

vol. [12]

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعراوى

فواطر

المجلد [12]



*In the Name of God,
the Most Merciful,
the Dispenser of Mercy.*

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EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

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the chapter of

Ibrahim

In the Name of God,⁽¹⁾ the Most Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy

The chapter of *Ibrahim*⁽²⁾:

الرَّكَتَبُ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ إِلَيْكَ لِتُخْرِجَ النَّاسَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ
إِلَى النُّورِ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ الْعَزِيزِ الْحَمِيدِ ﴿١﴾

***Alif Lam Ra*, This is a Scripture which We have sent down to
you [Prophet] so that, with their Lord's permission, you may
bring people from the depths of darkness into light, to the
path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy One [1]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 1)**

Allah *the Almighty* commences the chapter with the disjointed Arabic letters:
Alif, Lam and Ra. As we have previously pointed out, these disjointed letters
were revealed as such and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

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- (1) The Islamic conception of 'Allah' is not the same as the Christian and Jewish conception of 'God'. However, the word 'Allah' does not refer to a tribal god or God of only Muslims; it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.
- (2) *The chapter of Ibrahim is the fourteenth chapter of the Quran. The chapter contains eighty-two verses and is a Meccan chapter according to al-Hasan, 'Ikrama, and Jaabir. Ibn 'Abbas and Qatada, on the other hand, view that it is was revealed in Mecca except for the last two verses which were revealed in Medina. Others say that the only verses that were revealed in Medina are the three that are addressed to those who fought against Allah Glorified is He and Messenger Muhammad, namely: '[Prophet], do you not see those who, in exchange for Allah's favour, offer only ingratitude and make their people end up in the home of ruin, [28] Hell where they burn? What an evil place to stay! [29] They set up [false deities] as Allah's equals to lead people astray from His path. Say, 'Take your pleasure now, for your destination is the Fire.'* (Ibrahim: 28-30). (See *Al-Qurtubi's Tafsir* 5/3675).

conveyed them exactly as he had heard them from Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. However, it is worth noting that in the chapter of *Ibrahim*, these disjointed letters do not appear independently as a separate verse, unlike that in the chapter of *Qaf*, for instance: 'Qaf'. (*Qaf*: 1) The letter 'Qaf' constitutes an independent verse. There are several other examples in the Quran such as this one where the disjointed letters constitute independent verses. However, in the chapter of *Ibrahim*, the disjointed letters are a part of a larger verse. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '*Alif Lam Ra*, This is a Scripture which We have sent down to you [Prophet]...' (*Ibrahim*: 1).

Now when the word 'Scripture' is mentioned, it is meant to refer to the Quran which is called Scripture, Quran and Revelation, along with many other names. The word 'Scripture' implies that the Quran is written, whereas the word 'Quran' implies that it is recited. Of all the names by which the Quran is known, these last two are essential, for they signify that the Quran is a Scripture that is written and recited. Thus, the Companion⁽¹⁾ who compiled the Quran would only write down (or record) a verse after he had found it written. In addition, the verse would have to be corroborated orally by two other companions. Therefore, the Quran contains proof that it has been written since the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; it is also a Book that is recited as the word Quran indicates.

Allah's Words, '...a Scripture which We have sent down to you [Prophet]...' (*Ibrahim*: 1) indicate that the Quran has come from above. In another place of the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We have sent the Scripture down to you explaining everything, and as guidance and mercy and good news to those who devote themselves to Allah.' (*an-Nahl*: 89) Elsewhere, He also says: 'We sent down the Quran with the truth, and with the truth it has come down...' (*al-Isra'*: 105).

(1) *The Companion in question is Zayd ibn Thabit Al-Ansari Allah be pleased with him, a Companion who was charged with writing down the Quranic revelation. He was born in Medina in the year 11 before the Hijra and grew up in Mecca. He was one of those Ansar who compiled the Quran at the time of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and thereafter present it to the latter. It was Zayd who wrote the first copy of the Quran at the behest of Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him then at the behest of 'Uthman Allah be pleased with him as part of the effort to send copies of the Holy Book to the major cities. (Az-Zirikli's A'lam 3: 57)*

At times the revelation of the Quran is attributed to Allah *the Most High* Who brought it forth. At other times the revelation of the Quran is attributed to the created being—Gabriel *peace be upon him* — who was sent forth by Allah *the Exalted* to convey the Quran to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, Allah's Words, '... We have sent down ...' (*Ibrahim*: 1), refer to the revelation of the Quran from its location of the Guarded Tablet to carry out its mission in the universe.

Now the reason why the Quran has been revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the following: '... so that, with their Lord's permission, you may bring people from the depths of darkness into light...' (*Ibrahim*: 1). Let it be noted here that the Quran has been revealed for all of mankind. Allah *Glorified is He* does not describe Prophet Muhammad's mission in the same manner that He described the missions of previous messengers. Theirs were messages addressed to specific people. Allah says, for instance: 'To the people of 'Ad, We sent their brother, Hud (Eber).' (*al-A'raf*: 65) He also says: 'To the people of Madyan We sent their brother, Shu'aib (Jethro).' (*al-A'raf*: 85) Similarly, He says about 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*: 'He will send him as a messenger to the Children of Israel.' (*al-A'raf*: 65) Thus, Allah *the Exalted* sent previous messengers to specific locations, for specific people and at specific times throughout history—all except for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, for Allah *Glorified is He* sent him forth to all of mankind.

A case in point is when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* pronounced a judgment in the dispute involving a Muslim and a Jew. On this occasion, he was just with the Jew, for the truth was on his side⁽¹⁾. Prophet

(1) *Ibn 'Asakir (al-A'raf: 354 (Tahdhib Tarikh Dimashq)) has narrated the following on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn Abu Hadrad Al-Aslami. The latter owed four Dirhams to a Jew, and he asked to have them back. He said, 'O Muhammad I owe this person four Dirhams and he did not pay them back. Prophet Muhammad said to Abdullah, 'Give him his rightful due.' He said: By He who sent you forth with the truth, I am unable to repay him.' He said once again, 'Give him his rightful due.' He said, 'By He in whose hands rests my soul, I am unable to repay him. I have informed him that you are dispatching us to Khaybar. I am hoping that this expedition will enrich us somewhat whereby I will repay him on my return.' He said once more, 'Give him his rightful due.' Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him would never go back on his word if he made three pronouncements like this. Thus Ibn Abu Hadrad went out to the =*

Muhammad's upholding of the truth is more important to him than favouring those who belong to Islam.

Thus, we realise that Allah's Words, '...so that, with their Lord's permission, you may bring people from the depths of darkness into light...' (*Ibrahim*: 1) indicate the universality of the Islamic message. This principle is further confirmed by His Words: 'Say [Muhammad], "People, I am the Messenger of Allah to you all...."' (*al-A'raf*: 158) This effectively invalidates the argument of those who say that he had been sent as a messenger only to Arabs. In this instance, there are two honourable privileges that are conferred upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The first privilege is that Allah *the Almighty* chose him as a messenger. The mere fact that he had been chosen for such a task implies a lofty rank. The second privilege is that he is a messenger sent to all of mankind; this is another mark of high status, for it means that his message concerns all times and places, along with people of all languages and cultures. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says His Miraculous Words: '... so that, with their Lord's permission, you may bring people from the depths of darkness into light ...' (*Ibrahim*: 1). Note that Allah *Glorified is He* does not say 'From the depths of darkness into the lights'. In effect, He employs the term 'darkness' in its plural mode, while the word 'light' is used in its singular mode. This is due to that there are no multiple lights; there is only one light. As for 'darkness', there are as many of them as there are whims. Indeed, there are numerous paths of 'darkness'.

Now when Allah *Glorified is He* brings us out of these various paths of darkness—which are as numerous as human caprices—this is a Grace and a Blessing on His part, for we all come out into a single light.

Thus, Allah *the Exalted* wills to make clear the abstract meanings by the sensory ones which are within everyone's grasp. There is no doubt that darkness veils

= marketplace wearing a headdress and an outer garment. He thereby took the headdress of his head and wrapped himself in it. Then he took off the garment and said, 'Buy this garment off me.' Thus, he sold it for four Dirhams. Meanwhile, an old lady was passing by and said, 'What is the matter O companion of the Prophet?' So he informed her of what happened. Whereupon she said, 'Take this garment. Thus, she dressed him in the garment that she was wearing.' This is how the story has been narrated by Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (3: 423). Cited by Al-Kandahlawi in his (*Hayat As-Sahaba*) (2: 81).

those objects which human beings might bump into, thereby preventing them from walking with peace of mind. For if a person runs into something in the dark, he might break the object, or else the object will cause him injury. In this way, darkness prevents man from attaining that which he desires. On the other hand, light serves to illuminate things. With the help of light, man is able to distinguish between various possible routes and avoid that which is harmful while heading towards that which is beneficial. Moreover, light provides human beings with discernment and right guidance. This is the sensory meaning; and both light and darkness are sensory phenomena. In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* makes the meanings clear for us. However, life requires not only the illumination of sensory phenomena with light, but it also requires a light capable of elucidating the abstract phenomena—such as, for instance, grudges, envy, fear, security, serenity, trustworthiness and loyalty.

In every aspect of life, we find a thing and its counterpart; this is why abstract meanings must also be elucidated. Now the light brought by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* illuminates both sensory and spiritual phenomena at the same time so that we can avoid those things that are engulfed in darkness and travel through our spiritual paths with discernment and certainty. By doing so, we will not run into obstacles. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* explains the spiritual dimension of the verse. Allah says: ‘... to the Path of *the Almighty*, the Praiseworthy One.’ (*Ibrahim*: 1) This is the Straight Path to its light Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brings us forth from darkness. Allah *the Exalted* wishes to illuminate the way that leads to this Path since it might be arduous for some. Thus, He wants to illustrate the two alternatives: one is the clear, self-evident Path by which a man can arrive at the destination with ease, while the other is a path that is obscure, where things are not clear. Allah *the Most High* gives the parable of darkness and light so as to elucidate this meaning. Thus, the Straight Path is the shortest way to arrive at the desired destination in our worldly life and in the Hereafter. On the other hand, the path of darkness is the path that is not safe. Regarding the Path to which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* leads us, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... to the Path of *the Almighty*, the Praiseworthy One.’ (*Ibrahim*: 1) Now ‘the Almighty’ is He Who dominates and is never dominated, whereas the Divine Name of ‘*Al-Hamid*’ (the Praiseworthy) is One to

Whom the quality of 'Praiseworthiness' has been confirmed by His creation. Likewise, if no praise is forthcoming from them, Allah *Glorified is He* is nevertheless 'Praiseworthy' for His own Being. He must nevertheless be praised, but whether you praise Him or not, He deserves the Attribute of 'Praiseworthiness'.

To Allah *Glorified is He* belongs the finest example, and He is exalted far above anything that is compared to Him. In our daily lives, for example, there are people who are sometimes described as having praiseworthy attributes. Even if there is nobody around to sing one's praises, he makes sure that everything he does is worthy of praise. However, the quality of praiseworthiness in human beings is circumstantial. On the contrary, the Praiseworthiness of Allah *the Almighty* is absolute. One's character can only be praiseworthy if it contains the virtues that make it capable of bestowing gifts for which human beings must praise it.

The primordial human nature admires this universe which has been created before the existence of anyone to admire it. The primordial human nature likes to praise the Creator of this universe, but whether the human beings praise Him or not, this adds nothing to the One Who has created and prepared this universe, for Allah's Attribute of Praiseworthiness is innate. It is in your interest to praise Him, as you will be guided to the Path of *the Almighty* Who can never be defeated. He is the Praiseworthy Who is deserving of all praise, even if there exists no one to praise Him, for His Attributes are pre-eternal in nature.

Thus, Allah *the Exalted* is the Creator even before creation had been created. He is the Provider even before the created beings in need of sustenance had been brought into being. He is the One Who grants honour even before the existence of those whom He exalts. He is Praiseworthy even before the existence of those who praise Him. Furthermore, He is the Most-Relenting even before those towards whom He relents came to be. Therefore, Allah's Actions emanate from His Attributes. On the other hand, human beings only acquire certain qualities if they act in the light of these qualities. For example, you would not know whether so-and-so is generous unless you actually see him giving generously and abundantly. Allah, however, has possessed the Attribute of All-Generosity even before those to whom He is generous came to exist.

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ
وَوَيْلٌ لِلْكَافِرِينَ مِنْ عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ ﴿٢﴾

**Allah, to whom everything in the heavens and earth belongs.
How terrible will be the torment of those who ignore [Him] [2]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 2)**

Now if you read this verse continuously with the verse that precedes it, you would read it thus: ‘*Alif Lam Ra*. This is a Scripture which We have sent down to you [Prophet] so that, with their Lord’s permission, you may bring people from the depths of darkness into light to the Path of the Almighty, the Praiseworthy One, Allah, to whom everything in the heavens and earth belongs.’ (*Ibrahim*: 1-2) However, if you were to read it separately from the verse that precedes it, you would read it thus: ‘...Path of *the Almighty*, the Praiseworthy One, Allah, to whom everything in the heavens and earth belongs, How terrible will be the torment of those who ignore [Him].’ (*Ibrahim*: 1-2) Thus, you would pronounce the word ‘Allah’ as (Allah) in the latter case, whereas in the former case you would have to pronounce it as *Elah*.

The rules of the Arabic language require that the proper name should precede its description. Thus you would say, for example, ‘I met so-and-so the poet, the writer or the scholar.’ In this verse, however, the pattern is different: ‘...the Path of *the Almighty*, the Praiseworthy One, Allah ...’ (*Ibrahim*: 1). In other words, the Attributes ‘Almighty’ and ‘Praiseworthy’ are placed first, then comes the Divine Name ‘Allah’ which is the proper noun of the One Who must necessarily be present. This happened because the proper noun refers to a named thing regardless of its qualities; afterwards the qualities of that thing appear.

There are some scholars who have said that ‘Allah’ is a derivative noun, meaning that it refers to the One Who is worthy of worship. The Attributes of Almightyness and Praiseworthiness are considered to be a reason why Allah *the Exalted* should be worshipped with devotion. There are some scholars who have said that the word ‘Allah’ is a proper noun and it is not a derivative noun.

Allah *Glorified is He* has absolute dominion over all things: ‘...to Whom everything in the heavens and earth belongs.’ (*Ibrahim*: 2) Nothing happens

in His dominion except what He wishes. He who has attained to faith has done justice to himself, his life, and his Afterlife. As for he who did not believe, his fate is the opposite of this, reflected in Allah's Words: 'How terrible will be the torment of those who ignore [Him].' (*Ibrahim: 2*) This terrible state is not confined to the Hereafter; rather, it extends to this world as well. When a person is faced with difficulties, obstacles, and disasters which he has no control over, a believer—in this situation—can remember that there is a Lord Who stands above secondary causes. He can therefore be confident in the help that Allah *the Exalted* gives him. Thus, he can feel that in this world he possesses a Source of Power on which he can rely when faced with great events. On the other hand, the disbeliever can only resort to despair. This is why suicide rates are high amongst disbelievers, for there are events which are out of their control and which they are helpless to prevent. At the same time, they do not have faith in a Lord which they can turn to. Therefore, when I read the works of Quranic scholars who say that the word *Al-Wayl* refers to the punishment of the Hereafter, I find myself saying that *Al-Wayl* can also occur in this life. Indeed, there are many events that are beyond the control of human beings. If a person has no faith in Allah, he would go into panic and sink into despair. This is why we find that some of them have no other refuge than to utter the words 'O, Lord'. In doing so, they are effectively articulating the cry of the human innate nature which they tried so hard to resist by adopting atheism and refusing to attain to faith. This woe becomes even more severe in the Hereafter.

In describing those who do not believe, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

الَّذِينَ يَسْتَحِبُّونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ وَيَصُدُّونَ
عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَيَبْغُونَهَا عِوَجًا أُولَٰئِكَ فِي ضَلَالٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٣﴾

**Those who prefer the life of this world over the life to come,
who turn others from God's way, trying to make it crooked:
such people have gone far astray [3] (The Quran, *Ibrahim: 3*)**

We find that the root of the word *Habb* (to love), namely *ha'* and *ba'* are quite interesting, as the verb is used in a four-letter format; thus we say '*ahabba fulan*', while referring to the one whom he loves, we say *mahbub*.

This means that there is a point of contact between the two; when there is no contact, it is said that he is *hab* and *muhib*. The difference between '*ahabb* (to love) and *istahabb* (to prefer) can be seen in the letters *sin* and *ta*'. These letters signify 'asking' for something. Therefore, the verb '*istahabb* means that the person who loved was not content with any sort of ordinary love; rather, he loved in a fastidious and intense manner.

A patent example of this can be found in our daily lives: there are some who drift into deviousness, however, at the same time they resent the fact that they enjoy being devious. They perform devious actions while hating themselves, and they might come down hard on themselves for drifting into such deviousness. There are others who deviate off the Straight Path because they love to indulge in devious behaviour. They love this indulgence and boast about this deviousness; furthermore, they admire themselves taking pleasure in such transgressions, for they gratify their immediate desires. Such is the definition of one who has preferred the worldly life since he has gone beyond the ordinary limits of 'Love'.

When you look closely at this blessed verse, you will find that it does not prohibit you from loving the pleasures of this earthly life; however, what it is warning you against is loving the life of this world over that of the Hereafter—it is this case that is considered blameworthy. On the other hand, if you love this world because it assists you with your religious obligations and because you have used it as field wherein you plant the seeds of your Afterlife—this is something required, for you are using this world to perform actions which will bring you happiness in your Afterlife. You are thereby engaging yourself in this world while seeking after the Hereafter. This is why, in the chapter of *al-Mu'minun*, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Those who pay the prescribed alms.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 4) Thus, he is not only paying the prescribed alms, but also working to provide himself and his family with sustenance. He exerts effort in order that he might end up with surplus out of which he can give out alms. Thus, he does not work merely to satisfy his own needs; rather, he works to the greatest extent of his capacity so as to earn enough to give away to those who are unable to work for themselves. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* does not say: 'and those who pay forth the poor-due'. Rather, He says: 'Those who pay the prescribed alms.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 4) However, in

this case, these are not people who love the world because they would like to make it a staging ground for the Hereafter; rather, they prefer this worldly life over the Hereafter:

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They turn others from Allah's Way.' (*Ibrahim: 3*) In other words, they are not content to merely love this worldly over the life to come nor are they satisfied with fulfilling their desires, seeking pleasure and ruining their souls. Rather, they go even further in their transgression and bar others from the Way of Allah *the Almighty*.

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Why do you turn the believers away from Allah's Path and try to make it crooked...' (*Al-Imran: 99*). It is as if they themselves have gone astray and, not being satisfied with this, they tried to lead others astray and bar them from the rightly guided Path.

Then there comes a new phase: '... trying to make it crooked ...' (*Ibrahim: 3*) which means that they would like for Allah's Law to be crooked such that they might satisfy their desires. Thus, we find that there are three phases when it comes to going astray: preferring the life of this world over that of the Hereafter, turning others away from the Path of Allah and defiling His Doctrine so as to rouse an aversion of it. Allah *Glorified is He* describes such people in the following words: 'such people have gone far astray.' (*Ibrahim: 3*) What this means is that those who occupy the first rank in terms of perversity are those who prefer the life of this world over that of the Hereafter. Those who have indulged even more into perversity are those who turn others away from the Path of Allah *Glorified is He*. Those who have indulged the most are those who defile the Doctrine of Allah *Glorified is He* so as to stir an aversion of it in other people's hearts or in order that it might satisfy their desires. Thus, the latter have reached the climax of perversion.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا بِلِسَانٍ قَوْمِهِ لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمْ فَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ
مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤﴾

We have never sent a messenger who did not use his own people's language to make things clear for them. But still God leaves whoever He will to stray, and guides whoever He will: He is the Almighty, the All-Wise [4] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 4)

We know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed the Doctrine on Allah's behalf; moreover, he is supported by a miracle that confirms the veracity of what he conveyed to those to whom he was sent forth. Previously, Allah *Glorified is He* spoke about that which happened to those earlier communities that preceded the community of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Indeed, every messenger spoke the language of his people.

There is a difference between a community that is destined to be proselytising in nature—that is, the community of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* — and between a community that is destined to merely receive Divine revelation, namely the communities that preceded Prophet Muhammad's community. Previous communities were not asked to spread the message of their prophets. However, Muhammad's community has been tasked with such an assignment since Allah *Glorified is He* has sent forth Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and has informed us in the Quran that amongst His many signs is that He has made human beings speaking different tongues.⁽¹⁾ It would not make sense for Allah *Glorified is He* to send forth a messenger who spoke all languages. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to the Arab community, and when they received him and the love of faith was planted in their hearts, it thereby became their duty to go forth and spread the message, so as to transmit the Quran as undisputable proof, after having accepted it as a miracle. The Quran is evidence since it organises all the affairs of life. These affairs are not all different amongst the various peoples of the earth: every civilisation adopts

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Another of His signs is the creation of the heavens and earth, and the diversity of your languages and colours. There truly are signs in this for those who know.' (*ar-Rum*: 22)

the scientific achievements of other civilisations by translating them into their native tongue. The translation of ideas from one language to another is a well-known practice in all the civilisations of the world since the matter is essentially one of ideas, and ideas do not vary from one community to another. The Quran consists of ideas and contains a Doctrine that is suitable for all of humanity. It was revealed in Arabic because the Arab community excelled in the linguistic aspects and rhetorical speech. Thus, it became the duty of the Arab community to recognise the Doctrine of Allah *the Exalted* as a rhetorical miracle and, thereafter, to spread it to other societies. This is why it is instructive to set up a comparison between the lands that were liberated by the sword and the lands that were liberated peacefully, due to the native people's admiration of the Muslims' exemplary behaviour; you will find that those who spread Islam to many parts of the world did so by being exemplars of excellence. Furthermore, you will find that they spread the religion by exhibiting praiseworthy qualities and by applying the principles of the religion in their dealings with others. This is why people embraced the religion of Allah *Glorified is He*. Thus, we find that the doctrine of Islam has carried forth miraculous new ideas. In addition, the Quran is a miracle in terms of the language in which it was revealed, namely the Arabic language.

There are people who are unable to read a single Arabic letter unless it is written in a copy of the Quran. This is due to the fact that it was through the Quran that they had learnt to read; they relied on understanding the meanings contained in the Quran through the translations made by Muslims who loved the Quran and translated it into other languages. This is why we find the following Words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'We have made it easy to learn lessons from the Quran. Will anyone take heed?' (*al-Qamar*: 17) Thus we learn Allah *Glorified is He* has made the Quran easy for remembrance in its original Arabic, then He made it lucid in that the people to whom it was revealed spread Allah's Words on His behalf. This is due to the fact that Divine messages require to be conveyed. The primary means of conveying the Divine message is oral; the second means by which the Quran is received is by the ear. Thus, firstly, must come oral communication, then the ear must recognise the meanings of words to grasp the message and also to put it into practise. We also know that whosoever hears the speaker must be cognisant

and knowledgeable of the meanings of the words; that which the ear hears is spoken by the tongue.

We also know that the ability to use a language derives from one's sense of hearing; every person speaks the language that he heard in his environment. Likewise, if you were to retrace the history of how speech was acquired, you will arrive at the original root from which all human beings learned to speak, namely Adam *peace be upon him*. So Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'He taught Adam all the names [of things]'⁽¹⁾ (*al-Baqara*: 31). We know that language started from a Divine origin when Allah *the Most High* taught it to Adam; then Adam spoke the language and those surrounding him heard it from him. From then on, language had a human origin, and it varied from one community to another. In this instance, Allah *Glorified is He* says 'We have never sent a messenger who did not use his own people's language...' (*Ibrahim*: 4). Immediately after this statement, the reason follows: '... to make things clear for them...' (*Ibrahim*: 4). Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* explains the reason why each messenger was sent forth speaking the language of his people. There is another verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If We had sent it down to someone who was not an Arab, and he had recited it to them, they still would not have believed in it.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 198-199) He also says: 'If We had made it a foreign Quran, they would have said, "If only its verses were clear! What? Foreign speech to an Arab? Say, "It is guidance and healing for those who have faith, but the ears of the disbelievers are heavy, they are blind to it, it is as if they are being called from a distant place."' (*Fussilat*: 44) There is a person who receives the Quran as a way of guidance and purifies himself from spiritual impurities. On the other hand, there is a person who hears the Quran, but he is blind to it, his hearing is sealed over, he is gripped with fear and cannot find peace—this is due to the fact that he is a disbeliever. The reason for this, as we know, is that any event that takes place due to the order of one, requires one initiating the action and an object that receives the action.

(1) *Ibn Jarir narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him regarding Allah's Words: 'He taught Adam all the names [of things]' (al-Baqara: 31). These are the names with which human beings come to know one another: Man, beast, earth, sea, hill, mountain, donkey, and the equivalent of these words amongst various communities. (Cited by As-Suyuti in (Ad-Durr Al-manthur) (1/121).*

Previously, I have given the example of one who drinks tea; he blows on it and thereby makes it a little cooler. On a cold winter morning, when this same person goes out, he uses his breath to blow on his hands to make them warmer. Thus, sometimes he uses his breath to make something cooler, while at other times he uses his breath to create heat. The issue is not about using of his breath; rather, it is about the object that receives the air blown out of the mouth. The temperature of tea is higher than that of the body and therefore becomes cooler on contact with the breath. However, in winter, the temperature of the hand is cooler than that of the body; thus, it reacts to the breath being blown onto it by elevating its temperature such that becomes equal to that of the body.

Similarly, there is only a single Quran; when a believer hears its words, he is happy but when a disbeliever hears its words, he suddenly becomes tired and frustrated. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and among them, [O, Muhammad], are those who listen to you, until when they depart from you, they say to those who were given knowledge, "What has he said just now?"' (*Muhammad*: 16) There are people, who hear the Quran, but they fail to grasp its meaning, whereas there are those who upon hearing the Quran, they feel reverence in their hearts and promptly respond to the instructions of the True Lord *Glorified is He* embedded in it. We now know that language began in a conciliatory manner and ended up conventionalised. We have taken from Allah *the Almighty* that which He had taught to Adam *peace be upon him* concerning the names of things; then languages began to splinter along communal lines.

Thus, the languages spoken by the various messengers were different according to the people to whom they had been sent. Every messenger explains the Doctrine of Allah to his people. Once he puts forth this doctrine, there are those who respond to it by believing in it and becoming rightly guided; then, there are those who respond to it with disbelief and perversion. For he whom Allah *the Exalted* has guided, his heart will look towards this doctrine, and he purifies his heart from any other creed, examines that which the messenger brought and fills his heart with the doctrine which he has attained understanding and has full confidence in. This is contrary to what happens to the person whose heart is filled with a different creed, one of which he is adamant—not because of any strong conviction—but merely because of an inability to analyse, examine and study it. He ought to have cleared his heart

of the erroneous creed that dwells therein. He ought to have searched, compared, sought treatment, and mulled over things more carefully. Then may he let into his heart the most acceptable creed. However, the truth is that this is not what he does—contrary to whom Allah *the Most High* has guided. Let nobody say, ‘Since Allah has led us astray, He will not subject us to suffering.’ Every man should know that the will to accept faith is present, yet he failed to let it penetrate his heart. The True Lord *the Most High* says: ‘And those who are guided - He increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness.’ (*Muhammad*: 17) Allah *Glorified is He* also says: ‘And He misleads not except the defiantly disobedient.’ (*al-Baqara*: 26) In other words, the disobedience was ingrained in them since they filled their hearts with false creeds, and hence there was no room for the creed of Allah.

Now, in the verse which we are currently examining, Allah *Glorified is He* says: But still Allah leaves whomever He wills to stray and guides whomever He wills. He is the Almighty, the All-Wise. ‘Thus, whosoever seeks to deviate from the straight path, Allah *the Almighty* will cause him to deviate even further. His faith will in no way benefit Allah’s dominion. He who attains faith guarantees his safety in this world and after his death. He is, in this life, a force for good, and after his death, he will find a life full of blessings from the Bestower of Blessings—the *Almighty* Who can never be defeated, the All-Wise Who has determined the destiny of all things according to His Will.

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْ أَخْرِجْ قَوْمَكَ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى
النُّورِ وَذَكِّرْهُمْ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّكُلِّ صَبَّارٍ شَكُورٍ ﴿٥﴾

We sent Moses with Our signs: ‘Bring out your people from the depths of darkness into light. Remind them of the Days of God: there truly are signs in this for every steadfast, thankful person’ [5] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 5)

Numerous are the signs that Allah *the Exalted* sent with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* as well as the miracles that occurred with him and which he brought and showed to his people. Our own messenger *peace and blessings be*

upon him came forth bearing a single miracle which is the Quran. As for the other physical miracles that occurred with the Messenger of Allah, their function was to strengthen the faith of the believers in his message.

The only remaining trace of such miracles is to be found in the spiritually motivating memories which virtuous servants of Allah are fond of remembering and reflecting upon. The sheer number of miracles that happened during Musa's (Moses') mission indicates that the people he had been sent to were loquacious about unimportant matters, along with being argumentative. Now, when scholars tallied the miracles that happened during Musa's (Moses') mission, some put the number at nine, while others put the number at thirteen, yet others put the number of miracles at fourteen. To ascertain the true number of miracles we must distinguish between the miracles that occurred with respect to Pharaoh and those that occurred for the benefit of the Children of Israel. The staff that transformed into a snake, for instance, or the hand that emerged radiant-white—these were miracles for Pharaoh. The Quran puts the number of miracles that were performed for Pharaoh at nine. The True Lord *the Most High* says: '[These are] among the nine signs [you will take] to Pharaoh and his people' (*an-Naml*: 12). Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was not asking that Pharaoh attain faith; the purpose of Musa's (Moses') mission was not to guide Pharaoh. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had been sent, on one hand, to silence Pharaoh (through the miracles) and, on the other, to take the Children of Israel away with him—for he had been sent to them. The miracles that occurred were the following: the staff (which transformed into a snake), the hand that emerged white from his cloak, the dwindling of population and harvest levels, the flood, along with the swarms of locusts, lice and frogs, as well as the reddening of the Nile with blood. These are the nine miracles that occurred with respect to Pharaoh.

As for the other miracles that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* brought for the benefit of the Children of Israel, their numbers were plenty. They were mentioned in the following verses. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [mention] when We raised the mountain above them as if it was a dark cloud.' (*al-A'raf*: 171) Also, Allah says: 'And We shaded you with clouds.' (*al-Baqara*: 57) The True Lord *Glorified is He* likewise says: 'and sent down to you manna and quails.' (*al-Baqara*: 57)

This is why, in the following verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* summarises the miracles that occurred during Musa's (Moses') mission to his people: 'And We certainly sent Musa (Moses) with Our signs, [saying], "Bring out your people from darkness into the light and remind them of the days of Allah.'" In other words, bring forth their consciousness that which was lingering in the back of their minds and have them summon the memories of the 'Days of Allah', that is, the events that transpired in those days of yesteryear. The expression 'Days of Allah' is similar to some of the other expressions which we use like the 'Day of Badr', or the 'Day of Dhi Qar', along with the 'Sixth of October', or the 'Tenth of *Ramadan*'.

This blessed verse is a reminder of one of two things. It can be a reminder of those days during which specific events occurred to the communities of old, such as the people of Nuh (Noah), 'Ad and Thamud, for example. Thus, the True Lord *the Most High* would thereby be reminding them of the stories of the communities, or nations, that preceded them, specifically, the manner in which every community, or nation, acted towards the messenger that Allah *the Exalted* had sent to them.

The other possibility is that this verse is a reminder of those days during which Allah *the Almighty* showered His blessings upon the Children of Israel or during which He afflicted them with grievous trials, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: "'...and remind them of the days of Allah.'" Indeed in that are signs for everyone patient and grateful.' The word 'patient' refers to a person who is steadfastly patient in the face of the various events that occur during his life. The term therefore suggests that certain trials have occurred which require that patience. Similarly, the word 'grateful' suggests blessed occurrences that require the gratitude of a person.

Thus, we can see that a believer needs to embody two virtues: patience in the face of adversity and gratitude for that with which he has been blessed. When these two virtues are present in a believer, his faith is complete.⁽¹⁾

(1) *Suhaib ar-Rumi* narrates that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said: 'How propitious is the believer's state of affairs—verily he is fortunate in every situation—and this much can only be said of the believer: if joy visits him, he gives thanks and it is good, and if suffering afflicts him, he endures it patiently and it is good.' See *Muslim's (Sahih)* (2999).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has said that these signs are indictors that help shed light upon the road that stands before a believer. They are moral lessons; thus, when he comes to know and gain understanding about the history of previous communities, or nations, he will discover that those who attained faith nevertheless suffered from certain trials. At the end, however, they enjoyed Allah's contentment with them and His blessings. As for those who disbelieved, they were allowed some enjoyment, but ultimately, they suffered Allah's indignation and wrath.

Upon realisation of such fact, a believer prepares himself to bear the trials that come with faith, for he is confident that Allah *the Exalted* will always compensate him and that the army of faith will always be victorious. Then the True Lord *the Most High* says:

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِقَوْمِهِ أَذْكُرُوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ إِذْ أَنْجَاكُمْ مِنْ آلِ
فِرْعَوْنَ يَسُومُونَكُمْ سُوءَ الْعَذَابِ وَيُذَبِّحُونَ أَبْنَاءَكُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيُونَ
نِسَاءَكُمْ وَفِي ذَٰلِكُمْ بَلَاءٌ مِّنْ رَبِّكُمْ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٦﴾

And so Moses said to his people, 'Remember God's blessing on you when He saved you from Pharaoh's people, who were inflicting terrible suffering on you, slaughtering your sons and sparing only your women — that was a severe test from your Lord! [6] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 6)

We see that Allah *Glorified is He* has brought up an instance from their past wherein they suffered at the hands of Pharaoh's overweening might. Allah *the Almighty* reminds them of how He saved them from such tyranny. Pharaoh used to subject them to the worst forms of suffering. The phrase 'afflicting you with the worst torment' means that they sought to cause you a grave suffering.

Pharaoh slaughtered their male children, but he spared the lives of the females such that they ended up with no male guardian—so that, then, they might violate them. This amounts to severe ignominy.

Some orientalist has a say about this verse, 'There is a similar verse in the chapter of *al-Baqara* that reads: 'And [recall] when We saved your forefathers

from the people of Pharaoh, who afflicted you with the worst torment, slaughtering your [newborn] sons and keeping your females alive. And in that was a great trial from your Lord.' (*al-Baqara*: 49)

So which one of them is more expressive? The same orientalist adds, 'I will make no mention of the other verse in the chapter of *al-A'raf* when the Quran says: 'And [recall, O, Children of Israel], when We saved you from the people of Pharaoh, [who were] afflicting you with the worst torment - killing your sons and keeping your women alive. And in that was a great trial from your Lord.' (*al-A'raf*: 141)

Typically, this orientalist did not possess a strong grasp of the Arabic language. Had he possessed a solid understanding of the language, he would have known that the words in the two verses are spoken by two different speakers.

Thus, in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, the speaker was Allah *Glorified is He* which is why He said: 'We saved you' (*al-Baqara*: 49). However, the speaker in the chapter of *Ibrahim* is Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*; the latter does not claim to be the one who saved them, rather, he enumerates the blessings which Allah had bestowed upon them. To clarify, when a great person wishes to remind another person of the favours that he has bestowed upon him, he reminds the person of only the greatest of favours. A person who is not as great might remind his counterpart with favours that are not as great.

I give the following example, not so as to draw a parallel, but merely for the sake of clarity, for Allah *Glorified is He* stands far above any parallel. Thus, with this in mind, suppose that a rich person has a brother of meagre means. The rich brother might support his poor brother in manifold ways: he might take care of his children, and he might look after him and his children to the fullest. Then, if the son of the poor brother tells the son of the rich brother, 'Why do you not care about us?' The son of the rich brother will say, 'Was it not my father who paid for this pen of yours, these clothes and the apartment where your family lives?'

His father, on the other hand, will only say, 'I do indeed care about you, for it is I who have provided you with the apartment in which you live.' Thus, the person with the larger spirit will remind him about only those things

which are truly significant; the lesser person, on the other hand, will tend to enumerate a variety of things, both small and large.

Typically, in this verse Allah *the Almighty* describes the ignominious suffering and the slaughtering of the children as a great trial. He *Glorified is He* says: 'And in that was a great trial from your Lord.' Thus, we see the fortunate aspect of the hardship which Allah tried them with; that is, He saved them from the slaughtering of the children and the sparing of the women, which were evil aspects of their trial. It was a difficult trial.

Previously, we have explained that trials can be either good or bad. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And We test you with evil and with good as trial.' (*al-Anbiya*: 35)

A trial through good times is no mark of honour, nor is a trial through bad ones a mark of humiliation. Allah *Glorified is He* proves this point when He says: 'And as for man, when his Lord tries him and [thus] is generous to him and favours him, he says, "My Lord has honoured me." But when He tries him and restricts his provision, he says, "My Lord has humiliated me."' (*al-Fajr*: 15-16)

A trial is a form of test which you can either pass or fail. A person can only be judged according to the end result that he achieves.

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذْ تَأَذَّنَ رَبُّكُمْ لَئِنْ شَكَرْتُمْ لَأَزِيدَنَّكُمْ
وَلَئِنْ كَفَرْتُمْ إِنَّ عَذَابِي لَشَدِيدٌ ﴿٧﴾

**Remember that He promised, "If you are thankful,
I will give you more, but if you are thankless, My
punishment is terrible indeed"[7] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 7)**

The meaning of the verse is that it is an emphatic reminder on behalf of your Lord that if you are grateful, He will shower even more of His blessings and gifts upon you; certainly, gratitude is a sign of one's attachment to the Bestower. Also, you must rid yourselves of any arrogance that could have been caused due to the blessings you had been given, and then you have come to know that He is the sole Giver and the Bestower.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* Himself says: 'No! [But] indeed, man transgresses because he sees himself self-sufficient.' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7) If a person maintains a

strong connection with Allah *the Most High*, he will not dissociate the truth from His blessings. He would remain cognisant of the Lord Who bestowed the blessings upon him. This is why I always say to be wary not to let a gift make you forgetful of the giver of the gift, for the gift has been given to you, and it is not something innate in you.

The counterpart is immediately mentioned. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'but if you deny, indeed, My punishment is severe.' There must be punishment for ingratitude, and Allah's punishment must be severe since the severity of the punishment is always in proportion to the power of the punisher, and there is no one more powerful than Allah. We ask Allah *Glorified is He* to spare us from His punishment, for it is unbearable.

Thereafter, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّ تَكْفُورًا أَنْتُمْ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ جَمِيعًا فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ حَمِيدٌ ﴿٨﴾

And Moses said, 'Even if you, together with everybody else on earth, are thankless, God is self-sufficient, worthy of all praise' [8] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 8)

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had said as much so that nobody from amongst his people would think that Allah has any need for their gratitude, along with reminding them that He will punish them by subjecting them to suffering if they fail to show gratitude. Thus, he wanted to expunge this idea from the minds of his listeners.

Moreover, he explained to them that their faith will not profit the True Lord *the Most High* at all. Their faith, and that of all the inhabitants on earth, will not affect Allah's Dominion in the slightest, for when He created His Dominion; He imparted it with the qualities of perfection and completion. Allah's creation is borne out of His own, pre-existing attribute of Perfection and Completion.

This is why the True Lord's next Words are the following:

أَلَمْ يَأْتِكُمْ نَبُؤُا الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِكُمْ قَوْمِ نُوحٍ وَعَادٍ وَثَمُودَ وَالَّذِينَ مِن
 بَعْدِهِمْ لَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ إِلَّا اللَّهُ جَاءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَرَدُّوا أَيْدِيَهُمْ فِي أَفْوَاهِهِمْ
 وَقَالُوا إِنَّا كَفَرْنَا بِمَا أُرْسِلْتُمْ بِهِ وَإِنَّا لَفِي شَكٍّ مِّمَّا تَدْعُونَنَا إِلَيْهِ مُرِيبٍ ﴿٩﴾

Have you not heard about those who went before you, the people of Noah, ' Ad, Thamud, and those who lived after them, known only to God? Their messengers came to them with clear proof, but they tried to silence them, saying, 'We do not believe the message with which you were sent. We have disturbing doubts about what you are asking us to do' [9] (The Quran, Ibrahim: 9)

This blessed verse has allowed us to understand another verse, namely 'Indeed, We have sent you with the truth as a bringer of good tidings and a warner. And there was no nation but that there had passed within it a warner.' (*Fatir*: 24). It has also shed light on the following verse: 'And We have already sent messengers before you. Among them are those [whose stories] We have related to you, and amongst them are those [whose stories] We have not related to you. And it was not for any messenger to bring a sign [or verse] except by permission of Allah. So when the command of Allah comes, it will be concluded in truth, and the falsifiers will thereupon lose [all].' (*Ghafir*: 78)

We know that the True Lord *Glorified is He* had inspired Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to relate to his people the stories of some of the prophets who preceded him. This much is clear in the Words of the True Lord: 'Has there not reached you the news of those before you, the people of Nuh (Noah) and 'Ad and Thamud?' Regarding the people who came after them, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and those after them? No one knows them but Allah. Their messengers brought them clear proofs.'

What this means is that messengers had come forth bearing the doctrine of Allah. They had also come with miracles that attested to their verity for the benefit of those who came later. the Quranic term 'clear proofs' can either mean, in effect, the 'miracles' that attest to their verity, or they are the signs

that embody the clear principles which help them by lending order to the rhythm of their lives.

But did those communities, or nations, accept such clear proofs? No, for Allah *Glorified is He* says with respect to these people: 'but they returned their hands to their mouths and said, "Indeed, we disbelieve in that with which you have been sent."' Thus, we come to understand that disbelievers are those who had covered their mouths with their hands. Now, either they had grit their teeth because they could not bear the hardships of applying the doctrine of Allah, along with being unable to assert control over themselves.

Or, they had covered their mouths with their hands as a way of telling messengers, 'Hush', or be quiet and do not speak of the Divine Message which you have come to communicate. Or, some of them had told the messengers: 'There is no point of you talking to these people.'

The richness of the Quranic language supports all of these interpretations. At the same time, all of these meanings come together harmoniously in this verse. A single expression in the Quran comprises a wealth of meanings—and this is commensurate with Allah's attribute of Perfection and Completion. The riches of the Quran shall always endure; some will be revealed to us, while others might only be revealed to us by Allah on the Day of Judgment.

Thus, they say: 'Indeed, we disbelieve in that with which you have been sent.' This gives us an idea of their stupidity. They are hereby admitting that these are messengers from heaven, while at the same repudiating the Doctrine and being completely open about it. This much is clearer as revealed by Allah: 'and indeed we are, about that to which you invite us, in disquieting doubt.' This means that they had made known their opinion of the Doctrine. They said that they are in a state of apprehension and doubt in regards to this Doctrine.

Then the Quran moves on to messengers' responses. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَتْ رَسُولُهُمْ أَفَى اللَّهِ شَكٌّ فَاطِرِ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ يَدْعُوكُمْ لِيَغْفِرَ لَكُمْ
 مِّنْ ذُنُوبِكُمْ وَيُخْرِجَكُم إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى قَالُوا إِنْ أَنْتُمْ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا
 تُرِيدُونَ أَن تَصُدُّونَا عَمَّا كَانَتْ يَعْبُدُ آبَاؤُنَا فَأَتُونَا بِسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿١٠﴾

Their messengers answered, ‘Can there be any doubt about God, the Creator of the heavens and earth? He calls you to Him in order to forgive you your sins and let you enjoy your life until the appointed hour.’ But they said, ‘You are only men like us. You want to turn us away from what our forefathers used to worship. Bring us clear proof then, [if you can]’ [10] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 10)

The following Words of Allah. 'Can there be any doubt about Allah?' amount to a rhetorical technique whereby the addressee is left with no other choice but to answer in a manner that validates your point. Now you would only employ such a technique in a situation when you are sure that your addressee—assuming he allows himself to entertain the truth of the matter—will answer in the manner which you want.

Therefore, the verse does not say, 'There is no doubt in Allah.' The Words of the verse are intrinsically significant. Even though one might say that these words are untrue, but such an audience is the group of disbelievers; the issue is formulated in such a way as to guarantee that they will think about the issue and will eventually reach that answer which they cannot deny; that is, that 'There is no doubt about the [oneness] of Allah.'

Thus, we find that the speaker has, in the first order, remained silent regarding their declaration of disbelief; he then poses the rhetorical question to which the only answer can be, 'There is no doubt about the [oneness] of Allah.' The speaker then provides the proof that removes all doubt, namely, the words of the True Lord: 'Creator of the heavens and earth.' The word 'Creator' means one who has created in a completely original manner. This Quranic description is similar to the following Words of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: 'The Originator is He of the heavens and the earth' (*al-Baqara*: 117).

To clarify, there is none who can create anything comparable to the heavens and the earth; they are completely original and are not based on any

previous prototype. It is Allah *Glorified is He* Who willed that man should be master over all the living created beings and that these created beings should be subjected to, and in the service of, man.

Man might believe his creations to be grander than that of the heavens and the earth. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* warns him with the following words: 'Greater indeed than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth' (*Ghafir*: 57).

If you were to contemplate the sun and ask yourself how many generations have enjoyed its warmth and benefited from its light. Certainly, you can never know the number of generations since the sun was created before the creation of mankind. A person would enjoy the sun, would derive benefit from it during the years he is destined to live, and then he would pass away and die.

Let it be noted that the great commentator of the Quran, Al-Fakhr Ar-Razi⁽¹⁾ gives the parable that cannot be denied by anyone. He shows how faith is actually a function of man's primordial condition. He points out that the True Lord *the Most High* grants man enough time until his mind matures, and he becomes aware of the need for faith. He gives the example of a small child who sneaks up to his sibling and hits him. At this point, the sibling must turn around to find out who hit him; a person knows intuitively that no action can occur without there being one initiating the action behind it.

Imagine if a child finds his sibling sitting on a chair, but he wants to sit on the very same chair. The child will grab his brother and pull him down from the chair so that he may sit on it himself. It is as though, intuitively, he had realised that the chair cannot accommodate two people at the same time.

Similarly, through the primordial awareness of the human soul, a person comes to the realisation that there is a single creator. Thus, when Allah *Glorified is He*

(1) His full name: Muhammad ibn 'Amr ibn Al-Hasan Abu 'Abdullah. He was the great commentator on the Quran, the most eminent scholar of his time in the field of logic and the transmitted sciences of the ancients. He was of Persian ancestry and hailed from Tabaristan. He is also known as 'Ibn Khatib Ar-Ray'. He moved to Khawarizm and the lands beyond the river and Khurasan. He died in Herat in the year 606 AH. (See Az-Zirikli's (*Al-A'lam*) 6: 313).

says, 'The Originator of the heavens and the earth' (*Ibrahim*: 10), this is a vast cosmic sign.

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* continues with the Words: 'He invites you that He may forgive you of your sins.' These Words are a testament of mercy, wisdom, omnipotence, and love. Allah *Glorified is He* hereby says: 'that He may forgive you of your sins.' He does not say: 'that He forgives your sins', for He is addressing the disbelievers. However, when He *the Most High* addresses the believers, He says: 'O, you who believe, shall I guide you to a transaction that will save you from a painful punishment? [It is that] you believe in Allah and His Messenger and strive in the Cause of Allah with your wealth and your lives. That is best for you, if you should know. He will forgive for you your sins.' (*as-Saff*: 10-12) Thus, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks to mankind in the Quran, He does not equate believers with disbelievers.

Or it is possible that what is meant by the Words: 'that He may forgive you of your sins,' is forgiveness of the major sins. Minor sins are forgiven through the performance of the obligatory religious rites. We know that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'The five prayers, and from one Friday prayer to the next, these are a form of expiation for the sins committed in between their intervals; so long as no major sins have been committed.'⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* continues: 'and He delays your death for a specified term.' If Allah *the Exalted* wishes to will complete annihilation, there are passages in the Quran which document this possibility as well, for instance: 'And thereupon We caused the earth to swallow him and his dwelling' (*al-Qasas*: 81). This was what Allah did to Korah (Qarun). Or Allah's Words, 'for a specified term', might refer to the Day of Judgment.

However, disbelievers are extremely antagonistic and obstinate people. This is why we come across the following words of theirs: 'They said, "You are not but men like us who wish to avert us from what our fathers were worshipping. So, bring us a clear authority."'

(1) *Related by Muslim in his (Sahih) (233) and by Ahmad in his (Musnad) (2/484) and by Ibn Majah in his (Sunnan) (1086). Related on the authority of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him.*

Thus, disbelievers announce to their messengers that they would rather imitate their forefathers. Had they thought about the matter, they would have realised that if blind imitation were to become rampant in societies, no one would ever surpass the achievements of his parents and grandparents. The world continues to progress, thanks to the rebellion of every new generation against the old one. Therefore, why are these disbelievers adamant on imitating their parents and grandparents? Likewise, if the young generation is being innovative in every domain, why do these disbelievers cling to the creed of their forefathers?

Disbelievers do not stop there. Rather, they ask that a messenger with clear proof of his authenticity be sent them. The word 'authority' can sometimes refer to the state of being 'compelled', where the compelled subject is forced to act against his will.

At other times, it can refer to the proof that prompts the undertaking of action. The one initiating the action, in this case, enjoys the action which he is about to perform. Now the religion cannot be spread by compelling people against their will. Rather, a person must be drawn to the faith on the level of the heart, and this cannot be brought about through compulsion. This is why the True Lord *the Most High* says: 'There shall be no coercion in religion. Distinct has now become the right way from [the way of] error.' (*al-Baqara*: 256) Since the right way has made itself manifest, there is no need for coercion; if someone is coerced into something, he can never fully espouse that which he has been coerced in to. However, once a person embraces the religion, he must abide by that which the religion imposes upon him. This is why a person cannot adopt a religion out of coercion. Rather, he must come to embrace it after having discerned the truth with his heart.

Allah *Glorified is He* then moves on to the messengers' response to the disbelievers;

قَالَتْ لَهُمْ رُسُلُهُمْ إِنَّمَا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَمُنُّ
عَلَىٰ مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ۖ وَمَا كَانَ لَنَا أَنْ نَأْتِيَكُمْ بِسُلْطَانٍ
إِلَّا بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ وَعَلَىٰ اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿١١﴾

Their messengers answered, ‘True, we are only men like you, but God favours which- ever of His servants He chooses. We cannot bring you any proof unless God permits it, so let the believers put all their trust in Him [11] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 11)

Thus, the messengers explained to their people: we are human beings like yourselves, and the authority which we possess is a miracle which the True Lord *the Most High* has exceptionally bestowed upon every messenger. It is the Truth that He bestows gifts upon His servants however He pleases. He chooses the appropriate messenger for every community; He then grants this messenger the miracle that testifies to the verity of the message; and this messenger goes about communicating all that Allah has asked him.

Every messenger carries out his mission with the complete trust that the Truth will not fail him. The messenger goes forth with the confidence that Allah will grant him victory. Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'and that, verily, Our soldiers – they indeed – would [in the end] be victorious!' (*as-Saffat*: 173)

Allah *the Exalted* informs us of the reassurances given to the messenger and his followers during those times when they were overwhelmed by unfavourable circumstances, and when they were on the verge of despair, they would ask themselves, 'When will Allah's victory come?' (*al-Baqara*: 214) Then came the news of the True Lord *Glorified is He* granting victory to His previous messengers—thus 'And upon Allah let the believers rely.' (*Ibrahim*: 11) These are the words proclaimed by every messenger to his followers. The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us the rest of what the messengers said to their people:

وَمَا لَنَا إِلَّا نَنُوكِلَ عَلَى اللَّهِ وَقَدْ هَدَانَا سُبُلَنَا وَلَنَصِيرَنَّ
عَلَىٰ مَا أَذْبَحْتُمُونَا وَعَلَىٰ اللَّهِ فَلْيَتَوَكَّلِ الْمُتَوَكِّلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

Why should we not put our trust in God when it is He who has guided us to this way we follow? We shall certainly bear steadfastly whatever harm you do to us. Let anyone who trusts, trust in God [12] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 12)

Let us note that Allah *the Almighty* has, at the end of the previous verse, described those who put their trust in Him as ‘believers’. Furthermore, at the end of this verse, He describes them as *Al-mutawakkilun*, which means those who put their trust in Him, for the quality of having faith is part and parcel of the quality of putting one’s trust in Allah.

We also know that there is a difference between the words *At-tawakkul* and *At-tawakul*; the former means to make full use of the resources Allah has made available to you, as it is a state of the heart. It comes about after a person’s physical faculties have performed their duties, after they have made full use of all available resources; thus, the function of the outward faculties is to perform work, whereas it is the role of the hearts to maintain an attitude of trust..

The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us the rest of the conversation between the messengers and those, from amongst the past generations who disbelieved. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِرُسُلِهِمْ لَنُخْرِجَنَّكُمْ مِّنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْ
لَتَعُوذُنَا فِي مِلَّتِنَا فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْهِمْ رَبُّهُمْ لَنُهْلِكَنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

The disbelievers said to their messengers, ‘We shall expel you from our land unless you return to our religion.’ But their Lord inspired the messengers: ‘We shall destroy the evildoers [13] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 13)

We see that when the principle of the good is propagated through society, it angers those who stand to profit from corruption and who lead corrupt lives. Invariably, the perverse people come to the conclusion that it is necessary to

expel the elements of the good from the land, a land whose decent inhabitants are being exploited by the corrupt people.

And if the land is to spare the elements of the good, the latter must promise to revert back to the evil ways of the disbelievers. One does not say, 'You returned to something' unless you starting off in that something, then you left it, and then you returned to it.

Now these messengers—whom the disbelievers were threatening to expel from the land—were they ready to revert to the ways of disbelief? Of course, they were not. We understand that the following words: 'or you must return to our religion.' In other words: 'or you return to our creed,' the Messengers did not accept such a deal as the True Lord *Glorified is He* instils the spirit of indomitability, confidence and serenity into the hearts of His messengers and the believers; the messengers and their followers will not be affected by such talk. This is what is expressed by the words of the True Lord *Glorified is He* at the end of the verse: 'So, their Lord inspired to them, "We will surely destroy the wrongdoers."' Thus, with the destruction of the wrongdoers, heavenly justice would prevail. The belief in the principle (that evil shall ultimately be defeated) is a perennial pillar of faith.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues with His promise to His messengers and their followers of believers:

وَلَنَسْكَنَنَّكُمْ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ ذَٰلِكَ لِمَنْ خَافَ مَقَامِي وَخَافَ وَعِيدِ ﴿١٤﴾

And leave you to dwell in the land after them. This reward is for those who are in awe of meeting Me, and of My warnings [14] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 14)

Allah *the Almighty* hereby affirms that whosoever remains steadfast upon the faith, stands in awe of His presence and fears the Day of Judgment and reckoning, simultaneously without turning back from the Doctrine of the truth, He shall cause them to inherit the lands of those who disbelieved in Him, for such is the law of heaven. Allah *Glorified is He* has said: 'And He made you heirs to their lands, and their houses and their goods – and [promised you] lands on which you had never yet set foot' (*al-Ahzab*: 27).

We know that whosoever fears Allah, stands in awe of Him and believes that Allah watches (and judges) every soul, then He will reward whosoever leads his life with the faith that He will cause him to inherit the land of he who disbelieved. The True Lord *Glorified is He* said to His Messenger: 'And We caused the people who had been oppressed to inherit the eastern regions of the land and the western ones, which We had blessed.' (*al-A'raf*: 137)

Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

وَأَسْتَفْتَحُوا وَخَابَ كُلُّ جَبَّارٍ عَنِيدٍ ﴿١٥﴾

They asked God to decide, and every obstinate tyrant failed [15] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 15)

They asked for victory. Thus, this was the failure of disbelievers, for they had asked for victory believing that they had access to someone who could grant them as such. How could Allah grant them victory when they are disbelievers? This is why Allah failed them and condemned them to the fate that is becoming of anyone who exhibited arrogance during his life on earth, which was along with being too proud to submit himself to the worship of his Lord. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'disappointed, [therefore], was every obstinate tyrant.'

Now the word 'tyrant' refers to one who bends others to his will. In this context, the reference is to those who are too proud to submit themselves to the worship of the True Lord *the Most High* and who question the utility of having faith in Allah *Glorified is He*. What is it that awaits them thereafter? Allah *Glorified is He* says:

مِّنْ وَرَائِهِ جَهَنَّمُ وَيُسْقَىٰ مِنْ مَّاءٍ صٰكِدٍ ﴿١٦﴾

Hell awaits each one; he will be given foul water to drink [16] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 16)

We know that hell is a condition which shall come in the future. In other words, it is in front of him, but it also awaits him and stalks him. The True Lord *Glorified is He* continues: 'and he will be given a drink of purulent water.'

Now the word 'purulent' refers to that thin fluid that is found around flesh wounds; it is the pus that drips from the bodies of those who are destined to

hellfire where their skins shall be roasted. Let us try to imagine the amount of pain experienced by these people when, upon asking for water to quench their thirst, they are presented with the pus dripping out of the burning of their skin. Pus is already something that rouses disgust in us; how disgusting would it be then if the inhabitants of hellfire were made to drink it—may Allah protect us from that. Allah *Glorified is He* and then proceeds to describe what these people will experience when they drink pus:

يَتَجَرَّعُهُ وَلَا يَكَادُ يُسِغُهُ، وَيَأْتِيهِ الْمَوْتُ مِنْ كُلِّ
مَكَانٍ وَمَا هُوَ بِمَيِّتٍ وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِ عَذَابٌ غَلِيظٌ ﴿١٧﴾

**Which he will try to gulp but scarcely be able to swallow;
death will encroach on him from every side, but he will not
die; more intense suffering will lie ahead of him [17]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 17)**

The verb 'gulp' means that he imbibes it little by little. It is so bitter that it is thick and viscous. It barely passes down the throat. A person only swallows something if he can no longer continue to gulp; however, this drink made of pus does not go smoothly down the throat of he who drinks it. When Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'but will hardly [be able to] swallow it.' It means that he cannot swallow it easily for its taste and its appearance are repelling. Allah *Glorified is He* continues: 'And death will come to him from everywhere, but he is not to die. 'What this means is that: he looks around him, and all he sees is death surrounding him from every direction; still, he does not die. To his surprise, he sees that suffering surrounds him from every direction as per the words of the True Lord *the Most High*: 'And before him is a massive punishment.'

This is how the arrogant person suffers; he was so obstinate towards faith. If we compare severe suffering with the mildest form of suffering that a person experiences in hellfire, we would find that even the latter is unbearable, for the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* himself said: 'The least suffering for the inhabitants of Hell on the Day of Resurrection would be for the man under whose soles would be placed two embers, and his brain would boil on

account of them.⁽¹⁾ How terrible would the 'severe' suffering be then? May Allah protect us from such suffering? Then, Allah *Glorified is He* describes an existential condition:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَرَمَادٍ اشْتَدَّتْ بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي يَوْمٍ عَاصِفٍ
لَا يَقْدِرُونَ مِمَّا كَسَبُوا عَلَى شَيْءٍ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الصَّلَافُ الْبَعِيدُ ﴿١٨﴾

**The deeds of those who reject their Lord are like ashes
that the wind blows furiously on a stormy day: they have
no power over anything they have gained. This is to stray
far, far away [18] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 18)**

Certain thoughts—which are corrosive to the tenets of the faith—might creep into a person's mind, whereby he might ask: how can so-and-so be thrown into Hell even as he had given humanity the wonderful inventions that changed the course of civilisations and helped people? How can Allah punish those who exerted so much effort in order to advance the arts and sciences? Will He make them suffer just because they were disbelievers? The answer is that yes, He will. Allah causes them to suffer, even if, in principle, He does not deny those who performed good works their reward. That being said, Allah is capable of rewarding them in this life with glory, fame, and wealth. These are, after all, the goals towards which they worked. The following saying of the Prophet applies to these people: 'You have performed such a deed so that such-and-such may be said about you, and such-and-such has indeed been said about you.'⁽²⁾ They earned their reward through the fame and fortune which they coveted, for as they worked, they did not have Allah in mind.

Does the Quran describe the notion of reward? Even if such disbelievers receive severe suffering for their disbelief, the True Lord will, nevertheless,

(1) *There is a unanimous agreement regarding the authenticity of this Hadith. It has been related by Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) (6561) and also by Muslim in his (Sahih) (213). Narrated on the authority of an-Nu'man Ibn Bashir may Allah be pleased with him.*

(2) *Related by Muslim in his (Sahih) (1905) and by Ahmad in his (Musnad) (2: 322) and by an-Nasa'i in his (Sunnan) (6/23, 24). Narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him. This Hadith has also been commented upon by Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi in his book (Al-Ahadith Al-Qudsiyya) (1/135-151). I have verified this myself.*

reward them for the good which they did. They receive their reward in this world by having their inventions or their discoveries bear his name.

We all know the following saying of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Whosoever emigrated for worldly benefits, or for a woman he wished to marry, the reward for his emigration shall be that which he emigrated for.'⁽¹⁾ However, in the Hereafter, his reward shall be suffering, for during his life on earth, he lived in denial of Allah. All of these deeds which they performed in this world—deeds which they thought were of humanitarian and philanthropic value—will turn to dust on the Day of Resurrection. On a windy day, a strong wind will blow on them, scattering them far and wide. 'The example of those who disbelieve in their Lord is [that] their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day; they are unable [to keep] from what they earned a [single] thing. This is what extreme error is.'

At that time, they will not be given the opportunity to resume their lives and learn from their experience; rather, suffering will be all around them, and their tongues will speak: 'My Lord, send me back so that I might do righteousness in that which I left behind.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 99-100)

However, were he allowed to return to his life, he would merely revert to that which he had been forbidden from doing. As the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And even if I should be brought back to my Lord, I will surely find better than this as a return.' (*al-Kahf*: 36). This disbelief is the extreme aberrance which rendered all their deeds—which they thought were virtuous—in vain. Thus, they remained in a state of denial regarding the path that leads to happiness in the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues:

(1) *There is unanimous agreement regarding the authenticity of this Hadith. It is published by Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) (1) and by Muslim in his (Sahih) (1907). Narrated on the authority of 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab The first part of the Hadith is as follows: {(The correctness and the rewards for) deeds depends upon original intentions; and every person will be rewarded with that which he intended}.*

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ
 ۝ إِن يَشَأْ يُذْهِبْكُمْ وَيَأْتِ بِخَلْقٍ جَدِيدٍ ۝ ١٩

[Prophet], do you not see that God created the heavens and the earth for a purpose? He could remove all of you and replace you with a new creation if He wished to [19]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 19)

Allah *Glorified is He* hereby informs us that He has created the heavens and the earth in accordance with a principle of balance. The sky will never crash down upon the earth, for Allah says: 'And He restrains the sky from falling upon the earth, unless by His permission.' (*al-Hajj*: 65)

Now when you walk outside you find the sun over you, it is kept in place by virtue of a precise architectural system. Thus, the True Lord *the Most High* wishes to lay special emphasis upon a universal, corporeal principle; He begins with the words: 'Have you not seen?', which actually means, 'Have you not known?'

Allah *the Exalted* uses this expression in this context so as to explain to us that that which He teaches us as truth is truer than that which we perceive with our eyes. If Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Have you not seen ...', this means: do you not know with certainty? Your eyes can deceive you. Now when the True Lord *the Most High* calls our attention to the heavens and the earth, we must learn now that they would not exist were it not for He bringing them into being. It is He Who has informed us that He is their Creator; no one else has claimed to have created them. Therefore, until someone else comes forth and claims to have created the heavens and the earth, this means that it was Allah who created them.

Previously, Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Greater indeed than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth' (*Ghafir*: 57). As we know, the life of a single human being cannot be compared with the life of the sky; an individual human being dies, while others are born. All human beings come and go; however, the sun remains, and so does the earth.

What is indeed awe-inspiring about the All-Merciful creation is that He created it all such that it is subservient to man; there is no created being that

can deviate from its God given nature of being subservient to man. However, when it comes to man and the duties that he has been charged with, he has a choice in the matter, either believe, if he so wishes, or he can disbelieve; he can either obey, if he so wishes or he can disobey.

However, the created beings that have been made subservient to man are not endowed with free will. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it, but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.' (*al-Ahzab*: 72) This blessed verse teaches us that Allah's Mercy has been shown towards us human beings even before we were brought into being. Allah's Mercy brought us into a world that has been prepared for us.

It is indeed an amazing fact that the universe that has been created for us—a universe which helps sustain us and helps sustain our kind—revolves around things which we have nothing to do with; things which never change. I am referring to the great phenomena of creation like the sun, the moon, and the earth.

There are other things which are subject to change, and this occurs in one of two ways: on the one hand, there are things which change and are replaced by new things, like the plants which cease to exist (qua living creatures) and become harvest (for human beings), or like the animals whose flesh we consume or which die off on their own.

On the other hand, there are elements of creation which change, but their basic substance remains the same, even if their form changes. These consist of the inanimate objects which we see—like the mountains, the earth and their constitutive elements—every day we discover new elements. Thus, the elements of the created universe which witnessed mankind's entrance upon the scene are of two kinds: one kind remains unaffected by the passage of time, while the other kind is affected by the passage of time; however, its basic constitutive elements remain unchanged. These are the inanimate objects. There is yet another kind of created being whose form and gender changes over time. All of this indicates that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has two attributes:

One is His attribute of Omnipotence and All-Dominance; Allah *Glorified is He* has the power to subjugate any created being of His choice to another one of

His choice; this attribute of His is everlasting. The other attribute of His is His free will—and it is this very same attribute which He has made manifest in human beings.

His quality of Omnipotence—through which Allah *the Almighty* has made the various elements of the created universe subservient to man—is absolute and applies to every single thing that He has created. There is nothing that can ever go against His Will.

The wisdom behind Allah's endowing human beings with free will is such that man returns to Him as a loving servant who abides by all of His religious obligations. When a person is obedient towards Allah—even while having the choice of disobeying Him—this, in the end, proves that such a person truly loves his Lord. At the same time, it proves that essential quality of Allah's, namely, that He is the One Who is 'worthy of being loved'.

In the aforementioned verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'have you not seen that Allah created the heavens and the earth in truth?' (*Ibrahim*: 19) Let us note that the word *bil-haq* (with truth) has been mentioned on numerous occasions throughout the Holy Quran. For instance, in the Quran we find the following Words of Allah *the Almighty*: 'We did not create the heavens and the earth and everything between them but in truth' (*al-Hijr*: 85). We also find His Words: 'We were not playing a pointless game when we created the heavens and earth and everything in between.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 38)

This indicates that the heavens and the earth have been created with the quality of immutability. This has caused the philosophical schools of thought to engage this idea in two ways: the first manner of perceiving this idea is held by those who wish to adhere to faith, while the other is held by those who wish to disbelieve. The latter category is itself split into two subcategories. The first subcategory considers the immutability of the natural laws—which govern the sun, the moon and the earth—as evidence that there is no creator of the universe. They claim that if a creator did exist, He would change the nature of the heavens and the earth; however, all of those planets and heavenly bodies follow their orbital courses according to a precise, internal system. The second subcategory—of those who wished to disbelieve—posit that the abnormalities in the universe, in addition to the physical flaws that

exist in certain kinds of created beings, prove that there is no Allah. How could Allah create a living being that is blind; another who is crippled or one born with only one eye?

Thus, this latter subcategory of disbelievers took the existence of flaws in the universe as proof that there is no Allah. What is interesting is that the group that wanted the nature of the heavens and the earth to be changed—wanted it as a necessary requirement for confirming the existence of a creator. Whereas the other group—the one that observed that physical flaws existed in certain created beings—the immutability in creating all people with the same semblance (without flaws or abnormalities) would be the only incentive to make them admit the existence of a creator if He created.

What all of this tells us is that each of the two groups took one of two opposing issues as the basis for their disbelief. The two groups could not come to an agreement upon either issue, and this reveals the contradiction that exists between the two.

If the two groups were to think deeply about the issue, they would come to the realisation that faith is a necessary requirement for understanding the universe—whether in terms of its immutable nature or in terms of the flaws that it contains.

Thus, if you are one of those who expect the universe to be governed by the principle of immutability, consider, then, the immutability inherent in the orbital movements of the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon. Let this fact be your evidence for the existence of a creator, an Omnipotent Divine Force.

If, on the other hand, you are one of those who—if the existence of a creator is to be believed—expects the created universe to be in constant flux, then consider the inherent variety of created beings. Let this variety—by virtue of which no two created beings are alike—be the evidence that confirms the existence of a Divine Creator, Whose Power is Absolute.

The True Lord *the Most High* has pointed out to us that He has not created the heavens and the earth as mere idle play; rather, He created them in accordance with an inner truth. There is a difference between idle play and inner truth. A plaything can be devised by one who is dallying with a random

object; all of a sudden, he uncovers its entertainment value and thereafter he and others can use it for their amusement.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘He created the heavens and earth in truth, and He is far above whatever they join with Him!’ (*an-Nahl*: 3)

As for the act of creating in truth, this implies that the Creator brings His creation into being in accordance with strict, precise principles. Thus, He fashions it according to an ordered, immutable system based upon wisdom and truth. Since the higher reaches of the cosmos are immutable, then it is the True Lord *the Most High* Who created the heavens and the earth. Furthermore, since you seek to imbue your freedom of choice with stability and order, then adopt the Doctrine which Allah has revealed. By doing so, your life will become ordered just as the movement of the heavenly bodies is ordered. When you deviate from the Doctrine of truth, corruption is all that you will find.

If you wish that all manner of corruption disappear from society, then seek the decrees of Allah that has values man has wasted by deviating from His Doctrine. What you will find is that man’s neglect of these decrees is the reason why corruption exists in human societies. In addition, consider the Words of the True Lord, in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*, when He says: ‘It is the Lord of Mercy Who taught the Quran. He created man and taught him to communicate. The sun and the moon follow their calculated courses; the plants and the trees submit to His designs. He has raised the sky up. He has set the balance so that you may not exceed in the balance. Weigh with justice and do not fall short in the balance.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 1-9)

Thus, when you look at the sun, for example, you notice that sunrise and sunset—as well as its eclipse—are precise, ordered events. The same applies to the moon when it shines fully in all its splendour, when it wanes or when it is eclipsed.

Just as Allah *the Almighty* has raised the skies high and has established a balance, you too must weigh your actions with equity so that your lives might become ordered, for when the material and moral scales become balanced, and this translates into a stable rhythm of life. In contrast, if you remain on such a deviant course, know that Allah *Glorified is He* is capable of doing away with you and bringing forth a new creation: ‘... If He wills, He can do away with you and produce a new creation.’ (*Ibrahim*: 19) The wording of this

verse as well as the concept of removing people and replacing them with a new creation is not what Allah wants, for He has created and endowed man with the freedom to accept Him, even though He has also endowed him with the freedom not to accept Him.

On another occasion, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Though now you are called upon to give [a little] for the sake of Allah, some of you are grudging. Whoever is grudging is so only towards himself. Allah is the source of wealth, and you are the needy ones. He will substitute other people for you if you turn away, and they will not be like you.' (*Muhammad*: 38) Allah *Glorified is He* says in regards to the issue of Jews denying the manner of the Messiah's birth, that is, 'Isa (Jesus), the son of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon them*: 'When the son of Mary is cited as an example, your people [Prophet] laugh and jeer, saying, "Are our gods better or him?", they cite him only to challenge you. They are a quarrelsome people, but he is only a servant we favoured and made an example for the Children of Israel. If it had been our will, we could have made you angels, succeeding one another on earth.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 57-60)

The absolute Power of Allah which created 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* in the absence of a father is the same power that is capable of doing whatever it pleases. There is nothing that can refuse to comply with the Will of the True Lord *the Most High* or can counteract His infinite Power. Allah *Glorified is He* says on another occasion: 'And, by the Lord of every sunrise and sunset, We have the power to substitute for them others better than they are— nothing can prevent Us from doing this.' (*al-Ma'arij*: 40-41) Thus, there is nothing that can prevent Allah from doing what He wills.

To emphasise the point that He is capable of bringing forth a new creation—and that, indeed, this is not in the realm of the impossible—Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا ذَٰلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ بِعَزِيزٍ

**That is not difficult for Allah [20]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 20)**

When something is described as '*Aziz*, this means it is dear, impossible, or difficult. However, Allah *the Exalted* can never be denied what He wills. He

might reveal His Power—through which He can do away with a living being and bring forth a new one in its stead—when He does away with a plant and brings forth a new one or when He does away with an animal and brings forth a new one; He also does away with communities of human beings and brings forth newer communities in their stead.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَبَرِّزُوا لِلَّهِ جَمِيعًا فَقَالَ الضُّعَفَاءُ لِلَّذِينَ اسْتَكْبَرُوا إِنَّا كُنَّا لَكُمْ تَبَعًا فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُغْنُونَ عَنَّا مِنْ عَذَابِ اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ قَالُوا لَوْ هَدَّيْنَا اللَّهُ لَهَدَيْنَاكُمْ سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَجْرُ عَنَّا أَمْ صَبَرْنَا مَا لَنَا مِنْ مَحِيصٍ ﴿٢١﴾

When they all appear before Him, the weak will say to the power- seekers, ‘We were your followers. Can you protect us from any of God’s punishment?’ They will reply, ‘If God had guided us, we would have guided you. It makes no difference now whether we rage or endure with patience: there is no escape’ [21] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 21)

The word *Al-buruz* refers to the appearance of that which was hidden. It is said, for example, *rajul bariz* is an eminent man who inspires awe in others, the only man who the world gives in to his power. It is also said *imra’ah bariza* which means a woman who intermixes with men and who does not cover herself appropriately.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And you will see the earth as an open plain’ (*al-Kahf*: 47). He says ‘*barizatan*’ which means as an open plain. What this means is that every one of us will, on the Last Day, see the entire earth in a state of completion. In other words, we will not see a mere portion of it as is the case in our day-to-day lives, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘But today we have removed your veil and your sight is sharp’ (*Qaf*: 22).

It is also said *faras bariz*. This is a reference to a horse that wins races with other horses. No other horse is able to catch up with it. Therefore, it is the horse that is most clearly visible to the eye during a race. We know that during races, the galloping horses create clouds of dust. This dust obstructs the vision such that nobody can really see in detail what is happening with the

horses in the thick of the race. However, if there emerges a single horse that eludes all the others; there will be no other horses in its vicinity to create clouds of dust such that could prevent spectators from seeing it clearly. In this instance the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'When they all appear before Him (on the Day of Judgment...) (*Ibrahim*: 21). One might ask if there is anything that is hidden from Allah *the Almighty* such that it will not appear to Him on that Day? The answer is that Allah *the Most High* is far too Great for anything—whether on earth, in the sky or anything in the universe—to hide from Him. In this context, the meaning is that they shall appear to themselves, that is, they shall clearly behold their own existence in the presence of Allah *the Exalted*.

In the past, He says: 'They try to hide themselves from people, but they cannot hide from Allah. He is with them when they plot at night, saying things that do not please Him. He is fully aware of everything they do.' (*an-Nisa*': 108)

They used to believe that they could hide their deeds from their Lord. They were wont to deceive, and they were furtive at that. On the Day of Resurrection, however, we find them completely exposed in front of their Creator. They shall be seen for all they are worth, just like all other created beings. The verse may also mean that each of them will appear before himself, and see himself facing Allah.

We know that Allah *the Exalted* brought created beings into existence according to one of two possible states. One is a state wherein man is compelled and has no free will. The other state is that wherein man has a choice. The ratio of things in which man has free will is relatively small compared to those things in which he does not have free will. The True Lord *the Most High* has willed it to be this way since He has pre-eternally known what a person who becomes accustomed to rebelling against Allah would do. He, thus explain it to man. 'You have become accustomed to rebelling and saying "No", and you might publicly proclaim your disbelief, and you might even go to war for its sake. You want to rebel against the Will of the True Lord. Therefore, if what you say—to the effect that your capacity for rebellion is innate—is true, then try rebelling against those compulsory things which haunt you.'

Man knows, through experience, that he is unable to rebel against such things. A poor man cannot become rich without Allah's Leave, nor can a

sick person become well again without Allah's Leave, nor can a weak person become strong if this is incongruous with the Will of Allah. All of this indicates that Allah's ownership of you still remains a compulsory fact. Furthermore, there shall come a day when even the little free will that you have shall be stripped from you.

'The Day when they will come out and nothing about them will be concealed from Allah. "Who has control today?" [Allah will say] "To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all)."' (*Ghafir*: 16) On that Day, you see yourself for all you are worth, and you will find the True Lord the Most High before you. At the moment when you stand before your Creator, either you will see yourself for all you are worth, or the meaning of Allah's Words might be that all of creation will stand before Him on that Day completely exposed, whether they be followers or leaders.

At that moment, the following Words of the True Lord shall come true: '...The weak will say to those who are arrogant, "We were your followers..."' (*Ibrahim*: 21).

Thus, we see a dialogue unfold between two kinds of human beings: on the one side there are the arrogant people who were the leaders along with the masters who used to issue orders to the weak so that they might carry them out. To their surprise, however, the weak people will find that, on the Day of Judgment, their status will become equal with that of the powerful, arrogant people. They will then behold the suffering that awaits them all. Thereupon, the weak will ask the arrogant: '...Can you avail us anything against Allah's punishment?' (*Ibrahim*: 21) Previously, these arrogant people had flaunted their power and sovereignty so as to subjugate the weak people. Alternatively, they might have displayed insolence towards the messengers when the latter exhorted them to faith, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* points out elsewhere in the Quran: 'And they said, "Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

These words amount to arrogantly scorning the faith, for it is as if—Allah forbids—they are questioning Allah's Will and infinite Wisdom which He exercises when selecting His messengers.

Alternatively, the meaning of this verse might be that they displayed arrogance towards themselves, hence their failure to attain to faith. Another possibility is that they had used their power and influence so as to act arrogantly towards the followers, whereby the latter were not able to disobey them. That is why, when they were all rendered equally powerless, the followers said to them: '... Can you avail us anything against Allah's punishment?' (*Ibrahim*: 21) This is evidence of the rebuke, disgrace and ignominy suffered by the follower.

We know that in another place of the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* has quoted the followers as saying: 'Lord! We obeyed our masters and our chiefs, and they led us astray. Lord, give them double punishment and reject them completely.' (*al-Ahzab*: 67-68) Allah *the Almighty* brings up this issue so that we might understand the criterion we should use to decide about whom to follow. Therefore, before following the orders of someone else in a matter, be sure that there is good in it for you and that it will not bring you harm. Let us all pay close attention and never hand over the reins of our lives unless we have a clear rationale for doing so.

Let us all remember the following Words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Like Satan, who says to man, "Do not believe" However, when man disbelieves, he says, "I disown you, I fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds."' (*al-Hashr*: 16)

If you are faced with a matter that goes against Allah's Doctrine, you must uphold Allah's Doctrine over all else. Allah *the Exalted* has stated this for us so that we might pay close attention, for we must not hand over the reins of our lives to those whom we follow without having considered the matter wisely. Will he lead us to the good, or will he lead us to the bad; furthermore, can he stave off evil and save us from misfortune?

Therefore, let all of our actions be guided by a clear rationale. To be sure, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*: 'Which, then, of your Lord's blessings do you both deny?' (*ar-Rahman*: 16)

The word *Al-ala'a* means Allah's blessings. Among the most precious of these blessings are those values which the True Lord *the Most High* has brought out so that we might lead our lives on earth in the light of their wisdom and so that we might not adopt an ignorant approach to life; rather, we should adopt a clear and rational approach.

These are the principles which the follower should abide by in his dealings with his superior, lest they both find themselves equally disgraced on the Day of Reckoning. Thereupon, the followers will say to the followed: 'We were your followers. Can you avail us anything against Allah's punishment?' (*Ibrahim*: 21)

This Quranic passage is spoken by the Lord of the worlds. Therefore, each letter has a purpose and a meaning. For instance, when He says '... avail us anything against Allah's punishment' (*Ibrahim*: 21), this means that they will be unable to mitigate even the smallest portion of Allah's punishment. It is as if they are making it easier for them, by asking them to bear some of the punishment or reduce their suffering by at least a small fraction.

A similar situation occurs when one person asks another for a pound; this other person then says, 'One pound is all I have.' As a result, the first person says, 'Then give me at least a fraction of it.' He is in effect asking for one quarter of the pound or even a ten-piaster-fraction of it.

This is similar to that which the followers will ask those whom they followed; what then is the response from those who disobeyed Allah with their disbelief? The following is their response to those who asked them to lessen—if only by a fraction—the amount of suffering due to them: 'They will reply, "If Allah had guided us, we would have guided you. It makes no difference now whether we rage or endure with patience. There is no escape."' (*Ibrahim*: 21) Thus, their falsehood becomes manifest, for they claim that 'guidance' entails Allah instilling faith into their hearts. They forget that 'guidance' means the clear proof that leads one to such goal.

The following Words of Allah *Glorified is He* help to elucidate the meaning: 'And those who are guided - He increases them in guidance and gives them their guarding (against evil).' (*Muhammad*: 17) Whosoever embraces faith with a breast that expands to contain it will find every avenue of good open to him. However, if a person disbelieves, how can Allah ever guide him, when he has preferred blindness over right-guidance? Obviously, he will fail to find any sort of guidance.

The disbelievers will admit, on the Day of Judgment, to those who followed them—for on that Day they will see with their own eyes that heaven

is real and that Hell is real and Divine Reckoning is real—that if only the True Lord had taken them by hand and led them to faith, they would have led their followers to faith as well. Such a view of theirs is fallacious. They claim: ‘If Allah had guided us, we would have guided you’ (*Ibrahim*: 21).

We know that when a person finds himself in an impasse that is beyond his ability to surmount—an impasse from which there is no escape. There are two possible attitudes which one can adopt: the first attitude is one of despondency and desperation, while the second attitude is that of steadfast patience. At this juncture, we find the disbelievers saying: ‘It makes no difference now whether we rage or endure with patience. There is no escape.’ (*Ibrahim*: 21) This means that whether they grieve desperately or endure patiently—either way Allah will not save them from their terrible fate; there is, therefore, no escape and no prospect for riddance.

The expression *hasa*—in a place—means that he paced to and fro, yet, he could not find relief. In our own colloquial Egyptian Arabic, there is an expression that illustrates this meaning, that is, *fulan hayis*, which means that so-and-so cannot find a place where he can rest. They also say *nabat bihim al-‘ard*, which means that every spot on earth refuses their entry. This point is explained by Allah *Glorified is He* when He says: ‘... when the earth, for all its spaciousness, closed in around them, when their very souls closed in around them ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 118). This is an illustration of the state of those to whom the expression *nabat bihim al-‘ard* applies; their own souls become too narrow for them, thus, they become constricted. We often hear from those upon whom the True Lord has inflicted hardship, in their life on earth: *ana la atiq nafsi* (I cannot endure myself). This is indeed what happens to people in times of angst; their soul cannot stand itself. It is as if each person has two souls, two identities. One soul seeks carnal pleasures, but when it goes too far, the person reverts back to the soul that abhors carnal pleasure. Neither of these two states brings him any happiness—whether in loving pleasure or in hating it.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالَ الشَّيْطَانُ لَمَّا قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَعَدَكُمْ وَعْدَ الْحَقِّ وَوَعَدْتُكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُكُمْ وَمَا كَانَ لِي عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْ سُلْطَانٍ إِلَّا أَنْ دَعَوْتُكُمْ فَاسْتَجَبْتُمْ لِي فَلَا تَلُومُونِي وَلُومُوا أَنْفُسَكُمْ مَا أَنَا بِمُصْرِخِكُمْ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُصْرِخِيَّ إِنِّي كَفَرْتُ بِمَا أَشْرَكْتُمُونِ مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

When everything has been decided, Satan will say, ‘God gave you a true promise. I too made promises but they were false ones: I had no power over you except to call you, and you responded to my call, so do not blame me; blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I reject the way you associated me with God before.’ A bitter torment awaits such wrongdoers [22] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 22)

At this juncture the dialogue takes on a broader scope; it started out as a conversation between the followed and their followers; presently, the dialogue is carried out between Satan and mankind. Given the manner in which the True Lord *the Most High* has phrased this verse, we can note that the state in which the dialogue is taking place is one of finality; the final resolution of all matters has been determined. There can be no further discussion in the matter, and there is no opportunity to go back and change the events that have already transpired.

