note a distinction in the Prophet's approach: while he forgave personal insults and misbehavior with kindness, he was firm when it came to principles and Islamic laws. If someone violated Islamic rulings, he would treat them with severity and justice, showing no flexibility on matters of divine command.

Quranic Directives for Good Disposition and Gentle Argumentation

The Holy Quran contains several verses that underscore the importance of good disposition, mercy, kindness, and gentle argumentation:

- Quran 7:199: **"Take to the Forgiveness and enjoin good and turn away from the ignorant ones."** This reflects the prophetic approach to interacting with others.
- Quran 21:107: **"We did not send you but as a mercy to all the nations."** This verse establishes mercy and kindness as the very foundation of Islam.
- Quran 2:83: Instructs people to **"speak to men good words."**
- Quran 60:8: **"Allah does not forbid you in regard to those who did not make war against you on account of religion and did not expel you from your homes, that you deal with them with kindness and justice. Indeed Allah loves the just."** This clearly permits and encourages kindness and justice towards non-belligerent disbelievers.
- Quran 3:134: Praises **"Who spend [in the cause of Allah] during ease and hardship and who restrain anger and who pardon the people - and Allah loves the doers of good."**
- Quran 41:34: (As noted above) commands to **"repel [the evil] with one which is better; then verily he between whom and you there was enmity [will become] as though he was a close friend."**
- Quran 25:31: Mentions that for every Prophet, God has made an enemy from among the criminals, indicating the reality of opposition, yet not dictating a harsh response. **"And thus have We made for every prophet an enemy from among the criminals. But sufficient is your Lord as a guide and a helper."**

The Essence of Islam: Positive Interaction

According to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family), the religion [of Islam] is positive interaction [with people]. This suggests that Islam is fundamentally about treating others with kindness, respect, and compassion.

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله) : الإسلام حسن الخلق

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'Islam is to be good-natured.'**

— Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 5225

One of the fundamental principles of Islam highlighted in the Quran is the importance of coexisting with others, particularly through tolerance and gentleness. This means extending kindness and respect to all, avoiding harm, backbiting, and slander, and instead seeking to resolve issues through proper channels and positive behavior. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) advised that if one cannot serve people materially, they should serve them with good manners and behavior, emphasizing their profound value. He also taught that

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه وآله): إن صاحب الخلق الحسن له مثل أجر الصائم القائم

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'Verily the one with a good nature has the same reward as the one who fasts and prays during the night.'**

— al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 100, no. 5

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه وآله): ألا أخبركم بأفضل من درجة الصيام والصلاة والصدقة ؟ إصلاح ذات البين؛ فإن فساد ذات البين هي الحالقة

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'Shall I inform you of something that holds a higher status than fasting, praying and giving charity? Making peace between people, for verily sowing dissention between people is indeed calamitous.'**

— Kanz al-'Ummal, no. 5480

حدثني محمد بن موسى بن المتوكل قال حدثني عبد الله بن جعفر الحميري عن محمد بن الحسين بن أبي الخطاب عن الحسن بن محبوب عن أبي حمزة الثمالي عن أبي عبد الله ع قال كان أمير المؤمنين ع يقول لأن أصلح بين اثنين أحب إلي من أن أتصدق بدينارين قال رسول الله ص إصلاح ذات البين أفضل من عامه الصلاة و الصيام

Imam Ja'far Sadiq (peace be upon him) said, **"I consider it better to resolve conflict between two friends better than giving two dinars as Sadaqah."** The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.s.) said, **"Resolving a conflict between two friends is better than worship of one year."**

— Thawab al-A mal wa iqab al-A mal by Shaykh Muhammad b. Ali al-Saduq, Book 2, Chapter 305, Hadith #1

Patience and the Great Portion in Qur'an 41:35

The subsequent verse (Quran 41:35) further clarifies that **"But none is granted it [such good disposition] except those who are patient and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion [of excellences of dispositions] in this world."** This indicates that achieving such a praiseworthy character, which involves responding to evil with good, requires immense patience and tolerance in hardships. Only those possessing a great portion of wisdom, clemency, and knowledge can attain this exalted station.

