

RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT:
APPRECIATING WHAT ISLAM “HAS”

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Near the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount, the Savior separated the moral path required of Christians from the legalistic path advocated by Pharisees. He identified a crucial point of separation as the moment when we exercise personal judgment. Whereas pharisaical judgment sought justification through a rigid application of law, Christian judgment should be exercised after the manner of the Lord. The Joseph Smith translation of Matthew 7 goes further and defines a unique Latter-day Saint standard of judgment: “Judge not unrighteously, that ye be not judged, but *judge righteous judgment*” (JST Matthew 7:1). The broad Christian prohibition of “judgment” (“judge not, that ye be not judged”) was thus restated with a caution against judging in an unrighteous manner. The Lord additionally required that Latter-day Saints not only refrain from improper methods of judgment, but that they also render judgments that are genuinely righteous.

The scriptural injunction leaves few judicial alternatives to Latter-day Saints: unrighteous judgment is forbidden and righteous judgment is required. There is no neutral ground, where we may choose not to judge at all. Perhaps, however, there is some place for deferring judgment on a question or subject until such time as we are qualified to approximate a righteous judgment. Thus the Lord gives us room to develop the capacity for righteous judgment if we are astute enough to selectively defer judgment. Socrates was right: wisdom consists of knowing that truly we know nothing—and then deferring judgment until we learn those things necessary to render righteous judgment.

What makes a judgment righteous? Joseph Smith described the way in which God exercises judgment, demonstrating the pattern for our own judgments:

But while one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard; He views them as His offspring, and without any of those contracted feelings that influence the children of men... He... will judge all men, not according to the narrow contracted notions of men, but “according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil,” or whether these deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India. He will judge them “not according to what they have not, but according to *what they have*,” those who have lived without law, will be judged without law, and those who have a law, will be judged by that law... He will award judgment or mercy to all nations according to their

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several deserts, their means of obtaining intelligence, the laws by which they are governed, the facilities afforded them of obtaining correct information, and His inscrutable designs in relation to the human family.¹

The Father looks upon all His children with parental love. Perhaps it is incumbent upon Saints to regard their brothers and sisters with fraternal (or brotherly) love. The evils of the world often result directly from the actions of evil people. Additionally, the influence of the evil-minded may prosper when righteous people close their hearts and minds toward others, promoting an environment of fear and distrust. The exercise of righteous judgment helps avert this. It opens the heart and clears the mind, and prepares the way for brotherly regard and love.² Thus righteous judgment advances the work of God as an act of faith that enables the atonement of Christ.

What are principles of righteous judgment? Righteous judgment:

- Is grounded in *fraternal love*, patterned after the love of our Eternal Father.
- Means that *God alone* will exercise *final judgment*, deciding whether the actions of a person are authentically good or authentically evil.³
- Involves an expression of *genuine friendship*, the kind that will produce a Zion society.
- Examines what peoples *have*, instead of what they do *not have*.
- Takes *geo-cultural factors* into consideration (“whether these acts were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India”).
- Considers a people’s *means of obtaining intelligence*.
- Evaluates the *laws that govern* a people.
- Examines the facilities afforded for *obtaining correct information*.

The exercise of righteous judgment demands a significant investment of mental, emotional, and spiritual energy on the part of the “judge” and has all the trappings of a life-long, full-time job. Ultimately, it is God’s job (Moses 1:39). Nevertheless, He has commanded Latter-day Saints to engage in the process of righteous judgment in order to become more godlike.⁴ Rather than attempting to master the method in its entirety it may be enough to begin by applying one principle of righteous judgment. Altogether our opinions manifest a common flaw: they concentrate upon what Muslims *have not* instead of investigating what they *have*.

By focusing on what other peoples (in this case Muslims) have, we place the mandate of the Thirteenth Article of Faith into active practice. Searching for what is virtuous, lovely, of good report, or praiseworthy in another religion and culture leads to an awareness that the plan of salvation is more inclusive than we might think; and that the Lord is truly interested in all of His sheep hearing His voice, in creating a single fold with a single Shepherd.⁵ Such a quest also confirms our

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commitment to the restored gospel and to priesthood ordinances as provided exclusively through The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Finally, our strengthened commitment to the Church helps cultivate anxiety for the souls of those we have come to love and respect through the righteous examination of what *their* religion has, spurring us on to missionary work.

WHAT DOES ISLAM “HAVE”?

