

الْبَيْعَةُ



al-Bay^cah

a talk given on the occasion
of the
Milādu-n-Nabī

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by

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وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ

WA LA-DḤIKRU-LLĀHI AKBAR

and the remembrance of Allāh is the greatest!
(Sūrah al-Aġkabut 29:45)



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Before getting to the actual topic of my talk for this mawlid celebration, which is on the subject of bay^{ah}, I would like to say just a few words on the subject of mawlid generally and specifically.

First I would like to relate a story told to me by a student from India who is studying for his doctorate at the University of Virginia.

When he was a boy, he told me, when mawlid time came around the whole area of Dehli in which he lived was lit up and there were fireworks and fun things for kids as well as talks by scholars in the masjid and circles of dhikr and darood in every neighborhood.

But as he was growing up he began to notice that there were certain neighborhoods that were no longer lit up, and as time passed these areas of darkness became larger and larger, and the fireworks gradually stopped and there were fewer and fewer gatherings of scholars in the masjid and circles of dhikr and darood began to disappear.

He asked his father what was happening and why the event which was the cause of so much happiness and joy seemed to be gradually disappearing.

His father told him, “In one word...the Wahhabis.” It seems that people began to doubt the way things were and, as oil money rolled in to build new masjid and pay for imams to staff them, they were explicitly told in no certain terms that these *mawlid* had to cease.

In the last few years he has noticed that when he returns home, the darkness seems to be rapidly overcoming the light.

Well that is the story in one city in India, but we see that almost every place the Wahhabis/Jihadis/Salafis or, as some now call them, the “archaic revivalists” (since Wahhab and Jihad and Salaf are noble names and these people are anything but noble, so why should we allow them to arrogate these noble names) have spread their poison, the lights have gone off or are going out all over our world.

Just recently there was a report that upwards of 60%+ (some say 80%) of the masjid in North America are either funded outright or are under the outright or nominal control of these fanatics.

And if you think that fanatics is too strong a term for them, remember that these are the people who attack and kill Muslims (through the magic of *takfir* (تكفير) which allows them to call Muslims kaffir simply because they don't agree with their idea of what 'Islam is or isn't) all over the world. These are the people who, through their active embrace of terrorism, have made all of our lives miserable on a daily basis (think airport security lines, profiling of Muslim, the ICE etc.) and taken the joy out of our lives with their grim view of life.

If you don't agree with me then let me ask you some questions. How is it possible that a Muslim would throw acid into the eyes of a girl child on her way to school in the belief that he was somehow performing an Islamic act? Or how could it be that a Muslim would strap on a suicide vest (or even contemplate suicide) and go into a masjid of a different sect at the time of Friday prayers and blow himself and thirty or forty others up? Or how could it be that a group of Muslims would come into a town – Muslims that pray and fast, that perhaps speak Arabic, who sit on the floor, who have beards, who wear turbans – and at gunpoint round up other Muslim men and boys from a different sect and lock them up in a cargo container and refuse them food or water until they die of thirst, and at the same time tell the women of that village, the mothers, wives and sisters of those whom they have imprisoned, that they will shoot them if they try to rescue their husbands, brothers or sons. And justify what they do in the name of 'Islām? How is this possible? Or go back just 75 years and look at the attacks on Makkah and Madinah by “muslims” who claimed that the inhabitants of Makkah and Madinah were not truly Muslims (courtesy again of the magic of *takfir*) so they could shed the blood, steal the wealth and the dishonor fellow Muslims as well as the Prophet ﷺ and his family ﷺ.

This is in truth the reality of our lives in these times. It is these Archaic Revivalists who have sought by all means and by spending the wealth of the 'ummah to put an end to the celebration or observation of the mawalid, because the last thing they want us to know is “Who was, and even more importantly, who is, Muḥammad ﷺ.

And one further story. Recently I was invited to give a talk on the Shuhada-e-Karbalā'. I had just gotten to the point where I was drawing connections between happened at Karbalā' and the events of the present day where we find that Yazīd is still very much in control throughout the entire Muslim world, even in that nation which considers itself “Shi'ā”, when suddenly my host gave me the five minute cut off slip meaning “that's enough of that.” And I hadn't even gotten to the point of explaining how the people who killed al-Husayn ؑ were not only intent on killing him and his family, but in actuality were intent then (and now) on killing the Prophet ﷺ himself because in truth and in the deep reality, the last thing they want to see is true 'Islām practiced anywhere on this earth because if real 'Islām were to be practiced in full it would mean the end of their spreading corruption and filth in the world.

One of the main reasons that we observe this Mawlid of the Rasūl ﷺ is because it is of the utmost necessity to educate each generation as to who is Muḥammad ﷺ, who are his companions ؓ and his friends, and what is his ﷺ Message, so that we may at least have the possibility of islands of light and truth in this world; places where the scholars of taqwah are free to speak, places where the circles of dhikr and darood exist and the 'awliya karām ؑ continue in their training of the present and future souls of the 'ummah.



To start at the beginning.

Muḥammad ﷺ was born in Makkah in 570ce, and 'Islām has been inextricably linked with that city ever since. He ﷺ was born into the moeity or kinship group of the Hashemites, (هاشمي), a clan within the larger ruling tribe of the Quraish (قريش).

It was in Makkah, a polytheistic pilgrimage city, in a nearby mountain cave known as Hira on the Mountain of Light (*jabalu-n-nūr*), that he began receiving divine revelations from Allāh ﷻ through the Angel Jibrīl ؑ in 610ce, and began to preach pure monotheism in opposition to the animism, totemism and polytheism that prevailed in Makkah and, importantly, was the source of its income.

He ﷺ began preaching first to his family and friends and in time he began preaching openly to the people of Makkah including those who came from all over Arabia to worship their gods at the Ka'bah (الكعبة) the shrine in which the idols were then ensconced but which had originally been built for the pure worship of Allāh ﷻ by the Prophets 'Ibrahīm and Isma'īl ؑ on the foundations established by Adam ؑ at the beginning of human time.

