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The Concept of Safar (Travelling) from the Qura'nic Worldview

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Abstract

This article aims to elucidate the concept of *safar* in the Qur'anic worldview, including its meanings, Importance and objectives. It also discovers the ethics of travelling in the light of the Qur'anic guidance, whether related to religious, social or individual activities. It discovers the Importance of *safar*, its objectives, and the ruling of the Qur'an concerning the activity of *safar* or travelling, which Muslims have practised since the early time. It used the content analysis method by conducting analytical readings on the *ayat* of Al Qur'an and the books of classical Tafsir available such as *Tafsir Ibnu Kathir*, *Al Qurtubi*, *al Thabari*, etc. The contemporary tafsir books are also called the ayat's contemporary meanings, especially those written by local Ulama such as Hamka, *Tafsir Pimpinan al Rahman*, *Tafsir al Munir*, etc. Finally, this article discusses the issue of travelling according to the Qur'an and its objectives, ethics and ruling. The issue of travelling, which is done these days massively by people from all walks of life, including Muslims, should be guided by the Qur'an as a complete guide.

Keywords: Safar, Adab, Traveling, Tourism, Quranic Worldview.

Introduction

The comprehensiveness of the Quranic message includes the individual and social aspects of life, such as the activity of *safar* or travelling. *Safar* plays a significant activity in human life since it cannot be separated from human life, whether for short or long journeys. As a complete guide for human beings, the Holy Qur'an needed to distinguish the travelling activity from its coverage and guidance even though it encourages human beings to do it for several purposes. This article aims to elucidate the concept of **safar** in the Qur'anic worldview, including its meanings, Importance and objectives. It also discovers the ethics of travelling in the light of the Qur'anic guidance, whether related to religious, social or individual activities. It discovers the Importance of *safar*, its objectives, and the ruling of the Qur'an concerning the activity of *safar* or travelling, which Muslims have practised since the early time.

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The Meaning of 'Safar'

The term safar in Arabic means al-Dhuhur wa al-Buruz or to appear and to come out. It could be translated into travelling; Journeying; commuting, locomotion; codex, voyaging, travelling, and way fare. The term safar is a noun or Masdar in Arabic derived from the verb safar – yusāfiru, which means to travel or to take a journey, while the word musāfir means a traveller or a wayfarer. The term safar refers to any journey, be it short or long; however, it is more identical to a long journey than a short one. Due to the common connotation of travelling and voyaging, it means a long journey that takes days to complete. Another term used in Arabic that has a similar meaning is riḥlah. Linguistically, in Islamic law, the term safar is defined as a to leave a territory or location of one's settlement intending a place or destiny which distanced from his location whereby the distance allows him to shorten the salah or prayer (Al Ma'any, 2022). Legal scholars have different opinions regarding the travel distance that permits a person to shorten the prayer.

However, the opinions could be divided generally into two: The first opinion suggests that the *safar* has to reach a certain distance that allows a person to shorten the prayer. The common opinion of the distance is four *burūd* or 88 kilometres. This opinion is suggested by most scholars such as Imam Malik, Imam Shafi'i, Imām Hanbali and Abū Yūsuf of the Hanafis school (Abd Al Rahman et al., 1972).

The latter suggests that the distance of *the safar* is unlimited, whether for short or long journeys. This opinion is chosen by Zahiris and some Hanbalis, as well as Ibn al Qudāmah and Ibn al Qayyim (Abd al Rahman et al., 1972).

The term *safar* relates to prayer due to the close relationship between the travelling activity and prayer in Islam. Furthermore, it is because any activities in Islam are involved around the concept of *ibādah*, whereby prayer is the core activity in Islam. Therefore the discussion of the term *safar* is also related to the prayer, and the Ulama have used it to measure the distance of *safar*, whether it is considered so or otherwise.

The term *safar* or *riḥlah* in Arabic has been used widely in the classical period and the contemporary language. It is among the terms used since the early time of the Prophet's era and modern times. The Qur'an has been mentioned repeatedly in more than ten verses with various contexts and purposes.

Safar and its Similarities in the Qur'an

The word *safar* is mentioned in Al Qur'an in more than ten verses. It is in different contexts and with various issues such as travelling and fasting, travelling and transaction, travelling and prayer, travelling and jihad and so on.

