

DAILY QUR'ANIC REFLECTIONS

From Juz' 5: Nurturing an Islamic Community

وَإِذَا حُيِّتُمْ بِتَحِيَّةٍ فَحَيُّوا بِأَحْسَنَ مِنْهَا أَوْ رُدُّوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ كَانَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ حَسِيبًا

When you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better one than it, or return it; indeed Allah takes account of all things. (Al-Nisa: 86)

Reflections:

Surat al-Nisa is a Madani surah revealed in the years following the migration of Muslims to Madinah. The chapter emphasizes the significance of hijrah (migration) and the formation of the Muslim community. It encourages believers to actively participate in building and strengthening their jama'ah (community).

A Muslim community is primarily defined by the quality of interactions among the believers. The verse of Tahiyah (greeting) provides essential guidance on how to foster strong communal bonds. Linguistically, the word *tahiyah* derives from the root *hayat* (life), meaning to pray for another person's life and well-being, whether through saying *Salaamun 'Alaykum* or another form of greeting. In fact, Imam al-Sadiq (a) explains that *tahiyah* in this verse encompasses saying Salam and other acts of goodness¹. In an Islamic community, Muslims are expected to reciprocate kindness with even greater kindness.

From this verse, we can derive some of the key features of an Islamic community:

- a. **Faith-centered:** The verse does not specify any conditions regarding the one who initiated the greeting. Muslims should not discriminate in such matters by age, wealth, position or race. A believer's Islamic identity is their most important identity.
- b. **Ihsan (Goodness):** The believers are expected to greet and meet each other with warmth and affection. The instruction to respond with something better comes before the command to respond in an equal manner. A sign of an Islamic community is that goodness and warmth is amplified and not just reciprocated.
- c. **Islamic Culture:** An Islamic community should be built around an Islamic culture. The Prophet (s) was insistent that believers should greet each other with the greeting of Islam, which is *Salaamun 'Alaykum*.

To ponder: Why does Allah (s) end the verse by stating that He takes account of all things?

References: Āyatullāh Nāsir Makārim Shirāzi, Tafsire Namouneh.

¹ Tafsir al-Qummi, p. 133.