The Quraysh had tried many times and in many ways to subdue the Muslims and force them to reject 'Islām. The Quraysh, like many in the world today, wanted 'Islām to be totally eradicated from their society, as it was an outright threat not only to their traditional way of life but, perhaps more importantly, their economic well being. However, they were generally unsuccessful in all their attempts to eradicate 'Islam, but continued to humiliate and threaten the Prophet ﷺ and his companions ؓ by all the means at their disposal. In spite of all the tactics of the Quraysh the Muslims remained steadfast in 'Islām and, a fact which many people in our times do not understand, never aggressed against or fought with the Quraysh.

The Quraysh were very angry and concerned about the situation that had developed, especially after important and highly respected members of the community such as 'Umar and Hamza ؓ entered into and strengthened the cause of 'Islām. No matter what tactics the Quraysh resorted to, the Muslims were slowly increasing in number as the Message of 'Islām began to reach more people.

The Quraysh had tried many times to negotiate with the Prophet ﷺ and had failed every time. Finally in desperation they made him the following offer.

The Offer of Quraysh to Muḥammad ibn Abdullah ibn 'Abdu-l-Muṭallib al-Hashim.

“If your ambition is to possess wealth, we will amass for you as much as you wish; if your aspiration is to win honor and power, we are prepared to swear allegiance to you as our overlord and king; if you have fancy for beauty, you shall have the hand of the finest maiden of your own choice.”

The Reply of Muḥammad Rasulu-llāh ﷺ:

“I am neither desirous of riches, ambitious of dignity nor do I seek dominion. I am sent by Allāh ﷻ, who has ordained me to announce the good news of ʾIslām to you. I give you the words of my Lord; I admonish you. If you accept the message I bring you, Allāh ﷻ will be favorable to you both in this world and in the next. If you reject my admonitions, I shall be patient, and leave it to Allāh ﷻ to judge between you and me.”

His ﷺ rejection of the offer of Quraysh was viewed as an insult which increased their plotting to get rid of him. However, because he ﷺ had successfully united some members of his powerful tribal kinfolk or moiety, Banu Hashim, around himself notably his uncle, ʾImrān ʾAbu Ṭalib, son of his highly respected father, Abd al-Muṭṭalib, the Quraysh were unable to attack or kill the Prophet ﷺ physically, without confronting the whole tribe in a bloody battle. Consequently, in a new scheme to destroy the Prophet ﷺ and his protective tribe, the Quraysh issued formal social and economic sanctions and a physical blockade on the Banu Hashim tribe. This ban was a public rejection of his ﷺ prophethood by most of the Quraysh tribes and this resort to sanctions brought to a close the first seven years of his active mission in Makkah

As a result of these sanctions he ﷺ, his family ﷺ and those who followed him ﷺ lived in a state of want for three full years, suffering often the pangs of hunger and thirst. During these three years and the following three years he ﷺ, his family ﷺ and those who followed him ﷺ endured persecution with constant faith in Allāh ﷻ and the Prophet ﷺ, never complaining and through this suffering established a condition to separate themselves from *shayṭān*. The followers of the Prophet ﷺ supported and protected him at all times, even though their physical lives were often threatened and, very importantly, never entered into outright conflict or violence with those who had made their lives misery — a misery which resulted in the deaths of his beloved wife, Lady Khādijah ﷺ, and his protector and uncle, ʾImrān Abu Ṭalib ﷺ.

In the tenth year of the Prophet's ﷺ mission, just after the end of the boycott by Quraysh and the death of Lady Khadijah رضي الله عنها and his ﷺ dear uncle and protector 'Imrān Abu Talib رضي الله عنه, the Prophet ﷺ and his family ﷺ and companions رضي الله عنهم (who after ten years numbered only one hundred and seventy) had to face grave difficulties.

Now, not just the elite of Mecca attacked the Prophet ﷺ, but even young children hurled stones and insults at him. He ﷺ soon realized that there was no hope left that the Makkans would accept 'Islām, and he thus decided to journey with his adopted son, Zayd ibn Harithah رضي الله عنه, to the nearby city of Ṭā'if (الطائف) to invite the people there to 'Islām.

The people of Ṭā'if, devotees of the goddess al-Lat, rather than answering him in a civil manner, set dogs on him and encouraged their children to stone him, causing him to flee bleeding heavily.

Once Muḥammad ﷺ and Zayd رضي الله عنه were outside the city walls, Muḥammad ﷺ almost collapsed. They went a short distance outside of the town and stopped in a vineyard belonging to two Makkans who were there at the time. In the vineyard he sat by a fountain to try and clean himself. He was still bleeding so heavily that he could barely see straight.

The owners of the vineyard had seen Muḥammad ﷺ persecuted in Makkah and on this occasion they felt some sympathy toward their fellow townsman. A Christian worker in the vineyard took Muḥammad ﷺ into his hut, dressed his wounds, and let him rest and recuperate until he felt strong enough to resume his journey across the rough mountainous terrain between Ṭā'if and Makkah. It was there that the angel Jibril, ﷺ with the angels of the mountains, came to Muḥammad ﷺ and asked him if he wanted him to destroy the town, suggesting that Jibril ﷺ could crush it by slamming it between two nearby mountains, but Muḥammad ﷺ declined Jibril's ﷺ offer by saying, "Maybe in time Allāh ﷻ will produce from their offspring ones who will worship Him alone."

Muḥammad ﷺ then prayed:

“Oh Allāh ﷻ, I complain to You of my weakness, my lack of resources and my lowliness before men.

“Oh most Merciful! You are the Lord of the weak and You are my Lord. To whom will You relinquish my fate! To one who will misuse me? Or to an enemy to whom You have given power over me? If You are not angry with me then I do not care what happens to me. Your favor is all that counts for me.

“I take refuge in the light of Your countenance, by which all darkness is illuminated. And the things of this world and next are rightly ordered. I wish to please You until You are pleased. There is no power and no might save in You.”

Hearing this supplication the owners told their Christian worker named Addas of Nineveh, to give a tray of grapes to the visitors.

Muḥammad ﷺ took the grapes, and before putting them into his mouth he recited what all Muslims now say prior to eating:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

bismillāhi-r-raḥmāni-r-raḥīm

In the Name of Allāh

The Universally Mercy Full — The Singularly Compassionate

Addas ﷺ became curious and inquired about the identity of Muḥammad ﷺ, and in the conversation that ensued Addas ﷺ declared his acceptance of ʿIslām, so that in the end the journey of the Prophet ﷺ and Zayd ﷺ to Ṭāʿif did not prove entirely fruitless.