In the holy Quran, *Safar* could be expressed in various words such as:

riḥlah, ḍarb fi al arḍ and Sayr are mentioned frequently in the Qur'an.

The word *rihlah* has a similar meaning: to set forth safe and travel. This word is mentioned in the surah *al Fīl* no.3, which means: "And with those Allah's Grace and protections for their taming, We cause the Quraish caravans to set forth safe in winter (to the south) and in summer (to the north without any fear)".

The verse mentions the common practice of the Quraish tribe for having a regular journey to Yemen in winter and to Sham in summer to do business.

Another word used in Al Qur'an with a similar meaning is <code>Darb</code> fi al 'Arḍ, such as in Surah al-Muzammil no. 20. In the middle of the verse, it mentions:"... So, recite you of the Qur'an as much as may be easy for you. He knows there will be some among you sick, others travelling through the land, seeking Allah's bounty, yet others fighting in Allah's cause". (QS 73:20). In

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this ayah, Allah mentioned the activity of travelling by using different words, that is, darb fi al 'ard, to seek the bounty of God.

Another word used with a similar meaning is *sayr*, *sāra* or *yasīru*. This word means to walk or go, which has a close meaning, if not similar to *safar*.

For the word *says*, or *sāra* and its derivatives, more than 15 verses mention the word. The word means travelling or voyaging (Al Ma'any, 2022).

Interestingly most of the *ayah* mentioning the word *says* are in a plural form, which means travelling in a group. It may refer to the journey usually done by the people in the past or today as well that most journeys are made collectively. Another fact in this $\bar{a}yat$ is that the journey here requires one to observe and ponder the creation of God and nature and contemplate.

In the word, there are some words in an instructive form, such as 'siru', which means 'travel or move around'. In the context of ayah, it is recommended, if not obliged, for Muslims to travel on earth for various purposes. The instructive form in the Qur'an could be interpreted with various levels by scholars, it could be an obligation or wajib for the Muslims to do it, or it could be recommended or sunnah or at least it is mubāḥ/jāiz or permissible for the Muslims to do it (Al Ansary, 1990,p.42).

By looking at these verses and the number of mentioning the word *safar* in the Qur'an, the issue of *safar* or travelling has taken significant attention in the Qur'an. Even to some extent, the level of travelling is so important that it could be necessary or compulsory for Muslims to do it.

The Significance of Safar in the Qur'an

As mentioned previously, the issue of *safar* or travelling is significantly essential in the Qur'an. It is because many verses of al Qur'an mention the issue in various contexts. Therefore, if it indicates something, it indicates the Importance of the activity in the Qur'an. Apart from that, how the issue is mentioned is another important by looking at the instructive form of the word that, particularly *ayah*, the command had reached the obligatory or compulsory level at certain occasions.

An example of the word is in surah al An'am 11, which means:" Say (O Muhammad):" Travel on earth and see what the end of those who rejected the truth". QS. 6:11. In this ayah, the instruction of travelling is for reflection purposes, and the level of instruction could be obligatory if not recommendatory, or it could be a warning or reminder for those who rejected the truth (Al Baghāwi, 1989). There are about 14 verses with similar messages in the Qur'an with different contexts and purposes. In such an ayah, there are two targets of the command, including the believers and the non-believers. For the believers, the command of travelling means to remind them about the result of those who rejected the truth. On the other hand, the command targets non-believers as a warning of the end of those who rejected the truth (Imam Al Qurtubi, 1964). Many other similar verses target non-believers; however, the actual subjects of the verses are the believers since the Qur'an was sent down as a reminder for the believers (Ibn Kathir, 1999 vol. 2 p. 996).

Analyzing the context of the verses, travelling to ponder and reflect is necessary so that a man can find the truth and could accept it.

Not less important is the message to the non-believers that travelling is necessary for them to reflect and ponder on the stories of the past people so that they may get the truth and guidance.

