

Seerah is the answer: Identity – King or Vicegerent?

In Islam there are no half measures. Islam demands complete and total obedience. This was the test of the people of Makkah. Islam grew and the elite couldn't contain its spread, so they were willing to compromise. But Islam didn't accept a compromise formula. It was all or nothing.

This is what the Makkan polytheists and sad to say, modern-day Muslims find difficult to do. We also want to follow a compromised faith which bows and bends to our will, instead of we bowing to the Will of Allah ﷻ. But that didn't work for the Makkans and it won't work for us. Allah ﷻ ordered:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا ادْخُلُوا فِي السِّلْمِ كَآفَّةً وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ
الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُّبِينٌ

Baqara 2: 208. *O you who believe! Enter completely in Islam and follow not the footsteps of Shaytaan. Verily! He is to you a plain enemy.*

To be able to do this and to do it gladly we need a change in perspective and recognize that this life will end and then another life will begin which will go on forever. Whatever we do in this life affects that life and those effects are everlasting. It is like moving your mouse on the mouse pad which moves the cursor on the screen and implements changes. The action is in one place, but its effect is elsewhere. When we understand that, we learn to choose with the perspective of the Aakhirah in mind. We learn to do things which will have a long-lasting positive effect, even if it means some inconvenience immediately. The Khalifa of Banu Umayya Al Waleed bin Abdul Malik came to Makkah for Umrah. After he completed his Umrah, he asked if there were any of the Tabiyyoon in Makkah. Someone took him to meet one of them. He asked the man of Allah ﷻ, "Why do I fear death?" The Wali Allah ﷻ answered, "You have built your palace in this world and have left your life of the Aakhirah, barren. If instead, you had built your palace in Jannah even if had to be done at a cost in this life, you would have looked forward to going there." This is our challenge today also. Where do we want to build our palaces? That place will be the dearest to us.

So, we need to live this life very thoughtfully because once we cross the boundary of this existence, there is no return. The Sahaba understood this perfectly and that is why they took decisions which on the face of it were extremely difficult. But they did them with ease and stayed firm on them.

The two landmark instances that come to mind are the prohibition of alcohol and interest-based banking. The Eighteenth Amendment to the US Constitution instituted Prohibition in the United States as a nationwide constitutional ban on the production, importation, transportation, and sale of alcoholic beverages. The United States Government tried to enforce this from 1920 to 1933. This led to violence, bootlegging, crime and loss of jobs and tax revenue to the government and so Prohibition ended with the ratification of the Twenty-first Amendment, which repealed the Eighteenth Amendment on December 5, 1933. Total cost to the State was in hundreds of millions of dollars, both direct and indirect. One can understand the difficulty of trying to change the habit of millions of people to whom drinking alcohol was as natural as breathing. All the evils that came with it, of domestic violence, liver and heart disease, impaired faculties and so on were things they had become used to and accepted. They knew in principle that alcohol was harmful, which is why the law was passed, but they were not prepared to pay the price of it in real terms because it was too painful and inconvenient for them. They fought the law and eventually evil won against good because people gave in to their desires and preferred them even to their own good sense.

But when Allah ﷻ said:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا إِنَّمَا الْخَمْرُ وَالْمَيْسِرُ وَالْأَنْصَابُ وَالْأَزْلَامُ رِجْسٌ
مِّنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ فَاجْتَنِبُوهُ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ

Ma'aida 5:90 *O you who believe! Intoxicants (all kinds of alcoholic drinks), gambling, Al-Ansab and Al-Azlam (fortune telling) are an abomination of Shaytaan's handiwork. So, avoid (strictly all) that (abomination) in order that you may be successful.*

The Sahaba simply stopped drinking. It took Rasoolullah ﷺ not years or months or even weeks; people simply stopped drinking as soon as they heard the Revelation. It is interesting to reflect that alcohol is addictive. So those who habitually drank wine and liquor were addicted and so they were alcoholics to some degree or the other. Giving up their addiction was not easy.

Alcoholics Anonymous says that alcoholism can never really be cured. All the alcoholic can do is to stay away from alcohol. Because no matter how long he remains clean, if he goes near it, he would be hooked again. But in the case of the Sahaba, this didn't happen. Not only did they stop drinking and distilling, but they destroyed their stock and even smashed the amphorae in which they used to store the liquor. When Rasoolullah ﷺ asked them why they had destroyed the utensils, since they could have been washed and used to store other things, they replied, "Ya Rasoolullah ﷺ, we don't want anything to remind us about what we used to do." How did this level of obedience come about? It came from the testing times of Makkah where the Sahaba established the supremacy of Allah ﷻ's orders over their wills. This is our task. To submit our hearts. We must settle this question of supremacy. Who is supreme? Me or Allah ﷻ?