The verse states:

وما يلقاها إلا الذين صبروا وما يلقاها إلا ذو حظ عظيم

"But none is granted it [such good disposition] except those who are patient and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion [of excellences of dispositions] in this world."

An alternative translation: **"And none are made to receive it but those who are patient, and none are made to receive it but those who have a mighty good fortune."**

Understanding "It" (Such Good Disposition)

The initial phrase "none is granted it" refers to a "good disposition" or "praiseworthy character" (excellences of dispositions). This character is specifically described as the opposite of committing evil deeds. It represents a high moral and ethical state that enables an individual to respond to evil with good, as indicated in the preceding verse (41:34). Thus, "it" signifies the ability to exhibit such noble conduct and transform animosity into friendship through virtuous behavior.

The Essence of "Patience" (Sabr)

The verse clearly states that this good disposition is granted **"except those who are patient."** Patience, in this context, refers to being patient and tolerant in hardships. It is not merely passive endurance but an active steadfastness in the face of challenges. The Quran frequently emphasizes patience as a crucial virtue, describing it as remaining patient and steadfast in all matters and all conditions with which Allah may choose to test a person's submission and servitude. This includes being patient with natural calamities, blessings, and even injustices, all out of love for Allah.

Patience encompasses various dimensions:

- Patience in Obedience to Allah: Steadfastness in fulfilling divine commands, even when challenging.
- Patience in Abstaining from Disobedience: Resisting temptations and refraining from sins.
- Patience in the Face of Calamities: Enduring trials, misfortunes, and injustices with resilience and acceptance of Allah's decree.

The Quran frequently extols patience, highlighting it as an "important characteristic" and an act which requires determination, **"O my son, establish prayer, enjoin what is right, forbid what is wrong, and be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is of the matters [requiring] determination."** (Quran 31:17). It teaches believers to seek assistance through patience and prayer, **"O you who have believed, seek help through patience and prayer. Indeed, Allah is with the patient."** (Quran 2:153), **"And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed,**

it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah]" (Quran 2:45) and promises that Allah is with the patient ones, "And obey Allah and His Messenger, and do not dispute and [thus] lose courage and [then] your strength would depart; and be patient. Indeed, Allah is with the patient." (Quran 8:46).

The Meaning of the "Great Portion" (Hadh Adhim)

The verse further asserts that **"none is granted it except the owner of the great portion [of excellences of dispositions] in this world" or "those who have a mighty good fortune."** This "great portion" signifies a profound spiritual inheritance and exalted status.

According to the commentary, this "great portion" primarily refers to:

- Excellence of Character: High moral traits and commendable dispositions that enable one to respond to evil with good.
- Wisdom, Clemency, and Knowledge: These are the essential qualities that empower an individual to reach the elevated station of patience and the capacity to return good for evil. Only those endowed with these attributes can truly master such noble conduct.

While some may mistakenly perceive worldly wealth, like that of Korah, as the great portion, the Holy Quran asserts that the true great portion belongs to those who possess excellences of disposition.

Furthermore, some Quranic exegetes interpret the great portion as encompassing:

- Paradise and Exalted Stations in the Hereafter: These are the ultimate rewards bestowed by Allah Almighty for enduring patiently and cultivating excellent character. [[Tafsir Majma' al-Bayan]]

The Exclusive Link: Patience and the Great Portion

Quran 41:35 establishes an exclusive and unbreakable connection between patience and the great portion. It means that only those who are patient are truly in possession of this immense spiritual wealth. Without patience, one cannot develop the profound wisdom, clemency, and knowledge necessary to consistently repel evil with good.

