

Allah the Most High created the world and all it contains with His all encompassing knowledge, wisdom and planning. Allah created us for the divine purpose of worshipping Him alone and in order to aid us in this great act, He sent messengers with divine revelation to guide, remind and rectify the affairs of mankind. Allah clarified the path of righteousness which leads to His pleasure, satisfaction and His paradise, while clarifying the path to evil, corruption, His anger, enmity and dissatisfaction. Furthermore, from Allah's mercy upon the creation is that He has blessed them with intellects and free wills to choose which path they want to tread.

Know O my beloved brother ~~and sister~~ that within this worldly life Allah tests his servants with numerous and various affairs. Allah tests the Muslims with a variety of different ordeals and situations, for reasons that Allah knows the wisdoms behind, even if they are not realized by our deficient intellects. Allah tests us with fear, difficulties and hardships, ease, hunger and thirst, poverty, wealth, sickness, death, our souls, family, killing, fighting and 'fitan'. Indeed, every believer shall be tested according to the level of his faith and when his faith is stronger, then the test is longer, larger, and more difficult to bear. *Allah says in the Quran!*

{أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا آمَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ (2) وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ}

Allah says: (Do the people think that they will be left alone because they say: 'We believe' and they will not be tested. And We indeed tested those who were before them. And Allah will certainly make it know the truth of those who are true/truthful and will certainly make it known the falsehood of those who are liars.) alAnkabut 29:2-3

From this verse we benefit:

- 1-Everyone who is Muslim will be tested, and believing in what Allah commanded us to believe in, is not a safeguard from being tested
- 2-The previous nations were tested, many passed the tests and many others failed
- 3-Allah tests the believers to determine who is truthful in what they believe, who will turn back upon their heels and leave off truly believing because they are tested with hardships, adversities, hunger, fear, torture, poverty, thirst, death, etc... Will the true believers remain firm upon their beliefs and obedience to Allah's revelation, or will they let these tests of hardships and adversities lead them astray and abandon the guidance they were upon and beliefs which they claimed they had.
4. Allah is all knowledgeable of everything, He knows who truly believes in their hearts and who the hypocrites are, the ones who say they believe with their tongues but they disbelieve in their hearts. Allah is al Aleem (all knowing) He knows what is in the hearts of His servants.

And Allah says:

{وَلَنَبْلُوَنَّكُمْ بِشَيْءٍ مِنَ الْخَوْفِ وَالْجُوعِ وَنَقْصٍ مِنَ الْأَمْوَالِ وَالْأَنْفُسِ وَالثَّمَرَاتِ وَبَشِّرِ الصَّابِرِينَ}

Allah says: (And certainly We shall test you with something of fear, hunger, loss of wealth, lives and fruits, but give glad tidings to the patient ones) al Baqarah 2:155

Benefits from this verse:

- 1) Allah promises the believers that He will test them with fear, hunger and loss of wealth, ~~lives and fruits~~ *test them with their lives their families*

2) Allah told us in this verse that He will test us with 'something' i.e. a little from these things, and not completely, because if it was completely then indeed the Muslim would die. And the purpose of tests is to purify and examine the believer not to kill them.

3) Allah started with 'fear' because it is the foundation to all the things which proceed it. Indeed if one has no food he starts fearing for his life, his family, etc... If one loses his wealth, or experiences a decrease in his wealth, for indeed he starts worrying and fears poverty and not being able to support himself, his family, pay his rent, bills, etc... Indeed if one's life is in danger he becomes scared and frightened, even if the life of one of his loved ones becomes endangered he fears for them. Similarly, the farmer who spends his whole year planting and tilling his farm, dedicating his time, money and labor to reap harvests at the end of the season, indeed he fears that all his hard work will not bring forth fruits and all his hard work would be in vain. In turn he would receive no income because he has no crops to sell and support himself or his family.

4) Allah mentioned these things because these are the things which the majority of the time are most precious to human beings and loss of these things cause fear, worry and hardship.