The image of Islam cultivated in politics and the media is highly misrepresentative.

Presenting even a small slice of another religion, especially one as complex as Islam, is a sobering task. The task was handicapped by the events of September 11, 2001. The image of Islam cultivated in politics and the media is highly misrepresentative. Osama bin Ladin and his small number of followers represent Islam about as well as Mark Hoffman or Adam Swapp represent the LDS church; bin Ladin et al. represent states in which Muslims predominate about as well as Timothy McVeigh represents Americans. Examining positive aspects of Islam—aspects that lie beyond appearances and exaggerated caricatures presented in popular media—empowers Latter-day Saints to exercise righteous judgment and to engage the Muslim world in a dialogue conducive to peace and harmony. Perhaps more significantly, exercising righteous judgment builds bridges of friendship that can be used to teach the fulness of the gospel to Muslims—indirectly through our personal example, and directly through formal missionary efforts.

ISLAM AND THE PLAN OF SALVATION

Does Islam have a plan for happiness? As a missionary, I was taught to approach potential converts by asking three foundational questions: Where did we come from? Why are we here? Where will we go after this life ends? Islamic teaching provides Muslims with basic answers as means for achieving a measure of happiness.⁶ As will be shown, Islam teaches that each individual came to earth having made a covenant to obey God.* Islam teaches that humans are placed on earth to prove their obedience to God or to repent when they fail to obey His commandments, demonstrating a willingness to keep covenants made before this life. In order to help us along the path of obedience, God sends Guidance, in the form of scriptures and prophets to warn and encourage. Finally, Islam teaches that all people will attend a final judgment where their

* The name “God” is used interchangeably with the name “Allah” in this essay, being derived from the Church’s similar liturgical usage. For example, the LDS sacrament prayer in Arabic begins “Ya Allah” or “O God” (the Eternal Father, etc.). The Church uses the name Allah to refer to God the Father in Arabic.

good and evil deeds are weighed. Those having performed worthy deeds will enter Paradise. Those persons who disobeyed God will suffer the torments of Hell. Therefore, the overarching theme of Islamic teaching is that all people must make and keep covenants with God in order to attain everlasting happiness.

WHERE DID WE COME FROM?

The Qur'an teaches that Adam and his children existed prior to Adam's physical creation and prior to each individual's birth. The Qur'an also teaches that we each exercised agency and faith in that premortal state. Adam played a central role in the preexistent realm where God addressed the angels:

Behold, thy Lord said to the angels: "I will create a vicegerent on earth." They said: "Wilt Thou place therein one who will make mischief therein and shed blood?—whilst we do celebrate Thy praises and glorify Thy holy name?" He said: "I know what ye know not."

And He taught Adam the nature of all things; then He placed them before the angels, and said: "Tell me the nature of these if ye are right."

They said: "Glory to Thee, of knowledge We have none, save what Thou Hast taught us: In truth it is Thou Who art perfect in knowledge and wisdom."

He said: "O Adam! Tell them their natures." When he had told them, Allah said: "Did I not tell you that I know the secrets of heaven and earth, and I know what ye reveal and what ye conceal?" (Qur'an 2:30-33)⁷

Adam is thus set apart from the other angels in several respects:

1. Adam is God's *vicegerent*, a Latin term meaning one who stands in the place and stead of a ruler in the ruler's absence. Vicegerents not only take the place of absent monarchs, but they also act vicariously as priests, exercising supernatural or divine powers. The Arabic word used in this passage is *khalifa*, derived from a verb that means "to succeed, to appoint a successor." *Khalifa's* root verb can also mean "to have descendants or to have offspring." The priesthood references are obvious. Adam is not only the successor to God's authority on earth acting in the very place of God at the altar of worship, he is also the father of all who live on it, for we too are Adam's successors in the flesh. This concept is reminiscent of the revelation given to Abraham regarding the seed of the flesh and the seed of the priesthood (Abraham 2:11).
2. Adam, in the office of Vicegerent of God, was entrusted with knowledge of the spiritual *nature* of all things, "the secrets of

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heaven and earth.” Islam teaches that all things testify of God and His power. The entire universe comprises His Signs (Arabic, *ayat allahi*). The Qur’an, therefore, not only contains the testimony of Adam (and many other prophets) but also proclaims the testimony contained in nature itself. Thus, many of its chapters begin by invoking natural signs of God’s power and existence: “By the Glorious Morning Light, And by the Night when it is still” (Qur’an 93:1-2). Through premortal instruction Adam was given knowledge of the true nature of all things. They are testimony of a Divine Being and are more real than mere appearances indicate because they are an extension of divine power. This knowledge, hidden from the angels, gave proof of Adam’s supremacy as Vicegerent.