The reward for such patience is boundless. As stated elsewhere in the Quran, **"only the patient will be paid back their reward in full without measure"** (Quran 39:10). This indicates that the great portion is not limited to worldly virtues but extends to an immeasurable recompense in the afterlife.

و [جعل الله] الصبر معونة على استيجاب الأجر. (أعيان الشيعة-الطبع الجديد- ج 1 ص 316)

Lady Fatima (peace be upon her): **Allah rendered patience as a help for getting reward**

— Ayan ush-Shia Ataba Al Jadeed, Vol. I, P316

A tradition from Imam al-Sadiq (peace be upon him) further elaborates on this:

عن هشام بن الحكم، عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) اقل: اذا كان يوم القيامة يقوم عنق من : الناس فيأتون باب الجنة فيقال ،من أنتم؟ فيقولون: نحن أهل الصبر فيقال لهم: عل ما صبرتم؟ فيقولون: كنا نصبر عل طاعة هلالا، ونصبر عن معاصي هلالا .(فيقول هلالا عز وجل: صدقوا أدخلوهم الجنة، وهو قول هلالا عز وجل:)إنما يوفى الصابرون أجرهم بغير حساب

From Hisham ibn al-Hakam, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: **On the Day of Resurrection, a group of people will stand and come to the gate of Paradise. They will be asked: Who are you? They will say: We are the people of patience. They will be asked: What were you patient about? They will say: We were patient in obeying Allah and patient in staying away from disobeying Allah. Then Allah, the Mighty and Majestic, will say: They have spoken the truth, let them enter Paradise. And this is in accordance with Allah's words: Indeed, the patient will be given their reward without account [Quran 39:10].**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 19, Hadith 20368

إذا كان يوم القيامة يقوم عنق من الناس فيأتون باب الجنة فيضربونه، فيقال لهم: من أنتم؟ فيقولون: نحن أهل الصبر، فيقال لهم: على ما صبرتم؟ فيقولون: كنا نصبر على طاعة الله ونصبر عن معاصي الله، فيقول الله عز وجل: صدقوا، أدخلوهم الجنة وهو قول الله عز وجل { إنما يوفى الصابرون أجرهم بغير حساب }.

Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (as) said: **When the Day of Resurrection comes, a group of people will rise and come to the gate of Paradise and knock upon it. And it will be said to them: Who are you? And they will reply: We are the people of patience. And they will be asked: Over what were you patient? And they will say: We used to be patient in obedience to Allah, and we were patient in abstaining from disobedience to Allah. Then Allah Azzawajal will say: They have spoken the truth, admit them into Paradise. And that is the saying of Allah Azzawajal { The steadfast will be paid their wages in full, without reckoning }.**

— al-Kafi by Shaykh al-Kulayni, Volume 2, Page 75

عن أبي السفتاج، عن أبي عبد الله (عليه السلام) (في قول هلالا عز وجل)إصبروا وصابروا ورابطوا(اقل: اصبروا عل الفرائض .(وصابروا عل المصائب، ورابطوا عل الئمة)عليهم السلام

From Abu Al-Safatij, from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) regarding the words of Allah, the Mighty and Majestic "**Be patient, and enjoin patience, and be steadfast**": He said: **Be patient in performing obligations, be patient during calamities, and be steadfast with the Imams (peace be upon them).** [Quran 3:200]

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 24, Hadith 20446

Seeking Refuge from Satan: Surah Fussilat 41:36

Verse 36 of Surah Fussilat complements this guidance by addressing potential satanic incitements:

وإِذَا يَنْزَغُنَاكَ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ نَزْغٌ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

"And if an evil whisper from Satan tries to turn you away [from doing good in return for the evil deeds committed by others], then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is the All-Hearer, the Omniscient."

This highlights that incitement to vengeance is a satanic stratagem, whereas doing good in return for evil is a Divine injunction. If one feels provoked to anger or evil, seeking refuge in Allah is prescribed as He hears invocations and nothing is concealed from Him. This instruction, though addressed to the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), is for the entire Muslim community, as Satan cannot sway the Prophets.