That ‘everything will have been decided’ means that each person shall meet his fate. Whosoever has been destined for Paradise shall enter it, and whosoever has been destined for hellfire shall likewise enter it; in effect, events have reached their ultimate, unalterable denouement.

It is only now that Satan exposes himself and, ‘Satan will say, when everything has been decided, "Allah gave you a true promise. I too made promises but I deceived you."' (*Ibrahim*: 22) A promise given by Allah cannot but be true, for it issues from the One Who has real sovereignty over things, whereas a promise given by Satan, on the other hand, is a completely different matter, for it issues from one who does not have sovereignty over things. This is why it is a false promise. Only the True Lord can give promises that are fixed and unalterable.

When you—a human being—promise to render a future service to another human being, can you guarantee that your future situation will still enable you to fulfil your promise? This is why Allah *the Exalted* advises us to begin any such promises with the words '*in sha'a Allah*' (Allah willing). In so doing, we acknowledge that the matter hinges upon Allah's Will, for He is the One solely capable of making a promise and carrying it out. If one of us is about to make a promise, he should protect himself from uttering falsehood by saying '*in sha'a Allah*.' Thus, if for some reason you find yourself unable to make good on that which you promised, you would have at least protected yourself from accusations of dishonesty.

In the Hereafter, we find Satan saying: '... I too made promises, but I deceived you ...' (*Ibrahim*: 22). This is due to Satan's promise being a false one, and falsehood is *lajljaj* (never lasts and its defeat is inevitable). When you base your knowledge upon falsehood, reality will later prove the incorrectness of your assumptions and will cause you to disbelieve that upon which you based your knowledge. This is why we find the True Lord *the Most High* illustrating the vast gulf that separates truth and falsehood. He says: '...the froth disappears, but what is of benefit to man stays behind. In this way does Allah set forth the parables' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17).

Thus, Satan tries to exculpate himself even though he did make promises which he had no power to keep. This is why he tries to lay the blame upon those who followed him. In this respect, he can be likened to those who said: '..."If Allah had guided us, we would have guided you..."' (*Ibrahim*: 21) Thereafter Satan says: '..."I had no power over you except to call you, and you responded to my call ..." ' (*Ibrahim*: 22).

Power—as we know—can consist of either the power to compel or the power to persuade. The power to compel means that a person has enough power to compel others to do things against their will even if they abhor that which they are forced to do. As for the power of persuasion, it means that a person possesses a convincing logic that causes you to happily do that which he asks you to. Thus, on the Day of Reckoning, Satan confesses to human beings and says: 'I want to ask you. Did I possess the power to force you to do my bidding? Or was it that I had the power to persuasion by which I seduced you to follow my ways?'

During your earthly journeys, I had neither the latter nor the former power over you, so do not accuse me of anything, nor make a scapegoat out of me and blame me for all of your mistakes. I was the first among you to stray from the right way. I disobeyed my Lord's command. I had no power over you but that I called you and you responded. 'The only influence I had over you is that I stirred up the lower tendencies within your own souls, and when these tendencies had been awakened, you began engaging in sinful acts.'

Thus, Satan either can stir up the tendencies of the lower self or can let the lower self-follow its own desires and sin on its own accord. The lower self has sufficient self-motivation to sin on its own.

Previously, I have pointed out how a particular sin can be identified as either being independent or caused by self-motivation or as being caused by seduction from the devil. If the soul becomes, on its own accord, attracted to a particular temptation—whereby the more the person distances himself from it the more his soul clamours for it—then this sin can be said to originate from the lower self, for the latter is innately disposed towards it.

As for the whisperings of the devil, they consist of the devil moving from one sin to the other trying to tempt a person. If the devil finds a person to be resistant to a particular sin, he moves on and tries to tempt him into something else. It is Satan's wish that a person commits sins, regardless of which sin this happens to be—what is important is that man sins. This is why he targets a person's weaknesses, and if he finds him to be impregnable in one area, he shifts the point of attack to another. Satan proclaims that he is not to be blamed for this: '...I had no power over you except to call you, and you responded to my call, so do not blame me. Blame yourselves...' (*Ibrahim: 22*).

The guilt lies on the shoulders of the one who actually committed the sin, not the one who did the tempting. The True Lord *the Most High* continues with Satan's words, on the Day of Judgment, to those whom he seduced: '... It is not for me to respond to your cries, nor for you to respond to mine...' (*Ibrahim: 22*). These are the words that come from Satan—who, previously, had shown arrogance towards Adam *peace be upon him* when Allah *the Almighty* ordered him, along with all the other angels, to prostrate to Adam—The present situation, however, is one of parity between him and those whom he

seduced. He makes it known that he can be of no benefit to them, nor can they be of any benefit to him.

The word *Al-musrikh* (the one who responds to the cries of someone else and helps him) is related to the verbal noun *As-surakh*, from the root *sarakh*, which means the raising of one's voice in order that others might hear it. He who cries out thus is asking for none other than help. If one were to find a treasure under one's feet, one would not cry out so as not to draw attention. Rather, one would look around to see if anyone noticed or not. In contrast, if a person were attacked by a lion, obviously he would cry out for help. Thus, the objective of crying out is to ask for help, and this act is not performed unless a person fears some imminent danger.

The word *musrikh* indicates that the verb *asrakh* is affected by what is known in grammatical terms as *hamzat al-'izala*. Another example of this is the word *mu'jam* (dictionary); it means that which explains the meaning of a term such that it removes the mystery surrounding it. One could say. '*a'jam al-kitab*', which means that he explained it and brought it to light. This *hamza* that has been applied, in effect, redresses the word's ambiguity.

Another example of the application of this *hamza* is the word *atab*, which means he reproached him. When the *hamza* is applied to the word, it becomes *a'tab*, which means he removed that which was blameworthy. We also find the word *atab* in the Prophet's supplication: 'To you are all supplications until You are pleased. There is no power and no might except in You' In essence, this means the following 'O, Lord, if you find me blameworthy in any way, I supplicate to you to remove the cause of such blameworthiness.'

We find that the technique of *Al-'izala* can be affected either through the addition of the *hamza* or through *At-tad'if*; for example, we might say '*marrad at-tabib maridah*', which means that the doctor—by Allah's leave—treated his patient's illness.

So, the word *musrikh* denotes one who removes the cause behind another's cries. It is as though there were a person who cried out for help, whereby another person came to his rescue. Thus, Satan announces, on the Day of Judgment, that he and those he seduced are in a predicament. Furthermore, he is unable to do anything about the cause of this predicament. They (the people

who responded to his seduction) are not able to remove the cause of such a predicament; neither party is able to help the other.

Satan, then, adds: 'I reject the way you associated me with Allah before' (*Ibrahim: 22*). What this means is that you have ascribed to me a share of Allah's Divinity in the way of obedience, when you submitted yourselves to my temptation, and you were not of Allah's sincere and true servants whom I swore by the Majesty of Allah not to seduce.⁽¹⁾ Furthermore, each and every one of you carried out that which I seduced him to. I called you and you obeyed, whereas Allah called you and you disobeyed or disbelieved, and so you became like me, for I too were once commanded by Allah and disobeyed.

The True Lord *the Most High* then says that which Satan will utter to those who disbelieved and sinned: '...A bitter torment awaits such wrongdoers.' (*Ibrahim: 22*)

This is a public affair, the issue of disbelief at the summit, for just as you obeyed Satan and gave him a share of Allah's Divinity, he shall be there to tell you the final evaluation of this situation, and he will declare his refusal to share in Allah's Divinity or to ascribe it to anyone. For at that day of Gathering, Allah's Words about him will be realised: "'You have respite," said Allah, "until the Day of the Appointed Time."' (*al-Hijr: 37-38*)

Satan will, till the Day of Judgment, be sneaking, whispering and enticing, but on that day all shall manifest, whether it be the actions of humans, Jinn, or any of all other created beings, before the One, the Superb Vanquisher, and there will be nothing that will remain hidden from sight.

Indeed, this is what they have deluded themselves and thought that they could hide what they have done from the Eyes of Allah, and therefore, we find in the Qudsi Hadith,

'O, son of Adam, if it were that you believed I could not see you, then the deficiency is in your faith, and if it were that you believe that I could see you, then why have you relegated me to the lowest of your witnesses?' For in

(1) As is found in Allah's words: '(Whereupon Satan Iblis] said: 'Then (I swear] by Thy very might: I shall most certainly beguile them all into grievous error (*Sad: 82*) (all] save such of them as are truly Thy servants!'[83]' (*Sad: 82-83*)

one's daily life you do not find people stealing from one another face to face, and no one burns down another's house right before their eyes, so if it were mankind that you would not do such things with one another, then how can you do such things with your Creator and disobey Him as such?

Furthermore, if you were doubtful that He can see you, then the deficiency is in your faith, and if you believed that He does see you, then why have you belittled His witnessing of you; if a person were to observe you, you would not dare do to him that which he hates.

Thus, Satan says in admission and confirmation that the evildoers will face grievous suffering and that evil-doing at the summit is the association of Allah's Divinity with others, as it is stated by Luqman when he said to his son: '..."My son, do not attribute any partners to Allah. Attributing partners to Him is a terrible wrong."' (*Luqman*: 13)

When we read, 'A bitter torment awaits such wrongdoers' (*Ibrahim*: 22), either we take it as a confirmation from Satan that attributing partners to Allah is a terrible wrong and that's why a bitter torment awaits him and his followers; or we take it as a conclusion of this public issue stated by Allah after Satan said: '...I reject the way you associated me with Allah before." ...' (*Ibrahim*: 22) What this means is that after the True Lord speaks of the manifestation of all creation and created beings, followed by the dialogue between the weak and the elite, then the dialogue between Satan and the people of disbelief and sin, finally He brings forth the final judgment in this matter: '..."I reject the way you associated me with Allah before."..." (*Ibrahim*: 22)

Indeed, special occasions are reflective of their corresponding states, so that the soul is yearning and looking forward to that appointed time, such as in the Words of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'The good will live in bliss.' (*al-Infitar*: 13) Then He brings forth its opposing state: 'And the wicked will burn in the Fire.' (*al-Infitar*: 14)

Then, just as He declares the state corresponding to the evildoers, it is necessary to expand the hearts with joy of the state and compensation due to those who have been made felicitous with faith.

Thus Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأُدْخِلَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهِمْ تَحِيَّتُهُمْ فِيهَا سَلَامٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

**But those who believed and did good deeds will be brought
into Gardens graced with flowing streams, there to remain
with their Lord's permission: their greeting there is
'Peace'[23] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 23)**

Here the Arabic verb *udkhila* (indicated by the phrase 'will be brought into') can be ascribed in three ways, and each one of these ways is noteworthy (in its meaning). First, the verb can be ascribed to Allah; second, it can be ascribed to the angels who receive the command from Allah to bring a believer into the gardens; finally, it can be related to believers who enter the gardens by Allah's permission. For Allah brought them in through His permission, the chosen angels opened the gates to the gardens to them, and the believers actively entered. Such is the meaning for each possible way.

There is also another reading for this verse that clarifies this in which the verb is read as *udkhilu* (with the vowel sound 'u' applied to the end of the word). Here the speaker is clearly Allah, and we notice that the True Lord *the Most High* in this verse says: 'But those who believed and did good deeds will be brought into Gardens ...' (*Ibrahim*: 23).

In order to apply the vowel sound 'u' to the ending of the word *udkhil*, it must be that Allah permitted their being brought in since He also said in the same verse: '...with their Lord's permission...' (*Ibrahim*: 23). Indeed the angels that are responsible for this act, opened the gates; and believers entered, all this by Allah's Leave.

We notice that all this talk is of gardens; so what are the gardens? We say that *janna* 'garden' in its linguistic origin is a shelter or covering; from this same root meaning is the word *junun* 'madness'. In other words, the covering of reason and the root for this word are the letters 'j' and 'n'. The *janna* is therefore a shelter because of its fullness of trees through which a walker could not be seen due to the sheltering of its tress. Or in other words: that whomever enters it abides in it without anyone seeing him, for every provision and blessing in it is one that one would not want to ever leave.

The word *jannat* 'gardens' is also applied to parts of our world too, and Allah *Glorified is He* is the One who says: 'Would any of you like to have a garden of palm trees and vines ...' (*al-Baqara*: 266). It is for us to also know that the *janna* is distinct from the dwellings we find in it since Allah says: '...The good, peaceful homes in Gardens of lasting bliss ...' (*at-Tawba*: 72).

Janna—and to Allah belongs the supreme example—is also a vast garden, and this vastness is distributed to everyone in its sight. Man—in the mystery of his creation—loves to both have a special space as well as to go into many other places as well. For example, some people rent an apartment or build an independent house or even mansion for themselves and in that house or mansion they like to have one room that is special to them, one which no one else enters.

People act and value things upon these principles; those who want to buy some land will wonder: Is it situated upon a small alley or upon a main street? Can I raise the building to several stories high or not? Can I allot a portion of the land to a garden or not?

If the land is situated upon open space, then the price per meter is not just standard price, but includes the value of vertical spaciousness and surrounding openness whether in fields or upon the sea, for example, and in which case there is no one to intrude upon you in such a place.

Jannat are, thus, vast spaces, and everyone who enters them has in them goodly dwellings and through these gardens rivers run and those who are brought into them are: '...to remain with their Lord's permission...' (*Ibrahim*: 23).

Thus, we know that mankind loves to live in luxury, but for every luxury in this world there is cause to ruin it, and does it last or does it not last? Every one of us has seen people who live in luxury and it was taken from them by virtue of vicissitudes of this life, or they abandoned it by virtue of death.

Yet, the *janna* of Allah and its luxuries are a different matter; indeed in it luxury does not miss you, neither do you miss it, as it is based on the capability of your Lord.

We notice that the True Lord's Words 'to remain' (*Ibrahim*: 23) clarify that abiding in these gardens is for eternity by Allah's Leave. He follows these Words with: '... Their greeting therein is "Peace."' (*Ibrahim*: 23)

Welcoming or greetings are that which one gives their brother in humanity as a testament of their joy for their meeting. Thus, greetings or welcoming are commensurate with the amount of joy. For sometimes a greeting can simply be the raising of the hand in acknowledgement without shaking one another's hand, or this may not be enough when one feels greater endearment towards another, so one shakes their hand, or even embrace them. In such ways, welcoming can go to higher levels, and it is the declaration of joy at the encounter of others.

The welcoming in *janna* is that of peace since peace is the security of every human being; peace with oneself is such so that you are not inundating it with the type of self-dialogue in which you are constantly reprimanding it about what has passed or daydreaming of future actions. For in the peace of *janna* you will not find disturbances from the past, present or future. Rather you are in harmony with all that surrounds you in the universe: whether it be inanimate, plant, human or angelic.

This is why Allah *Glorified is He* said as conclusion for this verse: '...their greeting therein is "Peace."' (*Ibrahim*: 23)

This is indeed the greatest blessing: living in peace and security. After that, the angels shall enter upon them in accordance to what the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

'... The angels will go in to them from every gate, 'Peace be with you because you have remained steadfast. What an excellent reward is this home of yours.'" (*ar-Ra'd*: 23-24)

Then they will deliver the highest of greetings of peace, from Allah, and He is the declarer of: "'Peace," a word from the Lord of Mercy.' (*Ya Sin*: 58)

After Allah has described the states of the people of proximity and felicity, and the people who are distant and evildoing, He wanted to strike a parable to clarify for us the difference between the creed of the felicitous who lived by Allah's Word and the creed of the evildoers who followed a range of ways and not the way of Allah.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ كَيْفَ ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا كَلِمَةً طَيِّبَةً كَشَجَرَةٍ طَيِّبَةٍ أَصْلُهَا
ثَابِتٌ وَفَرْعُهَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٢٤﴾ تُؤْتِي أُكْلَهَا كُلَّ حِينٍ بِإِذْنِ رَبِّهَا
وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَالَ لِلنَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

**[Prophet], do you not see how God makes comparisons?
A good word is like a good tree whose root is firm and whose
branches are high in the sky [24] Yielding constant fruit by its
Lord's leave – God makes such comparisons for people so
that they may reflect [25] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 24-25)**

A parable is that which makes a subtlety manifest. For example, you would say to a friend of yours, 'Have you seen so-and-so?' Thus, he tells you, 'No, I have not seen him. So you say to him, 'He looks like so-and-so.' In such a way you materialise or clarify a picture which is absent or hazy in his memory using one which is clear to it. Allah *the Exalted* uses parables particularly in regards to sensory matters in order to convey their meanings to our minds. Man has a deeper inclination for that which is sensory. The receptors of his senses introduce to him things of a sensory nature, first, whereas their meanings are comprehended later.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah does not shy from drawing comparisons even with something as small as a gnat, or larger ...' (*al-Baqara*: 26). To this, disbelievers said, 'How is it that Allah would propound a parable of a gnat?' This means that they have not fully realised that a gnat has life and movement like any other created being, and that its biological structure is similar to the biological structure of all living beings in its details, along with carrying out all the necessary biological functions for survival. None but entomologists—those who study the science of insects—can know how it breathes, digests its food, how its circulatory system functions or where its particular glands are; despite all this, it is an insect that is minute in its make-up.

He draws many parables to clarify that which is mysterious with that which is manifest. After that, the parable becomes popular and is used frequently among people. We say that the word *daraba* (indicated by the word 'set forth') is used as it is in the saying *darb al 'umla*, which means 'minting coins by stamping metal'. People of yesteryear used to come forth with a piece of

silver or gold and mould into a certain form and weight to designate a certain value, which it would become exchangeable currency. It is also said *duriba fi Misr* which means that it has become conventional or matter of fact. The same goes with parables when they become frequently used by people and matter of fact amongst them.

The parable that Allah *the Almighty* sets forth is that of a good word. It has four characteristics: ‘...Like a good tree...’ (*Ibrahim*: 24). In other words it is a source of good in which you take comfort, whether in the way it looks, in its scent, with its fruits or all of it collectively. His Words, ‘like a good tree’ (*Ibrahim*: 24), imply that all your senses find comfort in it. The word ‘good’ is derived from the many ways in which one can sense goodness. The first characteristic is that it is a good tree. The second characteristic is that its roots are firm, as the faith of a loving believer. The third characteristic is that its branches are in the sky which is a proof of its rootedness in a healthy foundation and of its fine blossoming. As for the fourth characteristic it is that it consistently brings forth fruit and provision by its Sustainer’s Leave. In other words, it will continuously be supplied—by the Sustainer—and thus will continuously give with no limitation or finitude. These are indications of the traits of loving believers.

Since it is a good tree, then it is of the category of plants and vegetation which require nourishment to sustain its functions of survival, and its survival is based on its foundation in the earth, so if the tree is unstable it would not be able to receive its nourishment. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says about this tree: ‘...whose root is firm and whose branches are high in the sky.’ (*Ibrahim*: 24)

We all think that a tree receives its nourishment only from its roots, but the scientific reality confirms that it only takes five percent of its nourishment from its roots. The rest, it takes in through air. So, the cleaner the air the more able a tree to grow to its full potential, and its branches can reach up to the heights of the sky.

However, if the environment is not clean and is polluted, then the air is not clean enough to allow the tree to grow to its full potential. Unsuitable changes in the environment and conditions keep the tree from being able to extract the appropriate nourishment. It does not grow as it should, unless Allah brings the rain down upon it, hence washing its leaves.

Thus, the True Lord's Words, '...whose root is firm...' (*Ibrahim*: 24) mean that it derives stability and nourishment from the earth. Also, His Words, '... whose branches are high in the sky ...' (*Ibrahim*: 24) clarify that it takes from above. Then He *the Most High* follows with 'Yielding constant fruit ...' (*Ibrahim*: 25).

Al-ukul 'fruit' is all that which is consumed and enjoyed. We should not take this to mean only that which we consume with our mouths only, for there are trees and plants which are good because the dispositions of different parts of the universe, and its people need it. Shade, for example, is something from which we benefit; also there are trees with which ether interacts to bring about a beautiful scent.

An example of this is in the incident of the Bedouin child who saw his neighbour's palm trees rich in dates, while the palm tree that his family owned was without fruit. He wondered why. Then, he went to cut it down, but his father caught up with him and prevented him from doing so and said, 'Our palm tree is the male which produces the necessary pollen for the other palm trees to bear fruit.'

Therefore, I do not agree with scholars who have gone to interpret the True Lord's Words: '... a good tree ...' (*Ibrahim*: 24) as an apple tree or any other of those that bear sweet fruits. This is because every tree—even if it were a bitter colocynth tree—is good due to the benefits with which the True Lord has imbued it. For it is from the colocynth tree that we are able to derive the medicine colocynth—it may be bitter tasting—but it can cure some from their ailments by the Leave of Allah.

Thus, all that can be described as a tree has its own good role in this universe. The True Lord's Words, 'Yielding constant fruit ...' (*Ibrahim*: 25) indicate that there is value to all trees, whether we see it bearing sweet fruits or not.

Furthermore, modern science has alerted us to the fact that all greenery contributes to the purification of the air, as it extracts from it carbon dioxide, and adds for us oxygen. All greenery does so consistently during the day and transforms their role by sending carbon dioxide during the night and absorbing oxygen, as though they are programmed based on the understanding that daytime requires more movement.

Living beings require more fuel for their movement and that is oxygen, and human beings require a great amount of oxygen for movement. We find, for example, that whoever climbs stairs starts breathing heavily because their lungs are trying to absorb the greatest possible amount of oxygen to oxygenate the blood and create the needed energy to climb up the stairs. Thus, all greenery has its own specific role which is given to it by the Creator *the Most High*. It is because of this that the scholars have differed in their interpretation of: ‘Yielding constant fruit ...’ (*Ibrahim*: 25).

There are those who said that *Al-heen* indicates a moment; such as in the Words of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: ‘When the soul of a dying man comes up to his throat, while you gaze on’ (*al-Waqi’a*: 83-84). Another scholar said that *Al-heen* is that which implies morning and evening, and Allah says: ‘So celebrate Allah’s Glory in the evening, in the morning.’ (*ar-Rum*: 17) I say, let us pay attention to the fact that *Al-heen* is the time when that which is decreed becomes a reality. If *Al-heen* is when the last of your soul reaches your throat—for that moment is synonymous with *Al-heen* here—and if it was supposed to mean something longer than that, such as morning or evening for example, then such a time is included in the meaning of *Al-heen*. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... Who are steadfast in misfortune, adversity and times of danger ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 177). In this verse, ‘danger’ means a time of war, and the time of war could be long. The True Lord *the Most High* then says: ‘... having on earth your abode and livelihood for a while’ (*al-A’raf*: 24). Hence, the meaning of *Al-heen* in this verse is the unknown period of time which extends until the earth is replaced and is no longer the earth we know, and the sky unlike the sky we have. So, there is no set time with which we can define the meaning of *Al-heen*.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* follows this sacred verse which we are about to reflect upon with His Words: ‘... Allah sets forth such parables for people so that they may reflect.’ (*Ibrahim*: 25) The meaning of setting forth a parable is to strike the example of a small thing to indicate something which is great or to manifest something to bring to light that which is a mystery or to bring closer the meanings of things to one’s first means of consciousness and comprehension, which are the sensory channels including your hearing, eyesight

and the rest of the senses. When the meanings which are commensurate with the mind's ambition are brought forth, man transcends the stage of sensation to intellectual knowledge. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* brings it closer by setting forth parables which communicate to us the meanings that are necessary for our understanding.

Allah *the Exalted* does not shy away—as He says—to set forth a parable of a gnat and that which is above it. Some orientalisks have said, 'Why did He not say "that which is below it"?' We say to those who say that: you have not understood the Arabic language, so you have not been able to receive the Quran with the ownership of Arabic. For a parable is set forth with that which is minute, and what is 'above the minute' is the more minute.

The True Lord *the Most High* sets forth a parable to us of the life of this world. It is the life for which Allah created human beings, but there were other species before man. Allah clarifies for us, with the parable, that which concerns life from the moment of Adam's creation till the coming of the Hour. So, He encapsulates it—this long and wide ranging life which consists of the lifetimes of generations—and presents it to us in an image like a summary, and He says to us: 'And set forth to them parable of the life of this world: like water which We send down from the cloud so the herbage of the earth becomes tangled on account of it, then it becomes dry broken into pieces which the winds scatter; and Allah is the holder of power over all things.' (*al-Kahf*: 45) In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* summarised the likeness of life in this parable. The descending water revitalises plants, which are then blown away by the wind.

Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'Know (O mankind) that the life of this world is but a play and a passing delight, and a beautiful show, and (the cause of) your boastful vying with one another, and (of your) greed for more and more riches and children. Its parable is that of (life-giving) rain: the herbage which it causes to grow delights the tillers of the soil, but then it withers; you can see it turn yellow, and in the end, it crumbles into dust.' (*al-Hadid*: 20) Thus, Allah *the Almighty* gave an example of the deep and far reach of life in this simple parable so that we may see the subtle meanings of it in an image that we can grasp with our senses. Our simple minds may then be able to comprehend what Allah *the Exalted* wishes from us.

We know that we need our senses to grasp certain concepts first before they are elevated to the degree of imagination and conception. Thus, these are the stages through which we can comprehend subtle ideas. The first stage is the sensation *Al-hiss*, the second is the imagination *At-takhayul* and the third is the phantasm of fantasies *At-tawahum*.

Imagination is to draw together a complete image that does not exist externally, even if it was based on elements that do exist externally. An example of this is the words of the Arab poet who wanted to describe the inscription on the skin of his beloved woman's hand. He said:

Like pearls her fingertips were,
Amidst the design of interlocking rings
Fish of crystals that exist,
In nets of emerald woven

If anyone was to search for the image presented by these verses of poetry, he would not find it in reality. However, the poet created it from distinctive elements and meanings that are available for the mind to perceive. Fish, crystals, nets, and emeralds are all existing objects and elements. The poet painted a metaphorical image from things that do exist. This is the type of imagination that brings meanings closer to our understanding.

Conception is different from imagination since it paints an image that does not exist in reality, being formed of individual elements that are also not real. Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Garden (of Eden): 'And there will be found all that the souls might desire, and (all that) the eyes might delight in.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 71) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained this by saying, 'In it (the Garden) is what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard and what has not been imagined in the heart of any person.'⁽¹⁾ The eyes

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2824) of the Hadith of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him of the Prophet may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him who said: "Allah has said: I have prepared for my righteous servants what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what has not occurred to the heart of any person; which is affirmed in the book of Allah: "And [as for all such believers,] no human being can imagine what blissful delights, as yet hidden, await them [in the life to come] as a reward for all that they did," (*as-Sajda*: 17).

and the ears are means for sensory realisation, but that which the heart cannot reach could only be explained by mere conception and fantasy. Thus, we know why Allah *Glorified is He* presented such parables for us. They are to summarise and explain unseen concepts, using things that are closer to our human understanding.

When you want to write to a friend, you might take a piece of paper and pen and start composing a long letter. However, if brevity was of utmost importance, you would work harder and spend a longer time to focus all the meanings in a few words. Sa'd Zaghlul, the leader of the Egyptian revolution in the year 1919, wrote to one of his friends at the end of a five page letter, 'I apologise for having lengthened this letter, for I had no time to be succinct.' The reason for this is that to summarise means to force many meanings into a few words.

When one of the Muslim army generals asked for military help from Khalid ibn Al-Walid *Allah be pleased with him* after being besieged, he sent a message with only a few words, 'It is your help I need!' In these few words, the besieged general summarised what he wanted to communicate, to whoever might help him, with great conciseness.

An Arab poet once said:

When Allah wants the propagation of a virtue (that) was lost,
He enforces its reprisal through a person's envious tongue.
(For) if it were not for the burning of the fire,
The scent of incense would not be known.

This means that if a dormant virtue is forgotten by the people, Allah *the Exalted* allows the envious tongues of human beings to gossip speculate and disparage it so that it can become clear and manifest. This is similar to placing a stick of incense in the fire, thereby diffusing its scent among the people. So, the poet used this parable to clarify a matter for the reader or listener.

Another Arab poet also said the following verses, presenting another parable:

If a man praises others for their bounties,
And lengthens the praise, he has surely insulted them.
He sees the praised ones as miser watering wells,
To drink from them, they need longer ropes.

Ordinary measures of evaluation tell us that lengthy praises imply honour and nobility. However, when we understand the verses of this poet, our opinions may change by their meaning. The poet posed the concept that a generous drinking well in the desert only needs a short rope for a bucket to get water from it. If the water is at a lower level and the well is stingy, it would require a longer rope out of which to get the water. This means that lengthening the rope indicates the well's emptiness. In the same sense, lengthening praises to a person is, in fact, an expression of their stinginess. It indicates that the person will not give away his favours except after many praises. Had the praised person been truly generous, they would have been satisfied with a word or two of praise, or even less.

Thus, such parables can be used to bring meanings closer to a receiver's mind. In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And (thus it is that) Allah propounds parables unto men, so that they might remind themselves (of the truth),' (*Ibrahim: 25*). To 'remind' someone is to present a fact that they knew naturally, but have forgotten with time. The Quranic parable is brought forth to remind people of issues they had already known.

Thus, Allah *the Exalted* presents this parable of the good word that resembles a fruitful tree. Through this parable, He clarifies the state of righteous people who are in close adherence to His commands. In the next verse, He wants to remind us of the contrasting state of the evildoers who have opposed Allah's Way. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَثَلُ كَلِمَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ كَشَجَرَةٍ خَبِيثَةٍ اجْتُثَّتْ مِنْ فَوْقِ الْأَرْضِ مَا لَهَا مِنْ قَرَارٍ ﴿٢٦﴾

**But an evil word is like a rotten tree, uprooted from the
surface of the earth, with no power to endure [26]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim: 26*)**

If we were to compare the corrupt word with the good word, we will discover a startling contrast. The corrupt word resembles a tree that is 'torn up (with its roots).' The Arabic word used is *ujtuthat*, which is related to the word *juttha*, meaning carcass or a body which has been separated from its soul. Later, the carcass becomes debris and disintegrates to its most basic primary elements.

Thus, the process of *ijtithath* is the uprooting of something from its origin and tearing it up by its roots. In the case of the good tree, its foundation is strong and unaltered by any circumstance or event. On the other hand, a corrupt word, like a corrupt tree, has no roots and resembles a carcass on the face of the earth, with no foundation to anchor it steadfastly.

When scholars were interpreting the meaning of the verse describing the good tree, some of them said that it was the palm tree since it is a bountiful tree and its leaves do not fall. It always remains as a source of shade and all its elements provide benefits. For example, we can use the branches of the palm tree to make pillars for village homes. We can shape chairs from its fronds and use the fibres between its branches to weave ropes. We can also use the straw to make baskets.

Some scholars mistakenly interpreted the verse of 'the corrupt tree' to refer to the colocynth or the *figor the Kurrat* tree (Egyptian leek). Regarding all of these interpretations, we say that Allah *the Almighty* has created these trees to be beneficial according to the situation in which we need them. When you look at the universe, you find that its items have varying natures. The basic elements of life are not just food and drink, but include the elements that keep the environmental balance that Allah *Glorified is He* has designed. He has the most sublime knowledge of what He created. Allah *the Exalted* has not created anything but good.

Furthermore, everything in this universe provides a continuous stream of benefits that radiates into the world. For example, the falling of leaves brings about fertility to the earth once again. These are all things that are manifested to us long after they had been created by Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *the Most High* raises some people and abases other people. He is the One Who says of His Essence: '(And) every day He manifests Himself in yet another (wondrous) way.' (*ar-Rahman*: 29)

Different geographical locations have different days with varied beginnings and endings. Thus, we can observe closely the words of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, 'Surely, Allah extends His forgiveness by night, offering repentance for the sinner of the day, and expands His forgiveness by daytime, offering repentance for the sinner of the night, until the rising of the

sun from the West.⁽¹⁾ The meaning of this is that the Allah's Forgiveness is always extended for his servants since night starts at every minute for some people, and daytime starts at the same moment for other people. The birth of night and day is continuous as the earth revolves around itself.

In the same manner, we must never consider the garlic tree, the colocynth tree or any other tree in Allah's creation as a corrupt tree, for His creation has no faults. When we find a young man moulding a piece of iron, only an uninformed mind might think that this is misuse and corruption. A reasonable person would deduce that bending the iron will help manufacture a tool of benefit.

The best of all good words is the testimony that there is no god but Allah *Glorified is He* and that Muhammad is His Messenger. This testimony drives all righteousness. Accordingly, the most corrupt of words is the denial of this testimony, disbelieving in its principals and being obstinate against the Way of Allah *Glorified is He* and Prophet Muhammad's miracles.

One might say that since Allah *the Almighty* has described a corrupt tree, such a tree must exist. We say that any object that causes harm to a person at any given moment is corrupt at that moment. Excess sugar, for example, can damage the health of a diabetic person. Thus, every form of creation has virtues that are beneficial in certain circumstances and harmful in others. It rests upon man to discern that which is harmful and that which is beneficial concerning different situations.

In Allah's description of what a corrupt word resembles, He did not say that this corrupt tree has any branches leading to the sky. The tree is torn up from the ground, with no roots to form any foundation or anchor in the ground and no branches to reach the guidance of the sky. Allah *Glorified is He* described it as: 'completely unable to endure,' (*Ibrahim*: 26). This means that it has no stability or fortitude. Such is the state of disbelief in Allah *Glorified is He* for whoever denies Him will have no rising good works, as there are no foundations for virtue in his efforts.

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2759) from the Hadith of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari may Allah be pleased with him

Thus, the corrupt word has been described with three characteristics. Firstly, it is essentially harmful and malicious. Secondly, it is unstable and has no foundations. Thirdly, it has no endurance or fortitude due to its shaky grounds. Then Allah *the Most High* clarifies the results of both types of words. The words of virtue and good will lead to peace and security in this life and in the Hereafter. The words of evil and malice will lead to oppression, misguidance, anxiety, and hardship in this world. Then, in the Hereafter, they will be faced with grievous suffering.

Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

يُثَبِّتُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِالْقَوْلِ الثَّابِتِ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
وَفِي الْآخِرَةِ وَيُضِلُّ اللَّهُ الظَّالِمِينَ وَيَفْعَلُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ ﴿٢٧﴾

Allah will give firmness to those who believe in the firmly rooted word, both in this world and the Hereafter, but the evildoers He leaves to stray: God does whatever He will [27]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim: 27*)

In this verse, the Arabic word *yuthabit* (strengthens) is a natural description of a believer's sincere speech, especially after the last verse describes the contrasting and opposing traits of falsehood: 'Torn up (by its roots) from the face of the earth, completely unable to endure.' (*Ibrahim: 26*) The word 'strengthens' also implies that man is prone to change. People are under the effect of varying circumstances, events, and decisions that may influence them in choosing a correct judgment or overturning it. When Allah *the Almighty* commands his servant to uphold a certain judgment, the servant may implement Allah's command or he may disobey.

Additionally, a responsible servant may find himself in a situation where a fellow human opposes Allah's directives. Some fellow humans may even harm a servant who follows His command. Here, a faithful servant must trust that Allah *the Almighty* will not let him down in the face of such circumstances and that he will emerge victorious, whether sooner or later.

In this way, the changes and varying events will not control a believer's choices, confirming the Words of Allah *Glorified is He* in this verse: 'Allah

strengthens (*yuthabit*) the believers with unshakable speech.' (*Ibrahim*: 27) Indeed, they have believed in His Existence and Power, and furthermore, He will strengthen them and grant them stability in the face of turmoil. This is due to the fact that a believer knows with certainty what Allah *Glorified is He* has said and affirmed: 'Verily, (people's) hearts do find their rest in the remembrance of Allah,' (*ar-Ra'd*: 28). As long as a believer sets his heart firm with faith and unwavering speech, he will not be susceptible to deflection from the true path.

Naturally, the magnitude of the firmness depends on the source of the firmness and stability. When a pillar in a house becomes unstable, the owner of the house may ask an engineer to work on supporting the pillar, instead of asking an inexperienced person to carry out the job. The engineer will indeed guarantee greater strength and stability to the work. What do you think, then, about the stability and firmness that the Creator of man can grant?

Furthermore, Allah's Words, 'Allah strengthens (*yuthabit*) believers.' (*Ibrahim*: 27), bring us back to Him, the Source of all stability Who is not affected by any defects. The conclusion is that man is prone to change. He can be afflicted by misfortunes that are not in line with what he wants in life. Thus, a believer must not lose heart since his Lord *Glorified is He* is grasped by no sight while He grasps all insight. Allah *Glorified is He* strengthens believers with unshakable Words. These Words are firm because they emanate from unchanging Truth. They strengthen believers who are faced with harm from disbelievers who have chosen to disobey Allah's Way.

This verse made it clear that believers should necessarily be calm in life by leaving themselves in the company and care of Allah *the Most High* at all times. If oppressors learn about the compensatory rewards that Allah has prepared for the oppressed, they would indeed withhold their transgressions towards the oppressed people out of stinginess. They would probably stop their transgressions when they think, 'Why should we allow them all this reward that is prepared for their patience?' Indeed, many believers who have been persecuted for their faith endured the torture of the disbelievers and did not lose their certainty in Allah's reward. When disbelievers tortured them, they remembered the Gentleness of Allah's compensation and endured the afflictions with perseverance.

Allah's compensation can actually be eminent in this world or it can be fulfilled in the Hereafter. Believers are strengthened by Allah's Will in this world, a world that is characterised by change and needs constant effort. You need to work hard in it in order to achieve its benefits. People strive to learn, to find jobs, to get married and to form families. You need to serve other people to be served by them and you fulfil your needs through others. In this world, you can only reap the fruits of your labour. Every luxury that you acquire is the result of serious effort on your part, despite people trying to reduce their efforts while increasing their pleasures.

The Hereafter is different. Its efforts are free of charge and need no physical cause. Everything in it has been divinely prepared for mankind in advance. Believers will be compensated with constant pleasures in a garden that is as wide as the heavens and the earth and that contains all that their souls could desire. Others will be punished for their disbelief and sins with grave punishments.

If Allah *Glorified is He* strengthens believers in this world with firm and unshakable Words, He will indeed strengthen them in the Hereafter by providing them these effortless pleasures. We find that Allah *the Almighty* does not mention the Hereafter in this verse, rather, He says: '... in the life of this world as well as in the life to come,' (*Ibrahim: 27*). This is because the aspirations and ambitions in this life are related to the efforts exerted in it, but this matter is entirely different in the life to come. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who compensates people according to His Divine Will. He strengthens believers during the questioning in the grave and continues strengthening them until they are finally granted compensation for the good they did in His Divine Way.

After Allah mentioned the good reward for believers, He brought forth in this verse the opposite reward for disbelievers. He says: 'But the wrongdoers He lets go astray, ⁽¹⁾ for Allah does whatever He wills,' (*Ibrahim: 27*). Allah *the Exalted* has given man the ability to choose. Then, he leads the wrongdoer

(1) *Allah will let them go astray, from being able to answer the questioning in their graves, just as they were astray in this world due to their disbelief and did not comprehend the word of truth. So, if they are asked in their graves about their beliefs, they will answer, 'We do not know.' So it will be said to them, 'You have neither known nor followed the path.' At this point, they will be punished, as the narrations have narrated to us. (Al-Qurtubi's Tafsir) 3702/5]*

astray because he chooses to do that which is wrong. Thus, those who chose to do this evil must be punished.

Allah *Glorified is He* created mankind and rendered the universe at their disposal. Then, He provided believers and disbelievers ongoing bounties from His Lordship. Disbelievers choose the wrong path and do not carry out Divine directives sent down by Allah *the Almighty* as doctrines for the guidance of people.

Furthermore, disbelievers transgress against themselves. Since they are inclined towards disbelief, despite being allowed the choice to the good path, Allah places a seal upon their hearts, so that disbelief does not leave their hearts and faith does not enter them. Allah *Glorified is He* is the Lord of the worlds and He does what He wills.

Thus, since Allah *Glorified is He* gives every person his basic desires, if the disbeliever desires to be a disbeliever, Allah will extend the causes of his disbelief and will punish him later with these causes. In the same way, Allah *the Most High* extends to a believer the causes of faith, as in Allah's Words: 'All (of them) – these people as well as those people – do We freely endow from your Lord's bounties, since your Lord's giving is never confined (to one kind of people),' (*al-Isra*': 20). Thus is the vastness of Allah's Will and He does what He wills. This is due to there being no other deity than Him *Glorified is He*.

Allah has honoured us with servitude towards Him only, as we have all seen and witnessed the effects of servitude of man to another man. In mankind's servitude, a master seizes the good of a slave, and mankind has indeed tasted much of its afflictions. However, servitude to Allah *Glorified is He* differs completely, where the slave is the one who seizes the good of his Master. He gives His bounties abundantly upon His servants, Allah *Glorified is He* and then said:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَى الَّذِينَ بَدَّلُوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ كُفْرًا وَأَحَلُّوا قَوْمَهُمْ دَارَ الْبَوَارِ

[Prophet], do you not see those who, in exchange for God's favour, offer only ingratitude and make their people end up in the home of ruin, Hell [28] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 28)

When a verse in the Quran starts with the question, 'Do you not see...?' (*Ibrahim*: 28), this indicates how Allah's Words have higher truth than what

we see with our eyes. This verse shows the contrast between the disbelievers' acknowledgment of the blessings they have and their subsequent denial of these blessings. Their response to His endless bounties is disbelief. Allah *Glorified is He* said in another verse: 'Would you take a lesser thing in exchange for what is (so much) better,' (*al-Baqara*: 61)?

Before your age of adulthood, Allah *the Most High* has given you His blessings without requiring any obligations of faith from you. Thus, we find that blessedness is the original state, while the responsibilities of faith are only subsequently assigned. Thus, the servant should not transgress against Allah *Glorified is He* Who has provided him with every blessing. Instead, a servant is obligated to approach Allah's Commands with love so that he does not return Allah's Blessings with acts of disbelief.

The verse could be referring to the people of Quraysh whom Allah *the Exalted* had granted many blessings and had provided security for their sanctuary. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Have We not established for them a sanctuary secure, to which, as a provision from Us, shall be gathered the fruits of all (good) things? But most of them are unaware (of this truth),' (*al-Qasas*: 57). He also blessed them by making Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* (the final Prophet) one of them. He is the Prophet whose commandments will reach the whole world in every place and time, so why would they exchange such a blessing for disbelief? Was such a blessing not enough to be met with the deepest of gratitude and most virtuous servitude to Allah *Glorified is He*? Allah had said of Prophet Muhammad's message: 'and, verily, this (revelation) shall indeed become (a source of) eminence for you and your people, but in time you all will be called to account (for what you have done with it),' (*az-Zukhruf*: 44).

He is also the One Who Says of His blessings upon them: 'So that (the tribe of) Quraysh might remain constantly secure in their winter and summer journeys. Let them, therefore, worship the Lord of this Temple, Who has given them food against hunger and made them safe from fear,' (*Quraysh*: 1-4). How then, can they respond to the blessings of Allah *the Almighty* with disbelief? How could they mistreat Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his companions, to the point that Prophet Muhammad would pray: 'O,

Allah, make their years difficult like the (famine) years of Yusuf (Joseph).⁽¹⁾ He also had fought them in the Battle of Badr. They brought this upon themselves due to their disbelief. Why did they accept Allah's Provisions and Blessings upon them while refusing His Doctrine?

If they had been sincere with themselves and true to their beliefs, they would have asked their idols to provide for them or refused the provisions of Allah *the Almighty* after refusing His Doctrine. Allah *Glorified is He* had blessed them with material support and then added His commandments as a source for spiritual support.

In the Words of Allah *Glorified is He* 'and (thereby) made their people settle (*ahalu*) in the abode of utter desolation (*dar al-bawar*),' (*Ibrahim*: 28) we understand the Arabic word *ahalu* to come from the word *ihlal* which means to 'settle' in a place of residence. We know that this condition (of *ihlal*) can be divided into two parts. The first is the condition of place and the second is the condition of time. In the first condition, you can 'settle' an event in the place of another event. In the second condition, you 'settle' an object in the place of another object.

In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and (thereby) made their people settle (*ahalu*) in the abode of utter desolation,' (*Ibrahim*: 28). This means that the condition of concern is a condition of place.

A question might be posed, 'How can they take their people to settle in an abode of utter desolation?' We say that this has happened as a result of their trickery and deceit of their people. On the other hand, their people did not utilise their reason and did not realise that their leaders and authorities were adopting reprehensive ways that they should not emulate. Thus, these authorities dragged them into a series of offenses until the crimes and misdeeds overwhelmed and engulfed their hearts. It was due to this that Allah *the Almighty* wanted for the community of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to have

(1) Narrated by Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him that the Prophet Muhammad, may peace and blessings be upon him, used to say, when he raised his head in the last prayer unit, "O Allah, strengthen Your stranglehold upon Muḍar. O Allah, make their years (difficult) like the years of Yusuf (Joseph)." This Hadith was published by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (1006) and by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (470/2, 502, 521).

certain immunities against such temptations into misdeeds. Thus, the reproaching and righteous self-orders a believer to increase his good deeds and to annul his bad deeds. However, when the blaming self turns into a self that commands the mind with sinful acts, someone in the wide Muslim community should denounce its actions. In this way, the community of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is protected against schemes that remove faith from hearts. Allah *Glorified is He* said about the community of Muslims: 'You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for (the good of) mankind. You enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong,' (*Al- 'Imran*: 110).

Allah *the Exalted* also reminded us that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will be our witness and that we will be witnesses over other people. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* obligated each one from the community of Prophet Muhammad to have a portion of that knowledge so that he may become an extension of Prophet Muhammad's message. Furthermore, just as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* testified that he has delivered the message, it will be incumbent upon every one of his community to testify that he has delivered what he knows of his message.

We have all learnt that the first misguidance took place through blind imitation. Indeed, the role models within society fell into temptations and were overwhelmed by sin. When their inner selves forgot Divine Guidance, they committed sin. When people saw their role models committing sin, they imitated them. Thus, the forgetful role models carried their own burdens as well as the sins of the ones who followed them through imitation. They were led astray and carried the burden of those who followed the wrong path. Thus, the verse means that disbelievers will lead their people to settle in a desolate state. *Dar al-bawar* means 'the place of utter desolation'. This means that when the elders of societies behave in opposition with Allah's Doctrine, they leave their followers an inheritance of sheer despair. In conversational Arabic, we describe a field that is no longer suitable for cultivation as a field that has become '*buur*'. When it is said, 'We have rendered the land *buur*' it means 'We have destroyed its greenery and made it barren.'

In addition, when we read the Words of Allah *Glorified is He* 'And (thereby) invited their people to settle in the abode of utter desolation,' (*Ibrahim*: 28),

we find in the phrase ‘their people’ an indication of these disbelievers’ treachery and contemptible behaviour. Whoever brings forth devastation upon their people must be treacherous and skilled in deceit and lowliness. The phrase ‘their people’ indicates that these disbelievers were cheating those they were living with, instead of protecting them from evil, deception and trickery, Allah *Glorified is He* then describes this abode of utter desolation by saying:

جَهَنَّمَ يَصْلَوْنَهَا وَيُنْسِقُونَ الْقَرَارُ ﴿٢٩﴾

**Where they burn? What an evil place to stay! [29]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 29)**

We would not find anyone who would desire hellfire as a place of settlement. People desire to settle in places of comfort and leave any place that does not provide them with it. Hellfire, which they will have to endure, will not be a place of comfort; rather, it will be an abode of established suffering. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* described it as: 'and how vile a state (it is) to settle in!' (*Ibrahim*: 29)

It is as though they are held in hellfire with hooked chains from which they are unable to escape. Hellfire will torment them, as if asking: 'Is there yet more (evil-doers) (for me) (to punish)?' (*Qaf*: 30) It is as if they have longed for hellfire, thus it longed for them. If they had a way to escape from it, they would have, but they are bound to it and it is the vilest of settlements. None can escape this torment except that whom Allah wills. Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

وَجَعَلُوا لِلَّهِ أَنْدَادًا لِيُضِلُّوهُ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ قُلْ تَمَتَّعُوا فَإِنَّ مَصِيرَكُمْ إِلَى النَّارِ ﴿٣٠﴾

**They set up [false deities] as God's equals to lead people
astray from His path. Say, 'Take your pleasure now, for your
destination is the Fire' [30] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 30)**

A rival is that which is similar or has identical authority with its equal. Thus, they ascribed associates to Allah *Glorified is He* in worship. Any associate they had claimed neither informed them of any blessings nor offered them a clear way of living. These associates were idols, trees, the sun, the moon, or

the stars. Did any of these created beings clarify to the pagans why they should worship it? Furthermore, we know that worship requires the institution of commandments and prohibitions. None of these associates they had claimed ever brought forth commandments they may follow, any reward for their worship or any punishment for their disobedience. Thus, we find that such pagans gravitated to worshipping these idols because they did not bring forth any doctrine for them to which they adhere.

In a similar fashion, we find charlatans who claim that they had seen Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while they act in arrogant ways that differ from his teachings. These impostors even try to elevate their own status above other created beings. May Allah *the Almighty* grant us refuge from them.

The stranger aspect is that we find some intellectuals following these impostors, while simple people may show better instincts in staying away from them. It is more often that the simpler and purer souls adhere to living in a state of purer faith. On the other hand, the entangled souls that want an easier path in life, away from Allah's commandments, may follow the impostors who dilute the pure directives of religion. In this way, these followers make these impostors rivals to Allah *the Exalted* as they follow their path instead of Allah's commandments and are led astray from faith in this manner.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse: 'they had claimed that there are partners that could rival Allah, to misguide (people) (*le-yudilu*) from His Path,' (*Ibrahim*: 28). This verse means that they lead others astray from Allah's Path. In this case, the Arabic letter 'li' is known as *lamul-ta'leeliya* (an explanatory *lam*) which is used to indicate the reasons for a verb. In this case, the verb is the disbelievers misguiding their people.

There is also another Arabic pronunciation for this same verse: 'They had claimed that there are partners that could rival Allah and to misguide (*li-yadilu*) from His Path.' This pronunciation means that disbelievers themselves were being misled from Allah's Path. In this case, the Arabic letter 'li' is known as *lamul-'aqiba*, which is used to indicate that its verb is a consequence of the former sentence. In this case, when they claimed other partners with Allah *the Almighty* they were becoming misguided from His Path.

According to the second pronunciation, is it possible for these disbelievers to voluntarily mislead themselves? In essence, they assumed that they were on the right path. However, some actions are not desired by their doers, as in the case of Pharaoh who pulled Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* out of the water so he can make him his son. In this case, Allah *Glorified is He* had willed it that Prophet Musa (Moses) will later become Pharaoh's enemy. This was to prove to Pharaoh that he is unable to control any events, even though he claimed divinity and slaughtered male children of Israel. He rescued Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* from the water assuming that he would become a source of joy for him, but Musa (Moses) grew up to become his enemy. Thus, not all actions have desired consequences for their doers!

Allah *Glorified is He* then follows this verse: 'Say (O Muhammad to the disbelievers), 'Enjoy yourselves (in this world), but, verily, the Fire will be your journey's end!' (*Ibrahim: 30*) This is a commandment from Allah *the Exalted* to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to tell believers: 'Enjoy yourselves,' (*Ibrahim: 30*). This is a commandment from Allah *the Almighty*. Does this mean that if disbelievers enjoyed themselves according to this command that would be obedience to Allah's orders? This command was only meant to mock the disbelievers' short sight since Allah *Glorified is He* followed the command with the Words: 'Verily, the Fire will be your journey's end!' (*Ibrahim: 30*) Based on that, we deduce that either this command was used to oblige a command, or it was used to repudiate a request in a mocking way.

We find one of the sayings of 'Ali that explains this concept, 'there is no evil in an evil followed by Paradise, and there is no good in a good followed by hellfire.' So, anyone who says that the directives and responsibilities (of faith) are difficult must remember that they will be followed by Paradise. On the other hand, anyone perceiving sins and disbelief as easy matters must know that hellfire is the final point on that path. Do not separate the preludes from the final results.

A father who finds his son constantly studying day and night to build his future may be overly sympathetic towards him. He may even take away the book from his hand and command him to get some rest so that he does not become sick. If his son follows his father's sympathetic commands, he will

become disconnected from the causes of success. Thus, we find that both the father and the son had each perceived the good from different perspectives.

When they hear the Words of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Say, "Enjoy yourselves (in this world), but, verily, the Fire will be your journey's end!"' (*Ibrahim*: 30), they may assume that this grave result will occur only after a long time. They may also assume that, before the journey ends, they will probably find a solution for this problem.

We say that every one of us should remember that a matter which is not bound by a particular timing may come forth suddenly. Does he who lives in sin till he is ninety, think that he will escape the fire? If that is the case, he is surely delusional and deceiving himself. This is due to Allah's concealment of the date of death being the most violent indication of death's critical nature. Then, if the end of this life's journey is in the hellfire, no enjoyment will have come from its pleasures. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ لِعِبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا يُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَيُنْفِقُوا مِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ
سِرًّا وَعَلَانِيَةً مِّن قَبْلِ أَن يَأْتِيَ يَوْمٌ لَا بَيْعٌ فِيهِ وَلَا خِلَالٌ ﴿٣١﴾

Tell My servants who have believed to keep up the prayer and give, secretly and in public, out of what We have provided them, before a Day comes when there will be no trading or friendship [31] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 31)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* has ordered Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to inform His servants of specific commandments. Does this mean that all those servants who will hear these commandments will perform the due prayers? Some of them have actually heard it and did not perform these prayers.

Those who will adherently follow these commandments are the ones who fulfilled the condition of faith. Thus, we must look at the elements of the Words, 'My servants,' for the servants of Allah *the Almighty* who have believed will express their faith through obedience. This is how we understand the meanings of the Quranic phrases so that their meanings are aligned with their forms.

That being said, we know that all the creation of Allah *Glorified is He* are His servants. This is due to the fact that there are many decrees that Allah has desired in the way of their creation that his created beings have no control over. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* has subjugated them in certain ways, along with giving them autonomy in others.

Those who are rebelling against belief in Allah *Glorified is He* have the ability to rebel only with their minds. Their own physiological natures refused to rebel against Allah's laws. If these disbelievers are really sincere with their disbelief, they should similarly rebel against breathing, for it is something that is out of their control. They should rebel, if they can, against disease and the timing of their deaths. Indeed, they will never be able to.

Therefore, they have only rebelled against the divine laws that they have a choice in disobeying. They forgot that Allah *Glorified is He* wants them to follow His way.

If a believer chooses to follow the way of Allah *Glorified is He*, he becomes one of Allah's righteous servants, but if he does not willingly obey Allah's commandments, then he becomes one of Allah's subjugated servants, who are still dominated by the physical commandments of Allah *Glorified is He* which they have no choice in disobeying.

When you look at the Arabic words that are used to indicate the meaning 'servant' in the Quran, you will find the words '*ibad*' and '*abeed*'. Allah *Glorified is He* said in one verse: 'For (true) servants (*'ibad*) of the Most Gracious are (only) they who walk gently on earth, and who, whenever the foolish address them, reply with (words of) peace.' (*al-Furqan*: 63) In this verse the characteristics of the '*ibad*' (true servants) who choose to follow the way of Allah *Glorified is He* are numerous.

In the verses of the Quran, you will find that the word '*abeed*' is only used to describe those servants who have rebelled against Allah's Way, except in one verse where the disobedient servants are also described as '*ibad*'. In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* is informing us of his speech to those who have lead people astray on the Day of Judgment. He will say to them: 'Was it you who led My servants (*'ibady*) astray, or did they by themselves stray from the

Right Path?' (*al-Furqan*: 17) As we mentioned, notice that the timing of this dialogue is in the Last Day, when no one will have any other chance to disobey Allah's commands.

Thus, no one can deny that the word '*ibad*' is only used in describing those who have chosen to serve Allah *the Exalted* by obeying His Way in this world. These servants have truly submitted the reins of their will to Allah *Glorified is He* and obeyed His commandments and prohibitions.

We can also notice that the Words of this verse are commandments from Allah *the Almighty* that are to be immediately followed by believing servants" '(And) tell (those of) My servants who have believed, to be constant in prayer (*yuqeemu*) and to spend (in Our way), secretly and openly,' (*Ibrahim*: 31). The believers are awaiting these commandments to obey them immediately especially since they love obeying Allah's commands.

It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is telling Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'So long as you have conveyed this commandment, they will carry it out immediately.' Allah *the Most High* has brought forth the word *yuqeemu* ('to be constant in prayer') without the commanding prefix '*le*' (as it is usually used as '*le-yuqeemu*'). This affirms the idea that the true believers will rush to carry out the command as soon as they hear it.

We usually find that establishing prayers and dispensing the alms of charity are commanded together in many Quranic verses. This is because the establishment of prayers requires energy and demands fuel. The fuel requires motion and demands time. Giving alms also utilises some of the fruits of labour that have been gathered over time. We find that those who are lazy in performing their prayers say, 'Work takes up all of our time and so we combine all of our obligatory prayers at the end of the day.' Thus, they carry them all out tardily as though they had missed them. They do not realise that when each obligatory prayer is carried out in its appointed time, it will not actually take as much time as they perceived it would.

Furthermore, while it may seem that the performance of prayers slightly reduces the time available for fruits of our labour, the reality is that it provides a surge and energy that prompts the self to work more scrupulously. A person

who maintains their prayers (in their appointed time) will approach his work with a contented soul because, in their prayer, he stands in the presence of Allah *Glorified is He* Who has created him, provided for him and supported him. Thus, they leave their prayers feeling calm, serene, alert, and contented. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say to Billal *Allah be pleased with him* his appointed caller for prayer: 'Revive us with it, O, Billal.'⁽¹⁾

In addition, the obligatory prayers and their ablutions do not take more than fifteen minutes. If you were to evaluate the time needed for all the obligatory prayers in relation to the time you allocate for work, you would find that it only takes up a small portion of time and that it gives you more benefits than the time it takes.

Such is also the case of the giving of alms which might take up some of your time to give to those who are needy. However, it will give the entire society incomparable social security.

Thus, you will find that prayers are linked to the giving of alms in the verses of the Quran, for the performance of prayers is the accumulation of all virtues, while the giving of alms is the accumulation of all physical efforts.

Therefore, prayers cure one ailment, while the giving of alms cures another. Both acts of worship improve the essence of man, thereby serving the soul and its components as well as the body and its components. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'the comfort of my soul has been bestowed (upon my eyes) in praying.'⁽²⁾

When you look at the acts of praying and the giving of alms in charity, you will find that they gather all the benefits of this life and its branches.

(1) Published by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (364/5), and Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* (49850), as narrated by one of the companions of Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him*.

(2) Published by Ahmad in his *Masnad* (128/3, 199, 285), and an-Nisa'i in his *Sunnan* (61/7) and Al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak* (160/2) from the Hadith of Anas ibn Malik *may Allah be pleased with him*. Al-Hakim says: "This Hadith is accurate on the condition of Muslim and they did not publish it, and Adh-Dhabai agreed with him, and its totality is that Prophet Muhammad *may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him* said: "It has been made beloved to me in this world: women, perfume and the comfort of my eyes has been bestowed in praying."

These benefits of life have been summarised by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the five pillars of Islam. They are the following: the testimony that there is no deity but Allah *Glorified is He* and that Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, the performance of prayers, the giving of alms, the fasting of Ramadan and the performance of the pilgrimage to the Sacred House, for those who are able to take such a journey⁽¹⁾.

We have come to learn how prayers have combined all of these pillars in a smaller time, as it contains the testimony that there is no deity but Allah *Glorified is He*. It also entails the sacrifice and purification of time as well as fasting from all that you would uphold while fasting. In addition, you face the direction of the Sacred House of Allah during prayers. Thus, we see how the motions of life and its beneficial virtues are linked to prayer and the giving of alms.

Allah *the Almighty* also commanded us in this noble verse to spend of our wealth secretly and publicly. With such directives, Allah *the Exalted* is spreading the habit of giving in two opposing methods. Giving in secret is essential to prevent us from falling prey to boastfulness, while giving publicly allows some people to serve as positive role models for others who are able to give. It also prevents others from talking about one's wealth in envy or jealousy towards Allah's bounties and provisions.

Thus, I recommend that you make your voluntary charity discrete in secrecy. Give it away as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has described: 'So that your left (hand) knows not what your right hand has given.'⁽²⁾ Then,

(1) Published by Muslim in his *Sahih* (16) the book of faith, and Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (8), from the Hadith of Ibn 'Umar may Allah be pleased with them.

(2) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (1031), from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra, as part of the Hadith where Prophet Muhammad may the peace and the blessings of Allah be upon him said: "(There are) seven people who are Shaded under the Shade of Allah on the Day in which there is no shade but His Shade. (These are) the just ruler, a young man who has been brought up in the worship of Allah, a man whose heart is attached to the mosques, two persons who love each other only for Allah's sake, and they meet and part in Allah's Cause only, a man who refuses the advances of a beautiful and rich woman (refusing illicit relations with her) while saying, 'Indeed I fear Allah,' a man who gives charity so discreetly to the extent that his left hand does not know what his right hand has given and a man who remembers Allah while alone and his eyes overflow with tears."

make your giving of obligatory alms public, so that people know that you fulfil the rights of Allah *Glorified is He* upon you and you can become a role model for them.

Make the pillars of Islam behavioural sermons to others. Indeed, we see that in some villages and towns, no one comes forth to perform the pilgrimage because those who are eligible to perform it have already carried out this obligatory act. On the other hand, we find that a person who is financially able to build a mosque provides others who are financially able with model behaviour to build other mosques. Similarly, in *Ramadan* those who are able to fast serve as role models for their children. Thus, we make all the responsibilities of Islam public and clear before all society.

We learn from this verse, that there are acts which one can postpone, while other acts of worship have no substitutes. Thus, one must seize every opportunity to implement them immediately. This is due to the fact that the Last Day will allow no bargaining to happen between people. No one will be able to give alms or pray, and there is no friendship or intercession which can make up for what you should have done during this worldly life.

Indeed, intercession on the Last Day will only be for whom the Merciful has given permission.⁽¹⁾ Thus, the commandment in this verse orders us to perform our prayers and give our alms discretely and publicly, before the Day comes in which there is neither bargaining nor friendly favours.

Bargains are transaction of exchange. One person pays a price, while the seller gives the product. Befriending is to support one another in times of distress. In this world, loyal friends can rely upon one another and be relied upon.

A poem clarifies the meaning of the word ‘friend’ when he says:

(1) Allah said: “On that Day, intercession shall be of no avail (to any) save him in whose case the Most Gracious will have granted leave thereon, and whose word [of faith] He will have accepted,” (*Ta Ha*: 109). Allah also said: “And, before Him, intercession can be of no avail [to any] except one in whose case He may have granted leave (thereon)...,” (*Saba*: 23). Intercession is a truth affirmed by the text of the Quran, on the condition of a permission being given by Allah to the intercessor to intercede, and permission to the one who was interceded for, based on Allah’s knowledge of him. However, intercession is denied for the disbelievers and the hypocrites.

When we met, longing grew in its intensity,
Two friends mutual in need and blame
As if each friend dissolved in friendship,
Seeping through the embraces into one person

This clarifies that friendship gives an indication of unity. On the Last Day, you will not be able to buy yourself a place in paradise nor save yourself from hellfire. There is no friendship in which a friend may give his good deeds to save you.

Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who says: 'on that Day, (all) friends will be enemies unto one another – (all) except the (friends who were) pious,' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67). Some people with superficial understanding may want to make a case against the Quran claiming that it proved friendship then denied it. In the verse we are currently examining, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'When there will be no bargaining, and no friendly gestures,' (*Ibrahim*: 31). Another verse also said: 'and no friendship,' (*al-Baqara*: 254). Then, the Quran told us that the only friendship that will be true is that of the pious people. These are the people who did not embellish the sins of one another.

If we reflect upon the Quran's verses closely, we will understand that the friendships that are denied on the Last Day are those that had lead into sins and misdeeds. Those were indeed wicked friendships that will not last on the Day of Reckoning.

As we mentioned before, bargaining in this life is the external exchange of a product for a price. Friendship, on the other hand, involves apparently generous offerings of favours. However, even in friendships, friendly hearts subtly expect reciprocity, for if someone was to do you a favour, he would require that you return the favour one day. Only pure and righteous generosity has no precondition and expects no compensation.

After Allah *the Exalted* clarifies those who are blessed and those who are evil and propounds the parable of the good word and the parable of the corrupt word, He brought forth a verse that incites great joy in the soul of the believer since a believer has believed in Allah *the Most High* Who has fashioned all of these blessings. In the next verse, Allah *Glorified is He*

mentions the blessings that no partners can be associated with Him, for bestowing. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the next verse:

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً
فَأَخْرَجَ بِهِ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ رِزْقًا لَكُمْ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْفُلْكَ لِتَجْرِيَ
فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الْأَنْهَارَ ﴿٣٢﴾

It is God who created the heavens and earth, who has sent down water from the sky and with it brought forth produce to nourish you; He has made ships useful to you, sailing the sea by His command, and the rivers too [32] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 32)

The heavens and earth are two conditions of life that we all share. Allah *Glorified is He* describes their creation when He says: 'Greater (indeed) than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth,' (*Ghafir*: 57).

In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* describes the creation of the heavens and the earth in their totality. He does not use similar descriptions as in other verses of the Noble Quran. For instance, He does not describe the heaven as being created, 'without support' and that the heaven is 'without any breaks or gaps'. He does not mention in this verse that He creates firm mountains on the earth so that they do not sway and that He bestows blessings on earth and equitably apportioned its means of subsistence. In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* offers but a glance at the creation of the heavens and the earth.

When He speaks in this verse of the creation of the heavens and the earth, He mentions it in relation to something that no one has ever claimed, despite the vast number of those claiming atheism. This is so that it can be more binding of proof for those who are opposing His message. He reveals to them the reality of their disbelief and makes them see that they have disbelieved as a result of intense animosity, unresponsiveness to logic along with their disbelief being without solid reasoning.

When Allah *the Exalted* issues an argument that leaves no objection or opposition, it means that all the reasoning against the argument has submitted to His Glory. Not one of the disbelievers dared to claim against what Allah *the Most High* says. Certainly, no one of them has ever claimed the creation of the

heavens or the earth. They realised that there is no escape from the fact that they were the creation of a Supreme Power.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says: '(And remember that) it is Allah Who has created the heavens and the earth,' (*Ibrahim: 32*), the word 'Allah' in this verse indicates the Higher Power Who commands His creation. These commands assign responsibilities that deter people's harmful whims. Disbelievers may be angry at these commands. However, the truth is that these commands protect humans from one another and provide them with security and moral lives.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* does not use the word 'Lord' since it is an indication of His Bountiful giving to all mankind alike, including disbelievers. The word 'Allah *Glorified is He*' indicates the Powerful Who is worthy of all worship and praise and Who brings forth His commandments and prohibitions. The word indicates that this life that He creates is a life of trials and tribulations. Therefore, He mentions that He created the heavens and the earth and brings down water from the sky.

When we hear the word, 'the heavens', we assume that the heavens are the skies that stand opposite to the earth. However, physical reality affirms that the heavens are all that matter that towers over us.

Rain as we know descends from clouds. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who says: 'Are you not aware that it is Allah Who causes the clouds to move onward, then joins them together, then piles them up in masses, until you can see rain come forth from their midst,' (*an-Nur: 43*)?

We have come to learn from experimental knowledge that a plane, by way of example, flies over the clouds. Thus, rain does not descend from the heavens; it descends from the clouds that rise over us. If we choose to describe the rain as descending from the heavens, we should mean it in the sense of all sustenance coming to us from the heavens.

Thus, you will find that Allah *Glorified is He* describes the iron which is in the mountains and which matures in their core: 'And We bestowed (upon you from on high) iron, in which there is tremendous power⁽¹⁾ as well as (a source

(1) *Ibn Kathir says in his Tafsir about the verse: "...in which there is tremendous power...",* (*al-Hadid: 25*), that it could mean, 'Weaponry such as swords, spears, sharpeners, =

of) benefits for man.' (*al-Hadid*: 25) Therefore, we will find that it has either descended from the skies, as the rain, or that the matter in its makeup has descended from the sky.

Here in this verse which we are reflecting upon, Allah *the Almighty* speaks of the creation of the heavens and the earth and how He sends down water from the clouds: 'And thereby brings forth (all manner) of fruits for your sustenance,' (*Ibrahim*: 32). The fruits are the results of what the earth provides, including vegetation from which we may eat. For example, we eat grapes, but we do not eat the branches of the grape tree; similarly, we eat oranges, but we do not eat the leaves and branches of orange trees.

Allah *Glorified is He* then said: 'And Who has made ships (*fulk*) subservient to you, so that they may sail through the sea at His behest' (*Ibrahim*: 32). To make ships subservient means to make them submissive to the service of another being in creation. Making ships subservient might therefore bring to mind the question, 'How does Allah *Glorified is He* make a ship subservient, when man has constructed it?' The questioners should ask themselves, 'From where do we acquire the woods which we use to form the slabs from which we construct ships? Who rendered the liquid water flowing so that the ships may float upon it? Who governs the winds that drive the sails of a sailing ship?' Indeed, all of this is from the original creation of Allah *the Most High*.

The word *foolk* may be used to indicate the plural or singular of the word ship. An example is found in the verse where Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And in the ships (*foolk*) that speed through the sea with what is useful to man.' (*al-Baqara*: 164) He also said in the story of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*: 'But build, under Our Eyes and according to Our inspiration, the ark (*foolk*)' (*Hud*: 37).

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'and has made the rivers subservient (to His laws, so that they be of use) to you,' (*Ibrahim*: 32). Naturally, we understand that rivers have fresh water, while seas have salt water. Allah *the Almighty* thus,

= ploughshares, armor and such.' The verse that said: "...as well as [a source of] benefits for man," (*al-Hadid*: 25) could be interpreted as meaning, "In their daily lives such as the railway, axe, saw, chisel and other tools which people cannot do without." (*Ibn Kathir's Tafsir* 315/4).

makes all things subservient to us by His command. He is the One Who created the rivers with fresh water. He has made some of these rivers deep enough to allow for the passage of ships, while creating the seas with greater depths. He also creates the forces that allow these ships to float upon the water's surface. All these forces were made subservient by His Commands. He is the One Who says: 'If He so wills, He can make the winds still, and then they (the ships will) lie motionless on the sea's surface.' (*ash-Shura*: 33) Yet, if we read another verse of the Quran, we can see the word *reeh* (wind) being used with another meaning. In the other verse, He says: 'and do not (allow yourselves to) be at variance with one another, so that you do not fail and lose your wind (*reeh*) (strength).' (*al-Anfal*: 46) The word *reehukum* means 'your strength and energy'. Thus, the intended meaning of the word 'wind' regarding ships can also indicate the power and energy that is derived from the wind, steam vapour or other sources of power.

This verse that we are now reflecting upon, comes after Allah *Glorified is He* informs us of the blessed believers who appreciate these blessings from Him and the state of the disbelievers who will live a miserable life. Thus, this verse honours believers for the purity of their chaste nature that has not become blunted and their minds that have pondered the universe. These believers observe this universe thoughtfully and contemplate its outward forms to conclude that there is a Supreme Power, Allah *the Exalted* Who is All-Wise in His Creation.

The verse is also a condemnation of disbelievers who had accepted Allah's Blessings without directing their worship to Him. They have not heard anyone of their idols claiming to have created these blessings for them, nor did they create them themselves. Yet, they stand arrogantly and stubbornly in their disbelief of the Lord of these blessings.

The first of these blessings is the creation of the heavens and earth. Then, if you observe the rest of these blessings, you will find that they came after the creation of the heavens and earth. Some of these blessings are linked to the heavens, such as the clouds, while some are linked to the earth, such as the fruits that it provides. Thus, there is congruence between the first and the second blessings.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Who has made ships subservient to you, so that they may sail through the sea at His behest ...’ (*Ibrahim*: 32). Why has this matter followed the first two? The reason is that ships sail in the seas and take their course through water.

Allah says that He created the heavens and the earth, which contain land and water. The wonderful fact is that water covers an area on the earth that equals three times the area covered by land; therefore, the area of water is much more expansive than the area of land.

Since Allah *the Almighty* says that He has brought forth fruit from the earth as a source of provision for us, there must be a link between that the two points. Since the seas represent three quarters of the earth, they must include benefits for man.

Allah clarifies in other verses that He has subjected the sea to us so that we may acquire tender meat⁽¹⁾ which is considered among the basic necessities of life, and we can extract from it ornaments to wear which are among the elements of luxury in life.

The ships plough through the sea so that we may seek Allah’s bounties. The seas include many benefits other than fish and pearls, but they are mentioned in general. Perhaps people were not able at the time of the revelation of the Quran to comprehend and realise all the bounties which can be found in the seas and oceans; in fact, scientific researches continue to reveal more of the bounties of the seas. When we now ponder over the bounties of the seas, we become impressed by the beauty of created beings these seas contain.

Thus, Allah’s says: ‘...so that you may seek of His bounty...’ (*al-Isra*’: 66). This concise saying indicates that there are many things other than fish and ornaments, such as pearls, corals and others. When we see the created beings that live in the depth of the seas, we become impressed by them more than by those on dry land and those that roam the skies.

(1) This is included in Allah’s saying: ‘Not alike are the two bodies of water. One is fresh and sweet, palatable for drinking, and one is salty and bitter. And from each you eat tender meat and extract ornaments which you wear, and you see the ships plowing through [them] so that you might seek of His bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful.’ (*Fatir*: 12)

Therefore, Allah's Saying: '... so that you may seek of His bounty ...' (*al-Isra'*: 66) is one of the concise verses which is clarified by the signs of the universe. This is due to the fact that if Allah *the Exalted* was to elucidate every detail, people would not have believed it at the time when the Quran was revealed. For example, when Allah *Glorified is He* tackles the means of transport, He says: '[He created] the horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment. And He creates that which you do not know.' (*an-Nahl*: 8) Allah's saying: '... He creates that which you do not know.' (*an-Nahl*: 8) includes all that which the human beings have invented concerning means of transport and communication such as the devices that transfer data using simple buttons like faxes and other devices.

When Allah *Glorified is He* tackles the seas, He clarifies that which complements His saying about the earth: '... Who has made ships subservient to you, so that they may sail through the sea at His behest ...' (*Ibrahim*: 32).

If people had fully comprehended the meaning, they would have called ships 'the camels of the seas' as they called the camels 'the ships of the desert'. However, they used what was known to them to understand what was unknown to them.

One should not attribute any of his achievements to his own self because it is Allah Who has granted him the ability, the thought and the materials that he uses to accomplish these achievements.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... has made the rivers subservient (to His laws, so that they be of use) to you.' (*Ibrahim*: 32) Rivers generally contain fresh water to irrigate the trees which produce fruits and vegetables that generally need fresh water.

Allah decrees that the seas and oceans become huge reservoirs of water, occupying three quarters of the space of the earth and allowing evaporation, in which water changes by heat into vapour that rises to the sky and becomes clouds. Then the clouds gather and rain falls after getting rid of salts during the evaporation process, irrigating the trees which produce the fruits we need. Salts found in seas preserve them from being spoiled.

We also know that most of the water of rivers comes from rain. The cycle of water in the universe is as follows: seawater evaporates due to the sun heat

then forms clouds which gather causing rain to fall in order to fill up the rivers and the seas.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ الشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ دَائِبَيْنِ ۖ وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ ﴿٣٣﴾

**He has made the sun and the moon useful to you, steady on their paths; He has made the night and day useful to you[33]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 33)**

The sun - as we know - is a daytime sign as the moon is a nighttime sign, and there is a relation between the water that we drink and the sun, as it evaporates water from the seas. We also irrigate the land with water in order for it to produce sustenance for us. As for the seas, everything pertaining to it is connected to the development of the moon.

Did the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* know all this while he was an illiterate prophet? Certainly, he did not know these facts, but Allah revealed to him the Quran which includes all the realities of the whole universe.

Allah says that the sun and the moon are *da'ibayn* (steady on their paths), and the literal meaning of this word is performing an action regularly. For example, the sentence 'so-and-so is *da'ub* in studying' means that this person is diligent and exerts constant effort in studying without wasting his time. Accordingly, Allah *the Exalted* has made for the sun and moon a precise system. For example, we calculate the day starting at nighttime then the daytime, and we divide the day into 24 hours. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation.' (*ar-Rahman*: 5)

Allah also says: '... has made the night for rest and the sun and moon for calculation ...' (*al-An'am*: 96). This means that man will use the appearance and disappearance of either of them as a means for calculation. He also makes their movement so precise that they facilitate for us the calculation of time. They do not collide with each other, as each of them has a certain orbit and a precise movement. They are not like the clocks which need fixation.

As we make progress, we find that our inventions deepen our faith in the Creator, the Most Exalted.

In the same verse, Allah says: ‘... He has subjected the night and day to you.’ (*Ibrahim: 33*) Since the sun is a daytime sign, and the moon is a night time sign, and daytime precedes night time in existence from our perspective, then we might regard it more appropriate to say: ‘He has subjected the day and night to you.’ (*Ibrahim: 33*) Allah decrees to teach us that the moon is the nighttime sign which shines at night, and night is made for quietude. However, this quietude is not the reason for the existence of man on earth; rather, man has been created in order to be active, reconstruct the earth, work hard and exert efforts. Thus, He first mentions the rising of the sun, from which the moon derives its light, then He mentions the night and day. This indicated that Allah *the Almighty* includes two lights in this verse.

The first light comes from the sun, and the second comes from the moon, so man knows that his life on earth is prepared for labour. He should not think that the real purpose of life is to repose and sleep because Allah *the Most High* has created sleep for people to have rest, then wake up and work hard.

We notice that the word *taskhir* (subjecting something) is mentioned within the context of material elements, as animals, plants, sky and all that which it contains have been subjected to us. However, night and day result from material elements, the sun and the moon, and the night and day result directly from the sun and the moon.

Subjecting something — as we know — involves denial of choice, When Allah *the Exalted* subjects something, this indicates that it is precise and contains no error or disorder. However, created beings that have not been subjected may be liable to disorder as they may follow the right path or err.

The issue of predestination and choice has been tackled seriously by scholars. The philosophical schools — especially in Germany — have adopted two perspectives which seem in contradiction with each other, but they both lead to one purpose: justification of atheism. It would have been acceptable that one of them would justify atheism and the other would justify faith, but the philosophers of both schools tended to justify atheism.

The philosophers of one school hold the opinion that the Muslims say that universe is governed by a Wise Power and that all is the universe's components work regularly and precisely.

However, there are some abnormalities in some created beings as there are people who are extremely short or tall, some people are born with one eye or with a lame arm. Therefore, if the Power that governs the universe was indeed Wise, such anomalies would not exist. We refute this opinion saying that if there is no God, then what is the wisdom behind such anomalies? If those who hold this opinion deny the Wisdom of the Creator in whom we believe, can they prove that any other deity has such wisdom? Certainly, they will not be able to answer this question because their opinion has simply been rejected.

The other school of philosophy views that the system of the universe proves that there is no creator, as it is fixed and automated, and no deity can overturn the system of this universe

Accordingly, the two schools hold different and contradictory opinions, but both of them lead to atheism. We refute the opinions held by the followers of both schools by saying, ‘Those who take the constancy of this system as a proof of the existence of a god should know that this constancy is found in the basic components of the universe. Those who take anomalies as a proof of the existence of a creator should know that these anomalies occur in the created beings that live on earth. If anomalies were to occur in the basic components of the universe, the heavens and earth would have been corrupted.’

Allah *Glorified is He* has willed for the abnormalities to occur in some cases of individuals, so that one may be abnormal in some way, while the majority are normal. Accordingly, the existence of abnormalities in individuals does not contradict with the existence of a Supreme Creator. The constancy of the system is revealed in the basic elements of the universe and proves that no person is involved in this matter.

Allah *the Exalted* subjects to the man night and day which have resulted from the subjection of the sun and the moon where each of which is steady in its path. We calculate our time according to this precise and regular system; for example, we determine the beginnings of the seasons, the terms for agricultural activity and time of prayers.

Furthermore, if you have observed any disorder in some phenomena, you should know that it has occurred due to the interference of man, who has been

chosen as a vicegerent on earth. For example, the ozone hole which exists in the atmosphere has developed from the experiments intended to improve our lives on earth.

However, we look at the experimentation within a limited scope, and we do not attach due attention to the observation of all that surrounds us in the world. Thus, this zeal for experimentation results in the ruination of many of the essential elements of our life on earth, so that we have reached the point of constant complaining of the disorder of the weather, which has become frigidly cold or hot beyond endurance.

Man has interfered in matters in which he should not have interfered except after studying them from all perspectives. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned ...' (*ar-Rum*: 41).

Therefore, the preludes and consequences of each experiment should be studied thoroughly before conducting it in order to avoid harming people. In addition, the side effects of each scientific invention should be studied in order to protect humanity from any harm that may take place. We must also remember Allah's saying: 'Do not pursue that of which you have no knowledge ...' (*al-Isra'*: 36).

The challenges that we encounter at present pertaining to the climate and health result from our interference without full knowledge and understanding. This affirms the Wisdom of the Creator *the Most High*. We have been impressed by the superficial advantages of some scientific inventions, thinking that they would bring about great benefits. However, they have turned to be harmful because of their side effects.

Therefore, Allah uses the verb *kasabat* (earn) and not *iktasabat* (acquired) in the Arabic version of the following verse: 'Corruption has appeared throughout the land and sea by [reason of] what the hands of people have earned ...' (*ar-Rum*: 41).

In the verse that we are currently reflecting upon, the Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'He has subjected the sun and the moon to you, steady on their paths; He has subjected the night and day to you.' (*Ibrahim*: 33) The verse indicates

that the successive appearance of the sun and the moon causes the succession of night and day. The appearance of the sun and its bright shining does not mean that the moon does not exist, as it does, but the light of the sun prevents you from seeing it. However, there are times when you can see both the sun and the moon together.

As for nighttime and daytime, they follow each other in succession. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'It is He Who has made the night and the day in succession...' (*al-Furqan*: 62). This means that they never appear together, as night falls in one country and day breaks in another. Both of them move steadily and in succession from the moment Allah *the Exalted* created the universe. When Allah created it and placed the sun opposite to the earth, the side which faces the earth experiences daytime and the other side experiences nighttime. When the earth rotates, the side that faces the sun experiences daytime, whereas the other side experiences nighttime. Accordingly, Allah willed for each one of them to succeed the other.

Allah has stated in the above-mentioned verses a few of his bounties that He has endowed on his servants, such as the heavens, the earth, the rain, the fruits and vegetables that sprout from the earth. In addition, Allah subjected to his servants the sun, the moon, the night and day and stated this in the Quran in a manner that enumerates some of His bounties.

