

Surah 17, Al Israa (The Night Journey), Mecca 50

The Quran's Text & Yusuf Ali's Translation:

لَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ ...

17: 22. Take not with God another object of worship;

... فَتَقْعُدَ مَذْمُومًا مَّخْذُولًا ﴿٢٢﴾

or thou (O man!) wilt sit in disgrace and destitution.

[**Ali's comments:** 2202. The seeming inequality of gifts to men might make short-sighted men impugn the impartiality of God. But the fault lies with such men's own want of knowledge and want of Faith. There is no excuse for them to seek other objects of worship than God. For there is none worthy of worship except God.

2203. If foolish men turn to false objects of worship, they will not only be disappointed, but they will lose the respect of their own fellow-men, and spiritually they will be reduced to destitution. All their talents and their works will be of no avail.]

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا... ^{up}

17: 23. Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents.

...إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا ...

Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life,

... فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا أُفٍّ وَلَا تَنْهَرْهُمَا...

say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them,

... وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا (٢٣)

but address them in terms of honor.

[2204. Note that the act of worship may be collective as well as individual; hence the plural **ta'buda**. The kindness to parents is an individual act of piety; hence the singular **taqul**, **qul**, etc.]

وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ... ^{up}

17: 24. And, out of kindness, lower to them the wing of humility, and say:

... رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَانِي صَغِيرًا (٢٤)

"My Lord! bestow on them Thy Mercy even as they cherished me in childhood."

[2205. Cf. 15:88 and n. 2011. The metaphor is that of a high-flying bird which lowers her wing out of tenderness to her offspring. There is a double aptness.

1. When the parent was strong and the child was helpless, parental affection was showered on the child:

when the child grows up and is strong, and the parent is helpless, can he do less than bestow similar tender care on the parent?

2. But more: he must approach the matter with gentle humility: for does not parental love, remind him of the great love with which God cherishes His creatures?

There is something here more than simple human gratitude; it goes up into the highest spiritual region.]

[**2206.** Note that we are asked to honour our father and mother, not "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exod. 20:12), but upon much higher and more universal grounds, such as befit a perfected revelation.

- In the first place, not merely respect, but cherishing kindness, and humility to parents, are commanded.
- In the second place, this command is bracketed with the command to worship the One True God.

Parental love should be to us a type of divine love: nothing that we can do can ever really compensate for that which we have received.

In the third place (see next verse) our spiritual advancement is tested by this: we cannot expect God's forgiveness if we are rude or unkind to those who unselfishly brought us up.]

رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا فِي نُفُوسِكُمْ...^{up}

17: 25. Your Lord knoweth best what is in your hearts:

[**2207.** It is the heart, and its hidden and secret motives, by which we are judged: for God knows them all.]

...إِنْ تَكُونُوا صَالِحِينَ فَإِنَّهُ كَانَ لِلْأَوَّابِينَ غَفُورًا (٢٥)

if ye do deeds of righteousness, verily He is Most Forgiving to those who turn to Him again and again (in true penitence).

وَأَتِ ذَا الْقُرْبَىٰ حَقَّهُ وَالْمِسْكِينَ وَابْنَ السَّبِيلِ... ^{up}

17: 26. And render to the kindred their due rights, as (also) to those in want, and to the wayfarer:

...وَلَا تُبْذِرْ تَبْذِيرًا (٢٦)

but squander not (your wealth) in the manner of a spendthrift.

[**2208.** In the Jewish Decalogue, which was given to a primitive and hard-hearted people, this refinement of Kindness, -to those in want and to wayfarers (i.e., total strangers whom you come across) finds no place. Nor was there much danger of their wasting their substance out of exuberance. Even the command "to honour thy father and mother" comes after the ceremonial observance of the Sabbath.

With us, the worship of God is linked up with kindness;

- to parents, kindred,
- those in want,
- those who are far from their homes though they may be total strangers to us.

It is not mere verbal kindness. They have certain rights which must be fulfilled.]

[2209. All charity, kindness, and help are conditioned by our own resources. There is no merit if we merely spend out of bravado or for idle show. How many families are ruined by extravagant expenses at weddings, funerals, etc., or (as they may call it) to "oblige friends or relatives", or to give to able-bodied beggars? To no one was this command more necessary than it is to Muslims of the present day.]