The Meaning of Nazgh (Evil Whisper/Incitement)

The Arabic word nazgh (نزغ) in this verse denotes incitement to evil, Satan's temptation, and provocation. It specifically refers to the instigation of vengeance, which is identified as a satanic stratagem. Satan frequently attempts to control individuals by inciting their irascible faculty, causing them to fall into rage, lose self-control, and potentially commit sins. The verse implies that such an "evil whisper" can try to divert one from adhering to the divine injunction of returning good for evil.

The Command to Seek Refuge in Allah

The verse directly instructs the recipient, initially the Noble Prophet (peace be upon him and his family), that whenever Satan attempts to stir temptation in the heart or provoke an undesirable action, one must seek refuge in Allah. This instruction, while addressed to the Prophet, is understood to apply to the entire Muslim community, as Prophets, especially the Seal of the Prophets (peace be upon him and his family), are divinely protected from satanic control.

The act of seeking refuge (ista'adha billah) signifies:

- Protection from Satan: It is a plea for Allah's protection from the accursed Satan's suggestions and provocations. As stated in Surah An-Nahl (16:98), **"So when you recite the Quran, seek refuge with Allah from the accursed Shaitan."**
- Reliance on Divine Attributes: The verse highlights Allah's attributes: **"Indeed, He is the All-Hearer, the Omniscient."** This means Allah hears every invocation and is fully aware of all hidden thoughts and intentions, thus being the ultimate Protector.
- Curbing Anger, Wrath and Passions: Islamic traditions emphasize that many tempests of anger, wrath, lusts, and passions are satanic temptations.

الغضب من الشيطان، والشيطان خلق من النار، والماء يطفىء النار، فإذا غضب أحدكم فليغتسل

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Anger belongs to Satan, Satan was created from fire, and fire can be put out by water. Thus, when one of you gets angry, (s/he should immerse in water**

— Nahj Al-Fasahah

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله): الغضب جمرة من الشيطان

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'Anger is a smouldering ember [kindled by] Satan.'**

— Bihar al-Anwar, v. 73, p. 265, no. 15

عن أبي سعيد الخدري عن النبي صل هلا عليه وآله أنه كان يقول قبل القراءة أعوذ .
ابهلل من الشيطان الرجيم

From Abu Sa'id al-Khudri from the Prophet peace be upon him and his family that he used to say before recitation: **"I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan."**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 6, Section 3, Chapter 57, Hadith 7547

"إن هذا الغضب جمرة من الشيطان توقد في قلب ابن آدم"

Imam Mohammad Baqir (peace be upon him) said: **Anger and wrath are the burning flame of fire which is kindled inside man's heart by Satan**

— 1. Bihar al-Anwar, volume 73, page 278, AlKafi Volume 2, page 302

عن أبي حمزة الثمالي، عن أبي جعفر (عليه السلام) اقل: إن هذا الغضب جمرة من الشيطان توقد في قلب ابن آدم، وإن أحدكم إذا غضب احمرت عيناه، وانتفخت أوداجه، ودخل الشيطان فيه، فإذا خاف أحدكم ذلك من نفسه فليلزم الأرض، فإن رجز الشيطان ليذهب عنه عند ذلك

From Abu Hamza Al-Thumali, from Abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) who said: **Indeed this anger is an ember from Satan that ignites in the heart of the son of Adam. When one of you becomes angry, his eyes turn red, his neck veins swell, and Satan enters him. So if any of you fears this from himself, he should stay close to the ground, for Satan's filth will leave him at that time.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 53, Hadith 20742

عن ميسر اقل: ذكر الغضب عند أبي جعفر (عليه السلام) اقل: ان الرجل ليغضب فما يرضى أبدا حتى يدخل النار، أفيما رجل غضب عبل قوم وهو اقثم فليجلس من فوره ذلك، فإنه يذهب عنه رجز الشيطان، وأيما رجل غضب عبل ذي رحم فليدن منه. فليمسه افن الرحم اذا مست سكنت