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Travelling in al Qur'an is not limited, and it depends on personal intention. However, the objectives of travelling mentioned in the Qur'an could be listed as follows

The origin of travelling is recommended if not compulsory for the Muslims, like a journey for hajj and umrah, and it can be divided into the following types:

- a. Hajj or Umrah (Pilgrimage)
- b. Business
- c. Education & Spiritual Enlightenment
- d. Recreation
- e. War or migration (Hijrah)

Hajj or Umrah

In Islam, before undertaking a journey or a travel trip, one has to look into the priorities and Importance of that journey. Muslim scholars have classified travels into; starting from the most important to the less important one. In other words, such travels can be obligatory, recommended, permissible or prohibited. The one that falls under obligatory travel will be hajj. This travel is the dream of every Muslim to go to Mecca to perform the pilgrimage. Philosophically, Haj for Muslims is more than a ritual. For many, it is a long journey to fulfil Islam's last pillar (Al Thabari, vol.6, p. 26). The obligation of the hajj is mentioned in several ayat, such as in surah Ali Imran: 97, which means:" *In it are manifest signs, the Maqam of Ibrahim; whosoever enters it, he attains security.*

Moreover, the hajj to the house of God is a duty that humankind owes to Allah, those who can afford the expenses (for transport and accommodations). Whoever disbelieves in it then is a disbeliever of God, then Allah stands not in need of any of the world (humankind and jinn)". (QS 3:33).

Business

The journey of doing business is recommended if not permissible. This activity has been done since early, and the Arabs did it, including the Quraysh tribe of Mecca. The story is mentioned in surah al Quraysh from 1-5. Which says:" (And with all those Allah's grace and protections for their taming, We cause the Quraish caravans to set forth safe in winter (to the South) and in summer (to the North) without any fear".

The purpose of this journey done by the Quraish people is for business to Yemen in winter and Sham (Syria) in summer. It was the tradition of the Mecca people to do business in these places in different seasons due to the weather condition (Ibn Kathir, 1999 vol. 4 p. 3097).

This type of *safar* is considered permissible and even recommended if the intention is to benefit himself and others. The verse in surah *Al-Muzammil*: 2 mentions:

"Lo! thy Lord knoweth how thou keepest vigil sometimes nearly two-thirds of the night, or (sometimes) half or a third thereof, as do a party of those with thee. Allah measureth the night and the day. He knoweth that ye count it not, and turneth unto you in mercy. Recite, then, the Qur'an that is easy for you. He knoweth that there are sick folk among you, while others travel in the land in search of Allah's bounty, and others (still) are fighting for the cause of Allah. So recite that which is easy (for you), establish worship and pay the poor due, and (so) lend unto Allah a goodly loan. Whatsoever good ye send before you for your souls, ye will surely find it better and more significant in the recompense with Allah. Moreover, seek the forgiveness of Allah. Lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful" (QS. 73:20).

This verse mentions that those who travel in the land searching for Allah's bounty are among those whom God praises for the effort to get His pleasure (Al Thabary, nd. Vol.23 p. 596).

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Educational Purposes

Education or learning plays a vital role in Islam. Hence, the duty of learning is compulsory for Muslims, as mentioned in many verses of the Al Qur'an and al-Hadith. Consequently, the journey of seeking knowledge is necessary for Muslims to manifest their obligation. The journey for seeking knowledge was mentioned in the story of Prophet Moses and recorded in surah Al Kahfi 60-82. If it is necessary for the Prophet to travel for a long journey to get knowledge, it is undoubtedly necessary for the Muslims to do so since learning is for all. Moreover, many hadith supported the obligation and its significance for Muslims. One of the ayahs mentioned in the story is in Surah al Kahfi 62, which means:" So when they had passed further on, Moses said to his servant: "Bring us our morning meal; truly, we have suffered much fatigue in this, our journey". This ayah referred to the story of Moses when he had to find a Prophet of God who had more knowledge than him to learn. Moses has to overtake a long journey to find the man with knowledge mentioned by Allah despite the challenges he has to face (Ibn Kathir, vol 3 p. 1732). This story inspired the Muslims to seek knowledge and to travel for long journeys if necessary, especially in today's context, where knowledge has no limits or borders.

As for learning purposes, since learning is compulsory, the activity of travelling could be compulsory, as mentioned in the Maxim of Islamic Law; when a duty is incomplete without it, it is compulsory to fulfil the prerequisite to carry out the duty.