Wary of returning to Makkah now that he ﷺ no longer enjoyed the protection of ʿAbu Ṭalib ﷺ, he sent a message to several leading idolaters, asking their protection. Two refused, but eventually Mutim ibn Adi, chief of the Nofal clan of Quraysh, agreed to protect him. Next morning, he, his sons and nephews went fully armed to the public square of the Kaʿabah, and announced that Muḥammad ﷺ was under their protection, thus enabling him to safely return to Makkah albeit in a humiliating way.

The failure at Ṭā^ʿif was utterly heart-breaking for the Prophet ﷺ, and he knew that but for the heroic intervention of Mutim ibn Adiy, he might not have been able to enter Makkah at all. To a casual observer it might appear that the Prophet ﷺ had reached the limits of human endurance and patience. The progress of ʾIslām had come to a standstill, and the outlook for the future could not look bleaker.

Oddly enough, the following sūrah known as al-Køwṭḥar was revealed just after the return of the Prophet ﷺ from Ṭā^ʿif:

أَنَا أَعْطَيْنَاكَ الْكَوْثَرَ
فَصَلِّ لِرَبِّكَ وَأَنْحِرْ
إِنَّ شَانِكَ هُوَ الْأَبْتَرُ

ʾinna ʾa^ʿtaynāka-l-kowṭḥar
fa-ṣalli li-rabbika wa-n-har
ʾinna shāniaka huwa-l-abārar

Truly We have bestowed abundance on you.

So offer prayer to your Lord and sacrifice.

Truly the one who hates you has been completely cut off.

(Sūratu-l-Køwṭḥar 108:1-3)

There are several differing reports as to the circumstances under which it was revealed but according to Ibn Iṣḥāq, it was revealed in Makkah, just before the ʾIsrā^ʾ and Mir^ʿāj, when A^ʿas ibn Wa^ʿil as-Saḥmi said of the Prophet ﷺ that he was “a man who is cut off and is of no consequence, and, if he were killed, he would be forgotten.”

al-Køwṭḥar stems from a root meaning, “an overflowing river in paradise”, and occurs only once in the Qur^ʾān. The Shi^ʿa hold al-Køwṭḥar refers to Fatimah ؑ, as the Messenger ﷺ declared that for all men, their descendants are from their sons, but for him his sons are the children of Fatimah ؑ and they would be his abundance.

According to ḥadīṭḥ the Prophet ﷺ once asked those who were with him, “Do you know what al-Køwṭḥar is?” They said, “Allāh ﷻ and His Prophet ﷺ know best. “

He ﷺ said to them, “It is a river which Allāh most Exalted has promised me. To this flowing river belongs untold abundance, it is plentitude and it is to this fountain and the river which flows from it that my °Ummah will flock on the Day of Resurrection where they will drink only once, and will never hunger or thirst again.”

This was the true promise of Allāh ﷻ made at the time of the darkest moment in his life and the proof of the truth is that it was at this time that the Prophet ﷺ was taken on the wings of the Burāq from the precincts of the Ka[°]bah in Makkah to Sinai to al-Kḥalīl to Bayt Laḥm and on to the furthest maṣjid of al-°Aqsa in al-Quds aṣḥ-Ṣḥarīf. There he led all the Prophets ﷺ of the past in prayer and was then elevated by Allāh ﷻ, in the company of the angel Jibrīl ؑ, to the highest heavens, where he ﷺ met and conversed with those same Prophets ﷺ and was then brought to the Cedar Tree beyond the Garden of Refuge where he spoke directly with Allāh ﷻ, foreshadowing events that already loomed over the horizons, even though at the moment there was no way to perceive them.

°Isrā[°] is referred to in the first verse of the 17th chapter of Al-Qur’an al-Karīm in the following °āyat:

سُبْحَانَ الَّذِي أَسْرَى بِعَبْدِهِ لَيْلًا مِّنَ الْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ إِلَى الْمَسْجِدِ
الْأَقْصَى الَّذِي بَارَكْنَا حَوْلَهُ لِنُرِيَهُ مِنْ آيَاتِنَا ۚ إِنَّهُ هُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْبَصِيرُ

subāhana-l-ladhī °asrā bi-°abādihi laylam-
mina-l-masjidi-l-ḥaramī °ila masjidi-l-°aqāṣa-l-ladhī
bārakana howlahū li nuriyahu min °āyātina;
innahu huwa sami[°]u-l-baṣīr

Glorified is He Who carried His worshipper by night
from the Inviolable Place of Prostration (*masjidi-l-ḥarām*)
to the Furthest Place of Prostration (*masjidi-l-°aqsa*)
the neighborhood of which we have blessed
that We might show him some of Our Signs.

Surely He is the Hearing, the Seeing

(Sūratu-l-°Isrā[°] 17:1)

The Mi'raj, where the Prophet ﷺ is taken through the levels of the seven heavens to visit and speak with the earlier prophets such as 'Ibrahīm, Mūsā, and 'Isā ﷺ, and then is taken by Jibrīl ﷺ to Allah ﷻ. This heavenly ascension is referred to in Sūratu-n-Najm:

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

وَالنَّجْمِ إِذَا هَوَىٰ ﴿١﴾ مَا ضَلَّ صَاحِبُكُمْ وَمَا غَوَىٰ ﴿٢﴾
 وَمَا يَنْطِقُ عَنِ الْهَوَىٰ ﴿٣﴾ إِنْ هُوَ إِلَّا وَحْيٌ يُوحَىٰ ﴿٤﴾
 عَلَّمَهُ شَدِيدُ الْقُوَىٰ ﴿٥﴾ ذُو مِرَّةٍ فَاسْتَوَىٰ ﴿٦﴾
 وَهُوَ بِالْأُفُقِ الْأَعْلَىٰ ﴿٧﴾ ثُمَّ دَنَا فَتَدَلَّىٰ ﴿٨﴾
 فَكَانَ قَابَ قَوْسَيْنِ أَوْ أَدْنَىٰ ﴿٩﴾ فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَىٰ عَبْدِهِ مَا أَوْحَىٰ ﴿١٠﴾
 مَا كَذَبَ الْفُؤَادُ مَا رَأَىٰ ﴿١١﴾ أَفَتَمَارُونَهُ عَلَىٰ مَا يَرَىٰ ﴿١٢﴾
 وَلَقَدْ رَأَىٰ نَزْلَةَ أُخْرَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾ عِنْدَ سِدْرَةِ الْمُنْتَهَىٰ ﴿١٤﴾
 عِنْدَهَا جَنَّةُ الْمَأْوَىٰ ﴿١٥﴾ إِذْ يَغْشَى السِّدْرَةَ مَا يَغْشَىٰ ﴿١٦﴾
 مَا زَاغَ الْبَصَرُ وَمَا طَغَىٰ ﴿١٧﴾ لَقَدْ رَأَىٰ مِنْ آيَاتِ رَبِّهِ الْكُبْرَىٰ ﴿١٨﴾