A pious person said about Allah's bounties, 'I can state some of them, but I cannot reckon them.' Allah *the Almighty* draws our attention to the basic elements of the universe, and then moves to other bounties which cannot be enumerated.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَتَاكُمْ مِنْ كُلِّ مَا سَأَلْتُمُوهُ وَإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ
لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَظَلُومٌ كَفَّارٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

And given you some of everything you asked Him for. If you tried to count God's favours you could never calculate them: man is truly unjust and ungrateful [34] (The Quran, Ibrahim: 34)

Actually, Allah has given us that which we have asked him for and has given us many things before we ask Him. In addition, He has prepared the

universe for us before creating us. Accordingly, He has given us bounties before we ask for them, as they preceded the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* who found the universe prepared for him.

Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* has given each one of us bounties even before he knows how to ask Him; for example, the embryo in his mother's womb.

In this verse Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And given you some of everything you asked Him for ...' (*Ibrahim*: 34). This means He gives you what you ask for and what you have not asked for, whether you have uttered it or not, and even if it is merely thoughts in one's mind. In addition, you may ask Allah for things and He gives you what you have asked.

Some people, whom Allah has granted many bounties, may call others out of desire for a challenge — and to Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection — to ask them for anything they want. I have encountered this situation when I was hosted by someone whom Allah has endowed many bounties, and we were on a trip in the desert of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. He told me to ask him for anything, and he would bring it to me. I thought to ask him for something which he might not have, so I asked him to bring me a needle and thread, but he replied: 'Do you want white or red thread?' Therefore, if this takes place among people, what do we think of Allah's Ability to give His servant what they ask for?

It is due to Allah's Wisdom that He says: 'And given you some of everything you asked Him for ...' (*Ibrahim*: 34).

There is wisdom behind everything Allah gives as well as everything Allah withholds; indeed, Allah *the Exalted* is far beyond from giving people what they ask for without wisdom. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Man supplicates for evil as he supplicates for good, and man is ever hasty ...' (*al-Isra*': 11).

Thus, He says: 'And given you some of everything you asked Him for ...' (*Ibrahim*: 34). This means that Allah gives people some of that which they ask for since there are foolish supplications which Allah does not answer, such as a mother's supplication against her stubborn son. If Allah *the Exalted* were to answer her supplication, what would be her status?

Therefore, it is out of Allah's Magnificence that He gives us that which is in line with His Wisdom and withholds that which is not in line with His Wisdom. Therefore, withholding things is also considered a bounty. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... I will show you my signs, so do not impatiently hasten Me.' (*al-Anbiya*: 37)

Therefore, no one should say that he has supplicated to his Lord, but he has not answered him. Rather, he should remember Allah's saying: 'And man supplicates for evil as he supplicates for good, and man is ever hasty.' (*al-Isra*: 11) Allah *the Exalted* gives and withholds things due to His Wisdom, and no one can enumerate Allah's Bounties. Enumeration — as we know — is reckoning of individual units of a whole. The people who work in the field of logic — known as logicians — know that a whole thing corresponds to a part. For example, all people are created from similar elements, but they differ in names. For example, take a chair; it is made of different materials such as wood, nails and an adhesive material, and we cannot name only the wood as a chair, neither can we name nails as chairs.

Thus, the Arabic word *kulli* can refer to a matter whose individual units are all alike, even if their names are different, while the Arabic word *kul* refers to a matter whose parts are not alike and are different in nature.

If you want to count *kulli*, you call out the names of its individual units such as Mohammad, Ahmad and 'Ali. This is what we call counting. Therefore, counting is the aggregation of the units of a sum or the parts of a whole.

We call counting as *ihsa*' because in the past people used to count things using *hasa* (pebbles), and the word *ihsa*' applies to counting in order to calculate the total and identify the number of parts of the sum or whole.

In the past, man used to count till number one hundred and refer to every one hundred by one pebble. If he gathered ten pebbles, then he would know that he reached number thousand. This is how the word *ihsa*' is used to refer to counting. Nowadays, we still use old names to refer to different things; for example, we describe vehicles power by horsepower.

If you scrutinise Allah's saying, '... if you tried to count Allah's favours, you could never calculate them ...' (*Ibrahim*: 34), you will find many meanings,

However, those who try to find faults in the Quran say that the meaning of this verse is not accurate because as long as counting is possible, how could calculation not be achieved? These people forget that what is meant here is not the counting itself, but it is the desire or willingness to count.

If a person wants to count Allah's bounties, he will not be able to calculate them. Therefore, there is no contradiction in Allah's verses, as they form an integrated structure. You will not tend to count something unless you think that you are able to count it, but counting Allah's bounties is beyond man's capability.

Another example concerning proceeding to do something can be found in Allah's Saying: 'O, you who believe, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces ...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6). We do not wash our faces the moment we rise to perform prayers, but we wash them and complete the steps of the ablution when the muezzin calls to prayer. Therefore, and the verse means that when you proceed to perform the prayers, do such-and-such.

We also know that mentioning something by stating its cause indicates that you have mentioned it. Therefore, if the muezzin has called for prayer, and you have come out of your home intending to pray, do not run to catch up with the imam⁽¹⁾ since you have started the prayer the moment you have completed your ablution and have left your home proceeding to the mosque. Therefore, do not do any action that should not be done during the prayer and enter the mosque quietly and solemnly to perform the prayer with the imam.⁽²⁾

(1) *This is indicated by the Hadith narrated on the authority of Abu Bakra Allah be pleased with him who arrived at the mosque while Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him was bowing, and bowed outside of the row (of praying men) then walked to the row. When Prophet Muhammad completed his prayer, he said, 'Who among you bowed outside the row then walked to it?' Abu Bakra replied, 'I did.' So Prophet Muhammad said, 'May Allah increase you in keenness, but do not do this again.'* [Related by Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* (679, 680), *Al-Bukhari* in his *Sahih* (2/199- 267 – *Fat-h Al-Bari*) and by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (5/39, 42)]

(2) *This meaning is derived from the Hadith related by Muslim in his Sahih (603 – the Mosques) on the authority of Abu Qatadah who said, 'While we were praying with Messenger Muhammad, he heard tumult. (At the end of the prayer) he (Prophet Muhammad) said, "What is the matter with you?" They said, "We hastened to prayer." Prophet Muhammad said, "Do not do that; when you come for prayer, there should be tranquility upon you. Pray (along with the Imam) what you can catch up and complete what preceded you."*

When we scrutinise Allah's saying, '...if you tried to count Allah's favours, you could never calculate them ...' (*Ibrahim*: 34), we will find that the Arabic article *in* (if) is usually used in the case of referring to something doubtful, while the article *idha* is used when we refer to something certain, such as Allah's Saying: 'When the victory of Allah has come and the conquest.' (*an-Nasr*: 1)

Allah *Glorified is He* uses the article that indicates doubt when He says: '...if you tried to count Allah's favours, you could never calculate them ...' (*Ibrahim*: 34). The reasonable person already knows that he cannot calculate Allah's bounties. We all know that there is what is called statistics, which is studied in colleges.

Despite scientific advancement and the manufacture of computers, no one has tried to calculate Allah's bounties or is able to do so because counting and calculation require a sum that has units or a whole that has parts.

If we ponder any of Allah's bounties, you may think that it is only one, but if you ponder the details of any bounty, you will find that it includes different and various bounties. Therefore, there is no contradiction in Allah's Saying: '... If you tried to count Allah's favours you could never calculate them ...' (*Ibrahim*: 34).

If you scrutinise the bounty of water, you will find it includes various ones, as it is made up of elements; each of which contains a bounty. In addition, if you scrutinise the bounty of the earth, you will find that it contains many, and so is the case of each of Allah's bounties. Therefore, Allah's bounties cannot be calculated.

When you scrutinise Allah's saying, '... if you tried to count Allah's favours you could never calculate them...' (*Ibrahim*: 34), you will find three elements: namely Allah *the Almighty* Who is the Bestower of all bounties, the bounties themselves which He *the Almighty* endows people with and the people upon whom He *Glorified is He* bestows these favours and blessings. In addition, people have not busied themselves with calculating these bounties, as they are countless, and no reasonable person would try to calculate them.

Concerning the third element which is the one who receives the bounties, namely man, he is unable to calculate the favours his leader does for him, so

what about Allah's bounties which cannot be calculated, His limitless Perfection and His Giving which does not run out? To Allah belongs the utmost example of perfection. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...man is truly unjust and ungrateful.' (*Yusuf*: 34)

In this chapter of *Ibrahim*, Allah clarifies man's oppression towards himself and his ingratitude which implies his ingratitude to the Bestower of these bounties. Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: 'Have you not considered those who exchanged the favour of Allah for disbelief and settled their people [in] the home of ruin? [It is] Hell, which they will [enter to] burn, and wretched is the settlement.' (*Ibrahim*: 28-29) These are the ones who have committed wrongdoing the creed of monotheism and faith. Man, the one who receives Allah's bounties, should show not ingratitude after realising Allah's bounties. Fairness involves giving every person his due right, but some people offer ingratitude in exchange for Allah's favour. Therefore, they are considered as wrongdoers and as being ungrateful since they show ingratitude in exchange for Allah's bounties.

Furthermore, wrongdoing involves taking the right from its owner and giving it to the one who does not deserve it. If you do not believe in Allah, then you have denied Allah's right as God; if you worship deities other than Allah, then with that you have transferred Allah's right to be worshipped to another, an action that is considered as the ultimate wrongdoing.

Read carefully Allah's saying in the chapter of *an-Nahl*: 'And He has subjected for you the night and day and the sun and moon, and the stars are subjected by His command. Indeed in that are signs for a people who reason. [He has subjected] whatever He multiplied for you on the earth of varying colours. Indeed in that is a sign for a people who remember. It is He who subjected the sea for you to eat from it tender meat and to extract from it ornaments which you wear. You see the ships ploughing through it, and [He subjected it] that you may seek of His bounty; so perhaps you will be grateful. He has cast into the earth firmly set mountains, lest it shift with you, and [made] rivers and roads, that you may be guided, and landmarks. And by the stars they are [also] guided. Then is He Who creates like one who does not create? So will you not be reminded? And if you should count the favours of

Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.’ (*an-Nahl*: 12-18) No one can calculate Allah’s limitless bounties. The previous verses include both miracles and show man’s inability which implies that Allah’s perfection never ends.

Some of those who try to find fault with the Quran wonder why Allah says in one verse: ‘If you tried to count Allah’s favours, you could never calculate them. Man is truly unjust and ungrateful.’ (*Ibrahim*: 34) and in another verse: ‘If you tried to count Allah’s favours, you could never calculate them. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful.’ (*an-Nahl*: 18)

The answer is that they have not observed the context of each verse, as the context of the verse we are reflecting upon now includes Allah’s bounties and man’s ingratitude which has resulted from man’s extreme oppression against himself.

On the other hand, in the verse, which is mentioned in the chapter of *an-Nahl*, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the bounties which He bestows upon man. Despite man’s oppression, Allah’s Mercy encompasses him and He has not withheld His bounties. Allah instructs man not to stop asking Him of His bounties even if man has oppressed and showed ingratitude with regard to certain matters, Allah is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful. Accordingly, there is no contradiction between the two verses, but each verse has a suitable end; in the first verse, Allah treats us with His Justice and in the second verse, He treats us with His Grace.

Allah says: ‘...man is truly unjust and ungrateful.’ (*Ibrahim*: 34) We know that there are people who believe in Allah and acknowledge His bounties, so why does Allah describe man as unjust and ungrateful? When the word ‘man’ is used without any exceptions, it refers to those who are misguided, follow no religion, and do not reflect upon the universe. Allah has clarified this point in His Saying: ‘By the declining day. Man is [deep] in loss.’ (*al-‘Asr*: 1-2) Then he has mentioned an exception after this verse, as He says: ‘... except for those who believe, do good deeds, urge one another to the truth, and recommend one another to steadfastness.’ (*al-‘Asr*: 3)

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذْ قَالَ إِبْرَاهِيمُ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ هَذَا الْبَلَدَ آمِنًا وَاجْنُبْنِي وَبَنِيَّ أَنْ نَعْبُدَ الْأَصْنَامَ ﴿٣٥﴾

Remember when Abraham said, ‘Lord, make this town safe!

Preserve me and my offspring from idolatry [35]

(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 35)

Allah says in the Arabic version of the verse *idh* (remember when), then He quotes Ibrahim (Abraham) as saying, ‘O, Lord’ and not ‘O, Allah’ because Ibrahim (Abraham) was making his supplication to the Creator and the Lord. This is because the bounties granted by Allah involve religious obligations regarding which a servant is given a choice either to fulfil or not. An example on these obligations is His saying: ‘And establish prayer ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 43). On the other hand, the bounties of the Lord are given to those to establish prayer or not.

The issue of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* has not been mentioned in this verse haphazardly. We know that when the Quran descended, the first people who heard it are the masters of Quraysh, who enjoyed reverence and leadership on the Arabian Peninsula, and no one dared to harass their caravans on the winter and summer journeys to Yemen and the Levant. The masters of Quraysh derived their reverence from the Sacred House.

Allah *the Exalted* has stated first His bounties which He bestows on for every creature in general, and then He has stated the bounties relevant to them specifically, so He says: ‘... O, Lord, make this town safe!...’ (*Ibrahim*: 35) This phrase has been mentioned in the chapter of *al-Baqara* in a different way. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Remember when Ibrahim (Abraham) said, "My Lord, make this a secure city..."’ (*al-Baqara*: 126).

The difference between the Arabic words *Al-balad* and *balad* needs explanation; the word *balad* means that a place that was once empty, then Ibrahim (Abraham) supplicated for this place to become secure and to be inhabited by people who can fulfil their needs in it and find means for maintaining their livelihood. He supplicated also for the place to be secure and free from any threat for their lives and their means of livelihood.

Allah has answered Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) supplication, so the land has become a secure and peaceful *balad*. Man does not settle in a place unless he has secured his means of livelihood and has ensured the absence of any source of

terror that may disturb him. Every person needs this security. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* made this supplication when he arrived in this place which was a valley without vegetation and other essential elements that sustain life. This supplication is mentioned in the chapter of *al-Baqara*.

However, in the second verse, the place has already become vivid, so the second supplication for security is very specific and special. In any other place, you can cut down a tree or hunt any game, but this place enjoys a particular type of security, as it includes vegetation and animals; even the criminal cannot be harmed.⁽¹⁾

Accordingly, the first supplication for security differs from the second one, as the first one is for general security, whereas the second one is for a particular type of security. Any place may enjoy general security, but the city of the Sacred House enjoys security that encompasses all created beings.

Some shallow-minded people may wonder why the Sacred House was attacked by some people some years ago although Allah has made it secure. The answer is that this security is not a universal phenomenon, but it is a religious obligation which may be fulfilled or not. Allah's Saying, '...And whoever enters it shall be safe...' (*Al-Imran*: 97) means that those who follow Allah's religion should render the Sacred House secure and safe for those who enter it. Therefore, there is a difference between the religious obligation and the universal phenomenon.

Allah *Glorified is He* states Ibrahim's (Abraham's) saying: '... Preserve me and my offspring from idolatry.' (*Ibrahim*: 35) This statement includes

(1) *It was narrated on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him and his father said that Messenger Muhammad said on the day of the Liberation of Mecca: 'Allah made this town sacred on the day He created the earth and the heavens; so it is sacred by the sacredness conferred on it by Allah until the Day of Resurrection. Fighting in it was not lawful to anyone before me, and it was made lawful for me only during an hour on one day, for it is sacred by the sacredness conferred on it by Allah until the Day of Resurrection. Its thorns are not to be cut, its game is not to be molested, and the things dropped are to be picked up only by one who makes a public announcement of it, and its fresh herbage is not to be cut.' Abbas Allah be pleased with him said, 'O Messenger of Allah, exception may be made in case of rush, for it is useful for their blacksmiths and for their houses. He (Prophet Muhammad) conceding the suggestion of 'Abbas said, 'Except rush.' [Related by Muslim in his Sahih (1353)]*

Ibrahim's (Abraham's) prediction of what happened in the Sacred House at the hands of 'Amr ibn Luhay who brought the worship of idols into the Sacred House.

A person may ask why Ibrahim (Abraham) made this supplication although he is an infallible Prophet or why did he ask Allah to protect him from worshipping idols.

My answer is the following: Does this prevent a person from asking his Lord to perpetuate this infallibility? We receive religious obligations from Allah, such as: 'O, you who believe, believe in Allah and His Messenger ...' (*an-Nisa'*: 136). This is a command for the believers to have continuous belief in Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* states what Messenger Shu'aib (Jethro) said: 'We would have invented against Allah a lie if we returned to your religion after Allah had saved us from it. And it is not for us to return to it except that Allah, our Lord, should will ...' (*al-A'raf*: 89).

This saying includes humbleness before the Bestower of the bounty of faith. In addition, the Quran clarifies Allah's Omnipotence.

Allah says in this verse: '... Preserve me and my offspring from idolatry.' (*Ibrahim*: 35) The word *sanam*, which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the verse, differs literally from the word *wathan* for the idol which takes the human shape is called *sanam*, whereas the indistinct rock which was worshipped by some of the people in the pre-Islamic times is called *wathan*.

Some people who wished to clarify this matter said that there are two types of disbelief: manifest polytheism and hidden polytheism. The former refers to worshipping any deity other than Allah while the later refers to idolising the intermediaries between him and Allah, giving them more than their due and ascribing to some of them Allah's Attributes.

Ibrahim's (Abraham's) supplication to Allah to preserve him and his offspring from the worship of idols necessitates understanding to what the Arabic word *baniy* refers. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* intended with the prophets and messengers from his offspring, as we know that some of his offspring worshipped idols and other objects of worship.

The Arabic word *abna'* is mentioned in other verses, such as Allah's saying: 'Remember when Ibrahim (Abraham) was tried by his Lord with commands and he fulfilled them ...' (*al-Baqara*: 124). After Allah informed Ibrahim (Abraham) of some obligations, and he fulfilled them completely, He made him the leader of people. Allah *Glorified is He* said: '... Indeed, I will make you a leader for the people...' (*al-Baqara*: 124). Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* has become the leader of people, as he fulfilled all the obligations Allah assigned to him perfectly, accurately and honestly. We should apply Allah's rule concerning the living beings; we should not charge a person with the responsibilities of a leader unless he is qualified and can perform them proficiently.

We must also remember the Prophet's saying, 'When honesty is lost, then wait for the Hour (Doomsday).' He said when someone asked him about the time of the Doomsday and how honesty will be lost, 'When the power or authority comes in the hands of unfit persons, then wait for the Hour (Doomsday).'

⁽¹⁾

Charging unfit people with authority causes corruption, because assigning responsibilities to any person is intended in order for them to be fulfilled properly. If the choice of the person is bad, then he will be a bad example to be followed, and inefficiency will spread and the society will be corrupted. However, if authority is assigned to a fit person, the situation will be entirely different, as everything will be balanced, a matter which involves stability in different aspects.

For example, the children who are raised in Saudi Arabia and see that the hand of a thief is severed, they do not commit robbery because they understand that Allah has set a harsh punishment in order to prevent people from committing this crime.

Some people who claim civility ask how the Quran states: 'There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion...' (*al-Baqara*: 256) and the person who apostatises is arrested in order to be executed. This matter should not be counted against Islam since keenness to protect dignity causes the

(1) [*Related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (59, 6496) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him*]

people to embrace Islam only after reaching the level of certainty which means embracing the true religion after finding the evidence that supports it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth. But is it not sufficient concerning your Lord that He is ...' (*Fussilat*: 53).

Apostasy may cost one's life because he renounces the religion which he embraced after finding the evidence supporting it.

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* supplicated to his Lord, '...O, Lord, make this town safe! Preserve me and my offspring from idolatry.' (*Ibrahim*: 35) when he passed Allah's test and succeeded perfectly in accomplishing what was assigned to him, Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* willed for him to become a leader, and he asked Allah for this leadership to continue to be conferred upon his offspring, as he said: '...and my offspring...' (*al-Baqara*: 124). Allah *Glorified is He* answered him by saying: '... My covenant does not include the wrongdoers.' (*al-Baqara*: 124) Allah *Glorified is He* clarified that that the progeny of a prophet does not mean real sons, but it refers to the followers of this prophet. Allah has said to Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* about his son⁽¹⁾: '...so ask Me not for that about which you have no knowledge ...' (*Hud*: 46). In addition, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about Salman who was Persian, 'Salman is of us, the members of my family.'⁽²⁾ This affirms the previous point.

(1) *Ibn Kathir* said in his exegesis (2/446), 'This is Nuh's (Noah's) fourth son whose name is Yam and he was a disbeliever.' Allah says: '...Noah called to his son who was apart [from them], "O my son, come aboard with us and be not with the disbelievers." [But] he said, "I will take refuge on a mountain to protect me from the water." [Noah] said, "There is no protector today from the decree of Allah, except for whom He gives mercy." And the waves came between them, and he was among the drowned.' (*Hud*: 42-43) Then Nuh (Noah) asked his Lord a question about the state of his son who drowned, saying: 'My Lord, indeed my son is of my family; and indeed, Your promise is true; and You are the most just of judges. He said, "O Noah, indeed he is not of your family; indeed, he is [one whose] work was other than righteous, so ask Me not for that about which you have no knowledge. Indeed, I advise you, lest you be among the ignorant." (*Hud*: 45-46)

(2) It was narrated on the authority of 'Amr ibn 'Auf Al-Mazani, who said: 'Messenger Muhammad drew the parameters of the trench in the year of al-Ahzab (the confederates) =

Then Allah completes Ibrahim's (Abraham's) supplication which indicates Ibrahim's (Abraham's) awareness of what idolatry does to a person.

رَبِّ إِنَّمَنْ أَضَلَّنَا كَثِيرًا مِّنَ النَّاسِ فَمَنْ تَبِعَنِي فَإِنَّهُ
مِنِّي وَمَنْ عَصَانِي فَإِنَّكَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾

Lord, the [idols] have led many people astray! Anyone who follows me is with me, but as for anyone who disobeys me – You are surely forgiving and merciful [36] (The Quran, Ibrahim: 36)

We know that idols in themselves do not lead one astray because they do not speak and do not charge people with any obligations, but those who ascribe divinity to them lead people astray and leave them without any discipline. This type of misguidance is welcomed by those who hate following the directives of the One and the Creator.

Then, Allah states what Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said after his supplication: 'Anyone who follows me is with me, but as for anyone who disobeys me – You are surely forgiving and Merciful.' (Ibrahim: 36) These are commentaries on the matter of Allah's Forgiveness and Mercy after a person commits a sin. Allah *Glorified is He* says in one verse: '...and He is Exalted in Might, the Wise.' (al-Ma'ida: 118) In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: '... and He is Exalted in Might, the Wise.' (az-Zumar: 53) The reason for this is that crimes differ in degree. For example, when a person claims to be a god or the one whose followers consider him a god without him claiming so, this is considered the most horrible crime.

When Allah will say to 'Isa (Jesus): 'O, 'Isa (Jesus), Son of Mary, did you say to the people, "Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?"'...

= from the black fortress located at the side of of Banu Haritha until he reached Al-Midad, then he divided the digging place among men, giving each ten forty feet. Therefore, the Ansar (Medinan Helpers) and the Immigrants disagreed with regard to Salman, the Persian, who was a strong man. The Ansar (Medinan Helpers) said: 'Salman is one of us' and the Immigrants said, 'Salman is one of us.' Then, Messenger Muhammad said, 'Salman is of the members of my family.' [Related by Al-Bayhaqi in 'Dala'il An-Nubuwwa' (3/418) and Al-Hakim in 'Al-Mustadrak' (3/598)] Ad-Dhahabi regarded it as a weak Hadith because its chain of transmission includes Kuthayr ibn 'Abdullah.

(*al-Ma'ida*: 116) He will say: '... I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within Yourself. Indeed, it is You who is Knower of the unseen.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) Then 'Isa (Jesus) will say: 'If You should punish them - indeed they are Your servants, but if You forgive them - indeed it is You who is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118)

Thus, mightiness and wisdom follow the mention of punishment. There are situations to which might and wisdom are appropriate, and others to which forgiveness and grace are appropriate. No one is capable of preventing Allah's Command of forgiveness or mercy, as He is the Exalted is Mighty and the Most Wise.

Allah's Saying, 'O Lord, the [idols] have led many people astray! ...' (*Ibrahim*: 36), reflects characteristics that suit the beginning of the verse and confirms that the Quran is revealed by the Most Wise and the Most Acquainted. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We will make you recite, [O, Muhammad], and you will not forget.' (*al-A'la*: 6) Why does Allah *the Most High* say in one verse, '... the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful' (*az-Zumar*: 53), and in another verse, '...the Exalted in Might and the Most Wise' (*al-Ma'ida*: 118), although the moral context reflects otherwise?

After reminding us of His countless bounties, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... man is truly unjust and ungrateful.' (*Yusuf*: 34) although He says in another verse after reminding us of His bounties: '... verily, Allah is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful.' (*an-Nahl*: 18) Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'No! Indeed, these verses are a reminder. So whoever wills may remember it.' (*'Abasa*: 11-12) Allah *the Most High* says in another verse: 'Indeed, this is a reminder, so he who wills may take to his Lord a way.' (*al-Insan*: 29)

All these verses reveal that there is wisdom and reason behind the descent of every verse. This affirms Allah's saying: 'We will make you recite, [O, Muhammad], and you will not forget.' (*al-A'la*: 6)

Allah *the Almighty* willed for the Quran to descend upon His Messenger, and He ensured that His Messenger would memorise it and would not forget order of any verse. This is due to the One Who says, 'We will make you

recite, [O, Muhammad], and you will not forget.’ (*al-A‘la*: 6) is Allah the Omnipotent Creator.

Then, Allah states what Ibrahim (Abraham) said:

رَبَّنَا إِنِّي أَسْكَنْتُ مِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي بِوَادٍ غَيْرِ ذِي زَرْعٍ عِنْدَ بَيْتِكَ الْمُحَرَّمِ رَبَّنَا لِيُقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
فَاجْعَلْ أَفْئِدَةً مِنَ النَّاسِ تَهْوِي إِلَيْهِمْ وَارْزُقْهُمْ مِنَ الثَّمَرَاتِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Our Lord, I have established some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley, close to Your Sacred House, Lord, so that they may keep up the prayer. Make people’s hearts turn to them, and provide them with produce, so that they may be thankful [37] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 37)

We can understand from this verse that the place is not suitable for cultivation, because it is a rocky land that can be reclaimed. Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) saying, ‘... an uncultivated valley...’ (*Ibrahim*: 37), which means that there is no hope of cultivating it with human effort; nothing can bring about provision in this place except our Lord. Indeed, the place was not selected by Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* but Allah *the Almighty* commanded him to head towards this place in order to raise the foundations of the Sacred House. As Ibrahim (Abraham) said: ‘... close to Your Sacred House ...’ (*Ibrahim*: 37), this indicates that he was content with this obligation. As long as this matter is a religious obligation, it must be carried out with fervour; the one who does so earns two rewards: the reward of loving the religious obligation and the reward of carrying it out.

We have an example in this regard which is the story of the man who was met by Al-Asma’y⁽¹⁾ at the Sacred House, and was saying: ‘O, Allah, verily I have disobeyed you, but I love those who obey you, so consider it a good deed for me.’ Al-Asma’y said that Allah is most likely to forgive this man due to his good manner of supplication, as he has found joy in the religious

(1) Al-Aşma’ay is the epithet of ‘Abd Al-Malik ibn Qurayb Al-Bahli, Abu Sa’id; he was born in Basra in 122 A.H. and was one of the famous Arab orators, and one of the proficient experts of language, poetry, and knowledge of countries. He traveled frequently from a town to another. He died in Basra in 216 A.H. at the age of 94. *Al-A‘lam* by Az-Zirikli (4/162).

obligations, even if he did not fulfil them himself and other people did, that caused him to rejoice.

When any person fulfils the religious obligations, this matter will be in the interest of all mankind. When we offer prayer, we recite the following verse in the chapter of *al-Fatiha*, 'It is you we worship and you we ask for help' (*al-Fatiha*: 5), this means that everyone should keep himself with the worshippers so that Allah may accept one of the worshippers and all the worshippers may be accepted along with. Thus, I say to anyone who commits a sin not to be angry and hopeless because there are others who obey Allah. He should be glad about them because your rejoicing in their obedience proves that you love the religious obligations although you are unable to fulfil them yourself. Loving the religious obligations involves honour.

Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said about the valley in which Allah commanded him to establish the foundations of the Sacred House that it is an uncultivated valley. He came to this place to fulfil Allah's Command to the extent that when his wife Hajar found out that they settled in this place according to Allah's Command, she said, 'Then surely He will not lead us to loss.'⁽¹⁾ Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* presents the reasons for settling in this place and establishing the foundations of the Sacred House, as he says: '... make people's hearts turn to them ...' (*Ibrahim*: 37). This means that people will visit this place not for a touristic purpose, but for worshipping Allah. As long as the place has been established as Allah willed, He should be worshipped in this place.

Thus, it becomes completely clear that the basis of the command is staying in a place that has no means for sustenance. However, as Allah *the Almighty* enjoined this command, a person who establishes prayer should have the basic necessities of life, the first of which is food and water.

(1) *Ibrahim (Abraham) peace be upon him brought Hajar and his nursing son, Ismail (Ishmael), to Mecca, which included no one and no water. He left them there with a container of dates and a flask of water and walked away. Hajar asked Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) why he would leave them in this uninhabited valley. She repeated this question many times, but he did not look back. Therefore, she said, 'Has Allah commanded you with this? He said, 'Yes.' She said, 'Then He will not lead us to loss.' This is mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his Tafsir (5/3707).*

Therefore, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* supplicated Allah: ‘...people’s hearts turn to them...’ (*Ibrahim*: 37). The word *af’ida* (literally people’s hearts), which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the verse, is used to describe a group of people. There is a strong relationship between *fu’ad* and pilgrims, since pilgrimage is an act of worship relevant to hearts and not to material matters. A person may tend to save money by depriving himself of many things in order for him to perform pilgrimage.

The Arabic word *hawa* which consists of the letters *ha’*, *waw*, and *ya’*, has many meanings. It may be pronounced as *hawa* or *hawiya*, and if it is pronounced as *hawiya*, it means falling from a high place unwillingly, and if it is pronounced as *hawa*, it means falling in love as a result of feeling great affection.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... Make people’s hearts turn to them, and provide them with produce so that they may be thankful.’ (*Ibrahim*: 37) They are in a place that cannot be cultivated, but Allah *the Most High* answered Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) supplication, a fact which is proved by Allah’s saying: ‘... Have we not established for them a safe sanctuary to which is brought the fruits of all things as provision from us?’ (*al-Qasas*: 57) This is before the discovery of petroleum or any other resources. The Arabic word *yujba* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse indicates that the type of provision which Allah grants is something that is collected and is an obligatory matter. For example, when you try to buy some grapes and pomegranates from *Taif*, the seller may say that they are allotted for Mecca; if you want it, you have to go there. You also find something surprising and wondrous in the words: ‘...every kind of produce...’ (*al-Qasas*: 57) for you find in Mecca all sorts of goods whether cultivated or manufactured. It has the fruits of all four seasons coming from all over the world, as a result from the fact that every type of environment exports some of its produce to Mecca.

In our modern age, we also see the product of civilisational development and thinking minds presented in the market of Mecca or Jeddah; you see the fruits of planning and modern capabilities as they have been translated into a materialised reality in all facets of life.

During olden times, when we used to carry out the obligation of pilgrimage, we would take with us even the sowing needle and salt for our food. After the

majority of the Arabian Peninsula was unified under the rule of Al Sāud and the discovery of petroleum, we now go there and come back with all the goods needed for life.

We should observe Allah's Words: 'Make people's hearts turn to them,' (*Ibrahim: 37*) for the word *min* (of) indicates that those whose hearts turn to this place are a portion of all the groups of people. Some who truly know Allah said that if the text had been revealed as saying: 'Make the hearts of all people turn to them', we would have found that the followers of other religions would have been included in the pilgrimage, but it was from the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* that the text actually says: 'Make people's hearts turn to them' (*Ibrahim: 37*). Thus the pilgrimage became restricted to Muslims only.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* completes what Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said:

رَبَّنَا إِنَّكَ تَعْلَمُ مَا نُخْفِي وَمَا نُعْلِنُ وَمَا يَخْفَى عَلَى اللَّهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ
 فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ ﴿٣٨﴾

Our Lord, You know well what we conceal and what we reveal: nothing at all is hidden from God, on earth or in heaven [38] (The Quran, *Ibrahim: 38*)

After Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was assured that this town is characterised by general safety as well as a particular one, and he was assured that the sustaining elements for life will be there and that all this will come from Allah *Glorified is He*; after all this, the issue which had preoccupied him initially returned to occupy his mind, namely leaving Hajar and Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*, in this place.

Some scholars said that the plural pronoun 'we' in His Words: 'You know well what we conceal and what we reveal' (*Ibrahim: 38*) is meant to show the love that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* conceals for Hajar and Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*, and also to show his indifference to them that he reveals in the company of Sara. It is as though his emotional struggle returned to him as he began to bid farewell to Hajar and his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*.

We also say that Hajar herself was experiencing a difficult situation, for she found herself in a place bereft of vegetation and water, and it is as though she has repressed all her human instincts throughout the whole time and was patient.

Then at the moment of Ibrahim's (Abraham's) farewell, she said to him, 'Where are you leaving us? Furthermore, are you leaving us following your own volition or a Command from your Lord?' So Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, 'No, it is Command from My Lord.' So she said, 'Then He will not lead us to loss.' Thus, Hajar was certain that what she said is the truth, and that Allah *the Exalted* would certainly not lead them to any loss. Thus, when her only child grew thirsty, she ran between As-Safa and Al-Marwa searching for water, but then she saw the gushing of water under the feet of her son where she left him. Since that moment in history, the well of *Zamzam*⁽¹⁾ has begun to provide humanity with its water which does not dry up.

Therefore, the words of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* have been realised, that is, Allah *Glorified is He* knows what we conceal and what we reveal, for everything that has come into the open was once hidden. Despite of the fact that Allah *the Almighty* is beyond our perception, His bond is not limited to that which is beyond our perception, and rather, it encompasses the outward and the inward world. Every condition and circumstance in the heavens or the earth are known to Allah *the Most High* because what you may deem as beyond perception in your mind, is known to Him before your mind even begins to perceive it.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says in another place in the Quran: 'Whatever you may say aloud, He knows what you keep secret and what is even more hidden.' (*Ta Ha*: 7), for if a secret is what you tell someone and you only share it with him because you trust him not to reveal it, or if the secret is that which you hid within yourself, Allah *Glorified is He* knows it in both cases.

The Quran says: 'The Prophet told something in confidence to one of his wives.' (*at-Tahrim*: 3) This means that the secret was with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and it was told to some of his

(1) It is said: the water of *Zamzam* is much between salty and fresh. (*Lisan Al-'Arab*) – under root—(*Zamzam*).

wives. What is 'more hidden' is what you have not yet announced what you have contained without revealing. Allah *the Almighty* knows that secret and all that you hide, that is, the secret which you have not shared with anyone, indeed He knows of it even before it becomes a secret.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states what Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said in reverence and gratitude to Him *Glorified is He*:

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي وَهَبَ لِي عَلَى الْكِبَرِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِسْحَاقَ إِنَّ رَبِّي لَسَمِيعُ الدُّعَاءِ ﴿٣٩﴾

**Praise be to God, who has granted me Ishmael and Isaac in
my old age: my Lord hears all requests! [39]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 39)**

Al-Wahb refers to the bestowal given by the Provider without expecting anything in return. Every offspring is a bestowal, for if it were not a bestowed gift, then it would become perfunctory between the spouses, and wherever there are spouses, you find it. Thus, you find that Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah has control of the heavens and the earth; He creates whatever He wills — He grants female offspring to whomever He wills, male to whomever He wills, or both male and female, and He Makes whomever He wills barren: He is All Knowing and All Powerful.' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50)

The evidence that offspring is a bestowal is what Allah *the Exalted* has willed with Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*. He asked Allah *Glorified is He* to provide him with a child to inherit him, despite the fact that he had grown very old and his wife was barren. He was surprised because he was able to sire a child, and of this Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'He said, "This is what your Lord has said: 'It is easy for Me. I created you, though you were nothing before.'"' (*Maryam*: 9) This means that Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* should not become occupied with causes, means and natural laws.

Allah *the Almighty* has named 'offspring' a bestowed gift, so we should thank him for this bestowed gift. Thus, if He grants you females, you should accept that with pleasure since he who accepts Allah's Bestowal of having females, He will provide him with young men to marry his daughters, and they will indeed become more obedient to him than his own children are,

despite the fact that he did not toil concerning their upbringing. Every one of us sees this in their own surroundings, for he who has male children keeps thinking: 'Will my son marry a woman who will take him away and make him more dutiful to someone other than me?'

Furthermore, if He bestows upon you sons, then you must be accepted with pleasure as well. Additionally, you must ask Allah *the Most High* that your son becomes virtuous offspring, and if He should grant you both males and females, you must thank Him and ask Him to help you in raising them.

Finally, whomever Allah *Glorified is He* makes sterile should also thank Him since sterility is also a gift bestowed from Him, for we have seen sons who have killed their own mothers and fathers, and we have seen daughters who have been disobedient to their fathers and mothers. If he who is sterile has accepted this bestowal from Allah *Glorified is He* and declared this acceptance to himself and those around him, then *the Almighty* will render people's perception of him as that of children towards a father and will make every youth that he comes in contact with him ask, 'Is there anything that you need Uncle so-and-so?' Furthermore, everyone will serve him with pure affection.

Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* praises Allah *Glorified is He* by saying: 'Praise be to Allah Who has granted me Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) in my old age ...' (*Ibrahim*: 39). Gratitude for this gift which is bestowed upon us—as we know—forms the provision of offspring in youth or in old age.

Scholars say that Ibrahim's (Abraham's) words: '... in my old age ...' (*Ibrahim*: 39) mean that he is showing gratitude to Allah *Glorified is He* for granting him Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon them* despite his old age. Why does Allah *the Almighty* use the Word '*ala* (in) which is made up of three letters instead of using *ma*' (with) by saying, 'Praise be to Allah Who has granted me Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) with my old age'. I respond that '*ala* indicates rising above, for old age is a weakness, but the Will of Allah *Glorified is He* is more powerful than this weakness, and so if He had said 'with my old age', this linking would not signify power. On the contrary, His Words, '... Who has granted me Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) in my old age ...' (*Ibrahim*: 39) place Allah's Power of bestowing over aging. When Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said this, he was showing his gratitude to

Allah *Glorified is He* for answering what he had said before: 'Our Lord, I have established some of my offspring in an uncultivated valley ...' (*Ibrahim: 37*). In other words, he prayed for having offspring.

Thereafter, Allah *the Exalted* ends this verse with the words of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: '... My Lord hears all requests!' (*Ibrahim: 39*) Allah *Glorified is He* says after this:

رَبِّ اجْعَلْنِي مُقِيمَ الصَّلَاةِ وَمِنْ ذُرِّيَّتِي رَبَّنَا وَتَقَبَّلْ دُعَاءِ ﴿٤٠﴾

**Lord, grant that I and my offspring may keep up the prayer.
Our Lord, accept my request [40] (The Quran, *Ibrahim: 40*)**

Ibrahim's (Abraham's) supplication about keeping up the prayer is pertinent to the Path of Allah *the Almighty*. He was asking Allah *Glorified is He* to accept his prayers, for the other requests were motivated by his human nature so they may be good or bad. On the other hand, the request that Allah *the Most High* makes him and his offspring committed to keeping up prayers is a request for goodness. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* continues his supplication in Allah's Words:

رَبَّنَا اغْفِرْ لِي وَلِوَالِدَيَّ وَلِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَوْمَ يَقُومُ الْحِسَابُ ﴿٤١﴾

**Our Lord, forgive me, my parents, and the believers
on the Day of Reckoning [41] (The Quran, *Ibrahim: 41*)**

We know that the request for forgiveness from He Who is infallible is a declaration of Allah's Power in the universe, for His choosing of a messenger—any messenger—does not exempt His chosen messenger from being cautious and asking for forgiveness. For example, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Verily, I seek Allah's forgiveness each day and each night a hundred times.'⁽¹⁾ Asking for Allah's forgiveness, if it were not for a sin – as

(1) Narrated by Ad-Darami in his (*Sunnan*) (302/2) and Al-Hakim in his (*Mustadrak*) (457/2) and he said: it has an authentic chain of transmission, also narrated by Ahmad in his (*Masnad*) (394/5) in the Hadith of Hudhayfa Allah be pleased with him that he said: 'I have wronged my family with my tongue, but no one else so I asked the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and he said, 'Where are you with regards to seeking forgiveness, indeed I seek seeking Allah's forgiveness a hundred times every day.'

in the case of the infallible messengers—is out of respect for Him as the Creator deserves from us more than what He has charged us with. So if we are unable to fulfil all the recommended and supererogatory deeds, and then let us supplicate to Allah *Glorified is He* that He forgives us. There are those of us who are unable to fulfil the obligatory religious duties, let them supplicate that Allah *Glorified is He* forgive them, and so it is said, ‘The virtues of the righteous are the sins of those who are close to Allah.’⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘So that Allah may forgive you your past and future sins, complete His grace upon you, guide you to a straight path.’ (*al-Fath*: 2)

Thus, I always say that Allah *the Almighty* deserves to be worshipped with more than what He has charged us with, for if we are to limit ourselves to only what He has charged us with, it is as if we have not shown our complete gratitude to Him. Therefore, what should we think of the state of the messengers, especially after Allah *Glorified is He* has increased them in purity from amongst all of His creation? Should they not then increasingly show their gratitude to Him and seek His forgiveness? We also notice that the request for forgiveness here has encompassed the parents and believers: ‘Our Lord, forgive me, my parents and the believers on the Day of Reckoning.’ (*Ibrahim*: 41) Man’s existence, as we know, has two sources: one that originates from Adam *peace be upon him* and one that directly comes from his parents. Therefore, as long as man has entered into the world by means of his parents and he has become a believer, then he must supplicate for their

(1) The righteous and those of proximity are both of the people of paradise, but the righteous are at a lower degree than proximate ones, and Allah *Glorified is He* has spoken of both, of the proximate ones He says: ‘And those in front—ahead indeed! [10] For these will be the ones brought nearest to Allah [11] in Gardens of Bliss: [12] many from the past [13] and a few from later generations. [14] On couches of well-woven cloth [15] they will sit facing each other; everlasting youths will go round among them’ (*al-Waqi’a*: 10-17). While He says of the righteous ones: ‘Those on the Right, what people they are! They will dwell amid thornless lote trees and clustered acacia [29] with spreading shade.’ (*al-Waqi’a*: 27-30) Due to the great degree that those who are in proximity to Allah have attained, it is said: that the virtuous acts that the righteous perform and for which they deserved their place in Paradise, are sins in comparison to what those of proximity had done.

forgiveness, or as their example guided him, he should supplicate for their forgiveness. Man also supplicates for forgiveness for believers because they were company to him and provided him with role models, for believers support one another in upholding justice and patience. Thus, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* who made this supplication was praying for the believers of his offspring. This is indeed a supplication and intercession on his part for those who have believed, and he implored Allah *the Almighty* that He accepts it. Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ غَفْلًا عَمَّا يَعْمَلُ الظَّالِمُونَ إِنَّمَا يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ لِيَوْمٍ تَشْخَصُ فِيهِ الْأَبْصَارُ

Do not think [Prophet] that God is unaware of what the disbelievers do: He only gives them respite until a Day when their eyes will stare in terror [42] (The Quran, Ibrahim: 42)

After Allah *Glorified is He* mentions and clarifies the general blessings upon the world and the particular blessings that He has bestowed on the inhabitants of Mecca, from whose descendants were some who stubbornly opposed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; after all that Allah *Glorified is He* brings forth this verse as a condolence and assurance for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Do not think [Prophet] that Allah is unaware of what the disbelievers do...’ (*Ibrahim*: 42).

The landscape of imagery that preceded this verse captured the beginnings of forming the place where they existed and how the inhabitants of this place came to enjoy a variety of blessings and goods that came to them, including the blessing of respected among the tribes, as Allah *Glorified is He* destroyed anyone who attacked them such as Abraha and those who were with him and ‘He made them [like] cropped stubble.’ (*al-Fil*: 5) Allah *Glorified is He* then says directly after this verse: ‘[He did this] to make the Quraysh feel secure, secure in their winter and summer journeys. So let them worship the Lord of this House Who provides them with food to ward off hunger, safety to ward off fear.’ (*Quraysh*: 1-4) Despite these blessings, they took a stance against the Call of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; their stance was

that of denial, animosity, opposition and ingratitude. Furthermore, they attempted to rally all of Islam's adversaries to fight against the religion of Islam. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies the following fact as source of reassurance for the Noble Messenger: 'Do not think [Prophet] that Allah is unaware of what the disbelievers do ...' (*Ibrahim*: 42). Why is that? The answer is found in the second half of the verse: 'He only gives them respite until a Day when their eyes will stare in terror.' (*Ibrahim*: 42)

Allah's Words 'Do not think...' (*Ibrahim*: 42) mean that you should not speculate, for the word *hasiba* (to think or calculate) does not here mean to calculate or count, rather, it means to think; the following Words of Allah *Glorified is He* clarify this matter: 'Do people think they will be left alone after saying "We believe" without being put to the test?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 2) In other words, did people assume? Thus the word *hasab* in this verse is not related to counting but to speculation. *Al-Husban* (speculation) is thus an expression of no complete certainty, but of prevalent likelihood.

The unawareness that Allah *Glorified is He* denies concerning Himself is the inattention of something due to drowsiness or lack of alertness, and certainly and most obviously, this cannot be in the case of Allah *Glorified is He* for He is the Ever Living, the Ever Watchful Who does not slumber, nor sleep overtakes Him.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers who follow him, for when He speaks to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He simultaneously speaks to all who have believed in Him. However, did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* think that Allah *Glorified is He* is unaware? Of course, he did not, for we notice that when Allah *the Exalted* gives a Command of something, it may be that one man is already obeying it, and in that case Allah *the Almighty* wants that one to keep on obeying such Command. For example, when you tell someone who does not drink any intoxicants, 'Do not drink intoxicants', and indeed he does not, what you are thus doing is asking him to keep on abstaining from drinking. In other words, you command him to continue doing what is ordered and keep on abstaining from what is prohibited. So, can Allah *Glorified is He* become unaware? I say that when you find a quality in

people that is not attributable to Allah *Glorified is He* then you should explain it within the context of the perfection that belongs to Him.

When someone commits an act of oppression, he will receive punishment for this act, and when the punishment is delayed, people who witnessed this act begin to question and murmur, 'Has the evildoing of so-and-so been forgotten? Is there unawareness of this matter?' In their questioning they are trying to make known their stance against the evildoer and the necessity of their punishment. So, we should understand that the word '... unaware ...' (*an-Nur*: 42) means that Allah *Glorified is He* will just delay the punishment of evildoers. For those who are questioning about when justice will come, must remember Allah's Words: 'I will give them respite, but My plan is sure.' (*al-A'raf*: 183) Therefore, there is no unawareness or forgetfulness, but there is a postponement of punishment for these evildoers, for injustice means that someone appropriates the right of one person and giving it to another, or seizes it for himself.

Furthermore, if this injustice is with regards to doctrinal matters, then it is a form of disbelief, and that is indeed the gravest crimes. If one did injustice by committing a major sin, that is considered a transgression, and if it is injustice in the form of a minor sin, then it is evildoing. Thus, we find Allah *Glorified is He* putting forth a judgment that is commensurate to each of the three situations; for He says about those who condone the crime of disbelief: '... those who do not judge according to what Allah has sent down are rejecting [Allah's teachings].' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44) He says about committing one of the major sins: '... Those who do not judge according to what Allah has revealed are lawbreakers.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 47) Furthermore, He says about those who condone making minor sins what is appropriate regarding religious judgment: '...Those who do not judge according to what Allah has revealed are doing grave wrong.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44) If there is one who has been deemed guilty of several of these judgments, then the judgment rests upon how he himself judged.

Furthermore, when we examine this issue of evildoing we observe that the evildoer requires someone against whom to do evil. If that injustice is — may Allah *Glorified is He* grant us refuge from such — the ultimate injustice of

disbelief, then such evil-doing can be divided — as per the understanding of the scholars — into three kinds: The first type: is to deny Allah's Existence and Divinity without ascribing it to another and that is atheism, and it is injustice against the necessary existence of Allah *Glorified is He*. The second type is to concede to Allah's Divinity, and to associate others with Him in His Divinity, and this polytheism is an injustice against the Essence of Allah and His Oneness. The third type is to say that Allah *Glorified is He* is made of many parts; this is an injustice against the Oneness of His Essence.

Some of those who truly know Allah say that the first right to exist is the existence of Allah *Glorified is He*. A poet also once said:

The first right of existence is His existence
And all the rights of the universe from it [were] derived
For He is no plural as one idolater claimed
O my fine creed, nor is He [found divided] in parts

The injustice that is mentioned in the verse which we are reflecting upon is the gravest kind of injustice, an injustice against the doctrine of divinity. Besides this injustice, there is another one against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the poet also summarised their injustice against him by saying:

You called him the Sincere in his youth
Yet no Sincere one is accused for the [falsity] of their claims

For they had named Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before he received the message, 'the sincere', and after the message, they stripped him of this epithet. They also used to describe him before the coming of the message as 'the truthful', and they neither once said of him before the Message that he was a magician, nor had they accused him of insanity. Then how could they have described him of sincerity, possessing truthfulness of speech and talked of his wisdom in judgement? How could he have had all these characteristics before the message, and yet you strip him of them after it? This is the injustice of denying perfection, for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was indeed a perfect human being even before He was

sent to with the message. So you committed injustice against him after the message and denied him his perfection, and it is a twofold injustice. For you had already recognised his sincerity before the message, then after the message, you denied his sincerity, and similarly, he was indeed truthful before the message and you claimed that he was not truthful after it.

He had not a single characteristic of deficiency before the message, so you came up with one, such as your claim that he is a magician, soothsayer and insane, and this is great injustice against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

This is also injustice against the community in which you live in since the one who wants the tyranny of infidelity to continue, and wants to continue to rule over others and exploit and control them, all this is injustice against society. Above all, there is injustice against oneself, for whoever does so may derive a small pleasure from it, but in reality they are depriving themselves from a greater one and that is the pleasure of life in the light of Allah's Path: upon such a person applies Allah's Words: 'We did not wrong them; they wronged themselves.' (*an-Nahl*: 118)

Furthermore, beyond the injustice against oneself and the injustice against society, there is also an injustice that this type of person commits against the universe and what it contains other than human beings, including inanimate things, animals, and plants. When a person does not follow the Path of his Creator, while the universe is made to serve this Path, then that person will not take this into account in their treatment of the universe. Allah *Glorified is He* says about this: '...There is not a single thing that does not celebrate His praise...' (*al-Isra'*: 44). When everything in this world celebrates Allah's praise and a man who does not follow His Path becomes aberrant, the whole universe hates him. In this way, this man wrongs himself and the whole universe as well.

So we have come to understand the ultimate injustice refers to the denial of Allah's Divinity, associating others with Him and imagining that He is made up of parts. In addition, there is the injustice of stripping Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of his human perfection even though he is the medium through which the goodness of faith was delivered,

and finally injustice against the universe as a whole, for every one of its inhabitants celebrates Allah's praise.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do not think [Prophet] that Allah is unaware of what the disbelievers do ...' (*Ibrahim*: 42). We find the word *ya'mal* (do), and we know that there is a difference between '*amal* (work) and *fi'l* (act); the (*fi'l*) is the activity of all the limbs and the body, except for the tongue, for its activity we call 'speech'.

Thus, the actions of all the limbs and body are described in one word, and the activity of the tongue alone is described in a word, for nothing throws people into the hellfire on their noses except the harvests of their tongues.⁽¹⁾ So *fi'l* (action) and speech are combined in the word (*'amal*).

Furthermore, in this verse that is currently being reflected upon, Allah *the Exalted* uses the word *ya'*, and this is due to the idolaters who had received the Quran but spread rumours that caused agitation amongst the people against Islam and Prophet Muhammad. They did this by using speech, and all their actions that were carried out against Islam were the consequences of incitement through words.

Then comes the other part of this noble verse to confirm that Allah *Glorified is He* enables them to commit sins so that He punishes them for these sins, and so He says: 'He only gives them respite until a Day when their eyes will stare in terror.' (*Ibrahim*: 42)

We also know that there were a series of phenomena that made clear to the idolaters the imminence of victory for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: the death of their valiant heroes and some of their leaders in the battle of Badr along with the capture of their leaders. Thus, when Allah *the Almighty* has wished to mention His promise or His threat, He brought forth the matter which all the listeners are included in, and that is the punishment of the Hereafter, should they continue in their idolatry and fight against the Message.

Allah's Words, '...when their eyes will stare in horror ...' (*Ibrahim*: 42) mean that their eyes will be open wide with no movement left or right from the horror of what they see. It is possible that one's eyes do not turn about

(1) [Narrated by Ahmad and At-Tirmithi]

because of staring at something that is exceedingly beautiful, and what distinguishes between them is but a subtle current created by Allah *the Almighty*.

For when we see a person who is in a state of panic due to his exceeding fear, his face captures that fear, while when a person looks at that which is beautiful and his eyes open wide at its beauty, his features take on an expression of being in harmony and calm receptivity to the beauty he is seeing; a poet says:

The beauty of what I love has captured my sight

[I wish] that it may to a different thing turn

So we can differentiate between one who is fearful and one who is joyful from the expression on the face, whether it is terrified or content.

We know that eyesight is subservient to sights, for when there are many sights to be seen, the eyes turn from one to the other; the seeing person's sight is constantly diverted and distracted by a variety of sights, so his mind travels from one thought to another as well.

However, those whom Allah *the Almighty* has blessed with the blessing of removing their eyesight – visually impaired – such sights do not preoccupy them: so we find them most talented in learning, for their minds are not distracted by anything else, and they perceive the thoughts which stay in their minds through hearing.

Therefore, it is said that they are 'treasuries of knowledge' if they should seek knowledge, for none of them who seeks knowledge is ever empty, much like a treasury that never empties.

No one controls the feelings that arise from the passions except for Allah *the Exalted* for you cannot tell yourself 'rage' or 'laugh' because it is He Who owns this Power, so He says: 'And that it is He Who makes people laugh and weep.' (*an-Najm*: 43), for laughter and crying is naturally occurring things that no one can interfere with. We find Allah *Glorified is He* saying elsewhere in the Quran: '...your eyes rolled [with fear]...' (*al-Ahzab*: 10). For at that point when eyes stare, and terror overwhelms a person, it is then that they cannot look away from the terrifying scene, while at another point, the eyes shift in seeking to find an escape or way out but do not find it. Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* completes this image of those whose eyes turned dull by saying:

مُهْطِعِينَ مُقْنِي رُءُوسِهِمْ لَا يَرْتَدُّ إِلَيْهِمْ طَرْفُهُمْ وَأَفْجَدَتَهُمْ هَوَاءٌ ﴿٤٣﴾

They will rush forward, craning their necks, unable to divert their eyes, a gaping void in their hearts [43]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 43)

The one who rushes forward is he who can be seen speeding, and it is as though his neck has been elongated since he is running long. It is as though the punishment of suffering is drawing in the punished to bring him closer, thus thrusting him forcefully and intensely towards that suffering. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘On a Day when they will be punished by the Fire.’ (*at-Tur*: 13) It is as though there is someone who is thrusting them forcefully towards their painful destiny and they are ‘craning their necks’ (*Ibrahim*: 43). In other words, their heads were raised from shock at the terror of the suffering that awaits them.

In another situation, Allah *Glorified is He* gives the following image of them: ‘[It is as if] We had placed [iron] collars around their necks, right up to their chins so that their heads are forced up.’ (*Ya Sin*: 8) Thus, their image will be horrifying for their excessive humiliation, as the sight of each one is staring straight towards the suffering that draws him quickly and ever so forcefully, and his head is forced up from terror; he is utterly humiliated and shackled. Not one of them can let his eyelids fall, and it is as if they were opened out of his control; there is a gaping void in their heart, which means that there is nothing that can enter it.

We notice for example that when we place an empty bottle in water, air bubbles come out as water enters through its mouth. We know that the heart of a believer is full of faith, while a disbelieving atheist at that same moment recalls his history with Allah *the Almighty* and religion, and he finds nothing comforting therein. Thus, he finds his heart empty for not being reassured concerning what he faces at the moment of judgment.

We have seen those who have witnessed the last moments of someone’s life have said of a believer’s end ‘his face was bright with his facial features full of light’. On the other hand, what they say about a disbeliever’s end are stories of how ghastly his facial features were in that moment.

The reason behind this is that one is at that moment surveying his history with Allah *Glorified is He* and witnessing the course of his whole life. So, he

who spent his life doing what pleasing Allah *the Exalted* must feel comfort, and he who spent his life in disbelief and atheism cannot help but realise the terrifying fate that awaits him: 'On that Day there will be radiant faces, looking towards their Lord, and on that Day there will be the sad and despairing faces of those who realize that a great calamity is about to befall them.' (*al-Qiyama*: 22-25) Allah *Glorified is He* says after this:

وَأَنْذِرِ النَّاسَ يَوْمَ يَأْتِيهِمُ الْعَذَابُ فَيَقُولُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا رَبَّنَا أَخِّرْنَا
إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ قَرِيبٍ نُّجِيبْ دَعْوَتَكَ وَتَتَّبِعِ الرُّسُلَ أَوَلَمْ تَكُونُوا
أَفْئَسْمَ مِنْ قَبْلُ مَا لَكُمْ مِنْ زَوَالٍ ﴿٤٤﴾

So warn people of the Day when punishment will come to them, and when the disbelievers will say, ‘Our Lord, give us a little more time: we shall answer Your call and follow the messengers.’ Did you [disbelievers] not swear in the past that your power would have no end? [44] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 44)

This command from Allah *the Most High* is directed at Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to warn people of the necessity of preparation for the Day of Judgment, for it is inevitably coming. The word ‘Day’ is a condition of time and any condition of time must have an event which takes place in it; the Day of Judgment is not a time for warning or glad tidings, rather warnings and glad tidings must come at the time of this life while we are bearing the responsibility of religious duties. Thus, what they are warned of is the fear of the punishment that will befall them on this Day, as though it was a time bomb, which at the coming of the Day of Judgment will explode in their faces.

Here, evildoers who committed the greatest of injustices against the creed, the message with its components and the universe which celebrates the glory of Allah, will say: ‘Our Lord, give us a little more time. We shall answer Your call and follow the messengers.’ (*Ibrahim*: 44) They ask that the punishment be postponed for a short period of time, so that they can prove that they will answer the message and obey the messenger, and this means that they are asking for the postponement of their judgment. So, the answer of Allah

Glorified is He is the following, ‘Did you [disbelievers] not swear in the past that your power would have no end?’ (*Ibrahim*: 44), for you have sworn previously that Allah *the Almighty* does not resurrect the dead, and He has conveyed what you said: ‘They have sworn by Allah with their strongest oaths that He will not raise the dead to life.’ (*an-Nahl*: 38) When you see the words ‘Yes, indeed’ after a declaration or oath, then it means that what preceded it was in fact falsehood.

Indeed those who are referred to in this verse that we are currently reflecting upon thought that they would not be resurrected, along with thinking that after death they would merely become dust, and it is they who have said: ‘There is only the life of this world. We die, we live, but we will never be resurrected.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 37) So they assured themselves that there will be no Resurrection after this life, but after the resurrection we will hear each one of them says: ‘If only I were dust!’ (*an-Naba’*: 40) Or disbelievers thought that those who were given blessings by Allah *the Almighty* in this world would not be deprived by Him in the Hereafter, as it was put forth by Him in the following simile in His Words: ‘Tell them the parable of two men: for one of them We made two gardens of grape vines, surrounded them with date palms, and put corn fields in between; both gardens yielded fruit and did not fail in any way; We made a stream flow through them, and so he had abundant fruit. One day, while talking to his friend, he said, "I have more wealth and a larger following than you." He went into his garden and wronged himself by saying, "I do not think this will ever perish or that the Last Hour will ever come— even if I were to be taken back to my Lord, I would certainly find something even better there."' (*al-Kahf*: 32-36)

Indeed whoever says this believes that they will die, but they have imagined that his garden would stay as it is, and denied the coming of the Hour by saying, ‘Even if the Hour should come, and I was returned to Allah, I will find an even better garden than this one of mine.’ He supplicates for this even though he has had faith in Allah *the Almighty* to have its reward in the Hereafter. Therefore, he is one of those who have denied that their worldly blessings will perish and denied the Resurrection. He has fallen into the same circle of people who did not believe in Resurrection, and Allah has previously

mentioned what these people had said: 'They say, "What? When we have disappeared into the earth, shall we really be created anew?"' (*as-Sajda*: 10)

Allah *Glorified is He* tells us of His dialogue with those who denied the Resurrection, for He says: 'They will say, "Our Lord, twice you have caused us to be lifeless and twice you have brought us to life. Now we recognise our sins. Is there any way out?"' (*Ghafir*: 11) Thereupon, Allah *Glorified is He* replies to them: 'This is all because when Allah alone was invoked you rejected this, yet when others were associated with Him you believed [in them]. Judgment belongs to Allah the Most High, the Most Great.' (*Ghafir*: 11)

In addition, there is another part of the Quran that we find a dialogue which includes their imploring of Allah *Glorified is He* by saying: 'Our Lord, now that we have seen and heard, send us back and we shall do the good. [Now] we are convinced.' (*as-Sajda*: 12) Allah replies: 'So since you ignored the meeting on this Day of yours, now We shall ignore you. Taste the lasting suffering for all you have done.' (*as-Sajda*: 14)

Furthermore, in a third place of the Quran, they each say at the moment of death: 'My Lord, let me return so as to make amends for the things I neglected.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 99-100) So Allah *the Most High* responds: 'Never! This will not go beyond his words. A barrier stands behind such people until the very Day they are resurrected.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 100) Then after they enter the hellfire they will say: 'Lord, take us away from this and if we go back to our old ways, then we shall really be evildoers.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 107) So, Allah *Glorified is He* replies: 'He will say, "Away with you! In you go! Do not speak to Me!"' (*al-Mu'minun*: 108)

Then in another place, they say as they cry out loud pleadingly in the hellfire: 'Lord, let us out, and we will do righteous deeds, and not what we did before!' (*Fatir*: 37) So Allah *the Most High* responds to them: "Did We not give you a life long enough to take warning if you were going to? The warner came to you, now taste the punishment." The evildoers will have nobody to help them.' (*Fatir*: 37)

Notice that in all of the verses in which they beg and implore Allah *the Almighty* to return to this life they said, 'Our Lord', forgetting that they are taken to their

punishment for their transgressions against His Divinity, for Allah's bestowal of His Lordship was bestowed on you in the worldly life, and indeed He has not deprived you of any of it despite your disbelief.

Thus is the state of those who have sworn that Allah *the Exalted* will not raise them back from the dead, along with denying the Day of Judgement and saying that there is no end for their power, that is, there is neither Resurrection nor raising the dead to life. Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* follows with this noble statement:

وَسَكَنْتُمْ فِي مَسْكَنِ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ وَتَبَيَّنَ
لَكُمْ كَيْفَ فَعَلْنَا بِهِمْ وَضَرَبْنَا لَكُمُ الْأَمْثَالَ ﴿٤٥﴾

You lived in the same places as others who wronged themselves before, and you were clearly shown how We dealt with them — We gave you many examples [45]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 45)

The word *sukun* (comfort) means to find peace and serenity in something away from disturbance, and we know that the woman in a marriage is considered 'a source of comfort' and the home is also *sakan* (a dwelling). In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* is speaking of the dwellings of the evildoers who wronged themselves, for they did not pay heed nor learn from the lessons of those before them while they should have been aware of them. In their journeys and caravans in the summer and winter, they passed by the cities of Saleh, and they saw the remnants of those who did themselves injustice through disbelief and idolatry, and they have passed by Al-Ahqaf and seen what has befallen the people of 'Ad.

All of these peoples received their punishment from Allah *the Almighty* whether through a furious wind or He has sent upon them an intense storm from the sky, or He has destroyed them through a violent upheaval of the earth, or by drowning them, as He has done with the people of Pharaoh. He has punished each one of these people for their sins. Allah *the Most High* has thus been Truthful in fulfilling His Promise to punish disbelievers in this world, so why then did you not take heed of this, and learn that He has been Truthful when He has spoken about the punishment of the Hereafter?

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'You lived in the same places as others who wronged themselves before ...' (*Ibrahim*: 45). In another verse, He says: 'You [people] pass by their ruins morning and night. Will you not take heed?' (*as-Saffat*: 137-138) In other words, you pass by these places that had been settled by those who came before you and had wronged themselves by their disbelief and Allah *the Almighty* has inflicted them with punishment. Thus, He says in the verse that we are reflecting upon: '... you were clearly shown how We dealt with them—We gave you many examples.' (*Ibrahim*: 45)

Indeed when you walk through the land of the people of 'Ad, you see the civilisation of which Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'of Iram, [the city] of lofty pillars, whose like has never been made in any land.' (*al-Fajr*: 7-8) It is a civilisation which we have not yet discovered its remnants, and it remains among the buried, and all that has become enveloped by the earth as such resulted from the anger of Allah *Glorified is He* Who appoints a time to reveal these remnants so that the people on earth could pay heed; this type of revelation of anger occurs whenever atheism increases and spreads.

It has happened that we discovered the civilisation of Thamud, and the civilisation of the pharaohs, and it is this latter one which outreached all others in science and technology. However, despite that, the people of this civilisation were not able to preserve it from the destruction that Allah *the Almighty* has willed.

People still wonder why the ancient Egyptians did not leave their civilisation's expertise and knowledge written and documented in ways that the rest of humanity which followed could understand.

'You lived in the same places as others who wronged themselves before, and you were clearly shown how we dealt with them—We gave you many examples.' (*Ibrahim*: 45) This means that Allah *the Exalted* is showing in this verse that His Will in bringing punishment was clear to the contemporaries of the message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the state of the dwellings of the people who came before them and disbelieved in the messages of messengers. Additionally, Allah *the Almighty* has given them many examples of such people and what happened to them. He uses the sensuous things to give examples of the abstract meanings to bring the latter closer to our minds.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* continues His saying:

وَقَدْ مَكَرُوا مَكْرَهُمْ وَعِنْدَ اللَّهِ مَكْرُهُمْ وَإِنْ كَانَ
مَكْرُهُمْ لَيَرْزُلُ مِنْهُ الْجِبَالُ ﴿٤٦﴾

**They made their plots, but, even if their plots had
been able to move mountains, God had the answer [46]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 46)**

Al-Makr – as we know – means plotting or scheming against someone secretly. This understanding has its roots in the tree which is called *Al-Makmura*, which means a tree that hides itself. Moreover, we see in large fields a tree that is as thick as a finger wrapped around another bigger tree so closely that you could not distinguish its leaves or its roots from the branches of the other tree unless you were to separate it from the tree it is enveloped around.

Anyone who schemes against someone testifies to his own cowardice, weakness, and inability for confrontation, and perhaps it is acceptable that you scheme against someone who is your equal, but to do that against the Ever-Living, the Ever-Watchful from Whom nothing can be hidden neither on earth nor in the heavens is indeed the very meaning of foolishness. Thus, regarding this, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah is the Best of Schemers’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 54) He also said of their plotting: ‘The plotting of evil only rebounds on those who plot.’ (*Fatir*: 43)

We also know that when we attribute a Quality to Allah *Glorified is He* we must understand it within the context of the following verse: ‘... there is nothing like Him. He is the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing.’ (*ash-Shura*: 11) We usually attribute all of Allah’s Actions to goodness, such as His Saying: ‘You are the best of heirs.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 89) Also, the same could be said concerning His Saying: ‘Allah is the Best of Schemers’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 54).

His saying in the verse, ‘They made their plots ...’ (*Ibrahim*: 46) means that they schemed in proportion to their thinking, strength and conniving, but when Allah *the Almighty* responds to this, He will do so with what is commensurate with His Power and unlimited Omnipotence, for He has always known of what they were going to scheme, and He left them to do so.

The triumphs of the messages are derived from the strength of its messenger and his followers, and they face adversaries who are the very reason for the existence of this message; the reason for this is their having spread corruption on earth and their wanting to uphold this corruption which maintains their power. In essence, the new message will strike at their authority and shake its very foundations. This is why it is essential to spare no effort in plotting and bringing down Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in order to eliminate his message.

They tried this through confrontation in the beginning of the message of Islam. They took those who are weak from among the converts to Islam and began torturing them, and not one of them turned back on his religion.

Then, disbelievers tried war, and Allah *the Almighty* granted believers victory over them, while leaving disbelievers no other option but scheming, as He says: 'Remember [Prophet] when the disbelievers plotted to take you captive, kill or expel you. They schemed and so did Allah. He is the best of schemers.' (*al-Anfal*: 30) Thus, they tried corrupting that first recipient of faith, namely Prophet Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah *peace and blessings be upon him* and they thought that if they succeeded in that, then his message would disappear, and so they tried buying him out with money, but they did not succeed.

They also tried to buy him off with offers of power and kingship, but they also did not succeed, and he declared his famous saying: 'By Allah, if they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand to leave this matter, I will not until Allah makes manifest His Cause, or I perished in the attempt.'⁽¹⁾

Then they decided to kill him and divide the responsibility for his murder amongst clans, so they took from each clan a young man and all went to strike Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with their swords as one man, but he emigrated that night and so their scheming was not fulfilled.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They made their plots, but Allah had the answer.' (*Ibrahim*: 46) which means that He *the Most High* knew of their plotting Then He follows with this saying: '...even if their plots had been able to move

(1) Narrated by Ibn Hisham in His (*As-Sira An-Nabawiyya*) (266/1) attributed to Ibn-Ishaq.

mountains.’ (*Ibrahim*: 46) In other words, be comforted O, Prophet Muhammad, for even if their scheming was so powerful that it could move mountains, they still would not be able to capture you. The mountains were considered by Arabs as the powerful of all creation and so even if their scheming was powerful enough to move them, they could not succeed in harming you, O, Prophet Muhammad, and they would not be able to keep you from achieving your goal and mission.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If We had sent this Quran down to a mountain, you [Prophet] would have seen it humbled and split apart in its awe of Allah. We offer people such illustrations so that they may reflect.' (*al-Hashr*: 21) So if their scheme is so great that it can move mountains, then know that Allah's Will is far greater.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* presents the reason for the ineffectiveness of their plots, so He says:

فَلَا تَحْسَبَنَّ اللَّهَ مُخْلَفًا وَعَدِهِ رُسُلُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَزِيزٌ ذُو انْتِقَامٍ ﴿٤٧﴾

So do not think [Prophet] that God will break His promise to His messengers: He is mighty, and capable of retribution [47] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 47)

If their scheming had any effect or influence, Allah *the Exalted* would not have said that His Promise to His messengers would not fail to be fulfilled, rather, their scheming is indeed ruined from the very beginning and has no effect, for He is the One Who says: 'Our Word has already been given to Our servants the messengers: It is they who will be helped, and the ones who support Our cause will be the winner [173].' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173) Thus, Allah cannot break His Promise to His messengers.

Furthermore, there are many promises in the Quran, for there is Satan's promise to his loyalists as Allah's following Words confirm: 'Satan threatens you with the prospect of poverty and commands you to do foul deeds; Allah promises you His forgiveness and His abundance.' (*al-Baqara*: 268) There is also a promise from Allah *Glorified is He* to believers: 'Allah has made a promise to those among you who believe and do good deeds; He will make

them successors to the land ...' (*an-Nur*: 55). Thus if Allah *the Almighty* does break the Promise He makes to the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then would He break His Promise to Prophet Muhammad? Of course, He would not, since this Promise is made by Allah *Glorified is He* so He will certainly keep His Promise. What if His Promise is made to messengers and believers? He says: 'We support Our messengers and the believers, in the present life and on the Day when witnesses arise.' (*Ghafir*: 51) Allah's granting victory necessitates the defeat for the opposition, and this victory needs one of His fitting attributes, namely that it is granted by *the Almighty* Who cannot be defeated, and defeat for those who disbelieved also needs a fitting attribute which causes their defeat by the Command of the Avenger, the All-Compeller.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

يَوْمَ تَبْدُلُ الْأَرْضَ عَيْرَ الْأَرْضِ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ وَبَرَزُوا لِلَّهِ الْوَاحِدِ الْقَهَّارِ

One Day – when the earth is turned into another earth, the heavens into another heaven, and people all appear before God, the One, the Overpowering [48] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 48)

Allah *the Exalted* in this verse is making them fearful of the Day of Judgment after He has brought them the image of what they will ask for; that is, He postpones their judgment and returns them to the worldly life so that they might do good deeds and answer the Call of the messengers. In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* clarifies that the world that He has created and brought Adam and his offspring into was made subservient to them. They live in this universe by Allah's provision which exists in their own being and are dispersed all over this universe for all His creation – believers and disbelievers – and those who pursue these means of provision will ultimately triumph.

Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Anyone desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall increase it for him; if anyone desires a harvest in this world, We shall give him a share of it, but in the Hereafter he will have no share. (*ash-Shura*: 20) Thus, Allah *the Exalted* has granted His creation the ability to rise in this world through a variety of causes, but living in the life to come is by direct means of the Causer, and so as soon as a believer has but a

fleeting thought of a particular wish, he finds it immediately realised. This matter does not require an earth for which Allah *the Exalted* has portioned provision, placed solid mountains on it and sent rain down from the heavens. In other words, there will be an earth other than this earth and a heaven other than this heaven, for the earth that we know here is an earth of causes and means and similarly its heaven that we know is also of means and causes.

However, the paradise of the Hereafter has no causes or means, and thus it is necessary for the earth to be changed into another and the heavens as well.

Allah's Words, 'and people all appear before Allah, the One, the Overpowering' (*Ibrahim*: 48), mean that no one will be with them except for their Lord, for in this verse to 'appear before Allah' means to emerge and face Him.

A believer finds his Lord through faith in the unseen of his world, and he believes in Him and all that He has brought forth, including the coming of the Hour and the existence of paradise and hellfire.

Furthermore, we all remember the conversation between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and one of his companions when the former asked him, 'How did you arise today?' Thus, the companion said, 'I arose a true believer in Allah.' So Messenger Muhammad said to him, 'For every truth there is a reality, what then is the reality of your belief?' So the companion said, 'I detached myself from this world so that its comings and goings are the same to me (This means that gold is no more to me than dust), and it is as if I [already] see the people of Paradise blissful in it, and the people of the hellfire suffering in it.' So the Noble Messenger said to him, 'You have come to know [the truth] so hold firmly [to it]'.⁽¹⁾

This is the state of a believer; whereas a disbeliever's state is different. He emerges to find Allah *the Almighty* Who he denied, and it is a confrontation he was not expecting, and so Allah *Glorified is He* describes Himself in this event as: 'the One, the Overpowering.' (*Ibrahim*: 48), for there is no other God to tell him, 'leave him for my sake'.

(1) Cited by Al-Haythami in (*Majma' Az-Zawa'id*) (57/1) and he attributed it to At-Tabarani in (*Al-Kabir*) of the narration of Al-Harith ibn Malik Al-Ansari.

In another verse, He also says of such people: 'But the deeds of those who disbelieve are like a mirage in a desert; the thirsty person thinks there will be water, but when he gets there, he finds only Allah Who pays him his account in full—Allah is swift in reckoning.' (*an-Nur*: 39) This means that they will be surprised by this situation for which they were not ready. Likewise, His Words, 'the One, the Overpowering' (*Ibrahim*: 48) mean that He is capable of dominating any created being and compelling it towards that for which it does not wish.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ مُّقْرَّنِينَ فِي الْأَصْفَادِ ﴿٤٩﴾

You [Prophet] will see the guilty on that Day, bound together in fetters [49] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 49)

The guilty is the one who has committed a sin, and here it meant for those who have committed the gravest sin of disbelieving in Allah *the Almighty* and also those who have committed sins other than disbelieving; you will see them all bound with a rope or a fetter tying them up. The 'fetters' refer to the chains or handcuffs put on a person's hands, ankles or necks. Every gang of criminals are bound together. Simply, those who commit a particular sin are most likely kind and empathetic to one another. Yet, in this situation we find them repelling each other, showing animosity to, cursing, harassing and offending one another with mutual displeasure declared in confirmation of the Lord's Words *the Most High* 'Close friends on that day will become enemies of one another, except for the righteous' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67). Each one of them will torture the other before they all experience the painful suffering. They would say:

- 'O, our Lord! Show us those of the invisible beings and humans that have led us astray; we shall trample them underfoot, so that they shall be the lowest of all!' (*Fussilat*: 67)
- 'O, our Lord! Behold, we paid heed unto our leaders and our great men, and it is they who have led us astray from the right path! O, our Lord! Give them double suffering and banish them utterly from Your grace!' (*al-Ahzab*: 67-68)

Allah adds more elements to the image of sinners by saying:

سَرَابِيلُهُمْ مِّنْ قَطِرَانٍ وَتَغْشَىٰ وُجُوهُهُمُ النَّارُ ﴿٥٠﴾

**In garments of pitch, faces covered in fire [50]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 50)**

The *sarabeel* (garments) is the plural of *sirbal* (garment), which are clothes worn next to the skin beneath one's outer clothing. When a garment is made from 'black pitch', it is black, disgusting and repelling with a rotten smell, yet very flammable. *Qatiran* is originally a liquid substance that oozes out from certain trees and is used to cure camels of rabies. Allah *the Exalted* usually uses similes with things familiar to the Arab minds and environment. Allah *Glorified is He* also says of them, 'with fire veiling their faces' (*Ibrahim*: 50). When a person is exposed to danger, the first thing he tries to protect is his face because the face is the noblest part of human body. How would it be like when disbelievers have their faces veiled with fire? The mere image is painful. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse, 'Is he who will shield with his face the worst punishment on the Day of Resurrection [like one secure from it]' (*az-Zumar*: 24). They will be so keen to avoid the painful punishment even by using their faces. Allah *the Most High* also says, 'On the Day when they shall be dragged into the fire on their faces' (*al-Qamar*: 48). Evidently, the mention of face comes in several images to reflect the scenes of suffering.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

لِيَجْزِيَ اللَّهُ كُلَّ نَفْسٍ مَّا كَسَبَتْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٥١﴾

**[All will be judged] so that God may reward each soul
as it deserves: God is swift in His reckoning [51]
(The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 51)**

Indeed the Lord *the Most High* would not give a physical punishment except for violent sins. His Words, 'Allah will recompense every soul for what it had earned. Allah is swift in reckoning' (*Ibrahim*: 51) mean that believers and disbelievers alike will receive their recompense for what they did.

Earning is to acquire something more than what one has. When you deprive yourself of something in this world, you will be requited a reward for it. Furthermore, whosoever earns a penalty for a sin, will be punished for it. It is said *kasaba* to express a personal harmful behaviour in which a person usually enjoys. This is different from *iktasaba* which expresses things hard for a person to do. Then the recompense is necessary and must be based on reckoning, but the reckoning needs scales and balance. A believer might say, 'I believe in my Lord, and my Lord would not wrong anyone.' In response, the balance refers to the evidence as Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Then, he whose weight [of good deeds] is heavy in the balance shall find himself in a happy state of life, whereas he whose weight is light in the balance shall be engulfed by an abyss' (*al-Qari'a*: 6-9). This mental portioning of the balance is clear; it is either 'heavy' or 'light'. Those for whom both sides of the balance are equal, their state is made clear in the chapter of *al-A'raf* in which Allah *the Most High* says, 'On the Heights will be men who will recognise each person by his mark.' (*al-A'raf*: 46) Since the Lord will judge every soul according to what it has earned, some may think that this would take time. So He *the Most High* says, 'Allah is swift in reckoning!' (*Ibrahim*: 51) It shows us that He will judge every created being from Adam *peace be upon him* to the Final Hour in a speed commensurate with His unlimited Power. When people asked 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* how is it that Allah will judge every creature at once, he gave this clear and evident answer, 'In the same way He provides for all of them at once.' Allah *Glorified is He* says:

هَذَا بَلَدٌ لِلنَّاسِ وَلِيُنذَرُوا بِهِ، وَلِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌُ وَاحِدٌ وَلِيَذْكُرُوا الْأَنْبِيَاءَ

This is a message to all people, so that they may be warned by it, and know that He is the only God, and so that those who have minds may take heed [52] (The Quran, *Ibrahim*: 52)

This verse is the concluding verse of the chapter of *Ibrahim*. It defines the Message as a Divine Declaration from Allah to be delivered by His messenger whom He aided through miracles to draw the way of human life and stewardship over the earth. Furthermore, when the laws governing the progress of human life as vicegerents on the world are disclosed, it became incumbent that no

one may claim any addition to complete or perfect them. The Creator is the Lawmaker and this matter must be in mind of every responsible person. When you read the saying of the All-Wise, 'This is a Message unto all mankind' (*Ibrahim*: 52), it refers to the entire Quran since the Message covers all the revelations from Allah the Exalted.

The Words of Allah: 'This is a Message unto all mankind.' (*Ibrahim*: 52) undertake the same function of the modern legal text, which clarifies that no punishment is there without a law criminalising an act and that law must be made public to all people. It is important for the laws to be disseminated in the official national newspapers so that no one says, 'I did not know about the law.' We all know that Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'We never punish any people [for the wrong they did] until we have sent a messenger [to them]' (*al-Isra*': 15). The Prophet's mission is to deliver Allah's way of life to preserve its natural progression. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Your duty is no more than to deliver the Message, but the reckoning is Ours' (*ar-Ra*'d: 40).

- 'Those who convey Allah's Messages [to the world], and stand in awe of Him and hold none but Allah in awe...' (*al-Ahzab*: 39).
- The Lord *the Most High* states the statement of the Messenger,⁽¹⁾ 'Indeed, I delivered unto you my Lord's Message' (*al-A*'raf: 93).

He also says, 'I have delivered to you the Message with which I was sent unto you' (*Hud*: 57).

There is no excuse for one who says, 'I committed a sin, but I did not know it was one.' Simply, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the same verse, 'Let them be warned thereby' (*Ibrahim*: 52). A warning alerts people against any expected harm that may befall them before it happens and clarifies the horror that follows disobedience. Similarly, the glad tidings alert the people of good to prepare for the coming reward. The Lord's Statement 'This is a Message unto all mankind' (*Ibrahim*: 52) encompasses the glad tidings as well. However,

(1) The messenger mentioned here is Shu'aib *peace be upon him*; Allah says, 'They who had given the lie to Shu'aib, as though they had never lived there; they who had given the lie to Shu'aib – it was they who were the losers! He turned away from them and said, "O my people! Indeed, I delivered unto you my Lord's Message and gave you good advice: how, then, could I mourn for people who have denied the truth?"' (*al-A*'raf: 92-93).

He confirms the warning 'let them be warned thereby' (*Ibrahim: 52*) since the real failure will befall the sinners.

For me, 'warning' in this verse is a real blessing; it discourages man from committing sins when one thinks of the consequences of evil deeds. Therefore, it is a blessing and a great favour. Allah *Glorified is He* then says, 'Let them know that He is the One and Only God' (*Ibrahim: 52*). Such is the primary doctrinal matter which is basic belief. He is but One God whose command is incumbent upon all the creation for life in order to achieve harmony.

