**Brotherhood**



The believers are but brothers, so make peace between your brothers; and keep from disobedience to God in reverence for Him and piety (particularly in your duties toward one another as brothers), so that you may be shown mercy (granted a good, virtuous life in the world as individuals and as a community, and eternal happiness in the Hereafter).7[[1]](#endnote-2)

7. The last two verses mean that all the believers are brothers and sisters, who are dutiful to one another in this relationship. It hints that there may be quarrels, even fighting, among brothers, which may sometimes arise from rivalry and jealousy. Even if they quarrel and fight with one another, they are still brothers and sisters, and brotherhood and sisterhood require peace. If, despite the fact that there cannot be enmity among them, two parties of believers dispute or fight with each other, the other believers, who are brothers and sisters to them, must reconcile them immediately and make peace between them as required by such a relationship. When they are reconciled and have made peace, they must be meticulous in acting according to the precepts of justice. Since quarrels among brothers and sisters usually break out because of rivalry and jealousy, dispensing justice with great care is particularly important.

Brotherhood (and sisterhood) is very important for both the individual and social life of the believers. In particular, their prosperity in the world and superiority against their enemies depend on faith and this relationship. If they clash with one another and divide into rival groups, it is inevitable that they will weaken and be defeated by their enemies. For this reason, both the Qur'ān and God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, have greatly stressed the importance of brotherhood and sisterhood. God's Messenger, upon him be peace and blessings, used to demand the allegiance of the believers on the conditions that they had to perform the Prescribed Prayers, paying the Prescribed Purifying Alms, and be well-wishers of the believers. He also said: "Cursing a Muslim is a transgression, and fighting with him amounts to unbelief" (al-Bukhārī, "Īmān," 36). Again, he said: "A Muslim is a brother of another Muslim. He never wrongs him nor makes him devoid of his support. There is no greater offense for a Muslim than despising his Muslim brother" (al-Bukhārī, "Adab," 57–58; Muslim, "Birr," 28–34). He also said: "Believers are like a single body in loving and showing mercy to one another; (just as the whole body suffers from any suffering in any part of the body,) so too, will all believers suffer because of the suffering of a believer" (al-Bukhārī, "Adab," 122; Muslim, "Birr," 66). (For the importance of brotherhood and how it can be realized and preserved, see Said Nursi, *Lem'alar*, "20. Lem'a.")

The example of the believers in their affection, mercy, and compassion for each other is that of a body. When any limb aches, the whole body reacts with sleeplessness and fever.[[2]](#endnote-3)

None of you has faith until he loves for his brother or his neighbor what he loves for himself.[[3]](#endnote-4)

Do not hate each other, do not envy each other, do not turn away from each other. Rather, be servants of Allah as brothers. It is not lawful for a Muslim to abandon his brother for more than three days.[[4]](#endnote-5)

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The Twenty-Second Letter[[5]](#endnote-6)

*In His Name!*

*And there is nothing but it glorifies Him with praise*.(17:44)

 [This letter consists of two topics; the first summons believers to brotherhood and love.]

First Topic

*In the Name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate.*

*Verily the believers are brethren; so reconcile then your brothers*.(49:10) \* *Repel evil with what is better than it; then the one between whom and yourself enmity prevails will become like your friend and intimate*.(41:34) \* *Those who suppress their anger and forgive people – verily God loves those who do good*.(3:134)

Dispute and discord among the believers, and partisanship, obstinacy and envy, leading to rancour and enmity among them, are repugnant and vile, are harmful and sinful, by the combined testimony of wisdom and the supreme humanity that is Islam, for personal, social, and spiritual life. They are in short, poison for the life of man. We will set forth six of the extremely numerous aspects of this truth.

***Second Aspect***

They are also sinful in the view of wisdom, for it is obvious that enmity and love are opposites, just like light and darkness; while maintaining their respective essences, they cannot be combined.