From Muyassir who said: Anger was mentioned in the presence of Abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) and he said: **A man becomes angry and will not be satisfied until he enters the Fire. So whichever man becomes angry with people while standing should sit down immediately, for this will remove Satan's filth from him. And whichever man becomes angry with a relative should approach them and touch them, for when a relative is touched, they become calm.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 15, Section 2, Chapter 53, Hadith 20734

- Purification of Faith: Imam 'Ali (AS) taught that when one is tempted by Satan, they should seek refuge in Allah.

الإمام علي (عليه السلام): أحمد الله ٥ وأستعيينه على مدارح الشيطان ومزاجره (مزاحره)، والاعتصام من حبائله ومخاتله

Imam Ali (peace be upon him) said, **'I praise Allah and seek His aid against the acts that led to Satan's banishment and his eviction, and [I seek] His protection from his snares and his deceitful ways.'**

— Nahjul Balaghah, Sermon 151

Connection to Repelling Evil with Good

This verse, **"And if there comes to you from Satan an evil suggestion, then seek refuge in Allah. Indeed, He is the Hearing, the Knowing."** (Quran 41:36) immediately follows the instruction in Surah Fussilat (41:34-35) to **"Repel (Evil) with what is better"** and that **"none is granted it [such good disposition] except those who are patient and none is granted it except the owner of the great portion."**

The placement of verse 36 is significant: it provides the spiritual defense mechanism necessary to uphold the difficult command of returning good for evil. Responding to an adversary with goodness, indulgence, forgiveness, and kindness instead of retaliation can be challenging, as it goes against human instinct for vengeance, which Satan exploits. Therefore, to truly implement the principle of **"repelling evil with good,"** believers must seek Allah's protection from Satan's whispers that would provoke anger, incite retaliation, and deviate them from this noble path.

This strategy of reciprocating evil with good is considered one of the most effective ways to influence obstinate enemies, bringing about a spiritual change in their consciences. The biographies of the Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) and the immaculate Imams (peace be upon them) illustrate this practice, as they often met offenses with kindness, leading many adversaries back to the truth. However, this command applies when the enemy does not exploit such a response as a weakness.

Broader Scope of Seeking Refuge

The concept of seeking refuge from Satan is reiterated in various parts of the Qur'an:

- From Suggestions of Satans (Hamazat): Surah Al-Mu'minun (Quran 23:97-98) commands: **"And say: 'My Lord! I seek refuge in You from the suggestions of Satans,' and 'And I seek refuge in You, my Lord, lest they attend me'."** The word hamazat (plural of humazah) signifies intense release, discharge, and stimulation, referring to the forceful temptations of Satans.
- Manifest and Concealed Satans: The term Shayatin (Satans) is plural, encompassing both manifest (human) and concealed (jinn) Satans who tempt individuals. Seeking refuge involves not only protecting against evil suggestions but also avoiding satanic gatherings and influences.
- General Protection: Seeking refuge extends to various forms of evil and harm, including evil of what He has scattered, from the evil of what He has created, and from the evil of every creature. **"Indeed, I have relied upon Allah, my Lord and your Lord. There is no creature but that He holds its forelock. Indeed, my Lord is on a path [that is] straight."**(Quran 11:56). It is also prescribed for protection from disturbing dreams and from the general evil of whisperings, as seen in Surah Al-Falaq and Surah An-Naas.

The constant need to seek Allah's protection is a reminder that while believers strive to do good, they are perpetually vulnerable to the internal and external machinations of Satan. Thus, *Audhu billahi min ash-shaytanir-rajim* (I seek refuge in Allah from the accursed Satan) is a fundamental practice for all believers, a safeguard that leads to eternal success.