The main point of this life is that all living movements interlink and reinforce one another apart from conflict. If they conflict, there would be no development or growth if one builds and another destroys! The goal behind the motions of life is to carry out the mission of human stewardship over the world and strengthen one another without conflict, so the society progresses in harmony following the same Lord and the same Divine Command. When Allah *the Exalted* says, 'This is a Message unto all mankind' (*Ibrahim: 52*), He elucidates the essence of the religion as revealed to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. Whoever hears of this Message should deliver it to those who have not. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah blesses a person who hears my message and understands it, then delivers it to those who have not heard it.'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, the chain of transmission continues; if people did not hear the message, the burden lies on those who have not delivered it, who deprived themselves from the honour of following the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. Whoever knows a command of the religion shall transmit it to others. The Lord *the Most High* commands His Messenger to deliver His commandments. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Thus We have made you a just and central community that you may be witnesses over the people, and the messenger will be a witness over you' (*al-Baqara: 143*). The Messenger bore witness that he has delivered the message unto you and every Muslim who knows of any commandment must deliver it to those who do not know it to extend benefits from it to others. After hearing the

(1) Ahmad, *Musnad*, 1: 437; Al-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan*, (Hadith, 2657, 2658); Ibn Majah, *Sunnan* (Hadith, 232); Al-Humaydi, *Musnad*, 1: 47; from 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud may Allah be pleased with him.

commandment, they may live by it while the one who delivered it might not. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'It may be that a listener is more learned than a transmitter.'⁽¹⁾ I always say, 'Do not ever confuse the knowledge given to you with the behaviour of the one who transmits it to you.' A poet once said,

Take my knowledge and overlook my deeds

Like you enjoy fruits and leave twigs as firewood

A Muslim must assume the responsibility of transmitting religious knowledge to others, so the message continues. We know that the Lord *the Most High* says, 'You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind; you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong' (*Al-'Imran*: 110). In other words, you have taken on the mission of prophets. The message first came from Allah to the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Messenger honestly transmitted the message. This message is free from conflict for it comes from the All-Wise Lord. Conflict only arises from differences or absence of wisdom. Let us look closely at Allah's Words, 'Let them know that He is the One and Only God' (*Ibrahim*: 52). The word 'One' is used to deny any form of association or plurality as there is none like Him; He is One Who is not composed of parts. He does not have systems and organs like humans; if He has systems, then He would be in essence need for those various parts, a matter which is unthinkable and unfathomable when it comes to Allah *the Almighty*.

Ulu Al-Albab (those who are endowed with insight) receive this message and understand it perfectly. *Al-Albab* (hearts, which in the singular form is *lub*—the core/insight/heart of something) has outer layers or crusts for protection. That which is protected is the purest part is *lub*. *Ulu Al-Albab* is the people who perceive faith intellectually and have their minds occupied with constant remembrance. The world's demands, enjoyment, and desires may lead one astray from the Way of Allah, so Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Let those who are endowed with insight take this to heart!' (*Ibrahim*: 52) In other

(1) *The Hadith continues as follows, "Allah blesses a person who hears my Message and understands it, and then delivers it to those who have not heard it."*

words, those endowed with sound minds and insight remember that Allah is One and the Only God; there is no deity but He. He bore witness for Himself before anyone testifies to His Oneness. He says, 'Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him' (*Al-'Imran*: 18). Then comes the testimony of angels and scholars, '[so do] the angels and those of knowledge' (*Al-'Imran*: 18). The testimony of angels tells of the reality they themselves witness and the testimony of *Ulu A-Albab* is based on deduction. The Lord also witnesses that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a messenger. The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* also testifies for himself; he says just like all of us 'I bear witness that there is no deity but Allah and I testify that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' It is a responsibility upon *Ulu Al-Albab* to remember that He is Allah, the One and the Sovereign.

the chapter of

al-Hijr

In the Name of God,⁽¹⁾ the Most Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy

The beginning of this Chapter of *al-Hijr*⁽²⁾ speaks of the main principles of transmission and provides a programme—the Noble Quran—for human life; it teaches the doctrine of the Oneness of God, which people with insight, as seen at the end of the previous chapter, receive with their minds and hearts. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the beginning of the chapter:

الرَّ تِلْكَ ءَايَاتُ الْكِتَابِ وَقُرْءَانٍ مُبِينٍ

***Alif Lam Ra*⁽³⁾ These are the verses of the Scripture, a Quran
that makes things clear [1] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 1)**

As seen, the chapter begins with stand-alone letters about which we said that Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* revealed and recited in this way, and then the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* memorised and conveyed to

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- (1) The Islamic conception of 'Allah' is not the same as the Christian and Jewish conception of 'God'. However, the word 'Allah' does not refer to a tribal god or God of only Muslims, it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.
 - (2) This Chapter is the fifteenth chapter in the order of the Noble Quran. It is a Meccan chapter and has 99 verses. Its beginning falls at the beginning of the 14th Part of the Quran. It had this name following the people of *al-Hijr*, who are mentioned in the 80th verse of the same chapter. They were the people of Thamud to whom Allah sent Prophet Saleh as a Messenger. However, they denied him. The Hijr are the houses of Thamud.
 - (3) *As-Suyuti said (al-Itqan, 3/21) that some people of knowledge tried to explain its meaning. Ibn Abu Hatim and others transmitted from Abu al-Duha that Ibn 'Abbas said "Alif. Lam. Ra..." (al-Hijr: 1) mean, 'I am Allah and I see.' Abu Al-Sheikh narrated that Muhammad ibn Ka'b Al-Qurazi said, 'A. L. R' for the first three letters from "Ar-Rahman" (i.e. the All-Merciful). In his Ghara'ib, Al-Karmani said that 'Alif. Lam. Ra...' refer to 'I am Allah; I know and I raise up.' He then said, 'But the preferable view is that it is one of those secrets that none know except Allah.' Al-Sha'bi said, 'Every book has a secret and the secret of the Quran comes in the beginnings of its chapters.'*

us in the same way. The early people who first received them were highly skilled in language, talented in speech and gifted with eloquence, yet no one amongst them disapproved of these letters. They are isolated letters that are recited as the names of letters. We know that each letter has a name as well as something named after it. When we say or write the word *kataba*, for example, we take the letters *kaf*, *ta* and *ba* and place them side by side in order to put them in the form of that word as we voice or write. They together form a word and become what we refer to as 'What is named by the letters'. However, as for the names of the letters, they are *kaf*, *ta* and *ba*. The only ones who know these names are those who have learnt them. This is why when you want to test someone's reading and writing skills, you say to them, 'Give me the spellings of the words you write.' If he gives us the names of letters, we know that he can read and write well.

The Quran, as we know, was sent down to show the Arabs that they were incapable of matching it. The Arabs were a people who were exceptionally talented in language insomuch that they would set up markets to honour those gifted in language, just as we today set up trade fairs and conventions to show off our advanced products. Allah *the Almighty* wanted the miracle of His final Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to be in the same field in which they excelled. Simply, if the miracle had been in some other fields unfamiliar to them or in which they did not excel, they would have said, 'If we ourselves had learnt this, we would have brought something superior to it.' The miracle of the Quran came to them in the same field in which they were experts using the same Arabic language and words made up of letters that they themselves used in their own words. However, the thing that made the Quran miraculous was that the One Who spoke its Words was the Creator.

The letters '*Alif-Lam-Ra*' are elements of the Arabic alphabets which constitute the language of Arabs. This hint summarises the discussion of scholars about the beginnings of the chapter. We must know that Allah *the Most High* has secrets in His Words; He says, 'He it is Who has bestowed upon you from on high this Book, containing messages that are clear in and by themselves—these are the essence of the Book, as well as others that are allegorical. Now those whose hearts are given to swerving from the truth go

after that part of the Book which has been expressed in allegory, seeking out [what is bound to create] confusion, and seeking [to arrive at] its final meaning [in an arbitrary manner]; but none save Allah knows its final meaning. Hence, those who are deeply rooted in knowledge say, "We believe in it. The whole [of the Book] is from our Lord.'" (*Al-‘Imran*: 7)

In other words, the Quran has verses with decisive and clear content. These are the legal texts of laws, which speak of reward or punishment. As for the allegorical ambiguous verses, they are much like these letters that appear at the beginning of some Quranic chapters. The deviants ask themselves, 'What do they mean?' It is not because they actually search for their meaning, rather, they say as such out of a desire to create mischief and strife. To those people, we say, 'Do you want to understand everything with your faculty of reason?' The intellect is but a means of perception, exactly like the eye and the ear. Do your eyes see everything? Of course, they do not! There are rules and limits to human sight. For example, if something is at a great distance away, you will not see it; the eye cannot see beyond the limit of the horizon.

However, the horizon of every human being varies according to the strength of his vision. There are some whom Allah *the Exalted* blesses with exceptionally strong and keen eyesight, whereas there are others whose eyesight is so weak that they need glasses to help them see things properly. If the eye, a person's means of visual perception, has limits and so is the ear, a person's means of aural perception, then there must also be limits for human intellect which understands some things and fails to understand many others. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said about the verses of the Quran, 'Whatever you know of it, act by it, but whatever is ambiguous in it, then believe in it.'⁽¹⁾ This preserves the fixed times and places for the birth of Quranic secrets. Were the Quran to give away all secrets in the first generation of people to whom it was sent, how would it address the coming generations without new secrets? With any advancement that human intellect

(1) *The complete version of this Hadith is as follows, 'the Quran was not revealed in a way that some of it conflicts with other parts. Rather, whatever you know of it, act accordingly and whatever is ambiguous believe in it.'* Ibn Kathir ascribed it in his *Tafsir* (1/346) to ibn Mardawayh on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'As. As-Suyuti ascribed it to Nasr Al-Maqdasi in *Al-Hujja*, see *Al-Durr al-Manthur*, 2/154.

makes, Allah *the Almighty* permits some of the Quranic secrets. For the legal verses, no one can argue against them. For the ambiguous verses, the Lord *the Most High* says, '... but none save Allah knows its final meaning. Hence, those who are deeply rooted in knowledge say, "We believe in it. The whole [of the Book] is from our Lord."' (*Al- 'Imran*: 7) Some read this verse in the following way: 'but none save Allah and those who are deeply rooted in knowledge know its final meaning.' Those who recite it in this way⁽¹⁾ forget that the ultimate level of being deeply rooted in knowledge is to believe in these verses exactly as they are.⁽²⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* says, '*Alif-Lam-Ra*. These are messages of revelation—of a discourse clear in itself and clearly showing the truth' (*al-Hijr*: 1). The word *tilka* (these) indicates what came before as well as that of the Book that is following. *Ayat* is a plural and its singular is *aya* (a message of revelation) which refers to an amazing thing that draws people's attention. Either it may be existential, such as the night, day, sun, and moon, to prove the existence of a Higher Power, or it may be miraculous to prove the truth of the message conveyed from Allah such as the miracles of the messengers. These messages are also identical with the Quranic verses that deliver the Divine programme for the entire humanity.

Allah *Glorified is He* adds: 'of a discourse clear in itself and clearly showing the truth' (*al-Hijr*: 1). Is the Book something different from the Quran? We say that when the word 'Book' is used, it refers to the entire revelation from Allah *the Exalted* to His messengers, including the books of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the Psalms of Dawud (David) *peace be upon him*, the Torah of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and the Gospel of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. All these are Books; so we refer to the people who follow

(1) This recitation necessitates the obligatory pause after the word (*'ilm*). In other words, the meaning of the verse is that those who are deeply rooted in knowledge know the correct interpretation of the ambiguous verses. As for the first recitation, it stops at the Majestic Name (*Allah*); it means that it is Allah alone who knows the correct interpretation of the ambiguous verses. See, *Ibn Katheer, Tafsir, 1/247*.

(2) '*A'ishah may Allah be pleased with her said, 'Their deep rootedness in knowledge lies in the fact that they believe in its clear verses and its ambiguous ones, despite the fact that they do not know their correct interpretation.'* As-Suyuti ascribed it to Ibn Jarir, *Ibn Al-Mundhir and Ibn Abu Hatim. See, Al-Durr Al-Manthur, 2/151*.

them as the ‘People of the Book’. However, when we use the word ‘Book’ in the definite form, it only refers to the Quran and nothing else since it is the final Book revealed inclusive of what is in all other Books.

In this context, Allah *the Almighty* emphasises the Quranic characteristic conjoining a specific meaning to a general meaning; the Book itself is Quran i.e. recitation. It indicates that it will be written down as a book as was first written down in the Preserved Tablet. If someone says, ‘The previous Books were also written down’, our response is the following, ‘Unlike the Quran, these Books were written down a long time after having been revealed. The Quran was written in the very moment when Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* brought it. In that sense, the Quran is unique. It was not left unwritten for generations like the rest of Books. The Quran is described as ‘clear in itself and clear for others’. It encompasses all things. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘No single thing have we neglected in the Book.’ (*al-An‘am*: 38). Therefore, the answer to any question is that you either find it explained in detail in the Quran or ask the scholars about it. The Lord *the Most High* says, ‘If you do not know, then ask *Ahl al-Dhikr* (i.e. the scholars) who know.’⁽¹⁾ (*al-Anbiya*: 7) Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

رُبَّمَا يَوَدُّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْ كَانُوا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٢﴾

**The disbelievers may well come to wish they
had submitted to God [2] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 2)**

Rubba is a particle whose usage depends on the context; it may either mean ‘How few!’ or ‘How many!’ It comes before singular words. We say *rubba akhin laka lam talidhu ummuka* (How many a man is like a brother to you, yet your mother did not give birth to him!) Similarly, we say *rubbama yanjahu-l-kasul* (a lazy man might succeed), but the statement *rubbama yanjahu-dh-dhakiy* means ‘How many! Many a clever man succeeds. In this way, the same word is used to express two opposing meanings just to keep minds awake and attract attention. In this verse, the Lord *the Most High*

(1) The “*dhikr*” means the *Quran* and all other revealed Books. In other words, ‘Ask the scholars of all nations.’ See, Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*, 1/174.

attaches the particle *ma* to the end of *rubba* (*rubbama*) and places a verb⁽¹⁾ after it. It is wrong to say that *ma* is superfluous, since the speaker is Allah *the Exalted* Who says, 'It will come to pass that those who are [now] bent on denying this truth will wish that they had surrendered themselves to Allah [became Muslims in their lifetime]' (*al-Hijr*: 2). Will there come a time when the disbelievers wish to be Muslims? The word *yawaddu* means 'to love, wish and hope'. Everything you wish for and desire is a form of *talab*. In Arabic, when you wish for something, it is either possible or impossible to come true. Your wish 'Would that my youth come back!' is an example of impossible wishes. Your saying 'Perhaps I will visit so-and-so!' is an example of something that is called a 'hope'; it is possible for you to visit so-and-so. You might say, 'How many are with you?' to form a mental picture of all those sitting with the one asked. It is called a 'question'.

Thus, whenever you request something that is difficult and unobtainable, it is called a wish, but when it is attainable, it is called a hope. Finally, when you ask about the scenario of something, it is called a question. Sometimes you request a thing just to avoid doing a certain action. In this verse, the disbelievers' wish 'that they had surrendered themselves to Allah [became Muslims in their lifetime]' (*al-Hijr*: 2). Is it attainable? Let us see when they want it. They will declare that wish when their stubborn disbelief comes to an end by means of the horrible events, so they start to weigh up matters in the right manner. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'They rejected them [the signs/messages/miracles]; they justified transgression and arrogance for themselves. Note the consequences for the evildoers' (*an-Naml*: 14).

Their wish to be Muslims even occurred at the Battle of Badr when Muslims overcame them. They then said, 'Would that we were Muslims to win some of the booty!'⁽²⁾ In other words, the wish occurred in this world,

(1) Al-Qurtubi said (*Tafsir*, 5/2725) that '(*rubba*) does not come before a verb, but by attaching (*ma*) to it, you enable it to come before a verb.' Ibn Hisham said (*Mughni Al-Labeeb*, 1/120), 'If (*ma*) is added after (*rubba*), it is usual for it to stop it from actively affecting the word after it, to prepare it for coming before verbal sentences, and for the verb to be in the past tense both in form and in meaning.'

(2) As-Suyuti narrated (*Ad-Durr Al-manthur*, 5/61) that Ibn Mas'ud may Allah be pleased with him and a number of other Companions said, 'On the Day of Badr, when their =

but it will take place again when they die. Allah *the Almighty* says, '[As for those who will not believe in the life to come, they go on lying to themselves] until, when death approaches any of them, he prays, "O, my Lord! Let me return [to life], so that I might act righteously in whatever I have failed!"' (*al-Mu'minun*: 99-100) The Lord *the Most High* Himself comments on this statement by saying, 'Nay, it is indeed but a [meaningless] word that he utters' (*al-Mu'minun*: 100). They will also wish that they were Muslims, thereby affirming the Words of Allah *the Exalted* 'If you could but see [how it will be on Judgment Day] when those who are lost in sin will hang their heads before their Lord, [saying,] "O, our Lord! [Now] we have seen, and we have heard! Return us, then, [to our earthly life] that we may do good deeds. [Now], behold, we are certain [of the truth]!"' (*as-Sajda*: 12) There will come a time in which disbelievers wish that they were Muslims. It happens when they witness what removes their denial and stubborn disbelief. At that time, it becomes clear that this world which they clung to so desperately was transient; they wish to be Muslims when it is too late and all opportunities are lost. It is enough pride for Muslims that they followed Allah's religion and undertook their duties. Conversely, it is enough shame for disbelievers that they suffered that open loss and felt misery that they were not Muslims.

On the Last Day, Allah *the Exalted* punishes disobedient Muslims who did not repent after their sins and ask for forgiveness from their Lord as well as those who failed to have their sins forgiven since they lacked sincerity and determination. There are also hypocrites about whom the Lord says to His Prophet, 'Whether you seek forgiveness for them, or do not seek forgiveness for them; if you even seek forgiveness for them seventy times, Allah will not forgive them' (*at-Tawba*: 80). Each will suffer punishment equivalent to his disobedience. Disbelievers will look towards them and say, 'Your witness that there is no deity but Allah has not been of any benefit to you; here you are with us in the Fire!' The Lord *the Most High* will then relieve those who said, 'There is no deity but Allah' and say, 'Take them out [of the Fire], clean them up and go back with them to Paradise.' Whereupon, disbelievers will

= necks were being struck and they were being presented to the Fire, the idolaters wished that they were among those who believed in Muhammad.'

say, 'Would that we had been Muslims, so that we could now leave the Fire and join the people of Paradise.'⁽¹⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

ذَرَّهُمْ يَأْكُلُوا وَيَتَمَتَّعُوا وَيُلْهِمُ الْأَمَلُ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣﴾

**So [Prophet] leave them to eat and enjoy themselves. Let
[false] hopes distract them: they will come to know [3]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 3)**

Dharhum is a command to forsake and leave them. On some occasions, He says *dharhum* and on other occasions He says *dharni* (i.e. leave me): 'Leave Me alone [to deal] with those who give the lie to the truth, those who enjoy the blessings of life' (*al-Muzzammil*: 11). In other words, leave them to Me; I am the One Who will punish them, and I am the One Who knows how long a respite they will be given and when their punishment will come. The present tense verb of *dharhum* is *yadhar*; it is used in the Lord's saying, 'and *yadhar-uk* (forsake you) and your gods?' (*al-A'raf*: 127) The past tense of this verb is not used in Arabic except in one prophetic statement in which the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Leave the people of Yemen so long as they *dharaw* (leave) you.' There is another verb that shares many qualities with this verb, which is *da'a* (leave it be). It is said that Arabs neglected the past tense of *yada* and *yadhar* except in one recitation⁽²⁾ of Allah's Words, 'Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor does He scorn you.' (*ad-Duha*: 3) In another verse, the Lord *the Most High* says, 'Leave them alone; let them eat and enjoy themselves.' (*al-Hijr*: 3)

Normally, we eat, but there is a difference between one who eats to take the necessary energy to carry out the daily duties and one who eats for pleasure and enjoyment. Animals eat to receive and use energy. Then, when

(1) *Al-Suyuti, Al-Durr Al-Manthur, (5/62) from Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari may Allah be pleased with him. Al-Suyuti ascribed it to Ibn Abi 'Asim in Al-Sunna, Ibn Jareer, Ibn Abi Hatim, Al-Tabarani, Al-Hakim who graded it as authentic, Ibn Mardawayh and Al-Bayhaqi in Al-Ba'th wa Al-Nushur.*

(2) *It is the recitation of 'Urwa ibn Az-Zubayr. Both recitations (wada'aka) and (wadda'aka) convey the same meaning i.e. Your Lord has not left you alone. See, Lisan Al-'Arab, (entry: ع د ا).*

they are full, no one can force them to eat even a single sprig of clover more. Conversely, a human being may eat after being full and after washing hands when, for instance, he sees a new type of food. Sometimes, the food we eat is not healthy; it may tire us out, and we may use some laxatives to aid digestion, such as fizzy water and various medications. Therefore, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'It is sufficient for a human being to eat a few mouthfuls to keep his spine straight.'⁽¹⁾ In other words, he discouraged us from eating with the sole purpose of pleasure and sating our appetite.

Let us note the difference between the food of this world and that of paradise. There we will enjoy healthy food, while here in this world we sometimes eat food raw and without salt to live healthy and avoid troubles. It is healthy, yet unpleasant and tasteless. The food of paradise is both healthy and tasty. It is through this that we understand the Words of Allah *the Almighty* 'Leave them alone; let them eat and enjoy themselves' (*al-Hijr*: 3), i.e. Let them eat food solely for the purpose of enjoyment. Then Allah *Glorified is He* continues to say, 'the while the hope [of vain delights] beguiles them' (*al-Hijr*: 3). They set happy goals for themselves which distract them from the means which bring them benefit. This is why the Arab proverb says, 'Hope without action is meaningless!' As long as you hope for something, you must act to achieve it. For an example of mistaken hopes, Allah *the Exalted* quotes a conceited person who lets himself be deceived by vanities by saying, 'I do not think that this will ever perish! And neither do I think that the Last Hour will ever come' (*al-Kahf*: 35-36). Ultimately, the Last Hour will inevitably come despite all false hopes and self-delusion. The Lord *the Most High* says, 'the while the hope [of vain delights] beguiles them: for in time they will come to know [the truth]' (*al-Hijr*: 3). The word *sawfa* indicates the late occurrence in the future. Verbs such as 'know' mean that human beings already know or they will know in a short time. When we say *sawfa ya 'lamun*, it includes all these possible meanings. Believers will prove triumphant forever by Allah's

(1) *Ahmad, Musnad*, 4/132; *Ibn Majah, Sunnan*, (Hadith, 3349) from *Al-Miqdam ibn Ma'd Yakrib may Allah be pleased with him as follows*, 'There is no worse vessel a human being can fill than his stomach. A few small mouthfuls to help him keep his strength is enough for a man. If a human being can overcome himself, then he should set aside a third [of his stomach] for food, a third for drink, and a third for air.'

permission, whereas disbelievers will hope for belief as made clear earlier. In the same way, we see that Allah's Words, 'for in time they will come to know [the truth]' (*al-Hijr*: 3), include all times.

The Lord's creation in this world is a mean of signs for the truth of His Promise. Those who think that they take control of all worldly matters are shocked by sudden destructive earthquakes that destroy what they have built, despite the advances achieved, e.g. 'remote sensing' and other applied sciences. Meanwhile, we see donkeys, cattle and some other animals which we think they have no sense, getting up before an earthquake and going out to open areas far from enclosures that might collapse on top of them. This sort of instinctive behaviour in animals destroys human illusion of having achieved great advancements in science. It shows human ignorance and absurdity. Similarly, some say about a rainy country that it is a land whose water never runs out and that is why it will always remain fertile. Then that country suffers drought for no good reason. It is a warning to mankind not to become prisoners to illusion and self-deception, Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا وَلَهَا كِتَابٌ مَعْلُومٌ

**Never have We destroyed a community that did
not have a set time [4] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 4)**

Allah only commands the destruction of a community when the time fixed comes after all possible means for guidance fail, so He makes that community is an example for future generations to take lessons and identify the essence of belief. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And Allah propounds [to you] a parable: [Imagine] a town which was [once] secure and at ease, with its sustenance coming to it abundantly from all quarters and which thereupon blasphemously refused to show gratitude for Allah's blessings. Therefore, Allah caused it to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear in result of all [the evil] that its people had so persistently wrought.' (*an-Nahl*: 112) For a recent example, Lebanon before the fifties was a country in which one could scarcely find a passable hotel. Then, it flourished greatly in the sixties and seventies, but corruption became rampant everywhere. People with true knowledge of Allah *the Most High* said, 'It is inevitable for it to suffer the distress that old corrupt

countries which refused to show gratitude for Divine Blessings, suffered.’ It was exactly what happened; it suffered a bloody civil war and the Divine Word came true: ‘Let you taste the fear of one another’ (*al-An‘am*: 65).

Such is the living evidence of this world which predicts and affirms the truth of the Hereafter. The Lord *the Most High* Himself says, ‘There is no city but that We will destroy it before the Day of Resurrection or punish it with a severe punishment. This has been written in the Decree.’ (*al-Isra*: 58) Naturally, of course, this is what happens to those towns whose inhabitants are wrongdoers. Allah *the Almighty* does no wrong to anyone. I recall that the *Tafseer* (Quranic exegesis) of An-Nasafi⁽¹⁾ was impounded in a previous age since the author commented on this verse by saying, ‘So-and-so told me that such affliction will happen to such-and-such a place, and such-and-such will happen to such-and-such a place.’ He went on to say, ‘A man from Juhaynah will enter Egypt, so woe to its people, woe to the people of Syria, woe to the people of Ramla and woe to the people of Palestine. But he will not enter Jerusalem.’ The Lord *the Most High* says, ‘All this is laid down in Our Decree’ (*al-Isra*: 58).

In other words, Allah *the Exalted* may teach some of His creation about some of His secrets. There is nothing to prevent us from these secrets. When that account of Al-Nasafi came to the then president, they said to him, ‘You are from Juhaynah and the reference is made to you’, the *Tafseer* was then impounded and denied circulation. Allah *the Exalted* leaves examples for us in this world to affirm that He speaks the truth about the threats made against certain towns and peoples. He *the Most High* left those examples to affirm the events of the Last Day. Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Never have We destroyed any community [for its wrongdoing] unless a Book had [previously] been made known to it’ (*al-Hijr*: 4), no one can say it did not happen to such-and-such a place since everything happens in its fixed time.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

(1) He is Abu Al-Barakat ‘Abdullah ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad An-Nasafi (d. 710 AH), a Hanafi jurist and exegete from Idhij, the place where he also died. He was named after “Nasaf”, a place in the lands of Sind between Amu Darya and Samarqand. See *Khayr Al-Deen Az-Zerikli, Al-A‘lam*, 4/67.

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجْلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَخِرُونَ ﴿٥﴾

**no community can bring its time forward,
nor delay it [5] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 5)**

He has given each community a respite. When that period ends, the end of that community becomes a reality. There is no one who can bring that appointed time forward, nor is there anyone who can delay it beyond the time fixed. Then, the Lord *the Most High* says:

وَقَالُوا يَتَّبِعُهَا الَّذِي نَزَلَ عَلَيْهِ الذِّكْرُ إِنَّكَ لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴿٦﴾

**They say, Receiver of this Quran! You are
definitely mad [6] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 6)**

In this verse, they make fun of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and of the Quran; if they had believed in the Quran and the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* they would not have described him as crazy. Four leading masters of Quraysh said it: ‘Abdullah ibn Abu Umayyah, An-Nadr ibn Al-Harith, Nawfal ibn Khuwaylid and Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira. However, Ibn ‘Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that they were Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira Al-Makhzumi, Habeeb ibn ‘Amr At-Thaqafi. Mujahid said that they were ‘Utbah ibn Rabi’a and Kinana ibn ‘Abd Yaleel. Anyway, their statement is clearly contradictory. They first admitted that the Quran is *dhikr*. The word *dhikr* has a number of meanings in Arabic, including eminence, dignity and nobility. The Quran is declared a source of eminence for Arabs in Allah's Words, ‘Verily, this [revelation] shall indeed become [a source of] eminence for you and your people: but in time you all will be called to account [for what you have done with it]’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 44). They previously searched around for flaws in the Quran but found none. How can they describe the one to whom that Quran was revealed as crazy when they themselves bore witness to its truth and honesty? Allah *the Exalted* declares the high morality of His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying, ‘You are on a high moral standard.’ (*al-Qalam*: 4)

In their rush to accuse the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* they did not pay heed to the fact that they addressed him with the Words, ‘O you’,

which is the very same way that Allah addresses him. In that way, the Lord *the Most High* let His Prophet's esteem and respect even come out from their mouths without them even being aware of it. When stubborn disbelievers unknowingly speak the truth, it is a sign of the Divine Will. Allah *the Almighty* says about the hypocrites who said, 'Do not spend anything on those who are with Allah's Messenger, so that they [may be forced to] leave.' (*al-Munafiqun*: 7) What this means is that they do not give them any support, so they starve and are forced to leave him. When hypocrites described him here as the Messenger of Allah, did they do so because they believed it or because they inadvertently blurted out the truth? Allah *Glorified is He* continues their words as follows:

لَوْ مَا تَأْتِينَا بِالْمَلَكَةِ إِن كُنْتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٧﴾

**Why do you not bring us the angels, if you are
telling the truth? [7] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 7)**

In Arabic, there are a number of words used for encouragement, whereby speakers motivate listeners to predict what follows. The words *lawla* and *lawma* belong to this category. *Lawla* is used to indicate one's wish and desire for what comes after it. If what comes after it is in the negative, it indicates your desire for that thing not to be, e.g., 'If Zayd had come, I would have honoured him.' Since Zayd had not come, he received no honour. The disbelievers said as seen in a verse, 'Why do You not bring before us angels' (*al-Hijr*: 7). They also said, 'Why has not an angel [visibly] been sent down unto him, to act as a warner together with him?' (*al-Furqan*: 7) They were asking for an angel to accompany the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* so that they could affirm that he was a messenger from Allah *the Most High*. Now, do they believe the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* or the angel? the Quran already discusses this matter as Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Yet, whenever guidance came to them [through a prophet,] nothing has ever kept people from believing [in him] save this their objection, "Would Allah have sent a [mere] mortal man as His Messenger?"' (*al-Isra*: 94) It was as if they made their disbelief in the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* dependent upon being a human, not an

angel. In reply, Allah *the Most High* says, ‘Say: "If angels were walking about on earth as their natural abode, We would indeed have sent down unto them an angel out of heaven as Our Messenger."' (al-Isra': 95) In other words, if a messenger was sent down from heaven in the form of an angel, he could not walk about the earth with confidence, let alone be an example for mankind to follow. Simply, he is not a human being and is entirely different. If an angel came to them according to their desires and said, ‘Do this and do not do that. Go straight, ask forgiveness of your Lord and glorify Him morning and evening,’ they would say, ‘You are an angel to whom the Words of Allah *the Almighty* apply: ‘who do not disobey Allah in whatever He has commanded them, but [always] do what they are bidden to do.’ (at-Tahrim: 6) You are not an example for us!’ Furthermore, how can they speak to an angel when his nature is totally different from men? This is why Allah *the Exalted* chose to send a human messenger. In this way, the Lord *the Most High* nullified the argument they put forward as a reason for disbelief in the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: that he was not angel. Allah *Glorified is He* also refutes their argument and request that angels should come with the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to aid him in conveying the Divine Message. Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

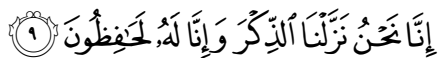
مَا نَنْزِلُ الْمَلَكَةَ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَمَا كَانُوا إِذَا مُنْظَرِينَ ﴿٨﴾

But We send down the angels only to bring justice and then these people will not be reprieved [8] (The Quran, al-Hijr: 8)

This way the Lord *the Most High* teaches us about His Wisdom of not sending us angels. Were He to send down an angel—as requested, to help the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in conveying the message, the angel would either take a human form, in which case people cannot differentiate him from human beings or take an angelic form, in which case no man would see him. If they could see him in that state, then they would all perish. Evidently, human beings cannot interact closely with the unique powers that Allah placed in angels. The Lord *the Most High* Himself says, ‘Had We sent down an angel, all would indeed have been decided, and they would have been allowed no further respite [for repentance]’ (al-An‘am: 8). If the Lord

sent an angel in a human form and they were to form a close connection with him, things would have become very confusing for them. They might think that angels are merely human beings like themselves. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And [even] if We had appointed an angel as Our message-bearer, We would certainly have made him [appear as] a man – and thus We would only have confused them in the same way as they are now confusing themselves’ (*al-An‘am*: 9). Allah *the Almighty* did not send down any angels since He did not will to destroy them while a messenger was amongst them. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘But Allah did not choose thus to chastise them while You [O Prophet] were still among them, nor would Allah chastise them when they [might yet] ask for forgiveness.’ (*al-Anfal*: 33) Later, most of them believed and sought forgiveness for their sins. Allah *the Most High* was Merciful and Forgiving since Islam erases all past sins.

Now, look at the first part of the verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘[Yet] We never send down angels otherwise than in accordance with the [demands of] truth’ (*al-Hijr*: 7); if the angels were to have come down, it would have been a punishment for mankind. When Allah *the Exalted* gives people a miracle they asked for, either they believe or He destroys them. This is why the Lord *the Most High* says, ‘And nothing has prevented Us from sending [this message, like the earlier ones,] with miraculous signs [in its wake], save [Our knowledge] that the people of olden times [only too often] gave the lie to them’ (*al-Isra’*: 59). Allah *the Exalted* did not show them physical signs and miracles of their desire since those who came before them rejected them, and they themselves only asked for them as a form of challenge, for they would reject them as well. Now, if a sign requested came true, there remains no option but to destroy them. If they rejected a sign sent down by Allah *the Most High*, He would have given them respite for a time. If We sent them angels as they wished, We would only send them down in accordance with the demands of the truth. The truth is that We would destroy them if they rejected them. Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse as follows, ‘and [were the angels to appear now,] lo! they [who reject this Book] would have no further respite!’ (*al-Hijr*: 8) The appointed time of the idolaters had not come yet, for Allah *the Most High* to send them angels and destroy them as past communities who had asked for signs, yet they were destroyed. Allah says:



**We have sent down the Quran Ourself, and We
Ourselves will guard it. Even before you [Prophet] [9]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 9)**

The Quran came after many other Books. Each of these Books had a version of the Divine Programme for human life. However, none of these Books was a miracle in its own right. Rather, the miracle came down with each of the messengers who preceded the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and that miracle was usually related to the field in which that messenger's people excelled. So long as the programme was separate from the miracle, Allah *the Exalted* demanded that the bearers of the books in which that programme was contained be the ones who preserve them. It was an obligation that Allah *the Most High* ordained on them. Evidently, one may obey or disobey that obligation. But none of the past peoples perfectly undertook the duty of maintaining the Books sent down to them. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Verily, it is We Who bestowed from on high the Torah, wherein there was guidance and light. On its strength did the prophets who had surrendered themselves unto Allah, deliver judgment unto those who followed the Jewish faith; and so did the [early] men of Allah and the rabbis, inasmuch as some of Allah's Book had been entrusted to their care' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44).

In this verse, the Lord *the Most High* obligated them with maintaining their Books which contained His Divine Programme. That responsibility was one that they could either obey and take on, or disobey. They chose to disobey the Divine Command and failed to maintain them. Instead, they changed and distorted the words of their Books and even omitted much of their content. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says about them: 'but, behold, some of them knowingly suppress the truth.' (*al-Baqara*: 146)

They further interpolated words of their own and said that they were from Allah *the Almighty*. This is why Allah *the Exalted* says about them: 'So woe to those who write the "scripture" with their own hands, then say, "This is from Allah," in order to exchange it for a small price. Woe to them for what their hands have written and woe to them for what they earn.' (*al-Baqara*: 79) In this way, they committed the crime of lying and being untrustworthy. They have not

preserved the scriptures that carried within their pages the Doctrine of Allah *Glorified is He* as it had been sent down by Him to the prophets and messengers who came before the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Hence, the True Lord *the Most High* decreed to discharge mankind from preserving the Quran. Such responsibility is liable to be obeyed or ignored. However, that is to say nothing of the fact that the Quran differs from all previous scriptures in the sense that it carries the Doctrine, while at the same time being the miracle that proves the truthfulness of what was conveyed by the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Indeed, it is We Who sent down the Quran and indeed, We will be its guardian.' (*al-Hijr*: 9) It is the Book that carries the Doctrine within its pages, and Allah *the Almighty* wants it to be preserved since it is the everlasting miracle that proves what the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed to be true.

The Companions used to write the Quran down immediately after each part of it had been sent down to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. In the present day, however, we find people who do not believe in the Quran and yet are specialists in the various ways of preserving it. There are some who print the entire Quran on a single page, and in order to do that, make use of the talents of people who have no belief in the Quran.

Similarly, when the Book was recorded, it used contemporary means of recording. In Germany, for example, there is a library in which every little thing that is connected with every single verse of the Quran is kept preserved in one specific place.

While in Muslim countries, we find those who have not memorised the whole Quran since their childhood, completing it when they were only seven; if you were to ask them about what the words that they recite mean, they would not know how to answer.

One of the secrets of the greatness of the Quran is that some of those who memorise lack proper intellectual education, and so if one of them were to stop at a word— not remembering what came after— he would not be able to put in a word with a similar meaning, but must wait until some other memoriser of the Quran corrects him.

In order to better comprehend the precision with which Allah *the Exalted* has preserved His Noble Book, we recount the following story. There were some people who tried to insert into the Quran what was not part of it. They tried to do so by inserting something that they thought was close to the heart of every Muslim - that is to say, esteem for the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. So they came to the Words of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: 'Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful amongst themselves.' (*al-Fath*: 29) They inserted a word that was not a part of it. Then they printed a version of the Quran in which they changed what was written in this verse, writing instead, 'Muhammad is Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful amongst themselves.' By doing that, they wanted to steal the affections of the Muslims, but when the men of knowledge got their hands on this version of the Quran, they commanded that it be destroyed by saying: 'It contains an interpolation.' So the one who printed that version of the Quran responded by saying: 'But that which is added is something that you love and hold in high esteem.' However, the men of knowledge replied: 'the Quran is set - we recite it and print it exactly in the way that it came down.'

There was an uproar which the people of knowledge brought to an end by declaring that any addition, even out of love and esteem for the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* is not permissible in the Quran, since it is incumbent upon us to preserve the Quran in the same form as that which Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* read to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فِي شِيَعِ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

**We sent messengers among the various
communities of old [10] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 10)**

In this verse, the True Lord *the Most High* offers consolation to His noble Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and makes it clear to him that when he was greeted with rejection and denial, this was nothing new, rather, it

was something that happened to other messengers, regardless of whether it took the form of non-acceptance, total disregard or ridicule.

If you are the master of the messengers and the seal of the prophets, then the difficulties and hardships that confront you must be equivalent to the size of your task, and the weariness that comes your way must be equivalent to the importance of the final message.

As for the word 'sects', it means groups of people who have come together around a common cause, regardless of whether that cause is a misguided one or a true one. An example of those who are joined together upon falsehood is found in Allah's Words: 'or to confuse you [so you become] sects.' (*al-An'am*: 65)

An example of those who are joined together upon truth is found in Allah's Words: 'And, verily, among those who followed his way was Ibrahim (Abraham).' (*as-Saffat*: 83)

The verse under discussion means that things are not going to be any less hard for you than the messengers who came before you. Rather, your journey as a messenger will be hard in a manner suitable with the greatness of the task, along with being suitable to the fact that you are the leader of the messengers and the seal of the prophets.

Then the True Lord *the Most High* completes His account of what happened to the messengers whose messages preceded that of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying:

وَمَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّن رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿١١﴾

But they mocked every single messenger that came to them [11] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 11)

The word 'ridicule' is expressed in the previous verse: 'And they say, "O, you upon whom the message has been sent down, indeed you are mad."' (*al-Hijr*: 6) It is as if Allah *the Almighty* were making it clear to him that their ridicule of him may increase, but that is an indication that they have come to the end of their plots. If their plot was something little, then they would lessen their own plotting. However, they have brought something that is very hard on them and shattered their beliefs. They have destroyed their

hegemony and power, and they can find no way of resisting him (the Prophet) except with ridicule.

This means that they are totally unable to fight against his Doctrine, so they try instead to wear him out with ridicule and make him weaker, relying upon the fact that every man loves to be honoured and revered amongst his people and to be seen by them as being noble.

In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* wants His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to brace himself to the fact they he is going to be ridiculed, abused and fought against, since the task he has is a difficult one. Therefore, he should know that every time their rejection and abuse of him gets worse, it is a necessary consequence of his task.

The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* before he had become certain of his task, being taken by his wife Khadijah bint Khuwaylid *Allah be pleased with her* to see Waraqa ibn Nawfal, who knew that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* would be met by abuse, saying to him, 'If I were to remain alive when your people force you out!' So the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* inquired, 'Are they going to force me out?' Waraqa replied, 'Yes, for no man has brought the like of what you have brought except that he has been met with enmity. If your day comes and I am still alive, then I will give you my full support!'⁽¹⁾

In this way, the True Lord *the Most High* decreed it that the revelation of the message be accompanied by providing him with protection against what was going to happen to him, so that he would have the necessary immunity to withstand future events. We know that immunity is something that is present within a human being and that it is by means of that immunity that he is able to live in a place in which there is a disease that requires him to take a vaccination to prevent himself catching it. This is what happens in the physical world, but the same thing also applies in the metaphysical world. For this reason, Allah *the Exalted* makes this matter clear to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* so that his trust in the truth with which his

(1) It is transmitted by Al-Bayhaqi in *Dala'il An-nubuwwa* (2/139, 140) in a (Hadith) from Muhammad ibn An-Nu'man ibn Bashir Al-Ansari. See *Dala'il An-Nubuwwa* of Abu Nu'aym (168).

Lord sent him would become even greater, and he would take even greater care in putting into practice the Doctrine entrusted to him.

Ridicule, as we know, is a form of passive warfare. They were not able to face up to what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with any seriousness or to drive back his elevated Doctrine. Instead, they resorted to making fun of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, their mockery did not benefit them nor enabled them to cause any damage to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or Islam. Therefore, in order to convey that, Allah *Glorified is He* says to us about what will become of those who mock Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*:

كَذَٰلِكَ نَسْلُكُهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

**in this way We make the message slip through
the hearts of evildoers [12] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 12)**

‘Insert denial’ means as we put disbelief, denial, and derision in the hearts of previous generations or former people, so too, do we put them in the hearts of sinners, or these criminals.

By ‘criminals’, He *Glorified is He* means the polytheists of Mecca since they had put themselves inside the circle of idolatry which prompted them to do this action, and so they brought the same retribution down upon themselves exactly like those who came before. Some of these people affirmed the message with their hearts at the same time as their tongues rejected it, as Allah *Glorified is He* indicates when He says: ‘They rejected them, although their minds were convinced of their truth.’ (*an-Naml*: 14)

They were a people of eloquence with a fine grasp of language, and the Quran had affected deeply with the sweetness and beauty of its language, but their stubbornness prevented them from accepting it. Indeed, we find one⁽¹⁾ of them saying, ‘It has a sweetness and beauty to it. Its heights are full of fruit and its roots are well-watered.’⁽²⁾ The one who said this rejected

(1) He is Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughirah Abu ‘Abd Shams. He was one of their elders and one of the most influential men among them.

(2) It is mentioned by Ibn Hisham in *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya* (1/270).

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his message.

We know that those who listened to the Quran were of two types. The True Lord *the Most High* Himself is the One Who says about one of those types: 'And among them, [O Muhammad], are those who listen to you, until when they depart from you, they say to those who were given knowledge, "What has he said just now?" Those are the ones of whom Allah has sealed over their hearts and who have followed their [own] desires.' (*Muhammad*: 16)

What he said did not please them, and what he recited to them did not deserve to be listened to. So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* responded to them, saying: 'Say, "It is, for those who believe, a guidance and cure." And those who do not believe - in their ears is deafness, and it is upon them blindness.' (*Fussilat*: 44)

This is a matter, as I have always said, connected to the receiver of the message; either his heart is pure so that it can receive the Quran, or his heart is filled with disbelief, so it does not receive anything whatsoever from the Book of truth, and we seek protection with Allah *Glorified is He* from having such hearts!

It so happened that Allah *the Almighty* put His heavenly scriptures in the hearts of peoples who came before the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* but because their hearts were so rotten and their intellects so dark, they received those books with mockery, ridicule, and disbelief.

Allah *Glorified is He* describes these sinners with His Words:

لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ ۖ وَقَدْ خَلَتْ سُنَّةُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿١٣﴾

**They will not believe in it. That was what happened with
the peoples of long ago [13] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 13)**

In this way, the True Lord *the Most High* makes it clear that the hearts of disbelievers will never soften to belief, along with never receiving good reception to the Quran. Because the reason for this is due to their hearts being completely full of disbelief, just as was the case of previous people.

A *sunnah* is the manner that is typically of results produced by certain causes. On one occasion, we find Allah *Glorified is He* saying: '[This is] the

established way (*sunnah*) of Allah with those who passed on before, and you will not find in the way of Allah any change.' (*al-Ahzab*: 62)

The *sunnah* of ancient people refers to those universal laws that Allah *Glorified is He* decreed for His servants, while the *sunnah* of Allah *the Almighty* is the *sunnah* that is ascribed solely to Him. Thus, part of Allah's *sunnah* is to destroy those who reject messengers and continue in disbelief after having asked for a sign which they were granted.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَلَوْ فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ بَابًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فَظَلُّوا فِيهِ يَعْرُجُونَ ﴿١٤﴾
لَقَالُوا إِنَّمَا سُكَّرَتْ أَبْصَارُنَا بَلْ نَحْنُ مُسْحُورُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

And even if We opened a gateway into Heaven for them and they rose through it, higher and higher [14] they would still say, 'Our eyes are hallucinating. We are bewitched' [15]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 14 -15)

They had requested that an angel be sent down to them from heaven, which is why we find Allah *the Exalted* bringing them a stronger proof than the one they have asked for; it would be much easier to send an angel down from heaven than to lower a ladder down from heaven which they could then climb up. This is a progression in terms of the proof, but they had also progressed in their disbelief and said: 'If that were to happen, then it would simply be an act of magic.'

However, if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were a magician as they claim, then he would have bewitched and made them all believers, but despite the fact that something like that should have been obvious to them, they persisted in disbelief and said that if a stairway to heaven were to have been sent down and they were to have ascended it. This would have simply been an act of magic, and it would have been Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who had bewitched them, blinded their eyes to reality and caused them to imagine as such.

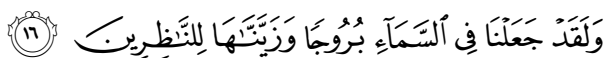
It is as if the meaning of these Noble Words was 'If we were to give them more than they asked for and send down to them a staircase by which

they could climb to the highest heavens so that they might say that the True Lord *the Most High* was the One Who sent Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the message rather than sending them an angel as they requested, they would still not believe in him, rather they would say instead that it was merely a piece of magic used by Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* against them.' In such a way, they increased in stubbornness and denial.

The verb 'continue' indicates that Allah *the Almighty* will not send them down that staircase by which they can ascend to heaven except in the middle of the day, but they still persisted in their disbelief.

Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'they continued therein to ascend.' It means that we are not going to take them during the night so that they can say that it is dark, and they cannot see anything. No, rather, it is going to be in the clear light of day. In other words, even if Allah *the Almighty* was to open a gateway to heaven, and they were to go up through it to the highest assemblies in the clear light of day, they would still reject.

After that, Allah *Glorified is He* transports us back to creation in order to show us how wondrous His Signs are:



We have set constellations up in the sky and made it beautiful for all to see [16] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 16)

The meaning is that an adornment that draws people's gazes on account of either its elevated body or its compelling beauty.

'Great stars' refer to the phases of the sun and moon; every time the sun moves through the sky, it goes from one phase to another and the same thing happens with the moon, proving the truth of Allah's Words: 'all of them floating through space.' (*al-Anbiya*: 33)

Furthermore, He is the One Who says: 'It is He Who made the sun a shining light and the moon a derived light and determined for it phases - that you may know the number of years and account [of time]' (*Yunus*: 5). By means of it, we can precisely determine all our times in the light of the movements of the sun and the moon. When we open any newspaper, we

read what is called a 'horoscope', in which the names of the different phases (i.e. the signs of the zodiac) are mentioned: Aries, Capricorn, Virgo, amongst others. These are the Syriac names for the different astrological phases. A poet has said:

Aries and Taurus, Gemini and Cancer
And Leo protecting Virgo, Libra,
Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn and Aquarius,
And Pisces, all we have learned from the Syrian nation.

They are twelve signs of the zodiac, and each sign has its own measurement of climate and weather. When we read the Quran, we find the following Words of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: 'and landmarks. And by the stars they are [also] guided.' (*an-Nahl*: 16)

Some people try to find an impact for each zodiac upon those who are born in the times when that particular zodiac is in orbit. Perhaps those who say that they have managed to gain some understanding of some of Allah's secrets in creation, for Allah *Glorified is He* Himself swears an oath by where the stars fall, saying: 'Then I swear by the setting of the stars. And indeed, it is an oath - if you could know - [most] great.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 75-76)

There are those who say that every human being has a star in whose company he is born and in whose company he dies. This is why it is said, 'So-and-so's star has fallen.' We are not certain whether matters such as these are true or not since they are not likely to be proven scientifically. Allah *the Exalted* best knows their secrets, and it might be His Will to give knowledge of them to some of His creation.

In the verse which is the topic of our commentary, we find Allah *Glorified is He* saying: 'And We have placed within the heaven great stars.' He is emphasising the fact that these star signs and constellations exist in the sky. These great constellations were not placed there because of the effect they have on the weather, or because they are signs by means of which we can navigate, not to mention the effect they have on temperature, humidity and the plants. No, above all, they have been placed there because of their great aesthetic value, for they are an object of beauty that can be enjoyed by

everyone who looks up at them. Hence, the True Lord *the Most High* says: 'and have beautified it for the observers.' (*al-Hijr*: 16)

There are some things that are useful without having any aesthetic value. However, as for the stars, Allah *the Exalted* wanted to endow them with aesthetic value, and He did so because He created man and knew that his soul was endowed with numerous faculties, and that each of these faculties had things by which they were nourished.

So, for example, the nourishment of the eye is a beautiful sight, and the nourishment of the ear is a melodious sound, while the nose is nourished by what smells good, the tongue is nourished by what tastes good, while the hand is nourished by what feels smooth. This is what we know with respect to the faculties of the five senses that we all are aware.

There are, however, other faculties within the human being, each of which needs its own specific form of nourishment. Each of these faculties can be spoiled by giving them an overdose of their respective nourishment, while denying them that nourishment can ruin a person's essence.

The well-balanced human being is the one who nourishes his faculties in a balanced way. Psychological illnesses sometimes appear as a result of a particular faculty of the psyche being undernourished. Furthermore, curing that illness requires laborious work to spot which faculty it is in the human psyche that is lacking in nourishment. One of the faculties that we find in the human soul is that of seeing beauty, which attracts the human soul. One representation of this matter is to be found in the decorators' work to distribute light across the house in a various artful appearances.

Something we have found that it clearly exemplifies the existence of interior decorators that use different forms of artistry to distribute the lighting about a house.

This is why Allah *the Almighty* says about the constellations of stars: 'and have beautified it for the observers.' We find Him saying about some of the blessings that He *the Exalted* bestowed upon us: 'and [He created] the horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment.' (*an-Nahl*: 8)

Thus, the True Lord *the Most High* blesses us with the beauty of what He has created and made subject to us. His Blessing does not stop there, since He

also makes them serve mankind in other ways: 'And they carry your loads to a land you could not have reached except with difficulty to yourselves. Indeed, your Lord is Kind and Merciful.' (*an-Nahl*: 7)

Allah is the One Who made the beasts beautiful to gaze upon, for He is the One Who says: 'And for you in them is [the enjoyment of] beauty when you bring them in [for the evening] and when you send them out [to pasture].' (*an-Nahl*: 6)

Allah *the Almighty* not only created livestock to serve us in the tasks for which they have been intended, but made some of them feed the feeling for beauty that He created within us. The more we are affected by beauty, the more we are able to find the Beautiful. Through Monotheism, we single Him out with Majesty.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says about heaven and the great constellations:

وَحَفِظْنَاهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْطَانٍ رَجِيمٍ ﴿١٧﴾

**And guarded it from every stoned satan [17]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 17)**

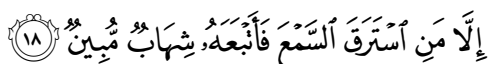
We know that the devils used to listen stealthily to parts of the Divine Revelation which had been sent down to the messengers who had been sent prior to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and they used to try to create falsehoods to corrupt those messages. However, as soon as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent, they were prevented from ever again doing anything like that by a command from Allah *Glorified is He* for He says: 'And indeed do the devils inspire their allies [amongst men] to dispute with you.' (*al-An'am*: 121)

This is why we find the devils saying what they are recorded as having said by the True Lord *the Most High* in His Mighty Book: 'And we have sought [to reach] the heaven but found it filled with powerful guards and burning flames. And we used to sit therein in positions for hearing, but whoever listens now will find a burning flame lying in wait for him. And we do not know [therefore] whether evil is intended for those on earth or whether their Lord intends for them a right course.' (*al-Jinn*: 8-10)

Thus, we know that they used to listen stealthily and take some of the word of the Divine Revelation. Then they would add their own words to it, so that there might be one word of truth in it, surrounded by a thousand lies.⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* wanted to deny that that was the case for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and so He *Glorified is He* says: 'And We have protected it from every devil expelled [from the Mercy of Allah].'

Devils, as we know, are those amongst the jinns who are disobedient. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says after that:



Any eaves- dropper will be pursued by a clearly visible flame [18] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 18)

The disobedient ones amongst the jinns before the time of the Messenger of Allah, used to listen stealthily to the Divine Revelation that was revealed to the messengers who had been sent prior to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

However, after his noble message was first sent down, things were different, since Allah *the Almighty* decided to guard heaven against that: thus, no sooner had one of them approached heaven, he was pursued by a burning flame.

Notably, heaven is protected by flaming embers, smokeless fire and fire blackened by soot.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says after that:

(1) *Al-Bukhari in his Sahih* (5762); *Ahmad in his Musnad* (6/87); and *Muslim in his Sahih* (8); all transmitted a (Hadith) from 'A'isha may Allah be pleased with her in which she said, 'Some people asked the Prophet *peace and blessing be upon him* about the soothsayers, and he replied, 'They are nothing.' So they said, 'Messenger of Allah, they say something and it then turns out to be true.' So the Prophet *peace and blessing be upon him* said, 'That truth is one that a devil has stolen and which he then clucks into the ear of his friend like the clucking of a chicken so that they mix in it with it more than one hundred lies.'

وَالْأَرْضَ مَدَدْنَاهَا وَأَلْقَيْنَا فِيهَا رَوَاسِيَ وَأَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مَوْزُونٍ ﴿١٩﴾

**As for the earth, We have spread it out, set firm mountains on it, and made everything grow there in due balance [19]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 19)**

The True Lord *the Most High* draws our attention to the point that if the earth were square, rectangular or triangular, we would have found that it had edges past which you could go no further, but when we travel about the earth, we find that it stretches out, and this is why it must be round. They proved empirically that the earth was spherical by showing that if a man were to travel in a straight line, he would eventually arrive back at the place at which he started. The curves of the earth are manufactured in such a precise way that no eye is capable of perceiving the degree to which it is curved but instead always sees it as being straight.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and cast therein firmly set mountains,' He means the things that keep it stable. It is possible that someone might ask, 'Given that the earth is created in a stable form, does it really need other things to keep it firm?' We reply that since it was necessary for the True Lord *the Most High* to create it in motion and make it susceptible to being shaken up, He created what keeps it firmly in place. So, from this one verse, we have gained knowledge of two of the realities of the earth - that it is spherical and that it is turning.

There is another verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And you see the mountains, thinking them rigid, while they will pass as the passing of clouds.' (*an-Naml*: 88) We understand from these Noble Words that the movement of the mountains is not some intrinsic motion of their own; rather, it is simply a result of the movement of the earth itself, just as the movement of the clouds is simply a result of the movement of the wind.

Allah *the Exalted* willed to make the mountains deeply rooted so that they provide stability to the earth, to stop it shaking violently and to stop it swaying from side to side as the earth moves.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'and caused to grow therein [something] of every well-balanced thing.' Allah *the Exalted* made every species grow upon the

earth in a balanced manner and with a precision that corresponds to the climate and environment in which they are found, bringing together all of the necessary ingredients for the continuation of life.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَجَعَلْنَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَعِيشَ وَمَنْ لَسْتُمْ لَهُ بِرَازِقِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

**We have provided sustenance in it for you and
for all those creatures for whom you do not
provide [20] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 20)**

In these words, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that He blessed us by placing all the means for us to live upon the earth, and He continued to place upon it the provision of all those things that serve us and that we rely on for our food: plants, animals and fuel as well as the methods and advancements in agriculture and manufacturing with which He inspires us for improving our quality of life. Thus, over and above all of that, He gives us our offspring which bring joy to our lives. All of these things are subject to His Will and do what He wants.

Then, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

وَإِنْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِلَّا عِنْدَنَا خَزَائِنُهُ وَمَا نُنَزِّلُهُ إِلَّا بِقَدَرٍ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿٢١﴾

**There is not a thing whose storehouses are not with Us.
We send it down only according to a well-defined
measure [21] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 21)**

'A thing' means that there is no species of any sort except that their storehouses are with Allah *Glorified is He* so these things that you might consider small and insignificant have storehouses, as do things which are precious. Allah *the Exalted* sends down everything by a preordained decree - even our scientific discoveries come about by a preordained decree.

When we need something that is stored away within the secrets of existence, we make use of the intellects given to us by Allah *the Almighty* to uncover such a thing. An example of this is fuel, for in old times, we used to use tree wood and firewood. Allah *Glorified is He* Himself is the One Who

says: 'And have you seen the fire that you ignite? Is it you who produced its tree, or are we the producer?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 71-72) Then mankind's needs became more extensive, and so they discovered coal, a substance that was originally plants or animals that came to be buried under the ground. Then, they discovered oil and so on and so forth.

In other words, Allah *the Exalted* does not create anything new, rather, He prepared for us everything that we are going to need in the earth and apportioned within the means of our subsistence before Adam *peace be upon him* was even sent down to the earth from the garden to live upon the earth and be Allah's vicegerent, he and all of his descendants until the coming of the Final Hour.

So, if we have any complaints, this is due to our own laziness and our not making the best use of what Allah *the Almighty* has created for us, and the provision that He has apportioned to us from the earth. We see misery on planet earth despite the scientific and technical advances we have made and this is due to us having used what Allah *Glorified is He* stored up to be a source of happiness for us in our conflicts and wars instead. If everything that was spent on wars were directed instead towards helping the different communities grow, everyone would live in true plenty, but the poor planning and poor distribution that we, as human beings, are guilty of is the primary cause of the wretched state of parts of humanity on the earth. Furthermore, this is due to He making the earth in its entirety for mankind, so whoever finds one place on the earth constricted should simply go somewhere else.

However, political factors, as well as the other differences that exist between people, have caused there to be, in some areas of the earth, men without work, and in other areas of the earth, wealth that is not being exploited. We ignore Allah's Words: 'And there is not a thing but that with us are its storehouses.' Thus, there are storehouses for everything on the earth, a storehouse being somewhere where precious things are stored away. The entire creation is created on the basis that Allah *the Exalted* has apportioned the means of every existing being's subsistence from the time of Adam *peace be upon him* until the coming of the Final Hour.

So, if things become tight for you in terms of your provision, then you should know that one of the rights due to Allah *Glorified is He* has been

neglected: either because you have neglected to properly cultivate the land and bring life to the dead earth to a degree sufficient to feed the number of inhabitants of the earth or because you have stored away what you have taken out of the earth and withheld your stores from everyone else.

If you see a poor man who has lost everything, you should know that there is a rich man somewhere who has withheld from others the rich pickings and plentiful provision granted to him by Allah *the Almighty*.

If you see someone who is incapable of obtaining the means to sustain his life, then know that someone else has withheld his sustenance from him. Likewise, if you see someone who is ignorant, then know that there is someone with knowledge somewhere who has withheld his knowledge from him. We know that Allah *Glorified is He* prepared existence and everything in it for us before He created us and did not make us responsible for any action we do before puberty. It is due to this that He knew in the time before time that responsibility limits man's freedom to do many things connected to the faculties and desires of his soul, whether that be in food, drink, clothing, accommodation or reining appetites, thereby ensuring that we are not driven to satisfy our impulses at the expense of our values.

The True Lord *the Most High* decreed that such responsibility is in effect after puberty, when a person's faculties are at full strength and he is capable of begetting one just like him, so that this responsibility can then be a proof against man. This is the one for whom Allah *Glorified is He* stored up everything in the earth, either by burying it in the earth, or by its type or species being kept under wraps.

Everything in existence is in balance, whether it is species, a type or individuals. The balance brought about by all of these gifts was only decreed into existence by the True Lord *the Most High* for all so that mankind could live in the warm embrace of faith. Thus, Allah's gift to us contains both a gift of Lordship and a gift of Divinity. The truly intelligent one is the one who takes both gifts together to set his life straight.

Allah *Glorified is He* Himself is the One Who says: 'Say [to them], "If you possessed the depositories of the Mercy of my Lord, then you would withhold

out of fear of spending." And ever has man been stingy.' (*al-Isra'*: 100) By this, Allah *the Exalted* makes it clear to us that man thinks that everything is about himself and bringing benefit to himself. Even in matters pertaining to religion, a servant might follow the principle outlined in Allah's Words: 'but rather give them preference over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot.' (*al-Hashr*: 9) At first glance, the one who follows this principle is doing that due to his preferring others to himself, but the reality is that he is doing as such because of his desire for the fine reward that Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared for him in this world and the Hereafter.

The basis for doing religious acts is also to benefit oneself. This is why we find those who say, 'I love belief since it is what is best for me, for Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'for, verily, to the love of good is he most ardently devoted.' (*al-'Adiyat*: 8)

This is a clever form of selfishness since it brings the one who has it a reward for every action he does for someone else. This type of selfishness is both clever and beneficial since it is a lasting form of selfishness and brings a person profit in terms of his belief.

We know that if Allah *Glorified is He* had wanted, He could have made everyone wealthy, but He did not will it in order to make people subject to circumstance and weigh them up against one another on the basis of belief; also, He does as such so that one person's illusions might quash another's illusions. Ultimately, that man might learn that his deluded view of his Lord will not get him anywhere with Allah *Glorified is He* and will bring no benefit to himself.

All of man's manifestations of power do not stem from something intrinsic in him; rather, they are gifts granted to him by Allah *Glorified is He*. In this way, the True Lord *the Most High* wanted to refine human beings so as to teach them how to interact in the best way with one another.

He makes it clear to mankind that the storehouses for everything are with him, and if He had so wished it, He could have given them all to mankind in one full swoop. However, He willed otherwise so as to emphasise to man that he is a subject of circumstance, and so as to direct his attention to the One Who gave them the blessings.

However, the monotonous repetition of a blessing can sometimes cause a person to forget the sweetness that he enjoys from it. For example, you do not find many people who spend any time thinking about their eyes except when they pain them - it is only then that they remember the blessing of sight. Indeed, it is often the loss of a blessing that draws one's attention to it, and this is to be certain that no one ever forgets Who the Bestower of blessings is.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَرْسَلْنَا الرِّيحَ لَوَاقِحَ فَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً
فَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمُوهُ وَمَا أَنْتُمْ لَهُ بِخَازِنِينَ ﴿٢٢﴾

We send the winds to fertilize, and We bring down water from the sky for you to drink – you do not control its sources [22] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 22)

When Allah *the Almighty* says that He does an action of (sending to) the winds, we find that they are sent from every place into every other place. In this way, every place becomes a place from which winds are sent and received. We find the winds blowing in a constant cycle, one after the other. If they were to stop moving, the air would stop moving and mankind would be afflicted by all manner of diseases, for it is the winds that renew the air and cleanse places of the stagnation which might otherwise come to them.

We know that when the Quran refers to 'winds' in the plural, it is talking about something bearing good, as is exemplified by the Words of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: 'And it is He Who sends the winds as good tidings before His Mercy.' (*al-A'raf*: 57) As for when it uses the word 'wind' in the singular, it is talking about something bearing punishment, like in His Words: 'And as for 'Ad, they were destroyed by a screaming, violent wind.' (*al-Haqqa*: 6)

The word 'fertilising' sometimes used to describe a she-camel that is carrying an embryo in its womb, and sometimes to describe one who impregnates another, causing an embryo to form within that other. The True Lord *the Most High* wanted what is in existence to multiply and proliferate; thus, He made everything in pairs, either for them to multiply and proliferate or for them to generate energy, like

negative and positive in electricity. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who says: 'Limitless in His glory is He Who has created opposites.' (*Ya Sin*: 36)

Then Allah *Glorified is He* enumerates them for us, by saying: 'in whatever the earth produces, and in men's own selves, and in that of which [as yet] they have no knowledge.' (*Ya Sin*: 36)

There are things that are outside the perception of human beings such as the sycamore tree. Those who have not studied botany have no idea how it multiplies itself in order to grow and bear fruit, but botanists know that there is one sycamore tree that plays the role of the female, while another that plays the role of the male. The same is true of the mulberry tree. There is another tree that you cannot distinguish its female from its male since it contains both, but you may not know that because Allah *the Almighty* has made its pollen extremely light so that the wind can carry it from one place to another. We also do not see how olive trees are pollinated or mango trees or guava trees. Thus, the reason for that is that we can learn a lesson about the precision with which Allah *Glorified is He* made things.

The example I always use to illustrate this is that of the water that falls in the form of rain on some mountain, and then only a few days later, we find the sides of that mountain carpeted in green grasses and other plants. What that shows is that the seeds of the grasses and plants were already there on the mountain, lying there awaiting water to allow them to grow.

Scientists have discovered that after the male part of a plant reaches maturity, it exposes itself awaiting the appropriate winds and appropriate weather to transfer it from one place to another. This is why we find some mountains that turn green after winds have blown across them and rain has fallen on them. This is on account of the fact that the pollinating seeds have been transferred to them by the winds, and then the rain came, giving the plants the opportunities to grow. Indeed, you can find some mountains with one side covered in green and the other side barren and lifeless. It is due to winds carrying pollen to the green side of the mountain, but they did not carry any to the opposite side. Thus, this is why we find the True Lord *the Most High* making winds circulate, taking things from one place to another, and blowing through every place.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues in the same verse by saying: 'and sent down water from the sky.' This makes it clear to us that the water comes about as a result of the process of pollination and contains both the male and the female. In this sense, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and given you drink from it. And you are not its retainers.' You cannot store away the water because you cannot be trusted with it. If Allah *the Almighty* had guided us to store away water, that is one of His gifts to us, no one should say, 'We have built dams', rather, he should say, 'Allah *Glorified is He* has guided us to build them after having made the rain fall.' The reason is if the rain were to have not fallen, we would not have been able to store them up.' Following this understanding, it is Allah *Glorified is He* Who has water stored up when He sends it down from the sky after having inspired man to build dams.

When you want a cup of distilled water, you go to the pharmacist and get him to heat the water with a specific appliance that turns it into steam. Then that steam condensates until it becomes distilled water. All of that happens in existence, and yet you know nothing of it.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِنَّا لَنَحْنُ شُعْبَىٰ ۖ وَنُمِيتُ وَنَحْيُ الْمَوْتُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

It is We who give life and death; it is We who inherit [everything] [23] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 23)

On the surface, one would think that it was possible that Allah says, 'We deal death and bring life' since He is addressing us while we are alive, but, by means of these words, the True Lord *the Most High* wants to direct our attention to the first death—the state of absolute non-existence from which we were first created. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who says: 'when you were lifeless and He brought you to life; then He will cause you to die, then He will bring you [back] to life, and then to Him you will be returned.' (*al-Baqara*: 28)

When speaking in detail about death, we must distinguish between absolute non-existence and the non-existence that follows existence. Absolute non-existence is the state before we were created. Then Allah *Glorified is He* brought us in existence so that we could become living beings. Then, He causes us to die after that, and then resurrects us after that for the Reckoning.

In the verse which we are currently discussing, it is talking about the death that comes after Allah *the Exalted* has granted us life, and we have reached the end of the time He appointed to us.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* finishes off the verse by saying: 'and We are the Inheritor.' These Words mean that there is a great inheritance, and it is this cosmos that Allah *the Almighty* created and over which He made us His viceregent. We ourselves have not added anything whatsoever to this cosmos that Allah *Glorified is He* created, for if you were to look at the total amount of water or food stuffs in existence, or any of the other component of life, you would find that they have not increased or decreased at all. The water that you drink to quench your thirst comes out of your body as sweat and urine. Then, after you die, your body decomposes, allowing any remaining water to evaporate. Likewise, the same process happens to all other things in existence.

When Allah *the Exalted* deals in this verse with the matter of death, life and then finally everything in existence returning to the One Who brought it into existence; He speaks of two alternating matters in the life of every existent thing: its life and its death. Both of these phases affect every single thing in existence, for everything has a period of time for which it lives. Everything begins its task of life when it is born, and everything completes its task of life - according to the span apportioned to it by Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who says: 'Everything is bound to perish, save His [eternal] Face.'⁽¹⁾ (*al-Qasas*: 88)

(1) *Ibn Kathir* said in his *Tafsir* (3/403), 'This is Him telling us that He is Everlasting, the Eternal, the Living and the Self-Sustaining Who does not die when all creatures die. It is as He says: "And there will remain the Face of your Lord, Owner of Majesty and Honor." (*ar-Rahman*: 27), where He uses 'face' to refer to His 'Essence'. And the same is true in His Words here: "Everything is bound to perish, save His [eternal] Face." (*Al-Qasas*: 88), i.e. except for Him *Mujahid* and *Ath-Thawri* said: "Except for what is done desiring His face." This interpretation was narrated by *Al-Bukhari* in his *Sahih* as an established opinion. This opinion does not contradict the first opinion since it simply informs us that all actions are worthless except for those right actions that are done for the face of Allah *Glorified is He* and that are in keeping with Allah's Law. As for the first opinion, it means that all essences are transitory and come to an end except for His Essence, for He is the First and the Last, who was before everything and after everything.

So, the ultimate fate of everything that is referred to as 'thing' is to perish, which means that it was living. Our proof that everything had life is Allah's Words: 'that those who perished [through disbelief] would perish upon evidence and those who lived [in faith] would live upon evidence.' (*al-Anfal*: 42) By means of this, we know that everything has a task in life. As soon as that task is complete, it perishes and dies. Then the True Lord *the Most High* inherits everything after everything that has life passes away. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who says: 'Indeed, it is We Who will inherit the earth and whoever is on it, and to Us they will be returned.' (*Maryam*: 40)

There is a difference between the way Allah *the Almighty* inherits and the way creation inherits, for when a created being inherits from another, he first puts that other person into the ground and then inherits what he has left behind. However, as for the True Lord *the Most High* He inherits both together: the created being and what he has left behind.

Some of those who cannot bear the sight of death of their loved one cling tightly to the coffin in which the body is being carried or refuse to let the body out of the house because of their excessive love for that person. However, if you were to leave them for a week and the body were to start to decay, they would contact the undertaker to come and take it away and bury it in the ground, and then they would start to discuss what they are going to inherit from the deceased. By that, they inherit what is left after placing the one who left it in the ground. If the one who left things to be inherited was a person of strong belief and good action, then he enters a new life which is much more pleasant than his life in this world, for in that new life he will eat and drink without ever becoming tired, and every desire that passes through his head will be manifested on the spot. It is because he will be a guest of the Bestower of Blessings *the Most High*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَقْدِمِينَ مِنْكُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمْنَا الْمُسْتَأْخِرِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

**We know exactly those of you who come first
and those who come later [24] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 24)**

Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us that He knows everyone before they are even created and everything about us after we leave this existence. His Knowledge is complete and timeless. The benefit of this knowledge is the recompense that will result from it, for when we live our lives and take our provision we do not view them from afar; rather, we find that Allah *Glorified is He* knows of everything that each of us is going to do before we come to exist.

There is an alternative interpretation that maintains that the True Lord *the Most High* writes down those who hurry to the prayer, having made their way to it as soon as they heard the call; also, He knows those who are late when it comes to offering the prayer.

The phrase '*Allahu Akbar* - Allah is the Greatest' has a profound effect in terms of changing people and waking them up to the fact that Allah *the Exalted* is greater than everything that distracts you and occupies your time.

We know that one of the miraculous aspects of the *adhan* is that it uses the phrase '*Allahu Akbar*' and does not say, '*Allahu Kabir* - Allah is Great'. This is due to respect for the things that occupy our attention in this world, and which we see as being large or great. Notably, belittling this world is not required in Islam since it is a bridge to the recompense promised in the Hereafter.

I always say that this world is too important to forget while at the same time being too trivial to be our aim and objective. In this world, you go out into the world and work hard to obtain food for yourself and those who rely on you, and then that food helps you to offer your acts of worship.

No one should look down upon this world, instead he should thank Allah, ask Him to grant you success in it and expend every effort to succeed in one's actions since for every good action, a servant obtains the best of rewards. However, as soon as he hears the *mu'adhdhin* say, '*Allahu Akbar*', he should direct himself to what is indeed greater. There are some scholars who see various points of interest in this noble verse, since its meaning may

be general in the sense that it is timeless, and may be specific like that related to those who come early and late to the prayer.

The meaning might well even be more specific than that since when we pray we stand in rows— men stand in the first rows, then the children and finally the women. Furthermore, amongst those men, there are those who hurry to the very front so as to avoid their eyes falling upon any woman, and there are those who use every trick at their disposal to ensure they are standing in the rows at the back so that they can see the women. So, the True Lord *the Most High* makes it clear here that even such matters as this do not escape his notice,⁽¹⁾ for He knows all secrets and even things that are more hidden than that.

Or, it might mean those who are the first to fight in *jihad* in the way of Allah *Glorified is He* and those who hold back are the last to fight in *jihad*. As for those who die due to natural causes are not included.

As for when one is called to *jihad*, and puts himself forward to fight, and then fights until he obtains martyrdom, the True Lord *the Most High* knows those who come early to meet Him out of love, and through fighting in *jihad* to raise high the banner of Islam.

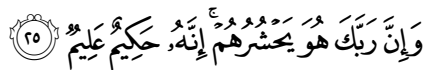
Apparently, he who aspires to martyrdom may be thought of as a life hater. As a matter of fact, they are the people who appreciate the value of life more than those who claim that they do. On the one hand, they love the One Who has created life and believe that He is worthy of fighting for. On the other hand, they want life to be prosperous, so they sacrifice for the Creator for His religion that He has sent down to set life right and maintain balance in the universe.

(1) A (Hadith) about this has come down [from the Prophet] about which Ibn Kathir said in his Tafsir (2/551), 'This is a very strange (Hadith) and there is a lot of disapproval about it.' Al-Wahidi mentioned the following Hadith in his Asbab An-Nuzul (p. 158) upon which there is the huge disapproval that Ibn 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him said, "A beautiful woman used to pray behind the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him' Ibn 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with him went on, 'I have never seen the like of her [in terms of beauty]. When they went to the prayer, some of the Muslims used to go right to the front so as to avoid seeing her, while others used to stay at the back and then when they were in prostration, they would look at her from between their legs.' The (Hadith) is narrated in the Musnad of, and the Sunnan of An-Nasa'i and At-Tirmidhi.

Their reward for sacrificing themselves for this sublime cause will be Paradise; there they will abide forever and enjoy eternal bliss. This reminds me of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq who expressed to Prophet Muhammad his aspiration to attain martyrdom. Hence, the noble Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘Give us the pleasure of your company, O, Abu Bakr!’⁽¹⁾

This proves that those who do not attain martyrdom are not necessarily less honoured in the sight of Allah. Rather, just as faith needs those who sacrifice for it to prove that it is more precious than life itself; it also needs true believers who establish it on earth and protect it against adversaries.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in the following verse:



**[Prophet], it is your Lord who will gather them
all together: He is All-Wise, All Knowing [25]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 25)**

This verse implies a reassurance to Prophet Muhammad that He Who has sent down His guidance to him would not let his stubborn opponents who ridicule and harm him to go unpunished.

The Words of Allah ‘... gather them all together...’ (*al-Hijr*: 25) imply a strong admonition to disbelievers, which means that they will certainly return to Allah to be held accountable for their evildoing. They have denied resurrection even though none of them has dared deny death. Allah *the Exalted* has introduced the notion of resurrection as the inevitable outcome that follows death: ‘Then you will die and then, on the Day of Resurrection, you will be raised up again.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 15-16) They are sure death will come upon them, yet they do not bother to prepare for what comes after death. In the original Arabic text of the verse, the subject ‘your Lord’ is

(1) *Al-Hakim narrated in his Al-Mustadrak (3/474), ‘Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Abu Bakr continued to be an idolater and took part in the Battle of Badr. There, he challenged Muslims for one of them to engage against him in a single combat. Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him wanted to accept his challenge and fight against him. Hence, the Messenger of Allah said to Abu Bakr, “Give us the pleasure of your company, O Abu Bakr!”*

followed by a pronoun which has the same referent, which literally translates into English: 'Your Lord, He it is Who will gather them all together...'. This pronoun, called 'the separating pronoun' (as it separates the subject from the verb) is used for emphasis. Resurrection is certain, for Allah Who has brought us to life after we were nothing is able to raise us from death, so there is no room for doubt or denial. Allah *the Exalted* disposes all affairs with absolute Wisdom and Might, for His Knowledge is Omnipotent, All-Encompassing.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in the following verse:

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ صَلْصَالٍ مِنْ حَمِإٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴿٦٦﴾

**We created man out of dried clay formed from
dark mud [26] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 26)**

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* is speaking about the creation of man, after having talked earlier about the creation of the universe and what has been laid in store in it so it can be ready to receive the vicegerent.

In this chapter, Allah *the Most High* tells us about the process of creation, including the stretching out of the earth, veering of the winds, sending down of water from the sky, allotting provisions in the earth, making firm mountains in the earth and how balance has been struck in the system of the entire universe.

Allah *Glorified is He* begins the chapter with His Words: '...These are Messages of revelation—of a discourse clear in itself and clearly showing the truth' (*al-Hijr*: 1). So He opens the chapter by speaking about the Quran, the guidance sent down to people to establish the fundamentals and values by which human life can be set right. Then, He speaks about the material from which this human life has been created. Thus, the chapter deals with the source of values, that is the Quran, as well as the material source of life. Allah *the Almighty* has created mankind and sent down to them His Guidance to manage their lives in the right way. To Allah belongs the Highest Similitude, but let me give this example again: an inventor of any machine, after creating its body, must define the purpose it is made of, the way of maintaining it and its manner of operation. The same is true of Allah's creation of mankind whom He has willed to be vicegerent on earth. He has

given them their physical forms and revealed to them His guidance so they may prosper both, in this life and the Hereafter.

Since mankind has been created to be vicegerents, this means that Adam *peace be upon him* was not the first to settle on earth. Rather, there were created beings on the earth before him. Geologists and archaeologists have discovered buried fossils of created beings that lived on this planet more than fifty thousand centuries ago, which proves there was life on earth before mankind existed.

Some would question the truth of that scientific statement and think that the fossils must date back to the time of Adam's existence and not by any means to any earlier time. However, they are perhaps ignorant of the fact that Allah *the Exalted* never says that Adam *peace be upon him* was the first one to inhabit earth. Rather, He has brought us to this life as vicegerents of those who lived before on earth.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If He wills, He can do away with you and bring in a new creation- that is not difficult for Allah.' (*Fatir*: 16-17) This verse proves the possibility that other created beings existed before mankind, just as other created beings can be brought to earth after us.

Allah *the Almighty* mentions glimpses of the story of Adam's creation in the Noble Quran. If we consider them all, we get a complete account with all its details and essential elements. The Quran is free from redundancies; rather, it mentions each part of a story in the context most suitable for it. The Quran is not meant as a history book detailing every event in the history of mankind. It is meant to convey Divine Guidance and outline for people the fundamentals, which life should be governed or based on. Its purpose is to instill in the hearts of mankind mindfulness of Allah and teach them the values that guard them against deviation.

Allah mentions the process of man's creation in many chapters of the Quran: *al-Baqara*, *al-A'raf*, *al-Hijr*, *al-Isra'*, *al-Kahf* and *Sad*⁽¹⁾. For example, Allah says in chapter *al-Baqara*: '[O, Prophet], when your Lord told the

(1) This is not the English word "sad" (unhappy), but one of the letters of Arabic alphabet which is pronounced as *sad* and it is also the name of the Quranic chapter number (38).
[Reviewer's Note]

angels, "I am putting a successor⁽¹⁾ on earth," they said, "How can⁽²⁾ You put someone there who will cause damage and bloodshed, when we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your holiness?" However, He said, "I know things you do not." (*al-Baqara*: 30) Thus, did the angels exclaim when Allah told them He would create mankind? This was before Adam *peace be upon him* was ready to descend to earth.

Some question the precision of the Quran regarding the accounts given in it about the creation of man. They ask: how can the Quran say on one occasion that man has been created from water, on another occasion from clay and on another occasion from dried clay like pottery? The answer is simple: Allah mentions in the Quran the different stages of the process of man's creation. Allah *the Exalted* knows best what He has created. He has created the heavens and earth and all this is in them and has not made any of His created beings witness how He created them. He says: 'I did not make them witnesses to the creation of the heavens and earth, nor to their own creation; I do not take as My supporters those who lead others astray.' (*al-Kahf*: 51)

Even though the process of creation belongs to the Unseen, Allah *the Almighty* has given us, out of His Mercy, tangible proofs in existence that point to such unseen matters and support what He reveals in the Quran. Allah *the Exalted* says in the Quran that every living being is made up mainly of water, which is true since water makes up the greatest proportion of the human body, for example. The statement that man has been created from dried clay like pottery is also true, for when water is mixed with earth it becomes clay, and when clay is left for a time, it dries and turns into a hard material like pottery. Thus, did Allah *Glorified is He* create Adam *peace be upon him*? About his creation He says: 'When I have fashioned him and breathed My spirit into him, bow down before him.' (*al-Hijr*: 29) This process of man's creation is actually evidenced

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- (1) The term *khalifa* is normally translated as "vicegerent" or "deputy". While this is one meaning of the term, its basic meaning is "successor"—the Quran often talks about generations and individuals who are successors to each other— or a "trustee" to whom a responsibility is temporarily given. [the Quran, *A new Translation by M. S. A. Abdel Haleem*]
- (2) In Arabic, this is not an interrogative but an exclamatory statement normally expressing disapproval, best rendered in English by 'How can you'. There are numerous examples of this in the Quran. [the Quran, *A new Translation by M. S. A. Abdel Haleem*]

by the very act that brings life to an end, namely death which is the reverse of life. The creation of man was started by water that was mixed with earth and turned into clay. Then, when the body had been formed, the soul was breathed into it. When one dies, this process is quite reversed. The first thing to leave the body is what was last breathed into it, namely the soul. Then, there comes the turn of the physical form. When life seeps out of it, its tissues soon come to resemble dried clay. Then, water evaporates from the body until it eventually turns into earth, from which creation was started. Thus, through this reversal of life by death, Allah *the Exalted* gives us material evidence for the process of creation which proves that what is revealed about it in the Quran is the truth.

