

**yābenī ādama qad anzalnā 'alaykum libāsay yuwārī sew ātikum warīsha.
Walibāsu t-taqwā dhālika khayr. Dhālika min āyāti I-lahi la 'allahum yazzakkarūna
(Surah al-A'raf 7:26)**

Allah says: "Oh children of Adam! Indeed, We have bestowed garments upon you to cover your nakedness, and as a thing of beauty: but the garment of God-consciousness is the best of all. Such are among the Signs of Allah, that they may receive admonition!"

In the verse, Allah mentions two types of garments provided for the children of Adam. The first is the physical garment, which brings beauty and adornment, protecting us from the vulnerability of being exposed. The second one is called "libas al-taqwa," a spiritual garment. It is presented as the finest of garments. It is not merely a covering, but a source of inner beauty and righteousness that adorns the believer in a way that no physical attire can. This spiritual garment embodies a state of moral and spiritual integrity, woven from a deep awareness of Allah's presence and a sincere effort to live according to divine guidance. "libas al-taqwa," the garment of taqwa, is a comprehensive covering that provides both protection from evil and beautification through virtuous conduct. In essence, this profound verse teaches that true honor, beauty, and security depend on nurturing one's relationship with Allah through God-consciousness, taqwa.

The words "taqwa" and "ittiqa" derive from the root verb "we-qa". The verb "we-qa" also has various noun forms such as "waqyen," "waqiyeten," "tewqiyeten". All these forms carry meanings invoking to protect something, to shield from harm, to safeguard, to avoid harm, and to protect something against danger with another thing. The derivatives of the word taqwa appear in 285 places in our Book.

11th century linguist Ibn Sida explains that the fundamental meaning of "ittiqa" is to place a barrier between two things. Ittiqa is used in the expressions such as "he protected himself with a shield against it," meaning that he used the shield as a barrier between himself and the mentioned thing.

Rasullah (saws) used the word ittiqa in the following hadith: "Ittaqū an-Nār walaw bi-shiqqi tamrah." ""Protect yourselves (Ittaqu) from the Fire, even if it is with half a date as charity." This illustrates the concept of using something, even a small act of charity like half a date, as a shield to protect oneself against danger, the fire of Hell. The term "ittiqa" and its noun form "taqwa" linguistically mean "to enter into strong protection or

to safeguard oneself against the danger." The word muttaqi refers to a one who embodies the qualities of taqwa. That is the one who protects himself by putting a barrier between himself and what is harmful. This protection stems from being aware of the divine presence, which is known as God-Consciousness.

Classical translators often chose to translate the meaning of taqwa as fear of Allah. While fear as an emotion is included in the meaning, the meaning of the fear which is part of taqwa is not an unpleasant emotion caused by the belief that someone or something is dangerous, likely to cause pain or a threat. We run away from anything that we are afraid of. We do not run away from Allah the most Merciful and most Compassionate, but rather we find ways to come closer to Him, like we find ways to come closer to loved ones. In this sense, the meaning of taqwa is closer to being afraid of doing anything that would displease the one whom you love. It means the fear of losing the protection of the one who is most compassionate. The use of the word "hawf" in the Quran specifically for the fear of punishment suggests that taqwa is distinct from mere fear. Taqwa involves a deeper, more comprehensive awareness and mindfulness of Allah, and His protection, not just fear of consequences.

When we try to understand the meaning of taqwa, we should remember how sensitive, and careful we are, when we say or do something in front of loved ones, with the fear that we may hurt their feelings, or break their heart. Similarly, the source of having fear or taqwa of Allah is love and respect for our creator, and being aware of our responsibilities. This level of sensitivity makes the faithful one put forth effort to do good, and to do it beautifully. This level of sensitivity protects us and others from evil, and makes us run away from sinning. This level of sensitivity requires God-consciousness, being aware of His Divine presence with admiration, all the time.

Another aspect of the fear experienced by those who are God-conscious is the fear of losing the guidance of Allah's words. In Surah Al-Baqarah, verse 2, Allah says: "This is the Book about which there is no doubt, a guidance for those conscious of Allah." The muttaqin are those who embody taqwa and receive the guidance of this book. The beautiful garment of taqwa protects us from distractions that could prevent us from receiving guidance for being righteous through Allah's beloved Messenger.

Numerous verses in the Quran emphasize the virtue of taqwa. In Surah al-Baqarah, Surah at-Tawba, Surah Ali 'Imran, and Surah al-Jathiya there are verses such as "Allah is with the muttaqi"; "Allah is the friend of those who have taqwa, Allah helps and protects the people of taqwa." Taqwa is simply to do what Allah asks us to do and not to do what He forbids us to do, enjoining right and forbidding wrong. An indication of taqwa is to obey Rasulallah (saws) and follow his beautiful example for Allah said "Obey Allah and obey Rasulallah." The beloved messenger of Allah (saws) was the living example of taqwa.

Taqwa is more than the behavior visible to others, it is the garment of the heart as well. Rasulallah (saws) pointed to his heart and said: "This is where Taqwa is." Taqwa of the heart means to come closer to Allah with love and respect. It means sincerity, keeping love and respect in the heart even if no one notices. The external taqwa is to obey the canon law in worship meticulously, and the inner taqwa in the heart is to seek the pleasure of Allah in all and everything. The indication of taqwa is to stay away from anything that creates doubt in the heart. Good morals and beautiful character are indications of taqwa. Only Allah knows who has the taqwa in his heart. So the faithful does not claim that he is muttaqi, but he struggles to become muttaqi. Taqwa beautifies the morals of the faithful, who have opened their hearts to Divine Knowledge. It is the reason to be protected by Allah-u Ta'ala; it brings one closer to Allah. In short, it means to follow the path of Rasulullah (saws) who was sent to perfect human morals.

Yurdaer Al Latif Al Jerrahi