Quranic Verse 3:159: Gentleness, Mercy, and Consultation

Quranic Verse 3:159 provides profound insight into the character of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) and the divinely guided methodology for inviting people to Islam. It highlights the importance of gentleness, mercy, and consultation as essential qualities for a leader, especially in guiding humanity towards truth and faith.

The verse states:

فبما رحمة من الله لنت لهم ولو كنت فظا غليظ القلب لانفضوا من حولك فاعف عنهم واستغفر لهم وشاورهم في الأمر فإذا عزمت فتوكل على الله إن الله يحب المتوكلين

"It was by the mercy of Allah that you were gentle with them (O, Muhammed) for if you had been harsh and hard of heart they would of dispersed from around you. So pardon them and pray forgiveness for them and consult with them in the affair; so when you have decided, then place your trust in Allah; surely Allah loves those who trust."

This verse is explained as providing general instructions, but it was revealed in the context of the Battle of Uhud. Following a defeat where some Muslims had abandoned their posts, they were filled with regret. Upon their apology, Allah commanded a general pardon for them through this verse.

Divine Mercy as the Source of Gentleness

The verse begins by attributing the Prophet's gentle demeanor to the **"Mercy from Allah."** This indicates that his kindness, compassion, and leniency were not merely personal traits but a divine gift and a manifestation of Allah's immense mercy. It was this divine blessing that enabled the Prophet to interact with people in a way that fostered attraction and unity. Allah (SWT) describes Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) as the **"Mercy for all mankind"** (Quran 21:107), reflecting his mission to bring kindness and peace to all nations.

The Impact of Harshness Versus Gentleness

The verse explicitly warns of the consequences if the Prophet had adopted a different approach: "**had you been rough, hard hearted they would certainly have dispersed around you.**" (Quran 3:159). This highlights the critical role of a leader's attitude in gathering people around a cause. Harshness, severity, and hard-heartedness are depicted as detrimental, leading to alienation and scattering, rather than unity and attraction.

- **Attracting People:** The Prophet's gentle behavior was a key factor in drawing people towards him and making them receptive to his message. This quality is crucial for any leader, as it helps to bring people together and build a strong community.
- **Preventing Dispersion:** The verse emphasizes that people are more likely to be drawn to a leader who is kind and compassionate. If the Prophet had been harsh, people would have moved away, hindering the spread of Islam.

Three Practical Instructions for Compassionate Leadership

Following the acknowledgement of the Prophet's gentle nature, the verse provides three specific commands:

1. **Pardon Them (فاعف عنهم):** The Prophet is instructed to forgive people for their shortcomings, mistakes, and even acts of disobedience or indiscipline. This was particularly relevant in challenging situations, such as the Battle of Uhud, where some fresh converts displayed disobedience. The Prophet's gentleness towards them, despite their faults, was essential to prevent them from reverting to disbelief due to their weak faith.
2. **Ask Forgiveness for Them (واستغفر لهم):** This command illustrates the Prophet's deep compassion and concern for his followers. It implies that he should intercede for them, seeking Allah's forgiveness on their behalf, further strengthening their bond and commitment to Islam. This verse specifically suggests that the Prophet's gentle and compassionate approach towards others, including praying for their forgiveness, was a result of Allah's mercy.
3. **Take Counsel with Them in the Affairs (وشاورهم في الأمر):** The verse instructs the Prophet to consult his companions in matters, demonstrating respect for their opinions and fostering a sense of participation and ownership within the community. While the final decision rests with the Prophet, this act of consultation builds trust and solidarity. The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) was sent as a facilitator, instructed to consult with others without prejudice and with tolerance in societal affairs.

Distinction: Leniency in Attitude vs. Firmness in Principles

An important nuance derived from this verse and explained by scholars is the distinction between personal leniency and firmness in divine principles. The Prophet's gentleness was in his personal attitude and interactions, aimed at attracting people and fostering love. However, he was unyielding when it came to the principles of Islam, its laws, and rulings. If Islamic laws were violated, he would treat the matter with severity and justice, ensuring that divine commands were upheld without compromise.