Some argue that the sun was created before the earth, and the earth was a part of the sun which then split off from it. Have they witnessed the creation of the sun and the earth? Can experiments be conducted to prove the truth of either statement? Since the creation of both belongs to the Unseen, the answer to both questions is in the negative. Allah *the Almighty* says about those who get their minds involved in matters beyond their reach: 'I did not make them witnesses to the creation of the heavens and earth, nor to their own creation; I do not take as My supporters those who lead others astray.' (*al-Kahf*: 51) Such attempts have only served to emphasise the miraculousness of the Quran, for they constitute material evidence for the statement Allah *the Most High* makes about them in His Glorious Book. Indeed, they 'lead others astray' (*al-Kahf*: 51); they dissuade others from the truth Allah has revealed and get them involved in needless pursuits of matters beyond their limited capacity.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in the following verse:

وَالْجَانَّ خَلَقْنَاهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ مِنْ نَارِ السَّمُومِ ﴿٢٧﴾

The jinn We created before, from the fire of scorching wind [27] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 27)

The Arabic word translated here as 'scorching wind' is *samum* which denotes 'the smokeless flame of fire'. *Samum* is derived from the same root of *masam* (pores) since it refers to hot winds that penetrate stealthily into the pores of the human body.

Thus, we see that mankind and jinns have been created from different materials, which certainly affects the characteristics and abilities of each. The human physical form resembles in its characteristics those of clay, and the characteristics of jinns also incarnate the fiery constituents of their forms. Jinns are lighter and of fiercer natures than mankind whose physical forms are subject to the laws of clay. Allah *Glorified is He* says about Satan: '... He and his forces can see you from where you cannot see them ...' (*al-A'raf*: 27). The extraordinary abilities of jinns are attributed to their creation from the fire of smokeless flame. This is where the difference between them and mankind originates.

Allah *the Almighty* has made jinns this way to suit the nature of their mission in this life, which is somewhat different from that mankind has been assigned. It is not a matter of one being better or preferable to the other, but different roles and assignments require different tasks. Therefore, there is no room to compare one species with another.

This brings to mind the story of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* when he asked for the throne of Balqis to be brought to him: 'Then he said, "Counsellors, which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?"' (*an-Naml*: 38) One of the skilled jinns offered to bring Sulaiman (Solomon) her throne before he got up out of his council-seat, but the one who had knowledge of the Scripture said he was able to bring the throne of Balqis before his eye re-opened after blinking. In that way, the one who had knowledge of the Scripture exceeded with this knowledge the power of capable jinn.⁽¹⁾ Allah relates this story in the Quran; He says: 'A powerful and crafty jinn replied, "I will bring it to you before you can even rise from your place. I am strong and trustworthy enough," but one of them who had some knowledge of the Scripture said, "I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye."' (*an-Naml*: 39-40)

Allah says in the following verse:

(1) Jinn vary as to power and ability. The jinn that offered to bring the throne was a '*efrit*' which means one of the strongest jinn. The word literally means "one who brings things about through his skill and cunning." [*Al-Mu'jam Al-Wajiz*, entry: '*afrata*']

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي خَلِّقُ شَكْرًا مِّن صَلَٰصِلٍ مِّن حَمَإٍ مَّسْنُونٍ ﴿٢٨﴾

Your Lord said to the angels, ‘I will create a mortal out of dried clay, formed from dark mud [28] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 28)

We have already provided basis for understanding this verse. For a statue to be made, earth is mixed with water until it becomes clay then left to turn into a material like sounding clay. Such is the material that can be shaped into a statue with distinct features. However, statues remain stuck in one form and have no power, unlike human beings created by the Hand of Almighty Allah. Human beings, due to the fact that Allah blows into them of His spirit, have powers that no being created by the ingenuity of man may ever have. It is impossible for Allah’s created beings to compete with the Omnipotent Power of Him Who has created them.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Allah has created Adam in his image, sixty cubits.’⁽¹⁾ Scholars have disagreed regarding the referent of the pronoun in ‘his image’. Does it refer Adam or Allah?

Some scholars have said the pronoun refers to Adam *peace be upon him*. Given this interpretation, the hadith means that Allah did not create him as a child who then grew up, rather He created him in his adult form. When created, Adam *peace be upon him* examined himself and found that he was a full human being even though he had not existed even one hour before that, so he turned to the One Who has brought him into existence in that image.

Other scholars have said that ‘Allah’ is the referent of the pronoun, which means Allah has created Adam *peace be upon him* in His Image. This implies no likeness between Allah and His creation. Rather, Allah has made man a vicegerent on earth and gave him power from His Power, knowledge from His Knowledge, wisdom from His Wisdom and might from His Might. This

(1) Imam Muslim cites this Hadith in his *Sahih* (2841). An-Nawawi said in his commentary on it, ‘This narration apparently shows that the pronoun in “his image” refers to Adam *peace be upon him*. It means that when Adam was created, his physical form was the same as when he was brought down to earth and also when he died. In other words, the very moment he was created, he was sixty cubits long and he did not go through the same stages of physical growth as his offspring do. His physical form in Paradise is also the same as when he was on earth. No change has occurred to him.’

is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Imitate the Attributes of Allah in your behaviour.'⁽¹⁾

The miraculous creation of Adam *peace be upon him* is the work of Him Who says to anything, 'Be!' and it is. He *Glorified is He* says: 'In Allah's Eyes, 'Isa (Jesus) is just like Adam: He created him from dust, said to him, 'Be', and he was.' (*Al-'Imran*: 59) When Allah wills something to take place, no explanation is needed- all that remains for us is to simply believe in the Creator *the Exalted and Almighty*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says after that:

فَإِذَا سَوَّيْتُهُ، وَنَفَخْتُ فِيهِ مِنْ رُوحِي فَقَعُوا لَهُ، سَاجِدِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

**When I have fashioned him and breathed My
spirit into him, bow down before him [29]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 29)**

The Arabic word *taswiyah* (translated in this verse as 'fashion') means making something fit a task it has been made for. Allah has willed to make man in a form suitable for a spirit to be blown into him. The fact that Allah 'blows' of His spirit into man does not mean that giving life to a human being is by breathing air into his mouth. The word 'blow' is meant to represent the process whereby a spirit spreads to every part of the human body.

Scholars have had a debate around the definition of *ruh* (spirit). Personally, however, I believe it safer not to immerse ourselves in such a debate at all, for Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[O, Prophet], they ask you about the spirit. Say, "The spirit is part of my Lord's domain. You have only been given a little knowledge."' (*al-Isra*': 85)

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* gave His command to the angels to bow down before Adam *peace be upon him*:

(1) *Scholars have classified this Hadith as da'if (weak) or mawdu' (forged). [Reviewer's Note]*

فَسَجَدَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ كُلُّهُمْ أَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

**And the angels all did so [30]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 30)**

They all made obeisance in a single motion, for the angels do not have free will — they have no choice but to do what Allah *the Exalted* commands them. After Allah *the Almighty* created Adam *peace be upon him* He bestowed great honour on him by commanding the angels to bow down before him. The angels, whom Allah has entrusted with managing and taking care of this new creation, obeyed the command. Allah *the Most High* has made those assigned the mission of disposing the affairs of the new creation and guarding over them bow down before Adam *peace be upon him*.

The structure of the verse shows that the act of prostration happened immediately. Once they received the command, the angels obeyed in a swift and decisive manner. It is worthy of pointing out that prostration of the angels was not any form of worship or obedience to Adam, but they did so only out of obedience to the One Who has so commanded *Glorified is He*. The angels to whom the command to bow down was given are those who are immediately above mankind, for there are other angels who are higher still, namely those who are totally lost in love of their Lord and who do nothing but glorifying Him and singing praises of His Name. This is the act of worship to which they devote every moment. Thus, the angels promptly responded to their Lord's Command.

إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى أَنْ يَكُونَ مَعَ السَّاجِدِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

**But not Iblis: he refused to bow down like
the others [31] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 31)**

Therefore, the command was given to the angels, yet this verse mentions Satan and his disobedience on that occasion, which means the command to prostrate before Adam included him as well. This point has been the source of great debate amongst Islamic scholars, and such debates are governed by two rules. First, in cases where there is an explicit text in the Quran or Sunnah, the text rules. Second, when there is no direct text pointing to the issue under discussion, the scholars derive rulings by means of analogy and logical inference. When the

text and logical inference are apparently contradicting, then reasoning applied to achieve logical inference should be guided by what the text conveys.

Satan was punished for noncompliance with the command of Allah *the Almighty*. He refused to prostrate himself before Adam *peace be upon him* out of defiance and arrogance. Thus, does that mean that Satan was one of the angels? The answer is no, for there is a text in the Quran explicitly telling otherwise: '... and they all bowed down, but not Iblis. He was one of the jinns, and he disobeyed his Lord's command ...' (*al-Kahf*: 50). Thus, Allah *the Exalted* clearly states that Satan (Iblis) was not one of the angels,⁽¹⁾ rather, he was one of the jinns. The jinns, like mankind, have been given free will, so they can obey or disobey the commands of Allah *the Most High* based on their choices, unlike the angels whom Allah has made totally subservient to Him, so they have no choice but to obey Him *Glorified is He*.

Satan too was addressed by the command to prostrate to Adam, which tells he was present among the angels. This is an indication of one thing: before this occasion where he disobeyed Allah, he had committed himself to be devoted to Him and that caused him to be raised up to such an elevated status that he was allowed to be in the presence of angels.⁽²⁾ Allah *the Almighty* thus honoured him because, even though he was given free will and could obey or disobey Him, he committed himself to obedience. It was this devotion that placed him among the ranks of angels.

Books of Islamic traditions and narratives report that Satan was given the appellation of 'the peacock of the angels' since he used to swagger with an air of self-important on account of the worship to which he willingly committed himself. He was the only one amongst them whom Allah *the Almighty* has given free will, so he had the power to choose whether or not to be obedient,

(1) *Al-hasan Al-Basri said, 'Satan (Iblis) was never an angel, not even for the blink of an eye. Rather, he was the father of all jinn just as Adam peace be upon him was the father of all of humankind.'* [Cited with an authentic chain of transmitters by Ibn Jarir At-Tabari and mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his *Quranic Exegesis* (3/88)]

(2) Ibn Kathir said in his *Quranic Exegesis* (2/88), 'He committed himself to be as good as the angels, devoting himself to worship and righteousness. That was why he was in the presence of the angels and was addressed by the same command. Then, he turned disobedient by refusing to comply. At times of trials, everyone reveals what truly lies inside him and his real disposition betrays him.' [Quoted with a certain amount of adaptation to the order of the sentences]

and he chose to submit to his Lord. Thus we understand that Allah *the Exalted* made him in the company of the faultless angels in order to honour his obedience to Him, but he was not an angel.

Some scholars hold that he was at a higher status than the angels⁽¹⁾ while others say he was below them. The fact they have all agreed about is that he was never an angel, as the Quran explicitly states. Regardless of whether he was higher or lower in status than the angels were, he was honoured for his obedience to whatever his Lord commanded.

In His depiction of Satan's disobedience, Allah once uses the word *aba* which denotes 'rejection', another time He uses *istekbara* which denotes 'rejection mixed with arrogance or defiance' and on a third occasion, He uses both.⁽²⁾ The punishment decreed for him was on account of his rejection to comply with Allah's Command and his arrogance, which is expressed in several verses of the Quran. In one verse, Allah *the Almighty* states Satan as saying: '... I will not bow to a mortal You created from dried clay, formed from dark mud' (*al-Hijr*: 33), and in another verse, He is quoted as saying: '... I am better than him. You made me from fire, and him from clay' (*Sad*: 76). Allah *Glorified is He* says in the following verse:

قَالَ يٰٓإِبْلِيسُ مَا لَكَ اَلَّا تَكُوْنَ مَعَ السَّٰجِدِيْنَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Allah said, 'Iblis, why did you not bow down like the others?' [32] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 32)

In the Arabic text of the verse, Allah *the Exalted* uses the expression *malaka* which is used in interrogation to denote surprise at something which

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- (1) *Ibn Kathir* cites a number of narratives in his *Quranic Exegesis* concerning this issue (1/77). He narrates that Ibn Abbas Allah be pleased with him said, 'The name of Satan was "Azazel". He was one of the noblest angels- one of those with four wings. Then, he was banished from Allah's Mercy.' He is also narrated to have said, 'He was one of the noblest angels and belonged to one of their greatest throngs. He was guardian over paradise and had sovereignty over the lowest sky and the earth.'
- (2) The word *aba* is used in the verse: 'Save Satan (Iblis): he *aba* (refused) to be among those who prostrated themselves' (*al-Hijr*: 31). The word *istakbara* is used in the verse: 'Save Satan (Iblis): he *istakbara* (gloried in his arrogance), and [thus] became one of those who deny the truth' (*Sad*: 74), and both are used in the verse: '... They all prostrated themselves, save Satan (Iblis), who *aba* (refused) and *istakbara* (gloried in his arrogance): and thus he became one of those who deny the truth' (*al-Baqara*: 34).

has gone against the normal state of things. Allah has given Satan the privilege of having free will, and the latter chose to be obedient to his Lord, so his disobedience for this occasion was unusual. However, it is Allah Who speaks here, so to suppose that He posed it out of surprise is out of the question, for His Omnipotent Knowledge encompasses what was, what is, what will be, and what would or would not be! He is the One Who has created Satan and granted him freedom of choice, so He knows he is able to obey or disobey Him. Allah *the Almighty* has eternally known what Satan would do, and He just willed to establish evidence against Satan on the Day of Resurrection. This is why Allah gave Satan that question. This was Satan's reply:

قَالَ لَمْ أَكُنْ لِأَسْجُدَ لِبَشَرٍ خَلَقْتَهُ مِنْ صَلْصَلٍ مِنْ حَمَلٍ مَسْنُونٍ ﴿٣٣﴾

**And he answered, 'I will not bow to a mortal You
created from dried clay, formed from dark mud' [33]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 33)**

Satan thus gives expression to the faulty understanding that was hidden within himself concerning the nature of elements, for he thought that clay had a lower rank than fire that which Allah has created him. Therefore, his refusal to prostrate himself before Adam was, in his eyes, a justified refusal. He seemed to think that the element from which a being has been created is what gives him preference over another being. He overlooked the fact that the command was the Will of the One Who has created all elements and put everything in place according to His Wisdom, not according to the whims or preferences of anyone of His created beings.

Who can say that fire is better than clay especially since both are used for different purposes, and therefore, there is no room for comparison? Each of them has a task that the other cannot perform.

In the Eyes of Allah, he who gilds objects with gold is not preferred over him who fashions clay to make pottery. Neither one of them can be said to be better than the other except with regard to him perfecting the task allotted to him. So Satan has revealed that his disobedience stemmed from a conviction that he was created from the best element.

Having thus expressed his defiance of the Divine command, Allah has decreed this punishment for him:

قَالَ فَخُذْ مِنْهَا فَإِنَّكَ رَجِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

Get out of here! said God. You are an outcast [34]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 34)

This command was issued to expel Satan from the presence of Allah, from the place he had occupied in the Highest Assembly and deprive him from all that was good. It is worthy to mention that the Arabic word *rajim* (translated in this verse as 'outcast') linguistically denotes punishment by stoning. Satan has incurred that punishment because of his rejection of the command of Allah, his arrogance and his erroneous belief that fire from which he was created was better than the clay from which Adam *peace be upon him* was created. He did not take into account the fact that every created being has an appointed task, and no being is preferred over another except with regard to how far he perfects that task.

Allah *the Almighty* has willed that every being should pursue the means that had been brought into existence in order to assist him in his mission. He created Adam to be a vicegerent on earth, for Allah *the Exalted* puts means and causes in the hands of His created beings to affect the outcomes He has willed. Take fire for example; it causes food to be cooked, for Allah has willed that to be the case. Allah *the Most High* has created means and causes of various natures to be employed for various purposes. A true believer sees causes and means a gift from Allah and that through them; Allah's Hand is extended towards him.

After banishing Satan from His presence⁽¹⁾, Allah *Glorified is He* confirms the sentence He has passed on him, so he is 'an outcast' and:

(1) *About Allah's Words: "Get out of here!" said Allah. "You are an outcast" (al-Hijr: 34), Ibn Kathir said in his Quranic Exegesis (2/551), 'Allah has banished Satan from the station he had occupied in the Highest Assembly.' Al-Qurtubi said about this verse in his Quranic Exegesis (5/375), 'It refers to banishment from heavens, from the Garden of Eden, or from the company of the angels.'*

وَإِنَّ عَلَيْكَ اللَّعْنَةَ إِلَى يَوْمِ الدِّينِ ﴿٣٥﴾

Rejected until the Day of Judgement [35]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 35)

This verse implies that jinns also die. The life of each of them must come to an end on an appointed day. It also confirms that Allah *the Exalted* will never give Satan a chance to repent, nor will He ever pardon him. However, Satan tries to win some respite, so he is quoted in the following verse as saying:

قَالَ رَبِّ فَأَنْظِرْنِي إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

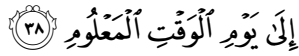
**Iblis said, 'My Lord, give me respite until the Day
when they are raised from the dead' [36]**
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 36)

These words indicate that Satan (Iblis) was trying to escape from death, but Allah *the Exalted* would never be tricked. He knew what Satan was after. He said in response to that request of Satan:

قَالَ فَإِنَّكَ مِنَ الْمُنْظَرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

'You have respite,' said God [37]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 37)

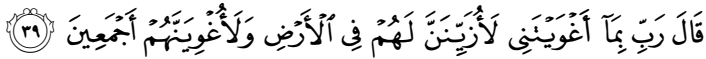
The moment Satan heard that, he thought that escaped from death since there is no death after resurrection. He thought that his request had been answered. It seemed to him as if he had escaped through his deception and he had been granted ample time to take his revenge on the descendants of Adam since it was his refusal to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him* that had placed him in that difficult predicament. If Satan had even the smallest amount of understanding, he would have realised that it was his own arrogance and wrong conviction that fire was better than clay that caused him to be banished from Allah's Mercy. Furthermore, immediately after this comes the verse that makes it clear that he has not escaped death, for Allah *Glorified is He* says he will have respite:



**Until the Day of the Appointed Time [38]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 38)**

This means that Satan will also meet death since it is the destiny of every being that is created to die before the Final Hour comes, for Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The Trumpet will be sounded, and everyone in the heavens and earth will fall down senseless except those Allah spares ...' (*az-Zumar*: 68). Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'Everyone on earth perishes.' (*ar-Rahman*: 26) Thus, Satan will not escape from death.

Someone may well wonder, 'How is it that Allah spoke to Satan?' In fact, Allah *the Exalted* did not speak to him to honour him, but to make his punishment all the more severe, for He has angels that He uses to convey whatever He wills to whomever He wills. The following verse tells as such:



**Iblis then said to God, Because You have put me
in the wrong, I will lure mankind on earth and put them
in the wrong [39] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 39)**

Satan's words: '... O, my Lord ...' (*al-Hijr*: 39) are an acknowledgement that he believes Allah *the Most High* to be the Lord. Nevertheless, this acknowledgement is followed by his confession that he brought upon himself the curse of Allah, for he said: '... because you misled me...' (*al-Hijr*: 39). It was not Allah Who misled him, in fact. Rather, Allah only gave him freedom of choice- freedom either to obey or disobey Him then be held accountable for what he does. So Allah *the Exalted* gave Satan free will which he used to go against His commands.

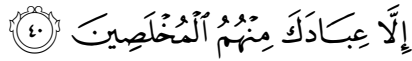
Satan continues to say: '... I shall indeed adorn the path of error for them (mankind) on the earth ...' (*al-Hijr*: 39). This makes it clear that the whisperings of Satan are limited to the finery of this life; he makes transient pleasures dazzling in the eyes of people, like drinking alcohol or taking drugs. He tempts people by means of such enjoyments to make them deviate and

follow paths that incur Allah's Wrath. This is why I believe that people who have just enough money to cover basic needs are safe in the sense that they cannot afford unlawful enjoyments. What does one get when he deviates from the Straight Path? Nothing but loss of righteousness and money as well!

As for the basic needs, Satan's insinuations would not approach them, for Allah *the Almighty* has already made it permissible for us to enjoy them. Allah *the Exalted* has not forbidden anything that we essentially need in our lives. Rather, Satan always tempts us into things that are far from essential, and we can well do without them, for He does not charge us beyond our capacities. Thus, by following Satan, one at once disobeys Allah and also wastes his money on mere extravagances.

Often times, those who exceed the limits in sinning envy the righteous to the extent of trying to tempt them into deviation from the Straight Path. One who persists in sinning often thinks to himself, 'Why should I fall into deviation alone?' Consumed by feelings of grudge and self-loathing, he would heartily love all the upright to be persistent sinners like himself. Such was the case with Satan when he made his foolish response to Allah, but he was at least aware of his weakness and the Might of his Lord. Would he enter into a direct war with Allah, or with the descendants of Adam whom He has created to be vicegerents on earth? Satan thus determined his position in the fight: '... give me respite until the Day when they are raised from the dead' (*al-Hijr*: 36). He has thus decided that his battle would be with the creation not the Creator: '...I shall indeed adorn the path of error for them (mankind)⁽¹⁾...' (*al-Hijr*: 39). This declaration of Satan seems to include all mankind. However, he knew that would be above his ability; he has already acknowledged his weak station and the Might of his Lord, so after he declares that he would lead all mankind astray, he adds this exception:

(1) *On the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri, Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Satan said, "My Lord, by Your Might and Majesty, I will continue to lead the descendants of Adam astray so long as their souls remain in their bodies." Allah replied, "By My Might and Majesty, I will continue to forgive them so long as they ask for My forgiveness."' [Cited by Ahmad in his Musnad (3/39 & 41) and Ibn Lahi'ah is present in its chain of transmitters. See: Majma' Az-Zawa'id (10/207).]*

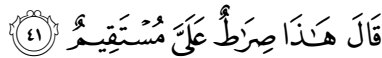


**All except Your devoted servants [40]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 40)**

Satan admits that he can have no power over those sincerely devoted to Allah since they are rightly guided and guarded against straying. Faith is firmly established in their hearts, and they have reached the station of true sincerity in worship, a station which makes it next to impossible for Satan to misguide them. The people of knowledge and insight have stated, ‘Devotion to Allah makes one honoured in His Sight.’

If Allah *the Almighty* willed that all of His creation should be rightly guided, no one would be able to misguide them. However, Allah *the Exalted* has given us freedom to decide and choose whether to be obedient to Him or otherwise, for He is in no need of us or of our worship. This is why Satan admits his inability to misguide those who are sincere in their worship of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Having made his declaration in full, Satan receives a clear reply from Allah *the Almighty* to make it known to him that it is not his choice that he would not lead astray those who are devoted to Him; it is not a favour from him to Allah or His sincere servants. Rather, it is the Will of Allah *the Exalted* that they shall be safe from Satan’s insinuations:



**Allah said, [Devotion] is a straight path to Me [41]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 41)**

Allah *the Exalted* makes it clear that it is His guidance that leads His servants to devotion, and it is not a favour from Satan that he allows some to be devout. Satan has described the directions where he would come to mankind in order to misguide them, as he is quoted saying: ‘I will come at them– from their front and their back, from their right and their left⁽¹⁾– and You will find that most of

(1) *Qatada* said, ‘He come at them from their front, telling them that there would be no resurrection, no Paradise and no Hellfire. He comes at them from their backs, making=

them are ungrateful.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 17) So Satan comes at one from all directions except from above or below. So long as one is mindful of the Exaltedness and Might of the One *above* and his own status as a servant who is definitely *below* His Creator, Satan can never find a way to him.

Having thus declared to Satan that it is He Who guards His servants from deviation, Allah *Glorified is He* further emphasises this truth, by saying:

إِنَّ عِبَادِي لَيْسَ لَكَ عَلَيْهِمْ سُلْطَانٌ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْغَاوِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

**You will have no power over My servants, only
over the ones who go astray and follow you [42]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 42)**

This verse makes it absolutely clear that Satan is in no position to lead astray those who are sincere in their devotion to Allah *the Exalted* for He protects His servants from deviation except for those who choose to be misguided by forsaking His ordinance; such are the only ones whom Satan can deceive. He will say to them on the Day of Resurrection: ‘... Allah gave you a true promise. I too made promises but they were false ones. I had no power over you except to call you, and you responded to my call, so do not blame me. Blame yourselves. I cannot help you, nor can you help me. I reject the way you associated me with Allah before ...’ (*Ibrahim*: 22). It is a Mercy from Allah that He has revealed all that to us in this worldly life, and Satan is going to admit it all on the Day of Judgment. As the verse states, Satan has no power over us; he can neither compel us by force nor persuade us by reason to do anything; all he can do is make insinuations to us.

In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us the destiny of Satan and those who follow him:

= the finery of this worldly life seem dazzling and calling them to it. He comes at them from their right, trying to make them reluctant to do good deeds. He comes at them from their left, making sins and unlawful things luring to them. He comes at you, son of Adam, from every direction, except from above, for he can never prevent the Mercy of Allah from coming down to you.’ [Cited by Ibn Kathir in his *Quranic Exegesis* (2/304)]

وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمَوْعِدُهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

**Hell is the promised place for all these [43]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 43)**

So long as the recompense awaiting those who follow Satan are so grievous, people of understanding should always have this final destiny deeply in mind whenever he is on the verge of doing a certain deed. Recalling punishment prevents one from yielding to the evil insinuations of Satan or those of his own self. If one heeds the unwelcome outcomes of his wrong actions from the first, he would not dare fall into them.

Suppose a man was aroused. He found access to a suitable place furnished with all that he needed and a beautiful woman was ready for him. Still, he was shown a hot furnace right there and was told that, after indulging himself in that unlawful pleasure, he would have to throw himself in that furnace. What do you think that man would do? No doubt, he would give up entirely the idea of even touching that woman for fear of the burning furnace. It is heedlessness of punishment that makes one easily fall into sinning. It befits people of understanding to remember well this Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Death is the herald of Judgment, so when someone dies, his own judgment day has come.'⁽¹⁾ No one knows when he is going to die.

In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies the different levels of hellfire:

لَهَا سَبْعَةُ أَبْوَابٍ لِّكُلِّ بَابٍ مِنْهُمْ جُزْءٌ مَّقْسُومٌ ﴿٤٤﴾

**With seven gates,⁽²⁾ each gate having its allotted
share of them [44] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 44)**

Those who have gone astray and persisted in their disobedience of Allah will meet their severe destiny in hellfire. With them will be Satan who

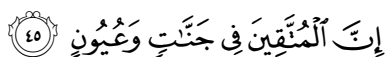
(1) Cited by Al-'Ajalunu in *Kashf Al-Khafa* (Hadith no. 3618), on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him with this addition, 'Remind yourself of death a lot, for if you remember it at times of prosperity, it will guard you against its lure, and if you remember it at times of distress, it will help you bear it more easily.'

(2) 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb Allah be pleased with him said, 'Do you know what the gates of Hell are like?' They replied, 'They are like our gates.' Ali replied, 'No, they are like this, one above the other.' Ath-Tha'labi cited a version with this addition, 'And he [Ali] placed one of his hands on top of the other.' [Cited by Al-Qurtubi in his *Quranic Exegesis* (5/3753)].

arrogantly rejected Allah's Command and plotted to misguide the human race. Types of punishment in hellfire will differ, for each throng of sinners will be gathered together and given their due punishment. Those who were addicted to alcohol, for example, will all be gathered in one place, gamblers in another, and so on. Each of the gates of hell will be specified for a group of people bound together by an act of disobedience all of them used to commit in the life of this world. As they shared that sin and persisted on doing it together, they also share the same torment and punishment. By that, the Words of Allah will be fulfilled: 'On that Day, friends will become each other's enemies. Not so the righteous' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67).

In Hell, there are different depths, each specified for a certain group of sinners: *Ladha* (the Blaze), *Hutama* (the Crushing Fire), *Saqar* (the Scorching Fire), *Sa'ir* (the Flaming Fire) and *Hawiya* (the Burning Abyss)⁽¹⁾. Each of these depths has sections, for just as there are different levels in Paradise, Hellfire has levels too, one below the other.

After speaking about the recompenses of disbelievers, Allah *the Most High* speaks about the reward of believers, for the striking contrast between the two to bring grief to disbelievers and great joy to believers. So He *Glorified is He* says:



**But the righteous will be in Gardens with
springs [45] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 45)**

The Arabic word rendered here as 'righteous' is *muttaqun*, an adjective derived from the noun *taqwa* which means 'righteousness' or 'mindfulness of Allah'. It is forsaking one's own desires and complying with Divine commands no matter how hard or heavy this can be. It is to prefer what Allah *the Exalted* loves to what one loves. *Taqwa* has outcomes that Allah mentions in the Quran. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '(Be mindful of) Allah and He will teach you.' (*al-Baqara*: 282) Allah *Glorified is He* also says: '... (Be on your guard against) the Fire of which men and stones are the fuel...' (*al-Baqara*: 24).

(1) These are different names of hellfire mentioned in the Glorious Quran. [Reviewer's Note].

We have previously explained that Allah *the Most High* has Attributes of Majesty and Attributes of Beauty. Blessings are the manifestations of the Attributes of Beauty, while trials are the manifestations of the Attributes of Majesty. Allah is the All-Forgiving and the Compeller; He is the Pardoner and the Avenger (the One Who executes retribution against wrongdoers). As for the Attributes of Majesty, we should seek protection from their manifestations by avoiding what displeases Allah *the Almighty*. As for the Attributes of Beauty, we should seek to attain their manifestations by doing acts of righteousness to get closer to Allah. The way to achieve both is to abide by the guidance of Allah to protect ourselves from the Fire, which is one of His forces.

So, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But the righteous will be in Gardens with springs' (*al-Hijr*: 45). They are the ones who believe in Allah and His Messenger (Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*) and follow His guidance. Even if they fall prey to weakness at times and commit sins, they soon repent and implore Allah's Forgiveness, so He accepts their repentance, forgives them and changes their misdeeds into good deeds.

So in paradise there are '*uyun*': '...Gardens with '*uyun* (springs)' (*al-Hijr*: 45). It literally means 'springs', yet in the verse we are reflecting on, it refers to the rivers of paradise, for Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'Here is a picture of the Garden promised to the pious: rivers of water forever pure, rivers of milk forever fresh ...' (*Muhammad*: 15). Still, there may be springs and fountainheads that no one knows about except for Allah *the Exalted and Almighty*.

After describing the Gardens of Paradise, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses those who will be admitted to it, by saying:

أَدْخُلُوهَا بِسَلَامٍ ءَامِنِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

Enter them in peace and safety! [46]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 46)

The definition of 'peace and safety' in the life of this world is different from that in the Hereafter. Peace in this life is temporary and must be interrupted by disturbances, by the fear of losing what one has or the fear of death. We know that every blessing in this world will inevitably come to an

end. In the Hereafter, contrarily, happiness is pure, undisturbed by any fears and never coming to an end.

In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* describes the relationship that will bind the people of Paradise, by saying:

وَنَزَعْنَا مَا فِي صُدُورِهِمْ مِّنْ غِلٍّ إِخْوَانًا عَلَىٰ سُرُرٍ مُّتَقَابِلِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

**And We shall remove any bitterness from their hearts: [they will be like] brothers, sitting on couches, face-to-face [47]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 47)**

No feelings of rancour or grudge will ever find a way to their hearts. Friends who disobey Allah together in this life will turn into enemies in the Afterlife. The righteous, on the other hand, will have their hearts purified from any negative feelings. Each will enjoy eternal bliss in his level in paradise, with purified wives, and they will feel no envy toward each other. Some will be at higher levels and some will be at lower levels, yet there will be no competition or lamentation; everyone will have pure, unending happiness.

Rancour may steal into the hearts of some because of differences in viewpoints for example, even though they are brothers in Islam and all believe in Allah and His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. An example of that is when ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him* faced Talha⁽¹⁾ and Az-Zubayr *Allah be pleased with them* at the Battle of the Camel. As we know, all three companions were among the Ten Promised Paradise. Each of the two conflicting sides had their viewpoint and their proof of being in the right. The moment that the battle began, the companion ‘Ali came face-to-face with the Companion Az-Zubayr and said to him, ‘Do you remember what the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said when the two of you were passing by me? The Prophet greeted you and you

(1) *He is Talha ibn ‘Ubaydullah Al-Qurashi Allah be pleased with him. He was one of the first eight people to embrace Islam and one of the five who became Muslim at the hands of Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him. He was also one of the six Companions who made up the Shura (Advisory) Council which was established by ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him. He was killed in the year 36 AH by Marwan ibn Al-Hakam at the Battle of the Camel. [Al-‘Isaba fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba 3/291]*

said, "Ibn Abu Taleb's youthful radiance has not left him." Hence, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* looked at you and said, "You will fight against 'Ali and you will be the one in the wrong [when you do so]."⁽¹⁾ Remembering this, the companion Az-Zubayr⁽¹⁾ *Allah be pleased with him* put aside his weapon and stopped fighting. Later, the son of Talha ibn 'Ubaydullah came into the presence of 'Ali, so 'Ali said, 'May Allah make me and your father among those this verse speaks about.' One of those who were present said, 'Allah is Just. He would not make you and Talha together in Paradise.' Hence, 'Ali replied, 'about whom, then, do these words of Allah speak: 'and we shall remove any bitterness from their hearts...' (*al-Hijr*: 47)?

The Arabic word *naza'na* (translated in the verse as 'remove') denotes removal of a thing that is deeply rooted in its place. This indicates that these unwelcome feelings are embedded deeply in the human psyche, and when they are removed on the Day of Judgment, they are pulled out by the roots so that no traces remain. Thus, believers who had viewed each other with discord or rivalry in this world will look on one another with the eyes of gratitude, for that very rivalry had caused each of them to be ever so cautious not to fall into error or misconduct.

That is because the believers in the Hereafter remember things they were given. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* makes them beloved brethren; commonly we describe the sincere friendship and loyal relationship between two persons who are not having any familial ties by saying 'one may have a sibling that does not share the same mother'. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says in other verses of the Quran: '...And remember the blessings which Allah has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together, so that through His blessing you became brethren; [how, when] you were on the brink of a fiery abyss, He saved you from it...' (*Al-Imran*: 103).

(1) *He is Az-Zubayr ibn Al-'Awwam Allah be pleased with him cousin of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him. He was one of the ten promised Paradise, one of the six Companions who made up the Shura Council, and husband of Asma' bint Abu Bakr As-Siddiq Allah be pleased with them all. He was killed at the Battle of the Camel in 36 AH by 'Amr ib Al-Jurmuz. [Al-'Isaba 3/ 5-7). Ibn Hajar cited this Hadith in Al-'Isaba on the authority of Abu Ya'la from the way of Abu Jaruw Al-Mazini.*

You might have a brother whom you do not bear a grudge against, but you are not familiar with him; that is because there are different types of brotherhood⁽¹⁾. It may be a good and respectful brotherhood, but you do not meet each other. Then, in the Hereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* gathers you together on thrones, facing one another.

Someone might, then, ask, 'But what if a believer's place in paradise is higher than that of their keen friend or brother?' We reply that Allah's unlimited bounty raises the level of the lower until they reach the level of the higher when they visit one another.

Thus, things in the Hereafter differ from the things in this world, for man lives in this world in the way the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes in the Quran verse: '[then,] O man – you [that] have, verily, been toiling towards your Lord in painful toil – then shall you meet Him!' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 6)

But, the Hereafter is different, it is what Allah *Glorified is He* says in the next verse:

لَا يَمَسُّهُمْ فِيهَا نَصَبٌ وَمَا هُمْ مِنْهَا بِمُخْرَجِينَ

**No weariness will ever touch them there, nor will
they ever be expelled [48] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 48)**

Your life in the Hereafter, if you are a righteous believer, will differ from your life in this world. For, in this world, you know that you live by making use of the means that Allah *Glorified is He* gives to you: you work hard and exhaust yourself to earn a living and in order for Allah to grant you the gifts dependent on those means and causes.

Then, you become among the successful whom Allah *Glorified is He* grants paradise. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'and who believe in that which has been bestowed from on high upon you, [O Prophet,] as well as in

(1) What we understand from these musings of the Imam is that brotherhood is of two types: brotherhood through family and brotherhood through faith. And that brotherhood through faith is stronger than brotherhood through family, since the True Lord says: 'All believers are but brethren...' (*al-Hujurat*: 10). So, every believer is a brother, but not every brother is a believer.

that which was bestowed before your time: for it is they who in their innermost are certain of the life to come! [4] It is they who follow the guidance [which comes] from their Lord; it is they, they who shall attain to a happy state! [5]' (*al-Baqara*: 4-5)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* uses the term *muflih*, (successful), to describe the believers in paradise because believers are those who have ploughed the lands of this world with their right actions and have made great efforts to establish Allah's way on the earth and worn their bodies out. We know that a person's body being worn out indicates that he has exhausted himself through work, and that only happens in this world.

As for paradise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'No weariness shall ever touch them in this [state of bliss], and never shall they have to forgo it' (*al-Hijr*: 48). In paradise, they are not afflicted by tiredness, nor will they ever be expelled from it, that is because they have been granted eternity therein.

Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* first speaks of those who are astray, and who were close friends in this world, rejoicing in their wrong actions; they are the ones for whom the punishment of the hellfire awaits. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about His sincere slaves who are going to enter paradise; among them, there are people who held different opinions to one another in this world and between whom was neither affection nor love. But when they enter Paradise, their hearts are purified of all the differences that divided them in this world.

After that, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

نَبِّئْ عِبَادِيَ أَنِّي أَنَا الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٤٩﴾

**[Prophet], tell My servants that I am the Forgiving,
the Merciful [49] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 49)**

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* is addressing His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The verb 'nabbi'' (tell) means to tell someone a matter of great importance and significance. The word *nabbi*' is not used for a trivial matter. Previously, the True Lord *Glorified is He* said about the tiding of resurrection: 'About what do they [most often] ask one another? [1] About

the awesome tiding [of resurrection] [2]' (*an-Naba'*: 1-2). He *Glorified is He* also said about this tiding: 'Say: 'this is a tremendous message: [67] [how can] you turn away from it?'[68]' (*Sad*: 67-6) We understand from these Noble Words that they are telling the tidings of the Hereafter and what is going to happen therein. Here, however, Allah also mentions the tidings of His forgiveness and the mercy He *Glorified is He* reserves for His sincere believers who have *taqwa* (piety); those who are going to enter paradise and enjoy its blessings forever.

Someone might, as well, ask, 'Does not forgiveness implies committing sins that need forgiveness?' We reply that the True Lord *Glorified is He* created us and know that there are whisperings and misgivings in every self; it is not possible for a person to be totally free from error, sin or whisperings. The proof is that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has banned many actions for the Muslim to do in order to protect the rights of the individual and protect the rights of society so that a society can live peacefully.

For example, the True Lord *Glorified is He* forbids Muslims from stealing, fornicating, drinking alcohol and other grave sins, wrong actions and ideas that lead him to spread corruption throughout the earth. However, the fact that Allah has made all those things unlawful indicates that they can happen. So, He *Glorified is He* sent down His Divine Message prohibiting those things and classifying them as crimes for those who do them, just as He *Glorified is He* obligates the Muslims to know of the necessity of steering clear of these wrong actions.

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* makes it clear to us that those believers who forget and commit wrong actions, but then repent and ask forgiveness, may not keep reprehending themselves about those wrong actions, since Allah *Glorified is He* is Compassionate and Merciful.

When we read Arabic, a language whose speakers have been honoured by Allah *Glorified is He* revealing His Quran in it, we find that its writings may be divided into two categories: poetry and prose. Poetry is that which has rhyme and meter, that which has rhythm and melody. As for prose, it has none of those characteristics, although it can be in the form of rhymed prose.

If you were to speak in prose and then quote a line of poetry in the middle of what you were saying, anyone who was listening to you would be capable of noting the difference between the prose and poetry. But the Quran is the speech of the All-Powerful Lord, and that is why you find that when you read this verse which we are in the process of musing about, it is almost as if it is a line of poetry with its rhyme and meter:

nabbi' 'ibadi anni ana-l-ghafuru-r-rahim

Its meter is the *mujtath*⁽¹⁾ meter, but it comes in the midst of a number of verses before it and after it, and so you do not notice the disparity. You do not notice that you have been taken from prose to poetry, and then from poetry back to prose, and that is because the solidarity of meaning along with the beauty of expression gives you the majesty of the miraculous effect. And that is one of the secrets for the greatness of the Quran.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says regarding what specifically relates to the unbelievers and those who are astray:

وَأَنَّ عَذَابِي هُوَ الْعَذَابُ الْأَلِيمُ

**But My torment is the truly painful one [50]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 50)**

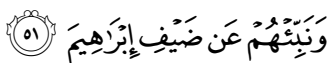
Thus, the tiding is completed by telling about the forgiveness for those who believed, and the punishment for those who disbelieved and were astray. And we note that He *Glorified is He* did not emphasise the punishment too strongly, and that is because His mercy precedes His anger, as is made clear by the words of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*: ‘On the day that Allah *Glorified is He* created mercy, He created it as one hundred mercies, and kept ninety-nine of those mercies with Him. Then he sent that one [remaining] mercy to the whole creation. If the unbelievers were to know the extent of the

(1) This type of poetic (sea,i.e. the system of a group of poetic meters is so-called in Arabic) is called *mujtath* (cut-off) because it is cut from the *khafif* (light) poetic sea by placing the meter (*mustaf'ilun*) in front of (*fa'latin*), and it was not used except in isolated verses. It has one complete prosodic form, which reads: (*mustaf'ilun fa'latin mustaf'ilun fa'latin*). See the book, (fi 'Ilmay Al-'Urud Wa-l-qafiya) by Doctor Amin 'Ali As-Sayyid. Printed by Dar Al-Ma'arif in 1982.

mercy that was with Allah, none of them would have despaired of Paradise. And if the Muslims were to know the extent of the punishment that is with Allah, none of them would have felt safe from the Hellfire.'⁽¹⁾

And we notice that the meaning of the two previous verses is explained in Allah's Words: '...Now, behold, your Lord is full of forgiveness unto men despite all their evildoing: but, behold, your Lord is [also] truly severe in retribution!' (*ar-Ra'd*: 6)

By this, we can see that the two verses alert us to the two statuses of fear and hope, and let us know that believers must combine both; they should not put off good deeds and the responsibilities of belief to a later time, and must ask for Allah's forgiveness for the wrong deeds. That is because Allah *Glorified is He* deals with people according to His bounty when their intention is correct and sincere, and that is quoted in the Qudsi Hadith: 'When the True Lord *Glorified is He* decreed creation, He wrote in the Book that was with Him above the throne, 'My mercy precedes My anger.'⁽²⁾ Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* after talking about His attributes of mercy and majesty in the form of His forgiveness, mercy and vengeance, moves on to a real and tangible matter which clarifies these attributes to us; He *Glorified is He* speaks about Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*, giving him the good news, and then moves on to his nephew, Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him*, giving him salvation and afflicting his people by punishment. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**Tell them too about Abraham's guests [51]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 51)**

The word *dayf* (*guest* in English) indicates someone who seeks hospitality or sociability from another. He is also called in Arabic (*mundawi*) which is someone who attaches himself to another in order to ask for his hospitality,

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- (1) It is transmitted by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (6469). And Muslim transmitted part of it in his *Sahih* (2755) in *Kitab At-Tawba* in a (*Hadith*) from Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him.
- (2) It is transmitted by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2751); and Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (3194) in a (*Hadith*) from Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him. There is also a wording that says, 'overcomes' instead of 'precedes'.

accommodation, and security. Another meaning of *mundawi* is to lean in the direction of light.

The generosity of the Arabs was not limited to receiving those who knock on their doors, but they announce themselves by means of a lit fire so that those who are travelling could see them easily and find the way towards them.

All of us have read about what Hatim At-Ta'i' (an ancient Arab man famous for generosity) said to his slave-servant:

Light the fire, for it is a bitterly cold night,
And the wind, my boy, is a piercing one,
And if you bring us a guest, you will be free!

From this, we know that the original meaning of *mundawi* is to make one's way to the light.

The word *dayf* is a singular word that can have a singular, dual or plural meaning, and can be both masculine and feminine. When using the word *dayf*, 'A (*dayf*) (guest) came to me and I hosted him'; and you say, 'A (*dayf*) came to me and I hosted her'; and you say, '(*Dayf*) came to me and I hosted them both'; and you say, '(*Dayf*) came to me and I hosted them all.' That is because the word *dayf* takes the place of the verbal noun. But there are some tribes of Arabs who pluralise *dayf* as *adyaf*, some who pluralise it as *duyuf*, and some who pluralise it as *difan*. We should be aware that when *dayf* is used to refer to a group of people, it means that one person has come accompanied by others. If one group comes and then another group comes later, then we would say that another *dayf* has come.

Here in the verse which we are in the process of discussing and musing about, we know that they were not truly guests. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِذْ دَخَلُوا عَلَيْهِ فَقَالُوا سَلَامًا قَالَ إِنَّا مِنْكُمْ وَجِلُونَ

**When they came to him and said, 'Peace,' he said,
'We are afraid of you' [52] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 52)**

We note that the word *salama*, (peace), is in the accusative form here, and that is because it means we bid you 'peace', and means that the greeting is newly

started one. But then in another verse, He *Glorified is He* says: 'When those [heavenly messengers] came unto him and bade him peace, he answered, '[And upon you be] peace!' – [saying to himself] 'They are strangers.' (*adh-Dhariyat: 25*)

We know that the Quran often mentions the story of an event with various different extracts scattered in verses throughout the Quran. So, in order to understand all the different aspects of a story, one must gather them all together. And that is why we find the True Lord *Glorified is He* not mentioning here that Ibrahim *peace be upon him* returned their greetings of peace or the fact that he set before them a roasted calf, for those things were mentioned in other verses in the Quran.⁽¹⁾

So, from those other verses, we learn that Ibrahim *peace be upon him* returned their greetings, and the word *salam* (peace) was in the nominative case. Then, why does the word *salam* in the verse in question comes in the accusative case?

It is because they are who greeted him first saying *salam*. Of course, he should respond to the greeting, and that is case in the second verse: '...he answered, '[And upon you be] peace!' – [saying to himself,] 'They are strangers.' (*adh-Dhariyat: 25*)

The greeting the angels gave Ibrahim *peace be upon him* was one that newly started, while the greeting that he gave was given in the form of a positive nominal sentence that is used to indicate permanence. The greeting of Ibrahim was stronger than that of the angels because it has been made clear to us that the courtesy of the Way of Allah is for the believer to return someone's greeting with one that is better than it, not to simply return it as it is. So, the response Ibrahim gave contained a continuous peace, while their greeting was one of a newly formed peace. The difference between the *salam* of Ibrahim *peace be upon him* and the *salam* of the angels was that the latter was defined by the circumstances while the former was the Way of his message and the message of all the other Prophets. Then, after that, come the words of Ibrahim *peace be upon him*: 'he answered: 'Behold, we are afraid

(1) That is in the verse: 'And, indeed, there came unto Ibrahim Our [heavenly] messengers, bearing a glad tidings. They bade him peace; [and] he answered, '[And upon you be] peace!' – and made haste to place before them a roasted calf.' (*Hud: 69*)

of you!" (*al-Hijr*: 52) And, in another verse, it is mentioned that he: '...became apprehensive of them...' (*Hud*: 70). Also in another verse in the Quran, he says: 'They are strangers.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 25)

Why did he become apprehensive of them, why did he say to them that they were strangers, and why did he say: '...Behold, we are afraid of you!' (*al-Hijr*: 52) They had come to him, but he did know who they were, and when he put food in front of them, he noticed that their hands did not reach out to it and they did not eat from it, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'But when he saw that their hands did not reach out towards it, he deemed their conduct strange and became apprehensive of them. [But] they said: 'Fear not! Behold, we are sent to the people of Lut [Lot].'' (*Hud*: 70)

That was because Ibrahim *peace be upon him* knew that if someone came as a guest and was offered food, but refused to eat from it, one should not expect that they come with good in mind, but rather that they had come with bad intentions. However, when he knew that they had been sent to the people of Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him*, and after they had set his heart at rest by telling him the good news that Allah *Glorified is He* had sent them with, he felt at ease. That part of the story is dealt with in the following verse:

قَالُوا لَا تَوْجَلْ إِنَّا نُبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ عَالِمٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

'Do not be afraid,' they said, 'We bring you good news of a son who will have great knowledge' [53]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 53)

Thus, the angels set the heart of Ibrahim *peace be upon him* at rest, calmed him and took away his fears. They had brought him the good news that the True Lord *Glorified is He* was going to provide him with a son⁽¹⁾ who

(1) The one who is alluded to by the word 'son' here is Isaac *peace be upon him*, for Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...[But] they said: 'Fear not! Behold, we are sent to the people of Lut.' [70] And his wife, standing [nearby], laughed [with happiness]; whereupon We gave her the glad tiding of [the birth of] Ishaq (Isaac) and, after Ishaq, of [his son] Ya'qub (Jacob). [71]' [*Hud*: 70-71] Ibn Kathir says in his Tafsir (2/452), 'It is based on this that some scholars use this verse as proof that the one who was offered as a sacrifice was Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*, and that it was impossible for it to be Ishaq *peace be upon him*, since he had been given the good news of him and the good=

would become a great man of knowledge. Ibrahim *peace be upon him* received that news with great astonishment; he said:

قَالَ أَبَشَّرْتُمُونِي عَلَىٰ أَنْ مَسَّنِيَ الْكِبَرُ فِيمَ يُبَشِّرُونِ ﴿٥٤﴾

He said, 'How can you give me such news when old age has come to me? What sort of news is this?' [54]

(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 54)

We know that the True Lord *Glorified is He* created in many different forms so that created beings should know that they did not necessarily have to be created in one particular defined manner. Rather, Allah creates beings in whatever forms He wishes by His absolute power.

The usual thing is for a child to be born to a mother and a father, a female and a male. Or without either of them, as was the case with Adam *peace be upon him*. Then He *Glorified is He* created Eve from only a male, created Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* from only a mother, and Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* from a male and a female.

In the verse which we are in the process of discussing, we find Ibrahim *peace be upon him* feeling amazed that he would be a father, given the fact that he was getting very elderly at the time as is mentioned in this verse: '...despite the fact that old age has overtaken me?' (*al-Hijr*: 54)

The Arabic preposition ('*ala*, equaling '*on*' in English) (corresponding to 'despite' in this verse) meaning 'with', so it means that it is difficult, for him, to beget children with his old age. I always say that the word '*ala*' gives a wide variety of meanings in the Noble Quran. Sometimes, it is replaced by another preposition to convey a specific meaning, like when He *Glorified is He* says: '...and I shall most certainly crucify you in great numbers on trunks of palm-trees...' (*Ta Ha*: 71) Crucifixion is on trunks of palm-trees, or alike thing, and yet the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses the Arabic preposition (*fi*, meaning '*In*') instead of ('*ala*, '*on*'). And He *Glorified is He* does that in order


= news that he in turn would give birth to Ya'qub *peace be upon him*. So, how could Ibrahim *peace be upon him* be commanded to sacrifice him when he was still a young boy and had not yet begot Ya'qub *peace be upon him* whose existence had been promised?

to indicate how violently they were crucified, with their crucified hands and feet almost being forced inside the trunks of wood.

Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...Do you give me this glad tidings despite the fact that old age has overtaken me?' (*al-Hijr*: 54)

Do you give me the good news of being a father to a learned boy despite the fact that I am an old man? What is understood by that is that it is almost inconceivable for being old and advanced in years to go hand in hand with having the capacity to sire children.

Therefore, the Arabic preposition '*ala*' is being used with the meaning of 'with', i.e. how can you give me the good news of a boy despite the fact that I am an old man. However, Ibrahim *peace be upon him* said these words having complete faith in the power of Allah. In another verse, Ibrahim said: 'All praise is due to Allah, who has bestowed upon me, in my old age, Ishmael and Isaac! Behold, my Lord hears indeed all prayer' (*Ibrahim*: 39). It is as if, for Ibrahim, old age is something that does not go with the ability to sire children. Then, the angels responded to Ibrahim *peace be upon him*, the most beloved one (after the Prophet Muhammad) to the Most Merciful:


 قَالُوا بَشِّرْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ فَلَا تَكُنْ مِنَ الْفَٰئِطِينَ

They said, 'We have told you the truth, so do not despair'[55] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 55)

It is as if the angels were saying to him, 'We are not those who have done that. Rather, we are simply giving you the good news of what Allah *Glorified is He* wants for you. So do not be of those who despair.'

The same story was repeated, after Ibrahim *peace be upon him*, with Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and Yahya (John), when Zakaryya *peace be upon him* called on his Lord to grant him a son, saying: 'who will be my heir as well as an heir [to the dignity] of the House of Ya'qub [Jacob]; and make him, O my Lord, well-pleasing to You!' (*Maryam*: 6)

Then the good news about Yahya *peace be upon him* came to him; Zakaryya *peace be upon him* said to his Lord: '[Zakaryya] exclaimed: 'O my

Lord! How can I have a son when my wife has always been barren and I have become utterly infirm through old age?' (*Maryam*: 8)

If you want to know an example of the secrets of the literary style of the Quran, you should read Allah's response to Zakaryya *peace be upon him*: 'And so We responded unto him, and bestowed upon him the gift of John, having made his wife fit to bear him a child...' (*al-Anbiya*': 90).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not say that he had made both of them fit [so as to have a child], and that indicates that it was the wife of Zakaryya who had been barren, not he. Later in our days, it was proven by science that a man's fertility and ability to sire is not limited by age, while the ability of a woman to conceive is limited and does not extend beyond a particular age.

Then, if we reflect on Allah's Words: '...and bestowed...' (*al-Anbiya*': 90), we find that it proves that Allah's power is unrestricted in terms of gifting and fixing what has been spoilt and ruined. Nothing is beyond His ability; He *Glorified is He* is able to give and to make necessary arrangements for His gift to take place. Here the angels say to Ibrahim *peace be upon him*: 'they said, "We have given you good tidings in truth"' (*al-Hijr*: 55), i.e. they were not responsible for fulfilling the good news, but only for passing it truthfully to him. That is why they said after that: 'so do not be of the despairing' (*al-Hijr*: 55).

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* states what Ibrahim *peace be upon him* replied to the angels:

قَالَ وَمَنْ يَقْنَطُ مِنْ رَحْمَةِ رَبِّهِ إِلَّا الضَّالُّونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

He said, 'Who but the misguided despair of the mercy of their Lord?' [56] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 56)

Here, Ibrahim *peace be upon him* announces that he does not despair of the mercy of his Lord, and that his amazement is at the unrestricted nature of the power that is suggestive of the powerful Oneness. His amazement was not at the event that took place itself, but rather, at the manner in which it took place, for anyone who reflects will see that there is something in the way it happened. And that is because Ibrahim *peace be upon him* knew with absolute certainty that Allah's power was unrestricted, for he had already said before this: '...Show me how You give life unto the dead!...' (*al-Baqara*: 260)

We notice that he did not ask, 'Can you bring the dead to life?', but instead asked about the process by which Allah *Glorified is He* brings the dead to life. And that is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* asks him: '...Have you, then, no faith?...' (*al-Baqara*: 260) So Ibrahim *peace be upon him* replied: '...Yea, but [let me see it] so that my heart may be set fully at rest...' (*al-Baqara*: 260). Then Ibrahim *peace be upon him* experienced how it happened⁽¹⁾ by Allah *Glorified is He* commanding him to take four birds, then cut them into pieces and place each piece separately on each hill, and then summon them and they will come walking to him. That is why Ibrahim *peace be upon him* was not despairing of the mercy of his Lord, but rather was simply asking about the process by means of which Allah *Glorified is He* implements His mercy.

That conversation was not only between Ibrahim *peace be upon him* and the angels, for his wife Sara *peace be upon her* also participated in it; the True Lord *Glorified is He* has quoted Sara in the chapter of *Hud*: '...Oh, woe is me! Shall I bear a child, now that I am an old woman and this husband of mine is an old man? Verily, that would be a strange thing indeed!'[72] Answered [the Messengers]: 'Do you deem it strange that Allah should decree what He wills? The grace of Allah and His blessings be upon you, O people of this house! Verily, ever to be praised, sublime is He!'[73]' (*Hud*: 72-73) By this, we see that some parts of the Quran complete what is said in other parts of the Quran, with every extract coming in its specified place. Then, when we gather all those extracts together, we find that they give us the complete story.

Here in the chapter of *al-Hijr*, we find Ibrahim *peace be upon him* questioning the angels who brought him the good news of a son about the basic task for which they had come and which had caused him a degree of apprehension. For

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Take, then, four birds and teach them to obey you; then place them separately on every hill [around you]; then summon them: they will come walking to you. And know that Allah is almighty, wise.' (*al-Baqara*: 260), so Ibrahim *peace be upon him* got hold of four birds, slaughtered them and cut them up into pieces, plucking out their wings, tearing them up and mixing them up with each other. Then, he divided them into segments and placed one segment on each hilltop. Then, he took their heads in his hand, and Allah *Glorified is He* commanded him to summon them to him, and so he summoned just as Allah *Glorified is He* had commanded him to do. Then, he began to see feathers flying towards feathers, blood towards blood, and flesh towards flesh until each bird was standing on its own. Then they came back to him swiftly. (Ibn Kathir mentioned it in his *Tafsir* 1/315).

he had looked upon them and felt that they had come for some purpose other than giving him the good news of a son, for the passing on of such good news would only have required the presence of a single angel.

But as for these angels who had come, there were too many of them for such a task, and so Ibrahim *peace be upon him* asks this question:

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكُمْ أَيُّهَا الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

And then asked, ‘Messengers, what is your errand?’ [57] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 57)

What is the great matter for which you have actually come? For the word (*khatb*, mentioned in the Quran verse, meaning great matter or issue, 'what other issue may you have in view?') is used for an important event that happens to people. It is called *khatb* because it is so significant that it occupies the minds of everyone and becomes the main topic of their conversations to the extent that they speak about that matter whenever they meet one another.

That is why the desire for marriage between a man and a woman, and he going to her family to ask for her hand, is called a *khitba*, for it is an important and significant matter. That is because if someone were to look at a woman, and one of her family were to see him looking at her, her relative's jealousy would cause them to take vengeance on her behalf. But, as soon as the person who wants to marry her knocks on the front door and asks for her hand, the matter becomes very different because a woman's family gives a good reception to those asking for her hand in marriage. It is an Arabic saying that 'The lawful conduct cuts the nose of jealousy right off.'

Here, Ibrahim *peace be upon him* says to the angels, 'And what [else] may you have in view, O you [heavenly] messengers?' That is: 'What important matter has brought you here?' The answer from the angels comes in the following Words of the The True Lord *Glorified is He*:

قَالُوا إِنَّا أُرْسِلْنَا إِلَى قَوْمٍ مُّجْرِمِينَ

They replied, ‘We have been sent to a people who are guilty’ [58] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 58)

We know that the word *qawm* (people) is derived from the word *qiyam*, (standing); *qawm* means the people who stand up and manage hard events. The word generally refers to men and not women, since women do not tend to stand up and manage such events. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who settles this issue clearly when He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...No people (men) shall deride [other] people (men): it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves; and no women [shall deride other] women: it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves...’ (*al-Hujurat*: 11).

If the word *qawm* could be used for women, then the True Lord *Glorified is He* would have used it to describe women as well, and the reason he does not is so that we know that it is men who stand up for events, and that it is a woman’s place to look after her family, and so she does not stand up except for those things which are specifically related to her home.

Here the angels inform Ibrahim *peace be upon him* that they are messengers sent to a sinful people, namely, the people of Lut (Lot) who put a heavy burden on Lut *peace be upon him* by denying him and committing the wrong actions to which they had become addicted. But, the True Lord *Glorified is He* excludes the family of Lut *peace be upon him* from committing the crimes of the people of Lut, the majority of whom were corrupt deviants. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِلَّا ءَالَ لُوطٍ إِنَّا لَمُنَجُّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

But We shall save the household of Lot [59] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 59)

This excludes the household of Lut from the sinners⁽¹⁾. A sinner is one who is cut off from the truth, so a sin is cutting oneself off from the truth in

(1) Al-Fakhr Ar-Razi says, posing a question, ‘Is this exemption (*muttasil*) (i.e. one whereby she is considered to be connected to those she is being exempted from), or is it (*munfasil*) =

order to support falsehood. The word *qawm* is often used for the group of sinners. Thus, the family of Lut were excluded from these sinners who sinned against the Path of Allah and the values which Lut *peace be upon him* was calling them to. So, the angels were sent to save those who believed and destroy those who turned aside and kept aloof both in a single mission. Then, a new exemption comes, whereby the True Lord *Glorified is He* decides that the wife of Lut *peace be upon him* will be among those who are destroyed; so He *Glorified is He* says:

إِلَّا أُمَّرَأَتَهُ. فَذَرْنَاهَا لِمَنِ الْغَيْرِيبِ

**All except his wife: We have decreed that she will be one
of those who stay behind [60] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 60)**

We know, in terms of language, that when exception clauses follow on, one after the other, the first exemption is exempted from the original statement, the second exemption is exempted from the first exemption, and the third exemption is exempted from the second exemption. An example of this is when someone owes you money and says to you, 'There are ten pounds for you barring four', i.e. he admits that he still owes you six pounds, then you look at him so that he may remember how many he has actually paid you, so he then says, 'barring one pound.' In this way, he admits to you that he owes you seven pounds after previously having admitted to six. And that is because he said, 'There are ten pounds for you barring four', and then added, 'barring one pound'. In this way, he excludes one pound from the four pounds that he said that he paid you, meaning that what he actually paid you was three pounds, and that seven pounds remain due.

= (i.e. one whereby she is considered separate from those she is being exempted from)? The author of Al-Kashshaf says, 'If this exemption from the people was *munfasil* then it is the people who are described as being sinners and the household of Lut *peace be upon him* are not sinners - they are two different categories of people, so here the exemption is *munfasil*. But if the exemption from the pronoun implicit in the word 'sinners' was *muttasil*, then it is as it were being said that all the people were sinners except from the household of Lut *peace be upon him* alone. (See *Al-Fakhr Ar-Razi's tafsir of the aya*).

Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* excludes the wife of Lut *peace be upon him* from those whom He *Glorified is He* had excluded from destruction and to whom He had granted salvation, namely the household of Lut *peace be upon him*.

The angels who said that did not decree that the wife of Lut would be destroyed; they were simply carrying out the highest decree, for it was the True Lord *Glorified is He* who decreed and commanded that: '...she should be among those who stay behind!' (*al-Hijr*: 60)

Here the word (*ghabir*, meaning 'who stay behind') means one who enters a place, or it is one of those words that can convey two opposite meanings. The wife of Lut will not be saved because those whose salvation was decided were those who were going to leave the town, while those who stayed behind in it were to be destroyed. The wife of Lut was among those to stay behind in the punishment. Exemption from a negative statement is an affirmative statement and exemption from an affirmative one is a negative one; the fact that the wife of Lut was exempted from those saved means that she was one of those to be destroyed.

Then the chapter moves on from the story of Ibrahim *peace be upon him* to that of Lut *peace be upon him*. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ آلَ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾ قَالَ إِنَّكُمْ قَوْمٌ مُنكَرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

**And when the messengers came to the household of Lot [61]
He said, 'You are strangers' [62] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 61-62)**

This is what Lut *peace be upon him* said to the angels when they came to him; in terms of appearance, they were as beautiful as could be, and he knew that his people were given over to homosexuality and abnormal obscene sexual acts. And that is why we find the True Lord *Glorified is He* saying elsewhere in the Quran about how Lut interacted with the angels: '...he was sorely grieved on their account, seeing that it was beyond his power to shield them...' (*Hud*: 77). That was because Lut *peace be upon him* knew that his people would covet these beardless young men, and that is why he announced to them, no sooner had they arrived, that their presence was not really welcome. That was due to the fact that they had come to him in

the form of young men with exceptional good looks, and that would prove too alluring to his people. As well, the angels entered to Lut without any signs of travelling appearing on them and they are not natives from the area where he was residing in. Therefore, he was not at ease in their presence.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions what the angels said in the moment that they set the mind of Lut at rest and revealed their task to him:

قَالُوا بَلْ جِئْنَاكَ بِمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

They said, ‘We have brought you what they said would never happen [63] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 63)

Thus, they announced to Lut *peace be upon him* why they had come to him and that was to bring punishment down upon the people who had oppressed him. For those people had doubts about the ability of the True Lord *Glorified is He* to afflict them by unavoidable torture. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* was consoling him about that.

Then, they further emphasised the upcoming truth in the next verse, saying:

وَأَتَيْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّا لَصَادِقُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

**We have brought you the Truth.
We speak truly [64] [the Quran, *al-Hijr*: 64]**

We have come to you by a command from the True Lord *Glorified is He* to punish them; there is no room for doubt about it, for we are speaking the truth in terms of what we have conveyed to you. Then, they say to him:

فَأَسْرِ بِأَهْلِكَ بِقِطْعٍ مِنَ اللَّيْلِ وَاتَّبِعْ أذْبَرَهُمْ وَلَا يَلْفِتْ مِنْكُمْ أَحَدٌ وَامْضُوا حَيْثُ تُؤْمَرُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

So leave in the dead of the night with your household, and walk behind them. Let none of you look back. Go where you are commanded’ [65] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 65)

Go, you and your household, while there is still part of the night left. Sometimes the form *sara* (to go, to transit) is used and sometimes the form *asra*

(to make to go, to transport) is used, with the two words being very close in meaning. However, the word *asra* has been used elsewhere in the Quran with a transitive meaning such as in Allah's words: 'Limitless in His glory is He who transported His servant by night...' (*al-Isra*: 1). The expression they use here, 'Go, then, with your household' is courteous way of saying 'go in the company of your womenfolk and your children. Here in the Egyptian countryside, we find some people who never directly mention women or daughters when they speak. They say, for example, 'The children did such-and-such.' It is as if the basic state of naming a woman is to be always kept hidden. That is why in many cases, we find rulings do not explicitly mention woman, but by implying, except in the cases specific to women. Here, the True Lord Glorified is He says: 'Go, then, with your household while it is yet night' (*al-Hijr*: 65).

The word '*qit*' (in the Arabic Quran verse, meaning part of night) is a collective noun. The meaning here is either that Lut *peace be upon him* go out with his household in part of the night, or at the end of the night.

This is the way to salvation that the angels told Lut about, so that he, his household, and the believers could then follow it. They advised him to follow immediately after them, saying: 'with yourself following them in the rear' (*al-Hijr*: 65), i.e. that he be at the back, in order to encourage them to go quickly. It was a custom of the Arab, that when they travelled out of a place, each of them would carry his own luggage with his family on the back of a camel. Then they would commence the journey, and the leader of the people, commonly called the *mu'aqqib*, would stay back so that he could see whether any of the people had been left behind, fallen over or left any of their luggage behind. They called this person the *mu'aqqib*.

Here, the angels command Lut *peace be upon him* to be the *mu'aqqib* for his family and the rest of those who believed in him, in order to urge them on to travel more quickly, and then to carry out another command that the angels conveyed to him: 'and let none of you look back' (*al-Hijr*: 65).

Carrying out the order by not letting any of them look back, required Lut *peace be upon him* to follow behind the people; Looking around takes time, making those who look back travel less quickly. As well, looking back at their home might stir up longing in their hearts for the places of memories

and the land of their birth. This would have hampered the movements of the entire group. That is why Lut was given the Divine Command: 'and let none of you look back, but proceed whither you are bidden' (*al-Hijr*: 65). Or, it may be that the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not want any of them to turn around because they might set eyes on the punishment, or the initial phases of the punishment, that was going to descend upon the people and then might feel pity for them.

We all know what the True Lord *Glorified is He* says with respect to carrying out any of the hard punishments that He legislated: '...and let not compassion with them keep you from [carrying out] this law of Allah...' (*an-Nur*: 2). If one of the believers were to have looked back at the punishment, or the initial stage of the punishment, he might feel tenderness or pity towards them, despite the fact that their punishment was as a result of a major sin, for they had committed a terrible action. We all know how disgusting the deeds they had done were, and yet still the immense painfulness of a punishment may still leave its mark on one in the moment that the wrongdoer is being punished. Or it may be that the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants the saved people to hurry away before the punishment comes, even if it were only the terror accompanying the first stage of the punishment afflicting the disbelievers.

Thus, the command to travel by night was directed at the people whom Allah *Glorified is He* had decided to save. The way it was to happen was for them to go out in part of the night, with Lut *peace be upon him* following behind them, and none of those who were saved to look behind, so that they could go where Allah *Glorified is He* had commanded them to go. It is said that the destination was the Levant. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَضَيْنَا إِلَيْهِ ذَلِكَ الْأَمْرَ أَنَّ دَابِرَ هَؤُلَاءِ مَقْطُوعٌ مُّصْحِحِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

**We made this decree known to him: the last remnants of
those people would be wiped out in the morning [66]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 66)**

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'And [through Our messengers] We revealed...this decree...' (*al-Hijr*: 66), it means, 'We revealed to him'.

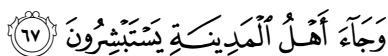
The True Lord *Glorified is He* firstly spoke about saving the believers from the people of Lut, and then about punishing the deviant unbelievers and His decree of wiping them out. *qat' ad-dabir* (Cutting of the last remnant) is pulling something out by the roots. And that is why it says in the Quran: 'and [in the end,] the last remnant of those folk who had been bent on evildoing was wiped out...' (*al-An'am*: 45).

Thus, we understand that *qat' ad-dabir* means that the True Lord *Glorified is He* completely destroyed them so that none of them remained on the earth. The appointed time for that destruction was the early morning; after Lut *peace be upon him* and those with him left during the night and reached a place of safety, Allah's Command came to destroy the deviants in the early morning.

Starting in the early morning is one of the main principles of warfare. It is said that the majority of wars start with emergence of the first rays of the sun. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'But then, once it alights upon them, hapless will be the awakening of those who were warned [to no avail]!' (*as-Saffat*: 177) Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to take them while they were relaxed and had no capacity whatsoever to resist.

What the True Lord *Glorified is He* says here: 'The last remnant of those [sinners] shall be wiped out in the Morn' (*al-Hijr*: 66), does not contradict what He *Glorified is He* says about them in another verse: 'And thereupon the blast [of Our punishment] overtook them at the time of sunrise' (*al-Hijr*: 73). It is as if the blast began in the early morning, and only finished at sunrise. In this way, the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes the matter very clear to Lut *peace be upon him* before the event takes place; the angels told Lut *peace be upon him* about what was going to happen.

Then, after this, the True Lord *Glorified is He* goes back to the people of Lut who did not know what was going to happen to them, saying:

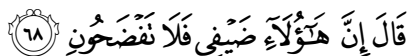


**The people of the town came along, revelling [67]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 67)**

When the inhabitants of the city from among the people of Lut learnt that a delegation of handsome beardless young men had arrived in the house of Lut, they came to him in a state of happiness and joy, for the beauty of those young men was the stuff metaphors are made from. It was as if the words that were spoken about Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* applied to each of them: '...This is no mortal man! This is nought but a noble angel!' (*Yusuf*: 31)

Allah's Words: 'And the people of the city came [unto Lut], rejoicing at the glad tiding' [*al-Hijr*: 67] combine various different elements of the disgusting practice that was prevalent amongst them, a practice in which they use to rejoice. They were the ones to whom Allah's Words apply: 'they would not prevent one another from doing whatever hateful things they did: vile indeed was what they were wont to do!' (*al-Ma'ida*: 79)

Lut *peace be upon him* knew that this practice was prevalent among them and knew what would happen to them, so he wanted to block them from doing that deed with the angels who were in his neighbourhood and were guests of his. Tradition necessitates that a guest be honoured by his host, and any humiliation that happens to a guest also humiliates the host. So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* states what Lut *peace be upon him* said:



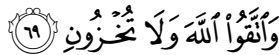
**And he told them, 'These are my guests, do not
disgrace me [68] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 68)**

Shame and disgrace is disclosing defects and exposing hidden matters about which people are embarrassed, for a human being might do things that he would be embarrassed for others to know about. When The True Lord *Glorified is He* orders that we follow the good manners indicated by His attributes, He has already given His creation a portion of each of His attributes of beauty and majesty.

But there are some of His attributes that He mentions without also mentioning its opposite. For example, He *Glorified is He* has said, 'The One who brings harm' with its opposite being, 'The One who brings benefit'; He has also said, 'The Reliever' with its opposite being, 'The Constrictor'; and 'The One who Bestows of Honours' with its opposite being, 'The One who humiliates'.

And one of His Names is 'The One who covers up'⁽¹⁾, and He does not mention its opposite which is, 'The One who exposes'. But why does He *Glorified is He* not mention this opposite? It is because He *Glorified is He* wants to protect creation so that every individual can derive enjoyment from the good deeds of wrongdoers. For if you know the bad actions that a man commits, you may spit on him, That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to cover up the wrong actions of wrongdoers and only make their good actions apparent to others.

Then Lut *peace be upon him* said to his people, after forbidding them, from approaching and disgracing his guests:



**Fear God, and do not shame me [69]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 69)**

Put a barrier between you and Allah's wrath and do not cause me humiliation and shame before my guests due to the atrocity you want to commit. *Ittiqa* (being conscious, protecting oneself) derives from the Arabic word *wiqayah* which means taking care of oneself against evil and avoiding it; the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who have attained to faith! Ward

(1) *Al-Qurtubi said in his book 'Al-Asna fi sharh asmaa Allah Al-husna' (1/167), 'Among the Names attributed to Allah Glorified is He are (As-Sattar) and (As-Satir) (The One who shelters, protects and covers), but I have not seen who it was who mentioned these names, or who numbered them amongst the Names of Allah Glorified is He although the action to which they refer has been mentioned in a number of Hadiths, including that of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him in which he narrates the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessing be upon him saying, 'Whoever covers up the fault of a Muslim, Allah Glorified is He will cover up his faults in this world and the Next.' It is transmitted by Muslim.'*

off from yourselves and those who are close to you that fire [of the hereafter] whose fuel is human beings and stones...' (*at-Tahrim*: 6).

place a barrier between yourselves and the hellfire, and take care that you do not fall into it by keeping well away from those things that are forbidden, for doing that which you are warned against is a path to the fire, while keeping well away from it is a protection against it. One of the remarkable things about this *taqwa* (synonym of 'ittiqā') is that you find the True Lord *Glorified is He* saying in the Noble Quran, and the entire Quran is the Word of Allah: '...have *taqwa* of Allah...' (*al-Baqara*: 194). And He also says: 'have *taqwa* of the fire...' (*Al-Imran*: 131) How can we conduct ourselves in the same way towards the True Lord *Glorified is He* and against the Fire in which the unbelievers are going to be punished?

The meaning is, 'Do not do what will make Allah *Glorified is He* so angry with you that you will be punished in the hellfire.' It is as if you have placed a barrier between yourselves and the fire by avoiding acts of disobedience. But if you have done what is required from you, been content with what the pre-determined actions for you and kept clear of the things you have been warned against, then you have had (*taqwa*) of Allah.

But they did not comply with his requests as they remained entrenched in their sinful ways and said what the True Lord *Glorified is He* states them as saying:

قَالُوا أَوَلَمْ نَنْهَكَ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٠﴾

**They answered, 'Have we not told you not to interfere
[between us and] anyone else?' [70] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 70)**

'Did we not warn you before about taking young men as guests whose beauty is unsurpassed? But since you have offered your hospitality to these young men, you must then let us do whatever foul acts we want to do with them.' They used to subject every stranger to evil. Lut *peace be upon him* tried his utmost to stop them, but they refused to grant his guests safe asylum from their shameless oppression, and asked to leave them to their own devices so that they could spread corruption throughout existence just as they wanted. So, they said, 'Do not speak, and do not object to anything we are going to

do.’ This is the language used by people of misguidance and corruption. Lut *peace be upon him* tried to dissuade them from doing that by saying to them:

قَالَ هَؤُلَاءِ بَنَاتِي إِنْ كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

**He said, ‘My daughters are here, if you must’ [71]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 71)**

If you are going to insist on doing these disgraceful acts, then why do you not marry my daughters instead? Some have tried to say here that he offered them his daughters to commit adultery with them, but of course it is impossible that such an offer be made by a messenger of Allah. No, what happened was that he offered them to marry his daughters. Then, there is the fact that Lut *peace be upon him* had two daughters, but used the plural when he said: ‘...[Take instead] these daughters of mine...’ (*al-Hijr*: 71), i.e. he spoke about a large number, although he had two daughters who could only marry two men from the large number of men in the city. That is because all the daughters of all the people to whom a messenger is sent may be considered daughters of his. And that is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says in another verse, clarifying the matter: ‘Must you, of all people, [lustfully] approach men, [165] keeping yourselves aloof from all the [lawful] spouses whom your Lord has created for you? Nay, but you are people who transgress all bounds of what is right!’ [166]’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 165-166), i.e. Lut *peace be upon him* wanted to push these young men in the right direction and get them to do what was right. Then, he finishes his statement with the words: ‘...if you must do [whatever you intend to do]!’ in order to raise doubt in their minds that they will demean his guests in such an abominable manner. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

لَعَمْرُكَ إِنَّهُمْ لَفِي سَكْرَتِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

**By your life [Prophet], they wandered on in their wild
intoxication [72] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 72)**

Here, the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* is the one being addressed. As for the word ‘*amruka*’ (‘as you live’), it means the appointed

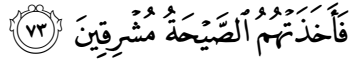
age for a person to live normally in this world. Sometimes, the Arabic word is pronounced 'umruka and sometimes it is 'amruka, but whenever the Arabs made an oath they always chose the word 'amruka. It is similar to when we say in day-to-day life, *wa hayatika* that is (I swear on your life).

It is in these Noble Words in which the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* that the people of illumination and gnosis find the proof that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has honoured the Messenger of Muhammad in that He *Glorified is He* did not call him by his public name, saying, 'O Muhammad!' or 'O Ahmad!' as He addressed all the other Messengers, but instead only addressed him by saying: 'O Apostle...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 67). Or: 'O Prophet...' (*al-Mumtahana*: 12) and that is a great mark of honour.

And here in this verse, we find another mark of honour, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes an oath by the life of His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*. We know that the True Lord *Glorified is He* swears by whatever He wishes to swear by; He swears by the sun, the places, the stars positions, and the star when it descends. He *Glorified is He* is the Creator who has full knowledge of everything He has created; indeed, the only one who knows the greatness of a creature is the One Who created it, for He knows the task of every being He created. But, still, He *Glorified is He* commands us to not swear by anything except for Him, since we do not know the complete picture or the true reality of things.

Allah *Glorified is He* has sworn by everything in existence, but He has not sworn by any human being except for Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*, for He says here: '...' 'As you live...' (*al-Hijr*: 72) i.e. 'By your life, Muhammad, they are stumbling blindly in their (*sakra*).'

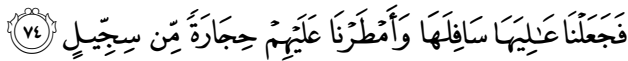
Sakra is the mental stupefaction that happens to someone whose perception is rendered faulty by some perverted belief or deviant practice, or simply by imbibing a substance that badly affects the consciousness. As for: '...they are but blindly stumbling to and fro!' (*al-Hijr*: 72), it means that they were confused with respect to their choices. Then the punishment comes, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**And the blast overtook them at sunrise [73]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 73)**

The True Lord *Glorified is He* previously told us that the last remnant of them would be wiped out in the morning, while, here, He tells us that the blast took them at sunrise. These days, we see certain games and sports such as karate in which the participant lets out a cry when facing his opponent in order to make him more frightened. And similarly, we see certain types of shouting in the military training of commandos, the purpose of which is to instil fear in the hearts of enemy combatants.

Everything that requires one's opponent to be terrified starts with a shout that causes him to lose his mental equilibrium. And that is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: 'Behold, We let loose upon them one single blast [of Our punishment], and they became like the dried-up, crumbling twigs of a sheepfold.' (*al-Qamar*: 31) On another occasion, the True Lord *Glorified is He* calls it 'a violent upheaval': 'Now as for the Thamud – they were destroyed by a violent upheaval [of the earth]' (*al-Haqqa*: 5) Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:



**We turned their city upside down and rained on them a
shower of clay stones [74] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 74)**

If its upper parts have been overturned to become its lower parts, that is an organised and directed form of vengeance. If it had not been an organised vengeance, then some of what was in that city would not have been toppled to the right or to the left. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to give us a picture of what happened in order to show us that He has the power to do whatever He *Glorified is He* wants in whichever way He wants. The True Lord *Glorified is He* rained down upon them stones of hard-baked clay just like those that He rained down upon those who attacked the *Ka'ba* in the year in which the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* was

born. These stones were made from the clay of a substance known only to the True Lord *Glorified is He*. When clay is hardened, it is known as *sijil*. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who says about exactly the same incident in the chapter *adh-Dhariyat*: 'to let loose upon them lumps of clay' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 33). The True Lord *Glorified is He* sent these stones down upon them to wipe them out completely until no one of them remained. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّمُتَوَسِّمِينَ ﴿٧٥﴾

**There truly is a sign in this for those who
can learn [75] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 75)**

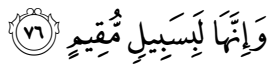
Thus, the punishment which the True Lord *Glorified is He* unleashed upon the people of Lut *peace be upon him* was a clear sign for the *mutawassimin* ('those who can read the signs'). *mutawassim* is someone who discerns the reality of things that are hidden by means of reading things that are readily apparent. One might say, 'I discerned such-and-such in so-and-so', meaning that he concluded from someone's outward disposition their inner disposition. And that is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...their marks are on their faces, traced by prostration...' (*al-Fath*:29), i.e. in the moment that you see them, you see in their features what clearly shows you the faith that lies in the depths of their being. The True Lord *Glorified is He* also says: '... [but] you can recognize them by their special mark: they do not beg of men with importunity....' (*al-Baqara*: 273)

Thus, we know that the *mutawassim* is the one who possesses *farasa* that is the ability to read the inside of other human beings and uncover aspects of their nature that are kept hidden deeply within them. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* Himself was the one who said, 'be wary of the *farasa* of the believer, for he sees with the light of Allah.'⁽¹⁾

(1) It is transmitted by At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (3127) and he said, 'It is a *ghariib* (Hadith), and Mus'ab ibn Salam is in the *isnad*.' Al-Manawi said in '*Fayd Al-Qadir*' (1/142), '*Adh-Dhahabi* transmitted it among the weak traditions.' And Ibn Hibban said, 'It is full of mistakes and may not be used as proof.' The (Hadith) is narrated from Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri may Allah be pleased with him.