The story of Adam-preexistent continues in the Qur’an:

And behold, We said to the angels: “Bow down to Adam” and they bowed down. Not so Iblis: he refused and was haughty: He was of those who reject Faith.

We said: “O Adam! dwell thou and thy wife in the Garden; and eat of the bountiful things therein as where and when ye will; but approach not this tree, or ye run into harm and transgression.” (Qur’an 2:35-36)

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God informed the angels that Adam was worthy of veneration by virtue of his special knowledge and by virtue of his office as Vicegerent. Iblis suffered from incurable pride, and refused to acknowledge Adam’s supremacy. This passage from the Qur’an is silent as to whether Iblis was cast out of God’s presence. Iblis does, however, appear in the Garden with a new name: Satan (Arabic, *Shaitan*).⁸ Adam was placed in the Garden with his wife (Eve) with the command not to eat of the forbidden fruit. The Qur’anic version of the preexistence and the fall continues:

Then did Satan make them slip from the garden, and get them out of the state of felicity in which they had been. We said: “Get ye down, all ye people, with enmity between yourselves. On earth will be your dwelling-place and your means of livelihood - for a time.”

Then learnt Adam from his Lord words of inspiration, and his Lord Turned towards him; for He is Oft-Returning, Most Merciful.

We said: “Get ye down all from here; and if, as is sure, there comes to you Guidance from me, whosoever follows My guidance, on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve.

“But those who reject Faith and belie Our Signs, they shall be companions of the Fire; they shall abide therein.” (Qur’an 2:36-39)

The implication that all humanity was in a preexistent state with God is stated in the phrases “get ye *down* all ye people” and “get ye

down all from *here*” together with the warning to accept the guidance of God. Those who heed the promised guidance will be rewarded, and those who reject faith and the Signs of God will be damned. Finally, the passage gives another clue to the events that transpired prior to birth: the word “belie” (Arabic, *kaddhabuu*). The Arabic word denotes active and purposeful betrayal or denial, not the simple failure to recognize God’s guidance or failure to act in accordance with the guidance offered. If, as is indicated, individuals on earth refuse to follow God as an explicit denial, what specifically are they denying? Another passage from the Qur’an provides an explanation:

When thy Lord drew forth from the Children of Adam from their loins their descendants, and made them testify concerning themselves saying: “Am I not your Lord Who cherishes and sustains you?” They said “Yea! We do testify!” This lest we should say on the Day of Judgment: “Of this we were never mindful.”

Thus do we explain the Signs in detail: and perchance they may turn unto Us.
(Qur’an 7: 172, 174)

The first line of this text is unusual, referring to a time when God took (in one moment) the descendants of all the children of Adam from their *own* loins, serving as another Islamic reference to our collective premortal life. God in that very moment had each individual testify “concerning themselves” that God is their Lord. In other words, each person who came to earth took an oath to respect God as his or her Lord, the source of love and life (Cherisher and Sustainer).

Each individual in the posterity of Adam had a separate existence from the time of Adam, and a covenant was taken from all of them, which is binding accordingly on each individual... Adam’s seed carries on the existence of Adam and succeeds to his spiritual heritage. Humanity has been given by Allah certain powers and faculties, whose possession creates on our [part] special spiritual obligations which we must faithfully discharge... [this is] the implied Covenant of the whole of humanity.⁹

Thus Adam as *Khalifa*, Vicegerent and Successor according to Islamic teaching made covenants with God. Through Adam and through his obedient posterity, the covenants made with God before this life are perpetuated and extended to all humanity. Through this covenant, Muslims believe that humankind has promised to obey God on penalty of damnation. No person can claim ignorance of God’s intentions regarding mortality (lack of mindfulness). Disobedience is more than an act of rebellion, for Muslims it is a betrayal of our pre-mortal covenant, the denial of a fundamental condition upon which the right to enter into mortality through birth was granted. Recall that Iblis refused to bow to Adam, rejecting God’s appointed representative and the person through

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whom all mortals were born. As a result, Iblis became *Shaitan*, or Satan, the enemy of God and enemy of mankind. God gives humans all of the faculties necessary to fulfill this covenant, together with guidance, answering in major part the question, “Where did we come from?”