Similar is the case of the prohibition of interest-based banking. Allah ﷻ ordered:

الَّذِينَ يَأْكُلُونَ الرِّبَا لَا يَقُومُونَ إِلَّا كَمَا يَقُومُ الَّذِي يَتَخَبَّطُهُ
الشَّيْطَانُ مِنَ الْمَسِّ ذَلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا الْبَيْعُ مِثْلُ الرِّبَا وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ
الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا فَمَنْ جَاءَهُ مَوْعِظَةٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ فَانْتَهَى فَلَهُ مَا سَلَفَ
وَأَمْرُهُ إِلَى اللَّهِ وَمَنْ عَادَ فَأُولَئِكَ أَصْحَابُ النَّارِ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ
يَمْحَقُ اللَّهُ الرِّبَا وَيُزِيلُ الصَّدَقَاتِ وَاللَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ كَفَّارٍ أَثِيمٍ

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ لَهُمْ
أَجْرُهُمْ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِمْ وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يَحْزَنُونَ
يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَذَرُوا مَا بَقِيَ مِنَ الرِّبَا إِن كُنتُمْ
مُؤْمِنِينَ

فَإِن لَّمْ تَفْعَلُوا فَأْذَنُوا بِحَرْبٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِن تُبْتُمْ فَلَكُمْ رُؤُوسُ
أَمْوَالِكُمْ لَا تَظْلِمُونَ وَلَا تُظْلَمُونَ

Baqara 2: 275. Those who eat Riba (interest) will not stand (on the Day of Resurrection) except like the standing of a person beaten by Shaytaan leading him to insanity. That is because they say: "Trading is only like Riba (interest)," whereas Allah has permitted trading and forbidden Riba (interest). So, whosoever receives an admonition from his Rabb and stops eating Riba (interest) shall not be punished for the past; his case is for Allah (to judge); but whoever returns [to Riba (interest)], such are the dwellers of the Fire; they will abide therein. **276.** Allah will destroy Riba (interest) and will give increase for Sadaqat (deeds of charity) And Allah likes not the disbelievers, sinners. **277.** Truly those who believe, and do deeds of righteousness, and establish As-Salat (Iqamat-as-Salat), and give Zakat, they will have their reward with their Rabb. On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. **278.** O you who believe! Fear Allah and give up what remains (due to you) from Riba (interest) (from now onward), **if you are Believers.** **279.** And if you do not do it, then take a notice of war from Allah and His Messenger. But if you repent, you shall have your capital sums. Deal not unjustly (by asking more than your capital sums), and you shall not be dealt with unjustly (by receiving less than your capital sums).

There is no prohibition in the Qur'an which has been stated more strongly than this. When these Ayaat were revealed Rasoolullah ﷺ declared on behalf of his uncle, Abbas bin Abdul Muttalib (RA) that all interest due on loans given by his bank was null and void. Allah ﷻ only knows what that amounted to in terms of today's currency value.

Not only did Al Abbas (RA) not protest, publicly or privately, he stood by this decision, took the loss and never looked back. With one stroke all interest-based dealings were stopped. We are talking about a huge socio-economic change. It is not only difficult, today we imagine that it is not possible at all. Why else is it that every Muslim country, almost without exception, has interest-based banking entrenched in it. I won't talk about the Ulama who 'allow' interest-based banking on all kinds of concocted reasoning, permitting something that they have no authority to do. I won't even talk about Muslims who take loans, lend money and indulge in interest-based transactions all over the world.

Little do we realize that Allah ﷻ's prohibition is not only categorical but also conditional. He said, 'Leave interest-based dealings, if you are Believers.' So, if we don't leave them, what are we saying about ourselves? Then Allah ﷻ went further and gave an ultimatum and said: *And if you do not do it, then take a notice of war from Allah and His Messenger ﷺ*. What does that mean for those who still refuse to give up interest-based dealings? It means that you have accepted a declaration of war from Allah ﷻ and Rasoolullah ﷺ. What does it say about your future when you meet Allah ﷻ? What does it say about acceptance of your dua? What does it say about you seeking the protection of Allah ﷻ from your enemies and seeking the intercession of Rasoolullah ﷺ on the Day of Judgement? What does that say about your Imaan itself? Ask yourself, if this is what you want from life. If not, then do what you know you must do. If you are afraid of losing money by getting out of your loan, consider it the price of getting out of the list of Enemies of Allah ﷻ and into the list of Awlia Allah ﷻ. For those who still want to believe the bankers who loaned you the money or the financial analysts who tell you the benefits of leveraging assets, think about what Allah ﷻ promised: *Allah will destroy Riba (interest) and will give increase for Sadaqat (deeds of charity).*

How can something that Allah ﷻ promised to destroy profit you? As I said, the first question to ask is, 'Do I really have Imaan that one day I will die and meet Allah ﷻ?'

To the one who submits his will to the Will of Allah ﷻ and follows the Sunnah of Rasoolullah ﷺ, Allah ﷻ promised: *On them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.* That is the description of people of Jannah. May Allah ﷻ make us among them.

Now that we have completed this section, let us sit and reflect on our activities, habits, preferences, likes and dislikes and see if they reflect us as obedient to Allah ﷻ or as people who choose their desires over the Will of Allah ﷻ? You may like to also do this as a family exercise where everyone shares their thoughts in this context.

Then go to the Action Plan page and write in what you need to start doing, stop doing and continue doing. Try to be as specific as possible because that will help you to monitor your success after you start applying the new ways.

Once you have listed the Start, Stop and Continue, please look at each one and list the Inhibitors and Enablers for them. What are the things, habits, conditions, people and situations that are likely to inhibit you from Starting, Stopping or Continuing that activity? And what are the things, habits, conditions, people and situations that are likely to help and enable you to succeed? This will help you to put your new intentions into practice and gain from this exercise.

Action Plan

Start: What are the attitudes, behaviors, habits that I need to **START** to inculcate in order to align myself and my life with the lesson from the Seerah I just read?

Stop: What are the attitudes, behaviors, habits that I do now but need to **STOP** in order to inculcate to align myself and my life with the lesson from the Seerah I just read?

Continue: What are the attitudes, behaviors, habits that I do at present, which I need to **CONSCIOUSLY CONTINUE** to do in order to align myself and my life with the lesson from the Seerah I just read?