wa-n-najmi 'idha hawā
 mā ḍalla ṣāhibukum wa mā ghawā
 wa mā yañtiqu 'ani-l-hawā
 'in huwa 'illa waḥyuñy-yuḥā
 'allamahu ṣhadīdu-l-quwā
 dhu mirratin fa-s-tawā
 wa huwa bi-l-'ufuqi-l-'alā
 ṭhumma danā fa-tadallā
 fa-kana qaba qowsayni 'aw 'adānā
 fa-'awḥāā 'ilā 'abāadihi māā 'āwḥa

al-Bay^ʿah • (البَيْعَة)

mā kadḥaba-l-fu^ʿadu ma ra^ʿā
ʿafatumārūnahū ʿala my yarā?
wa laqadā ra^ʿāhu nazlatan ʿukḥrā
ʿiñda sidārati-l-muñtahā
ʿiñdahā jannatu-l-ma^ʿwā
ʿidḥ yagḥṣḥa-s-sidārata mā yagḥṣḥā
mā zagḥa-l-baṣaru wa ma tagḥā
la qadā ra^ʿā min ʿāyāti rabbihi-l-kubārā

(I swear) by the star when it sets.
Your companion is neither astray nor deluded.
Nor does he speak on a whim.
(His speech) is nothing but Revelation revealed.
Taught to him by One of mighty power.
Possessed of strength — standing poised —
while he was on the highest horizon.
Then he drew near and hung — suspended —
till he was two bows length or nearer.
Then He revealed to His worshipper what He revealed.
His heart did not lie in what it saw.
Would you argue with him about what he saw?
And truly he saw him yet another time
By the Cedar Tree of the outermost boundary
— near the Garden of Refuge —
when there shrouded the Cedar Tree what shrouded it
his eye did not waver nor did it stray.
Indeed he saw the greatest among the signs of His Lord
(Sūrah an-Najm 53: 1-18)



This event took place on the night of the 27th of Rajab (the seventh month of the Islamic calendar) during the twelfth year of the Proclamation which is one year before the Migration or the Hījah (هجرة) of the Prophet ﷺ from Makkah to Madinah.

In the interim a ray of light shone forth from the north.

Two hundred and fifty miles north of Makkah was a town which was the birthplace of his ﷺ mother which was then known as Yathrib, and later as Madinah al-Munawar, (المدينة المنورة), the City of Light. Its population was divided into two groups — Jews and polytheists. The polytheists were divided into two clans, Aws and Khazraj, which were generally at loggerheads with each other. Every year in the month of Rajab, the Arabs travelled to Makkah. One day in Makkah the Prophet ﷺ, speaking with the traders and pilgrims, came upon a group of six men who were of the Khazraj tribe. These particular men knew of and were expecting a Prophet as prophesied in the Jewish scriptures, which they were familiar due to the large Jewish population in Yathrib. He ﷺ led them to a slope of a hill just on the way to Mina just outside of Makkah and recited to them some verses from Qur^ʿān and invited them to ʾIslām. They listened to him earnestly, learnt about Allāh ﷻ and His revelations, and, grasping the profundity and purity of the teachings of Muḥammad ﷺ, immediately recognized him as the Prophet mentioned in Jewish scriptures foretold by the Jews of Yathrib. They told him that they had left Yathrib in an unsettled state that they feared could erupt anytime into open warfare. Above all they expressed the hope that Allāh ﷻ would restore peace to their city as the result of their fortuitous meeting with His Messenger ﷺ.

All six people from Yathrib agreed to accept ʾIslām. They pledged an oath of allegiance (*bay^ʿah*) to the Prophet ﷺ and promised to return the next year with more people. He sent them back to Yathrib with his companion, Musab-bin-Umair ﷺ, to teach them.

Soon the stories of the new faith and its wonderful leader ﷺ began to spread among the people of Yathrib. What follows is the text of that first Pledge (*bay^ʿah*).

The First Bay[°]ah of Aqaba:

These new Muslims assured the Prophet ﷺ that:
they would never associate partners with Allāh ﷻ,
they would not worship anyone except Allāh ﷻ,
they would never rob or steal;
they would never kill their girl infants;
they would never revile or backbite others;
they would never defame women;
they would always remain chaste and pure;
they would obey Allāh ﷻ and His Messenger ﷺ;
and they would be faithful to him at all times.

As a result of the work of propogation (*da[°]wah* دعوة) of Musab-bin-Umair ؓ many families in Yathrib accepted ʾIslām.

The Second Pledge of Aqaba

In 622 ce, seventy-five citizens of Yathrib came to Makkah in the season of the Ḥajj. The Prophet ﷺ met them in secret at night at the same spot at Aqaba where he had met the first group the year before. These 75 men and women also accepted ʾIslām. They gave him their pledge of loyalty, and invited him to Yathrib.

His ﷺ uncle, ʾAbbās ibn ʾAbdul Muṭṭalib (not yet a Muslim), was with him on this occasion. He is reported to have said to the representatives from Yathrib: “Muḥammad is held in high esteem by his own people. If you can stand by him through thick and thin, take him with you to Yathrib; if not, then abandon the whole idea.”

One of the leaders of the people of Yathrib was Ber[°]a ibn Ma[°]rūr. He said: “When we were children, our favorite toys were swords and spears.” Another chief, Abul Hayṭhum, interrupted him, and said: “But, Oh Messenger of Allāh! What will happen when ʾIslām becomes great and strong? Will you then leave Yathrib and return to Makkah?”