Imprinted into the Arab consciousness is the story⁽¹⁾ of a nomad who lost his camel, so he went to the leader of his district and said to him, 'My camel is lost. I am afraid someone has stolen it from me.' While he was in the process of speaking to the leader, a man came up to him and said, 'Is your camel one-eyed?' The owner replied that it was, so the man asked, 'Is your camel without a tail?' The owner of the camel replied that it was, so the man asked him a third question: 'Does your camel have a limp?' The owner of the camel replied, 'Yes, that is my camel!' The leader of the district wanted to know how the man who had come into his presence had come to know of all the distinguishing characteristics of the camel, so he asked him, 'And how have you come to know of all these distinguishing characteristics?' The man replied, 'I saw it on the road. I knew that it had only one eye because it was eating the dry grass on one side and did not turn to the green grass on the other side. If it had been able to see with both eyes, it would have seen the green grass. And I knew that its tail had been cut off by the fact that its droppings were not scattered about the road like the droppings of camels who do have uncut tails. And I knew that it had a limp because its right hoof-prints left a deeper mark in the ground than its left hoof-prints.' By this, the collective Arab memory explains what a *mutawassim* is.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes clear the place in which the city of the people of Lut was situated, saying:



**It is still there on the highway [76]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 76)**

It is on an established road which you yourselves pass along when you go in the direction of that place. In another verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'and, verily, [to this day] you pass by the remnants of their dwellings at morning-time' (*as-Saffat*: 137). So, this city is on an established route which will never be destroyed through erosion or changeable factors of this world. None of those things will have any effect on it except if the True Lord

(1) The story of the one eyed lost camel.

Glorified is He wills it to be well-formed and well-established. It is what was called Sodom. Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

**There truly is a sign in this for those who
believe [77] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 77)**

While beforehand He *Glorified is He* says: ‘There truly is a sign in this for those who can learn’ (*al-Hijr*: 75), it is as if one of the responsibilities of a believer is to investigate the factors that lie behind things, come to know things by their special marks and signs, and possess the faith-based *farasah* (insight that God casts into the hearts of His faithful ones), about which the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Beware of the spiritual insight of a believer, for he sees with the light of Allah.’

In this way, the True Lord *Glorified is He* completes the story of the people of Lot *peace be upon him*. Believers must learn a lesson from the punishment that seized them, for they received their just recompense for the perverted acts they had performed.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He*, takes us to a new story: the inhabitants of Midyan, who were the people of Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him*. They are the companions of the thicket, the dwellers of the wooded dales about whom Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِنْ كَانَ أَصْحَابُ الْأَيْكَةِ ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٧٨﴾

**The forest-dwellers, too, were wrongdoers [78]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 78)**

An *ayk* is a tree with many closely intertwined branches. We know that Shu'aib *peace be upon him* was sent to the inhabitants of Midyan and to the companions of the Thicket, a place close to Midyan. These people of Midyan⁽¹⁾

(1) 'Ibn Kathir said in his *Tafsir* 2/231, 'The word Midyan was used both as a name for the tribe and a name for the city. It was located close to Ma'an on the road to the Hijaz.' He also said 2/455, 'They were a tribe of Arabs who lived in the area between the Hijaz and the Levant, in a place near Ma'an.'

had wronged themselves by associating others with Allah (God). The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘And unto (the people of) Midyan (We sent) their brother Shu’aib’ (*al-A’raf*: 85). He also says about the Companions of the Thicket: ‘The forest-dwellers, too, called the messengers liars. Shu’ayb said to them, ‘Will you not be mindful of Allah?’’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 176-177) By this, we know that Shu’aib *peace be upon him* was sent to two neighbouring peoples⁽¹⁾. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says about these two peoples:

فَأَنْقَمْنَا مِنْهُمْ وَإِنَّهُمَا لَبِإِمَامٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٧٩﴾

And We took retribution on them; both are still there on the highway, plain for all to see [79] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 79)

It is said that the thing which separated Midyan from the companions of the Thicket was these trees with many thick closely intertwined branches that were close to the sea. That is why we find here the proof that Shu’ayb *peace be upon him* was sent to two separate peoples, for Allah *Glorified is He*, says: ‘...both are still there...’ (*al-Hijr*: 79).

Allah *Glorified is He* took retribution on both these wrong-acting peoples: Midyan and the companions of the Thicket. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...both are still there on the highway.’ (*al-Hijr*: 79)

Imam is what is followed in terms of verdict and opinion, in terms of movement and stillness or in the way that takes you to the goal. Such a way is called an *imam*, because it leads us to the places and destinations which we

(1) ‘The gist of what the Sheikh is saying here is that Midyan and the companions of the Thicket were two separate peoples to whom Shu’aib *peace be upon him* was sent. And that is indicated by a Hadith traced back to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* which As-Suyuti transmitted in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* 5/91: in a Hadith narrated by ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Amr ibn Al-‘As, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Midyan and the companions of the Thicket were two peoples to whom Allah sent Shu’aib *peace be upon him*.’ And he ascribed it to Ibn Mardawayh and Ibn ‘Asakir. And that is why the Sheikh considers the pronoun in Allah’s Words: ‘...And, behold, both these (sinful communities) lived by a highway, (to this day) plain to see.’ (*al-Hijr*:79) to refer back to these two peoples, But as for Al-Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir, they both considered the pronoun to refer back to the people of Lut *peace be upon him* and the people of Midyan, according to the understanding that the people of Midyan were themselves the companions of the Thicket. Refer to *Al-Qurtubi* 5/3768 and *Ibn Kathir* 2/556.

wish to get to. That is because every part of that way is known. What seems to be the case is that the companions of the Thicket persisted in their wrongdoing and disbelief⁽¹⁾. If Allah *Glorified is He*, took retribution on Midyan by means of a blast and an earthquake, He *Glorified is He* took retribution on the companions of the Thicket by subjecting them to intense heat for a period of seven days during which they could find nothing to shade them from it. Then He *Glorified is He* sent them a cloud, and when they wished that it would bring rain, it, instead, rained down fire upon them and devoured them utterly, as the books of *Hadith* have told us⁽²⁾. This is the punishment about which the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...so the torment of the Day of Shadow came upon them—it was the torment of a terrible day.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 189)

Thus, these lessons are very much like the *Imam* who leads us to see clearly what the consequences of wrongdoing and association with Allah *Glorified is He* are.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* moves on to the account of another people, saying:

وَلَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْحِجْرِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٨٠﴾

The people of al-Hijr also rejected Our messengers [80] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 80)

The people of *al-Hijr* were the people of Saleh (*Shelah*) *peace be upon him*, and the area in which they lived was all made of stone. The place they lived is still known today, in the area between Khaybar and Tabuk (cities in Saudi Arabia). The True Lord *Glorified is He* says about them: ‘How can you be so vain that you set up monuments on every high place? 129 Do you build fortresses because you hope to be immortal?’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 128-129)

They had rejected their Prophet Saleh *peace be upon him*. Their rejection of him implied the rejection of all the Messengers, since the Messengers came,

(1) *The wrongdoing of the people of Shu'aib peace be upon him lay in the fact that they associated others with Allah, committed highway robbery and gave short measure. The Tafsir of Ibn Kathir 2/556.*

(2) *It is transmitted by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr al-Manthur 5/92 in a statement from Qatada, and he ascribed it to 'Abad ibn Humayd, Ibn Jarir, Ibn Al-Mundhir and Ibn Abu Hatim.*

one after the other, to proclaim the Oneness of Allah *Glorified is He*. They all agreed with one another with respect to their general universal principles. For the Prophets *peace be upon them* only differed with one another with respect to the small details appropriate to the environment in which they lived.

So, if the environment was one in which the worship of idols was prevalent, their Prophet would prove to them that idols did not deserve to be worshipped. If the environment was one in which people were defrauders who give less than what is due when they measure or weigh, their Messenger would come with what would forbid them from doing so. If the environment was one in which obscene acts were committed, their Prophet would warn them against such acts.

Thus, the Messengers *peace be upon them* differed from another with respect to small details of the law that corresponded to the environment in which they lived. Yet, they did not differ with respect to the wider message which specifically related to declaring the Oneness of Allah *Glorified is He*.

The True Lord said about the people of Saleh *peace be upon him* that they rejected the Messengers, meaning that they rejected Saleh *peace be upon him* with respect to call to the Oneness of Allah that all Messengers came with.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says about them after that:

وَأَيُّنَ لَهُمْ ءَايَاتِنَا فَكَانُوا عَنْهَا مُعْرِضِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

**We gave them Our signs, but they turned their
backs [81] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 81)**

Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions in brief the signs with which He sent His Prophet Saleh *peace be upon him* calling them to belief in the Oneness of Allah *Glorified is He* and the truth of the Message that Saleh *peace be upon him* conveyed to them. This was best represented by the she-camel, which Saleh *peace be upon him* warned them against harming in any way, so that they might not be seized by a painful punishment.⁽¹⁾ Yet, they rejected him and turned

(1) Allah says: ‘And unto (the tribe of) Thamud (We sent) their brother Salih. He said: ‘O my people! Worship Allah alone: you have no deity other than Him. Clear evidence of the truth has now come unto you from your Sustainer. This she-camel belonging to=

away, not paying any attention to the signs that the True Lord *Glorified is He* had created for them in existence, such as the night and the day, the sun and the moon and the variety of languages and colours found within the human race.

We know that the word *Ayat* either means the miracles that accompanied the Messengers and proved them to be speaking the truth, the signs of the universe, or the verses explaining the Divine Path conveyed from Allah *Glorified is He*. The sign a Messenger brought was always in an area in which the people to whom he had been sent excelled, but at such a level that none of them were able to match it.

Usually, these signs stirred up the competitive nature of human beings, but none of the people of the Messengers was successful in bringing anything like that which the Messenger sent to them brought.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says about the people of Saleh *peace be upon him*: 'We gave them Our signs, but they turned their backs.' (*al-Hijr*: 81) meaning, they were arrogant and turned aside from the Divine Program Saleh *peace be upon him* had brought them. *I'rad* is turning your side or back on something to distance yourself from it and not going near it. If you were to have gone to it, you would have found that it was good for you.

When you accept the signs of Allah *Glorified is He* you will find that they call you to reflect, and through that reflection you come to believe that there is a Creator Who sent these signs and so you undertake to put into practice the teachings that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* brought. Thus, when you reflect upon the wisdom of obeying, you will find that it relieves you from the anxiety of having to rely on someone other than your Creator, whereas if you were to take things purely on a superficial level, you would never end up believing.

That is why we find the True Lord *Glorified is He* saying elsewhere in the Noble Quran: 'And there are many signs in the heavens and the earth that they pass by and give no heed to.' (*Yusuf*: 105) This means that every believer has to look closely at Allah's signs in existence so that perhaps he

= Allah shall be a token for you: so leave her alone to pasture on Allah's earth, and do her no harm, lest grievous chastisement befall you.' (*al-A'raf*: 73)

can extract from that what will be of benefit to him. If you were to look at all of things that have been invented in the universe, you would find that they came about as a result of them being approached by people of knowledge who sought to discover what there was in those things that could be of benefit to others.

An example of this is the discovery of steam power, which heralded the start of an age of energy, and led to the invention of appliances that could make use of that energy. It was by this steam power, that ships and trains were able to move. Moreover, that inventor was preceded by another, the one who invented the wheel and made it easier for mankind to transport and move heavy weights.

If this is how it is with respect to existential phenomena, then if you were to reflect also on the signs that lie in the laws of ‘Do’ and ‘Do not do’, you will find that they too bring benefit to your lives, and make your futures brighter. An example of this is *zakat* (mandatory alms): you pay a tiny amount of the proceeds of your work to another who is unable to work, and you find that others give to you when you are in need. That is because you yourself belong to the changeable world and are apt to vicissitudes of fortune.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* continues to speak about the people of Saleh *peace be upon him* saying:

وَكَاْنُوْا يَنْحِتُوْنَ مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوْتًا اٰمِنِيْنَ ﴿٨٢﴾

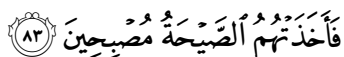
**They carved out dwellings in the mountains,
and lived in security [82] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 82)**

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* blesses them by granting them a high civilisation and giving them great skill and expertise when it came to building. So, they took to building their houses in stone, using the stone that was present in the valley in which they lived. They cut those stones in a manner that allowed them to put them together and build great houses and palaces that kept them safe from the vicissitudes of the weather and other such things.

We know that those who live in tents suffer from a lack of security, while those who build their houses from baked bricks enjoy a greater level

of security, but their level of security is beneath that of those whose houses are built from reinforced concrete. Thus, the degree to which a person feels safe in his house depends upon the strength of the substance which surrounds him and from which the house is built.

So, if the people of Saleh *peace be upon him* constructed their houses from stone, it means that those houses were most certainly safer than those of others. So, we find their Prophet Saleh *peace be upon him* saying to them what the True Lord *Glorified is He* states him having said: 'Remember how He made you heirs after 'Ad and settled you in the land to build yourselves castles on its plains and carve houses out of the mountains: remember Allah's blessings and do not spread corruption in the land.' (*al-A'raf*: 74) However, they acted badly and went to excess and rejected that which Saleh *peace be upon him* had brought. The only thing that remained for the True Lord to do was to unleash upon them a blast that would seize hold of them. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



The blast over-whelmed them early in the morning [83] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 83)

If the mountainous nature of the place in which they lived made them feel safe and secure, the True Lord *Glorified is He* sent a blast that caused everything they had built to collapse onto their heads. In a former verse in the chapter of *Hud*, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says about them: 'The blast struck the evildoers and they lay dead in their homes.' (*Hud*: 67) He *Glorified is He* also says about them: 'An earthquake seized them: by the next morning they were lying dead in their homes' (*al-A'raf*: 78).

A *rajfah* is an earthquake, while a *sayha* is one of the things that happen as a consequence of earthquakes. That is because an earthquake creates a wave in the air that leads to the creation of strong sounds that blow away those who hear them.

According to what the True Lord *Glorified is He* has said, they had the enjoyment of three full days before the blast took them, just as was promised

to them by their Prophet Saleh *peace be upon him*: ‘...so he said, ‘Enjoy life for another three days. This warning will not prove false.’ (Hud: 65)

The True Lord *Glorified is He*, then speaks about their state after the blast had taken them, saying:

فَمَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَكْسِبُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

**What they had gained was of no use to them [84]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 84)**

Thus, their citadels did not benefit them or protect them from Allah’s Decree. We know that no one can stop Allah’s Decree or Punishment from happening no matter who he is. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who says: ‘An earthquake seized them: by the next morning they were lying dead in their homes.’ (*an-Nisa*: 78)

Thus, it is not possible for a person to protect himself from what Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed for him, or from those punishments that Allah wills to afflict upon him. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One who says: ‘...Tell them, ‘Even if you had resolved to stay at home, those who were destined to be killed would still have gone out to meet their deaths.’ (Al-*Imran*: 154) Thus, they all fell into the abyss of destruction, and their fortresses did not protect them from the punishment which the True Lord had decreed for them.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* moves on to the signs in the universe, saying:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ
وَإِنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَآتِيَةٌ فَاصْفَحَ الصَّفْحَ الْجَمِيلَ ﴿٨٥﴾

**We did not create the heavens and the earth and everything
between them without a true purpose: the Hour will
certainly come, so [Prophet] bear with them graciously [85]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 85)**

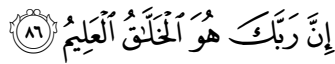
Al-haqq is that immoveable and constant thing that is not influenced or affected by anything else. An example of that would be the solar systems

and galaxies, or the movements of the sun and moon - such things you find to be perfectly regulated. This is because human beings are unable to meddle or interfere in them. Human beings—who are apt to change—have no choice or influence over such things. That is why corruption is not caused by higher laws. Rather, it happens when human beings interfere. That does not mean that people should refrain from taking action to build the earth, but rather that it is incumbent upon them to be mindful of Allah's Path. That is they should refrain from what Allah has forbidden and obey His commands.

If you were to put into practice the commands of the True Lord *Glorified is He* when He says to you 'Do', or 'Do not do', then the world would be put straight with respect to those matters over which you have influence, just as it is right and well-regulated with respect to those things which you have no hand in. Read if you like His True Words: 'It is the Lord of Mercy (1) who taught the Quran. (2) He created man (3) [and] Taught him to communicate. (4) The sun and the moon follow their calculated courses (5) the plants and the trees submit to His designs (6) He has raised up the sky. He has set the balance (7) so that you may not exceed in the balance. (8)' (*ar-Rahman*: 1-8) So, if you want your affairs to be well-ordered and regulated in this world, do not transgress the balance of anything.

Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds us not to fall into the error of imagining that we will take the blessings of this world without any check or binding. The Reckoning is coming, for there is no escaping it. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Either We shall take you away and punish them— indeed We will [41] or We shall let you witness the punishment We threatened them with; We have full power over them. [42]' (*az-Zukhruf*: 41-42) This means: what Allah has decreed will happen, and nothing, no matter what it is, will be able to stop it. Either you will see that in your life, or you will see it in the Day of Resurrection. The proof of this is what befell those who rejected, wronged and denied their Messengers and spread their corruption around the earth, and whom the True Lord destroyed through the punishment He afflicted upon them, thereby purifying the earth of their corruption. That is their recompense is in this world, and there is another recompense for them on the Last Day. In these words, there is

consolation for the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* because when Allah *Glorified is He* tells him about what befell the previous peoples who rejected the Messengers *peace be upon them*. The problems and troubles that were facing him from his own people seemed slight in comparison. It became easier for him to make use of beautiful patience until the promise of the True Lord *Glorified is He* comes to pass. So, it is not necessary for you, Muhammad, to overburden yourself. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:



**Your Lord is the All Knowing Creator [86]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 86)**

The True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions here the Name denoting His power to create everything from nothingness as well as to provide from nothingness. It is the maintenance of creation which the Divine Lordship entails that provides the whole existence with its provision and takes care of it.

As for the words addressed to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘...your Lord...’ (*al-Hijr*: 86), they mean: even if something happens to you as a result of your call and a result of your people rejecting you and standing against you, your Lord will never abandon you.

The Lord, as we know, is the One Who undertakes to develop a thing until it reaches its full maturity and potential. This is not limited to this world, but applies to both this world and the Hereafter.

As for His Words: ‘...All Knowing Creator.’ (*al-Hijr*: 86), *Al-khallaq* is an intensive form of *khalaqa* (created). It entails the attribute of creation being extended to everything that it is possible to create. This is because He is the One Who makes ready every substance and material from which things are created. He, then, makes ready the intellect which thinks about creating. After that, He makes ready the energy to do things. Finally, He makes ready the interplay and interaction between substance, energy and the intellect which plans for all of this.

What the created human being is capable of is just synthesizing the materials which Allah *Glorified is He* has created. If there is a person who has the capacity to create, the True Lord, alone, is the One Who gives him/her the ideas on how to do it. Then, He *Glorified is He* brings cleverer persons who develop it. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Above everyone who has knowledge there is the One Who is all knowing' (*Yusuf: 76*).

Thus, all human inventions develop and evolve. An example of this is the sewing machine which today works mechanically, but in the past required a woman to sit at it and work hard to adjust it. The same is true of the washing machine, dishwasher, cars, and aeroplanes.

We notice that one can derive benefit from the waste of everything that Allah *Glorified is He* has created, such as the dung of livestock which can be used as fertiliser. By contrast, the waste that comes from cars and the like, it pollutes the environment. Some of the rays that emanate from television sets harm people's eyes. Indeed, research has been done into the destructive side effects of appliances like this that make people's lives easier.

As for the things Allah that creates, they do not have any side effects. This is because the knowledge that Allah *Glorified is He* has is not acquired or given to Him by another, but is one of His intrinsic attributes. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَاكَ سَبْعًا مِّنَ الْمَثَانِي وَالْقُرْءَانَ الْعَظِيمَ

We have given you the seven oft-recited verses and the whole glorious Quran [87] (The Quran, *al-Hijr: 87*)

Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of what He conferred upon him, i.e. it is sufficient for him that Allah revealed the Quran, the miraculous Book to him. In addition, He sent down to him the Divine Path which falsehood cannot reach, either from the front, or from behind. The Quran contains all the eternal and perfect qualities of the True Lord *Glorified is He*. So, if the True Lord *Glorified is He* gave all that to you, then He *Glorified is He* will also relieve you of the burden of

everything that brings you pain. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One who says: ‘We are well aware that your heart is weighed down by what they say’ (*al-Hijr*: 97). He also says: ‘We know well that what they say grieves you [Prophet]...’ (*al-An‘am*: 33). The True Lord *Glorified is He* removed from him the worries caused by his people’s accusations of being a magician or a madman. Allah *Glorified is He* says to him: ‘...It is not you they disbelieve: the evildoers reject Allah's revelation.’ (*al-An‘am*: 33) The True Lord *Glorified is He* reveals to him that, ‘they believe that you, O Muhammad, are truthful, but they outwardly act as if they reject you.’

The blessing that the True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* of is that He *Glorified is He* has sent down to him the seven oft-repeated verses. People of knowledge are in agreement that the word *mathani* (oft repeated) refers to the *al-Fatiha* since it is the only chapter that is repeated often in the prayer.

We find Him describing the Quran as being ‘glorious’, and He *Glorified is He* is the One Who judges the Quran to be glorious in the light of His absolute standards of measurement. They are His standards of measurement for gloriousness.

The other example of this is the way He *Glorified is He* describes His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘And most surely you conform (yourself) to sublime morality’ (*al-Qalam*: 4). This is a judgement of sublimity based on the highest standards of measurement. In this way, all the pleasures of this world are less than that which the True Lord *Glorified is He* granted to His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, no one should look at what has been given to anyone else, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* gave it to His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

We notice that the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the Quran in conjunction with the seven oft-mentioned verses, which is an example of something general, being conjoined to something specific, similar to that when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Attend constantly to prayers and to the middle prayer....’ (*al-Baqara*: 238) We understand from these words that the middle prayer is included as part of the obligatory prayers. That is also similar to the words of the True Lord *Glorified is He* that came on the tongue

of His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Lord, forgive me, my parents, and whoever enters my house as a believer. Forgive believing men and women...’ (*Nuh*: 28). By this, something general is conjoined to something specific and something specific being conjoined to something general. Alternatively, the word ‘Quran’ refers to the entire Noble Book which was sent to the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from the very first verse to the very last. It can also refer to a single verse within it. So, the statement of the True Lord: ‘Both of deepest green’ (*ar-Rahman*: 64) is a verse of the Quran, yet it is also called a Quran. The True Lord also says: ‘inna Quran al-fajri kana mash’huda’ ‘...dawn recitation is always witnessed...’ (*al-Isra*’: 78). At dawn, we do not recite the whole Quran, only some of it, but we still call what we recite ‘Quran’. The True Lord *Glorified is He* also says: ‘wa idha qara’ata al-Quran...’ ‘[Prophet], when you recite the Quran, We put an invisible barrier between you and those who do not believe in the life to come.’ (*al-Isra*’: 45) The verse shows that Muhammad does not recite the whole Quran, only some of it. So, every verse of the Quran is referred to as Quran.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* gave His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the oft-repeated seven and the glorious Quran—the very pinnacle of bounties. Allah *Glorified is He* has innumerable bounties which He gives to both believers and unbelievers, and to both those who are obedient and those who are disobedient. Yet, there are bounties that are exclusively given to those who believe in him. Those are the bounties of Divinity that are given to those who hear and obey the words of the True Lord when He says, ‘Do’ or ‘Do not do.’

The bounties that He grants His creation extend even to a sip of water, a morsel of food, clothing, and shelter. Every one of these has a life span. The longer the life span of that bounty, the more exalted the bounty with mankind. Moreover, the longer the life span of the bounty, the more it brings happiness.

If the bounties of Lordship are connected to material things and basics of life, then the bounties, in the Quran, encompass both this world and the Hereafter. In addition, while the bounties of this world are spoilt by a person by leaving them through death or by they themselves withering away, the bounties in the Quran do not run out in this world or in the Hereafter.

We know that there is no end to the Hereafter, unlike this world in which your life span is not measured by its life span, but rather by the life span that is appointed for you in it. If the bounties in the Quran protect the values that grant to you the bounties of a life that never ends, that is the life of the Hereafter, then this is the most exalted form of bounty. So, beware of a strong desire for temporary transient blessings that have been granted others in this world. For the one who is granted the Quran, and yet still thinks that what someone else has been given is better, actually belittles something upon which Allah Himself confers honour and glory.

As long as Allah *Glorified is He* has given you this glorious bounty, O Muhammad, what He says next comes as a consequence of this:

لَا تَمُدَّنَّ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ
وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَخَفِّضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٨٨﴾

Do not look longingly at the good things We have given some to enjoy. Do not grieve over the [disbelievers], but lower your wings over the believers [88] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 88)

La tamuddanna (Do not look longingly) is derived from *madd* which means stretching something out and extending it. There are distances at which an eye is able to see things, and every eye differs in that according to the capacity that it has been given. There are some who enjoy keen strong eyesight, while there are others who do not. People vary with respect to the strength of their eyesight. This is determined by doctors, in order to enable the latter to treat deficiency as best as their scientific know-how would allow them. In our daily lives people say: ‘so-and-so is far-sighted’ meaning that he has the ability to weigh up the consequences of his actions, and anticipate what is going to happen and what the results of any given action are going to be.

Madd al-'ayn (literally: stretching the eyes out) do not mean taking out the eyeball and stretching it, but rather means staring at something and looking at it for an extended period of time. The True Lord *Glorified is He* uses this particular expression in the Quran because it is almost as if a

person will take out his eyeball to make use of it and look long and hard. This is what is understood from the wording of the verse, and the wording indicates the desired meaning. That is the very essence of the inimitability of the Quran.

As for the word *mata'a*, it indicates enjoyment that will come to an end. That is why the enjoyments of this world are described in the Quran as being illusory. In other words, they are enjoyments that only last for a moment.

As for the Words of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: '...We have given some to enjoy...' (*al-Hijr*: 88), *azwaj* (literally: pairs) is the plural of *zawj* (one of a pair), and we have previously made it clear that the word *zawj* is a singular word. Then, when a male and female get married, they come to be known as *zawjayn* (two married to each other). The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One who says: 'Glory be to Him who created all the pairs of things...' (*Ya Sin*: 36). All the *azwaj* means all of the individuals with whom there is another individual of the same type. As for the meaning of *azwaj* in the verse we are discussing, it means that those who opposed the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were several coteries or pairs. In each coterie there was the one who was astray and the one who led astray. At the time of Reckoning, each and every one of them will say: 'A speaker from among them shall say: Surely I had a comrade of mine.'" (*as-Saffat*: 51)

Thus, the word *azwaj* indicates the many different types of people who stood stubbornly against the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and rejected the Path that he brought.

In another part of the Quran, the True Lord *Glorified is He* reveals that those whom the devils led astray will be gathered together with the devils and sent into the hell-fire: 'On the day He gathers everyone together [saying], 'Company of jinn! You have seduced a great many humans,' their adherents among mankind will say...' (*al-An'am*: 128) meaning: company of jinn, you have been able to inspire many human beings to disobey, go astray and become your allies. Thus, every coterie in which members agree upon something is called *azwaj* (comrades).

Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear that, 'you should beware of extending your eyes to what we have given certain groups of

them to enjoy, since we have given you the highest of gifts, the miraculous Quran, the guardian of the values that form the straight Path.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* continues, saying: ‘...Do not grieve over the [disbelievers]...’ (*al-Hijr*: 88). We say: *hazintu minhu*, (I was saddened by him), *hazintu alyhi* (I grieved over him) or *hazintu lahu* (I grieved for him). When someone becomes sad, and you are not the cause of his sadness, you tell him: ‘I grieve for you’. If someone does something bad to himself, you say that you ‘grieve over him’, using the preposition. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* grieved over them since he wanted them to believe and enjoy the blessing that he himself was enjoying. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says about Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves. Your suffering distresses him: he is deeply concerned for you and full of kindness and mercy towards the believers.’ (*at-Tawba*: 128)

Due to his compassionate nature, it was very hard for him to see his people suffering hardship. The source of that mercy and compassion was the understanding—which Allah had given him—of the immense value of the blessing of belief. In another verse, He says to His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘But [Prophet] ‘Are you going to worry yourself to death over them if they do not believe in this message?’ (*al-Kahf*: 6) It means: their lack of belief will not diminish your reward in any respect, nor will their belief increase the reward that awaits you. That is because your only duty is to convey, so why grieve at their lack of belief. The Words that the True Lord *Glorified is He* uses here: ‘...Do not grieve over the [disbelievers]...’ (*al-Hijr*: 88) prove that the Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was eager for his people to believe because of his love for them, and to get to know the sweetness of belief in Allah *Glorified is He*. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to feel pain and cut-up as a result of their disbelief to the extent that the True Lord *Glorified is He* says to him in another verse: ‘[Prophet], are you going to worry yourself to death because they will not believe? [3] If We had wished, We could have sent them down a sign from heaven, at which their necks would stay bowed in utter humility. [4]’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 3-4)

Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that their belief is not something that would be difficult for Him to bring about. That is because He *Glorified is He* is able to send down a sign from the sky that would make them bow down in submission and believe in Him. Instead, Allah wants His creation to come to Him out of love and use well, the quality of free choice with which He *Glorified is He* has endowed them.

Glory be to the One Who does not compel anyone to believe in Him. For belief is an action of the heart. The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not want vessels, but rather only wants submissive hearts. If He had wanted His creation to come to Him of their own free will, compelling them to do that would prove He *Glorified is He* is Powerful. By contrast, for creation to come to their Creator of their own free will, that proves that He *Glorified is He* is loved. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants belief to spring from the worshipper's love of the One Whom He worships. That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says to His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...Do not grieve over the [disbelievers]...' (*al-Hijr*: 88). Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* commands him to direct the tenderness and love that lies in his heart towards those who deserve it, namely those who believe in his Message. In other Words, he should spread the wings of tenderness over the believers.

Every movement a person makes is a desire put into motion after it initiates as a sentiment. This sentiment produces internal energy that prepares him to put that desire into motion and propels him towards it. So, if the Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* felt sadness on account of the leaders of Quraysh's disbelief in his Message, this sadness drained his energy. So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* commanded him to save his energy and direct it towards those who believed in him, lowering the wings of tenderness over them.

Lowering the wings of tenderness—means: being modest. This is because the word *janah* (literally: wing) means (side). When a man comes to you and act haughtily towards you, you say: 'he turns his side to me.' Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* commands His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be*

upon him to be modest with the believers and to turn towards them, not with his body ramrod straight, but rather with his body inclined towards them a little.

The Words: ‘...lower your wings over the believers...’ (*al-Hijr*: 88) are derived from the way a bird lowers its wings, for a bird raises its wings when it flies, but no sooner does the bird come to its small hatchling than it lowers its wings over it to embrace it. So, Messenger of Allah, take the energy you used to waste on those who did not deserve it, and direct it towards those who do deserve it. It is enough for you to convey your Message to all people. Then those among them who believe are those who deserve the energy of your tenderness and mercy. Lowering the wings over those who believe in your Message does not cause them to be arrogant towards you, but rather makes them even more courteous towards you.

There is a *Hadith* that says, ‘If your brother is in difficulty, then make things easy for him.’ In other words, if you see your brother in a state that pains you, make things easy for him. In the pre-Islamic period, an Arab poet⁽¹⁾ said:

We pardoned the tribe of Dhuhl after their mistreatment
 And we said the people are brothers.
 Perhaps the days shall bring
 Back the people as they once were.
 Yet, when evil spoke out openly (and they exceeded the limits),
 And bared all of it in the evening,
 Nothing remained but enmity,
 Which we brought close to them—just as they deserved.
 We walked the walk of a lion,
 That goes out in the morning angry from hunger,
 Striking a blow debilitating,

(1) He is Al-Fand Az-Zamani, whose name was Shahl ibn Shayban. He was a pre-Islamic poet from the people of Al-Yamama. He was called Al-Fand because of how huge he was, comparing to the *fand* of a mountain, which means a portion of it. He died approximately 70 years before Hijra. Al-A‘lam of Az-Zirikli 3/179

Overpowering and continuing relentlessly
And a thrust, as wide as the opening of a water-skin (with a lot of blood spilled),
That starts off full, in the morning.
In evil, one can find salvation when,
Goodness will not save you.
Sometimes forbearance in the face of rudeness,
Means: submitting to humiliation.⁽¹⁾

When the Quran gives a believer's conduct the color of the True Lord and His Path, it does not just mention one single way of acting and ask everyone to stick to it. Rather, it makes this moral color (behavior) matching to the different situations and people's attitudes in them. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...people who are humble towards the believers, hard on the disbelievers...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54).

The True Lord also says in His description of the believers: '...Those who follow him are harsh towards the disbelievers and compassionate towards each other...' (*al-Fath*: 29).

Thus, it does not imprint the believer with the quality of hardness or pride, but rather makes him react to the situation. If the situation is one that requires him to be hard, then he takes on hardness, but if the situation requires him to be soft, then he takes on softness.⁽²⁾

A poetic aphorism says:

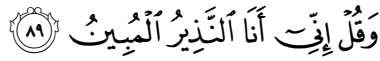
Acting magnanimously in a situation that merits a sword is harmful to one exalted

Just as using a sword is harmful in a situation meriting magnanimity.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

(1) Abu 'Ali Al-Qali transmitted these verses in his *Amali* 1/309-310.

(2) Ibn Kathir said in his *Tafsir* 2/70, 'These are the qualities of perfect believers - that he is humble towards his brothers and friends, but proud towards his opponents and enemies.'



**And say, ‘I am here to give plain warning’ [89]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 89)**

We know that the Messengers *peace be upon them* came bringing good news and a warning. Someone might ask here, ‘why is a warning expression always used?’ I say: it is only those who believe who receive the good news, whereas those who expect the warning are the denying disbelievers.

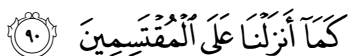
Warning involves making people afraid of something bad that could happen to them in the future. So, to protect yourself from experiencing this bad thing, you must make the necessary preparations. On the other hand, bringing good tidings involves telling people of something for which their heart wishes. It is through these two things— warning and bringing good tidings—that a person’s position becomes perfectly clear and he is able to see all the affairs of his life in full, and see the directions in which his choices take him.

Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has blessed His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in the two previous verses by giving him the oft-repeated seven and the glorious Quran. That is why He *Glorified is He* instructs him not to covet the fame and wealth that some of the disbelievers have been given since the Quran that He gave him is the glory of this world and the Hereafter. He *Glorified is He* also instructs him not to grieve for them on account of them refusing his call since the only thing he is required to do is to convey. Moreover, He *Glorified is He* instructs him to act humbly and modestly towards the believers to strengthen their connection with him, for they are better than all the disbelievers and more deserving of his Message. Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* instructs him to tell everyone that he is a warner and a bearer of good news, in order to clarify the good which the Quran brings to the believers and the punishment it promises the disbelievers.

The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘My example and the example of what I have been sent with is that of a man who came to some people and said, ‘O people! I have seen the enemy's army with my own eyes, and I am the naked warner; so protect yourselves!’ Then a group of his

people obeyed him and fled at night proceeding stealthily till they were safe, while another group of them disbelieved him and stayed at their places till morning when the army came upon them, and killed and ruined them completely So this is the example of that person who obeys me and follows what I have brought (the Quran and the Sunnah), and the example of the one who disobeys me and disbelieves the truth I have brought.^{'(1)}

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:



Like the [warning] We have sent down for those who divide themselves into bands [90] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 90)

We know that He *Glorified is He* sent His Book down to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, and that people received it in one of two ways: some listened to the Quran, saw in it the words of the True Lord and so believed. About those people the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognize the Truth [in it]. They say, 'Our Lord, we believe, so count us amongst the witnesses.''' (*al-Ma'ida*: 83)

By contrast, another group listened to the Quran, but their hearts were like stones and thus it had no effect on them. About those people, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Some of these people listen to you [Prophet], but, once they leave your presence, they sneer at those who have been given knowledge, saying, 'What was that he just said?' These are the ones whose hearts Allah has sealed, those who follow their own desires.' (*Muhammad*: 16) That is because their hearts were full of disbelief. They went in to listen with a preconceived notion of how things were, and so they did not use a just measure to weigh up the benefit of what they were hearing.

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he should not grieve over them,

(1) It is transmitted by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* 6482, 7283; and Muslim in his *Sahih* 2283 in a Hadith from Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari may Allah be pleased with him.

for the same thing happened with previous Messengers *peace be upon them*. Every Messenger came with a Book containing the Divine Path, but people received those Books in the same way that your people received what was revealed to you. That is, some believed and some disbelieved. They disagreed in respect with the Books that were revealed to their Messengers *peace be upon them*.

Their division was like the division of your people due to their different attitudes toward the Book that was revealed to you. So, do not feel sad when they accuse you of being a magician, claim that the book you have brought is a book of poetry, accuse you of being a soothsayer and practising divination, or lose their ability to judge and accuse you of being insane.

Thus, they divided up the Quran sent down to you by Allah *Glorified is He* into different sections: sorcery, soothsaying, poetry, and insane ramblings. What they did is just like what many peoples before them had done (with the Books brought by their Prophets). For some of them⁽¹⁾ said, as is mentioned in the Quran: ‘...‘This messenger who has been sent to you is truly mad.’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 27)

By this you will know, O Messenger of Allah, that this is nothing new among the Messengers⁽²⁾. That is because no Messenger comes to a people unless corruption and strife have become prevalent amongst them. The nature of corruption is that one benefits from it while others suffer harm.

(1) They were the people of Pharaoh, and this statement was made by Pharaoh when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* confronted him with the fact that he was neither an Allah nor a Lord. The dialogue between them is mentioned in the Quran when Allah says: ‘Said Pharaoh: ‘And what (and who) is that ‘Sustainer of all the worlds’?’ (23) (Moses) answered: ‘(He is) the Sustainer of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them: if you would but (allow yourselves to) be convinced!’ (24) Said (Pharaoh) unto those around him: ‘Did you hear (what he said)?’ (25) (And Moses) continued: ‘(He is) your Sustainer, (too,) as well as the Sustainer of your forefathers of old!’ (26) (Pharaoh) exclaimed: ‘Behold, (this) your ‘apostle’ who (claims that he) has been sent unto you is mad indeed!’ (27)’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 23-27).

(2) Allah says to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘Say: ‘I am not the first of (Allah’s) apostles; and (like all of them,) I do not know what will be done with me or with you; I only follow what is revealed to me: for I am nothing but a plain warner.’’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 9), i.e. I was not a stranger or a foreigner, nor was I unlike anything else that had come before. Rather, I am just like the earlier Messengers.’ Al-Qamus Al-qawim 1/57.

Then, when a Messenger comes to sort out that corruption and put things right, those who benefited from that corruption move to oppose him and impede him in any way they can, just like what happened to you, Muhammad. Like when some of them said to you: '...The disbelievers say, 'Do not listen to this Quran; drown it in frivolous talk...' (*Fussilat: 26*).

Statements of this sort indicate that if they were to have lined themselves up and listened to the Quran, they would have been guided by it. That is why one of their leaders said to them: '...The disbelievers say, 'Do not listen to this Quran; drown it in frivolous talk: you may gain the upper hand.' (*Fussilat: 26*) *Walghaw fihi* means: make it confused (by drowning it in frivolous talk).

Thus, the way the unbelievers divided up the Quran when they heard it was nothing new and had already been done with the Messengers who came before you.⁽¹⁾

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- (1) *There are seven different opinions with regard to who these people were who divided up the Quran in this manner:*

The first is that they were a group of sixteen men sent by Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira during the Hajj festival. They divided up amongst themselves the roads leading into Makka and said to those whom they found travelling along them, 'Do not be deceived by this man who has come out from us claiming to be a Prophet, for he is a madman.' This was what Muqatil and Al-Farra' said.

The second is that they were a group of people from the unbelievers of Quraysh who divided up the Book of Allah and declared that one part of it was poetry, another part sorcery, another part divination and another part myths and legends of the ancient peoples. This was what Qatada said.

The third is that they were the people of the Book who believed in some of it and rejected some of it. This was what Ibn 'Abbas said.

The fourth is that they were the people of the Book, and they were called 'those who divided up' because they were people who mocked, some of them saying, 'This sura is for me and that sura is for you.' This was what 'Ikrima said.

The fifth was again that they were people of the Book - they divided up their own Book, split it up and altered it. This was what Qatada said.

The sixth that it was referring to the people of Saleh peace be upon him- they made an oath amongst themselves to kill him, and so they were called the muqtasimin. This was said by Zayd ibn Aslam.

The seventh is that they made oaths amongst themselves to which they committed one another. This was said by al-Akhfash.

Al-Qurtubi mentioned all these opinions in his Tafsir 5/2782.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

الَّذِينَ جَعَلُوا الْقُرْآنَ عِضِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

**Those who made the Quran into shreds [91]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 91)**

The word *idin* means cutting: when a butcher slaughters a sheep or a calf, it is said that he has made it into *idin*. In other words, he has separated each of the limbs from each other and cut up its upper legs. That is to say, he has made the sacrificed animal be in pieces, after all its limbs and body parts had been—by nature—joined together.

In the same way, when the Quran came down as a single thing, some of the unbelievers wanted to cut it up into bits. The ones who are being referred to here were a group of Jews and a group of Christians who lived in the lifetime of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They wanted to cut the Quran to pieces just as they had done to the two Books that were revealed to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*, which are the two Books comprising the Torah, and the Injil (Gospel) that was brought by Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says about these two groups: ‘...and have forgotten some of what they were told to remember...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 13) meaning: some of the Jews have forgotten some of the Torah, just as some of the followers of Isa *peace be upon him*, have forgotten some of the Injil (Gospel) that was revealed to him.

Even if we can find some excuse for them in the fact that they have forgotten, what excuse can there be for the things they deliberately concealed in those Books? Also, what excuse can they have for altering them and distorting the words that they found written in them, for adding words to them that were not part of the revelation of Allah? The True Lord *Glorified is He* exposes all of the things that they did to their Books in the Quran.⁽¹⁾

(1) The people of the Book interacted with the Quran in a number of different ways:

1. Concealing and withholding in it: Allah says: ‘...but, behold, some of them knowingly suppress the truth’ (*al-Baqara*: 146) =

Alternatively, it may be that the Jews received the words of Allah in such a way that they affirmed the truth of those parts which entailed no hardship for them, and denied those parts that did entail hardship for them. For example, they denied that their Book had brought to them the good tidings of the coming of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. By this, we can see how they tried to divide the Quran to *idin*, i.e. into pieces separated from each other. They tried to do that after it had become clear to them that the Quran was affective and influential.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* willed that the Quran contains both warnings and good tidings. So, through the medium of the clear Quran, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a warner to those who split up into different factions with regard to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. One group devoted themselves exclusively to mocking Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and those who believed in him. Another group distributed its members to sit at the gates of Mecca during the *Hajj* days. Their role was to meet all those who came to the pilgrimage from different lands, and warn them against listening to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Among these people, there were those who described Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as being insane, those who described the Quran as being poetry and those who described the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* as being a magician.

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- = 2. Altering and reverting its words: Allah says: 'But those who were bent on evildoing substituted another saying for that which had been given them:...' (*al-Baqara*: 59), and He says: '...seeing that a good many of them were wont to listen to the word of Allah and then, after having understood it, to pervert it knowingly?' (*al-Baqara*: 75)
3. Distorting it with their tongues: Allah says: 'And, behold, there are indeed some among them who distort the Bible with their tongues, so as to make you think that (what they say) is from the Bible, the while it is not from the Bible; and who say, 'This is from Allah,' the while it is not from Allah: and thus do they tell a lie about Allah, being well aware (that it is a lie).' (*Al- 'Imran*: 78)
4. Adding words: Allah says: 'Woe, then, unto those who write down, with their own hands, (something which they claim to be) divine writ, and then say, 'This is from Allah,' in order to acquire a trifling gain thereby; woe, then, unto them for what their hands have written...' (*al-Baqara*: 79).

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

فَوَرَبِّكَ لَنَسْأَلَنَّهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

**So, by your Lord, We will question them all [92]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 92)**

Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes an oath by the attribute of Lordship that guaranteed to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that He *Glorified is He* would look after him and educate him in such a way as to make him worthy of carrying the message. By this attribute, He *Glorified is He* swears to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that He *Glorified is He* will never surrender him to anyone. Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who says addressing Musa (Moses): ‘...and planned that you should be reared under My watchful eye.’ (*Ta Ha*: 39) This means every Messenger is brought up and kept safe by Allah’s Will, and that care is for the protection of that Path, and to look after those who have been chosen to convey His Message to creation. Allah gave provision to all of His creation and then only sent the Messengers *peace be upon them* to convey to them the Message that would allow them to properly manage their lives. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* had to grant them a special type of care. As for what the True Lord *Glorified is He* says here: ‘So, by your Lord, We will question them all.’ (*al-Hijr*: 92) He makes it clear to us that He will ask them about the smallest of details. Just by directing such questions at them, He will subject them to a form of punishment.

Some of those who desire to find any contradiction in the Quran try to say here, ‘How can Allah say in one place: ‘On that Day neither mankind nor jinn will be asked about their sins.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 39), then, affirms in more than one place in the Quran that He *Glorified is He* is going question the disbelievers on the Reckoning Day? How can He say that He will ask them in one place, yet, say that He will not in another place? We say to these people: ‘you read the Quran in the most superficial of ways. What you say is a contradiction may outwardly appear that way, but in truth, it is not.

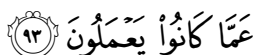
We know that there are different purposes for asking questions. The first is to learn something of which you are ignorant. The second is to acknowledge

something you already know. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says that they will not be asked, He clarifies to us that no one will be able to tell Him anything that He does not already know. Whereas, when He *Glorified is He* says that they will be asked, what is meant is that He will ask them something in order to elicit their acknowledgement.

By this, we know that whenever the Quran affirms an action in one place and negates it in another, this means that it refers to two separate directions. In other words, the thing which is being affirmed is different from the thing that is being negated. Moreover, the two things have different meanings.

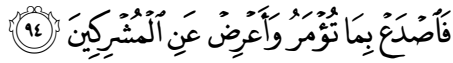
So, what He *Glorified is He* says here: ‘On that Day neither mankind nor jinn will be asked about their sins.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 39), means that both the one who is astray and the one who leads astray, both the follower and the followed, will be questioned about what they did.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**About their deeds [93]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 93)**

'*Amal* (an action) as we know, is a body organ carrying out its function. So, the job that is connected to the eye is that of seeing, the job that is connected to the tongue is that of speaking and the job that is connected to the hand is either that of caressing or that of striking. Thus, anything carried out by any of the faculties of perception of the human creature is called an *amal* (an action). We have previously learnt that an action may be divided up into words and deeds. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...He is not unaware of what you do.’ (*al-Baqara*: 74) This means: remember that there is nothing that escapes Allah’s attention; that He *Glorified is He* knows everything that you know and that you will meet Him on the Day of Resurrection, when you will be in dire need of His mercy and forgiveness. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:



**So proclaim openly what you have been
commanded [to say], and ignore the idolaters [94]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 94)**

It means: devote yourself to your task. *Sad'a* is making a crack in something solid, just as we split glass with a glasscutter, or make a split in a wall. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to split disbelief and destroy the strong, well-organized corruption that gave the leaders of Quraysh their strength.

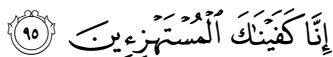
This technical term *sad'a* is most commonly used with glass, since it is possible to fix cracks in almost anything except for glass. That is because it is very difficult to gather all of the fragments and tiny pieces which result from the glass being broken. Similarly, belief has come to shatter the wall of disbelief and the highly coordinated corruption.

As for the words of the True Lord *Glorified is He*: '...and ignore the polytheists.' (*al-Hijr*: 94), they mean: O Muhammad, present the side of your shoulders to them (turn aside from) and do not ask about them, for they will never submit to you. That is because they benefit from the corruption that you have come to destroy. Yet, they will consecutively come to you as followers when your call has become firmly established, and their hearts will achieve the certainty that what you have brought is the truth.

An example of this is Khalid ibn Al-Walid and 'Amr ibn Al-'As (*may Allah be pleased with them*) becoming Muslims. They said, 'Muhammad has now fully consolidated his position and there is no longer any use or benefit in opposing him.'⁽¹⁾ So, they both embraced Islam.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

(1) *Al-Kanidhalwa* transmitted something of this sort in his book, '*Hayat As-Sahaba*' 1/140 in the story of Khalid ibn Al-Walid *may Allah be pleased with him* becoming Muslim. He narrated that Khalid *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'We have remained here firmly rooted like wisdom teeth, while Muhammad has gained power over the Arabs and non-Arabs alike. But if we were to go to Muhammad and become his followers, then the honour and glory of Muhammad would become our own honour and glory.'



**We are enough for you against all those who
ridicule your message [95] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 95)**

This is said after the True Lord says to him: ‘...and ignore the polytheists’ (*al-Hijr*: 94), and after it had become clear to everyone who was living in that time that a punishment from heaven had descended on all those who mocked Muhammad. Take Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira⁽¹⁾, for example, who used to strut around in his fine clothes: one day, he walked over a piece of metal, but was too proud to bend down and remove that piece of metal when it became tangled in his clothes, and that piece of metal then cut open his foot. That foot then became gangrenous so they had to cut it off. But the gangrene continued to spread throughout his entire body until he died from it.

Another example is that of Al-Aswad ibn 'Abd Yaghuth who was afflicted by an eye disease and became blind. Similar things happened to Al-Harith ibn At-Talatala and Al-Aas ibn Wa'il.⁽²⁾

Everyone who mocked the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was subjected to some form of punishment. Those who did not contract some sort of disease or affliction was laid low by the swords of the Muslims at Badr (a battle ground between Mecca and Medina), to the degree that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* described the exact place in which each one of those leaders of Quraysh would meet his fate. He said: ‘Here is where So-and-so will be killed, and there is where So-and-so will be killed.’⁽³⁾

The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clearly had described those places before the battle started. We know that war involves a

(1) The story of the death of Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira from gangrene.


(2) *al-Qurtubi mentioned some of these things that happened in the end to these people who mocked the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him in his Tafsir 5/2785.*

(3) *Anas ibn Malik may Allah be pleased with him said, ‘The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him showed us where the people of Badr would be killed yesterday, saying, ‘This is where So-and-so will be killed tomorrow, Allah Willing.’ ‘Umar may Allah be pleased with him said, ‘By the One who sent him with the truth, they did not fall outside the boundaries that The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him had set.’ It is transmitted by Muslim in his Sahih 2873; and Ahmad in his Musnad 3/219.*

lot of toing and froing and a lot of advancing and retreating. However, what the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had predicted happened exactly as he had described.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* describes what kind of person those people who mocked the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were.

He *Glorified is He* says:


 الَّذِينَ يَجْعَلُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ

**Those who set up another god beside God – they will
come to know [96] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 96)**

Those idolaters who mock you will receive their punishment. That is because they associated others with Allah *Glorified is He*. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...so they shall soon know’ (*al-Hijr*: 96), the words he uses apply to all times. In other words, they will know now and will also know after now. The word *sawfa* (will/shall) is inclusive of all times and phases. So, the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not seize them all in one go, but seized them at different intervals. When the True Lord seized those who have twisted minds in torture, they—who formerly persisted on abusing—might be deterred, and so they stop their abuse. So, some of them might even turn to belief. So the strength that some of them had directed against the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to be directed for him and on his behalf.

We have a clear example of this in ‘Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl⁽¹⁾ *Allah be pleased with him*. When he was badly wounded in the Battle of Yarmuk, he laid his head on the thigh of Khalid ibn Al-Walid *Allah be pleased with him* and asked him, ‘O Khalid, is this a death that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings*

(1) *Ibn Hajr said in Al-Isaba (vol. 4, p. 258), ‘He was, like his father, one of those most strongly opposed to the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him. Then ‘Ikrimah Allah be pleased with him became Muslim in the year of the Conquest of Mecca and moved to Medina. Then he went to fight against those who had apostatised, and Abu Bakr As-Siddiq Allah be pleased with him sent him to fight against the army of ‘Uman, whom he defeated. Then he came back and again set out to strive in Allah’s Cause in the year in which he died. He was martyred at the Battle of Yarmuk.’*

be upon him would be pleased of?’ Khalid *Allah be pleased with him* replied, ‘Yes’, so he gave up his soul in peace.

These mockers set up false gods in place of Allah *the Exalted*; however, these false gods which they worshiped instead of Allah will not benefit them one iota. Once they realize this, they become convinced of the truthfulness of everything that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has conveyed on behalf of Allah.

Then the True Lord says after this:

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّكَ يَضِيقُ صَدْرُكَ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

**We are well aware that your heart is weighed down
by what they say [97] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 97)**

These Noble Words manifest the True Lord’s appreciation for the feelings of His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The True Lord assigns certain tasks to His Prophet, but at the same time He knows the hardship he endures in carrying out his prophetic commission.

This same meaning is also expressed in His Words: ‘we know indeed the grief which their words cause you (O Muhammad): it is not you that they deny, but it is the Verses (the revelations) of Allah that the wrongdoers deny’ (*al-An‘am*: 33).

You, O Messenger of Allah, are too noble to be denied, for they bore witness to how truthful you were by how they lived and interacted with you before you received the Message. In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘Indeed, We know that your breast is straitened at what they say.’ (*al-Hijr*: 97)

A tightened or constrained chest means that only a small amount of air has been brought into the lungs by the process of breathing. From the air drawn in, the lungs extract oxygen and expel carbon dioxide from the body. Oxygen then works to oxidize the food in order to release energy. So, when a person feels a constriction in his chest, this indicates that his body is running short of energy.

This point is even clearer to those who have climbed up a long flight of stairs in a house or some other place and found themselves short of breath. The

reason for this shortness of breath is that the lungs want to take in a greater supply of oxygen than that which they are receiving, so the heart has to work harder in order to allow the lungs to draw in larger quantities of oxygen. When the chest is expanded, one can inhale as much air as he wants, which allows the lungs to draw in as much oxygen as they need. So a person with an unburdened, expanded chest does not suffer from shortness of breath.

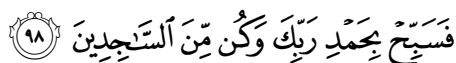
So, it is as if the chest of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to become tightened whenever anyone denied or mocked him, which compressed and constricted the amount of air he needed to move and act. That is why the True Lord assured him by telling him that His Strength and Support shall never cease.

You can notice in yourself that when someone annoys you and you get infuriated, you become short of breath. So he exclaims to you, ‘Why has your chest become constricted? Expand your chest a little (i.e. try to be more tolerant and patient)!’

Also, the True Lord says elsewhere in the Quran: ‘So whoever Allah wants to guide, He expands his breast to (contain) Islam...’ (*al-An‘am*: 125). That is, Allah opens up space in his heart and increases his ability to understand the meanings brought by the upright religion of Islam.

Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* also says: ‘and whoever He wants to leave astray, He makes his breast tight and constricted as if he were climbing into the sky’ (*al-An‘am*: 125). Here, we find the True Lord *the Exalted* explaining the act of climbing as being arduous which is contrary to the common belief that the higher you go in altitude, the purer the air becomes. It has been proven by science that the higher you go into the atmosphere, the less air there is.

The True Lord then guides His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to how best to heal the tightness in his chest when he was saddened or pained by someone denying or mocking him. Allah points the way, saying:



**Celebrate the glory of your Lord and be
among those who bow down to Him [98]
(The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 98)**

This is the way through which you can rid yourself of any constriction you are experiencing – just glorify Allah *the Exalted*. Whenever someone treats you unkindly or annoys you, know that you can find the solace and companionship with Allah by means of glorifying Him. You will never find anyone more merciful to you than Him. When you glorify your Lord, you acknowledge Him to be transcendent and above absolutely everything and you praise Him so that you may live in the warm embrace of His mercy. That is why we find the True Lord saying elsewhere in the Quran: ‘Had he (Yunus, Jonah) not been of them who glorify Allah, he would have indeed remained inside its belly (the fish) till the Day of Resurrection.’ (*as-Saffat*: 143-144) So, whenever your chest tightens and you are left depleted of all means, go to the Creator of these means, the Causer of all things.

We always combine glorification and praise, for *tanzih* is declaring Allah *the Exalted* to be exalted above having any shortcomings in His Essence, Attributes or Actions. Allah’s Essence, Attributes and His Actions are all-perfect since His Self is unlike any other self. His Attributes are timeless and absolute unlike the attributes of creation, which are originated and bestowed upon them by Allah.

There is nothing that governs Allah’s Actions except His own Will. This is why we find Allah saying concerning glorification: ‘Glory be to Him, Who has created all the pairs of that which the earth produces’ (*Ya Sin*: 36). He is the One Who also says: ‘So celebrate Allah’s Glory in the evening and in the morning’ (*ar-Rum*: 17).

Both the morning and the evening are signs from Allah *Glorified is He*. When the sun sets, that is a token from Allah to mankind that they should rest; and when the sun rises, that is a token from Him to go out energetically to work. Glorification and exaltation of the Creator by the creation is something that belongs solely to Allah and none of His creatures should receive any share

of it. It is as if the only way a believer can attain relief when his means of living becomes narrow and straitened is in turning wholeheartedly to his Lord, away from the harshness of mankind. Only there he can find peace of mind because he is taking recourse to the most powerful support.

Some knowledgeable believers have offered an explanation for this matter from their own prospective, which gives comfort to a believing soul in the face of harshness and estrangement from people. They say, 'If you are shunned by Allah's creation, then know that it is because Allah wants to give you His Own Companionship.'

By glorifying Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* you are acknowledging that His Essence is unlike your essence, His Attributes are unlike your attributes, and His Actions are unlike your actions. All this is in your own best interests, for your power or the power of other human beings is characterized by inadequacy and changeability. But as for Allah's Power, it is intrinsic to His Nature and both eternal and infinite. It is He Who brings you all the blessings.

Therefore, it is necessary for you to combine your declaration of His Transcendence with praise of Him. You praise your Lord because He is above and beyond any similarity to you. It is obligatory to praise Allah at all times, since it is He Who created all of the gifts that serve you as you go through life. So when you see someone who has been gifted with a skill and feel pleased for his sake and thank Allah for bestowing this gift upon him, you will receive a share of this bounty.

Any time you glorify and praise Allah, He will never break His Promise to bestow on you all that is good. Despite our best intentions, sometimes all of us break promises because we are changeable. As for the True Lord, He never breaks His Promise. Therefore, every time you glorify and praise Allah, many blessings shower on you.

Then show more humbleness and humility towards the Bestower of all blessings and favours by prostrating yourself to Him in obedience to His Command: 'and be of those who prostrate themselves (to Him)' (*al-Hijr*: 98). Prostration is the most comprehensive manifestation of submission. The face is the locus of identity and prestige. It is with your face that you meet

people, and your face is the first place you try to protect and keep clean and in good appearance.

So, by prostrating and placing the most honourable part of you on the ground⁽¹⁾, you are humbling yourself in a way that endows you with dignity. Anyone who humbles himself and prostrates before Allah as an expression of gratitude for all the blessings that Allah has bestowed on him, Allah will give him enough honor and power to suffice for all other different purposes of prostration.

We all recall the words of the poet:

The prostration in which you dislike to remain,

Is one of thousands of forms of prostration wherein lie salvation.

Prostration is the pinnacle of submission to the True Lord. Some people hate the word *'ubudiyyah*; (worshipful servitude and slavery to Allah) because the history of humanity contains endless examples of grave injustices done by one human being enslaving another. This type of slavery, as we all know, transfers all that is useful and good in the slave to the possession of the master. Slavery to Allah, on the other hand, transmits His Blessings to his slaves, and that is the greatest possible honour conferred upon the human being. Then the True Lord says after this:

﴿ ٩٩ ﴾ وَأَعْبُدْ رَبَّكَ حَتَّىٰ يَأْتِيَكَ الْيَقِينُ

**And worship your Lord until what is certain
comes to you [99] (The Quran, *al-Hijr*: 99)**

We know that worship lies in the worshipper obeying the commands and prohibitions of the One Whom he worships, and applying His Law of 'Do this' and 'Do not do that.' Yet, many people think that worship only consists

(1) *It was narrated on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'There is no prayer for the one who does not place his nose on the ground.' It was transmitted by Ad-Daraqutni in his Sunnan (vol. 1, p. 348) and Al-Hakim in Al-Mustadrak (vol. 1, p. 270), and he said, 'It was classed as authentic according to the criteria of Al-Bukhari, although neither he nor Imam Muslim transmitted it.' It was also transmitted by At-Tabarani in Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir (vol. 11, p. 333) through a different chain of narrators in the following wording, 'If someone does not stick his nose to the ground along with his forehead when he prostrates, his prayer will not count as valid.'*

of bare outward performance of rituals through the observance of the Five Pillars of Islam, such as testifying that there is no god but Allah, establishing the prayer, paying the obligatory charity, fasting during *Ramadan* and performing pilgrimage to Mecca, if economically and physically possible.

But we say that the matter is not so. These pillars are simply the foundations upon which worship is established. In other words, they are the building blocks upon which the rest of worship is built. Everything that must be put in place for an obligatory act to be done is itself obligatory, so worship joins all these components together. That is to say, all the activities of life become worship, even sweeping the street and removing harmful objects from the road. Any action that is done for the benefit of others is considered an act of worship in itself which keeps the Muslims from being dependent on others. The performance of these pillars it is an outward sign of the strength of the Muslims through which they demonstrate the perfection of their devotion to Allah by offering the prayer five times every single day. Upon hearing the words '*Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest),' Muslims immediately leave whatever tasks they are doing and put behind them the struggles of everyday life to announce their devotion to the Creator and Bestower of all blessings.

And by fasting during one month every year, Muslims announce their devotion to the Most Generous Creator. The Muslims practice abstention from many permissible things. As soon as the start time of fasting begins, which is shortly before the Dawn Prayer, Muslims immediately refrain (from food, drink and all things that break the fast).

This compliance with the Commands of the True Lord reminds you of the blessings of Allah upon you. In the course of a normal day, you would not think of doing any of the actions that were prohibited over time at the beginning of Islam. For example, no Muslim would think about drinking alcohol or gambling. Prohibitions of this sort have become so deeply impressed into our conduct and identity that they have become, for the majority of the Muslims who apply Allah's Law, something that is completely ordinary and habitual. They spontaneously put 'Do!' and 'Do not do!' into practice.

When the fast of *Ramadan* comes, you refrain from things that are lawful for you through the rest of the year, and spend every day in *Ramadan*

eagerly waiting the sound of the *adhan* of Sunset Prayer that allow you to break your fast.

Thus, you comply with the command to refrain from anything that constitutes a breach of fasting, and also comply with the command to break your fast. And that is to make you accustomed to these many acts of obedience that have almost become second nature to the believers, for the True Lord wants the pleasure you experience from worshipping Him to last and last.

However, some people use faulty reasoning and follow their whims and desires when explaining the True Lord's Words: 'And worship your Lord until there comes unto you the certainty (i.e. death)' (*al-Hijr*: 99). One of these people might say, for example, trying to deceive someone else, 'I have already reached the station of certainty,' and so refrains from carrying out the obligatory pillars of Islam such as praying, fasting, paying *zakat* (obligatory alms), and making pilgrimage to the Sacred House of Allah despite his ability to do so claiming that he is no longer held responsible for his actions since certainty has come to him. We say to these people who make such a claim, 'Do you think you can deceive Allah and His Messenger? We all know that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spent his days carrying out the obligatory acts of Islam, and continued to do so right up to the last day of his life. Also, we all know that the one certain thing this is universally agreed upon by all of mankind without disagreement or doubt is death.'

Certainty of the matters of the Unseen is one of the qualities of a believer. As soon as the Quran tells a believer of the existence of an issue, he believes in it and does not inquire how such a thing could possibly be. The clearest example of this is Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him*. Whenever people would tell him about something astonishing the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* had proclaimed, he would reply, 'If he has said this, he has spoken the truth.'

As for unbelievers – we seek refuge in Allah from this – they have doubt about absolutely everything that is Unseen. They even doubt material things, if they have not personally experienced them themselves. But no sooner does death come than they know that it is the one certainty.

And that is why we find `Umar ibn `Abd Al-`Aziz saying, 'I have not seen any certainty more closely resembling doubt than people's certainty in the coming of death.'⁽¹⁾ We are all certain that we are going to die, but we distance ourselves from our certainty regarding this matter even though it is an inescapable reality. Then, when death comes, we say, 'Here is the moment where nothing is of benefit to a human being except what he has done previously in his life as a believer who is dutiful to Allah.'

And that is why I always say, 'Certainty is total conviction that allows no new thoughts to surface, after you have learned that the truth involved has been conveyed to you by authentic and fully reliable sources.'

But as for seeing with the eye of certainty, it is the certainty that comes from viewing an incident with your own eyes, or something real and true that enters straight into the heart and so you affirm it as true. Thus, there are different stages of certainty: one is a matter that you affirm totally and the mind never questions it since it comes from sources in whose truthfulness you have full confidence or because it is the consensus of a group of people who never agree upon a lie. This type of certainty is called 'knowledge of certainty.' But if you see the matter with your own two eyes, that type of certainty is called 'truth of certainty.'

Believers base their affirmation and certainty upon what has been conveyed to them by Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Take `Ali Allah *be pleased with him* for example, whom we find saying, 'If the veils were to have been lifted from the Unseen matters which the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* has told us about, my certainty would not have increased.' Or Haritha Allah *be pleased with him* whom we find saying, 'It is as if I were looking directly at the inhabitants of Paradise being rewarded and the inhabitants of Hell being punished.' So Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'You know, so hold firm.'⁽²⁾ That is the level of certainty which marked the belief of the Companions of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

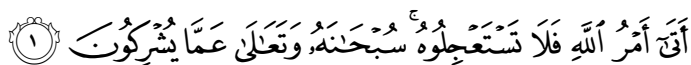
(1) *It was narrated by Al-Qurtubi in his Tafsir (vol. 5, p. 3787). The statement concludes, '...but still not preparing for it.'*

(2) *It was narrated by Ibn Hibban in Al-Majruhin (vol. 1, p. 150) in a (Hadith) on the authority of Abu Hurayrah peace be upon him, In the biography of Ahmad ibn Al-Hasan ibn Aban Al-Misri, Ibn Hibban said, 'It is not permissible to use this as proof.'*

the chapter of

an-Nahl

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy



**God's Judgement is coming, so do not ask to bring it
on sooner. Glory be to Him! He is far above anything
they join with Him! [1] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 1)**

This is how this majestic chapter of the Quran begins; it clarifies that Allah's Decree and Judgement regarding the victory of the Messengers and the believers is not to be doubted in the slightest, and the defeat of the unbelievers is certainly coming. There is no escape from it, if they do persist in disbelief.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had previously warned them with the verses of the Book that had been revealed to him. He warned them in the previous chapter of the Quran of some of the punishments in the life of this world, such as the victory of faith over disbelief. He also warned them before about some of the punishments in the Hereafter such as the True Lord's Statement: 'And whether We show you (in this world) something of what We hold in store for those (deniers of the truth), or whether We cause you to die (before that retribution takes place – know that, in the end), it is unto Us that they will be brought back' (*Ghafir*: 77). Likewise, the True Lord's Statement: 'Their assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs (in retreat)' (*al-Qamar*: 45). This is how the True Lord promised His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* that He would destroy the camp of disbelief and give victory to the camp of faith. Either he would see this with his own eyes, or if the True Lord took his soul, He would see it in the Hereafter. Regarding the position of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah says: 'We are enough for you against all those who ridicule your message.' (*al-Hijr*: 95)

The True Lord *the Exalted* warned the people who ascribed partners to Him (*mushrikin*) that they would be destined to hell on the Last Day. In this regard, Allah says: 'The Command of Allah has come' (*an-Nahl*: 1). This is a clarification of one of the stages of giving warning, as Allah says in one place in the Quran: 'The Hour has drawn near, and the moon has been cleft asunder.' (*al-Qamar*: 1) That is, the Hour of the Resurrection is drawing near after which there will be the Reckoning of the Hereafter; punishment for whoever has disbelieved and paradise for whoever has believed and acted righteously. Thus, the drawing near of the Hour is not something to be intrinsically feared, but rather, it should be feared because of the judgement and punishment therein.

It has been said that the moment the disbelievers heard the True Lord's Statement: 'The Hour has drawn near' (*al-Qamar*: 1), they said: 'Let us wait for a while and see; maybe what Muhammad is informing of is true.' After they waited for some time and the Hour did not come as the Noble Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* had stated, they said: 'We have waited and the Hour has not come.' Then the True Lord revealed His saying: 'Ever closer to people draws their reckoning' (*al-Anbiya*: 1). This came as a statement about something that would happen immediately at the arrival of the Last Hour, so they refrained and waited a little while. Then they said: 'Where is the judgement, then?' At this point, Allah revealed His Words: 'The Command of Allah has come' (*an-Nahl*: 1).

When everyone heard this, they became frightened, including the Muslims. Then relief came in Allah's saying afterwards: '...so seek not to hasten it...' (*an-Nahl*: 1). That is, the matter that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was declaring would come at a time that only Allah knew; and the Muslims felt soothed.

Every event, as we know, is governed by two circumstances; the circumstance of time and the circumstance of place. The verbs that indicate these circumstances are either the perfect verb, which means that the event took place before the time of speaking, or the imperfect verb, which means that the event is happening currently, unless it is prefixed with the letter (*sin*) or preceded by (*sawfa*). It expresses that the action will take place in the near future if it is prefixed with the letter *sin*, or the unspecified distant future if it

is preceded by *sawfa*. This shows how an action can be in the past, the present, or the future.

The verb (*ata*, has come) indicates that the One informing you, Who is Allah, is telling you about something that took place before the time of speaking, and He is informing you of it. Human beings may talk about things that have already happened and inform one another of them. However, the One speaking here is the True Lord *the Exalted* and He speaks in the Quran with complete, perfect and infallible knowledge. His Knowledge is eternal and He is fully capable of bringing the future in accordance with whatever He has said. He has appointed the time and place for everything before creating it. Creation is an essential attribute of Allah; He is the Creator before having created anything. He is transcendent above everything. For this reason, He says: ‘The Command of Allah has come, so seek not to hasten it...’ (*an-Nahl*: 1). That is, He is the All-Knowing of the time and place of every event. The glorification of Allah has been established eternally even before He brought the creation into existence. Allah is the One Who says: ‘They glorify Him tirelessly night and day’ (*al-Anbiya*: 20).

Then Allah created the heavens and the earth and the rest of the universe. That is, Allah was glorified even before He created the heavens and the earth; Allah is the One Who says: ‘Whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is on the earth glorified Allah’ (*al-Hashr*: 1). But has this glorification ended? No, because glorification continues forever. Allah is the One Who says: ‘Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on the earth is exalting Allah’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 1).

Therefore, it has been established that Allah has always been, and will always be, glorified. Then the angels came into being, to engage in ceaseless glorification of Allah by night and by day, without ever slackening. Then Allah created the heavens and the earth, and everything that is in them and between them started glorifying Him. Then all other creatures came into existence to glorify Him as well. So O you who have accepted Allah as your Lord, glorify Allah as the entire universe glorifies Him

Someone might wonder about the connection between the part ‘Exalted is He and high above...’ and the rest of the verse ‘...what people used to associate with Allah.’ (*an-Nahl*: 1) We can explain it by saying that we know

that these people ascribed divinity to objects and beings instead of or along with Allah. These idols which they took as gods did not assign to them any duties or responsibilities as part of worship, and did send down to them a law from heaven. Rather, these deities permitted them that which was forbidden and prohibited them from some of that which was lawful and permissible. With that these people withdrew from following the Messengers, who were conveying the truth from Allah because of the burden of legal responsibility that was attached to true faith.

These are the ones who will meet Allah and the angels will ask them: 'Where are these partners whom you worshipped alongside Allah?' But none will be able to protect them from the horror of the punishment they shall receive in consequence of joining gods with Allah.

So we have learned that the Transcendence of Allah – in terms of His Essence, Attributes and Actions – is essentially eternal. It has been timelessly established for Him, before He brought anything into existence and after the creation of the angels and the creation of the heavens and the earth; and then it became enjoined on every human being, endowed with the ability to choose. All mankind is divided into two groups, one believing and glorifying Allah, and another not glorifying Him. And indeed, the True Lord is sublimely exalted above all that they associate with Him.

The True Lord says after this:

يُنْزِلُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ بِالرُّوحِ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ عَلَى مَنْ يَشَاءُ مِنْ
عِبَادِهِ أَنْ أَنْذِرُوا أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاتَّقُونِ ﴿٢﴾

**He sends down angels with inspiration at His command, to
whichever of His servants He chooses, to give [His] warning:**

'There is no god but Me, so beware of Me' [2]

(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 2)

When we read Allah's saying 'He sends down,' it suggests and clarifies that there is a height from which it is possible for something to come down. The example that I love to give here to explain this matter is the True Lord's Statement: 'Say, 'Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited to you....'

(*al-An'am*: 151) That is, draw near so that you can hear from me the commandments that have been sent down to you from the One Who is higher than you. Do not remain in the lowliness of earthly life and its laws. Rather, be elevated and take command from the One Who has no personal desires regarding your affairs, and He is indeed the True Supreme Lord.

As for those who descend with the revelation, they are the angels. We know that the angels are unseen beings that we believe in because Allah *the Exalted* has informed us of their existence. Any unseen matter is unperceived by the mind's eye; the proof for it is hearing about it from a trusted person. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed us of what the Quran came down to reveal. He told us of the existence of the angels and that the True Lord *Glorified is He* had created them. Even though we do not see them, we believe in what has been conveyed to us from the True Lord through His Honest and Trusted Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

When the True Lord says: 'He sends down angels with inspiration at His command, to whichever of His servants He chooses...' (*an-Nahl*: 2), we know that it is not possible for something to come down from above (heaven) to below (earth) except by means of those who are near unto Allah. The True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* chose one of the angels⁽¹⁾ to convey the revelation to His messengers. The angels, as the True Lord has informed us, are described to be: 'honoured servants. They speak not until He has spoken, and they act on His Command' (*al-Anbiya'*: 26-27). Allah says in another glorious verse: 'angels who never disobey Allah's Commands to them, but do as they are ordered' (*at-Tahrim*: 6).

The angels are created from light, and are not affected by changing circumstances. They have no desires of their own and they do not marry one another or have progeny. They are closer to serenity, which allows them to receive from above and convey to those below.

Therefore, we find the True Lord saying concerning the revelation of the Quran: 'The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 193).

(1) *The angel meant here is Jibril (Gabriel peace be upon him). Allah the Glorious and Exalted says: 'The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down.'* (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 193) *Ibn Kathir said in his (Tafsir) (vol. 2, p. 247): 'It was Jibril peace be upon him as stated by more than one of the Salaf (righteous predecessors). This is an undisputed matter.'*

In the verse under study, the True Lord says: 'He sends down angels ...' (*an-Nahl*: 2). The comprehensive verse that explains this issue is the True Lord's statement: 'Allah chooses messengers from among the angels and from among men. Verily, Allah is All-Hearer, All-Seer' (*al-Hajj*: 75). That is, He chooses angels that are able to receive from Him and give to those who have been elected from among mankind so that these elected individuals can convey from Allah to the rest of mankind. This is because beings of lower spirituality and capacity lack the power of enduring heavenly truths coming down through heavenly beings and directly from the True Lord *Exalted is He*.

I compared this before to the transformers we use in electricity to transfer from a higher voltage to a lower voltage in lamps. We all know what happened to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at the first time he received the divine revelation through Angel Jibril (Gabriel *peace be upon him*). He recounted, 'He (Jibril) pressed me so hard that I could not bear it anymore,' and his pure forehead was dripping with sweat. He *peace and blessings be upon him* returned to his house and said: 'Cover me, cover me!' and 'Cloak me, cloak me!' This is because a higher power descended upon a human power, even though the Messenger of Allah's power is an elected power. Then Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* grew accustomed to the reception of revelation and such hardships became mitigated. Then he received the following divine words: 'Did we not relieve your heart for you (O Prophet), and remove the burden that weighed so heavily on your back, and raise your reputation high? So truly where there is hardship there is also ease; truly where there is hardship there is also ease' (*ash-Sharh*: 1-6).

Then there was a pause in the revelation for some time until Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* began to miss it; so why did he miss the revelation when he had said, 'Cloak me, cloak me'?

The pause in revelation was so that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could get used to the hardships associated with the angel's descent; and so the hardships ceased and the sweetness of what he conveyed remained. Yet some of foolish disbelievers said: 'Indeed, the Lord of Muhammad hated him.' In response, the True Lord revealed: 'Your Lord (O Muhammad) has neither forsaken you nor hated you. And indeed the Hereafter is

better for you than the present (life of this world). And verily, your Lord will give you (all that is good) so that you shall be well-pleased' (*ad-Duha*: 3-5).

The word *ruh* is found in the Quran with numerous meanings, as sometimes it refers to the spirit through which material substance has life and consequently has sense and motion. As in the Words of Allah: 'So, when I have fashioned him completely and breathed into him (Adam) the soul which I created for him, then fall (you) down prostrating yourselves unto him' (*al-Hijr*: 29).

This breathing into the material substance happens to both the believer and the disbeliever. Another use of the word *ruh* means attainment of a life higher than the temporal life: 'Verily, the home of the Hereafter is the life indeed (i.e. the eternal life that will never end), if they but knew' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64).

Therefore, the angels come down with revelations from Allah about a life that is more elevated than the life that we are living and the world with which we are interacting. This is how the word *ruh* has two significances, not just one; the spirit that endows the human being with sense and motion, and the spirit that endows the human being with moral values that in turn lead to another, more elevated life than the life we live in; a life that will never be extinguished.

Therefore, the True Lord calls the Quran a (*ruh*; spirit), as He says: 'So we have revealed our revelation (*Ruh*) to you (O Muhammad) by our command; you knew neither the Scripture nor the faith' (*ash-Shura*: 52).

Also, the True Lord *Glorified is He* calls the angel that came down with the Quran a (*ruh*), as He says: 'The Trustworthy *Ruh* (Spirit) has brought it down upon your heart (O Muhammad) that you may be (one) of the warners' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193-194).

The True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* explains that the Quran is a *ruh* that gives us a more elevated life, for He says: 'O Believers, respond to Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...' (*al-Anfal*: 24). That is, it takes you to the eternal life that contains no death and where there is no fear of a blessing being lost or taken away from you.

In the verse under study, Allah informs us that the Quran was brought down by the angels: 'He sends down angels with inspiration at His command, to whichever of His servants He chooses...' (*an-Nahl*: 2). That is, it was sent

down at Allah's Command. The True Lord *the Glorious and Exalted* says in another place: 'For each (person), there are angels in succession, before and behind him. They guard him by Allah's Command' (*ar-Ra'd*: 11).

The word (*amr*; command or decree) mentioned at the beginning of the verse that we are currently discussing hold this same level of meaning: 'The Command of Allah has come' (*an-Nahl*: 1). This *amr* is the result of what Allah wills for mankind's life on the earth. We know that the True Lord has numerous commands that all share the element of bringing a non-existing thing into existence. Allah is the One Who says: 'When we will something to happen, all that we say is, 'Be,' and it is' (*an-Nahl*: 40). When He wants to bring about a partial matter, He says to it 'Be!' and it is; and when He establishes a law, He sends it down. When He decides to bring about the appointed Hour, the judgement, and the punishment, He says: 'The Command (*amr*) of Allah has come' (*an-Nahl*: 1).

From this we can discern that the meaning of '*Amr* (Command) of Allah' is 'Be – and it is' (*an-Nahl*: 1). In other words, it is bringing the non-existent into existence, whether it is a partial non-existence, a total non-existence or eternal non-existence. All this falls under the word (*amr*, command or decree). The moment Allah commands something to happen; we have absolute certainty that what Allah has commanded will manifest itself. Therefore, Allah says: 'When the sky is ripped apart, obeying its Lord as it rightly must' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 1-2). That is, the sky not only hears but also fulfils the command as soon as it has been issued, without any delay whatsoever. Allah's Command is carried out as soon as it is issued. As for the commands of human beings, they are liable to being obeyed or disobeyed.

Allah *the Exalted* and the Glorious sends down the angels with His Words to whomever He wills of His servants so that they can warn mankind. The True Lord *the Exalted* did not bring glad tidings in this context because His Statement: 'The Command of Allah has come...' (*an-Nahl*: 1) is directed to the disbelievers.

Then He declared His Essence to be incomparably transcendent by stating: 'exalted is He and high above what they associate with Him' (*an-Nahl*: 1).

Or, the True Lord may be here alerting His Messenger to explain to the people whom he would come across whatever they could not understand; for they could not perceive the manner and criteria of choosing. The True Lord alone knows whom to choose as His Messengers. The will of choosing and selecting is fulfilled according to the criteria of the True Lord; He is the One who says: ‘Allah knows best with whom to place His Message....’ (*al-An‘am*: 124) It was known to Allah that the disbelievers had said: ‘And they said, "Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities (Mecca or Ta’if)?"’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) The True Lord answered them, saying: ‘Are they the ones who share out your Lord’s Grace?...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) It is the True Lord Who has apportioned among the creation their material provisions, and has raised some of them above others in rank. He is the One Who causes the abased to be exalted and the exalted to be abased. How then can these people have any say regarding divine revelations and laws? They were trying to modify Allah’s Decree, and they said: ‘we want so-and-so,’ and ‘we do not want so-and-so.’ Or the True Lord is making it clear to His Messenger that after having explained to these people the matter of revelation he must inform them of His Words: ‘...There is no god but Me, so beware of Me.’ (*an-Nahl*: 2)

Since there is no other god except Allah, the Messenger must advise them; they should spare themselves the confusion of searching for a god. Allah makes it clear to them there is no god but He, and they must be conscious and in awe of Him. This shows how the True Lord is full of compassion toward the creation. He is the True Lord Who dismissed the request of other created beings, when they expressed their astonishment at and rejection of the disbelief shown by some of humanity, and invoked Allah’s vengeance on them. But Allah said to them: ‘If you had created them, you would have been merciful toward them. Leave Me with My creation. If they repent to Me, then truly I am their Beloved. If they do not repent to Me, then truly I am their Doctor’

The True Lord’s statement: ‘...to give (His) warning: ‘There is no god but Me, so beware of Me’ (*an-Nahl*: 2) is a summation of the doctrines of the heavens and the earth. It is also a summation of the acts of worship that Allah has demanded from His creation so that their lives’ activities can proceed in a way that is mutually supportive and not mutually antagonistic.

It is as if Allah's saying: '....to give (His) warning: 'There is no god but Me, so beware of Me' (*an-Nahl*: 2) is an explanation of the *ruh* that Allah sent down to the angels, as we clarified earlier. It expresses the second significance of the word (*ruh*; spirit) which brings the divine revelation and conveys Allah's Way that guarantees for those who adhere to it a life whose delights last and never end and so does the one who enjoys them. It is different from the first significance of the word *ruh* which the True Lord breathed into the human being. Life flows into the human beings, giving them sense and motion, but this kind of life will surely end.

Indeed, it is out of the True Lord's Mercy towards His creation that He has sent them the way that guides them to everlasting life instead of remaining prisoners to this temporal, fleeting life. It is also out of His Mercy that He has warned them of the evil end that awaits those who disbelieve in Him. Such a warning only comes from One Who cares. Allah loves His creation and He loves for them to be sincere believers in Him. He loves for them to live a joyful life in the Hereafter without employing means because they will live therein with the power of the word: 'Be!' coming from the Causer of all things.

When Allah says to them: '...There is no god but Me ...' (*an-Nahl*: 2), He is making it clear that there is no god along with Him, so do not associate any partner with Me and do not deny My Messengers. You must implement my way which will organise your life, and I will reward you for it in the Hereafter. Beware of being deluded by the means that I created and subjugated them to you because I am Able to take away all these means. I willed for the life of this world to be a trial and a test, and in the Hereafter these means will have absolutely no authority. 'To whom belongs (all) sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Prevailing' (*Ghafir*: 16).