إِنَّ الْمُبَذِّرِينَ كَانُوا إِخْوَانَ الشَّيَاطِينِ... up

17: 27. Verily spendthrifts are brothers of the Evil Ones;

...وَكَانَ الشَّيْطَانُ لِرَبِّهِ كَفُورًا (٢٧)

and the Evil One is to his Lord (Himself) ungrateful.

[2210. Spendthrifts are not merely fools. They are of the same family as the Satan. And the Satan himself-fell by his ingratitude to God. So those who misuse or squander God's gifts are also ungrateful to God]

وَأِمَّا تُعْرِضَنَّ عَنْهُمْ ابْتِغَاءَ رَحْمَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ تَرْجُوهَا... up

17: 28. And even if thou hast to turn away from them in pursuit of the Mercy from thy Lord which thou dost expect,

...فَقُلْ لَهُمْ قَوْلًا مَّيْسُورًا (٢٨)

yet speak to them a word of easy kindness.

[2211. You may have to "turn away" from people for two reasons.

- You may not have the wherewithal with which to entertain them and give them their rights; or
- you may have to give them a wide berth because their thoughts are not as your thoughts.

In either case there is no need to speak harshly to them. Your words should be those of "easy kindness", i.e., the sort of kindness (not merely frigid politeness) which flows from pity and understanding and smoothes over unnecessary difficulties in human intercourse.]

وَلَا تَجْعَلْ يَدَكَ مَغْلُولَةً إِلَىٰ عُنُقِكَ... up

17: 29. Make not thy hand tied (like a niggard's) to thy neck,

وَلَا تَبْسُطْهَا كُلَّ الْبَسْطِ فَتَقْعُدَ مَلُومًا مَّحْسُورًا ﴿٢٩﴾

nor stretch it forth to its utmost reach, so that thou become blameworthy and destitute.

[2212. Cf. the phrase for niggardliness in 5:64. We are not to be so lavish as to make ourselves destitute and incur the just censure of wise men, nor is it becoming to keep back our resources from the just needs of those who have a right to our help. Even strangers have such a right, as we saw in 17:26 above. But we must keep a just measure between our capacity and other people's needs.]

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ وَيَقْدِرُ... up

17: 30. Verily thy Lord doth provide sustenance in abundance for whom He pleaseth, and He provideth in a just measure:

إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِعِبَادِهِ خَبِيرًا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٠﴾

for He doth know and regard all His servants.

[2213. If a foolish spendthrift pretends that his generosity, even if it ruins himself, is good for other people, he is reminded that God will take care of all. He knows every one's true needs and cares for them. He gives in abundance to some, but in all cases He gives in just measure. Who are we to pretend to greater generosity! (R).]

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا أَوْلَادَكُمْ خَشْيَةً إِمْلَاقٍ... ^{up}

17: 31. Kill not your children for fear of want:

...نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُهُمْ وَإِيَّاكُمْ...

We shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you:

...إِنَّ قَتْلَهُمْ كَانَ خِطْئًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٣١﴾

verily the killing of them is a great sin.

Transliteration *Wa la_ taqtulu_ aula_dakum khasy-yata imla_q(in), nahnu narzuquhum wa iyya_kum, inna qatlahum ka_na khit'an kabira_(n).*

[2214. The Arabs were addicted to female infanticide. In a society perpetually at war a son was a source of strength whereas a daughter was a source of weakness. Even now

infanticide is not unknown in other countries for economic reasons. This crime against children's lives is here characterized as one of the greatest of sins.]

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا الزَّيْنَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَاحِشَةً وَسَاءَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٢﴾

17: 32. Nor come nigh to adultery: for it is a shameful (deed) and an evil, opening the road (to other evils).

Transliteration *Wa la_ taqrabuz zina_ innahu_ ka_na fa_hisyah(tan), wa sa_'a sabila_(n).*

[2215 Adultery is not only shameful in itself and inconsistent with any self-respect or respect for others, but it opens the road to many evils. **It destroys the basis of the family: it works against the interests of children born or to be born;** it may cause murders and feuds and loss of reputation and property, and also loosen permanently the bonds of society. Not only should it be avoided as a sin, but any approach or temptation to it should be avoided. (17.32)]

وَلَا تَقْتُلُوا النَّفْسَ الَّتِي حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ ...