WHY ARE WE HERE?

The Qur’an declares the purposes of mortality in direct terms: “O ye who believe! Fulfill all obligations!” (Qur’an 5:1) The purpose of mortality, according to Islam, is to test humans and see if they will fulfill the covenant made before they were born. Covenants carry obligations, and Islam defines the types of obligations imposed upon each individual.

First, there are divine obligations, namely, to love God and worship Him only—holding nothing back. In Islam this is known as the doctrine of submission to God’s will. In order to ensure mankind the power to fulfill divine obligations, God gave to each person innate faculties, such as reason, intuition, foreknowledge, and foresight. When these faculties are exercised in acts of submission to divine will they lead men aright through this life and back into God’s presence (Paradise).

Second, there are social relationships made under divine guidance, such as marriage. Islam teaches that God lays the limits and bounds required within marriage, and that it is sinful to exceed these bounds.

Third, the structure of civil society creates obligations for its citizens, and Muslims are expected to be good citizens of the countries in which they live. For example, respect for civil authority is cultivated within the family by most Muslims, respect for teachers, and one’s elders is also taught. Complementary obligations are created since rulers, parents, teachers and other authority figures will answer to God for the discharge of stewardship concerning those over whom they exercise authority. Unrighteous dominion is an egregious breach of stewardship in Islamic teachings.

Finally, there are purely voluntary obligations made when any of us extends a promise to another person. Examples include all contracts. God requires the fair and full discharge of all these obligations during mortality.

Beyond the inherent moral and spiritual faculties given by God to every person born into this world, Islam teaches that God promised (as a condition of our first pre-mortal covenant) to send Guidance from heaven. Islam has a highly developed doctrine of scriptural revelation and of the existence of prophets, which in addition to our innate faculties provide the promised guidance. The Qur’an makes frequent reference to the scriptures of the Bible, including the Old and New Testaments:

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O Children of Israel! Call to mind the special favour which I bestowed upon you, and fulfill your Covenant with Me [the Old Testament] as I fulfill my Covenant with you, and fear none but Me.

And believe in what I reveal [the Qur'an], confirming the revelation which is with you [the Old Testament], and be not the first to reject faith therein, nor sell my signs [the covenants of the Old Testament and God's guidance contained in it] for a small price: and fear Me and Me alone. (Qur'an 2:40-41)

Those who believe [in the Qur'an], and those who follow the Jewish [scriptures], and the Christians and the Sabians [a probable reference to Nestorian Christians]—any who believe in God and the Last Day, and work righteousness, shall have their reward with their Lord; on them shall be no fear, nor shall they grieve. (Qur'an 2:62)

Islam teaches that God has made covenants with a variety of nations, collectively termed “people of the book” or “peoples with a scripture.” The Qur'an teaches, as Joseph Smith taught, that each nation will be judged according to its laws, its scriptural teachings, and the deeds done in the flesh (i.e., its morality). Muslims are taught to allow each nation to practice religion undisturbed:

[Let there be] no compulsion in religion, for the right way is [established] clearly from the wrong way. Whoever therefore rejects the forces of evil and believes in God, he has taken hold of a support most unfailing, which shall never give way (Qur'an 2:256)

In order for scripture to act as a divine guide, it must be delivered, interpreted, and implemented by inspired prophets. The LDS view of Muhammad provides insight into the function of prophets.

Put simply, Muslims respect prophets, they did not stone the messengers God sent. True, Muhammad is revered by Muslims to an extraordinary degree, yet he is also seen as one among many prophets, specifically the prophet sent to the Arabs in Mecca, but whose message was for the entire world. Analogously, Muslims regard Muhammad in much the same way as many Latter-day Saints regard Joseph Smith: initiating a new dispensation of truth, authoring a new scripture, establishing a new order of worship, restoring lost truths, and being one of many prophets.

The LDS Church promotes a positive image of Muhammad, although Latter-day Saints may be unaware of this fact.¹⁰ On February 15, 1978, the First Presidency issued a statement that Muhammad, among others, received a portion of God's light as part of a revelation of moral truth:

The great religious leaders of the world such as Mohammed, Confucius, and the Reformers, as well as philosophers including Socrates, Plato, and others, received a portion of God's light. Moral truths were given to them by God

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to enlighten whole nations and to bring a higher level of understanding to individuals...