Muḥammad ﷺ smiled and said: “No. Your blood is my blood and my blood is your blood. From this day you are mine and I am yours, and I shall never part company with you.”

The terms of the Second Bay'ah of Aqaba were:

“To listen and obey in all sets of circumstances.

“To spend in plenty as well as in scarcity.

“To enjoy good and forbid evil.

“To fear the censure of no one in the service of Allāh ﷻ.

“To defend me (the Prophet ﷺ) in case I seek your help, and keep me from anything you keep yourself, your spouses and children from. If you observe these precepts, Paradise is in store for you.”

The Muslims of Yathrib were satisfied by the assurance given to them by the Messenger ﷺ. and when it appeared that the new faith had found a haven in that city, the Messenger ﷺ, who had come to the conclusion that the persecution in Makkah might end in a general massacre, suggested to his followers to seek immediate safety in Yathrib since the persecution of the Muslims in Makkah had reached its zenith and all known forms of torture and humiliation were routinely visited on the Muslims.

Yathrib thus was the shore on which the ship of ʾIslām at last came to rest after being buffeted for thirteen years in the turbulent seas of paganism in Makkah and throughout al-Jazīratu-l-Arabiyyah.

When we look at all these events that led up to the Hijra (الهجرة), beginning with the economic sanctions and blockade in which the Muslims were driven up the narrow valley which became known as Shi'b Abu Ṭālib, followed by the Year of Sadness and the death of Lady Khadija ؓ and ʾImrān ʾAbu Ṭālib, which at its end led to the ill-fated journey to Ṭāʾif, followed by the revelation of Sūratu-l-Kawthar and then the miracle of the ʾIsrāʾ wa Miʾrāj, and crucially the meetings with the people of Yathrib, we see that the turning point and hinge was the arrival of these people of Yathrib, and their willingness to enter into the bay'ah and to stand surety for the Prophet ﷺ and his family ؑ and his companions ؓ.

Given the impotence of bay'ah it is necessary that we understand more deeply the meaning of the bay'ah both then and now.

Reality of Bay'ah in Shari'ah

The proof of giving and taking the bay'ah is found in the two examples we have given concerning the bay'ah of Aqaba as well as various 'āyāt in the Qur'ān and, additionally, in many actions (*sunan*) (سنن) and sayings ('*aḥadīth*) of the Prophet ﷺ.

Three 'āyāt of the Qur'ān are presented here as proofs for legitimacy and authenticity of the bay'ah as practiced by the Prophet ﷺ:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُبَايِعُونَكَ إِنَّمَا يُبَايِعُونَ اللَّهَ يَدُ اللَّهِ فَوْقَ أَيْدِيهِمْ
فَمَنْ نَكَثَ فَإِنَّمَا يَنْكُثُ عَلَىٰ نَفْسِهِ
وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِمَا عَاهَدَ عَلَيْهِ اللَّهُ فَمَسْئُوتِهِ أَجْرًا عَظِيمًا

inna-l-ladhīna yubāyi'ūnaka

'innamā yubāyi'ūna-llāh ;

yadu-llāhi fowqa 'aydihim :

fa-man-nakatḥa

fa 'innama yañkutḥu 'ala nafsih '

wa man 'owfā bi-mā ḥāhada 'alayhu-llāha

fa-sayu'tihī 'ajāran 'adḥimā

Truly those who swear allegiance to you swear allegiance to Allāh;
the Hand of Allāh is above their hands.

The one who breaks [the oath] only breaks it to the loss of his self.

Whoever keeps his oath with Allāh,
upon him shall be [bestowed] an immense reward.

(Sūratu-l-Faḥ 48:10)

The second 'āyat is from the same sūrah:

لَقَدْ رَضِيَ اللَّهُ عَنِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذْ يُبَايِعُونَكَ تَحْتَ الشَّجَرَةِ
فَعَلِمَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ فَأَنْزَلَ السَّكِينَةَ عَلَيْهِمْ وَأَثَابَهُمْ فَتْحًا قَرِيبًا

laqadā raḍiya-llāhu °ani-l-mu°minīnaa
 °idh yubāyi°unaka taḥta-sh-shajarati
 fa-°alima mā fī qulubihim
 fa-°aanzala-s-sakīnata °alayhim
 wa aḥābahum faḥan qaribā

Allah was well pleased with the believers
 when they swore allegiance to you under the tree,
 and He knew what was in their hearts,
 so He sent down tranquility on them
 and rewarded them with a near victory.
 (Sūratu al-Faḥ 48:18)

The third of the °āyāt shows that not only did the Prophet ﷺ take the bay'ah from men but he also did so from the women members of his ﷺ community:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ إِذَا جَاءَكَ الْمُؤْمِنَاتُ يُبَايِعَنَّكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ لَا يُشْرِكَنَّ بِاللَّهِ
 شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْرِقَنَّ وَلَا يَزْنِيَنَّ وَلَا يُقْتَلَنَّ أَوْلَادَهُنَّ وَلَا يَأْتِيَنَّ بِمُهْتَانٍ
 يَفْتَرِيَهُ بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِنَّ وَأَرْجُلِهِنَّ وَلَا يَعْصِيَنَّكَ فِي مَعْرُوفٍ
 فَبَايِعْنَهُنَّ وَأَسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُنَّ اللَّهُ ۗ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

yā-°ayyuha-n-naiyyu
 °idhā jā°aka-l-mu°minatu yubāyi°inaka
 °alā °al-lā yushrikna bi-llāhi shay°an
 wa lā yashriqāna wa la yaznīna
 wa lā yaqātaluna °awladahunna
 wa lā ya°tīna bi-buhutāniñy-yaftarūnā
 bayna °aydihinna wa °arjulihinna
 wa la ya°šinaka fī ma°rūfin
 fa-bāyi°hunna wa-s-taghfir lahunna-llāh;
 °inna-llāha ḡhafūru-r-raḥīm

Oh Prophet!

If the securely believing women come to you
 swearing an oath of fealty
 that they will not associate anything with Allāh,

and they will not steal, and they will not fornicate,
and they will not slay their children,
and neither indulge in slander
made from between their own hands and feet
nor disobey you in what is correct — then accept their oath of fealty
and pray to Allāh to forgive them.