17: 33. Nor take life -- which God has made sacred -- except for just cause.

...وَمَنْ قُتِلَ مَظْلُومًا فَقَدْ جَعَلْنَا لَوْلِيَّهِ سُلْطَانًا ...

And if anyone is slain wrongfully, We have given his heir authority (to demand Qisas or to forgive):

... فَلَا يُسْرِفُ فِي الْقَتْلِ ...

but let him not exceed bounds in the matter of taking life:

...إِنَّهُ كَانَ مَنْصُورًا (٣٣)

for he is helped (by the Law).

Transliteration *Wa la_ taqtulun nafsā lati harramalla_hu illa_ bil haqq(i), wa man qutila mazlu_man faqad ja'alna_ li waliyyihi sulta_nan fala_ yusrif fil qatl(i), innahu_ ka_na mansu_ra_(n).*

[2216. On the subject of Qisas see 2:178 and the notes thereto. Under the strict limitations there laid down, a life may be taken for a life. The heir is given the right to demand the life; but he must not exceed due bounds, because he is helped by the Law. Some Commentators understand "he" in "**he is helped (by the Law)**" to refer to the heir of the person against whom Qisas is sought. He too will be helped by the Law, if the heir of the first slain exceeds the 'bounds of Law.]

وَلَا تَقْرَبُوا مَالَ الْيَتِيمِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ ... up

17: 34. Come not nigh to the orphan's property except to improve it,

[2217. Cf. 6:152, and other passages relating to orphans, e.g., 2:220. If an orphan's property is touched at all, it should be to improve it, or to give him something better than he had before, - never to take a personal advantage for the benefit of the guardian. A bargain that may be quite fair as between two independent persons would be, under this verse, unfair as between a guardian and his orphan ward until the latter attains the full age of understanding.]

... حَتَّى يَبْلُغَ أَشُدَّهُ ...

until he attains the age of full strength;

[2218. **Ashuddahu** means the age when the orphan reaches his full maturity of strength and understanding, say between the ages of 18 and 30. The age of legal maturity may be 18 (as for certain purposes in India) or 21 (as in England). For certain purposes in Muslim law it may be less than 18. In the orphan's interest a much stricter standard is required in his case.]

... وَأَوْفُوا بِالْعَهْدِ ...

and fulfil (every) engagement, for (every)

[2219. The definite article al has here a generic meaning, and is best translated by "every".]

... إِنَّ الْعَهْدَ كَانَ مَسْئُولًا (٣٤)

engagement will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).

[2220. From the context the engagements referred to would relate to beneficial contracts connected with the orphan's property or promises or undertakings given by the guardian or implied in the terms of his appointment. But the words are general and may be interpreted in the general sense. Note that this sentence does not occur in the similar passage in 6:152, where there was a discussion of social laws: it is appropriate here, where the discussion is about the guardian's personal and individual responsibility in a spiritual sense.]

وَأَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ إِذَا كِلْتُمْ وَزَنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ... ^{up}

17: 35. Give full measure when ye measure, and weigh with a balance that is straight:

[2221. Giving just measure and weight is not only right in itself but is ultimately to the best advantage of the person who gives it.]

...ذَلِكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَحْسَنُ تَأْوِيلًا ﴿٣٥﴾

that is the most fitting and the most advantageous in the final determination.

وَلَا تَقْفُ مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ عِلْمٌ... ^{up}

17: 36. And pursue not that of which thou hast no knowledge;

...إِنَّ السَّمْعَ وَالْبَصَرَ وَالْفُؤَادَ كُلُّ أُولَئِكَ كَانَ عَنْهُ مَسْئُولًا ﴿٣٦﴾

for every act of hearing, or of seeing, or of (feeling in) the heart will be enquired into (on the Day of Reckoning).