Recreation

Another purpose of *safar* of travelling in Al Quran is for recreational purposes. This type of travelling is recommended to observe the creation of Allah and the natural law, be it related to the creation or human beings. This activity is encouraged by God to reflect and ponder on God's creation and to appreciate and thank God for His perfect creation. In one verse of surah al Ankabut: 20, it is said: "Say:" Travel in the land and see how (Allah) originated creation, and then Allah will bring forth (resurrect) the creation of the Hereafter (i.e. resurrection after death), Verily, Allah can do all things". This ayah and several other āyat recommended that Muslims travel on earth and observe or ponder on many things of Allah's creation and His natural laws, including the perfectness of His creation, the stories of the past nations, be the end of the non-believers or the victory of the believers. It encouraged the believers to ponder on the creation of man and the creation of the universe and nature around them. In the end, Allah leads us to be sure that the resurrection day will come and that God can return us to life again after death (Ibn Kathir, 1999 vol 3. P.2146).

In this verse, travelling, which is meant here, is travelling for observation and reflection that could be equalled to a recreational journey today since, travelling in such a type, a man likes to observe the nature and culture of other people. Compared to today's travelling or tourism in Islam, any activities could not be detached from the act of 'ibādah. However, the activity should observe the guidance of Islam, and it should be helpful and free from forbidden things. Therefore, several places encouraged Muslims to visit other places, including Mecca, Medina and Al Aqṣa mosques (Al Bukhari, book 21, no 281).

The historical places, mosques, and Ulama's mausoleum could be visited to inspire us about Islam, past nations, and their exemplary life.

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War and Migration (Hijrah)

Travelling could be for the reason of Jihād (holy war) if needed. This type of travelling is necessary or obligatory, mainly when the enemy attacks Muslim territory. This obligation was mentioned repeatedly in the Qur'an such as in Surah Al Tawbah: 42, which says:" Had it been a near gain (booty in front of them) and an easy journey, they would have followed you, but the distance (Tabuk expedition) was long for them, and they would stand by Allah," If we only could, we would certainly have come forth with you." They destroy their selves, and Allah knows that they are liars" (QS. Al Tawbah:42).

This *ayah* was revealed to those who refused to travel to Tabuk (Shām) to fight due to the long distance they had to cover. Hence Allah showed his wrath against them due to their rebellion against the command of Allah and His Prophet (Al Thabary, 1999 vol 14. P 271).

Looking at the nature of the $\bar{a}yah$ travelling to fight in His way is considered wajib or compulsory, especially if the situation is urgent. It is based on the fact that the highest command in Islam is from God and the Prophet, and its denial is considered rebellious (Ibn Kathir vol. 2 p. 1304).

Similarly, travelling to migrate from the land of war or evil is necessary if the Muslims cannot defend their faith and religion. It is the case of the early Muslims during the Mecca period, whereby they were under continuous oppression by the Non- believers in Mecca. At the beginning of Islam, the Muslims, as a minority, could not bear the agony due to the excessive oppression of the non-believers of Mecca. They finally had to migrate to Medina to save their life and religion. This story is recorded in the Quran surah Al Nisa: 97, which says:" Lo! as for those whom the angels take (in death) while they wrong themselves, (the angels) will ask: In what were ye engaged? They will say: We were oppressed in the land. (The angels) will say: Was not Allah's earth spacious that ye could have migrated therein? As for such, their habitation will be hell, an evil journey's end; "(An Nisā: 97). According to Tafsir al Baghawi, the verse here is referring to the Muslims who refused to migrate with the Prophet to Medina due to the continuous oppression of the non-believers. Hence Allah blames them for their rejection to leave Mecca despite the oppression they received from the non-believers (Al Thabary,n.d. vol.9. p. 100).

The Ethics of Traveling Intention or purpose

The intention or purpose of travelling in Islam is not a less critical issue in travelling. This matters because any action of a Muslim will be meaningful because of its intention. In this regard, the intention of travelling depends on the travelling mentioned above, and travelling should be for good reason and meaningful if it is not the obligation required.

The intention to do something determines the quality of the action itself; if it is good, it will be rewardable or otherwise. As it is mentioned by the Prophet, SAW

Abū Ḥafs 'Umar ibn al Khaṭṭāb said: "I heard the messenger of God says:' the rewards of any action depend on the intention and everyone will get his rewards according to his intention. Therefore, whoever migrates for the pleasure of Allah and his messenger's action will be counted for that. Whoever migrates for the worldly benefit or women, his migration will be counted for what he intended to". reported by al Bukhari and Muslim (Muslim, no. 1907, Sahih Al Bukhari, 54).