Truly Allah is Ever-Forgiving, Singularly Compassionate.

(Sūratu-l-Mumtaḥanah 60:12)

This should make abundantly clear the Qur[°]ānic basis and truth of the bay[°]ah and the following saḥīḥ ḥadīṯ (one from among many) should make clear the weight of the bay[°]ah in the life of the Muslim then and now:

“Whoever dies without the bay[°]ah on his neck
dies the death of the Jahilyyah!”

(Reported by Muslim in his Saḥīḥ)



Understanding Bay[°]ah

Mufti Muḥammad Ṣhāfi ؒ writes: “The word *bay[°]ah* in fact means to take a promise for performing some special deed. Its customary method, according to the sunnah of Rasullullāh ﷺ is to place the hands of both persons one on top of the other, although placing the hands above one another is not compulsory. If you make a promise to do something, then it becomes religiously incumbent on you to keep it, and breaking your promise is unlawful.

Kinds of Bay[°]ah:

Rasullullāh ﷺ took the bay[°]ah at different times on different occasions. He took such covenants at the time of accepting °Islām, or for performing actions according to all the Commandments of °Islām. Some times, Rasullullāh ﷺ took the bay[°]ah for abstaining or avoiding certain sins, or for doing particular deeds.

Thus we should understand there were many different kinds of bay[°]ah that the Prophet ﷺ took from the people. These include:

Bay'ah for ʾIslām: This bay'ah is when a non-Muslim discards his or her previous religious convictions, seeks repentance and makes a covenant to accept ʾIslām. It is called Bay'ah in ʾIslām.

Bay'ah for Jihad: This bay'ah also goes by the name of Bay'ah ar-Ridwan, which was a covenant of fealty taken at the time of al-Hudaibiyah. The first men to take this bay'ah were Abu Sinan al-Asadi and Salamah bin al-Akwaʿ, who gave a solemn promise to die in the cause of Truth three times, at the front of the army, in the middle and in the rear. This bay'ah was sworn under a tree, with ʿUmar holding the hand of the Prophet ﷺ and Ma'qil bin Yasar holding a branch of the tree. This is the bay'ah referred to in ʾāyah eighteen of Sūratu-l-Faṭḥ which is mentioned above.

Bay'ah for Kḥilāfah: This is the bay'ah accepting a person as the Kḥalifah of the Muslims, who would rule over them. An example of this occurred after the death of the Prophet ﷺ when many ṣaḥābah took ʾAbu Bakr as their Kḥalifah and gave him their bay'ah.

Bay'ah against committing major sins: This we have mentioned in reference to Sūratu-l-Mumtaḥanah 60:12.

Giving Bay'ah for performing Islamic deeds: Auf bin Malik aṣḥ-Jae relates that there were eight or nine people sitting in the company of the Prophet ﷺ and he asked for their bay'ah. "We extended our hands, and asked him what was the issue on which we were to take the bay'ah."

The Prophet ﷺ replied: "On these issues: That you will worship only Allāh ﷻ and not join partners with Him. That you will perform five daily prayers and hear and obey all the orders." He also added in a low voice, "Do not beg anything from anyone." The narrator says that he had observed the ṣaḥābah of the Messenger ﷺ to the extent, that if the whip of a horse had dropped from their hands, they would not ask anyone to pick it up for them, but would dismount and would pick up the whip themselves. (at-Tabrani, Abu Nu'aim, al-Ḥakim, al-Bayhaqi and ʾIbn ʾAskr etc. reported it)

From these examples we can see there are many clear proofs that the Prophet ﷺ took bay[°]ah from people on many different occasions and for a variety of reasons.

This sunnah has continued from that time to this time and is most commonly observed in our time by the various turūq ṣufiyyah as well as among the mujahidīn and fadā'yūn (فدائيون). Here are some examples of the bay[°]ah as it manifests in our time:

The Bay[°]ah of Allegiance: Regarding this Shah Waliullāh رحمه الله writes in the book al-Qøwlu-l-Jamīl that this bay[°]ah which is inherited from the 'awliyā karam can be taken for many purposes.

1. The Bay[°]ah to avoid committing sins and to make sincere repentance.
2. The Bay[°]ah for blessing or benediction, which means to enter the fold of the righteous people to attain auspiciousness, which is proved by a chain of authoritative sayings of the Messenger ﷺ.
3. The Bay[°]ah for leaving overt or covert forbidden things, and making a firm intention to act sincerely on Divine Commands, and attaching your heart to Allāh the Exalted and Sublime.

This third kind is most fundamental. In the first two kinds, the aim is to leave all major sins without insisting on minor ones, and to practice all the ways of ordained obedience, such as the emphasized sunnah (*sunnah mu'akkadah*) which are those acts of worship that the Prophet ﷺ always used to do.

The breaking of this Bay[°]ah will involve persisting in committing major or minor infractions against ordained commandments of obedience. In the third kind, fulfilling the bay[°]ah means continuous steadfastness for migration (*hijrah*), or striving (*jihad*) in the path of Allāh ﷻ, or performing spiritual exercises, until one attains the light and joy of satisfaction (*ridā*), and it becomes one's instinctive voluntary habit. In such a condition, one is allowed to enjoy those things which are permitted in the ṣhāri'ah or to keep oneself busy in certain activities, the completion of which requires a long time, such as courses of religious and judicial sciences or spiritual practices.

The breaking of the bay[°]ah refers to the condition of making it defective before achieving enlightenment of the heart.

This type of Bay[°]ah can be continuously traced since the days of the Prophet ﷺ. In Qur[°]anic terminology it is called *tazkīyah* (تزكية), and in the tradition of the Prophet ﷺ it is called *°ihsān* (احسان) which is mentioned in the “Ḥadīth of Jibrīl ؑ”. Later, it was called *taṣawwūf* (تصوف). The order of spiritual leaders (var. *shaykh, pīr, murshid*) (شيخ، پیر، مرشد) and their disciples (murīd, muridūn مریدون، مرید) is an offshoot of this system.