[2222. Idle curiosity may lead us to nose into evil, through our ignorance that it is evil. We must guard against every such danger. We must only hear the things that are known to us to be of good report, and see things that are good and instructive and entertain in our hearts feelings or in our minds ideas that we have reason to expect will be spiritually profitable to us. We shall be called to account for the exercise of every faculty that has been given to us. This goes

a little farther than a famous sculpture on a Japanese temple in which three monkeys are shown as putting their hands to their ears, eyes, and mouths, respectively, to show that they were not prepared to hear any evil, or see any evil, or speak any evil. Here idle curiosity is condemned. Futility is to be avoided even if it does not reach the degree of positive evil.]

وَلَا تَمْشِ فِي الْأَرْضِ مَرَحًا...^{up}

17: 37. Nor walk on the earth with insolence:

...إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَخْرِقَ الْأَرْضَ وَلَنْ تَبْلُغَ الْجِبَالَ طُولًا (٣٧)

for thou canst not rend the earth asunder, nor reach the mountains in height.

[2223. Insolence, or arrogance, or undue elation at our powers or capacities, is the first step to many evils. Besides, it is unjustified. All our gifts are from God.]

كُلُّ ذَلِكَ كَانَ سَيِّئُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ مَكْرُوهًا (٣٨)^{up}

17: 38. Of all such things the evil is hateful in the sight of thy Lord.

ذَلِكَ مِمَّا أَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْكَ رَبُّكَ مِنَ الْحِكْمَةِ...^{up}

17: 39. These are among the (precepts of) wisdom, which thy Lord Has revealed to thee.

[2224. The moral law, as expounded in 17:23-39 is far in advance of the bare Decalogue in that it searches out motives, and draws pointed attention to the weak and helpless if we are to reach any real understanding of God.

It begins with a mention of the worship of God, the One True God and ends with a similar mention to close the argument, thus emphasizing the fact that the love of God embraces the love of man and practical help of our fellow-creatures. (R).]

...وَلَا تَجْعَلْ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتُلْقَى فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَلُومًا مَّدْحُورًا (٣٩)

Take not, with God, another object of worship, lest thou shouldst be thrown into Hell, blameworthy and rejected.

[2225. "Blameworthy" carries us back by reminiscence to 17:29, between which and this verse there is mention of crimes committed out of covetousness and a selfish disregard of other people's rights. "Rejected" carries back our reminiscence to 17:18, from which to here we have a reference to crimes that lead to deprivation of God's grace. The latter is of course wider than the former. Note how subtly the two streams of thought are here conjoined.]

Muhammad Asad's Translation:

17:22 – 39

17:22 DO NOT set up any other deity side by side with God, lest thou find thyself disgraced and forsaken:

(17:23) for thy Sustainer has ordained that you shall worship none but Him. And do good unto [thy]

parents. 26 Should one of them, or both, attain to old age in thy care, never say "Ugh" 27 to them or scold them, but [always] speak unto them with reverent speech,

(24) and spread over them humbly the wings of thy tenderness, 28 and say: "O my Sustainer! Bestow Thy grace upon them, even as they cherished and reared me when I was a child!"

17:25 (25) Your Sustainer is fully aware of what is in your hearts. If you are righteous, [He will forgive you your errors]: 29 for, behold, He is much-forgiving to those who turn unto Him again and again.

17:26 And give his due to the near of kin, 30 as well as to the needy and the wayfarer, 31 but do not squander [thy substance] senselessly. 32

(17:27) Behold, the squanderers are, indeed, of the ilk of the satans - inasmuch as Satan has indeed proved most ungrateful to his Sustainer. 33

17:28 And if thou [must] turn aside from those [that are in want, because thou thyself art] seeking to obtain thy Sustainer's grace and hoping for it, 34 at least speak unto them with gentle speech.

17:29 And neither allow thy hand to remain shackled to thy neck, 35 nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit [of thy capacity], lest thou find thyself blamed [by thy dependants], or even destitute.

(17:30) Behold, thy Sustainer grants abundant sustenance, or gives it in scant measure, unto whomever He wills: verily, fully aware is He of [the needs of] His creatures, and

17:31 Hence, do not kill your children for fear of poverty: 36 it is We who shall provide sustenance for them as well as for you. Verily, killing them is a great sin.

17:32 And do not commit adultery" - for, behold, it is an abomination and an evil way.