5) Allah after mentioning the things which people fear of losing, he gave glad tidings to those who are patient during these tests and trials and afflictions. Numerous verses in the Quran about those who are patient, Allah mentions patience and its virtues and benefits in over 95 verses in the Quran. Indeed patience is from the best traits of the true believers. Allah's Messenger said:

(وَمَا أُعْطِيَ أَحَدٌ عَطَاءً خَيْرًا وَأَوْسَعَ مِنَ الصَّبْرِ)

'No one can be given a blessing greater and better than patience' (Bukhari)

And Abu Huraira said Allah's Messenger said:

(مَنْ يُرِدِ اللَّهُ بِهِ خَيْرًا يُصِبْ مِنْهُ)

"If Allah wants ~~to do~~ ^{for someone} good ~~to somebody~~, He afflicts him with trials." Bukhari

Then in the verse which directly proceeds this verse Allah mentions 'who' are these patient ones and what are their characteristics, as Allah says:

{الَّذِينَ إِذَا أَصَابَتْهُمْ مُصِيبَةٌ قَالُوا إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ}

(Who, when afflicted with calamity, say: "Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return.")

IbnKathir mentions in explanation of this verse: meaning, those who recite this statement to comfort themselves in the face of their loss, know that they belong to Allah and that He does what He wills with His servants. They also know that nothing and no deed, even if it was the weight of an atom, will be lost with Allah on the Day of Resurrection. These facts thus compel them to admit that they are Allah's servants and that their return will be to Him in the Hereafter.

{وَأَنْبَلُواكُمْ حَتَّى نَعْلَمَ الْمُجَاهِدِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ وَتَبَلَّوْا أَخْبَارَكُمْ}

Allah says: (And surely, We shall try/test you until We know who are the Mujahideen (fight and strive hard for the sake of Allah) from amongst you and who are the patient ones from amongst you. And We shall test your information/facts (who is truthful and who is a liar)) Muhammad 47:31

Allah explains this verse with other glorious verses, as he says:

3)The 'fitan' will be general and effect all people as Allah says:

(وَاتَّقُوا فِتْنَةً لَا تُصِيبَنَّ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْكُمْ خَاصَّةً وَاعْلَمُوا أَنَّ اللَّهَ شَدِيدُ الْعِقَابِ)

(And fear 'fitnah' (affliction, trials, tribulations) which will not only effect those of you who do wrong but may afflict all the good and the bad people, and know Allah is Sever in punishment) al anfal 8:25

4) fitnah causes separation, dissension and disunity, Allah says:

(وَكَذَلِكَ فَتَنَّا بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لِيَقُولُوا أَهَؤُلَاءِ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ بَيْنِنَا أَلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ
بِالشَّاكِرِينَ)

(And thus we have tried/tested some of them with others so that they might say: 'Is it these poor believers whom Allah has favored over us?' Does not Allah know best those who are grateful?) alan'aam 6:53

5)Fitnah occurs in affairs which are unclear, uncertain, vague, doubtful, and ambiguous which causes confusion, strife, conflict and discord amongst the people which makes them incapable to distinguish between the truth and the falsehood, as Allah says:

(هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ مِنْهُ آيَاتٌ مُحْكَمَاتٌ هُنَّ أُمُّ الْكِتَابِ وَأُخَرُ مُتَشَابِهَاتٌ فَأَمَّا
الَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِمْ زِينٌ فَيَسْتَبِغُونَ مَا تُشَابَهُ مِنْهُ ابْتِغَاءَ الْفِتْنَةِ وَابْتِغَاءَ تَأْوِيلِهِ وَمَا يَعْلَمُ تَأْوِيلَهُ إِلَّا
اللَّهُ وَالرَّاسِخُونَ فِي الْعِلْمِ يَقُولُونَ آمَنَّا بِهِ كُلٌّ مِنْ عِنْدِ رَبِّنَا وَمَا يَذَّكَّرُ إِلَّا أُولُو الْأَلْبَابِ)