If love is truly found in a heart, by virtue of the predomination of the causes that produce it, then enmity in that heart can only be metaphorical, and takes on the form of compassion. The believer loves and should love his brother, and is pained by any evil he sees in him. He attempts to reform him not with harshness but gently. It is for this reason that the Hadith of the Prophet (UWBP) says, “No believer should be angered with another and cease speaking to him for more than three days.”1

If the causes that produce enmity predominate, and true enmity takes up its seat in a heart, then the love in that heart will become metaphorical, and take on the form of artifice and flattery.

O unjust man! See now what a great sin is rancour and enmity toward a brother believer! If you were to say that ordinary small stones are more valuable than the Ka‘ba and greater than Mount Uhud, it would be an ugly absurdity. So too, belief which has the value of the Ka‘ba, and Islam which has the splendour of Mount Uhud, as well as other Islamic attributes, demand love and concord; but if you prefer to belief and Islam certain shortcomings which arouse hostility, but in reality are like the small stones you too will be engaging in great injustice, foolishness, and sin!

The unity of belief necessitates also the unity of hearts, and the oneness of our creed demands the oneness of our society. You cannot deny that if you find yourself in the same regiment as someone, you will form a friendly attachment to him; a brotherly relation will come into being as a result of your both being submitted to the orders of a single commander. You will similarly experience a fraternal relation through living in the same town with someone. Now there are ties of unity, bonds of union, and relations of fraternity as numeous as the divine names that are shown and demonstrated to you by the light and consciousness of belief.

Your Creator, Owner, Object of Worship, and Provider is one and the same for both of you; thousands of things are and the same for you. Your Prophet (UWBP), your religion, your qibla are one and the same; hundreds of things are one and the same for you. Then too your village is one, your state is one, your country is one; tens of things are one and the same for you. All of these things held in common dictate oneness and unity, union and concord, love and brotherhood, and indeed the cosmos and the planets are similarly interlinked by unseen chains. If, despite all this, you prefer things worthless and transient as a spider’s web that give rise to dispute and discord, to rancour and enmity, and engage in true enmity towards a believer, then you will understand – unless your heart is dead and your intelligence extinguished – how great is your disrespect for that bond of unity, your slight to that relation of love, your transgression against that tie of brotherhood!

***Fourth Aspect***

It is a sin from the point of view of personal life. Listen to the following four principles which are the base of this Fourth Aspect.

***First Principle:*** When you know your way and opinions to be true, you have the right to say, “My way is right and the best.” But you do not have the right to say, “Only my way is right.” According to the sense of “The eye of contentment is too dim to perceive faults; It is the eye of anger that exhibits all vice;”2 your unjust view and distorted opinion cannot be the all-decisive judge and cannot condemn the belief of another as invalid.

***Second Principle:*** It is your right that all that you say should be true, but not that you should say all that is true. For one of insincere intention may sometimes take unkindly to advice, and react against it unfavourably.

***Third Principle:*** If you wish to nourish enmity, then direct it against the enmity in your heart, and attempt to rid yourself of it. Be an enemy to your evil-commanding soul and its caprice and attempt to reform it, for it inflicts more harm on you than all else. Do not engage in enmity against other believers on account of that injurious soul. Again, if you wish to cherish enmity, there are unbelievers and atheists in great abundance; be hostile to them. In the same way that the attribute of love is fit to receive love as its response, so too enmity will receive enmity as its own fitting response. If you wish to defeat your enemy, then respond to his evil with good. For if you respond with evil, enmity will increase, and even though he will be outwardly defeated, he will nurture hatred in his heart and hostility will persist. But if you respond to him with good, he will repent and become your friend. The meaning of the lines: “If you treat the noble nobly, he will be yours; And if you treat the vile nobly, he will revolt,”3 is that it is themark of the believer to be noble, and he will become submitted to you by noble treatment. And even if someone is apparently ignoble, he is noble with respect to his belief. It often happens that if you tell an evil man, “You are good, you are good,” he will become good; and if you tell a good man, “You are bad, you are bad,” he will become bad. Hearken, therefore, to these sacred principles of the Qur’an, for happiness and safety are to be found in them:

*If they pass by futility, they pass by it in honourable disdain*.(25:72) \* *If you forgive, pardon, and relent, verily God is All-Relenting, Merciful*.(64:14)

***Fourth Principle:*** Those who cherish rancour and enmity transgress against their own souls, their brother believer, and divine mercy. For such a person condemns his soul to painful torment with his rancour and enmity. He imposes torment on his soul whenever his enemy receives some bounty, and pain from fear of him. If his enmity arises from envy, then it is the most severe form of torment. For envy in the first place consumes and destroys the envier, and its harm for the one envied is either slight or nonexistent.