The Quran emphasizes that the Prophet's behavior was gentle and merciful, but it also describes him and his companions as being "**firm of heart against the unbelievers, compassionate among themselves**" (Quran 48:29).

Broader Implications for Da'wah (Inviting to Islam)

The message of Quran 3:159, coupled with other verses, establishes a clear methodology for inviting others to the faith:

- **Wisdom and Beautiful Preaching:** The Quran instructs believers to "**Invite to the way of thy Lord with wisdom and beautiful preaching; and argue with them in ways that are best and most gracious.**" (Quran 16:125) This emphasizes a gentle, understanding, and respectful approach in conveying the divine message.
- **Constructive Argumentation:** Even in debates, the directive is to "argue and debate with them in a way that is better," focusing on moral, humane, and literary methods to calm pure hearts with divine guidance.
- **Transformation of Hearts:** The ultimate goal of this gentle approach is to guide people to happiness and salvation by freeing them from ego and ugliness, allowing them to accept the truth with a kind embrace.

The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) himself stated:

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه وآله): امرت بمداراة الناس كما امرت بتبليغ الرسالة

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**I have been commanded to be amicable towards people as much as I have been commanded to deliver the Message.**'

— Tuhaf al-'Uqul, no. 48

He also advised:

اسمح يسمح لك

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Be lenient to people, and they will be lenient to you**

— Nahj Al-Fasahah

عليك بالرفق، وإياك والعنف والفحش

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Be moderate and avoid harshness and abuse**

— Nahj Al-Fasahah

يسروا ولا تعسروا

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **Be easy- going and do not be hard (on people)**

— Nahj Al-Fasahah

رسول الله ﷺ (صلي الله عليه وآله): يسروا ولا تعسروا، وسكنوا ولا تنفروا

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: '**Ease and do not cause hardship [when propagating], and comfort and do not nauseate.**'

— Sahih al-Bukhari, v. 5, p. 2269, no. 5774

Nuance and Exceptions

While clemency and forgiveness are paramount, the text also indicates important distinctions and exceptions:

- **Personal vs. Principles:** The Prophet (peace be upon him) was gentle and forgiving when insults or wrongs were related to his person. However, he was very firm when it came to principles and showed no flexibility or softness if anyone violated Islamic laws and rulings, treating such matters with severity and justice.
- **Systematic Violation of Rights and Treachery:** While peace is a general principle, in cases of "systematic violation of one's rights" or when dealing with "ruthless and treacherous adversaries who attack innocent messengers," Islam mandates a robust defense of truth and human dignity. This means opposing evil and wrongdoers by denying evil in the heart, denouncing it with the tongue, and forbidding it with physical actions, without fearing blame. It is acceptable to defend oneself after being wronged, though forgiveness and reformation are preferred when possible. The Islamic perspective distinguishes

between returning evil in kind (which is considered evil) and punishing an evil act in a fair and just manner.

Practical Meaning: Transforming Enmity into Understanding

These teachings do not advocate for accepting falsehood or abandoning the truth. Instead, they provide a methodology for dealing with opposition:

- **Correcting Falsehood without Hostility:** The aim is to address errors or injustices without resorting to antagonistic behavior.
- **Defending Truth with Fairness:** The truth should be upheld and defended with impartiality and equity.
- **Seeking Guidance over Personal Victory:** The primary objective in interactions, even with opponents, is to seek their guidance and reconciliation, rather than personal triumph or revenge.

Through this approach of gentleness and forgiveness, Islam teaches that it is possible to transform enmity into understanding and ultimately, friendship. As the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) advised, "Behave well with those who mistreat you." This establishes a general principle of peaceful behavior, with exceptions only for systematic violations of rights where firm resistance is necessary.