(He (Allah) is the one who revealed to you (Muhammad) the Quran. In it are verses that are entirely clear which are the foundations of the book and there are other verses not so entirely clear (clarified by other texts). So as for those in whose hearts is deviation (from the the truth) then they follow that which is not entirely clear, seeking 'al fitnah' (polytheism, trials, tribulations, etc...) and seek for hidden meanings. But none knows the hidden meanings except Allah. And those who are firmly grounded in knowledge say: 'We believe in all of the verses they are all from our Lord.' And none receive admonition except men of understanding) ali Imran 3:7

we ask Allah to keep us safe from all types
of fitan, the apparent and inapparent,
O Allah make our hearts firm upon
your religion.

Based upon this I saw it fit to remind myself as well as my noble brothers and sisters in Islam about the different types of tribulations, what are some characteristics and signs of 'fitan' and what is the prophet guidance for the Muslims to adhere to in times of 'fitan'.

What are the signs and characteristics of 'fitan'?

1) 'fitan', trials, tribulations and war is attractive to people during its onset such that it deceives them with its illusions.

KhalafibnHowshab mentioned that the people should learn these lines of poetry (attributed to ImrulQays) in times of 'fitnah':

الْحَرْبُ أَوَّلُ مَا تَكُونُ فِتْيَةً ... تَسْعَى بِرَبِيَّتِهَا لِكُلِّ جَهُولٍ

War when it first appears, is like a young woman...Who hastens/moves with her beauty to every ignorant one

حَتَّى إِذَا اشْتَعَلَتْ وَشَبَّ ضِرَامُهَا ... وَلَتْ عَجُوزًا غَيْرَ ذَاتِ حَلِيلٍ

Until when it (war) becomes fierce and prolonged...It (war) turns into an old woman without a husband

شَمِطَاءَ جَزَّتْ رَأْسَهَا وَتَنَكَّرَتْ ... مَكْرُوهَةً لِلشَّمِّ وَالتَّقْبِيلِ

Grey-haired, changed and different....An unpleasant one to smell and kiss! (asSunan al Ma'thoorah by Imam ash Shafee 1/344)

2) 'fitan' seizes and captures the minds and intellects of men

عَنْ أَبِي مُوسَى الْأَشْعَرِيِّ، أَنَّ رَسُولَ اللَّهِ صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ، قَالَ: "إِنَّ بَيْنَ يَدَيِ السَّاعَةِ الْهَرْجُ. قَالُوا: وَمَا الْهَرْجُ؟ قَالَ: "الْقَتْلُ. قَالُوا: أَكْثَرُ مِمَّا نَقْتُلُ؟! إِنَّا لَنَقْتُلُ كُلَّ عَامٍ أَكْثَرَ مِنْ سَبْعِينَ أَلْفًا. قَالَ: "إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ بِقَتْلِكُمُ الْمُشْرِكِينَ، وَلَكِنْ قَتْلُ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا. قَالُوا: وَمَعَنَا عُقُولُنَا يَوْمَئِذٍ؟! قَالَ: "إِنَّهُ لَتُنزَعُ عُقُولُ أَهْلِ ذَلِكَ الزَّمَانِ، وَيُخَلَّفُ لَهُ هَبَاءٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ، يَحْسِبُ أَكْثَرُهُمْ أَنَّهُمْ عَلَى شَيْءٍ، وَلَيْسُوا عَلَى شَيْءٍ. قَالَ أَبُو مُوسَى: وَالَّذِي نَفْسِي بِيَدِهِ، مَا أَجِدُ لِي وَلَكُمْ مِنْهَا مَخْرَجًا - إِنَّا دُرُكْتِنِي وَإِبَاكُمْ - إِلَّا أَنْ نَخْرُجَ مِنْهَا كَمَا دَخَلْنَا فِيهَا؛ لَمْ نُصِبْ مِنْهَا دَمًا، وَلَا مَالًا .