17:33 And do not take any human being's life - [the life] which God has willed to be, sacred - otherwise than in [the pursuit of] justice." Hence, if anyone has been slain wrongfully, We have empowered the defender of his rights [to exact a just retribution] ;" but even so, let him not exceed the bounds of equity in [retributive] killing. 40 [And as for him who has been slain wrongfully -] behold, he is indeed succoured [by God]! 41

17:34 And do not touch the substance of an orphan, save to improve it, before he comes of age. 42 And be true to every promise - for, verily, [on Judgment Day] you will be called to account for every promise which you have made! 43

17:35 And give full measure whenever you measure, and weigh with a balance that is true: 44 this will be [for your own] good, and best in the end.

17:36 And never concern thyself with anything of which thou hast no knowledge: 45 verily, [thy] hearing and sight and heart - all of them - will be called to account for it [on Judgment Day]!

17:37 And walk not on earth with haughty self-conceit: for, verily, thou canst never rend the earth asunder, nor canst thou ever grow as tall as the mountains! (17:38) The evil of all this is odious in thy Sustainer's sight:"

(17:39) this is part of that knowledge of right and wrong with which thy Sustainer has inspired thee. 47 Hence, do not set up any other deity side by side with God, 48 lest thou be cast into hell, blamed [by thyself] and rejected [by Him]!

[For Asad's comments: See at the end]

Muhammad Pickthall's Translation:

- 17:22** Do not set up with **God** another god; or you will find yourself disgraced, abandoned.
- 17:23** Your Lord decreed that you shall not serve except Him, and do good to your parents. When one of them or both of them reaches old age, do not say to them a word of disrespect nor raise your voice at them, but say to them a kind saying.
- 17:24** Lower for them the wing of humility through mercy, and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they have raised me when I was small."
- 17:25** Your Lord is fully aware of what is in yourselves. If you are good, then He is to those who repent a Forgiver.
- 17:26** Give the relative his due, and the poor, and the wayfarer; and do not waste excessively.
- 17:27** Those who waste excessively are brothers to the devils, and the devil was an unappreciative of his Lord.
- 17:28** If you turn away from them to seek a mercy from your Lord which you desire, then say to them a gentle saying.
- 17:29** Do not make your hand stingy by holding it to your neck, nor shall you lay it fully open so you become in despair and regret.

17:30 Your Lord lays out openly the provision for whom He wishes, and He is able to do so. He is Ever-aware and Watcher to His servants.

17: 31 Slay not your children, fearing a fall to poverty, We shall provide for them and for you. Lo! the slaying of them is great sin.

17: 32 And come not near unto adultery. Lo! it is an abomination and an evil way.

17: 33 And slay not the life which Allah hath forbidden save with right. Whoso is slain wrongfully, We have given power unto his heir, but let him not commit excess in slaying. Lo! he will be helped.

Edip Yuksel's translation:

17:22 Do not set up with God another god; or you will find yourself disgraced, abandoned.

17:23 Your Lord decreed that you shall not serve except Him, and do good to your parents. When one of them or both of them reaches old age, do not say to them a word of disrespect nor raise your voice at them, but say to them a kind saying.

17:24 Lower for them the wing of humility through mercy, and say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they have raised me when I was small."

17:25 Your Lord is fully aware of what is in yourselves. If you are good, then He is to those who repent a Forgiver.

17:26 Give the relative his due, and the poor, and the wayfarer; and do not waste excessively.

17:27 Those who waste excessively are brothers to the devils, and the devil was an unappreciative of his Lord.

17:28 If you turn away from them to seek a mercy from your Lord which you desire, then say to them a gentle saying.

17:29 Do not make your hand stingy by holding it to your neck, nor shall you lay it fully open so you become in despair and regret.

17:30 Your Lord lays out openly the provision for whom He wishes, and He is able to do so. He is Ever-aware and Watcher to His servants.

17:31 Do not kill your born children out of fear of poverty; We shall provide for you and them. The killing of them was a big mistake.*

[**Yuksel's comments:** 017:031 The Arabic word we translated as "children" is aWLaD (plural of WaLaD) and it literally means "those who are born." The story of pagans killing their daughters by burying them alive years after they were born is a mythology. They were simply practicing infanticide, that is, they would murder their daughters as soon as they learned their sexes. For abortion, see 46:15.]