Therefore, a traveller should have good intentions for his journey, which will be regarded as a rewardable action. The intention is essential for any action as it will affect the quality of that action. If it is good, it will bring a good outcome and vice versa. That is why a Muslim should

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also decide his intention for travelling, whether for social, economic, or recreation (Inhart, 2019).

Du'ā (Supplication) before Journey

Travelling is a kind of adventure that man would not know what will happen in the journey, and only God knows, and to Him, man will ask for help. Although travelling is not very hard nowadays, thanks to the transportation and good roads, man would not know what will happen to him throughout his journey. For that reason, man must seek God's blessings and protection from any harm or calamity. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad has taught some $Du'\bar{a}$ one can recite before leaving one's domicile or when one starts to ride his camel/horse those days and vehicles of all kinds in the modern context. One is encouraged to recite a $Du'\bar{a}$ in gratitude to God, even after one arrives safely at the destination. Below here is an example of a $Du'\bar{a}$ before embarking on a journey

It is mentioned in the Surah Hood: 41 which says

Moreover, he said: Embark therein! In the name of Allah be its course and its mooring. Lo! My Lord is Forgiving, Merciful. (QS. Hood: 41)

This du' was the du' read by the Prophet Noah when he had to make a ship and board it to save himself and his followers from the flood that Allah revealed early (Al Thabary, n.d., vol.15. p. 327).

Another du'a is from the Prophet Muhammad, seen and mentioned in surah al Zuḥrūf 13-14, as follow

(Glory be to the one Who has placed this (transport) at our service, and we ourselves would not have been capable of that, and to our Lord is our final destiny. O Allah, we ask You for righteousness and piety in this journey of ours, and we ask You for deeds which please You. O Allah, facilitate our journey and let us cover its distance quickly. O Allah, You are the Companion on the journey and the Successor (the One Who guards them in a person's absence) over the family. O Allah, I seek refuge with You from the difficulties of travel, from having a change of heart and being in a dire predicament, and I seek refuge with You from an unfortunate outcome concerning wealth and family)."(Hadith narrated by Muslim

This *data* is a combination of the verse of the Qur'an, and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad SAW. When a person reaches his home, it is recommended to recite such *dua'*)Ibn Kathir, vol 4). P. 2534).

Praising God and Thankful for His Bounties

It is recommended that a Muslim traveller always remember God during his journey and praise Him for his blessing. Whenever he sees the beauty in God's creation, he should praise Him. For the bad things he comes across, he should ask God to avert him from what he sees in people and objects. This is because the traveller will see many new things in his journey, good or bad. Praising God for the good scenery and asking for God's protection from evil is the practice shown to us by the Prophet of Islam. Muslims have been asked to follow the ways of the Prophet in many parts of the Qur'an; one such example is in *Surah Ali Imron* 121. Another example can be seen in the verse below

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"Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding. Who remember Allah while standing or sitting or [lying] on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, [saying], "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are You [above such a thing]; then protect us from the punishment of the Fire". (Ali Imran: 191-193)

The verse reminds us always to observe the creation of God and to praise Him for the perfection and the wisdom of His creation (Ibn Kathir, vol. 1 p.604-605).

Writing a will (al wāṣiyyah) and Settling the debt

For the traveller, it is recommended to write a will for his family and to settle the debt before he leaves his home. It is due to the risk that he may face in the journey, especially if he has to travel for long journeys like going to jihad, hajj, umrah etc., that takes time and puts the traveller at risk. It is mentioned in surah Al Mā'idah 106: "O ye who believe! Let there be witnesses between you when death draweth nigh unto one of you, at the time of bequest two witnesses, just men from among you, or two others from another tribe, in case ye are campaigning in the land, and the calamity of death befall you. Ye shall empanel them both after the prayer, and, if ye doubt, they shall be made to swear by Allah (saying): We will not take a bribe, even though it were (on behalf of) a near relative, nor will we hide the testimony of Allah, for then indeed we should be of the sinful." (QS. Al Mā'idah: 106)

This verse is about writing a will or leaving a bequest. However, the verse also mentions when someone should write a will to his family. It is because a journey is a risky thing that may take the traveller's life, especially in the past. It is also recommended nowadays, despite today's advanced transportation and communication. It is also recommended for the traveller to settle the debt, especially before taking a long journey like hajj or jihad, to avoid unpredictable things (Ibn Kathir, vol 2.p.978).