One of the four major tasks for which the Prophet ﷺ was responsible is *tazkiya* or the purification of self, as Allāh ﷻ says:

هُوَ الَّذِي بَعَثَ فِي الْأُمِّيِّينَ رَسُولًا مِنْهُمْ
يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِهِ وَيُزَكِّيهِمْ وَيُعَلِّمُهُمُ الْكِتَابَ وَالْحِكْمَةَ
وَإِنْ كَانُوا مِنْ قَبْلُ لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ

huwa-l-ladhi ba[°]atḥa fi-l-°ummiyīna rasulam-minhu
yatlu °alayhim °āyātihi wa yuzakkihim
minhum yatlu °alayhim °ātātihi wa yuzakkihim
wa yu°allimuhum-l-kitāba wa-l-ḥikmah
wa °iñ janū miñ qabālu lafi ḍalālim-mubīn

He it is Who raised up among the unlettered ones a Messenger from amongst them to recite to them His Signs, and to purify them, and to teach them the Book and the Wisdom — though before they were clearly astray —
(Sūratu-l-Jumu[°]ah 62:2)

The Messenger ﷺ trained and purified his companions ؓ. If he detected any spiritual disease, he would pay special attention to its reformation, and adopt different methods for its elimination. After the death of the Prophet ﷺ the companions ؓ in turn took the bay[°]ah and this system was continued by their followers, and the followers of the followers, and is followed by their followers in our time.

And it is for this reason we have brought this subject to the attention of those gathered to observe the *mawlid*, as it is a key in the present as it was in the past, to real and fundamental change.

Tazkiyah is one of the principal focal points of all Qur[°]anic teachings. Allāh ﷻ mentions it in the Qur[°]ān (62:2) even before knowledge, saying that the Prophet ﷺ first purifies the believers and then teaches them the Book and the Wisdom, so that they can realise and comprehend that world which the teachings in the Qur[°]ān urge them to strive for. It is natural that human effort is directly proportional to realisation as a requirement for purification. A negligent (غفلة) person who doesn't realise their situation is difficult to convince of the Truth because such a person cannot comprehend their real needs.

Allāh ﷻ in the Qur[°]ān first makes clear the importance of a requirement and then enumerates the ways in which that may be realized. As such *tazkiyah*, or the purification of the self, is the realisation that purification is necessary in order to achieve felicity in the Final World (الآخرة) and is a building block of Qur[°]anic teachings. Without this realisation, the effect of Qur[°]anic teachings is no more than a lecture to a negligent, heedless or ignorant (*jāhl*, جاهل) person, which is unlikely to bring about any change in that person.

The Nature of Bay[°]ah.

The meaning of *bay'* (بيع : to make a transaction) is inherent in the term *bay[°]ah* (بَيْعَةٌ). *Bay'ah* thus implies that the murīd “sells” himself to the Shāykh as did the people of Yathrib sell themselves to the Rasūl ﷺ. You must make a transaction with the Shāykh you will adhere to the Laws (أحكام) of Allāh ﷻ, both on the outer and inner (*°āḥkamu-l-dhāhirah* and the *°āḥkamu-l-baṭiniyyah*) planes.

The nature of this “transaction” envisages that the searcher after the truth (*tālib*) should repose implicit trust and faith in his shāykh. He should understand and accept that the various advices, prescriptions, admonitions and prohibitions of the shāykh are all designed and motivated for the murīd's spiritual well-being. It is of the utmost importance that the murīd should not attempt to interfere with or impede the diagnosis and prescriptions of the shāykh.

The murīd should have implicit faith to such an extent that he should believe that in all the world there is none in his knowledge who can benefit him more than his ṣhaykh. In the terminology of ṭasawwūf this conception of implicit faith in the ṣhaykh is known as *wahdat-e-maṭlab* or holding firm to one's ṣhaykh. Without holding firm to one's ṣhaykh the act of bay[°]ah is meaningless and of no benefit because compatibility (*munāsabāt*) (مناسبات) with the ṣhaykh is an essential condition for reformation (*ʾiṣlāḥ*) (إصلاح) of the nafs.

The sign of the existence of compatibility (*munāsabāt*) between the murīd and his ṣhaykh is that the heart of the murīd does not object to the statements and acts of the ṣhaykh nor does he speculate about the ṣhaykh's judgements. Should any objection arise in the heart regarding the ṣhaykh, the murīd should grieve and feel remorse.

As Sayyidnā Khidr ؑ said to the Prophet Mūsa ؑ

فَإِنْ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّى أُحْدِثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا

fa-ʾinni-t-taba[°]tanī fa-lā tas[°]alnī ʿan ṣhay[°]in
ḥattāā ʾuḥdithā laka minhi ḍhikra

“If you would follow me, then ask no questions about anything
until I myself mention it to you.

(Sūratul-Kahf 18:70)

By virtue of bay[°]ah a bond of sincerity (*kḥulūs*) is generated between the murīd and the ṣhaykh. In their mutuality the ṣhaykh considers the murīd to belong to him and the murīd considers the ṣhaykh to belong to him and there is no friction or discord between them. The external form of bay[°]ah is beneficial to the generality of students (*al-amm*) since it induces reverence and respect in them for the ṣhaykh. As a result, they come to readily, smoothly and easily accept the statements of the ṣhaykh and are constrained to act accordingly. However, for the elite (*al-khaṣṣ*) the bay[°]ah proves more deeply beneficial after a period has been spent in intimate association with the ṣhaykh. This time is often referred to as “breaking the legs”. which demands that the murīd spend as much time as possible with the ṣhaykh carefully observing him in all his states.

The murīd must actively commit himself to the ṣhāykh and his teachings with a clean heart, clear mind, focus and total commitment. Obviously a murīd who gives the bay^{ah} but does not follow up on that bay^{ah} in terms of investment of time and service will not, in most cases, benefit to the same degree as the murīd who fully gives of himself to the ṣhāykh and his teachings. At the very least the murīd should arrange to spend some time with the ṣhāykh every week if only during the weekly gathering (*majlis*), but ideally seek further contact with the ṣhāykh for training (*tarbiyyah*) which usually consists in carrying out ‘jobs’ one is given by the ṣhāykh, no matter how menial or outwardly strange these tasks might appear.