**The cure for envy:** Let the envious reflect on the ultimate fate of those things that arouse his enmity. Then he will understand that the beauty, strength, rank, and wealth possessed by his rival are transient and temporary. Their benefit is slight, and the anxiety they cause is great. If it is a question of personal qualities that will gain him reward in the hereafter, they cannot be an object of envy. But if one does envy another on account of them, then he is either himself a hypocrite, wishing to destroy the goods of the hereafter while yet in this world, or he imagines the one whom he envies to be a hypocrite, thus being unjust towards him.

If he rejoices at the misfortunes he suffers and is grieved by the bounties he receives, it is as if he is offended by the kindness shown towards him by divine determining (*kader*) and divine mercy, as if he were criticizing and objecting to them. Whoever criticizes divine determining is striking his head against an anvil on which it will break, and whoever objects to divine mercy will himself be deprived of it.

How might justice and sound conscience accept that the response to something worth not even a day’s hostility should be a year’s rancour and hostility? You cannot condemn a brother believer for some evil you experience at his hand for the following reasons:

*Firstly,* divine determining has a certain share of responsibility. It is necessary to deduct that share from the total and respond to it with contentment and satisfaction.

*Secondly,* the share of the soul and Satan should also be deducted, and one should pity the man for having been overcome by his soul and await his repentance instead of becoming his enemy.

*Thirdly,* look at the defect in your own soul that you do not see or do not wish to see; deduct a share for that too. As for the small share which then remains, if you respond with forgiveness, pardon, and magnanimity, in such a way as to conquer your enemy swiftly and safely, then you will have escaped all sin and harm. But if, like some drunken and crazed person who buys up fragments of glass and ice as if they were diamonds, you respond to worthless, transient, temporary, and insignificant happenings of this world with violent enmity, permanent rancour, and perpetual hostility, as if you were going to remain in the world with your enemy for all eternity, it would be extreme transgression, sinfulness, drunkenness, and lunacy.

If then you love yourself, do not permit this harmful hostility and desire for revenge, so harmful for personal life, to enter your heart. If it has entered your heart, do not listen to what it says. Hear what truth-seeing Hafiz of Shiraz says: “The world is not a commodity worth arguing over.” It is worthless since it is transient and passing. If this is true of the world, then it is clear how worthless and insignficant are the petty affairs of the world! Hafiz also said: “The tranquillity of both worlds lies in the understanding of these two words: generosity towards friends, forbearance towards enemies.”1

***If  you  say :***  “I have no choice, there is enmity within my disposition. I cannot overlook those who antagonize me.”

***The  Answer :***If evil character and bad disposition do not exhibit any trace, and you do not act with ill intention, there is no harm. If you have no choice in the matter, then you are unable to abandon your enmity. If you recognize your defect and understand that you are wrong to have that attribute, it will be a form of repentance and seeking of forgiveness for you, thus delivering you from its evil effects. In fact, we have written this Topic of the Letter in order to make possible such a seeking of forgiveness, to distinguish right from wrong, and to prevent enmity from being displayed as rightful.

**A case worthy of notice:** I once saw, as a result of biased partisanship, a pious scholar of religion going so far in his condemnation of another scholar with whose political opinions he disagreed as to imply that he was an unbeliever. He also praised with respect a dissembler who shared hisown opinions. I was appalled at these evil results of political involvement. I said: “I take refuge with God from Satan and politics,” and from that time on withdrew from politics.

**References**

1. **49:10/The Quran with Annotated Interpretation in Modern English by Ali Unal** [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. **Sahih Bukhari 5665, Sahih Muslim 2586** [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. **Sahih Bukhari 13** [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. **Sahih Muslim 2559** [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. **THE RISALE-I NUR COLLECTION by SAID NURSI** [↑](#endnote-ref-6)