The outward reality is that sovereignty belongs to Allah in the Hereafter, but the reality is that sovereignty always belongs to Allah, both in the life of this world and in the Hereafter. However, He willed to make the means – created with His Will – respond to mankind. Beware of thinking that you have become fully capable; because in the life of this world you have sovereignty over certain things, but a king or ruler like you has sovereignty over you. The standard procedure for the universe is that there is a system that governs everything in it.

But the situation is different in the Hereafter, as there is no sovereignty for anyone besides Allah. Even the limbs will not move according to the will of their owners but rather according to the Will of the True Lord. In the Hereafter, you will have no control over those limbs that used to submit to you in the life of this world. Rather, they will bear witness against you. Since Allah has given you the power to move your limbs in the life of this world, and you align your movement with Allah's Commandments, you are one of Allah's (*'ibad* ; sincere, devoted worshippers).⁽¹⁾ If you do not direct them towards what Allah has asked then you are one of His (*'abid*; literally, slaves).

After this, Allah *the Exalted* presents to you the key aspects that consolidate His command of being worshipped alone and His Declaration that there is no god except Him. Allah did not ask us to worship Him until after He had created for us the heavens and the earth. The entire universe is prepared to receive mankind in truth; that is, for a firm purpose and a law which no one besides Allah has any choice in deciding it. Allah *the Exalted* says:

خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ تَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٣﴾

He created the heavens and earth for a true purpose, and He is far above whatever they join with Him! [3] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 3)

That is, Allah *the Exalted* is transcendent above anything to which humans may ascribe a share in His divinity. No one assisted Allah in the creation and arrangement of the universe. How can you set up another god alongside Him? Allah is Supreme and far Exalted above having any partners or rivals. He created for us before He created us. He created the heavens and the earth and apportioned to each living being its share of sustenance. If you contemplated your creation, you would find that the world is contained within you. Allah is the One Who says: 'on earth there are signs for those with sure faith — and in yourselves too, do you not see?' (*at-Tur*: 20-21)

You have been created from what? The True Lord gives us the answer:

(1) The (*'ibad*) are the true servants of the Most Merciful, while the (*'abid*) are all of mankind. All *'Abid* can be elevated to the rank of *'ibad* by working righteous deeds.

خَلَقَ الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ فَإِذَا هُوَ خَصِيمٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٤﴾

**He created man from a drop of fluid, and yet man
openly challenges Him [4] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 4)**

The drop of fluid that we come from is a sperm that unites with the ovum found in the uterus of the female to produce the *`alaqah* (something which clings; a leech-like structure that attaches itself to the uterine wall). Allah is the One Who says: ‘Does man think he will be left alone? Was he not just a drop of spilt-out sperm which became a clinging form (*`alaqah*), which Allah shaped in due proportion, fashioning from it the two sexes, male and female?’ (*al-Qiyama*: 36-39) Indeed, every ejaculation contains enough sperms to create millions of humans. Due to its extremely minute size a sperm cannot be seen by the naked eye. This minute size can only be seen with a microscope. Hidden within every male’s sperm are all the properties that are then united with the properties hidden within the female’s ovum in order to form a human being.

Al-`Aqqad – may Allah have mercy on him – spoke the truth when he said: ‘Indeed, the size of a thimble filled to its half with sperms could produce the equivalent of the entire world’s population.’ The True Lord has willed that only the strong sperms can make it through to the ovum, to affirm for us that nothing lasts except the fittest. If the living sperm is carrying the hereditary traits that give birth to a female, a female will be born. If it is carrying the hereditary traits that give birth to a male, a male will be born.

You can observe something similar in plants, as the first grain of wheat was like Adam *peace be upon him* who was the first human to exist in the way that we know. Within this first grain the True Lord embedded the content of all future wheat grains until the Hour is established. This is the magnificence of the True Lord’s Creation.

In more than one place in the Noble Quran, the True Lord has explained to us the stages of human creation, such as His saying: ‘Then He made his posterity out of the extract of a liquid disdained’ (*as-Sajda*: 8).

The stages of human formation include the *nutfah* (male and female seminal fluids), then the *`alaqah* (a leech-like clinging clot), then the *mudghah* (a chewed-like lump of flesh), some formed and some unformed.⁽¹⁾

The fertilized ovum, referred to as *nutfah*, carries either the (hereditary) female or male traits as have been confirmed by modern science. The woman has nothing to do with determining the baby's gender. As if this is intended to point to a woman's role as a dwelling and a shelter because the ovum receives the sperm and embraces it so that growth can be accomplished until it develops into a full human being. 'Glory be to Allah, the Best of creators!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14) It is the True Lord Who says: 'Does man think he will be left alone? Was he not just a drop of spilt-out sperm, which became a clinging form (*`alaqah*), which Allah shaped in due proportion?' (*al-Qiyama*: 36-39)

The *`alaqah* stage derives its name from its function; it attaches itself to the uterine wall as has been confirmed by contemporary science. Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Then we made that drop into a clinging form (*`alaqah*), and we made that form into a lump of flesh (*mudghah*)' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14).

The Arabic word (*mudghah*) signifies a chewed substance. Then Allah *the Exalted* describes the *mudghah* as being: 'a lump of flesh, formed and unformed' (*al-Hajj*: 5). Someone might ask: 'We can understand that a completely formed embryonic lump contains what is possible to become an eye or an arm, but what about the incomplete one?' We say that this a pre-cautionary balance in order to maintain the body. When man, who is a created being, starts building a house, he will buy some additional building supplies; for example, because he is taking into account any accidents that may occur; so what do we think about the True Lord who has created the human being?

Allah has made the unformed part a balance for the sake of maintenance or renewal in case of any circumstances that may occur to the human being. It remains a surplus in the body as a sort of depository for any repairs.

An example would be the wounds that occur and then the human body treats the wounds itself. We find that the wounds heal without leaving any

(1) Allah *the Exalted* says: 'People, (remember,) if you doubt the Resurrection, that We created you from dust, then a drop of fluid, then a clinging form, then a lump of flesh, formed and unformed...' (*al-Hajj*: 5).

scar or mark. This is because the treatment was carried out by the interior pharmacy that was placed in the body by the True Lord *Glorified is He*.

The surprise is that after all this, the human, who is created by Allah rebels against his Creator: 'He (Allah) created man from a drop of fluid, and yet man openly challenges Him' (*an-Nahl*: 4).

Some humans go as far as denying that there is a God, ignoring the fact that they, solely by the power that Allah has placed in them, are arguing about Him. The (*khasim*, contender in argument) is the one who argues and denies realities. If a matter of the Unseen is discussed with him, he tries to disprove its rationality.

Allah says in the chapter of *Ya Sin*: 'Can man not see that we created him from a drop of fluid? Yet – lo and behold! – he disputes openly' (*Ya Sin*: 77) It may be acceptable to argue with someone who is your equal, but it is not acceptable to argue with the One Who has created you, shaped you, proportioned you, in whatever form He chose.

The True Lord says after this:

وَالْأَنْعَمَ خَلَقَهَا لَكُمْ فِيهَا دِفْءٌ وَمَنْفَعٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ

**And livestock — He created them too. You derive warmth
and other benefits from them: you get food from them [5]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 5)**

The word (*dif*, warmth) is heat provided to someone who is cold. This is analogue to what air conditioning does in modern homes. We find the True Lord *the Exalted* speaking here about warmth and not speaking about coldness. This is because the opposite is known. In another noble verse, He says: 'and has made for you garments which protect you from the heat' (*an-Nahl*: 81).

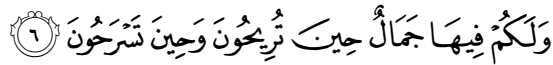
This is what happens when we walk in the hot sun; as we put a cover over our heads to protect ourselves from the heat of the burning sun. In the winter, we wear a hood, i.e. something that wraps around our heads. This is how we know that clothes are fit for certain purposes and their opposites, on the condition that people choose appropriate clothes for appropriate weather. In cattle, there are

numerous benefits; we drink their milk, we make cheese and butter from it, we shear off the wool in order to spin and weave woollen clothes, they carry our loads and we benefit from their progeny. We also eat their meat.

We know that cattle were described in detail in another place of the Quran in which the True Lord says: ‘... (Allah gave you) eight animals, in (four) pairs: a pair of sheep and a pair of goats...’ (*al-An‘am*: 143). These animals are sheep, goats, camels and cows.

We know that warmth comes from wool, fur and hair. If one looks at the hair of goats, one finds that each hair is separate; but the fur that we shear off camels is stuck together. This is proof of the minuteness of its fibres. As for wool, each hair is a hollow cylindrical tube.

The True Lord says after this:



**You find beauty in them when you bring them home to
rest and when you drive them out to pasture [6]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 6)**

In addition to the necessities provided by the cattle, here we find the True Lord *Glorified is He* giving us luxury as well. Warmth, food, and the other benefits are necessities of life. As for beauty, it is among the luxuries of life. Beauty is what the eye sees and brings happiness to the soul. Warmth, food and the other benefits are matters that are particular to the owner of the cattle. As for beauty, it is widespread and general for all of mankind. When you see a beautiful horse or a very healthy cow, you are seeing a bounty of Allah that He created to please the onlookers.

We notice this beauty when the cattle go out to pasture and when they come back to rest. In the countryside, we say: ‘The cattle (*saraha*) have gone out to graze freely, i.e. they have left the barn to go out to graze and eat. We notice that the True Lord *the Exalted* mentioned driving them home first, i.e. their return to their enclosure after pasturing. This is because when the cattle return to their enclosures after grazing their bellies are full and their udders are replete with milk. Whoever sees them will feel pleased, even before he

tries their milk. Anyone who takes his beasts out to pasture in the morning, and he accompanies them from their barns to the field, finds beauty mixed with awe and vigour in their voices. This brings prestige to their owners. While those who do not own these cattle are still able to witness their beauty.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after this:

وَتَحْمِلُ أَثْقَالَكُمْ إِلَىٰ بَلَدٍ لَّمْ تَكُونُوا بَالِغِيهِ إِلَّا
 بِشِقِّ الْأَنْفُسِ إِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ لَرءُوفٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٧﴾

They carry your loads to lands you yourselves could not reach without great hardship — truly your Lord is kind and merciful [7] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 7)

We know that during this life the human beings are in one of two states; either travelling or resident. When living in homeland, the cattle provide them with warmth, food, and clothing. Usually, people of average or poor means settle in their place of residence.

As for rich and well-off people, you find them in Cairo one day, in Alexandria or Tanta the next, or they may travel abroad. All this is easy in the age of modern transportation. In the past, the transport means were difficult. No one could travel except those who had healthy camels or strong horses. As for those who only owned an emaciated donkey, they could only think of traversing short distances.

Therefore, we find the Quran, when it talks about the People of Sheba, saying: 'But (insolently) they said, "Our Lord, lengthen the distance between our journeys."' (*Saba'*: 19) They said this out of pride in the horses which they owned and the strong and healthy beasts that they had as means of travel, which ensured them comfortable journeys. This betokened their might, power, and wealth.

The True Lord's statement: 'They carry your loads to lands...' (*an-Nahl*: 7) means to put something heavy on something that is capable of carrying loads. This is why we do not find a man carrying his riding animal. Rather, we find him making his riding beast carry his loads so that he does not have to burden himself with an unbearable weight.

We know that weight depends on density, just as size depends on area. When you look at a kilogram of iron and a kilogram of cotton, you find the kilogram of cotton is bigger in size than the kilogram of iron. This is because the particles of iron are tightly packed. Cotton fibres are fluffy and this is what makes cotton require a bigger space.

The True Lord *the Exalted* continues in this noble verse: ‘They carry your loads to lands you yourselves could not reach without great hardship....’ (*an-Nahl*: 7)

Those among the orientalist who examine the style of the Quran might claim that the end of this verse is inconsistent with its beginning. We say to such people: ‘You have not understood the gifts that Allah bestows upon His creation. Even without heavy loads, they could only reach this place with difficulty; so what about the difficult burden of having heavy loads of merchandise and goods with them?’

Indeed, it is a great blessing that they can find something that will carry them and their heavy loads in order to get to wherever they want to go.

Concerning the part of the verse ‘...great hardship (*bishiqq*)....’, the Arabic word (*shiq*; literally split) mean a (*sad*’; fissure) between two objects that cause them to be disconnected. Allah says in one verse: ‘So proclaim openly (*fa-isda*’) what you have been commanded (to say)’ (*al-Hijr*: 94).

There are also the derivative nouns *shaqq*, which means exertion, and *shuqqah*. As we know, the human is always in one of three states. Either he is sleeping, and in this state, he does not require a great deal of energy in order to stay alive; or he is awake, and in this state he does not need a great deal of energy either. Rather, he needs a medium amount of energy in order for his body to function. However, when the person is carrying heaving things, he needs a greater amount of energy.

We also find the True Lord *the Exalted* saying: ‘They would certainly have followed you (Prophet) if the benefit was within sight and the journey short, but the distance seemed too great for them (*al-shuqqatu*)’ (*at-Tawba*: 42).

The meaning of *shuqqah* here is the distance that is difficult to cover. The True Lord *Glorified is He* concludes the noble verse under study by saying: ‘...truly your Lord is Kind and Merciful.’ (*an-Nahl*: 7) The two attributes here

are kindness and mercy, and both are suited to what the verse contains. The Lord is responsible for sustenance and provision, and this applies to any journey that has a destination, whether it is for financial gain, reflection, or both.

If the journey is for financial gain, then your animal riding must be strong enough to carry your heavy loads that you are taking with you as well as the goods that you will be bringing back. If the journey is for reflection, then through this journey you can remove the discomfort of not knowing and the desire to arrive at the place that you have intended.

This is how we find that kindness is suited to bringing about a benefit, fulfilling a need, and eliminating hardship. And the word (*Rahim*; Merciful) is suited to preventing discomfort by making one reach their aim.

Some scholars have paused to consider the intention behind a journey; whether one is travelling for trade or travelling for reflection. One kind is voluntary and the other is obligatory; like the necessary journey to perform the pilgrimage to Mecca once in a lifetime.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* relieves us of the pain of carrying heavy loads, and this is how His Compassion is realised. And He is Merciful because He achieves our aim of getting to a certain destination.

The True Lord *the Exalted* says after this:

وَالْخَيْلَ وَالْإِبَالَ وَالْحَمِيرَ لِتَرْكَبُوهَا وَزِينَةً وَيَخْلُقُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٨﴾

**Horses, mules, and donkeys for you to ride and
use for show, and other things you know nothing
about [8] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 8)**

As Allah *the Almighty* refers to the livestock from which we get food, He, in this verse, mentions those used for transportation or for the enjoyment of beauty but not to be eaten; i.e. horses, mules and donkeys. He reminds us that they are used for riding and for show because there is beauty in them; thus, man is embellished by them such as the people of our time who boast about the embellishments they make to their cars.

The verse indicates the disparity of mankind in rank; every rank rides what suits it. Horses are for the elite, cavaliers and the wealthy. Those of the lesser rank ride mules while those who cannot afford a horse or a mule have a donkey.

People differ as there is a person who may own the three kinds of livestock used for riding, another may own two of them, a third may own just one mount and a fourth cannot even afford to hire any mount at all.

Allah *the Exalted* differently distributes livelihood among mankind, whether it is more or less. If there had been an equality in the distribution of livelihood, there would not have existed the mistakenly so-called menial jobs, i.e. the jobs taken on by people who sweep streets, carry bricks for buildings and service cars.

All these jobs are indispensable; but for the desire for providing livelihood, there would not have been anyone to do these jobs or to be pleased by them. Such jobs eliminate begging.

But for the need for food, the workers would not have tolerated the burdens of these jobs. By examining the life of the poorest person in the world, there should be a time when he has realised some of his dreams.

It is found that there may be someone who works hard for ten years, and then relaxes for the rest of his life. Another person may work hard for twenty years and then he and his children relax for the rest of their life. There may also be a person who toils for thirty years, and then his children and grandchildren relax after him. What is important is the value of the skilled job and the satisfaction with Allah's destiny for him. Thus, Allah bestows blessings upon man as long as he accepts His destiny.

By overlooking the life of those whom Allah has given wealth and luxury, it is found that, in the beginning of their lives, they arduously worked hard, yet they were pleased with His destiny. Moreover, they did not harbour any resentment towards anyone. Finally, they were presented Allah's guidance towards serenity and peace of mind.

Allah *the Almighty* decrees the diversification of the standards of living amongst humanity so that no one would refrain from offering services to others as long as he needed theirs.

The verse under discussion expressively mentioned mules amidst horses and donkeys because they are not pure species but rather, they are the hybrid offspring of two different ones. In the end of the verse, Allah *Glorified is He*

draws our attention to the fact that this is not the end of the matter. Rather, there are more creations, as He says: ‘... And other things you know nothing about’ (*an-Nahl*: 8).

Allah *the Exalted* has subjugated *Al-Buraq* (a white animal, half-mule is said to have transported Prophet Muhammad to heaven) to serve Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the wind to serve Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. As miracles happened to the Prophets, humanity has been guided to invent several means of transportation; from horse-drawn carriages to cars, trains, and planes.

Although science has made great strides in developing means of transportation, yet there are still people who breed, lead, and ride horses because they are beautiful to behold.

These are the means of transportation and inventions developed to serve us in the worldly life, then what about transportation in the Hereafter? There should be luxurious means suited the lavish unprecedented pleasures of the Afterlife. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the following verse:

وَعَلَى اللَّهِ قَصْدُ السَّبِيلِ وَمِنْهَا جَايزٌ وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَهَدَيْكُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٩﴾

**God points out the right path, for some paths
lead the wrong way: if He wished, He could guide
you all [9] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 9)**

The path is the road, and *qasd* (points out) means that He *the Almighty* shows you the destination. It is a verbal noun derived from the Arabic statement *tariq qasid*; i.e. the road that has no turns and no bends. Allah *the Exalted* shows us the destination to be reached with minimal efforts.

In local dialect, we ask the traffic officer, ‘Is this road running?’, even though the road itself does not run, but rather, we go on it. However, the question means whether the road leads to the required destination. When the person cannot devise a means to overcome the problem, he says: ‘Leave it to Allah’, i.e. he raises unresolved issues beyond human capabilities to Allah the Most High Originator.

Therefore, the believer desires to use his means; i.e. worshipping Allah to reach the destination, the Paradise as a reward for faith and righteous action in this worldly life.

By comparing the bending meandered course of the River Nile, to the straight Tawfiki Rayah Irrigation Canal, there is a difference because the former is naturally led by the running water; whereas, the latter is straightforwardly built by human beings for a specific objective.

Since the straightforwardness of the path is laid down by Allah, it could not be slightly curved; as He has no whim, no consort, no son, and no special favour to anyone and treats the entire creation equally. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Guide us to the straight path’ (*al-Fatiha*: 6); i.e. the straight unbent way for any purpose. Rather, the purpose is to reach the destination in the easiest way.

Allah’s saying: ‘Allah *qasd* (points out) the right path...’ (*an-Nahl*: 9) recalls Iblis’ (Satan’s) conversation with Allah: ‘Iblis said, “I swear by Your might! I will tempt all [82] but Your true servants” [83]’ (*Sad*: 82-83). Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah says: “This is, with Me, a straight way”’ (*al-Hijr*: 41). Allah also says: ‘Our part is to provide guidance’ (*al-Layl*: 12), i.e. when He has created man, He has made the path of guidance clear to him. Likewise, Allah says: ‘And point out to him the two clear ways [of good and evil]’ (*al-Balad*: 10), i.e. Allah *the Almighty* shows the man both the paths of truth and falsehood.

Thus, Allah’s saying in this verse: ‘Allah *qasd* (points out) the right path...’ (*an-Nahl*: 9) shows that the destination of the decreed path is laid down by Allah, the Ever-Just, Who does not have any whims and Who treats the entire creation equally. For this reason, the thinkers should not greatly exhaust themselves in an attempt to lay down their own legislation to control life’s activities because Allah, the Originator of this life has already laid down the law of maintenance. The irrefutable evidence of the incapacity of thinkers to lay down laws organising human life is the fact that they change the laws in every age; however, Allah’s law is permanent, perfect, and unchangeable.

Thus, humanity should relax and live according to Allah’s decreed Path that should be applied. As for other life matters that have not been settled by Allah, they can use their own *ijtihad* (legal reasoning).

According to Allah's saying: 'Allah *qasd* (points out) the right path...' (*an-Nahl*: 9), He is the One Who has laid down the path of faith leading to the targeted destination because there are other deviating paths leading to the wrong way. For that reason, He says: '...For some paths lead the wrong way...' (*an-Nahl*: 9). In order to prevent deviation, He has pointed out the path of faith, as He says: 'But if the truth were in accordance with their desires, the heavens, the earth, and everyone in them would disintegrate...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71).

Nevertheless, the straight and even path is that of faith laid down by Allah *the Almighty*. There are other deviating paths; i.e. they increase the distance to be cut, expose man to dangers, or erratically misguide him to be led away from the straight path. It is cognisant that any path has two ends and each point lying on it has also two ends. Allah *the Exalted* does not force man to lead one path; but rather, He gives him the ability to choose. Thus, Allah subjugated other creatures to serve man.

As for man, Allah bestows upon him the ability to choose to differentiate between he who obeys and he who disobeys His commands. All mankind will certainly be gathered for reckoning; thus, whoever chooses the path of obedience is he who reveres Allah. Being in awe of Allah is the established target for which Allah endows the man the ability of choice. Undoubtedly, if He had wanted to attest absolute domination for Himself, He would have coerced humanity into obedience just as He has subjugated other beings.

Yet, Allah *the Exalted* is concerned with people's hearts, rather than superficial outward acts. Hence, He says in the conclusion of the verse: '... If He wished, He could guide you all' (*an-Nahl*: 9). It is known that all creatures prostrate to Allah *Glorified is He*: '... There is not a single thing that does not celebrate His praise, though you do not understand their praise...' (*al-Isra'*: 44). In another verse, Allah says: '[Prophet], do you not see that all those who are in the heavens and earth praise Allah, as do the birds with wings outstretched? Each knows its [own way] of prayer and glorification...' (*an-Nur*: 41). Therefore, if Allah had otherwise decreed, He would have guided the humans and the *jinn* just as He has guided all other beings, but He is concerned with people's hearts, rather than their outward acts.

Allah *the Almighty* says afterwards:

هُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً لَكُمْ مِنْهُ شَرَابٌ وَمِنْهُ شَجَرٌ فِيهِ تُسِيمُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

It is He who sends down water for you from the sky, from which comes a drink for you, and the shrubs that you feed to your animals [10] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 10)

Allah's saying: '... Sends down water from the skies...' (*an-Nahl*: 10) appears to be a simple statement; yet the processes of filtering and purifying water from dirt at the laboratories show the amount of work carried out to send down pure water as rain.

It is perceptible that the sky is everything above us, and that the clouds are formed as a result of water evaporated by the sun from oceans and seas. Thus, water vapour is formed, rises upwards, condenses in the form of rain and then rain falls to the earth.

Oceans and seas cover three quarters of the earth surface, while land makes up only one quarter. It is observed that the three quarters of the earth's surface were made to serve the remaining quarter.

It is amazing that rain falls on places that might not be benefitted from it, such as the highlands of Ethiopia. Yet, rainwater soon mixes with alluvium from these highlands to form the River Nile so that we can benefit from it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do you not see that Allah drives the clouds, then gathers them together and piles them up until you see rain pour from their midst? He sends hail down from [such] mountains in the sky, pouring it on whoever He wishes and diverting it from whoever He wishes...' (*an-Nur*: 43).

As Allah says in the concerned verse that but for the process of evaporation and the ongoing condensation of water vapour after it has become clouds, man would never be able to drink the saltwater that is found in the seas. As a result of Allah's wisdom, He *the Almighty* creates the water of the seas and oceans salty because salt acts as a preservative substance.

As the sun evaporates the water to become clouds and then the rain falls, man can drink such water feeding rivers and wells and also causing shrubs to grow to be eaten.

Allah *the Exalted* uses the word ‘... *Shajar* (Shrubs)...’ which indicates the bushy plant that intertwines. The Arabic word has the derivative ‘*mushajara*’ which means that there is an internal quarrel that broke out between people.

There are different kinds of *shajar* (shrubs) those which are implanted and owned by the proprietor. Furthermore, there are plants that grow without being humanly implanted; they are public property where animals were allowed to graze freely.

As Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... That you feed to your animals’ (*an-Nahl*: 10). When someone pastures their animals in public property, they leave traces of their presence; such as tracks and marks. They pasture the ‘untouched meadows’ where no one has pastured, as if it has been abandoned and nothing is taken from it. Subsequently, Allah *the Exalted* says:

يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنْ
كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿١١﴾

**With it He grows for you grain, olives, palms, vines,
and all kinds of other crops. There truly is a sign in this
for those who reflect [11] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 11)**

Allah informs us that plants do not grow themselves, but that He is who makes them grow. Furthermore, He *the Exalted* exclusively mentions the most-needed kinds of crops; such as olive trees, date-palms, grapes and others. Olives are made up of oily substances while grapes are made up of sugary substances and the same goes for the date-palms that produce dates. It is well known that human’s nourishment comes from starches and proteins. Therefore, Allah’s former mention to the cattle and current reference to the crops make it clear that man has been given the fundamental components of food, as He says: ‘By the fig, by the olive, [1] by Mount Sinai, [2] by this safe town, [3] We create man in the finest state [4]’ (*at-Tin*: 1-4). Thereby, Allah endows man with proteins, fats, starches, and vitamins which maintain man’s life.

When physicians want to provide fundamental nourishing components to a patient, they dissolve the nutritional supplies in liquids injected into his

veins. However, they are concerned about nourishing someone like this for a long time for fear that the intestines may shrink.

The breeders who feed animals know that nourishment is divided into two types; the kind that fills the stomach and another that supplies the necessary elements. Hay, for example, fills the stomach and provides fibres helping the intestines work properly. However, processed soybean residue nourishes and ensures abundant animal flesh.

Allah's Power of making plants grow in the current verse is then emphasised in His saying: 'Is it you who make them grow or We?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 64) The man only ploughed the earth, but Allah is the One Who makes plants grow; the farmer plough the land with the axe-head made of iron created by Allah and extracted by man. Furthermore, he grasps the axe-handle made of wood grown by Allah, he uses Allah's gifts to plough the land created by Allah. Moreover, the energy needed to plough the land is granted by Allah.

Conclusively, Allah *the Almighty* reminds the people that all crops are His gifts; thus, He uses the specific-to-general pattern where He *the Exalted* begins with the details and leads the listener to the generalization; i.e. the known specific yields to man are a part of the whole limitless innumerable crops.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse: '... There truly is a sign in this for those who reflect' (*an-Nahl*: 11), i.e. man should use his rational faculty to think properly with regards to the given surrounding facts, and then he should observe and determine his position of these facts. Doing this, he would find that he is not the doer, but he is liable to do.

Allah *the Exalted* notifies that thinking is not only the task of a specific person but rather the task of everyone; so that each rational faculty would complement the other. Thus, whoever has a deep reflection leading to the existence of Allah is inevitably responsible to communicate this to the others.

There are many Quranic verses ending with words calling for; *tadhakkur* (remembering), *tafakkur* (rationally thinking), *tadabbur* (trying to deeply understand) and *tafaqquh* (precisely comprehending). Each expression denotes certain knowledge; because *tadhakkur* (remembering) means that they had knowledge beforehand but forgetfulness wiped it out; thus, it is their duty to remember.

As for the expression *tafakkur* (rationally thinking), it is the umbrella term because when the man thinks rationally, he needs to look at the facts given outwardly and inwardly. As Allah says: 'Will they not think rationally about this Quran?...?' (*an-Nisa'*: 82). This means that the person should not look at the facts only outwardly, but rather inwardly as well to exactly understand the matter. As he properly understands, he comes to know; thus the path of perception is made up of four phases; thinking, reflecting, understanding and then acquiring knowledge.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ وَالنُّجُومَ
مُسَخَّرَاتٌ بِأَمْرِ اللَّهِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

By His command He has made the night and day, the sun, moon, and stars all of benefit to you. There truly are signs in this for those who use their reason [12]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 12)

It is known that the night and the day are two clear evidences on the existence of Allah. The moon is well matched to the night, while the sun is suitable to the daytime and they are all subjected to Allah's Command in one system. To make something subservient to someone means that a creation is coerced to benefit another so that both would carry out their function. The night, the day, the sun and the moon have been made subservient and have given a function. The purpose of the night is repose and tranquillity.

As Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'In His mercy, He has given you night and day, so that you may rest and seek His bounty and be grateful' (*al-Qasas*: 73).

The function of the day is to undertake arduous work, seeking sustenance and bountiful graces from Allah. The sun is created to be the permanent source of energy and warmth; it is subservient to other creatures continuously and submissively to Allah's Command. It does not belong to anyone but to Allah. Moreover, it is an integral part of the universe system organised only by Allah *the Exalted* so that no person can control others' life. Likewise, the same applies to the moon, which is created for another purpose.

Beware of presuming that there might be two contradictory functions incoherently opposing each other; rather, they are complementarily consistent. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘By the enshrouding night [1] by the radiant day [2] by His creation of male and female [3] The ways you take differ greatly [4]’ (*al-Layl*: 1-4). Even though the night and the day are opposites, yet they are not contradictory; just as the varying tasks of male and female which are complementary rather than contradictory.

Allah *Glorified is He* gives an example to clarify this complementary relationship: ‘Say, “Just think, if Allah were to cast perpetual day over you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than He could give you night in which to rest?” Do you not see?’ (*al-Qasas*: 72) If man stays awake for two consecutive nights, he will not be able to resist sleep, even if he is undertaking a challenging task. Later on, he may need repose for a week. Thus, Allah says: ‘The night as a cover [10] and the day for your livelihood? [11]’ (*an-Naba*: 10-11)

Whenever someone prays *Isha* (the fifth nighttime prayer of the day) and goes to bed, he will inevitably wake up before dawn fully energetic because he has deeply slept and spent a relaxing night.

However, Muslims have assimilated themselves to the scum and dregs of the Western culture, such as the inventions that make them awaken all night, watching television, films, and satellite channels; thus, they wake up in the morning exhausted. Despite the fact that the Western people themselves use these inventions properly and at appropriate times. Therefore, they go to bed early and wake up at dawn active and energetic.

Allah *the Exalted* switches to a new miraculous sign: ‘... And stars all subservient (to benefit you)’ (*an-Nahl*: 12). He has not mentioned the stars in conjunction with what comes before; rather, He has singled them out with a new sentence even though they are smaller and unnoticeable because they are numerous and are found in so many various places. However, Allah takes oath on them: ‘I swear by the positions of the stars [75] a mighty oath, if you only knew [76]’ (*al-Waqi’a*: 75-76).

Each one of these distant stars has a specific function; such as in daily life, when the lights go out, the person checks the fuse box in home. However,

ordinary people do not know how electricity comes into their home, how the science has advanced to make electric lights under their service, or how the electric circuit is extended after being generated to the house.

Ordinary people do not have an idea of one item inside their homes and affecting them in their daily life; however, Allah does, as He says: 'I swear by the positions of the stars' (*al-Waqi'a*: 75). He, also, says: 'And landmarks and stars that they are guided by' (*an-Nahl*: 16).

Allah *Glorified is He* has, specifically, singled them out with a new and independent sentence where He stresses the concept of being subjugated. This is done because they all have positions and are too many to be counted; some of them are so far that their lights take millions of years to reach the earth. Additionally, this is done because Allah has created everything between the Heavens and the earth with a hidden secret.

He attracts the people's attention to the fact that the structure of items created to directly serve people, have other hidden items to also serve them.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse, by saying: '... There truly are signs in this for those who use their reason' (*an-Nahl*: 12).

Allah's signs are the miraculous matters that should not be tackled briefly; rather, the person should think about them because this reflection benefits him. Moreover, it enables him to benefit humanity from the deduced lessons on unveiling unknown matters with ease and pleasure.

The words '...use their reason' means using the intellectual faculty properly. It is known that the intellect has a unique potential that derives abstract meanings from physical matters. Thus, it achieves a previously unknown outcome from the known data to be satisfied and satisfies others. Afterwards, it uses the previously unknown data to come up with a new result.

Therefore, the man deduces matters from the unveiled secrets of the universe as per Allah's Will. Allah *the Almighty* says after that:

وَمَا ذَرَأَ لَكُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ مُخْتَلِفًا أَلْوَنًا إِلَّا
فِي ذَٰلِكَ لَآيَةٌ لِّقَوْمٍ يَذَّكَّرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

He has made of benefit to you the many-coloured things He has multiplied on the earth. There truly are signs in this for those who take it to heart [13] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 13)

The word *dhara'a* means that Allah has created reproducing living organisms; which are multiplying, either by impregnating the female, or by hatching eggs as in the case of birds. Thus, *dhara'a* does not only mean creation in the absolute sense, but rather, the multiplying creation. Allah *the Exalted* has first created Adam *peace be upon him* and then has succeeded him by descendants who in turn reproduced as the male mates the female. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... Glory be to Allah, the Best of Creators!’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 14)

This verse shows that Allah is generous towards His slaves; by giving them the power to create even though their creation is not like His. Allah has created Adam *peace be upon him* and then brought people into existence from his progeny. Man may create using tools and devices of everyday life, but he cannot create the way Allah does because he does not create out of nothing, but rather, he uses the already existing bounties. On the contrary, Allah creates out of nothing; therefore, He is the best of creators.

The most recurrent example held is that of the grain which grows seven ears and in each ear there are one hundred more grains. Allah *the Exalted* draws this example to make man yearn to spend out for His sake.⁽¹⁾ This is the tangible and material creation; that Allah has made all this grow from one grain. Hence, Allah says: ‘He has made of benefit to you the many-coloured things He has *dhara'a* (multiplied) on the earth...’ (*an-Nahl*: 13). This means that Allah’s creation of several hues which multiplies itself is a proof of His absolute power in creating innumerable miscellaneous beings. Allah gives us an illustration of this matter in His saying: ‘Have you [Prophet] not

(1) Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Those who spend their wealth in Allah’s cause are like grains of corn that produce seven ears, each bearing a hundred grains. Allah gives multiple increase to whoever He wishes: He is limitless and all knowing’ (*al-Baqara*: 261).

considered how Allah sends water down from the sky and that We produce with it fruits of varied colours; that there are in the mountains layers of white and red of various hues, and jet black; [27] that there are various colours among human beings, wild animals, and livestock too? It is those of His servants who have knowledge who stand in true awe of Allah. Allah is Almighty, Most-Forgiving [28]' (*Fatir*: 27-28).

Actually, mountains are found to have various colours and the same mountain can have lines separating between a number of strata. This shows that there are different hues amongst inanimate objects, plants, and human beings.

Allah's saying: '... It is those of His servants who have knowledge who stand in true awe of Allah...' (*Fatir*: 28) refers to every scholar who studies a particular conventional issue or an issue that has come down directly from the Creator. In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* does not only mean the scholars of religion; but rather, every scholar who carries out researches to derive knowledge from the unknown and who reveals Allah's secrets in creation. Allah *Glorified is He* makes a clear distinction in this regard, so that religious scholars do not delve into the matters of empirical scientific research which benefit mankind. For example, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* found some people pollinating date palms; i.e. they were taking the spadix of the male and pollinating the female date palm. He said: 'If you were not to do that; nevertheless, they would bear fruit.' When they abandoned this practice, there was a decline in the yield. As the Messenger knew this, he revoked his opinion and said the decisive statement: 'You have better knowledge of the affairs of your worldly life.'⁽¹⁾ That is, you have better knowledge of empirical scientific matters. It is noticeable that the major hindrance to civilization and development in Europe, for many centuries, was the attempts of the clergymen to cease any scientific research, and they accused every empirical scientist of blasphemy.

(1) *It is narrated in Sahih Muslim (2362) from the Hadith of Anas ibn Malik may Allah be pleased with him that {Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him passed by a people who were pollinating and he said: 'If you did not do this it would flourish.' He said: 'The result was shisa (bad dates) and he passed by them and said: 'What happened to your date palm?' They said: 'You said such and such.' He said: 'You know best about the affairs of your world.'}*

Islam is distinguished by encouragingly allowing research into all Allah's signs in the universe. Due to Allah's Compassion, He *the Almighty* makes clear to His creation the importance of researching and revealing the secrets of the universe. He says: 'And there are many signs in the heavens and the earth that they pass by and give no heed to' (*Yusuf*: 105). This verse disallows the believer from turning away from any of Allah's signs in the universe; rather, he should use his intellect and capacity to reflect and get benefit from them in his creed and life. Allah says: 'We shall show them Our signs in every region of the earth and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth...' (*Fussilat*: 53). Whereas, the matters related to the reckoning of the Hereafter, lie under the purview of the jurists.

Allah *the Exalted* concludes the verse under discussion: '... There truly are signs in this for those who take it to heart' (*an-Nahl*: 13). It means that the people can grasp the unknown by analogy to the known matters.

Afterwards, Allah returns to the matter of subservience, saying:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ الْبَحْرَ لَكُمْ تَكُونُوا مِنْهُ لَحْمًا طَرِيًّا وَتَسْتَخْرِجُوا
مِنْهُ حِلْيَةً تَلْبَسُونَهَا وَتَرَى الْفُلْكَ مَوَاجِرَ فِيهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا
مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

It is He who made the sea of benefit to you: you eat fresh fish from it and bring out jewellery to wear; you see the ships cutting through its waves so that you may go in search of His bounty and give thanks [14] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 14)

Subjugation, as previously tackled, is achieved when the being is brought into existence for an obligatory inevitable mission. The entire universe has been made subservient to man before he was brought into existence. Afterwards, Allah has created man with the ability to choose.

Some people assume that the beings that have been made subservient, have no choice whatsoever. This is a mistake; because such beings were given a choice that they denied at the beginning of their existence. As Allah *the Exalted* says: 'We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, yet they refused to undertake it and were afraid of it...' (*al-Ahzab*: 72).

This verse shows that Allah lets His creation choose between subservience and the ability to choose, where all beings, except man, used their right to choose only once. Thus, it should not be alleged that Allah has forced them; rather, they chose at the very beginning to be subservient. This is because they were capable at the time of executing work but were not capable at the time of undertaking trust, as compared to man. It is supposed that they preferred remaining blameless to oppressing themselves.

Accordingly, Allah describes mankind: ‘... They have always been inept and foolish’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72). Man indeed oppressed himself because he was capable at the time of assuming trust, but he was not capable at the time of executing work. Furthermore, he is ignorant because he does not know the difference between execution and assumption while the other beings restrained themselves from assuming the responsibility of the trust; thus they did not oppress themselves.

Thus, the meaning of subservience is exactly clarified that the being is brought into existence for an obligatory inevitable mission. However, it is clear that the beings that have been made subservient were given a choice at the very beginning, but they chose to be made subservient and to refuse the trust. Meanwhile, man took up the mission, relied on his intellect and capacity to think and accepted to arrange the affairs of his life in light of this.

However, Allah makes man subservient in some cases so that the entire universe and man would both be subservient in some cases and having choice in others. Therefore, the man may encounter some events he has no choice in, such as getting sick, getting into an accident or going bankrupt. Thus, the disbeliever is foolish of his choice; he denies the existence of Allah and rebels against faith even though he is not able to avert himself from getting sick or death.

In the verse under discussion, Allah says: ‘He is Who made the sea of benefit to you...’ (*an-Nahl*: 14). This means that He is the One Who created the sea as He created the heavens and the earth. He has created the land to be one quarter of the earth’s surface and seas and oceans has the remaining three quarters. He is tackling here the three quarters of the earth’s surface which give people some kinds of food.

Among Allah's gifts are the signs of tide and ebb; the former is followed by the latter; some fish remain on the shore. Moreover, strong waves carry and throw some fish onto the shore.

This gift is granted to man without any effort. Furthermore, the presence of some thrown fish onto the shores is the matter that draws man's attention to the importance of thinking to make fishing hooks and nets. Then he moved on from these primitive means to recent modern techniques of catching fish.

However, the jewellery that is extracted from the sea which is pearls, require that man should dive to the seabed in order to obtain them. Allah draws our attention to the secrets of His treasures by saying: 'Everything in the heavens and on earth, everything between them, everything beneath the soil, belongs to Him' (*Ta Ha*: 6).

All the treasures of nations are found beneath the surface of the earth. If the globe is split the same way the melon is split into slices, the treasures in each piece are found to be equal in terms of beneficial value. However, every gift beneath the earth will be discovered at a set time determined by Allah *the Exalted*.

There are places on earth which has been gifted of cultivation by Allah, whereas, there are other desert places that are assumed to have no benefit, but oil bursts forth afterwards from them, and so on.

Not only does Allah make the sea subservient in the way that it appeared, but rather, it may have other tasks, such as the sea which is split by the staff of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and each part appeared like a vast mountain. Moreover, the river had previously carried Musa *peace be upon him* after his mother had cast him into it with inspiration from Allah: '... Let the river wash him on to its bank...' (*Ta Ha*: 39). Thus, Allah commanded the river to carry Musa *peace be upon him* immediately after his mother had cast him into it.

It is made clear that the river has been made subservient to perform other tasks, along with containing fish and jewellery. It is known that seawater is salty, contrariwise to the fresh water of rain and rivers. Thus, water is of two types; fresh and saline. As Allah says: 'The two bodies of water are not alike—one is palatable, sweet, and pleasant to drink, the other salty and bitter— yet

from each you eat fresh fish and extract ornaments to wear...' (*Fatir*: 12). Rivers and seas are generally referred to as the two bodies of water, as Allah *the Exalted* says: 'He released the two bodies of [fresh and salt] water. They meet' (*ar-Rahman*: 19).

The intended meaning of the two bodies here is the freshwater and the seawater and the way they mix together. However, it is the freshwater that seeps underground; were we to drill at the seabed, we will find freshwater. Allah *the Almighty* states this in His saying: 'Have you not considered that Allah sends water down from the sky, guides it along to form springs in the earth...' (*az-Zumar*: 21).

Here, Allah says: 'He is Who made the sea of benefit to you: you eat fresh *lahm* (fish) from it...' (*an-Nahl*: 14). When the term *lahm* is used in an absolute sense, it refers to the meat of cattle, but when it is restricted with the word 'fresh' it refers to the meat of fish. This is part of the Quran's inimitable miraculous expression because the edible fish is always fresh.

Hence, those who buy fish will bend it to see whether it is fresh, if it is inflexible then it is unsuitable to be eaten. If a fish is taken out of the sea, its meat is fresh and if it is thrown back into the water, it will resume swimming and moving about. However, if it is dead, then it will swell and float on the surface.

Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* forbade eating any dead floating fish on the surface of the water. When the word *lahm* 'meat' collocates with the word 'fresh', it means fish meat; thus, it is distinguished from cattle meat. Therefore, the scholars say: 'Whoever vows not to eat meat and then eats fish, has not broken his vow' because the customary understanding of meat is that it is cattle's.

In the same verse, Allah says about making the sea subservient: '... And bring out jewellery to wear...' (*an-Nahl*: 14). Thus, we find that extracting jewellery requires effort; for it is a matter of luxury. As for fish, Allah *the Exalted* speaks about it directly: '... You eat fresh *lahm* (fish) from it...' (*an-Nahl*: 14).

Eating is a necessity; thus, Allah undertakes the responsibility of providing food and has in fact made fishing easy for people. As for ornamentation, people need to toil in order to extract it because it is a luxury. The necessities

of life are abundant; whereas, the luxuries of life require that the man should dive into the water and toil in order to obtain them.

This represents an indication that whoever wants to raise his standard of living, should sweat and toil, rather than living luxuriously dependent on others.

He says: ‘... And bring out jewellery to wear...’ (*an-Nahl*: 14). It is well-known that ornaments are worn by women; yet, the underlying observation is that they are worn to please men. As if the man is the one who enjoys this jewellery or who ornaments. Ornamentation that are extracted from the sea are not impermissible for men, as in the case of gold and silk because gold and silk are specie while pearls are not. These things are predominantly worn, but there is nothing wrong with making a stick out of them or something else of which you can make use.

Allah *Glorified is He* resumes the verse: ‘...You see the ships cutting through its waves...’ (*an-Nahl*: 14). These are not the recently known big steamships; rather, they are smaller ships. It is known that Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was the first person to make ships, and was mocked by his people. If he was making something normal, they would not have mocked him. Of course, there were not any nails at that time so it was held together by ropes. Thus, Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘We carried him along on a vessel of planks and *Dussur* (ropes)’ (*al-Qamar*: 13).

The course of the vessel of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was drawn according to Allah’s Will. Science had not yet been advanced to the extent where it was possible for human beings to make a huge vessel that the Quran foretold of in Allah’s saying: ‘His are the moving ships that float, high as mountains, on the sea’ (*ar-Rahman*: 24).

This verse shows the miraculous power of the Quran to foretell human’s inventions. The Quran knows everything; not only things that will be coercive matters but also new things chosen by human beings. Allah says: ‘... You see the ships cutting through its waves...’ (*an-Nahl*: 14). The front part of the ship has something sharp, like the head of a spear, that cuts through the water with a ripple.

In this verse, Allah favours His slaves with three things; catching fish, extracting ornaments and the ships travelling on the seas. Afterwards, He informs

them of other new bounties that can come into existence, as He says: ‘... So that you may go in search of His bounty...’ (*an-Nahl*: 14). The man finds pleasure on seeing the huge vessel that splits the gentle water, in addition to its function in carrying people from one place to another.

Allah concludes the verse by saying: ‘... And give thanks’ (*an-Nahl*: 14). This is only said when a blessing is perceptible that deserve gratitude from a normal person. Allah leaves human beings to choose to be grateful for these blessings, rather than coercing them to do so.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالْقَىٰ فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَن تَمِيدَ بِكُمْ وَأَنْهَارًا وَسُبُلًا لَّعَلَّكُمْ تَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

He has made mountains stand firm on the earth, to prevent it shaking under you, and rivers and paths so that you may find your way [15] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 15)

Hence, Allah shows that the earth was created in phases, as per His saying: ‘Say, “How can you disregard the One who created the earth in two Days? How can you set up other gods as His equals? He is the Lord of all the worlds!” [9] He placed solid mountains on it, blessed it, measured out its varied provisions for all who seek them—all in four Days [10]’ (*Fussilat*: 9-10).

The general mass of the earth was created first, in a state of motion; thus, this motion keeps the earth swinging right and left and prevents it from being stable. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* created solid mountains on the earth in order to make it firm and settled. Because of the motion of the earth, Allah has created the mountains to be like firm pegs for it. In another verse, Allah says: ‘You will see the mountains and think they are firmly fixed, but they will float away like clouds...’ (*an-Naml*: 88). The words ‘... He has made...’ indicates that the mountains are something solid that has been placed in order to be firm and stable. Then He conjoins to the mountains: ‘... And rivers and paths’ (*an-Nahl*: 15). Allah does not mention an action for rivers, and it is amazing that the Quranic style joins the inanimate nature of the mountains with the fluidity of the rivers, and paths, i.e. roads. All of this is made so that people might find their way: ‘... So that you may find your way’ (*an-Nahl*: 15). It

is acknowledged that the Arabs used the mountains as landmarks to find their way. For example, the mountain of Tawbad and that of Harsha were considered guiding landmarks, as the poet said:

Take guide of any side of Harsha Mountain

As each flank is a guiding landmark lane

As Allah says: ‘We called to him from the right-hand side of the mountain’ (*Maryam*: 52); thus, among the marginal tasks of the mountains is that they are used as guiding landmarks to roads and places, Or else, they are also created to learn people lessons and guide them to the Path of Allah *the Almighty* Who created these mountains for their benefit, as He says: ‘... So that you may find your way’ (*an-Nahl*: 15). Allah says afterwards:

وَعَلَّمَكُمُ الْوَيْلَ وَالْجَمِ هُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

**And landmarks and stars to guide people [16]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 16)**

The verse means that Allah’s creations are signs that show the necessity of looking at their benefits; thus, you will be guided to believe in Allah who brings all these things into existence for your benefit. The aforementioned signs; mountains, rivers or paths, are found on earth.

In this verse, Allah mentions an additional sign that is found in the sky; i.e. the stars. It is recognisable that everyone travelling on the sea is only guided by the stars. Allah *the Exalted* mentions them as a distinct subjugation; He did not include them amongst other numerous ones because there is a star that leads to another one, and there are stars whose light has not reached earth yet. Thus, people get benefit from their effects via other stars. The people of Quraysh had two journeys in the year, one in the winter and another in the summer. They travelled along different routes and were guided on their way by the stars. Thus, they should have had some knowledge regarding the positions of the stars.

As Allah says: ‘... And stars that they are guided by’ (*an-Nahl*: 16). Allah uses this linguistic style preferably than others that can also convey the

meaning but are less effective; such as 'They are guided by the stars' and 'By the stars they are guided'. Whereas, Allah's used style: '... And stars that they are guided by' (*an-Nahl*: 16) confirms that the people of Quraysh had knowledge regarding the positions of the stars because they made two journeys every year and no one else had this knowledge.

The pronoun 'they' is mentioned to stress two specific points; the first is that they were guided by the stars and nothing else. The second is that the people of Quraysh were exclusively guided by the stars while no other tribe was able to be guided by them.

Allah says after that:

﴿١٧﴾ أَفَمَن يَخْلُقُ كَمَن لَا يَخْلُقُ أَفَلَا تَذَكَّرُونَ

Can He who creates be compared to one who cannot create?

Why do you not take heed? [17] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 17)

The speech that the speaker conveys to the listener takes on various forms; he may use the informative style, such as: 'Whoever does not create is not like the One Who creates.' This informative speech may perhaps be admitted or not. However, when the speaker wants the listener to affirm his speech and wants him to express his admittance, he asks him an affirmative-form question. Thus, the listener has no choice but to definitely confirm the objective of the speaker.

The people of Quraysh used to worship idols and set them up as deities, despite those idols did not speak or send down a Message to be followed. Allah *the Almighty* states their alleged words: '... "We only worship them because they bring us nearer to Allah"...' (*az-Zumar*: 3). The key question is: why, then, do they not worship Allah directly without any intermediary? Why do they not relieve themselves of the burden of worshipping others and turn to Allah directly?

The crucial brought up question is: what is worship? Worship means obedience in commands and prohibitions issued by the worshipped. Of course, there are no commands or legal responsibilities given by the idols for their worshipper. The idols are worshipped without having a Message, a

punishment for those who contravene or a reward for those who obeys. Thus, they are not apt to be worshipped.

This issue can be tackled from another perspective that Allah demonstrates that He is the One Who created the heavens, the earth, the night, the day, the sun, and the moon. Furthermore, He has subjugated all these beings to serve man whom He entrusted to be Allah's vicegerent on earth.

None of these creations has been claimed by anyone other than Allah. Indeed, if the disbelievers and idol-worshippers have been asked who created them they would answer 'Allah'. Allah says: 'If you [Prophet] ask them who created them they are sure to say, "Allah"...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87). No one has dared to claim the process of creating and bringing into existence, since he is not the originator. On being asked, 'Who created the heavens and the earth?' they would answer, 'Indeed, He is Allah'. Moreover, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed them that Allah is the One Who created the heavens and the earth and that His way of managing the universe starts with worshipping Him. As long as Allah has made this undisputable claim and no one has refuted Him; thus, the claim is affirmed until someone objects, and no one has ever been found.

In the verse under discussion, there is wisdom in sentence formulation. This verse was sent down to the people, who were worshipping the idols as if they were Allah; who imagined that Allah was created just like these idols. Thus, this appropriate saying came down. Allah *the Exalted* totally refutes this whim; thus, He clarifies that the worshipped idols are made by their own hands according to their imagination and abilities from a material substance; i.e. from stones. In this case, the worshipped idol is inferior than and subordinate to the worshipper; additionally, these idols are incapable of harming or benefitting their worshippers.

Accordingly, why do they call on Allah when they are afflicted with any harm? Indeed, man calls on Allah in the state of detriment, because at that moment he would not dare to deceive himself. As for the deities being made and worshipped, they do not hear their supplication: 'If you call them they cannot hear you; if they could hear, they could not answer you; on the Day of Resurrection they will disown your idolatry. None can inform you [Prophet]

like the One who is all aware' (*Fatir*: 14). Consequently, how can they liken those who do not create to Allah who does? Indeed, they should think, contemplate, and use their intellects in their benefit. Allah says after that:

وَلِإِنْ تَعُدُّوا نِعْمَةَ اللَّهِ لَا تُحْصُوهَا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾

**If you tried to count God's blessings, you could never take
them all in: He is truly most forgiving and most merciful [18]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 18)**

This verse was previously mentioned in the chapter of Ibrahim (Abraham). Allah says there: 'And given you some of everything you asked Him for. If you tried to count Allah's favours you could never calculate them: man is truly unjust and ungrateful' (*Ibrahim*: 34).

Both verses tackle those who stubbornly denied Allah, the Divine Creator, the Lord of all existence and the Supplier of rights. Thus, Allah explains for people that if they try to count His blessings, they could not be enumerated. This is because the countable items should be individually separable objects. However, the blessing comprises infinite others; furthermore, they are all gathered together. Or else, Allah *the Almighty* has bestowed only one blessing that can be broken down into several others.

Allah concludes the verse by saying: '... He is truly most forgiving and most merciful' (*an-Nahl*: 18). Despite their disbelief, He will give them more blessings from the anchor of mercy. Oppression and disbelief are results of people's deeds, whereas, Allah brings forgiveness and mercy.

The conclusion of this verse resembles that of the verse of within the chapter of *Ibrahim* where Allah says: '... Man is truly unjust and ungrateful' (*Ibrahim*: 34). Allah *Glorified is He* is much forgiving of people's stubborn rejection and disavowal of His favour. He is also the Dispenser of mercy, for He continues to bestow blessings upon people even though they are oppressors and disbelievers.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُسْرُوبُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

**He knows what you conceal and what you reveal [19]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 19)**

A secret – as we know – is what is hidden within yourself, or what you confide to someone else and then ask them not to tell anyone. The True Lord *Glorified is He* knows one's secrets and what is beyond. He says: 'He knows [even] the secret [thoughts of man] as well as all that is yet more hidden [within him].' (*Ta Ha*: 7) He knows what we hide within ourselves and He knows what can be a secret before we keep it a secret. He *Glorified is He* does not only know what is secret but He also knows what is open.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَالَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

**Those they invoke beside God create nothing; they are
themselves created [20] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 20)**

They are not able to create anything. Rather, they are created, and the idols, as we said before, are of a lesser rank than those who create them. How can that which is worshipped be of a lesser rank than the worshipper? This exposes the foolishness of their worship. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, as expressed by Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when he destroyed the idols and his people asked him, 'Who did this to our gods?' He responded: 'No, it was this one, the biggest of them' (*al-Anbiya*: 63) They said to him, 'The biggest is only an idol and you know that it cannot do anything.' We find the Quran saying to people like this, 'Do you worship something that you [yourselves] have carved' (*as-Saffat*: 95) These gods, therefore, do not create but rather are created. However, Allah is the Creator of everything and He says: 'O people, an example is presented, so listen to it. Indeed, those you invoke besides Allah will never create [as much as] a fly, even if they gathered together for that purpose. And if the fly should steal away from them a [tiny] thing, they could not recover it from him. Weak are the pursuer and pursued'. (*al-Hajj*: 73) After that the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the attributes of these idols:

أَمْوَاتٌ غَيْرُ أَحْيَاءٍ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

They are dead, not living. They do not know when they will be raised up [21] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 21)

They are in fact dead because they have no sense and no motion. His statement: 'not alive' means that they did not have life beforehand. Life cannot be affirmed for them in the past, the present, or the future. They do not create anything, but rather, they are created by means of you carving them. These idols and statues will not have life in the Hereafter. Instead, they will be fuel for the Fire. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '[The angels will be ordered], Gather those who committed wrong, their kinds, and what they used to worship.' (*as-Saffat*: 22) Of course, these idols will never be aware of the resurrection of those who worshipped them. After that the True Lord *Glorified is He* settles this creedal issue by saying:

إِلَهُكُمْ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَالَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ قُلُوبُهُمْ مُنْكَرَةٌ وَهُمْ مُسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

Your God is the One God. As for those who deny the life to come, their hearts refuse to admit the truth and they are arrogant [22] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 22)

The True Lord's statement: 'Your god is one God,' declares it impossible for there to be anyone besides Him that are like Him. Some people imagine that it is equal to the word 'single'. I say that the word 'single' means that He is not made up of constituent parts as He is transcendent above being repeated or partitioned.

In this statement, the believers are given confidence that they have reached the peak of understanding and believing that Allah is one.

Or, He is making it clear to the disbelievers that He is One to spite them, and you will return to Him by force. With this statement the True Lord *Glorified is He* reveals the natural disposition found within the human soul which bears witness in the atomic world that Allah is One, He has no partner and that the Standing and the Resurrection are true. However, those who do not believe in Allah and the Hereafter are the ones who veil their natural disposition from themselves. The word disbelief, as we explained previously, is a veil that necessitates something being veiled, and it veils the faith of one's original natural disposition.

Those who deny the Hereafter are only forbidding themselves from imagining what will inevitably happen which is the reckoning that will bestow reward and blessings as a recompense for good deeds, and perhaps their evil deeds are few in number; and the True Lord *Glorified is He* will overlook them, thus entering Paradise.

Those who transgress against themselves hope that the matter of religion is a lie because they want to distance themselves from having to imagine the reckoning and they hope that there is not a reckoning. The True Lord *Glorified is He* describes them: ‘their hearts are disapproving, and they are arrogant’. They are not content with merely denying the Hereafter. Rather, they are arrogant and haughty without any right to be so.

The word *arrogant* means that they set themselves up as great without possessing the essential qualities of greatness. This is because someone who is great must innately have the essential qualities of greatness, and he must guarantee for himself that these essential qualities will always remain within him.

But we, human beings, are subject to changing circumstances, and thus it is not right for us to be arrogant; one of us may become sick, or he may be deprived of his wealth and rank. Thus, the attributes and perfections of greatness are not essential to any one of us. They may be stripped from whomever Allah has blessed them with. It becomes befitting for each one of us to be modest, remember our Lord and have humility before our Creator.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* alone is worthy of having pride. He *Glorified is He* is the One whose attributes and essential qualities are of the utmost perfection, and He will never be deprived of them.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يُسْرُوبُونَ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْتَكْبِرِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

There is no doubt that God knows what they conceal and what they reveal. He does not love the arrogant [23]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 23)

When you see ‘assuredly’, the meaning is that whatever comes after it is an established truth.

Some of the scholars have said that the True Lord's statement 'Assuredly' carries the meaning of inevitability, and this means that the True Lord's statement: 'Assuredly, Allah knows what they conceal and what they declare' means that it is inevitable that Allah knows all that they keep secret as well as all that they bring into the open, and it is unavoidable that those who disbelieve will lose. The scholars have analysed this term in order to arrive at its most subtle secrets. Allah's knowledge does not only apply to that which is brought into the open. It also applies to that which is kept secret. This is because He will take them to account for all of their actions. The True Lord *Glorified is He* finishes the verse by saying: 'Indeed, He does not like the arrogant.'

If we ask, 'What is the connection between Allah's knowledge and punishment?' We say, 'did not they say amongst themselves: "Why does not Allah punish us for what we are saying?"' (*al-Mujadala*: 8)

Whenever the True Lord's statement came down to inform them of what they had said amongst themselves, it was a proof that one conveying to them is truthful in what he conveys from Allah. Despite that they were given to arrogance, they stubbornly rejected, denied and they were overwhelmed in sin. In their arrogance, they wanted to flee from adhering to the way that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had brought.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ مَآذًا أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ

**When they are asked, 'What has your Lord sent down?'
they say, 'Ancient fables' [24] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 24)**

In the True Lord's statement: 'And when it is said to them,' He makes the reprisal clear on the tongue of the speaker; so that they know that they have a Lord. If they did not believe in a Lord they would declare as such, but out of their heedlessness they objected to what was sent down, not to the fact that they have a Lord. This is proof that they believe in a Lord and Creator, but they object to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and what has been sent down to him from Allah.

And: 'Fables of the former peoples' 'Fables' are lies. If they had been true to themselves, they would not have affirmed the existence of Allah, and they would have also rejected the statement that was sent down to them. Amongst them are those who said: 'And they say, "Fables of ancient times which he has caused to be written down, so that they might be read out to him at morn and evening!"' (*al-Furqan*: 5)

However, there is another side that has a different position which will be explained shortly. They are the opposite side to these people and the True Lord *Glorified is He* said of them: 'But [when] those who are conscious of Allah are asked, "What is it that your Lord has bestowed from on high?" They answer, "Goodness" For those who do good in this world; and the home of the Hereafter is better. And how excellent is the home of the righteous.' (*an-Nahl*: 30)

There is a story that clarifies the aspects of difference between the believing party and the disbelieving party. When the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called on his people and his clan to have faith in Allah, the One, Who sent down to him a way in an inimitable book, news of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* began to spread amongst the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula. Each tribe sent a delegation to become familiar with and investigate the issue of this Messenger. However, the disbelievers of Quraysh wanted to bar others from Allah's path. They split themselves up amongst the four entrances to Mecca, and when someone from one of the tribes' delegations asked: 'What has your Lord said, who has sent a messenger to you?' The disbelievers who received them would say: 'He is a false messenger. He makes up lies and he is ungrateful.' Obviously, the objective of the disbelievers was to bar the delegations of the tribes.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* informs His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* of what happened. When it is said to those standing at the gates of Mecca by the delegations that have come to examine the news of the Messenger: 'What has your Lord sent down?' They respond: 'He is repeating the fables of ancient times'.

This sole response from those standing at the four gates of Mecca shows that they had agreed upon a response that had been prepared beforehand. With this, they wanted to turn away the tribes' delegations from listening to

the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and they likened the reminder that had been sent down from Allah to the stories that used to be related to them – for example – by An-Nadar ibn Al-Harith, whose stories of the ancients were similar to the stories of ‘Antara and the stories of Abu Zayd Al-Hilsli, which are told in our villages. This was their initial position in the dispute.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* comments on this statement of theirs:

لِيَحْمِلُوا أَوْزَارَهُمْ كَامِلَةً يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَمِنْ أَوْزَارِ الَّذِينَ
يُضِلُّونَهُمْ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ إِلَّا سَاءَ مَا يَزُرُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

On the Day of Resurrection they will bear the full weight of their own burden, as well as some of the burden of those they misled with no true knowledge. How terrible their burden will be! [25] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 25)

Look at His statement: ‘That they may bear their own burdens in full.’ This is so that you can see how the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear that the human soul has various states. If the human soul transgresses against itself in these aspects then it may transgress in moral aspects, social aspects, and other aspects, and thus it takes on the burdens of everything it does.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear that the human soul that perpetrates sins when it misguides another soul will only bear the burden of the sins perpetrated afterwards of the soul that it misguided. He says: ‘and some of the burdens of those whom they misguide without knowledge.’ This is because the soul that has been misguided may commit sins irrelevant to the aspect at which they were misguided.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is Most Just, such that even the person who leads others astray does not bear the burden of the sins of which he is not the cause. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says here: ‘and some of the burdens of those whom they misguide without knowledge.’ The one who misguides others bears the burden of his own sins and also some of the burden of those whom he led astray, and these are the sins that resulted from being led astray.

As for the sins and evil deeds that they committed themselves without being prompted by those who misguided them, they alone will bear the consequences. In this way, every person bears the burden of sins that he commits.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* settled this matter when He said, 'By Him in Whose Hand my life is, whoever takes anything illegally will bring it on the Day of Resurrection by carrying it over his neck: if it is a camel, it will be grunting; if it is a cow, it will be mooing; and if it is a sheep it will be bleating!'⁽¹⁾

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'some of the burdens of those whom they misguide without knowledge,' He is only alerting us to the need of not letting this life distract us from the most important issue that preoccupies the mind of the creation, which is to seek out the Creator Who has ennobled the creation and prepared the universe to receive them.

It was obligatory upon these people who had heard from the disbelievers of Quraysh to seek out the Messenger and to hear from him; as they were unlettered and no messenger had come to them previously. The True Lord *Glorified is He* said about them: 'And among them are unlettered ones who do not know the Scripture except in wishful thinking, but they are only assuming.' (*al-Baqara*: 78)

Thus, if a messenger comes to them, then they must seek him out, and they must hear from him directly, not via the disbelievers. This is why Allah will punish them because they neglected the issue of religion. However, the severe punishment will be for those who had knowledge of writing.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'So woe to those who write the "scripture" with their own hands, then say, "This is from Allah," in order to exchange it for a small price.' (*al-Baqara*: 79) The True Lord *Glorified is He* describes those who bear their own burdens and some of the burdens of those whom they led astray: 'Unquestionably, evil is that which they bear.' How evil are the sins that they bear? They were not content with their own burdens. Rather, they barred others from Allah's path and prevented them from

(1) *Related by Muslim in his (Sahih) (1832) and Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) (7597) from the Hadith of Abu Hamid As-Sa'adi*

listening to faith. As a result, these people deemed some of what Allah had forbidden to be lawful, and those who barred them from Allah's path bear the burden of leading them astray.

Therefore, we find Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'The evilest of you is the one who sells his religion for the sake of this life, and even more evil than him is the one who sells his religion for someone else's life in this world.'⁽¹⁾ If someone sells their religion, then let them enjoy themselves for a while, they deserve punishment. Whoever sells their religion so that someone else can enjoy it will receive an even greater punishment from Allah.

He *Glorified is He* says after that:

قَدْ مَكَرَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَأَتَى اللَّهَ بُنْيَانُهُمْ مِنَ الْقَوَاعِدِ فَخَرَّ عَلَيْهِمُ
السَّقْفُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَأَتَاهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Those who went before them also schemed, but God attacked the very foundations of what they built. The roof fell down on them: punishment came on them from unimagined directions [26] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 26)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the stories of those who lived before and the standard practices that Allah *Glorified is He* carried out against them in order to give His Messenger solace. He makes it clear that what has happened to him is nothing new. Rather, the same happened to every other Messenger. He informs him that He did not send any messenger until after tribulation had become widespread and corruption was overflowing, and humanity had lost the power of resistance that faith had given them as a result of the loss of those who believe, do righteous actions, and advise one another in truth and patience.

A clear example of this is what happened to the children of Israel, about whom the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: 'They used not to prevent one another

(1) Related by Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (118) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra *peace and blessings be upon him*.

from wrongdoing that they did.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 79) Allah’s punishment was directed at them, and this is the outcome of every nation in which the people do not prevent one another from the wrongdoings taking place in front of them.

He *Glorified is He* says here: ‘Those before them had already plotted.’ To plot means to secretly devise something hid it from the one who is plotted against. However, when one of the Messengers is plotted against, they are plotting against someone who is assisted by Allah, the Omniscient, the All Knowing.

Whenever Allah informed His Messenger of the plot, He would render the effects of this scheming to be null and void. The One Who informed him is the One Who is able to nullify it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah has thus ordained: “I shall most certainly prevail, I and My messengers!”’ (*al-Mujadala*: 21) He also says: ‘for, long ago has Our word gone forth unto Our servants, the message-bearers; that, verily, they – they indeed – would be victorious.’ (*as-Saffat*: 171-172)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* applied this to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When the disbelievers of Quraysh plotted against Him and gathered the youth of the tribes to kill him, Allah veiled them and they did not see him setting out for the migration. The camp of disbelief was unable to gain victory over him by any means; neither the aggressions of the tongue nor the aggressions of the limbs. These people who plotted against the Messengers were not left alone by the True Lord *Glorified is He* without any punishment. ‘But Allah came at their building from the foundations.’ They made their plot to be like a tall building. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* left them with a false sense of security and it opened up from beneath them and fell in upon them from above. This is how the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives an abstract example with something that is perceptible.

In the True Lord’s statement: ‘so the roof fell upon them from above them,’ He makes it clear that they are inside this structure and the roof is above them in this case, and Allah willed for it to come upon them from above: ‘and the punishment came to them from where they did not perceive’ This is how Allah’s punishment came about suddenly. This is because they plotted and they thought that this plotting was secret and hidden from the Ever-Living, the All-Sustaining.

If only the matter was restricted to this; no, rather, Allah will punish them in the Hereafter as well:

ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يُخْزِيهِمْ وَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَاءِ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تُشْفِقُونَ فِيهِمْ
قَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ إِنَّ الْخِزْيَ الْيَوْمَ وَالسُّوءَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

In the end, on the Day of Resurrection, He will shame them, saying, ‘Where are these “partners” of Mine on whose account you opposed [Me]?’ Those given knowledge will say, ‘Shame and misery on the disbelievers today!’ [27] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 27)

This is how the punishment will be in this life and the Hereafter. They will suffer disgrace on the Day of Resurrection. Disgrace is humiliation. It is more severe than beating and physical harm. No one can bear it. It is that trembling that envelops the entire body, and no one who is afflicted with it ever escapes it.

Many may be able to suppress pain, but disgrace is an inner feeling which is outwardly apparent. No one is able to suppress its effects because it is killing the nucleus of false pride that the one who plotted and schemed lived in. The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes this clear in His statement about the village that received sustenance from Allah and then showed ingratitude to Allah’s blessings. He says: ‘And Allah presents an example: a city which was safe and secure, its provision coming to it in abundance from every location, but it denied the favours of Allah. So Allah made it taste the envelopment of hunger and fear for what they had been doing’ (*an-Nahl*: 112). It is as if the body comes to possess the sense of taste and it is as if hunger has become a garment; the one wearing it suffers from it. The back of his head feels hungry. His face feels hungry. His arms, skin, and feet all feel hungry, and everything that they contain.

When this disgrace happens, all the feelings of false pride come to an end, and especially for the person who claimed his arrogance, presumption, and snobbery were everlasting and self-sufficient.

He *Glorified is He* continues with a challenge: ‘Where are My “partners” for whom you used to oppose [the believers]?’ Where are these partners that you were worshipping? The phrase “for whom you used to oppose [the

believers]” means that you have made the believers and those with the Messenger to be a party that you oppose. You have taken the side of falsehood and you have abandoned the side of truth. Here, the people whom Allah *Glorified is He* has given knowledge say: ‘Indeed disgrace, this Day, and evil are upon the disbelievers.’

It is as if the matter will become an assembly with the presence of the True Lord *Glorified is He* between those who plotted against Allah’s Messenger and those whom Allah gave knowledge will also be present.

Knowledge, as we know, comes from Allah directly. Then it is transmitted to the angels, to the Messengers and then from them to their respective nations.

Just as this life has borne witness to the fall of various ways that people have followed out of their personal desires, and the fall of those who worshipped them besides Allah, the Last Day will bear witness to the disgrace and calamity that will engulf them. The disgrace could be from the horror of the great standing, and Allah will protect those who believed in Him with tranquillity.

We know that the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He* said, ‘Have I not conveyed? O Allah, bear witness!’⁽¹⁾

Just as the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed to his nation and they responded to him; he also asked them to be an extension of his Message and to convey it to mankind. This is because the True Lord *Glorified is He* has prevented the possibility of there being any messages after the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It then became the responsibility of Muhammad’s nation to convey to whomever has not received the Message. He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘May Allah make the person who hears from me and spreads it, and conveys it to whoever has not heard it, shine. And perhaps the one who conveys is more aware than the one who hears’.⁽²⁾

(1) *This statement is found in several Hadiths, such as the Hadith of ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud which has been related by Muslim in His (Sahih) (378). He said, ‘The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him addressed while leaning his back on the dome of Adam peace be upon him. Then he said, ‘Indeed, only a soul that has believed will enter Paradise. O Allah! Have I conveyed? O Allah, bear witness!’*

(2) *Related by Ahmad in his (Musnad) (1/438), At-Tirmidhi in his (Sunnan) (2658, 2657), Ibn Majah in his (Sunnan) (232), Al-Humaydi (1/47) from the Hadith of ‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud.*

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who says: ‘So how [will it be] when We bring from every nation a witness and we bring you, [O Muhammad] against these [people] as a witness? That Day, those who disbelieved and disobeyed the Messenger will wish they could be covered by the earth. And they will not conceal from Allah a [single] statement’. (*an-Nisa*: 41-42) They wish to become dust, as He *Glorified is He* said in another place: ‘Indeed, We have warned you of a near punishment on the Day when a man will observe what his hands have put forth and the disbeliever will say, "Oh, I wish that I were dust!"’ (*an-Naba*: 40)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says after that:

الَّذِينَ تَتَوَفَّيْهُمْ الْمَلَائِكَةُ ظَالِمِي أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَأَلْقَوْا السَّلَ مَا كُنَّا نَعْمَلُ
 مِنْ سُوءٍ بَلَىٰ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

**Those whose lives the angels take while they are wronging themselves will show submission: ‘We were doing no evil.’
 ‘Yes you were: God knows fully everything that you have done [28] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 28)**

He *Glorified is He* says: ‘The ones whom the angels take in death [while] wronging (i.e. oppressing) themselves.’ They gathered them in death while they were in a state of sinning against themselves. In another verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: ‘and no wrong did we do to them, but it was they who persistently wronged themselves.’ (*an-Nahl*: 118)

It is known that man may oppress someone else for his own personal gain and benefit, so how can he oppress himself? This is what they call foolish oppression; when you oppress your own soul. But how can this be? We know that if the enemy is external, it is easy to resist him, as opposed to when it comes from your soul. This enemy is dangerous and difficult to resist. Here, we raise a question: what is oppression? It is to deny someone his right. Therefore, what can you do to your soul such that it can be said that you oppressed it by denying it its right? We say, ‘when you are hungry, do you not eat? When you are thirsty, do you not drink? When you are exhausted from your work, do you not sleep?’ Therefore, you give your soul its

requirements which please it and you hasten to do so. Likewise, when you sleep and they try to wake you up for work, you do not wake up, or they try to wake you up for prayer and you are sluggish. In the end, the result is failure at work or loss in trade, etc. This is an accumulated loss, and the loser is the soul. By depriving the soul of certain benefits in this life, man oppresses his soul. Compare this to the matters of the Hereafter.

Look here at the particulars of this life when they are fulfilled for you. Do they end? Or do they end and something else begins? It is the latter indeed. We ask regarding this thing that will begin; is it a repeated image of what came to an end? It is not so because the end in this life is intermittent, and I have taken my portion of it according to my abilities, and my abilities have limited capacities. As for that which will begin (i.e. in the Hereafter), it has no end. It is eternal and will never be cut off, and all the blessings that it contains come about according to the capacities of the Bestower of Blessings; your Lord *Glorified is He*. Therefore, when you give your soul a gratification in this life, which is ceasing and intermittent, you cause it to lose out on the eternal gratification in the Hereafter. This is the end of oppressing the soul.

We return to Allah's statement: 'The ones whom the angels take in death.' This verse affirms causing death for the angels. In reality, causing death belongs to Allah *Glorified is He* as we find in His statement: 'It is Allah [alone that has this power – He] who causes all human beings to die' (*az-Zumar*: 42). However, as long as angels are commanded, then it is as if Allah is the One Who causes human beings to die even though He *Glorified is He* did say: 'It is Allah [alone that has this power – He] who causes all human beings to die'. He also said: 'Say, "The angel of death will take you who has been entrusted with you." Then to your Lord you will be returned.' (*as-Sajda*: 11) Therefore, the causing comes from Allah *Glorified is He* at one time, from the chief of the angels at another time and from his helpers amongst the angles at another time. The matter is either applied directly, or via an intermediary, or from the source of the matter.

'And [who] then offer submission, [saying], "We were not doing any evil." They will humble themselves and surrender, and their arrogance and haughtiness will no longer benefit them as it did in this life. All of this will have left them along with this life which will have departed in front of them.

As long as they are offering their submission now, then it means that they were at war beforehand. They were at war with their own souls and they are people who committed wrongdoing against themselves. It is as if the verse is saying, 'They have raised the white flag and said, "We can no longer endure the war."'”

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '[saying], "We were not doing any evil"'. This is similar to His statement in another verse: 'Then there will be no [excuse upon] examination except they will say, "By Allah, our Lord, we were not those who associated."' (al-An'am: 23) The reality is that after offering their submission and raising the white flag, they are then faced with punishment. Thus, they say, in an attempt to defend themselves: 'We were not doing any evil.' It is astonishing that these people are lying in this situation. Who are they lying to now? The True Lord *Glorified is He* responds to them: 'But, yes! Indeed, Allah is Knowing of what you used to do' It is from Allah's mercy that He is not content with only knowledge. Rather, He records and writes down everything in a book which will be presented to them on the Day of Resurrection, as He *Glorified is He* said: 'And sufficient are We as accountant.' (al-Anbiya': 47) He also said: 'And [for] every person We have imposed his fate upon his neck, and We will produce for him on the Day of Resurrection a record which he will encounter spread open. [It will be said], "Read your record. Sufficient is yourself against you this Day as accountant."' (al-Isra': 13-14)

Some people are happy to negate the possibility of actions being recorded and written down, and we say to these people: Look at what the human intellect has achieved today in terms of recording pictures, sounds, prints and other things. All of these should make it easy for us to move on from the capabilities of the human intellect and look at Allah's capabilities, which are unlimited. There is no basis for denying the power of the angels, as 'watchers' and 'ever-present'⁽¹⁾, to record deeds in a book that preserves them and counts every major and minor action.

Then He *Glorified is He* says:

(1) He *Glorified is He* says: 'When the two receivers receive, seated on the right and on the left. Man does not utter any word except that with him is an observer prepared [to record].' (Qaf: 17-18)

فَادْخُلُوا أَبْوَابَ جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا فَبِئْسَ مَثْوًى الْمُتَكَبِّرِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

So enter the gates of Hell. There you will remain – the home of the arrogant is evil indeed [29] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 29)

We previously stated, while commenting on His *Glorified is He* statement which describes Hell: ‘with seven gates leading into it, each gate receiving its allotted share of sinners.’ (*al-Hijr*: 44) Every group from the disobedient will have a specified gate. There will be the gate of usury, the gate of bribery, the gate of hypocrisy, and so forth. It is left to you to imagine what suffering will happen to the person who has committed all these acts of disobedience. Indeed, he will enter through this gate and then come out again in order to go through another gate. How truly miserable will these people be! Here: ‘enter the gates of Hell.’ This is also in the form of a plural. Therefore, each one of you will enter from the gate that has been specified for you.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘how wretched is the residence of the arrogant’ This arrogance of theirs is not essential because the one who truly deserves to be proud is he who has it essentially which cannot be taken away from him. Someone who is proud of something that they do not possess has a false sense of pride. How quickly are these people deprived of what they are boasting of in this life and then made contemptible. It is not appropriate for anyone to be proud because true pride belongs to Allah *Glorified is He*. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَقِيلَ لِلَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا مَاذَا أَنْزَلَ رَبُّكُمْ قَالُوا خَيْرٌ لِلَّذِينَ أَحْسَنُوا فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةٌ وَلَدَارُ الْآخِرَةِ خَيْرٌ وَلَنِعْمَ دَارُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

But when the righteous are asked, ‘What has your Lord sent down?’ they will say, ‘All that is good.’ There is a reward in this present world for those who do good, but their home in the Here- after is far better: the home of the righteous is excellent [30] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 30)

We previously talked about His statement: ‘And when it is said to them, "What has your Lord sent down?" They say, "Fables of the former peoples.”’

(*an-Nahl*: 24) These acts and scenes clarify the position that ended with them professing they were disbelievers.

This verse was sent down regarding the group that was entering Mecca. At its gates, from which the people of the countryside came, the disbelievers divided themselves up in order to bar those entering from hearing the news of the people who believe in the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

The Muslims waited for their opportunity and went out to the hills surrounding Mecca under the pretence of grazing their sheep, for example, in order to meet these questioners and give them news of the Prophet and his call.⁽¹⁾ This shows that the one asking about something should not be content with the first passer-by that he asks. Rather, he should continue asking until he finds a contrasting view. When they asked the disbelievers, they said, "They say, 'Fables of the former peoples.'" But they were not satisfied with this, so they asked the people of faith and their answer was: 'Goodness!' (*an-Nahl*: 30) This is so we can understand that when man comes across something that has two opposing sides, he should not be satisfied with just one side. Rather, he must listen to the opposing side and then use his intellect to choose between the two. We notice here in 'And it will be said to those who feared Allah' that the True Lord does not explain to us who they are, and He does not let us know their identity. This shows us that they were unable to meet face to face. They were making themselves discreet because they were still weak and unable to meet face to face. This position is repeated – this position of asking until one arrives at the correct viewpoint – when the True Lord *Glorified is He* censured one of His Prophets, Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* in His statement: 'And has there come to you the news of the adversaries, when they climbed over the wall of [his] prayer chamber. When they entered upon Dawud and he was alarmed by them? They said, "Fear not. [We are] two adversaries, one of whom has wronged the other, so judge between us with truth and do not exceed [it] and guide us to the sound path. Indeed this, my brother, has ninety-nine ewes (Female sheep), and I have one ewe; so he said, 'Entrust her to me,' and he overpowered me in speech.'" (*Sad*: 21-23) What did Dawud

(1) Mentioned by *Al-Qurtubi* in his (*Tafsir*) (5/2824) and *As-Suyuti* in (*Ad-Durr al-Manthur*) (5/125).

peace be upon him say? ‘He has certainly wronged you in demanding your ewe [in addition] to his ewes’ (*Sad*: 24). It is clear in the judgement of Dawud *peace be upon him* that he was influenced by the statement ‘he has ninety-nine ewes’. Let us suppose that he did not have anything. Would he be oppressing his brother by taking one ewe? Therefore Dawud *peace be upon him* was influenced by the claims of the opponent, as he inserted another context. This is a procedural error in presenting the case because these ninety-nine ewes have nothing to do with the case. Rather, it is a means of currying favour with the judge and playing on his emotions by stating that the opponent is wealthy and despite that he is greedy and oppressive.

Dawud *peace be upon him* realised his mistake in judgment immediately, and that it was a test and trial from Allah: ‘And David became certain that We had tried him.’ (*Sad*: 24) We tested him in order to teach him the lesson in a practical way. Would he judge in truth and consider all sides of the case, or would he not? Look here at the intelligence of prophethood. Look how quickly Dawud *peace be upon him* realised and acknowledged what had happened to him. He asked his Lord for forgiveness, fell down in prostration, and turned to Him in repentance. He *Glorified is He* said: ‘and he asked forgiveness of his Lord and fell down bowing [in prostration] and turned in repentance [to Allah].’ (*Sad*: 24) Therefore, the testimony here is that it was obligatory for Dawud *peace be upon him* to listen to the second party in this dispute before making a judgment.

In His statement: ‘And it will be said to those who feared Allah, "What did your Lord send down?" They will say, "[That which is] good."' What is ‘good’? It is everything that the soul is fond of in all of its dispositions and faculties, but being fond of something might only be temporary, and then it leads to sorrow and regret. Hence, this is not goodness because there is no good followed by the Fire. Likewise, there is no evil followed by Paradise. We must know that true goodness remains as permanent goodness in this life and likewise in the Hereafter.

If we take the example of a drug addict, we find that he engages in temporary enjoyment and spurious intoxication, which quickly comes to an end. Then, in his view, this goodness quickly becomes immediate evil in this

life and delayed evil in the Hereafter. Therefore, look at the life span of goodness in yourself and how it is and how it will end. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* explains it in His statement: 'For those who do good in this world is good; and the home of the Hereafter is better.' We understand from this verse that it is obligatory for the believer not to abandon this world and its means, for may be the disbeliever will take them and overcome you with them, or he will weaken you in your religion because of them. Whoever worships Allah has more right over His secret in existence, and Allah's secrets in existence are for the believers. It is not appropriate for them to leave the means of this world to the disbelievers.