The Wisdom and Impact of This Approach

This approach is not a sign of weakness, but rather a manifestation of immense spiritual strength and strategic wisdom:

- **Psychological Impact:** Aggressors often expect retaliation. When met with kindness instead, their conscience is provoked, leading to internal conflict and often repentance. This "pressure of conscience" can be so strong that many enemies change their course and become flexible.
- **Spiritual Rank and Divine Assistance:** The Qur'an states that "**And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, none but persons of the greatest good fortune**" (وما يلقاها إلا (الذين صبروا وما يلقاها إلا ذو حظ عظيم (Quran 41:35). This highlights that such conduct requires a high level of patience and a significant spiritual portion (great fortune) from Allah. Furthermore, "**And be patient and your patience is not but by the assistance of Allah.**" (Quran 16:127)
- **Divine Promise of Honor:** The Prophet (peace be upon him and his family) taught that

رسول الله (صلي الله عليه وآله): عليكم بالعفو؛ فإن العفو لا يزيد العبد إلا عزا، فتعافوا
يعزكم الله.

Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) said: **'Pardoning is incumbent upon you, for verily pardoning [others] only increases the servant's honour, so pardon each other's faults and Allah will grant you honour.'**

— al-Kafi, v. 2, p. 108, no. 5

عن إسماعيل بن أبي زائد السكوني عن أبي عبد هلال (عليه السلام) اقل: اقل رسول هلالا
(صل هلالا عليه وآله وسلم): عليكم. ابلعفو إفن العفو ال يزيد العبد إال عزا، فلتعافوا
يعزكم هلالا

From Ismail bin Abi Ziyad Al-Sakooni from Abu Abdullah (peace be upon him) who said: The Messenger of Allah (peace be upon him and his family) said: You must pardon, for pardoning only increases the servant in honor, so pardon one another and Allah will honor you.

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 12, Section 1, Chapter 112, Hadith 15984

عن جابر، عن أبي جعفر (عليه السلام) اقل: ثالث ال يزيد هلالا بهن المرء المسلم إال عزا:
الصفح عمن ظلمه، وإعطاء من. حرمه، والصلة لمن قطعه

From Jabir, from Abu Ja'far (peace be upon him) who said: **Three things by which Allah only increases a Muslim in honor: forgiving those who wronged him, giving to those who deprived him, and maintaining ties with those who cut him off.**

— Wasa'il al-Shia Vol. 12, Section 1, Chapter 113, Hadith 15996

While the ego might fear that forgiveness leads to humiliation, Allah promises elevation and dignity in this life and the hereafter for those who practice it.

Conclusion

In Islam, the response to evil, slander, and hostility is guided by a profound emphasis on clemency, kindness, forgiveness, patience, and compassionate argumentation, drawing directly from Qur'anic principles and the exemplary character of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family). The overarching aim is to transform enmity into understanding and guide people towards the truth.

The Islamic principle of 'repelling evil with that which is better' (دفع بالتي هي أحسن) is a fundamental guidance for interacting with hostility and wrongdoing. It encourages

a proactive, compassionate, and transformative approach rather than a reactive or retaliatory one. This approach requires moral education, spiritual elegance, and significant self-restraint.

The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) embodied this principle throughout his life, offering numerous practical examples of forgiveness, non-retaliation, patience in adversity, and gentleness as a means of attraction. His conduct serves as the paramount example of these Qur'anic teachings.

The teachings emphasize that this principle is about actively responding with goodness, not merely turning the other cheek in a way that encourages wickedness or exploitation. The objective is to bring peace, order, and harmony to human society. As mentioned in the Quran: **"Repel (Evil) with what is better: then will he between whom and thee was hatred become as it were thy friend and intimate! And no one will be granted such goodness except those who exercise patience and self-restraint, none but persons of the greatest good fortune."** (Quran 41:34-35)

In essence, the Islamic approach, as exemplified by Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), promotes an active, compassionate engagement with wrongdoing, aiming to heal divisions, guide towards truth, and establish peace through virtuous conduct, while maintaining firmness in upholding justice and defending fundamental principles.

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