It is this process of tarbiyyah which, along with adherence on the part of the murīd to all the Laws of Allāh, both outer and inner (*’āḥkamu-l-ḍhāhirah wa ’āḥkamu-l-baṭiniyyah*), that works to bring about the tazkiyyah or the purification of the self.

The word tarbiyyah is derived from the root *rabb* which means to foster, nourish and care for. A person who does this is called *al-murabbī* in Arabic. English unfortunately does not contain one all embracing word by which we can translate this term. In Arabic, in the context of the ṣhāykh or teacher, the reflection in this world of the Greatest Teacher, the Prophet ﷺ, is the one who nourishes, fosters, supports, advances, aids, encourages or trains the murīd by goodness and grace, in the Way of Allāh ﷺ. It comes from the same root as ‘*ar-rabb*’ which means, when referring to Allāh ﷻ, the Nourisher, the Sustainer, the One who gives life and sustenance to all. The word *ar-Rabb*, with the definite article ‘*al-*’, cannot be applied to anyone except Allāh ﷻ but it may be used in conjunction with something else, in the genitive, e.g., *rabb al-māl* (the owner of the wealth), *rabb al-bayt* (the owner of the house) and so on. In its verbal form it is used when referring to the care the farmer takes to nurture his crops or when referring to women it means specifically the function of the mother in nourishing her child by feeding the child with the milk from her breasts. We may also think of it as meaning, ‘The Trainer of Souls’ but we hope that it is understood that these are all facets of the term *al-murrabī*.

Again we hope it is understood that the first and greatest *murrabī* is the Prophet ﷺ but the true *shuyukh* are educators, trainers, fosterers — the *murabbī* of their *muridīn*. Were this not so they could not have connected their students to the knowledge of Allāh ﷻ and the Way of °Islām. *Tarbiyyah* is not a process of learning “about” °Islām but it *is* the process of learning to “be” a Muslim.

And it is in this way that the *murrabi* are the inheritors (*warith*) of the Prophet ﷺ and those who must be sought out in each time and in every place. It is this point, above all, we want to stress in relation to this talk celebrating the *mawlid* of the Prophet ﷺ.

As the people came from *Yathrib* seeking a way beyond strife and dissension, *fitnah* and warfare we, like they, must find a way beyond the strife and dissension, *fitnah* and warfare that surrounds us and make our way to the Prophet ﷺ to give him our *bay'ah* and take the teaching from whom he provides as the people of *Yathrib* did from *Musab-bin-Umair* ؓ whom he ﷺ sent to teach them.

This can be understood by means of an example. A light bulb is connected by a network of wires linked by poles. The electricity that originates from the generator in the powerhouse is transmitted to the bulbs through the wires stretched between the various poles.

By entering into the transaction of the *bay'ah* a person links him or herself through the wires connecting one *shaykh* to another *shaykh* (the poles) all the way back to the Prophet ﷺ from whom all these teachings and blessings originate. The generator in the powerhouse.

In this way the teachings of °Islām are kept forever green and alive in the most personal of ways — from human to human — across time. This is not ‘book learning’, though some things can be learned from books, but rather it is the teaching that reaches from heart to heart. May Allāh ﷻ make us all to be receptors of this teaching.

Allāh ﷻ knows best and peace and blessing be upon the Prophet ﷺ, his family ؑ and his companions and his blessed friends ؓ. °*Amīn*

إِنَّ صَلَاتِي وَنُسُكِي وَمَحْيَايَ وَمَمَاتِي لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ
لَا شَرِيكَ لَهُ ۗ وَبِذَلِكَ أُمِرْتُ وَأَنَا أَوَّلُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ

°inna ṣalātī wa nusukī wa maḥyātī wa mamātī
li-llāhi rabbi-l-°ālamīn
lā ṣharīka lah:

wa bi-dḥālika °umirtu wa °anā °awwalu-l-muslimīn

“Truly My worship and my sacrifice and my living and my dying
are for Allāh, The Nurturer of All the Worlds –
in Whose Divinity none has a share
This I am commanded and I am the first [among you]
who surrender [to Allāh].
(Sūrah al-°An°am 6:162-63)



إِنَّ اللَّهَ اشْتَرَىٰ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ أَنفُسَهُمْ وَأَمْوَالَهُم بِأَنَّ لَهُمُ الْجَنَّةَ
يُقَاتِلُونَ فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ فَيَقْتُلُونَ وَيُقْتَلُونَ ۖ وَعَدًّا عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا فِي
التَّوْرَةِ وَالْإِنْجِيلِ وَالْقُرْآنِ ۚ وَمَنْ أَوْفَىٰ بِعَهْدِهِ مِنَ اللَّهِ فَاسْتَبْشِرُوا
بِبَيْعِكُمُ الَّذِي بَايَعْتُمْ بِهِ ۚ وَذَلِكَ هُوَ الْفَوْزُ الْعَظِيمُ

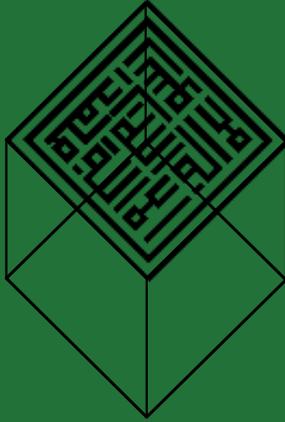
°inna-llāha-ṣḥ-tarā-mīna-l-mu°inīna
°ānfusahum wa °amwālahum
bi-°anna lahumu-l-jannah;
yuqātiluna fī sabīli-llāhi
fa-yaqātulunna wa yuqātālūn:
wa °da °alayhi ḥaqqan
fī-t-tawrātī wa-l-°injīlī wa-l-qur°ān:
wa man °awfā bi-°ahdihi mīna-llāh:
fa-s-tabāshīrū bi-bay°ikumū-l-ladḥī bayā°tum-bih;
wa dḥālika huwa-l-fowzul-l-°aḥḥīm

Surely Allāh has bought from their believers their souls and their wealth
[in exchange] for the Garden.

They fight in the Way of Allāh and they kill and they are killed.

This is a promise binding on Him in the Torah, the °Injil and the Qur°ān
[and] Who fulfills the covenant better than Allāh?

Rejoice in the bargain you have made, for that is the supreme attainment.
(Sūrah at-Ṭawbah 9:111)



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