On the authority of Abu Musa al Ash'aree the prophet Muhammad said: 'Before the coming of the Hour there will be al-Harj', they said: 'and what is al-Harj?'. The Prophet replied: 'Killings'. Then they said: 'More than the ones we kill? Indeed we kill more than this and that amount of polytheists every year.' The Prophet said: 'Indeed it won't be your killing of the polytheists but rather it's when you will kill each other such that a man will kill his neighbor, his brother, his uncle and his cousin', they said: 'Will we have sound intellects that day?' The prophet replied: 'Verily the intellects of the people will bewithdrawn/seized and there will remain from the people those who are worthless and possess not intellects. Most of them will think they are upon something (good) but in reality they are not.'

Then Abu Musa said: ' By him in Whose Hand is my soul, if it takes hold of me, I don't see a way out of it neither for me nor for you except that we should exit from it just like we entered into it, without spilling any blood or seizing any wealth.'(Imam Ahmed in Musnad 19492, IbnMajah 3959 and IbnHibbaan 1870 and others. Imam al Albaani said the hadeeth is authentic in 'SilsilatulAhaadeeth as Saheehah 1682.

puts them through trials and tribulations. So the benefit of the test and trial is to make people's situations apparent for other people to see.

And Allah's statement in the previous verse: 'Allah will not leave the believers upon what you are upon now, until He distinguishes the wicked/filthy from the good/pure...' The intent in this verse is to clarify to the people who are the wicked ones and who are the good ones and distinguish between the two. (AdwaaulBayaan by Sheikh Muhammad Ameen ash Shanqiti 1/209)

Indeed 'fitan' occur to distinguish between the good people and the bad people, the wicked people and the righteous people. Surely 'fitan' is apparently bad and filled with difficult situations to deal with, but 'fitan' many times is a way to distinguish the good and pure, from the bad and impure.

The word (fitna or fitnah) is an Arabic word:

فَتْنُ الْمَعْدِنِ : صَهْرُهُ فِي النَّارِ لِيَخْتَبِرَ جَوْدَتَهُ

Which means: to find out the purity or impurity of precious metals like gold or silver by melting it on fire. Melting the metal on fire discloses the reality. Melting the nugget separates the gold from the other minerals and impurities.

For the same reason, the word 'fitan' is also used to mean testing and examining something. Thus, a second meaning of this word is "trial, or tribulation" because when hardships and misfortunes descend on a man his real worth and character are tested by his conduct and behavior under these trying and difficult situations. It is observed whether he bears these trying hours, days with patience, or makes a fuss, complains and raises hues and cries.

From the goals of these 'fitan' (trials, tribulations, killing, fighting, torturing, disputes, etc...) is what Allah mentions in the Quran:

{وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا إِنَّهُمْ لَيَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُونَ فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً أَتَصْبِرُونَ
وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيرًا}

(And We never sent before you (Muhammad) any of the Messengers except that they ate food and walked in the markets. And we have made some of you as a trial for others; will you be patient/have patience? And your Lord is Ever All seer) al Furqan 25:20

And Allah tested the people of Thamud with the she camel as Allah said:

{إِنَّا مُرْسَلُو النَّاقَةِ فِتْنَةً لَهُمْ فَارْتَقِبْهُمْ وَاصْطَبِرْ}

(Verily, We are sending the she-camel as a test for them. So watch them (O Salih) and be patient!) alQamar 54:27

So based upon these Quranic verses we could extract some profound meanings and benefits as to how to deal with 'fitan'. From the benefits of these verses:

Indeed, 'fitan' in its many forms and types are from the most of difficult affairs that Allah tests the believers with, within Muslim communities, within Muslim cities and countries Muslims fighting, torturing, and killing each other. These types of 'fitan' seize the minds of the masses while captivating and intriguing the minds of the ignorant and naïve. These types of 'fitan' capture the attention, intellects and lives of the laymen such that there hardly remains an individual with a clear mind and sound intellect amidst such chaos, strife and anarchy.

{أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَأْتِكُمْ مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ خَلَوْا مِنْ قَبْلِكُمْ مَسَّتْهُمُ الْبَأْسَاءُ وَالضَّرَاءُ وَزُلْزِلُوا حَتَّى يَقُولَ الرَّسُولُ وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا مَعَهُ مَتَى نَصُرَ اللَّهُ أَلَا إِنَّ نَصْرَ اللَّهِ قَرِيبٌ}

(Or do you think that you will enter the paradise without such trials/tests as those who proceeded you from amongst the previous nations? They were afflicted with severe poverty and ailments and were shaken so hard that even the Messenger and those who believed with them used to say: 'When with the Help of Allah come?' Yes, Certainly the Help of Allah is near!) alBaqarah 2:214

Allah says in another verse:

{أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَيَعْلَمَ الصَّابِرِينَ}

Or do you think that you will enter the paradise before Allah tests those of you who fought in His cause and also tests those who are patient amongst you?

Allah says in another verse:

{أَمْ حَسِبْتُمْ أَنْ تُتْرَكُوا وَلَمَّا يَعْلَمِ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا مِنْكُمْ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَلَا رَسُولِهِ وَلَا الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَلِجَنَّةٍ وَاللَّهُ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ}

Do you think that you shall be left alone while Allah has not yet tested those among you who have striven hard and fought and have not taken any 'Walijah' (helpers, advisors, consultants from disbelievers and pagans giving openly to them their secrets), besides Allah and His messenger and the believers. Allah is well acquainted with what you do.) atTawbah 9:16

Allah says:

{مَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيَذَرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ عَلَىٰ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ حَتَّىٰ يَمِيزَ الْخَبِيثَ مِنَ الطَّيِّبِ وَمَا كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُطْلِعَكُمْ عَلَى الْغَيْبِ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَجْتَبِي مِنْ رُسُلِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ فَأَمِنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرُسُلِهِ وَإِنْ تُؤْمِنُوا وَتَتَّقُوا فَلَكُمْ أَجْرٌ عَظِيمٌ}

(Allah will not leave the believers upon what you are upon now, until He distinguishes the wicked/filthy from the good/pure. Nor will Allah disclose to you the secrets of the unseen, but Allah chooses from His Messengers who He wills. So believe in Allah and His messengers. And if you believe and fear Allah, then for you there is great reward.) ali Imran 3:179

Be informed
~~know~~ may Allah have mercy upon you that Allah knows everything in existence and His knowledge is all *comprehensive* and all encompassing. Indeed Allah tests the believers not because he doesn't know people's situations or not because ~~of his unawareness~~ *he is unaware* of who is the true believer from the false believer. Surely Allah already knows this by His perfect and complete knowledge, Allah is the All hearing, All seeing, All knowing, but he tests his servants and puts them through trials, tribulations and difficulties so as to make these affairs known to his creation, so that the people can see with their eyes who are the patient ones, who are the believers, who are the impatient ones, who are those spreading corruption in the earth, who are those creating problems, and who are those striving for reconciliation. Surely trials, tribulations and calamities occur so that the people on the earth know who the real believers are, as Allah already knows who the real believers are, He knows what is in the hearts and intellects of his creation, Allah says in explanation of this:

{وَلِيَبْتَلِيَ اللَّهُ مَا فِي صُدُورِكُمْ وَلِيُمَحَّصَ مَا فِي قُلُوبِكُمْ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِذَاتِ الصُّدُورِ}

(So that Allah may test what is in your chests and purify/test/get rid of what is in your hearts (sins) and Allah is all aware/knowing of what is in your breasts) ali Imran 3:154

Allah's statement 'Allah is all knowledgeable of what is in your breasts' after Allah's statement 'So that Allah may test' is decisive proof that Allah did not benefit anything from testing them which he didn't already know. This is because the one who knows what is in the breasts and hearts is free and independent of needing to test anyone.

This verse contains a great clarification of the other verse in which Allah mentions that he tests the creation and