SAMPLE

The Prohibition of Oppression: The

Weight of the Hand Dhulm (ظلم) in the Quran

Aira Aurora

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This free sample contains the Introduction and Chapter 1. The complete book contains the full contents above.

Introduction: The Darkness on the Day

The Quran's prohibition of oppression is one of the most emphatic and wide-ranging commands in the entire text. The word dhulm — oppression, injustice, wrongdoing — appears in hundreds of verses, in dozens of forms, across every dimension of human life. The Quran prohibits the oppression of others, the oppression of the self, and the acceptance of oppression. It describes the consequence of oppression in the most severe terms: "And the Day the wrongdoer will bite on his hands, saying: O would that I had taken with the Messenger a way" (25:27). The image — the wrongdoer biting their own hands in regret — is the image of the person who, on the Day of Judgment, realizes the weight of what they did and the impossibility of undoing it.

The Quran says: "And whoever turns away from My remembrance — indeed, he will have a depressed life, and We will gather him on the Day of Resurrection blind" (20:124). The dhulm that begins in this world — the oppression of others, the injustice of the powerful, the exploitation of the weak — produces a darkness that extends into the next. "And for those who have done wrong is a turning away like the turning of the possessor of a ring" — the imagery of darkness, of loss, of disorientation. The Quran says: "On the Day you see the hypocritical men and hypocritical women, their light proceeding before them and on their right. It will be said: Your light today, go back and seek it. So a wall will be placed between them with a door, inside it mercy and outside it punishment" (57:13). The dhulm that was done in the light of this world becomes the darkness of the next.

This book — the ninth in the Commands & Prohibitions sub-series — explores the Quranic prohibition of oppression (dhulm). It examines the foundational verses, the theological foundation (Allah as the Just — al-'Adl), the nature of oppression (the misuse of power), the two sides (the oppressor and the oppressed), the prophetic models of liberation, the tyrants as the models of oppression (Fir'awn, Namrud, Qarun, Abu Jahl), the social and systemic face of oppression, the scope of the prohibition (what is forbidden and to whom), and the spiritual reward of those who establish justice.

The Quran's treatment of dhulm is not limited to the individual act of wrongdoing; it encompasses the systems, the structures, and the cultures that produce and sustain injustice. The oppressor is not only the tyrant who rules with an iron hand but also the merchant who cheats on the scale, the parent who favors one child over another, the spouse who abuses their partner, the employer who withholds the wage, the judge who rules by bias, and the person who oppresses their own soul through sin. The prohibition of dhulm is comprehensive — it covers every relationship in which power is exercised, and

every dimension in which the exercise of power can be just or unjust.

The first chapter begins with the prohibition itself — the verses that establish the forbidding of dhulm and the weight that the wrongdoer will carry on the Day when the darkness closes in.

Chapter 1: The Prohibition — What Allah Forbids

The Quran prohibits oppression in the most emphatic terms: "And do not cooperate in sin and aggression" (5:2). "And Allah does not like the wrongdoers" (3:140). "And the wrongdoers will have no protector and no helper" (42:8). The prohibition is not of a single act but of a category — the category of dhulm, which encompasses every form of injustice, from the oppression of the individual to the oppression of the community, from the misuse of power to the exploitation of weakness.

The word dhulm comes from the root dhulama, meaning to put something in the wrong place, to misplace, to act unjustly. The dhulm is the act that puts the right in the wrong place — the right of the person in the wrong hands, the right of the community in the wrong system, the right of the soul in the wrong direction. The opposite of dhulm is 'adl — justice, the putting of everything in its right place. The prohibition of dhulm is the command to put everything in its right place — and the forbidding of every act that puts something where it does not belong.

The Quran says: "And do not consume one another's wealth unjustly or send it to the rulers in order to consume a portion of the wealth of the people in sin, while you know" (2:188). The verse prohibits the consumption of wealth through injustice — the taking of what is not yours through fraud, manipulation, bribery, or coercion. The verse also prohibits the use of authority — sending wealth to the rulers — as a means of consuming what belongs to others. The prohibition addresses both the private act (the unjust taking) and the public act (the corruption of the system).

The Quran says: "Indeed, Allah commands you to deliver trusts to whom they are due and when you judge between people to judge with justice. Excellent is what Allah instructs you. Indeed, Allah is ever Hearing and Seeing" (4:58). The verse pairs the delivery of trusts with the judgment of justice — the two dimensions of 'adl in the social realm. The person who holds a trust must deliver it; the person who judges must judge with justice. Both are the opposite of dhulm: the withholding of a trust is dhulm, and the biased judgment is dhulm. The command to justice is the prohibition of oppression — the two are the two faces of the same coin.

The Quran says: "And do not sit on every path, threatening and averting from the way of Allah those who believe in Him, seeking to make it deviated. And remember when you were few and He increased you. And see how was the end of the corrupters" (7:86). The verse prohibits the oppression of the

believer — the person who sits on the path and threatens the one who seeks the way of Allah. The prohibition includes the physical blocking (sitting on the path), the verbal threatening (threatening the believer), and the psychological discouraging (averting from the way). The oppression of the believer is the oppression of the faith itself — and the Quran addresses it with the severity it deserves.

The Quran says: "And do not oppress the people, spreading corruption" (26:183). The verse, spoken by Shu'ayb to his people, is the prophetic command to the community: do not oppress. The prohibition is not merely individual but communal — the community that oppresses is a community that spreads corruption. The oppression that begins as an individual act extends to the community, and the community that tolerates oppression is a community that has become corrupt.

The Quran addresses two dimensions of dhulm: the oppression of others and the oppression of the self. "And whoever does wrong has wronged himself" (4:97). The person who oppresses another has first oppressed their own soul — because the act of injustice harms the doer before it harms the victim. The harm to the victim may be visible (the loss, the pain, the diminishment), but the harm to the doer is deeper (the corruption of the heart, the earning of the divine wrath, the weight on the scale). The prohibition of dhulm is the prohibition of both — the harming of the other and the harming of the self, which are, in the Quran's vision, the same act seen from two sides.

The prohibition of dhulm is, in the Quran's treatment, one of the gravest of all prohibitions. The Quran says: "And your Lord is not unaware of what they do" (11:123) — the wrongdoer is not forgotten by the One who sees all. The Quran describes the consequence of dhulm in the most severe terms: the darkness of the grave, the weight on the scale, the punishment of the Fire, the regret on the Day of Judgment. The gravity reflects the nature of the act: the oppression of another is the most direct violation of the justice that Allah has established — the order that says every person has a right, every right must be honored, and every violation of a right will be judged.

The prohibition of dhulm is the negative counterpart to the command of 'adl. The Quran's moral framework is built on pairs: command and prohibition, virtue and vice, the path and the deviation. The command of 'adl (16:90, 4:58, 5:8) and the prohibition of dhulm (2:188, 5:2, 7:86, 26:183) are the two faces of the same principle: Allah has established justice, and the person who does justice obeys the command while the person who does injustice violates the prohibition. The two are inseparable — the person who does not establish justice has, by default, permitted oppression, and the person who does not

oppose oppression has, by default, abandoned justice.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aira Aurora is an independent researcher and writer specializing in Quranic studies. Her work focuses on close reading of the Quranic text, exploring its themes, narratives, and moral framework with attention to both the original Arabic and the broader human context.

The NurOne master series is her primary project -- a multi-sub-series exploration of the Quran covering prophets, people, places, events, lessons, commands, signs, the unseen, the hereafter, and everyday life. Each book is a close reading of the Quranic verses on a specific topic, presented in clear, accessible language.

Her work is published under the pen name Aira Aurora.

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