Consistent with these truths, we believe that God has given and will give to all peoples sufficient knowledge to help them on their way to eternal salvation, either in this life or in the life to come.

We also declare that the gospel of Jesus Christ, restored to His Church in our day, provides the only way to a mortal life of happiness and a fullness of joy forever. For those who have not received this gospel, the opportunity will come to them in the life hereafter if not in this life.

Our message therefore is one of special love and concern for the eternal welfare of all men and women, regardless of religious belief, race or nationality, knowing that we are truly brothers and sisters because we are sons and daughters of the same Eternal Father.¹¹

The 1978 statement identifies Muhammad as a type of prophet. Identifying Muhammad by name as God's intended recipient of moral truth casts the founder of Islam in a light contrary to that cast by many Christians. He was obviously different from LDS prophets in crucial respects: there is no evidence that he possessed any form of priesthood authority or that he received and taught pure doctrinal truths. However, the exercise of righteous judgment goes beyond mere identification of doctrinal deficiencies and requires examination of Muhammad in terms of what he "had." The 1978 statement described Muhammad's prophetic contribution as "moral truth." The receipt of moral truth from God and its subsequent delivery to the children of men is an important prophetic function. True, possession of moral truth alone cannot save the human soul, for this requires priesthood ordinances and doctrinal truths held exclusively by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in this dispensation. Nevertheless, the personal practice of moral truth is a necessary component of spiritual progression and development, and forms a bedrock foundation to the plan of salvation.

Morality constitutes *the* universal challenge to humanity: irrespective of *when* people were born or *where* they lived, they must learn to become moral before any further spiritual progress is possible. Whatever moral progress individuals make in mortality prepares them to receive the fulness of "this gospel...in the life hereafter if not in this life."¹² The moral truths Muhammad taught include chastity, generosity, humility, honesty, and meekness. Applying Joseph Smith's standard of judgment, one can conclude that (as a collective religious system) Islam possesses and teaches moral truths—truths communicated and exemplified by the Arab moral prophet Muhammad.

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Muhammad represents a prophetic ideal for Muslims, but esteem for prophets does not begin or end with Muhammad. The Islamic doctrine of prophets is both comprehensive and detailed. Islam organizes prophets into three classes: *nabi*, *rasul*, and *ulu al'azm*. Each type of prophet fulfills certain functions in Allah's plan to save mankind. The *anbiya* (Arabic, plural of *nabi*) bring a specific message to a people within the context of an existing religion. Muslims believe that God will send 124,000 *anbiya* to instruct and warn mankind. Such warnings establish the basis for divine final judgment. Although Islam does not have a comprehensive understanding of priesthood authority, the doctrine of *nabi* involves several priesthood-like functions: "warner" and "judge." The divine messenger, occasionally referred to in Islamic writings as an "envoy," serves an important purpose: awakening mankind to a sense of their spiritual loss and incomplete existence apart from God. Although endowed with sufficient inherent faculties to awaken, humans do not have adequate knowledge of which path to choose after they have come to appreciate their condition. Thus, scriptures, and especially prophets, are necessary for mankind's moral and spiritual progress; in other words, once men and women wake up spiritually, they must thereafter rise up morally. This, Muslims maintain, cannot be accomplished without a divinely mandated set of moral instructions to direct humanity.¹³ Islam teaches that God sends messengers to all people to warn of wrong behavior and to impart moral knowledge:

To every people a messenger was sent. When their messenger comes before them [on the day of judgment] the matter will be judged between them with justice, and they will not be wronged. (Qur'an 10:47)

Joseph Smith serves as an LDS metaphor of spiritual awakening, illustrating a coincidence of LDS and Islamic views. Prior to the First Vision, Joseph Smith knew that he needed guidance from God, but he could not determine how to find it given the doctrinal contradiction advanced by competing sects where he lived. A scriptural passage, James 1:5 (as we all know), led him to further knowledge through revelation. Since there was no prophet he could consult, and in keeping with God's intentions, Joseph himself was made prophet, seer, and revelator, complete with priesthood authority and pure doctrine. The 11th century Muslim Ibn al-'Arabi describes the prophetic function as understood by Muslims:

Man is necessarily ignorant of his final end... he is ignorant of what causes his happiness... or his unhappiness if he should be wretched, as regards Him upon whom he [i.e., the individual human] depends, for he is ignorant of God's knowledge of him. He does not know what God wants from him nor why he created him, and of necessity is in a position of needing God to give him knowledge concerning this... God... [decided] to send to each [people]

an envoy who is one of their kind... and He gave [the envoy] leadership over them... This was a trial for them from Him.¹⁴