17:32 Do not go near adultery, for it is a sin and an evil path.

17:33 Do not kill, for **God** has made this forbidden, except in the course of justice. Whoever is killed unjustly, then We have given his heir authority. Since he received help let him not transgress in the taking of a life.

17:34 Do not go near the orphan's money, except for what is best, until he reaches maturity. Fulfill your oath, for the oath brings responsibility.

17:35 Give full measure when you deal, and weigh with a balance that is straight. That is good and better in the end.

17:36 Do not uphold what you have no knowledge of. For the hearing, eyesight, and mind, all these are held responsible for that.*

[**Yuksel's comments:** **017:036** This verse instructs us to use both our reason and senses to examine all the information we receive. It warns us against blindly following a religious teaching or political ideology and asks us to be iconoclasts. It warns us not to be hypnotized by the charisma of leaders nor by the social conventions. A society comprised of individuals that value rational and empirical inquiry will never become the victim of religious fanaticism, tragedies brought by charismatic politicians. A religion or sect that glorifies ignorance and gullibility can be very dangerous for its followers and others. As the Physicist Steven Weinberg once put profoundly, "With or without religion, you would have good people doing good things, and evil people doing evil things. But for good people to do evil things, that takes religion." See 6:74-83.]

17:37 Do not walk in the land arrogantly, for you will not penetrate the earth, nor will you reach the mountains in height.

17:38 All of this is bad, and disliked by your Lord.

17:39 That is from what your Lord has inspired to you of the wisdom. Do not make with **God** another god, or you will be cast into hell, blameworthy and rejected.*

[**Yuksel's comments:** **017:039** The followers of hadith and sunna claim that Muhammad was given both the Quran and Wisdom, the latter being delivered in hadith books. For those who know the nature of hadith collections, this is clearly not a wise statement. The verse expressly states that the Wisdom is not separate from the Quran; it is in the Quran. We cannot divorce the Quran from wisdom and make a mockery of "wisdom" by using it to sanctify contradictory hearsay accounts and medieval culture. Besides, the fabricators of hadith were not "wise" enough to name their fabrications "Wisdom," since they picked a wrong word, hadith, which is negatively treated by the Quran when it is used for

any other utterance besides the Quran (6:112-116; 33:38).
Furthermore, one of the attributes of the Quran is hakym, which means "wise." See 9:31; 17:46; 18:26; 36:1; 42:21.]

Asad's comments:

26 Whereas God is the real, ultimate cause of man's coming to life, his parents are its outward, immediate cause: and so the preceding call to God is followed by the injunction to honour and cherish one's parents. Beyond this, the whole of the present passage - up to and including verse 39 - is meant to show that kindness and just dealings between man and man are an integral part of the concept of "striving for the good of the life to come"

27 In Arabic, uff - a word or sound indicative of contempt, dislike or disgust.

28 Lit., "lower for them the wing of humility, out of tenderness (rahmah)" - a metonymical expression evocative of a bird that lovingly spreads its wings over its offspring in the nest.

29 This interpolation gives the meaning of the above elliptic sentence (Tabari, Baghawi Zamakhshari, Razi).

30 In this instance, "his due" evidently refers to the loving consideration due to one's relatives (Zamakhshari and Razi); those of them who are in a state of want are included in the subsequent mention of "the needy" (al-miskin).

31 Regarding this expression, see surah 2, note 145.

32 Lit., "with [utter] squandering" (tabdhiran), i.e., senselessly and to no good purpose. It is to be borne in mind that the term tabdhir does not relate to the quantity but, rather, to the purpose of one's spending. Thus, Ibn 'Abbas and Ibn Mas'ud (both of them quoted by Tabari) defined tabdhir as "spending without a righteous purpose" or "in a frivolous (batil) cause": and Mujahid is reported (ibid.) to have said, "If a man were to spend all that he possesses in a righteous cause, it could not be termed squandering; but if he spends even a small amount in a frivolous cause, it is squandering."