Shortening or Combining the Prayer

It is recommended or permissible for the traveller to shorten the prayer and to break fasting if the journey takes place on Ramadhan.ⁱ. This act has been guided by the Qur'an in surah al Baqarah 185:" The month of Ramadan in which was revealed the Qur'an, a guidance for humanity, and clear proofs of the guidance, and the Criterion (of right and wrong). Furthermore, whosoever of you is present, let him fast the month, and whosoever of you is sick or on a journey, (let him fast the same) the number of other days. Allah desireth for you ease; He desireth not hardship for you; and (He desireth) that ye should complete the period, and that ye should magnify Allah for having guided you, and that peradventure ye may be thankful (QS. Al Baqarah:185).

For the traveller, it is permissible to shorten the number of prayers and to combine two prayers into one time, such as Zuhr and 'Asr, into two-two prayers at an earlier time or later. This practice is mentioned in surah Al Nisa:101 which says:" And when ye go forth in the land, it is no sin for you to curtail (your) worship if ye fear that those who disbelieve may attack you. In truth, the disbelievers are an open enemy to you (QS. An Nisa:101)

The Relevance of the Concept of Safar in the Contemporary Life

As a complete guidance, Al Qur'an did not overlook any activities of human beings to be guided so that man has no room to be confused and get lost in guidance. Travelling is one of the common activities of human beings, whether in the past or these modern days. In the

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past, during the time of the Prophet, most of the travelling was done by the people for business and hajj or umrah, while in today's life, travelling could have more reasons and purposes. Transportation and communication have advanced significantly due to the rapid development of technology and research. In the past, travelling could be considered a risky burden for travellers, and the Prophet described as that travelling as a part of agony (Al Bukhari no. 1804; Muslim no.1929). It is understandable due to the challenges the traveller faces during the journey ranging from long distances, lack of food, water and sleep, uncertain weather, loneliness, safety issue, etc., especially in the past with less advanced technology. Compared to today's life, travelling could be easier and faster with all types of transportation and accommodation. However, despite all the facilities and technology available today, traveller still needs guidance and support to guide them. It is because travelling is just a means to achieve an objective and benefits in human life. There are risks and challenges when a person carries out a journey, be it bad weather, failed transportation, loss of wealth and health, missing the objective and targets, etc. All these challenges could not be predicted and overcome immediately due to uncertainties. Hence Al Qur'an came to guide human beings to face all challenges in life by guiding them and to seek protection from the Almighty One. Furthermore, travelling is not separated from the concept of ibādah, whereby it is a rewardable act if done right, and it would be a sinful act if done wrongly. That is why humans need guidance regardless of the time or space that he lives. It is in line with the message of the Qur'an as the final truth and the final guidance to human beings, as stated in surah al-Mā'idah: 3, which says:" .. today, those who disbelieve in despair of (ever harming) your religion, so fear them not, fear Me! This day have I perfected your religion for you, completed My favour unto you, and chosen for you as religion al-Islam. Whoso is forced by hunger, not by will, to sin: (for him) lo! Allah is Forgiving, Merciful. (QS. Al Mā'idah:3)

Conclusion

The Qur'an has come up with complete guidance for human life in all matters, personal and social. *Safar* or travelling is an everyday activity that has become a trend today along with the advancement of technology in transportation and communication. However, despite all the development of human facilities, and advanced social and educational life, human beings could not escape from the x-factor that comes from God that could jeopardize human plans. Hence Islam has come up with a guidance to lead human beings to take a safe and meaningful journey. More importantly, by following Al Qur'an's guidance, human activity could become an act of *ibādah* whereby its fulfilment would be rewardable. Furthermore, Al Qur'an and Al-Hadith developed Safar's principles and ethics, including the most basic ones, such as the intention, objectives and etiquette of travelling. By having all these concepts, human beings are not left in confusion to carry out any activities and to make the activities more meaningful and rewardable.

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