Islamic doctrine states that there is a higher rank of prophet above *nabi*: i.e., *rasul* (English, messenger). A *rasul* delivers a message, or scripture, from God. The Arabic word *risalat* means “message” or “epistle” and refers both to the mission of a prophet (Arabic, *mursalat*) and to the written scripture itself. Muslims believe that God will send over 300 *rusul*. The number of scriptures thus accumulated over the course of the world’s history will be extraordinarily high, according to Islamic teaching, since the number of prophets is equally high. The Qur’an mentions several *rusul* including: Elisha (*alyasa*), David (*da’ud*), Ezekiel (*dhul-kifl*), Elijah (*ilyas*), Isaac (*ishaq*), Ishmael (*isma’il*), Jonah (*yunus*), Lot (*lut*), and Jethro (*shu’ayb*). The Qur’an refers to Allah as the God of “Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob,” further demonstrating Muslim acceptance of the overall biblical record and the testimony of prophetic messengers.¹⁵ Nearly all of the prophets of the Old Testament and New Testament are presented in the Qur’an, sometimes in a different light than that cast in the Bible. For example, Lot (Arabic, *lut*) is not merely a relative of Abraham who makes some poor choices but is a prophet who fails to maintain control even of his own household and stands as an example of a repentant patriarch in his own home.

Above the *rasul* stands another, higher-ranking level of prophets, the *ulu al-‘azm*, or “possessors of firmness and determination.”¹⁶ Muslims associate this level of prophet with the establishment of a new religious order. The *ulu al-‘azm* not only warn (as a *nabi* must warn a people), also bring new messages or scripture (as does a *rasul*); they also found a new form of worship or restore older, truer patterns of worship. Islam counts seven prophets in this category: Adam, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus Christ, and Muhammad. The closest LDS doctrine is that of founder of dispensations. The LDS list is identical with the exception that Joseph Smith is substituted for Muhammad. The derivation of this Islamic doctrine is remarkable: Muslims had no prophetic writings to lead them to this conclusion, but determined that there were seven founders of dispensations based solely upon the roles fulfilled by these prophets in the biblical and the qur’anic histories.

The Islamic doctrine of prophets and their scriptures answers the second question, “Who am I?” Muslims answer that we are all morally asleep (the LDS functional equivalent is the veil over our minds) in a fallen condition, that we must awaken to God’s teachings and obey his commands in compliance with our individual premortal covenants. The degree to which we obey these covenants and heed the guidance given by God determines our ultimate destination.

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WHERE WILL WE GO AFTER THIS LIFE ENDS?

Islam regards the Day of Judgment (Arabic, *yawm ad-din*) as a great and terrible day, when all things hidden, all things revealed, all truth, and the moral quality of all mortal actions will be brought before God, and everyone will be judged and rewarded “according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil.”¹⁷ One’s deeds will be weighed as much by their moral quality as by their quantity:

When the earth is shaken, quaking
When the earth bears forth her burdens
And someone says “What is with her?”
At that time she will tell her news
As her Lord revealed her
At that time people will straggle forth to be shown what they have done
Whoever does a mote’s weight of good will see it
Whoever does a mote’s weight of wrong will see it (Qur’an 99)¹⁸

Islam holds that each nation or people will be judged according to the guidance given them by God through prophets and scripture. Muslims will be judged by the guidance of the Qur’an, Christians by the Bible, Jews by the Old Testament, etc. The standard of judgment adjusts to the guidance given to each individual, nearly the same as the principle where much has been given in stewardship much will be required in its discharge: “it is required of the Lord, at the hand of every steward, to render an account of his stewardship, both in time and in eternity” (Doctrine and Covenants 72:3). Muhammad warned Muslims that every human has a stewardship regarding God’s Signs (*ayat*), to use the gifts of mortality and nature in God’s work, and to “spend” the wealth of God in His service. This comprehensive stewardship creates a core set of moral principles such as generosity, liberality, and humility. There are vices, too, that correspond to each of these virtuous principles, such as avarice, egoism, and pride. Islam teaches that God expects us to “spend” His Signs to aid and comfort those with genuine needs:

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Spend out of your substance for love of [God], for your kin, for orphans, for the needy, for the wayfarer, for those who ask and for the ransom of slaves.
(Qur’an 2:177)