33 Since squandering - in the sense explained in the preceding note - implies an utter lack of gratitude for the gift of sustenance bestowed by God upon man, the squanderers are described as being "of the

ilk [lit., "brethren"] of the satans". Regarding the deeper meaning of the terms "satans" and "satanic", see surah 15, note 16.

34 I.e., "because thou art thyself in want, and therefore unable to help others".

35 A metaphor signifying miserliness and, in particular, unwillingness to help others (cf a similar expression in 5:64).

36 Historically, this may be a reference to the pre-Islamic Arabian custom of burying unwanted female children alive (see note 4 on 81 :8-9), as well as to the occasional - though much rarer - sacrifices of male children to some of their gods (see Zamakhshari's comments on 6:137).

Beyond this, however, the above prohibition has a timeless validity inasmuch as it relates also to abortions undertaken "for fear of poverty", i.e., on purely economic grounds.

37 Lit., "do not come near adultery", thus intensifying the prohibition. It is to be noted that the term zina signifies all sexual intercourse between a man and a woman who are not husband and wife, irrespective of whether either of them is married to another partner or not; hence, it denotes both "adultery" and "fornication" in the English senses of these terms.

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38 I.e., in the execution of a legal sentence or in a just war (see 2:190 and the corresponding note 167), or in individual; legitimate self-defence. notes. In the present context, the term wali ("protector" or "defender of [one's] rights") is usually taken to mean the heir or next of kin of the victim; Zamakhshari, however, observes that it may also apply to the government (as-sultan): an interpretation which is obviously based on the concept of the government as the "protector" or "defender of the rights" of all its citizens. As regards the expression qutilamazlaman ("slain wrongfully"), it is obvious that it refers only to cases of wilful homicide, since the concept of zulm applies in the Qur'an exclusively to intentional and never to accidental wrongdoing.

39 This refers to the legal punishment for homicide, termed qisas ("just retribution") and explained in 2:178 and the corresponding

40 Thus, the defender of the victim's rights (in this case, a court of justice) is not only not entitled to impose a capital sentence on any but the actual murderer or murderers, but may also, if the case warrants it, concede mitigating circumstances and refrain from capital punishment altogether.

41 I.e., he is avenged in this world by the retribution exacted from his murderer, and in the life to come, blessed by the special grace which God bestows on all who have been slain without any legal or moral justification (Razi). Some of the commentators, however, relate the pronoun "he" to the defender of the victim's rights, respectively, to the latter's heir or next of kin, and explain the above phrase as meaning "he is sufficiently helped by the law of just retribution (qisas) and should not, therefore, demand any punishment in excess of what is equitable".

42 See surah 6, note 149.

43 Lit., "every promise shall be asked about" or "investigated".

44 Lit., "straight" (mustaglm) - a term which in the Qur'an has invariably a spiritual or moral connotation. Hence, as in the similar phrase in 6: 152, the above injunction applies not merely to commercial transactions but to all dealings between man and man.

45 Or: "do not follow [or "pursue"] anything...", etc. This would seem to relate to groundless assertions about events or people (and hence to slander or false testimony), to statements based on guesswork unsupported by evidence, or to interfering in social situations which one is unable to evaluate correctly.

46 According to some commentators, this condemnation refers to what has been mentioned in the preceding two verses; more probably, however, it extends to the subject-matter of all the prohibitions whether enunciated as such or merely implied - in verses 22-37.

47 Or: "which thy Sustainer has revealed to thee". It is to be noted that the noun hikmah, usually signifying "wisdom", is derived from the verb hakama ("he prevented" or "restrained [him or it]", i.e., from acting in an undesirable manner). Hence, the primary meaning of hikmah is "that which prevents one from evil or ignorant behaviour" (cf Lane 11, 617); in its positive sense, it signifies "

[conscious] insight into that which is most excellent" (Lisan al-'Arab, Taj al-'Arus). Inasmuch as this term refers here, in particular, to what is "odious in God's sight", it implies moral discrimination (or "the knowledge of right and wrong") on the part of men; and this, in its turn, presupposes the existence of an absolute, God- willed standard of moral values.

48 Since there is no basis for an acceptance of absolute moral values - i.e., values that are independent of time and social circumstances - without a belief in God and His ultimate judgment, the passage ends, as it began, with a call to a cognition of God's oneness and uniqueness.