O ye who believe! Spend out of the bounties We have provided for you, before the Day comes when no bargaining will avail, nor friendship nor intercession.
(Qur’an 2:254)

The vice of avarice regularly applied in the Qur’an to those who sell God’s Signs for worldly riches. There is no eternal profit in this, and the

Day of Judgment will be the day of reckoning when all accounts are balanced before God:

...be not the first to reject Faith therein, nor sell My Signs for a small price; and fear Me, and Me alone. (Qur'an 2:41)

Acquisitiveness turns you away
Until you reach the graves
Oh then you will know
Surely then you will know
Surely you will know with a knowledge certain
you will see a blazing fire
Then you will see it with an eye certain
At that time then
you will be asked about true well-being. (Qur'an 102)

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God requires generosity of all faithful humans, and will visit even the smallest act of mercy with great rewards. Likewise, the failure to perform even the smallest act of mercy will be visited with wrath and condemnation:

Do you see him who calls the reckoning a lie?
He is the one who casts the orphan away
Who fails to urge the feeding of one in need
Cursed are those who perform the prayer
Unmindful of how they pray
Who make of themselves a display
But hold back the small kindness. (Qur'an 107)¹⁹

In addition to the universal stewardship we each have regarding the proper use of God's Signs, Muslims undertake particular stewardships under covenant known as the "five pillars" of Islam. The pillars are:

- *Testimony* (Arabic *shahada*, there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His prophet)
- *Prayer* (*salat*, performed five times each day)
- *Fasting* (*sawm*, for the entire month of *ramadan* from dawn to dusk)
- *Almsgiving* (*zakat*, a certain percentage of all possessions must be given for religious and charitable purposes each year)
- *Pilgrimage* (*hajj*, a one-time pilgrimage to Mecca)

Those who fulfill all obligations receive their eternal reward following final judgment as they feast in Paradise upon the sweet fruits of their own labors in God's service:

But give glad tidings to those who believe and work righteousness, that their portion is Gardens, beneath which rivers flow. Every time they are fed with

fruits therefrom, they say: “Why, this is what we were fed with before,” for they are given things in similitude; and they have therein companions pure and holy; and they abide therein for ever. (Qur’an 2:25)

Those individuals who sell God’s Signs or who fail to live up to their covenants are the “companions of fire.”

The *qari’a* [English, “calamity”]
What is the *qari’a*
What can tell you of the *qari’a*
A day humankind are like moths scattered
And mountains are like fluffs of wool
Whoever’s scales weigh heavy
His is a life that is pleasing
Whoever’s scales weigh light
His mother is *hawiya* [English, “burning abyss”]
What can tell you what she is
Raging fire (Qur’an 101)²⁰

CONCLUSION

By learning to identify what Islam “has,” the fundamental moral principles of stewardship and accountability are firmly in place. Muslims believe that all people come to earth having made a covenant with God to obey and serve Him. They believe that God has given and will give to all peoples moral truths to guide them aright. These truths are found in scriptures in addition to the Qur’an, and are found in prophetic warnings and teachings. Islam teaches that our purpose in life is to fulfill all obligations. Those who fulfill their stewardships will be rewarded with the fruits of their own righteous labors. Those who fail in their stewardships are (according to the Islamic doctrine of “similitude”) likened to people who ask God for gifts, but consume these gifts upon their own lusts. The Qur’an is clear as to their reward: they themselves will be consumed by fire (*hawiya*).

As Latter-day Saints we have been given a divine charge to judge righteous judgment. We have been blessed not only with moral truth, but also with the clearest scriptural and prophetic guidance ever given to humankind. I am convinced that one day we will be called upon to account for this stewardship and that we will be rewarded or punished for the discharge of righteous judgment. Latter-day Saints occupy a unique position in the world: We can do more good than has ever been done if we fulfill our stewardship. We must rise above vilification of others and their religion; we must rise above petty political posturing that feeds fears

Islam teaches that our purpose in life is to fulfill all obligations. Those who fulfill their stewardships will be rewarded with the fruits of their own righteous labors.

and fuels phobias. We have the power to create a better world through good works and righteous judgments. Joseph Smith made this clear:

Friendship is one of the grand fundamental principles of “Mormonism”; [it is designed] to revolutionize and civilize the world, and cause wars and contentions to cease and men to become friends and brothers...It is a time-honored adage that love begets love. (HC 5:517)

**The path to peace
is the one traveled
by the Prince of
Peace, the King
of Love.**

The path to peace is the one traveled by the Prince of Peace, the King of Love. For Christ “ascended up on high, as also he descended below all things” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:6) that he might come to understand us, to know us, and ultimately to judge us from His knowing and righteous perspective, with generosity of heart and liberality of merciful purpose. As Paul reminds us, our divine High Priest was not exempt from temptation, “but was in all points tempted like as *we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). He set the example we are commanded to emulate as we execute judgment. Let us follow the admonition of the prophet Zechariah:

Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the *stranger*, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. (Zechariah 7:9-10) ☞

NOTES:

- 1 Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, Joseph Fielding Smith, et al., eds. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Deseret Book Company, 1976), 218 (italics added).
- 2 One of the great blessings of membership in the Church is the environment of love and service it encourages. Nevertheless, the trap of unrighteous judgment is open to all, regardless of their creed. In times of crisis, such as that caused on September 11, 2001, we should be on guard against the cultivation and expression of unrighteous judgments.
- 3 See Elder Dallin H. Oaks, “‘Judge Not’ and Judging,” *Ensign*, Aug. 1999, beginning page 7.
- 4 Joseph Smith affirmed this principle: “There is a love from God that should be exercised toward those of our faith, who walk uprightly, which is peculiar to itself, but is without prejudice; it also gives scope to the mind, which enables us to conduct ourselves with greater liberality towards all that are not of our faith, than what they exercise towards one another. These principles approximate nearer to the mind of God, because it is like God, or Godlike.” *Encyclopedia of Joseph Smith’s Teachings*, 106 (italics added).
- 5 The term Pharisee means “separatist.” Unrighteous judgment grounded in pharisaical pride seeks to keep the various cultural flocks separated, to prevent a Zion-like fold from emerging. The exercise of righteous judgment can overcome pharisaical tendencies by seeing what virtues and goodness each of the flocks, however small or large, brings to the Savior’s fold.]
- 6 This discussion presents a “majority” view in Islam. Islam contains diverse cultures and

- peoples, as well as some sectarian differences.
- 7 'Abdullah Yusuf 'Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 10th edition (Mexico: Amana Publications, 2003). Unless otherwise indicated, all qur'anic quotes come from (are adapted by me from) this respected translation.
 - 8 See D&C 76:25-30. After Lucifer's fall from heaven he received new names: Perdition and Satan.
 - 9 Ali, at 395.
 - 10 James A. Toronto, "A Latter-day Saint Perspective on Muhammad," *Ensign*, Aug. 2000, 51. This article is a good starting point for an LDS viewpoint presented in the *Ensign*. James Toronto teaches at BYU.
 - 11 Excerpted from a statement of the First Presidency of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, February 15, 1978, "God's Love for All Mankind."
 - 12 First Presidency Statement of February 15, 1978.
 - 13 Stephen Hirstenstein comments that "A prophet or messenger is like someone who is awake trying to rouse the sleeping. It is a hazardous task, as those who are asleep tend to view the awake as one of the many figures in their dream." *Unlimited Mercifier*, 65.
 - 14 Stephen Hirstenstein, *The unlimited Mercifier: the Spiritual Life and Thought of Ibn 'Arabi* (Ashton, Oregon: White Cloud Press, 1999), 63.
 - 15 I have explained the story of Joseph Smith's first vision to Muslim friends. Their response is nearly uniform: "He [Joseph Smith] was truly a rasul, sent from God for the benefit of your people. Al hamdu 'llilah!" (English, God be praised!). They sometimes thereafter use an Arabic blessing when speaking Joseph's name, a blessing reserved for Muhammad, invoked after the mention of Muhammad's name: Sulla allah 'alayhi wa salam! (May the prayers and blessings of Allah be upon him!).
 - 16 See Sayyed Hossein Nasr, *Ideals and Realities of Islam*, (London: George, Allen & Unwin, 1985), 86-87.
 - 17 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 218.
 - 18 Translated by Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an: The Early Revelations*, (Ashland, Oregon: White Cloud Press, 2001) 108. This is an excellent work on the Qur'an, with selected translations of the earlier revelations, known as the "Meccan Revelations." One can only hope that Dr. Sells will find time to translate the entire Qur'an.
 - 19 Translated by Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an*, 124.
 - 20 Translated by Michael Sells, *Approaching the Qur'an*, 112.