Strive, o believer, in the means of this life in order to protect yourself from tribulation on behalf of the disbelievers. It is not lost on anyone how much we are in need of others in this day and age such that we have given them the opportunity to take control over our politics and our capabilities. This is why He *Glorified is He* says: 'For those who do good in this world is good.' They take their good deeds and they will be an upper hand for them in what they strive for and what they do in this life. This is how the man benefits himself and benefits others, and whenever your sphere of benefit increases for the sake of mankind, you have the upper hand, and your reward is tied to goodness in the Hereafter. This is why the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'There is no Muslim who plants a plant, or cultivates a crop, and then a bird or person or beast eats from it except that an act of charity is written for him.'⁽¹⁾

This verse also clarifies the other side for us, which is one of the fruits of persevering in doing good in this life and it is security. You will find that whoever lives upright in this life and does not do anything that he can be punished for, will be secure and reassured, such that if he is afflicted with something evil or despicable, he still feels secure without fear. This is because he has not done anything that would invite fear.

Take the example of the thief. You can see that he is always anxious and scared. His eyes keep moving from left to right. If he sees a police officer, he

(1) *Agreed upon. Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) (2330) and Muslim in his (Sahih) (1553) in the chapter of Drinks from the Hadith of Anas ibn Malik may Allah be pleased with him.*

becomes restless, looks around, and then departs telling himself, 'Maybe he is after me!' As for the upright person, he is secure and reassured. One of the fruits of this perseverance in good action and uprightness in this life is that man lives according to his capacities and he does not exhaust himself in what he is incapable of. In the past, they used to say to one of them, 'The meat is expensive.' He would respond, 'Make it cheaper'. They would say, 'How can we do that?' He would again respond, 'Do without it.'

The poet composed this by saying:

If something is too expensive for me, I leave it

Then it will be much cheaper after it was expensive

Do not say that the soul is aspiring for it and desiring it.

In our practical lives, someone may come home from work and no food has been prepared and the table has not been set. He is hungry, so he eats whatever he can find and the problem is solved. The soul is content with what it has obtained. In order for man to live according to his capabilities, he must strike a balance between his income and his expenditure. Whoever is experiencing difficulty with regards to his income, or his outlets of sustenance are being restricted, must restrain himself in what he spends and restrain the desires of his soul. This is how he can live blamelessly and easily, pleased with himself and happy. Some people, when in this kind of situation, resort to asking for loans in order to gratify the desires of their soul. Maybe they will borrow enough money to enjoy themselves for a month, but then live in humiliations for ages. Therefore, it is wise, before asking people for a loan, to ask your soul first. Request that it be patient with you and wait for you until you are in a state of ease. Do not let it make you resort to the humiliation of begging. Before you blame whoever denied you blame your soul which misguided you in the first place. How original is the poet who summarised these values in his statement:

If you intend to ask for a loan in order to spend it

On the desires of the soul in a time of difficulty

Ask your soul to spend out from the treasures of its patience

To be patient with you and wait for a time of ease

If you do that you will be wealthy, and if you refuse

Whoever denies you after that will have every excuse to do so

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'and the home of the Hereafter is better.' Goodness in the Hereafter is from Allah, and the blessings therein are according to the Bestower of Blessings *Glorified is He* without any toil, trouble, or work.

However, if it is said, 'this is better than this', then goodness is abundant in both, except that one has more goodness than the other. This is the meaning of Prophet Muhammad's statement, 'The strong believer is better than the weak believer, and there is goodness in both of them.'⁽¹⁾ This is why when He said: 'For those who do good in this world is good.' (*an-Nahl*: 30) He also said: 'And the home of the Hereafter is better.' The good fortune of this life is good, but the good fortune of the Hereafter is better. The True Lord *Glorified is He* finishes the verse by saying: 'And how excellent is the home of the righteous.' i.e. the abode of the Hereafter.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to give us a brief of illustration of the abode of the Allah-conscious, as a sort of synopsis. He *Glorified is He* said:

جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ يَدْخُلُونَهَا يُجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا
يَشَاءُونَ كَذَلِكَ يَجْزِي اللَّهُ الْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

**They will enter perpetual Gardens graced with flowing streams.
There they will have everything they wish. This is the way God
rewards the righteous [31] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 31)**

Gardens that have trees, flowers, fruits and vegetables, no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and what has not occurred to the heart of any human being. But this is not it. This is paradise in a general sense which everyone who enters it will see. Additionally, everyone will have their own palace, as indicated by His statement: 'And admit you to gardens beneath which rivers

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (2664) in the chapter on Destiny, from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra peace be upon him.

flow and pleasant dwellings in gardens of perpetual residence. That is the great attainment.’ (*as-Saff*: 12)

Therefore, here we have something that is shared by all: ‘Gardens of perpetual residence, which they will enter, beneath which rivers flow.’ The meaning of His statement: ‘Gardens of perpetual residence’ is gardens of permanent residence because they contain everything that man needs. There is no need for anything else. Imagine entering one of the greatest parks and gardens in the world, such as Hyde Park, for example. The most you could do is walk around for some time. Then you would feel tired, bored, and exhausted and you would want to take a break from your walk. As for the Paradise, it is a garden of perpetual bliss and you will love residing there on a permanent basis. The True Lord *Glorified is He* describes these gardens by saying: “beneath which rivers flow.” In another verse He *Glorified is He* says: ‘under which rivers flow’ (*at-Tawba*: 100). The meaning of ‘under which rivers flow’ is that they flow underneath it, and maybe they come from another place. Someone might say, ‘the flowing of these rivers could be cut off from you’. This is why the verse came: ‘beneath which rivers flow.’ They are an essential part of Paradise and no one can cut them off from you. Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘They will have therein whatever they wish.’ ‘Wish’ here is not the same as wish in this life. Rather, it is the desire of a vivid imagination that is appropriate for the Hereafter and its blessings. For example, if you enter upon someone with poor means, then you have a wish that is according to his state. If you enter upon one of the rich and powerful, then you have a wish that is higher, and so forth.

The wish of oneself differs according to what is desired. If is the object of desire is Allah Who is not incapacitated by anything then your desire is absolute. The wish in the verse is not the same as wish in this life because wish in this life is limited by the environment of this life. As for that in the Hereafter, it is unfolded, ascending, and elevated, and in the same way that wishes are elevated from human being to human being according to their ranks and positions.

It is narrated that when one of the daughters of the kings of Persia was taken by a man, and they wanted to pay a ransom to get her back they offered

him whatever he wanted. Thus, he said: 'I want one thousand dinars,' and they gave him one thousand dinars and he accepted it. One of them said to him, 'She is the daughter of a king. You could have asked for anything and he would have given it to you.' He then said: 'By Allah, if I knew any numbers after one thousand, I would have asked for it.' Thus, he had asked for the maximum amount according to his knowledge. This is why, when the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to explain this Quranic passage to us: 'And therein is whatever the souls desire and [what] delights the eyes, and you will abide therein eternally.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 71) He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'It contains what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and what has not occurred to the heart of any human being.'⁽¹⁾

The framework of the verse is defined according to what it contains with their Lord. 'Thus does Allah reward the righteous?' This is the reward that they deserve for what they put forward in this life and forbidden pleasures that they denied themselves. Now the time for reward has come, and is a reward that is longer lasting and more extensive. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* said in another verse: '[They will be told], "Eat and drink in satisfaction for what you put forth in the days past."' (*al-Haqqa*: 24)

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

الَّذِينَ نَوَفَّيْنَاهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةَ طَيِّبِينَ يَقُولُونَ سَلَامٌ
عَلَيْكُمْ ادْخُلُوا الْجَنَّةَ بِمَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٣٢﴾

Those whose lives the angels take in a state of goodness. They will say to them, 'Peace be upon you. Enter the Garden as a reward for what you have done' [32] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 32)

Those who were conscious of Allah are the ones whom the angels gathered in death while in a state of inner purity. The meaning of: 'take in death' is that

(1) Related by Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (2824), Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (2/466), and Abu Na'im in (*Al-Hilya*) (2/262) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him from the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* who said, Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'I have prepared for My righteous servants what no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what has not occurred to the heart of any human being.'

they come to reclaim their souls, and here the angels are in a group, as if they are the soldiers of the original angel of death. His statement: '[being] good and pure' is the opposite of the previous verse: 'The ones whom the angels take in death [while] wronging themselves.' Inner purity is the thing that brings about everlasting goodness that will never be cut off and will never be turned into evil. It is the thing that the soul is pleased with in a way that is harmonious with all of its faculties and dispositions, but on the condition that it continues on to that which is better than it. Nothing continues on to that which is better than it and more excellent except inner purity in values and inner purity in religion. As for what is besides this, it is only temporary and it will quickly vanish.

When two people claim to love each other for the sake of Allah, we say that these are words that are confirmed when the love involved begins to grow bigger one day after another. That is because worldly love is contaminated by greed and desires. Thus, you see such love decreases as each party takes from the other. Those who love each other for the sake of Allah, however take from a gift that is never depleted, which is the gift of Allah. When you see two people whose love is increasing, know that it is a love for the sake of Allah. On the other hand, love, which is shown for worldly reasons, is a kind of love that quickly fades.

Is there anything purer than their true love that is free from the filth of association? Is there anything purer than their sincere actions for the sake of Allah? Is there anything purer than that they have not transgressed against themselves? Due to their inner purity, they see the record of their deeds, the summary of everything they have sent forward and are pleased, when the angel of death comes. You see them rejoicing and exulting. This appears on their faces at the time of their death. You see their faces shining, radiating, and smiling. On their faces are the signs of good, purity, and bliss as they observe the purity of their actions and the good news of the reward of Allah. On the contrary, we have the people of wretchedness and their state of dark faces and evil end, God forbid.

The angels greet them, at the time of death, saying, peace be upon you. (*an-Nahl*: 32) They say peace because they are exiting the life of this world in

peace and coming to the Hereafter in peace. Therefore, the peace of those in a state of inner purity is a kind of peace that goes from this world to the Hereafter. Their peace is due to their sound religion in the life and their peaceful turn to Allah with no fear in the Hereafter.

There is another peace said to those who are careful of their duty to their Lord and after they are admitted to the garden. The doors open and the keepers of it shall say to them, peace be on you. (*az-Zumar*: 73) Then the sublime peace comes to them from Allah, the Merciful Lord. All the kinds of peace are taken from it. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Is there anything better and purer than that peace that comes directly from Allah?' (*Ya Sin*: 58)

Surprisingly, people of the Elevation greet the pure believers while they are in Paradise. We know that people of the elevation are those whose good deeds and bad deeds are equal. They are detained sequestered on the Elevation which is a place between Paradise and the Fire. Ordinarily, the balance has two scales. As for ones whose scales are heavy with good deeds, he will be in a pleasant life. As for those whose scales are light, their refuge will be an abyss. (*al-Qari`a*: 6-9) These are two states. Where is the state of equilibrium between the two scales? It is mentioned in the verse where Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And on the most elevated places there shall be men who know all by their marks.' (*al-A`raf*: 46) This means that they know the marks of the People of Paradise and Hell fire. They recognise and call out to the dwellers of Paradise saying peace be upon you. (*al-A`raf*: 46) It is surprising that they are happy for the people of paradise and glad to greet them, even though they are facing a dilemma and a critical situation that preoccupy them.

Therefore, the people of paradise get greetings of peace from the angels as they die and when they enter paradise. They get greetings of a sublime peace from Allah as well as a peace from the people of the elevation who are concerned with their own affair. The angels tell them, 'Enter the garden for what you did due to their good deeds.' (*an-Nahl*: 32) That is because you have paid the price. The price is your righteous deeds in the life of this world and your adherence to the way of Allah. Some people might see a contradiction between this verse and the Noble Hadith where Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessings be upon Him* say, 'there is none whose deeds alone would entitle him

to get into paradise. It was said to Him, And Allah's Messenger, not even you? Thereupon He said, not even I, but that my Lord wraps me in mercy.'⁽¹⁾

Actually, there is no contradiction between both of them. How do we reconcile between the verse and the Hadith? Allah *Glorified is He* reveals the Hadith to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* just as He reveals the verse to him. Thus, both of them come from the same source. It is evident at the following verse as Allah speaks of the hypocrites saying: 'And they did not find fault except because Allah and His Messenger enriched them out of His grace.' (*at-Tawba*: 74) The event here is one. Allah did not enrich them with what suited Him and the Messenger with what suited him; rather, it is one act of enrichment and one event. Likewise, there is no contradiction between the verse and the Hadith. How? Allah *Glorified is He* made man legally responsible after reaching the age of maturity and reason. He has been bestowing blessings upon him since his young age. When Allah demanded him to do something, He charged him with what yields good and profit that none of it goes back to Allah. After that, Allah awards him for this legal responsibility with paradise.

Every obligation is for a servant's own good in the life of this world and the Hereafter. Thus, legislating reward from Allah in the Hereafter is merely a favour from Allah. If a servant obeys his Lord as he has been required to regarding the obligatory actions, he would still be unable to compensate the blessings of Allah sent to him and thereby, reward in paradise is a favour from Allah and a bounty. The meaning of the words of the angles could be that their deeds is a normal reason for entering paradise and they acquire it by Allah's favour afterwards. Thus, the verse gathers between both deeds and favour and that is why Allah *Glorified is He* reinforces this when He says: Say: 'In the grace of Allah and in His mercy—in that they should rejoice; it is better than that which they gather.' (*Yunus*: 58) They are not rejoicing because of their actions, as it does not fully make up the blessings they acquire. The true joy is due to the favour and grace of Allah. We say in the supplication, 'O Allah! Treat us with favour and not with justice.'

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

In addition, were they deeds of such and such from themselves? No, they were not. Their deeds were based on a way that their Lord laid down for them. Therefore, it is by favour and not merely action. To give an example, a father says to his son, if you work hard this year and excel, I will give you such and such.' When the son excels, everything becomes his, including success and the gift.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

هَلْ يَنْظُرُونَ إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ أَوْ يَأْتِيَ أَمْرُ رَبِّكَ كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ الَّذِينَ
 مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ وَمَا ظَلَمَهُمُ اللَّهُ وَلَكِنْ كَانُوا أَنْفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

**Are the disbelievers waiting for the angels to come to them,
 or your Lord's Judgement? Those who went before them did
 the same. God did not wrong them; they wronged
 themselves [33] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 33)**

After the previous verses presented the reward of those who are conscious of Allah and those who said that Allah sent that which is good, they return to those who said that Allah sent 'Fables of the former people.' They return to those who oppose calling people to Allah and adopt a stance of hostility, deception, lying in wait, and harm. This is a question from Allah to those people. It is as if Allah asks them, 'what are you waiting for after what you have done to the *Da'wa* and after you barred people from it? What are you waiting for? Do you wish to see with your own eyes? You have only any of the two inevitable matters that will befall you, which are either that the angels will take you in death or that the command of your Lord will come, which is the Day of Resurrection. Nothing will save you unless you believe. Or else, are you waiting for good? Good is never going to happen to you. Allah has said in other verses: 'Allah's commandment has come, therefore do not desire to hasten it.' (*an-Nahl*: 1) He also said: 'The hour drew nigh and the moon did rend asunder.' (*al-Qamar*: 1) Further, He said: 'Their reckoning has drawn near to man' (*al-Anbiya*: 1).

Therefore, they are waiting for events that will bring evil to them. The angels will come to them to reclaim their souls while they are sinning against

themselves, whereupon they will reluctantly proffer their submission or the overwhelming event will come to them, which is the Resurrection. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says that those who denied the Messengers were before them did the same. This means that this issue was known of them from before. Allah did not wrong them when He requited them with such and such. The meaning of Allah wronging them here does not refer to punishment, as the punishment has not taken place yet.

Allah says that they were wronging themselves. This is what we call foolish oppression. Wronging someone else could be done by the oppressor to get some sort of benefit, while wronging one's self bears no benefit. They transgressed against themselves in the life of this world by contravening the way of Allah and thereby, they caused themselves to miss the blessings of the worldly life and the blessings of the Hereafter. This is how they wrong themselves.

Then Allah says:

فَأَصَابَهُمْ سَيِّئَاتُ مَا عَمِلُوا وَحَاقَ بِهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

So the evil they had done hit them and they were surrounded by the very thing they had mocked [34] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 34)

This means that since they were transgressing against themselves the requital of this hit them. Allah names what will befall them in return *sayi'a* (evil) because He calls the retribution for an evil act a *sayi'a* (an evil act) like it. (*ash-Shura*: 40) Similarly as He, says: 'And if you take your turn, then retaliate with the like of that with which you were afflicted.' (*an-Nahl*: 126) That is what is called *mushakala*, which is verbal resemblance, i.e. this and that are from the same genus.

Allah says: 'that the retribution of what they did shall afflict them.' An action is a direct application of any of the functions of man's limbs. Every limb has a function including the leg, the hand, the eye, the ear etc. The function of the tongue is to speak and the function of other limbs is to carry out an action. Therefore, the tongue itself gets the half and all other limbs take the other half. That is because the yields of the tongues are centric. The word of the testimony of faith, 'There is no God but Allah' must be articulated so

that we know that a person is a believer. The role of action comes into play to back up this statement afterwards. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who believe! Why do you say that which you do not do?' (*as-Saff*: 2-3)

It is through statements that ways and methods are conveyed to the ears. How can the limbs act without a way? That is why the Allah gave the ears a special place amongst other senses. It is the first of human organ that carries out its task and it is the one whose task is never finished. No limbs, for example, function during sleep, except the ear and it is through them one is woken up from sleep. If you examine the verses of the Quran and ponder at the signs of creation you see Allah *Glorified is He* say: 'And Allah has brought you forth from the wombs of your mothers—you did not know anything—and He gave you hearing and sight and hearts that you may give thanks.' (*an-Nahl*: 78)

Ears are among the organs that shall bear witness on the Day of Resurrection. (*Fussilat*: 20) This is why Allah says that He veiled their ears of the people of the cave for many a year. (*al-Kahf*: 11) This means that He caused their ears that never rest to stop so that they could sleep peacefully and be able to remain in their cave. Had Allah not rendered something specific in the formation of their limbs, they would not have been able to sleep continuously for 309 years.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that they will be overwhelmed by the very thing which they mocked. (*an-Nahl*: 34) What were the disbelievers mocking? They were deriding the resurrection, the reckoning and the punishment that is awaiting them. The Quran narrates that they mocked the possibility of being resurrected after they die and become mere dust and bones. (*as-Saffat*: 16-17)

They said: 'What! When we have become lost in the earth, shall we then certainly be in a new creation?' (*as-Sajda*: 10) Their derision led them to ask for the punishment to be hastened if Prophet Muhammad is truthful. (*al-A'raf*: 70) They also said: 'Or you should cause the heaven to come down upon us in pieces as you think.' (*al-Isra'*: 92) Would anyone ask his enemy to send down a punishment unless they were mocking? However, Allah *Glorified is He* tells them that they will never afford the punishment that they are mocking and that which is going to overwhelm them. It will surround and afflict them.

They will be unable to escape it or find any way out, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And Allah encompasses them on every side.’ (*al-Buruj*: 20)

Then Allah says:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا لَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مَا عَبَدْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ
نَحْنُ وَلَا آبَاؤُنَا وَلَا حَرَمْنَا مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ كَذَلِكَ فَعَلَ
الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَهَلْ عَلَى الرُّسُلِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٣٥﴾

Those who worshipped others alongside God say, ‘If God had willed, we would not have worshipped anything but Him, nor would our fathers. We would not have declared anything forbidden without His sanction.’ Those before them said the same. Are the messengers obliged to do anything other than deliver [their message] clearly? [35]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 35)

We notice that the verb here is mentioned without its related phrase attached. Allah did not say that those who associate with Allah say. It is because the meaning of *Ishrak* is to associate partners with Allah. That is why Allah says: ‘And they who give associates say.’ (*an-Nahl*: 35) Then Allah mentions their statement. They say that if Allah had willed, we would not have worshipped anything other than Him. Here they are defending themselves using the rack that the disbelievers hang their mistakes on. That is Allah prescribed and decreed for us such and such things.

The one who transgresses against himself says that it is our Lord Who willed such and such for me. It is He Who guides and misguides. He is the One Who made me commit sins and such statements that are void of any truth. They end up asking, ‘So why is He punishing me, then?’ Let us discuss the kind of person who says these things because he has cognitive dissonance and the issue is not clear to him. In order to avoid this obscurity, we ask him why he does not wonder why Allah rewards him in return for good deed even though He willed this obedience from Him and prescribed it for me. This is the other side of the coin. Why do you say the first and not the second? Apparently, the first brings about evil and punishment for him, so he bears it

in mind, while the other brings about good, so he pays no attention to it. We also ask him whether all his deeds are all good and all evil or mixed. The answer to this is clear. Thus, you are not innately good and you are not innately evil. You are capable of good just as you are capable of evil. Therefore, there is a difference between Him creating you with a capability to do something and its opposite and creating you restricted to doing one thing and not its opposite. Since He created you with the ability to do good and evil, He made either way clear to you and explained their rewards and requitals. He told you to do good and the reward is such and such, do evil and the retribution is such and such and here is the way.

The one who transgresses against himself likes saying, ‘Allah ordained that I should do that. I wonder if he has been shown the Preserved Tablet, looked at it and found out that Allah had ordained that he should drink wine, for example, so he did because Allah had ordained it for him. If that was the case you would be obedient to the orders. However, the case is different to what you imagine. You do not know that it has been ordained for you until after you do it and the action you carry out is preceded by your determination to act. So, have you examined the Preserved Tablet in order to know what Allah has ordained for you?

To give an example -Allah is the highest-: a father observes how his son study and finds that he is neglectful and not serious. He expects that he will fail in his exam. Is the father going to go to the exam with his son and force him to make mistakes? No, he is not going to do so. He rather, expects him to fail because he knows his state and that he does not deserve to pass.

Therefore, Allah prescribed in advance and in pre-eternity because He knows what a servant will do from the very beginning. Allah *Glorified is He* illustrated that when he directed the believers towards the *Ka'ba* after making Jerusalem their destination. (*al-Baqara*: 144) He informed the Prophet Muhammad that: ‘Those weak-minded among people would say, “What has turned them from their qiblah which they had?”’ (*al-Baqara*: 142)

The verb is mentioned in the future tense; will say. They have not said this statement yet at that time. The Quran was recited to everyone and was not hidden from any of these weak-minded people. Had those people had any

intellect, they would have remained silent and not said this statement. They would thereby, miss the opportunity of truthfulness of Muhammad and the Quran. It was within their capacity to remain silent and accuse the Quran of lying. None of this happened, however. Thus, the will of Allah and his command regarding the disbelievers, who were looking for contradictions in the Quran, were fulfilled.

In the verse under discussion, Allah uses the past tense narrating what those who associate others with Allah said. (*an-Nahl*: 35) This verse comments on and explains the other similar verse where Allah uses the future tense. (*al-An'am*: 148) Allah uses both tenses to let us know that no one can oppose Allah's statement or change His judgment. Allah states that they said: neither they nor their fathers would have served anything besides Allah. Why did they not just talk about themselves? What is the wisdom behind defending their ancestors here? The wisdom is that they will need this claim afterward and will use it as their argument when they say: 'Nay! They say, "We found our fathers on a course, and surely we are guided by their footsteps."' (*az-Zukhruf*: 22) Therefore, there is no argument for those people who hang their transgressions against themselves on the rack of predestination and that Allah ordained disobedience for them. We see even some Muslims say the same and incline towards these fallacies. Some of them have the courage to and they liken this issue to a statement of a poet that says he (God) threw him into the sea shackled and said to him, beware of letting the water wet you. No one would do this except an oppressor! May Allah be exalted and transcendent above the statements of the ignorant and the disbelievers! Some people say that man is the one who creates actions and others oppose them and say No, our Lord is the One Who creates the action. We say to all of them that they have to understand that there is no contradiction. We ask what action is. Action is the instruction of a limb to do something. When you instruct a limb to do something, what is it that you do? Have you given your hand the power to move by itself or have it been your will that instructed it to move? The limbs are created by Allah and so is the will that governs the limb. Therefore, you did nothing but instructed the creation of Allah to do what Allah does not love, in a state of disobedience, and what Allah does love, in a state of obedience.

In addition, we must take note that Allah *Glorified is He* has a universal will and a legislative will. The universal will is what actually happens. Everything you see in the universe is what Allah has willed to be. The legislative will is that which He demands and loves. Let us take an example to clarify this. The disbelief of a disbeliever is universally willed by Allah for He created him with the ability to choose. Allah says: 'so let him who please, believe, and let him who please, disbelieve.' (*al-Kahf*: 29) As long as Allah has created you with the ability to choose, you are able to go towards faith or go towards disbelief but you disbelieved. So, have you disbelieved in defiance of Him and opposition to His will? Allah forbids! Thus, a disbeliever's disbelief is a universal will, not the legislative will.

By the same standard, the faith of a believer is both a universal will and a legislative will, while, the disbelief of a believer is not disbelief. Therefore, it is a legislative will as well as a universal one. Thus, we must differentiate between the universal will and the legislative will.

When that strife took place, in the Sacred Mosque of Mecca some years ago, shots were fired there and people were frightened, some of them said, 'How can this happen when Allah said that whoever enters it shall be safe. (*Al-Imran*: 97) They exclaimed about the act of killing and frightening those who were safe inside. Actually, those people mixed between the universal will and the legislative will. The intended meaning of the verse makes safe whoever enters it. This is what is sought by Allah and that is a legislative will that may or may not happen. The universal will, on the other hand, is what actually happens. Thus, what happened in the Sacred Mosque was a universal will and not a legislative will.

Allah *Glorified is He* mentions what they say about not prohibiting anything without an order from Allah. A clarification of this phrase is to be found in the verse (103) of the chapter of *al-Ma'da*. Then, Allah said in affirmation that those who lived before did the same, i.e. this is the standard practice of those from before who were stubbornly resistant. However, the job of the apostles is to deliver the message clearly. (*an-Nahl*: 35) The clear delivery means conveying what is between Allah's servants and Allah which is the notification the Messengers. This refers to the way of Do's and Don'ts. Allah would not order you unless you were capable of doing and also capable of leaving.

Thus, we see Allah *Glorified is He* lift the legal obligation from a forced person and attach no judgment to him. That is because under compulsion one may do what he does not want or desire to do. The same applies for the insane and the child who has not reached puberty yet. No judgment is attached to any of these people. Why? It is because Allah *Glorified is He* wants to secure the well-being of the tool that makes choices, which is the intellect.

A legal responsible man must make that clear notification of the messengers his decisive criterion. That way is represented in do's and do nots. Due to this, the Quran condemns those people who come up with a statement from themselves without any account from Prophet Muhammad. Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding them: 'And they make the angels—them who are the servants of the Beneficent Allah—female [divinities]. What! Did they witness their creation? Their evidence shall be written down and they shall be questioned. And they say: If the Beneficent Allah had pleased, we should never have worshipped them.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 19-20) Allah rebuked them for this and asked them whether they have been given a book before the Quran to which they are adhering. (*az-Zukhruf*: 21) He addressed them in another verse exclaiming if they have a scripture in which they learn. (*al-Qalam*: 37)

A clear notification means that the one who is legally responsible must be clearly informed. If there is any shortcoming and the legally responsible person has not been informed, the shortcoming is attributed to the truly religious people, those affiliated to the religion and those entrusted with conveying the way to those whom it has not reached. There are many Hadiths encouraging spreading the religion of Allah to those who have not received the religion. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Convey from me even one verse.'⁽¹⁾ He also said, 'May Allah freshen the affairs of a person who hears something from us and communicates it to others exactly as he has heard it, for it may be that the recipient of knowledge understands it better than one who has heard it.'⁽²⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards:

(1) Narrated by Bukhari, Ahmad Ad-Darami, and At-Tirmidhi

(2) Narrated by At-Tirmidhi

وَلَقَدْ بَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ رَسُولًا أَنِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاجْتَنِبُوا
 الطَّاغُوتَ ۖ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ هَدَى اللَّهُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّنْ حَقَّتْ عَلَيْهِ الضَّلَالَةُ
 فَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُكَذِّبِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

We sent a messenger to every community, saying, ‘Worship God and shun false gods.’ Among them were some God guided; misguidance took hold of others. So travel through the earth and see what was the fate of those who denied the truth [36] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 36)

Here, Allah said that He raised in every nation a messenger, while in another verse He said that He raised from every nation. (*an-Nahl*: 84) Each one of them has a meaning. As for the latter it means from among themselves. He emerged from them, was raised and grew up amongst them and they knew his qualities, his veracity and his position amongst his people. Regarding the former, the preposition in regard is a locative pronoun, which refers to the whole community. It indicates an immersion within the entire community so that the notification does not reach just one group and not any other. Rather, it must be a general delivery for the entire community.

In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* says at one point, that He has sent messengers, (*al-Hadid*: 26) while at another time He says that He has raised messengers (*an-Nahl*: 36). There is a difference between the two meanings. As for the former, it indicates the act of sending which is comprised of something being sent and a recipient. As for the latter, it refers to the previous existence of something, which was wiped and needs to be raised up again.

To clarify this matter, let us return to the story of Adam *peace be upon him* where Allah taught him the names of everything and then caused him to go down from Paradise to earth. Allah told them that there shall come to them guidance from Him and those who would follow His guidance shall have no fear and neither shall they grieve. (*al-Baqara*: 38) He also said that whoever followed His guidance would not go astray or be unhappy. (*Ta Ha*: 123) Therefore, this is the way sent from Allah; *Glorified is He* to Adam. The obligation of Adam was to convey the way to his children and similarly his children are obliged to convey the way to their children and so forth. However, heedlessness may get the better

of the one conveying the way or he may have a lack of concern for the way that leads to the obliteration of the ways so, Allah raises them up again. Thus, the issue of the message did not come about like this all of a sudden to one of the groups. Rather, it has existed since the beginning of creation.

The messages are a resurrection of a divine way that must have remained in the collective memory of humankind and being passed on to the next generations. However, heedlessness may afflict the one who is conveying it and thereby, does not convey or may make him not committed to it. That is why Allah sends messengers again. There are several verses that give this meaning. Allah says: 'There are not a people but a warner has gone among them.' (*Fatir*: 24); another verse says: 'This is because your Lord would not destroy towns unjustly while their people were negligent.' (*al-An'am*: 131) And another verse says: 'nor do we chastise until We raise a messenger.' (*al-Isra'*: 15)

That is why we see those who do not believe in the way revealed from heaven, lay down laws for themselves to regulate their lives. Do they not have a law that defines crimes and punishes them? There is no punishment without incrimination, no incrimination without a text and no text without a conveyance. At this juncture, the importance of laying down laws and publishing them in public journals and newspapers comes so that everyone can be aware of them. It is not right to punish someone for a crime that he does not know that it is a crime. He has to be informed first so that he knows that the punishment for this act is such and such and the proof against him is established.

Here, we also notice that two messengers may be contemporary with one another. Were Ibrahim (Abraham) and Lut (Lot) *peace be upon them* not contemporaries? Were Moses and Shu'aib (Jethro) not contemporaries? What is the reason behind this? The world in the past was in a state of isolation and seclusion. Each group was secluded in its place from the other groups due to the lack of means of communication. All the various groups on earth were unaware of one another and did not know anything about each other.

Thus, each group had its own specific environment that included customs, traditions, and reprehensible acts that were specific to it. Some people would worship idols, others would give less than due weights and measures, and others would engage in homosexuality. Therefore, distinct messengers had to

be sent to deal with each group that lived in a specific environment and committed a specific crime.

Nevertheless, the message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is during an age when places came into contact with one another due to the existence of means of communication to the degree that a crime happens in America, for example and we know about it on the same day. Therefore, all the environments and situations turned into one. Thus, it is logical that the Prophet is sent to all humanity and ages. The Quran expressed this universality when Allah says that he has not sent the Prophet but to all humankind as a bearer of good news and a warner. (*Saba'*: 28) This means that He was sent to everyone with no one excluded. When a tailor says that he *kaffa* the clothes, he means he has gathered it together so that nothing ravel.

Then, Allah mentions the task of the Messengers namely; to serve Allah and shun the Shaitan (Satan). The act of worshipping is to adhere to the command to do something and the prohibition not to do something. Thus, if someone comes, claims divinity and does not have a way we ask him: how can we worship you? What is the way that you have brought? What do you command us? What do you prohibit us from?

In the verse we are discussing, there is a command to worship and a prohibition against the powers of evil. This is what they call *tahliyyah* (embellishment) and *takhliyyah* (leaving). To embellish by worshipping Allah and to leave by avoiding Shaitan, the issue of faith is based on these two elements. It consists of a negation within the words 'I bear witness that there is no God' and an affirmation in 'but Allah.' The one who articulates the testimony of faith is negating plurality and affirming oneness for Allah. Thus, he has left idolatry and embellished himself with oneness.

Thus, the reward in the Hereafter will be similar to this embellishing and leaving. This is why we find Allah says: 'then whoever is removed far away from the fire gathered together and is made to enter the garden he indeed has attained the object.' (*Al-Imran*: 185) This means that whoever is drawn away from punishment and embellished with blessings, he has attained his desire.

The second thing the messenger call to is to shun the Shaitan. This means to distance yourselves from the powers of evil and do the opposite which is

draw closer to Allah. The word *taghut* contains a hyperbole which indicates that one has reached the peak of transgression and gone beyond it. There is difference between a simple word like *tagha* (transgress) and a hyperbole form such as *taghut* which is the person who is over transgressing actions lead him to overstep the bounds of Allah and engage in greater wrongdoing.

To give an example, a young man rebels against his society. He starts by being a petty thief and he finds that people curry favour with him and treat him gently in order to protect themselves from his evil. He advances in his wrongdoing, buys a weapon for himself, kills people, and steals valuable amounts of money. Thus, he arrives at the peak of oppression and transgression. If the people had reprimanded him at the very beginning, he would not have reached this state. Thus, the indemnities are borne by the people. They pay it in place of the criminal because they neglected the responsibility of controlling and reprimanding him.

We also notice that the word *taghut* is a hyperbolic adjective that does not change according to the noun that it is describing. It is as if it has over indication in its word and meaning. It is the same whether it is used with a singular, dual or plural, male or female. Thus, we say that is a *taghut* man, a *taghut* woman or those are two *taghut* men, two *taghut* women as if it has passed the limits of its word and all morphological forms. Therefore, a *taghut* is a person whose oppression will increase if people submitted to him. Allah says about the Pharaoh that he bluffed his people and they obeyed him. (*az-Zukhruf*: 54) His situation took him to the point where he claimed divinity and he said he knew no other deity but himself. (*al-Qasas*: 38)

It is related in the stories of those who claim prophecy that one of the caliphs received news of someone claiming prophecy. He commanded them to pay no attention to him and leave him alone so that perhaps he would desist. After a while, someone else claimed prophecy. The people went to the former to see what he thought about the new prophet. They asked him, what do you think about this person claiming prophecy? Which of you is the Prophet? He replied, 'He is a liar. I have not sent anyone.' He thought that they had believed his claim of prophecy, so he went a step further and claimed divinity and this is how *taghut* is.

The word *taghut* occurs eight times in the Quran. Six of them can be both a masculine and a feminine, one time with a female. (*az-Zumar*: 17) and one with a male. (*an-Nisa'*: 60) In the Arabic language, there are words that can be applied to both a masculine and a feminine, such as the word *sabil* (path). It is used with a masculine as in (*al-A'raf*: 146) and with a feminine as in (*Yusuf*: 108). Thus it occurs with a masculine and a feminine.

Next in the verse we are discussing Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'of whom Allah guided and there were others against whom error was due.' (*an-Nahl*: 36) Some people use this verse as an argument to proclaim that guidance is in the hands of Allah and therefore, there is nothing we can do about not being guided and so forth.

We tell them come and let us read the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And as to Thamud, We showed them the right way, but they chose error above guidance.' (*Fussilat*: 17) If the meaning of guidance was as you understand, they would not have preferred blindness. Allah merely showed them the right way. They had the right of choice and they are capable of both this way and the other. The act of shoeing the right way is for both the believer and the disbeliever. Allah showed everyone and thus, whoever comes to Allah in faith, He increases his guidance and gives him his righteousness. (*Muhammad*: 17)

Some people see a contradiction between the statement of Allah to the Prophet that He does not guide everyone He loves (*al-Qasas*: 56) and the other statement to the Prophet that He guides to a straight way. (*ash-Shura*: 52) Allah negates the act of guidance for his Messenger in the former and affirms it in the latter. We notice that the action here is the same, which is guidance and the one being addressed is the same, which is the Messenger of Allah. Thus, how can one action be affirmed to a person at one time and then be negated to same person at another time?

There must be a difference in meaning. When Allah says that the Prophet does not guide everyone He loves, He means that He is unable to put faith into the hearts of those whom He loves. Rather, He can only direct and show the way. As for the guidance of faith, it is in the hands of Allah. He guides to it whoever is prepared to believe and turns away whoever rejects and refuses guidance. It is that Allah is in the service of His slaves. If someone loves

something, He gives and facilitates it to him. This is how Allah guided a believer to faith and sealed the heart of a disbeliever with disbelief.

Therefore, guidance comes with two meanings, i.e. showing and directing to the way as in the previous verse and supporting and opening one's bosom to faith as in the statement of Allah: 'but Allah guides whom He pleases.' (*al-Qasas*: 56) Similarly, it has that meaning in the verse: 'And [as for] those who follow the right direction, He increases them in guidance.' (*an-Nahl*: 36)

Thus, the meaning of the first part of the verse we are discussing refers to the guidance of faith and support. He firmly establishes the way within them, facilitates it to them and opens their bosom. As for the second part, the word *haqqat* means that it became their right and it was necessary due to the deeds they had put forth that necessitate falling into grievous error. Error was deservedly decreed and became their due only because of what they did.

This is similar to the statement of Allah where He says that He does not guide the unjust people. (*al-An'am*: 144) What is that which comes first, the lack of guidance from Allah or their evildoing? Obviously, their evildoing happens first and thereby, Allah called them evildoing folk. The result was that they were denied guidance.

In this regard, we often mention an example so that it can be firmly implanted in our minds, and to Allah belongs the highest example: imagine that you are driving on a road heading towards some town and you come across various junctions and signs pointing to different directions. When you ask the traffic officer to tell you how to go to such and such town, he says 'Go from here'. You might say 'Praise be to Allah! I almost got lost. May Allah reward you!' When he finds that you have accepted his advice happily and with love and have thanked him for what he has done, he wants to do more for you and says, 'however, there is a tricky obstacle in the road, so I'll accompany you so that you get past it safely.'

Thus, the first advice was directing, while the second instance was a support. When you trusted his directions he helped you reach your destination. This is how the Messengers direct people to the truth and how people accept it. It is up to you to imagine what would happen if you said to the traffic

officer, 'It seems that you do not know the way' He would say to you, 'Fine. Direct yourself and go wherever you want.'

The word *dalala* (error) is an exaggeration of the word *dalal* as if it is a great misguidance. It contains both hyperbole and emphasis of the verb. It is mentioned again in the verse: 'Say: As for him who remains in error, the Beneficent Allah will surely prolong his length of days.' (*Maryam*: 75)

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* proves to us sending Messengers in previous nations. Thereby, we become certain of what He is informing us of and know that humankind was divided into two groups, those who denied, and those who believed. He orders us to proceed through the earth and observe how the end of the deniers was. (*an-Nahl*: 36) There are proofs and testimonies that show that there were people in a certain place and that they had a civilization that was crushed and obliterated. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse that we pass by them in the morning. (*as-Saffat*: 137)

Allah *Glorified is He* commands that we travel in the earth, behold, and reflect on the previous nations such as 'Ad, Thamud, the people of Saleh (Shelah), the people of Lut (Lot) and other nations. Allah tells us to proceed through the earth. Are we walking in or on the earth? We are travelling on the earth and that was our understanding of the verse. However, it is Allah Who speaks in the Quran whose gifts will remain until the Hour is established. As time passes, realities are revealed to us and science confirms the veracity of the Quran and its miracles. Years ago, we used to think that the earth was the Terra-firma that we lived on. Then science established that the air that is surrounding the earth (the atmosphere) is the elixir of life on earth and that there would be no life on earth without it. Thus, the atmosphere is a part of the earth. In this sense, we travel in the earth, as Allah *Glorified is He* articulated in His Mighty Book.

In the verse we are discussing, we also notice that Allah uses the letter *Fa* after ordering us to travel in the earth, while in another similar verse He uses the conjunction *thumma*. (*al-An'am*: 11) This is not just a difference in expression; rather, each verse indicates a specific thing. When the letter *Fa* is used as a conjunction, it indicates sequence and immediate succession, i.e. beholding comes immediately after travelling. When *thumma* is used as a conjunction, it also indicates sequence but with a delay. In other words, some

time passes between the two events, as in the verse where Allah *Glorified is He* states: ‘Then He causes him to die, then assigns to him a grave, then when He pleases, He will raise him to life again. (‘*Abasa*: 21-22)

Allah commands us to see. Thus, the purpose behind travelling is to reflect and take admonition. Therefore, there must be remains and ruins that indicate the existence of these previous deniers who had these civilizations that were completely ruined. Today we boast about the stone structures that we have, such as the pyramids. Tourists from all the countries of the developed world come to see the development and progress of this ancient civilization which confounds them and bewilders them. Even now, they cannot solve its cryptic characters. Despite this, the Pharaohs did not leave behind anything to show how the pyramids were built or how they mummified their dead. This shows that these people were taken so forcefully that these sources and this information were obliterated along with them, as He *Glorified is He* said: ‘And how many a generation have we destroyed before them! Do you see any one of them or hear a sound of them?’ (*Maryam*: 98)

The Quran narrates several stories of these previous peoples. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with ‘Ad, [The people of] Iram, possessors of lofty buildings, the like of which were not created in the [other] cities. And [with] Thamud, who hewed out the rocks in the valley, And [with] (Pharaoh), the lord of hosts, who committed inordinacy in the cities, so they made great mischief therein? Therefore your Lord let down upon them a portion of the chastisement’ (*al-Fajr*: 6-13) this is what happened to the deniers in the past and beware of thinking that who comes after will flee from this outcome. No they are certainly not, as Allah is ever on the watch. (*al-Fajr*: 14)

Then Allah says:

إِنْ تَحَرَّضَ عَلَىٰ هُدَاهُمْ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي مَن يُضِلُّ وَمَا لَهُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

Though you [Prophet] may be eager to guide them, God does not guide those who misguide [others], nor will they have anyone to help them [37] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 37)

Allah *Glorified is He* is comforting Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and affirming for him his concern for his *ummah* (his followers).

He tells Him that He does more than Allah has commanded him for the sake of guiding them to the degree that He would kill himself ‘...through grief due to their disbelief.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3) He *Glorified is He* says: ‘certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves; grievous to him is your falling into distress, excessively solicitous [and] respecting [to] you; to the believers [he is] compassionate,’ (*at-Tawba*: 128).

After that, Allah cuts off all hope for the stubborn deniers and says that He does not guide whoever leads astray. This means that He does not misguide except those who have not accepted faith, so He leaves them to their disbelief and expunges their hearts. They are not lamented over because this is what they want and Allah has responded to them with what they want. Thus, they have no helpers. Therefore, the issue is not just a lack of guidance, rather, there is a battle where they will not find any aid, helper or anyone to rescue them from it, as Allah *Glorified is He* narrates what they will say: ‘So we have no intercessors, Nor a true friend.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 100-101) Therefore, Allah does not guide who has chosen misguidance for himself. He will, however punish him so that he will not find anyone to help him.

Then Allah says about them:

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَا يَبْعَثُ اللَّهُ مَن يَمُوتُ بَلَى وَعَدًا
عَلَيْهِ حَقًّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَ النَّاسِ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

**They have sworn by God with their strongest oaths that He
will not raise the dead to life. But He will – it is His binding
promise, though most people do not realize it [38]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 38)**

Amazingly, they swear by Allah. How can you swear by Allah when you do not believe in Allah? What does the word Allah mean to you? That is a sign of the ignorance of the disbelievers and a proof that the subject of faith is unclear in their minds. The word Allah itself is a proof of faith in Him. No word exists in the language until after there is something to which it refers. The television, for example, did not have a name before it existed. After it came into existence, they found a name for it. Therefore, meanings of things

exist first and names are given to the meanings afterwards. Does the meaning of a word come before it or after it? It comes before it. When they say that Allah does not exist, we tell them that they are lying because the word Allah is a term that exists in the language and it must have a meaning before it exists. Therefore, faith precedes disbelief. Disbelief is logically coined, as the meaning of *kufir* (disbelief) is a cover. The question then is; what does it cover? It covers faith and only something that exists can be covered. Thus, we say that disbelief is a proof of faith.

They swear by Allah with the most energetic of their oaths, which means that they exaggerate in emphasising the oath. Their stupidity, here, is similar to what they said in another verse where they ask Allah to rain down upon them stones from the sky or bring them a grievous punishment. (*al-Anfal*: 32) That is not something an intelligent person would say. They swore by Allah that He would never raise who has died. This is a denial of the resurrection, as they have wondered before whether they and their ancestors would be resurrected after having died and become mere dust and bones. (*al-Mu'minun*: 82) Allah responds to them saying: *bala* (Yes indeed!) which is a tool of negating that which came before it. The linguists say that the negation of a negation is an affirmation. Therefore, *bala* negates the negation that came before it, which is their statement that Allah will never raise anyone from the dead. Thus, the meaning becomes, yes indeed Allah will raise anyone who has died.

Allah says that is a promise binding on Him. A promise means to give information about something whose time has not yet come. When a promise comes that something will happen afterwards, we look at the one who made the promise. Is he able to bring about what he promised or not? If he is not able to carry out what he has promised due to his inability to secure all the means needed to bring his promise, we tell him say 'if Allah wills'. That is so when the time for him to carry it out comes and he has not fulfilled his promise, we can find an excuse for him and do not call him a liar as you attributed the matter to the will of Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* does not prohibit us from planning the future out, working and building such and such plan as we wish. Prepare everything for it, but you must complement this by saying, 'If Allah wills.' That is because

you do not possess all the means which enable you to do what you want in the future. Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'and do not say of anything: Surely I will do it tomorrow, unless Allah pleases.' (*al-Kahf*: 23-24) To give an example, suppose that you wanted to visit someone tomorrow to talk to him about something. Do you guarantee that you will be alive tomorrow? Do you guarantee that this other person will be there tomorrow? Do you guarantee that your reason for going will not change? Maybe all of these conditions will be available for you and then when you are about to go some impediment befalls you and prevents you from going. Therefore, we must complement our actions regarding the future by saying: 'If Allah wills.'

However, if the Promise is from Allah *Glorified is He* it will be certainly fulfilled, because He *the Almighty* is fully Capable of carrying out what He promises. There is no power that can oppose or challenge His Will. Nothing in the heavens or the earth can incapacitate Him. Thus, the Promise from Allah *Glorified is He* is an absolute truth that He will for sure fulfil.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...but most people know it not.' (*an-Nahl*: 38) In other words, they do not know that Allah *Glorified is He* is fully Capable of resurrecting them, as He says: 'They say, "What? When we have disappeared into the earth, shall we really be created anew?"' (*as-Sajda*: 10) He says about them: 'They also say, "What? When we are turned to bones and dust, shall we really be raised up in a new act of creation?"' (*al-Isra*: 49)

The disbelievers deemed that the Resurrection will unlikely happen because they could not imagine how Allah *Glorified is He* will resurrect the entire creation that lived from the time of Adam, *peace be upon him* until the coming of the Hour. But why did the disbelievers deem it unlikely while Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Creating and resurrecting all of you is only like creating or resurrecting a single soul.' (*Luqman*: 28) The matter is not some operation in which Allah *Glorified is He* gathers together all the particulars of each individual human being. No, there is no operation or process that takes up time, for Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'When He wills something to be, His way is to say, "Be" — and it is!' (*Ya Sin*: 82)

Let us give an example of this —and to Allah belongs the highest similitude— for we see examples of these commands in the human world when a teacher

or trainer comes to train the soldiers. We see him teaching and training first and then, whenever he wants to implement these commands; all he has to do is to stand in front of all the soldiers, say one word, and they all obey and stand in the way they are commanded. Does the trainer have to grab each individual soldier and make him stand the way he wants? No. With one word he gets what he wants.

It is as if the discipline and obedience of those commanded are the basic state. Likewise, all the particulars of the universe are properly ordered under Allah's command. It is with one Word that everything is completed. There is no process in His Command because a process means that the one doing it has to apply the particulars of his power to the particulars of the object, and the Resurrection is not like that. Rather, it is a command that is under His Order: '...Be! And it is!' This is why He says: '...but most people know it not.' (*an-Nahl*: 38) We say: Praise be to Allah *Glorified is He* that there are a few people who know the command of resurrection and believe in it.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لِيُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي يُخْتَلَفُونَ فِيهِ وَلِيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا كَاذِبِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

In order to make clear for them what they have differed about and so that the disbelievers may realise that what they said was false In order to make clear for them what they have differed about and so that the disbelievers may realize that what they said was false [39] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 39)

In this verse in question, Allah's saying: 'In order to make clear for them what they have differed about...' (*an-Nahl*: 39) means that He will clarify for them what they have differed about, namely, the matter of Resurrection because the Hereafter cannot be carried out properly without Resurrection and Reward. When I had a debate with the Communists, that is, why I told them, 'you have witnessed fierce and fabricator capitalists who caused people to suffer enough and did such and such, so what have you done regarding them?' They said, 'We have done such and such...' to which I responded, 'Before Communism came to existence in 1917, were there not oppressive people similar to them?' They said, 'Yes, indeed.' I then said, 'Therefore it is

in your interest that there be a Resurrection, a Reckoning and a Punishment from which those who preceded you cannot escape and by no means you were unable to punish them. In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* concludes that matter saying that the disbelievers will come to know that they were false regarding their speech that Allah *the Almighty* will not raise the dead again. That knowledge is based on certainty and examination, but it will be too late. The time will be only for Reckoning and Reward but not to accept or reject it because it will be of no benefits. At that time they will acknowledge that they were lying when they swore that Allah *Glorified is He* would never raise the dead, and that they exaggeratedly emphasized their oath. That is why He *the Almighty* says in another verse: ‘and persisted in great sin’. (*al-Waqi'a*: 46)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

إِنَّمَا قَوْلُنَا لِشَيْءٍ إِذَا أَرَدْنَاهُ أَنْ نَقُولَ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿٤٠﴾

**When We will something to happen, all that We say is,
‘Be,’ and it is [40] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 40)**

Therefore, the matter of Resurrection is not a process in which the particulars of every individual, from Adam *peace be upon him* until the Hour is established, are gathered together and their parts are formed as they should be. Rather, it is completely controlled by the Divine command: ‘Be’

Merely by the command being issued, without the need for any time or operation, everyone will be compliant and obedient. Each individual will be waiting his turn and waiting for instructions. That is why the statement has been related: ‘Allah only manifests matters but does not commence it from the very beginning’, Allah has already written these matters in the Preserved Tablet. Thus, He *Glorified is He* manifests them as they are written therein.

The command depends on the permission: ‘Manifest!’ And it becomes manifest.’ Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; if someone sets a Timer it for a specific time and it remains as it is until the time of that has been set for it. Then it goes off without any intervention on behalf of the one who initially set it.

Even the Arabic word *kun* (Be) itself requires time, and it is the simplest and the nearest time-form of giving permission even though He *the Almighty* has no need of *kun* or anything else when He commands.

Allah *Glorified is He* and then says:

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي اللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا لَنَبْوِّتَنَّهُمْ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً
وَلَا جَزَاءَ الْآخِرَةِ أَكْبَرُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

As for those who emigrated in God's cause after being wronged, We shall give them a good home in this world, but the reward of the Hereafter will be far greater, if they only knew it [41] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 41)

The Arabic word *Muhajirun* (The Emigrants) means people who believed in Allah *Glorified is He* with faith that reached such a degree of certainty which made them capable of bearing hardship, oppression, and persecution for the sake of their faith. It is not possible for someone to sacrifice his or wealth, family and his self unless he certainly believed in something.

The verse in question affirms the Resurrection which the disbelievers firmly denied. They exaggerated and persisted in their denial that Allah *the Almighty* says: 'they have sworn by Allah with their strongest oaths that He will not raise the dead to life.' (*an-Nahl*: 38)

They are well-aware that amongst the creation are those who do evil and those who do good; so the question is, 'Do they believe – rationally – that Allah *Glorified is He* will leave those who do evil and cause chaos in the world without giving them their due punishment?' This means that they are scared of the Resurrection. If they had been people who persevered in doing goodness, they would hope for the Resurrection. However, they have transgressed against themselves. It is, thus, natural for them to deny the Resurrection. But they resort to promising themselves with false hopes so that they can feel reassured that they will not be taken into account for their transgressions committed against people, their blood, their honour, and their security.

If they had already denied the Resurrection, while there was a messenger with whom there were believers who believed in Resurrection and Retribution

to a degree of certainty that pushes them to make sacrifices for the sake of that faith, there must, therefore, be a fierce battle between the people of faith and the people of disbelief, a battle between truth and falsehood.

Allah *the Almighty* puts wisdom behind spreading Islam, initially, amongst the weak, so that no one can think that the believers imposed their faith by force. No. They are the weak who are unable to defend even themselves. The disbelievers are the rulers. Therefore, Islam came to oppose the arrogant notables of the disbelievers.

It was possible for Allah *Glorified is He* to give victory to these weak people and to elevate the word of the religion uppermost from the beginning, but Allah *the Almighty* willed the call of faith to be in Mecca at first because it was the centre of leadership in the Arabian Peninsula. Quraysh were the people of respect, of influence and of authority. No tribe on the peninsula had the power to oppose them, and it is widely-known that they held this position because they were the custodians of Allah's Sacred House and they served the delegations that came to visit it.⁽¹⁾ If the beginning of Islam was in a location other than Mecca, the enemies of Islam would have said that, 'Islam considered some people as weak and enticed them with words until they become Muslims'. The call of faith came to strike the ears of the chiefs of Quraysh, the rulers of the peninsula whom Allah *Glorified is He* had made safe from danger in their winter and summer journeys, but also they were the possessors of power and wealth.

Logically, if this was the case, then why did not Allah *Glorified is He* give victory to His religion in the land of the rulers? We would say that: No...the call of Islam, firstly, should strike the ears of falsehood in the land of the chiefs of Mecca, but the victory of the religion was not to come at the hands of these chiefs. Rather, it was to come in Medina.

Consequently, that was from Allah's wisdom that no one can pretend afterwards that Muhammad's family had imposed and compelled people to

(1) That is proved by Allah's saying: 'Do you consider giving water to pilgrims and tending the Sacred Mosque to be equal to the deeds of those who believe in Allah and the Last Day and who strive in Allah's path? They are not equal in Allah's eyes. Allah does not guide such benighted people.' (*at-Tawba*: 19)

adopt Islam. No, rather, He *the Almighty* willed that believing in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and in his Message initially give him power, so he *peace and blessings be upon him* sought power that was so far of Quraysh in Mecca whereupon they finally submitted to his own.

As long as there was a battle, then who are the ones being defeated? Surely, the ones being defeated are the weak who are unable to protect even themselves, i.e the ones who have been oppressed in the place in which they live. That was inevitably why Allah *Glorified is He* had to lift this oppression.

The process of removing the oppression upon those weak people should be done in stages. In the first stage, the weak and the oppressed were moved out from Mecca, not to an abode of faith that would protect them and help them spread their religion, but to an abode of security only, in which they would be secure with their religion, merely to give them the opportunity to perform the commands of their religion. That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* surveyed all the lands looking for places that could be an abode of security for those who believe in his call to emigrate to where no one there would oppose them. He *peace and blessings be upon him* only found Abyssinia as a secure place for his followers, and this is why he said about it, ‘Indeed in the land of Abyssinia there is a king under his leadership no one oppressed. Enter into his country so that Allah *Glorified is He* can grant you an opening and a way out from what you are in’.⁽¹⁾ These characteristics of the king of Abyssinia were enough encouragement for the believers to emigrate to him. At that stage of giving victory to the religion, nothing more than this was sought and, thus, the first emigration to Abyssinia was made.

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* supported his religion with followers and helpers who met with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and gave him a pledge of allegiance with support and assistance. These were the Helpers from the people of Medina who pledged allegiance to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in ‘Aqaba and paved the way for the second emigration to Medina. The emigration – this time – was to an

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Al-Baihaqi in his book *Dala'il An-Nabuwwa* (2/301), and also mentioned by Ibn Hisham in his book *As-Sirah An-Nabawiyyah* (1/321).

abode of security and faith. The Muslims felt safe with their religion and they also found the opportunity to spread it to the four corners of the world.

We pause here elaborating upon the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'As for those who emigrated...' (*an-Nahl*: 41). The root of this Arabic verb *hajra* (to forsake), and there is a difference between *hajra* and *hajara*. The meaning of *hajra* is that someone hates living in a certain place, so they leave it for another place that they see as better. The place itself does not force them to leave, i.e. they leave the place voluntarily. As for the second meaning *hajara*, it indicates a mutual action on behalf of two parties. The subject here does not hate the place, but rather, the mutual action on behalf of the people is what compelled him to emigrate. This is what happened when the believers emigrated from Mecca. They did not leave it for another place until they had suffered persecution and oppression on the side of Quraysh. If the Muslims had not suffered and had not been oppressed by them, they would not have emigrated.

Thereafter, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...after being wronged...' (*an-Nahl*: 41) This meaning also applies to Al-Mutanabbi⁽¹⁾:

If you have to leave a people and they were able

To stop you from leaving them, then they are ones who are leaving

Tha is to say, if you are in a group and you want to leave them, and they have the capacity to offer you help and facilitate your residence amongst them, but they did not do so, and they let you go despite their ability, then the ones leaving are in fact them because they are not helping you stay.

Likewise, this was the situation when the believers emigrated from Mecca; for it does not make sense for these people to hate Mecca as a place when it contains the Sacred House whose neighborhood every Muslim desires to live in its side. Therefore, the Emigrants did not leave Mecca by their own free will. Rather, they were forced and compelled to leave it and it was natural for

(1) *He is Ahmad ibn Al-Husayn, Abu At-Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi, born in Kufa of 302 H. He poetized as a youth and claimed prophethood in the countryside. He was imprisoned by the prince of Homs until he repented and gave up his call. He travelled to the entourages of rulers and governors and praised them in poetry and enjoyed their favors. He visited Aleppo, Egypt, Baghdad, and Persia and he was killed in An-Nu'maniyah at the hands of Fatik ibn Abu Jahl in the year (253 H) at the age of 51. Al-I'lam, 1/115*

them to seek another abode until their power was being strengthened. Then they could return to live in Mecca a second time in a normal and natural way.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘As for those who emigrated in Allah’s Cause.’ (*an-Nahl*: 41) We notice in the Noble Hadith which clarifies the meaning of this verse: ‘The emigration of one who emigrates for the sake of Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* is for the sake of Allah and His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*; and the emigration of one who emigrates for gaining a worldly advantage or for marrying a woman is for what he has emigrated’

Is there a difference between emigrating for the cause of Allah *Glorified is He* and emigrating to Allah *Glorified is He*.

The explanation is: emigrating to a place means that the place one is emigrating to is better than the place one has left, as if the latter is not suitable. As for emigrating in the cause of Allah *Glorified is He*, this indicates that one’s previous residence was also in the cause of Allah *Glorified is He*. Their residence in Mecca, in and of itself, while bearing hardship, oppression, and persecution, was also in the cause of Allah *Glorified is He*. If the verse stated above urged the people of Mecca to emigrate to Allah, which may give an indication that their previous residence was not in the sake of Allah *the Almighty*. But then, the meaning that the verse illustrates is that their settlement and the emigration were in the sake of Allah

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Hurry towards your Lord’s forgiveness.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 133) That means if you are in a situation that may not lead you to Allah’s forgiveness, then change this situation and hurry towards his forgiveness. In another verse Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘These hasten to good things.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 61) They were doing good things and they were ordered to hurry to do more, i.e from the better to the best. Also another indication is when Allah *the Almighty* says ‘As for those who emigrated...’ (*an-Nahl*: 14); the pronoun came in its plural form so the question is: is it referring specifically to those at that time or is it a general statement that can be applied upon anyone oppressed, in the sake of Allah, and then he emigrated?

In this vein, the fact is this issue is generally applied with the same circumstances and not only referring to this specific incident; we know that this verse revealed for a number of the companions of prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, Suhayb, 'Ammar, Khubbab and Billal, but this verse can be applied for anyone oppressed and wants to save his faith.

We know the story⁽¹⁾ of Suhayb *Allah be pleased with him*; he was a blacksmith. When he wanted to emigrate in order to save his religion, he presented an offer to Quraysh, 'By Allah *Glorified is He* I am an old man. If I stay with you I am of no benefit to you, and if I go with the Muslims I will not be of any trouble to you. I have wealth...take it and leave me to emigrate. They were happy with this and they took Suhayb's wealth and gave him a leave to emigrate.

This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, 'Your sale was profitable O Suhayb.'⁽²⁾ i.e. it was a profitable transaction. 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said about him, 'What an excellent slave Suhayb is. If he did not fear Allah *Glorified is He*, he would disobey Him.' It is as if his lack of disobedience was not because he feared punishment, but rather because he loved Allah *the Almighty*, for Allah *Glorified is He* does not deserve to be disobeyed.

Then Allah *the Almighty* turns to inform us of their reward; He says: 'We shall give them a good home in this world.' (*an-Nahl*: 41) The Arabic word *Nubaww'* (we shall give them) also mentioned in another verse therein Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And when we assigned to Ibrahim (Abraham) the place of the House...' (*al-Hajj*: 26). That is, we showed him his place. When we say that a man *ba'a* to his house it means that he returned to it because man goes out to endeavour in various parts of the earth, in agriculture or commerce, and then he seeks shelter and returns to his house. Therefore *ba'a* as a verb means 'to return', but as a noun refers to man's abode and what Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared for him.

(1) This story was narrated by Al Wahidi in his book *Asbab An-Nuzul*, p.160. Narrated also by Al Qurtubi in his *Tafseer*, (5/3831)

(2) Narrated by Abu Na'im in (*Hilyat ul-Awliya'*) (1/151-153) from the Hadith of Suhayb *Allah be pleased with him*, and likewise Al-Hakim in his (*Mustadrak*) (3/298)

If the believers are now going to leave Mecca defeated and persecuted, then we will grant them stability in a place that is better than the place in which they were persecuted, and they became secure in Medina. If they have left only their homeland then We will facilitate the life of this world for them, all of it, so that they can spread Allah's way therein, and they will get the best of this world. Then, afterwards, we will return them to their homeland as powerful rulers after Mecca has become a land dedicated to Allah *Glorified is He* and purified of idolatry and paganism. This is the good fortune in the life of this world. Then Allah *the Almighty* refers to another meaning, and says: 'But the reward of the Hereafter will be far greater...' (*an-Nahl*: 41).

The good fortune of this worldly life and its goodness for the believers which we have mentioned are both short-term benefits of their actions. However, the good fortunes of the life of this world, whatever they are, will eventually come to an end. Either you will leave them or they will leave you. Allah *Glorified is He* fulfilled His promise to the believers in the life of this world, therefore, they returned to Mecca victoriously. Indeed, the entire Arabian Peninsula submitted to them and then the entire world. They widely spread out to the east in Persia and to the west in Roman held territory. Finally, and within half a century they were ruling the entire world.

If this is the immediate good fortune of the life of this world, then the deferred good fortune of the Hereafter is greater about which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'But the reward of the Hereafter will be far greater...' (*an-Nahl*: 41), i.e. the blessings of the Hereafter that have been prepared for them are more magnificent than what they have found in the life of this world. This is why our master 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* used to say when giving one of the emigrants his due share of booty, 'May Allah *Glorified is He* bless you with it. This is what Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared for you in the life of this world and what He has stored for you in the Hereafter is greater than this.'⁽¹⁾ This is the good fortune of the life of this world. When you hear the Arabic word *akbar* (greater), you must know that its opposite is not *asghar* (smaller) or

(1) Al-Qurtubi has mentioned this tradition in his Tafsir 5/3832, Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir 2/570 and also by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur 5/132 and he dated it back to Ibn Jarir At-Tabari and Ibn Al-Mundhir.

saghir (small). Rather, its opposite is *kabir* (great) and therefore the good fortune of the life of this world that Allah *Glorified is He* granted them is great, but what awaits them in the Hereafter is greater.

Likewise, the superlative form mentioned above may contain less praise than the normal adjective. *Al-Kabir* (The Great) is one of Allah's most beautiful names and at the same time *Al-Akbar* (The Greatest) is one of Allah's attributes, but it is not one of His names. When we call to prayers, we always say, 'Allah is Greater!' We do not say, 'Allah is Great!' This is because what is other than great is small, while what is other than greater is great because the affairs of the life of this world, for the believer, are great as they are a means to the Hereafter.

Beware of thinking that the activities of the life of this world which you leave in order to pray are small. Rather, they are great because they are means that help you obey Allah *Glorified is He* and with them you eat, drink and become strong. With them you gather wealth and you meet your needs and you pay your alms to others. This is how the activities of the life of this world are considered great matters and the prayer and standing before Allah *Glorified is He* is greater. In the same connection, this is why, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Believers! When the call to prayer is made on the day of congregation, hurry towards the reminder of Allah and leave off your trading...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 9).

Through the previous verse, Allah *the Almighty* gave us a leave from the bond of worldly activities and its action, afterwards He, turns our attention, says: 'Then when the prayer has ended, disperse in the land and seek out Allah's bounty.' (*al-Jumu'a*: 10) Thus He *Glorified is He* commands us to return to the activities of life because they are a means to the abode of the Hereafter. They are a field in which we prepare our provision to meet Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, the life of this world is important for the reason as a support for the Hereafter, but it is naïve to be asked for itself as an ultimate purpose.

At the conclusion of this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...if they only knew it.' (*an-Nahl*: 41) Who is being referred to here? There are three possibilities: Commenting in this verse in question, firstly, is the disbelievers, and thus the meaning would be: if they could but understand the outcome of faith and the reward of the believers they would prefer it to disbelief. Secondly is the Emigrants, and, thus, the meaning would be: if they could but

understand, they would increase in good works. Finally are the believers who have not emigrated, and, thus, the meaning would be: if they could but understand the result of emigrating, they would hasten to it.

These three possibilities, that these verses of the Quran speak of contain proof of the rich rendering and rhetoric of the Noble Quran, and this is what they call an order of advantages that clearly outline the varying degrees of benefit from emigrating. Allah *the Almighty* then says:

الَّذِينَ صَبَرُوا وَعَلَىٰ رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٤٢﴾

**They are the ones who are steadfast and put their trust in
their Lord [42] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 42)**

Contemplating on this verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* gives us an analysis of the state of the Emigrants who were oppressed, persecuted, and harmed for the sake of Allah Glorified is He and none of these afflictions turned them away from their religion. Rather, they were patient with forbearance; moreover, they preferred to leave their homeland and lose their wealth so as not to be harmed of the religion, all for the sake of religion and faith believing that Allah Glorified is He would not neglect them.

Therefore, the Quranic expression came in the past tense as if it already happened; Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...those who were steadfast...’ (*an-Nahl*: 42). It is as if the period in which they had to be patient with hardship had passed and come to an end. What remains for them is might, power and strength and no one will be able to persecute them after this, and this is out of the glad tidings of the Quran rendering.

As for placing trust in Allah *the Almighty* He says concerning them: ‘...and put their trust in their Lord.’ (*an-Nahl*: 42)

The present tense used in this verse indicates that their trust in Allah *the Almighty* has begun in the past, and will continue to do so in the present and into the future. This is the state of the believer.

Afterwards, the Quran talks about the issue of sending messengers; explaining the process of sending messengers whom the disbelievers resist by denying them with arrogance and disbelief.

Allah *the Almighty* then discusses a new issue, and says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِيْ اِلَيْهِمْ فَسْئَلُوْا اَهْلَ
الذِّكْرِ اِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُوْنَ ﴿٤٣﴾

[Prophet], all the messengers We sent before you were simply men to whom We had given the Revelation: you [people] can ask those who have knowledge if you do not know [43] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 43)

Some resisting people amongst disbelievers objected to the Messenger being a human being, therefore, they said, 'If Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to send a messenger it would be appropriate for it to be an angel.' They said: 'Allah would have sent down angels if He had wished...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 24). It is as if they were undervaluing the message coming via a human being. This is also of the outcome of stupidity of disbelief and the idiocy of the disbelievers because when a messenger conveys from Allah *Glorified is He*, he bears two responsibilities on his shoulders; the responsibility of conveying knowledge and the responsibility of carrying out the actions and setting an example. Thus, he enjoins the prayer and he prays, he enjoins the payment of alms and he pays, he enjoins patience and he is patient. Conveying the message of Allah *the Almighty* is not just about words but also about actions and setting a good model.

At this point Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* used to say about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'His character was as that of the Quran and, His character and morals were as if the Quran was a being walking on the earth, which means that he was a complete application of the way brought from Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah *Glorified is He* concerning Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'The Messenger of Allah is an excellent model...' (*al-Ahzab*: 21).

How can we imagine the Messenger to be an angel? How could an angel convey the message amongst human beings? He may be able to carry out the task of merely conveying, but how would he carry out the actions and set an example? How, when we know that the angels are creations that have been moulded to obey Allah *Glorified is He*? Allah *the Almighty* mentions their concern; He says: 'angels who never disobey Allah's commands to them, but

do as they are ordered.’ (*at-Tahrim*: 6) Reasonably, the angels do not eat, drink or procreate so where would his desires come from? If an angel came with a message from heaven and he wanted to forbid his people from a specific sin, what would we expect? One of the disbelievers would say: ‘No. I am not able to, you are an angel, and you have a higher nature so you are able to leave off the action. As for me, I am not.

Therefore, the nature of being an exemplar necessitates that the Messenger must be a human being so that when he commands his people, he will be the first to carry out the command and when he forbids, he will be the first to abstain. Consequently, it is a conferment of Allah *the Almighty* upon Arabs that He *Glorified is He* raised amongst them a messenger from amongst themselves; in this point Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘A Messenger has come to you from among yourselves...’ (*at-Tawba*: 128).

First of all, Allah *the Almighty* bestowed us with a messenger directly from amongst ourselves who was not only a human being but also from among the Arabs and not from a foreign nation. Indeed he is from your own environment, from the same city of Mecca, and from the same tribe of Quraysh. Thereby, that you can have complete knowledge of his history, his manners, his conduct, and you know all his doings. You have already acknowledged that he is truthful and trustworthy and you entrust him with every expensive and precious thing that you have because you know that he is trustworthy. Thus, how can you disbelieve in him and accuse him of lying?!

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* refutes their accusation in another verse, and says: ‘The only thing that kept these people from believing, when guidance came to them, was that they said, ‘How could Allah have sent a human being as a messenger?’ (*al-Isra*’: 94) The thing that is blocking them from having faith is that he is a human being! In the same connection, illogically they speak, i.e. in one place, they reject the issue of sending a messenger in the form of human being, but in another place, they accept it; Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘And they said, “Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?”’⁽¹⁾ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

(1) The two tribes mentioned above are; Mecca and Ta’if. Some of the scholars said that the two men are Al Walid ibn Al-Mughirah and Urwa ibn Mas’ud Ath-Thaqafi, see Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir, 4/127. The apparent meaning is that any old man of the two tribes.

This verse indicates an astonishing amount of hesitation from the disbelievers, and a lack of sticking to one position. In the past they used to say, 'If you are going to be a liar, then you should be a man of retentive memory.'

The Quran responds to them by saying: 'Say, "if there were angels walking about on earth, and feeling at home, We would have sent them an angel from Heaven as a messenger."' (*al-Isra'*: 95) If there had been angels on the earth, then We would have sent down an angel messenger so that the benefit will be achieved.

Therefore, the exemplary one must be of the same species. Let us set an example to illustrate this point; imagine that you see a lion raging and roaming through the jungle, devouring everything it might see and no one is able to stop it, would you think, at that moment, to be a lion? No, but if you saw a knight holding his sword and smiting the necks of his enemy, you would not mind being that knight? I certainly would. This is the real, beneficial exemplar, but, if the species are different one cannot be an example for the other.

In this scope, Allah *the Almighty* refutes the accusations of the disbelievers; He says: '[Prophet], all the messengers We sent before you were simply men to whom We had given the Revelation.' (*an-Nahl*: 43) That is, O Muhammad, you are not the only man unprecedented with regards to the Messengers because those who preceded you throughout the past centuries were mortal men, all in the same field of prophethood.

The Arabic word *Rijalan* (men) here firstly indicates humanity. Secondly it indicates the sex as male. This is because the nature of the Messenger is based on dealing and socialising with his people. He presents himself to everyone and he talks to everyone. On the other hand, women's nature is based on being veiled and, thus, she cannot carry out the role of being an example for mankind. If we look at the nature of a woman, we find that her nature contains many things that are not suited to the role of prophethood and that are not compatible with the mission of a prophet, such as stopping prayer and worship while she is in a menstruating period or in childbed.

With deep contemplation on the verse, we find that the word 'Men' is restricted to a following meaning which is the revelation; in this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'To whom We had given the Revelation...' (*an-Nahl*: 43).

Thus, the Messenger is a man with no resemblance to any of us, for he has a higher advantage and distinguishing feature which is that Revelation sent to him and this is a high rank that we must preserve for the Prophets *peace and blessings be upon them all*.

In the same connection with new guidance Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘...you [people] can ask those who have knowledge if you do not know.’ (*an-Nahl*: 43) That is to say, if this matter has been hidden from you, which is sending messengers from amongst human beings – and I do not think it is hidden from you – because it is something common for all messages. It should not be hidden from you especially, for you have amongst your people those who have knowledge of the previous religions, such as Waraqa ibn Nawfal and others, you have people who have the knowledge of biographies and history, and there are Jews and Christians amongst you,; therefore, it is possible for you to ask these people about the humanity of the Messengers. This matter is clearly undeniable and cannot be rejected. What will the Jews and Christians say regarding the humanity of Musa (Moses) and ‘Isa (Jesus)? When questioned about their humanity.

Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse saying: ‘...if you do not know.’ (*an-Nahl*: 43) The verse indicates that they had nothing of knowledge. And that they have no doubt in this matter, i.e. you tell someone to ask about things which are unknown to him, but until this moment he knows well. And if there is a doubt in that issue, we will tell him to ask directly. Therefore, they are aware of the truth but will deny it with arrogance. Allah *the Almighty* says:

بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالزُّبُرِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الذِّكْرَ لِتُبَيِّنَ لِلنَّاسِ
مَا نُزِّلَ إِلَيْهِمْ وَلَعَلَّهُمْ يَنْفَكُّوْنَ

We sent them with clear signs and scriptures. We have sent down the message to you too [Prophet], so that you can explain to people what was sent for them, so that they may reflect [44] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 44)

Allah *Glorified is He* begins the verse by saying: ‘We sent them with clear signs and scriptures...’ (*an-Nahl*: 44). The linguists say that a preposition and a noun of preposition must be attached to something; the question here is, to

what are the preposition and noun of preposition attached here? They said: it is attached to the verb of the previous verse *Nuuhi* (we reveal) and the context would be: We never sent any but mortal men whom We inspired with all evidence of the truth and with clear signs and scriptures.

The preposition and noun of preposition could also be attached to the followers of earlier revelation, and the meaning would be: ask the people of earlier revelation about the evidence of truth, and about the clear signs and scriptures. These are two possibilities to which the preposition and noun of preposition can refer.

The Arabic word *bayinat* (clear signs) is a matter that is clear and obvious and no one has any doubt about it. Either it can be a sign that affirms the truthfulness of the message such as a miracle that challenges the deniers to bring something like it, or it can be universal signs that draw the attention of the creation towards the existence of the Creator, such as the signs of the night, the day, the sun, the moon and the stars.

As for the Arabic word *zubur* (Scriptures) i.e. the written books; none can be written except what is valuable in order not to be lost and there is nothing more precious than that which comes to us from Allah's way in order to regulate the activities of our lives.

We know that Arabs –in the past– used to ask about everything, no matter how inconsiderable it is. They had knowledge of arrows and were the first to make them, and they also knew about bows and saddles and other similar simple things. So did they not ask about Allah's signs in the universe, the secrets that they contain and the wonders in their creation that indicate the Creator?

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We have sent down the message to you too [Prophet], so that you can explain to people what was sent for them...' (*an-Nahl*: 44). The Arabic word *dhikr* (Message) which means to remind, is found many times in the Noble Quran with numerous meanings. The original meaning of *dhikr* is something that kept in mind and that is never absent; its opposite is forgetfulness. Therefore, we have been remembering and forgetting, and the word *dhikr* here means something that is already present in mind and we should not forget it...what is it?

With replying to the previous question Allah *Glorified is He* says that He created Adam *Allah be pleased with him* and took a covenant from every atom he had. Allah *the Almighty* illustrating this truth says: '[Prophet], when your Lord took out the offspring from the loins of the Children of Adam and made them bear witness about themselves, He said, "Am I not your Lord?" and they replied, "Yes, we bear witness." So you cannot say on the Day of Resurrection, "We were not aware of this,"' (*al-A'raf*: 172).

The covenant taken from Adam *Allah be pleased with him* was a covenant taken from all of his progeny as well. This is because each of the progeny of Adam contains an atom from their father Adam, a living part of him as a result of reproduction and procreation from Adam until the Hour will come to exist. As long as this is the case so we have witnessed and taken the covenant. Allah *the Almighty* says: '...Am I not your Lord...?' (*al-A'raf*: 172)

As a matter of fact, the word *dhikr* came to remind us of the covenant that is hidden within our creation and which we must not forget. When forgetfulness happens, messengers then have to be sent and books have to be sent down to remind us of Allah's covenant with us, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Am I not your Lord? 'and they replied, "Yes,"' (*al-A'raf*: 172). For this reason, the Books that were sent down are called *dhikr*, but the process of *dhikr* comes gradually and in stages. Each messenger comes to remind his people according to the extent of their forgetfulness. As for the seal Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, who has come to all of mankind until the establishment of the Hour, he has come with the true *dhikr* after which there is no *dhikr* i.e. the Noble Quran.

Another possible meaning that the word *dhikr* contains, is eminence and honour; this meaning is also mentioned in the Quran; Allah *the Almighty* says: 'We have certainly sent down to you a book in which is your mention...' (*al-Anbiya*: 10).

The Arabs, by the Quran, occupied a high position; their language, by Quran, prolonged, and held a position of pre-eminence amongst all other nations.

Let us contemplate more in this rich word *dhikr*; the slave of Allah can remember Allah and vice versa, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'So remember Me; I will remember you...' (*al-Baqara*: 152).

The intended meaning is: remember Me with obedience and faith and I will remember you with vast gifts, blessings, goodness, sustenance and with My reward.

When the word *Ad-dhikr* (the reminder) is unrestrictedly used, it refers exclusively to the Quran because it is the Book that comprises everything that was sent down to the previous messengers as well as everything that humanity will need until the Hour is established.

Likewise, the indefinite word *kitab* (book) can refer to any book, but when it is definite as in *al-kitab* (the Book), it refers exclusively to the Noble Quran. This is what we call 'known by preponderance'.

The dhikr (reminder) is the Quran that was revealed to Muhammad and at the same time it is his everlasting miracle. It is both a way of life and a miracle. In contrast to the previous messengers who came with miracles for their own circumstances and books for their own, and, thus, the book is separate from the miracle. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point, the book of Musa (Moses) was the Torah and his miracle was the staff, the book of Isa (Jesus) and his way is the Gospel, but his miracle was curing the blind and the leper⁽¹⁾ and bringing the dead back to life by Allah's leave.

As for Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, his miracle is also the book of his way; they are inseparable, that is to say, that the miracle can support the way until the Hour is established.

This is the secret behind preserving and protecting the Quran by Allah *the Almighty* who says: 'We have sent down the Quran Ourselves, and We ourselves will guard it. Even before you [Prophet]' (*al-Hijr*: 9).

As for the previous books, the followers of each messenger were entrusted with preserving each book; Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We revealed the Torah with guidance and light, and the prophets, who had submitted to Allah, judged according to it for the Jews. So did the rabbis and the scholars in

(1) The Arabic word *Akmah*: i.e. a person born or after his birth becomes blind. The second word is *Baras* / leprosy: i.e. a skin disease causing some white spots defames in the skin.

accordance with that part of Allah's Scripture which they were entrusted to preserve,' (*al-Ma'ida*: 44).

The Arabic word *istuhfizhu* (entrusted to preserve) means that Allah *Glorified is He* asked them to preserve the Torah. This is a command of responsibility that can be either obeyed or disobeyed, but what happened was that the Jews disobeyed, changed, and distorted the Torah. As for the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* took it upon Himself to preserve it and He left it not to anyone else because it is the seal Book that will accompany humanity until the coming of the Hour.

There is another meaning of the exuberant Arabic word *dhikr* (The reminder); it is also that which the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought along with the Quran, i.e. Hadith. The Messenger has another mission, which is his approach of speech by using Hadith with the magnificent light of guidance from the Quran; therefore, The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Beware! I have been given the Quran and something like it, yet the time is coming when a man repletes on his couch will say, "Keep to the Quran"; what you find in it to be permissible treat as permissible, and what you find in it to be prohibited treat as prohibited, but the matter is not like that...' ⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...so that you can explain to people what was sent for them,' (*an-Nahl*: 44). Therefore, the Quran was revealed as both a miracle book and as book containing a way, but it goes through establishing the foundations of this way only, without any methodological definitions or necessary explanations to elucidate that way to keep the Quran with broad lines of instructions and not to be massive and possibly far removed from its intent.

For more illustrations we can say that, the Quran came with firm foundations and the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was left with the task of explaining to mankind, elucidating and clarifying what it contains.

Some people may think that everything that comes from *Sunna*, we are not obliged to stick to and abide by it; for *Sunna* rewarded the one who abides by it and unpunished the one who does not abide by it; that matter is not so

(1) See Ahmad in his *Musnad*, (4/131). Abu Dawud in his *Sunan*, (4591). And Ibn Hibban in his book *Mawared Az- Zam'aan*, p. 97, from the Hadith of Al- Miqdam ibn Ma'd Yakrab.

simply understood in that scope. We must distinguish between evidence based on *Sunna* and ruling based on *Sunna* so that the matter may not be obscured for people.

Commenting on these two terms, we say that, firstly, evidence based on *Sunna* means that there is an obligation, but its evidence is affirmed by *Sunna*. An example to illustrate this point; the number of *Raklas* (units of obligatory prayers), i.e. Dawn, Noon, Afternoon, Sunset and Night prayers, are obligatory by *Sunna*.

Secondly, a ruling based on *Sunna*: these are juristic matters and rulings that have been related to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; rewarded is the one who does it and unpunished is the one who does not do it. When the Messenger explains a ruling to us via his conduct and his example, we should elaborate: is its evidence based on *Sunna* as in an obligatory act or is it a ruling based on *Sunna*, i.e. a mere *Sunna* voluntary prophetic act? The permanent practices of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* give us a clear understanding which one of the previous meanings is correct, i.e. if he was persistent in something and adhered to it, then it is an obligation. If he was not persistent in the act, so it is a *Sunna* act.

Therefore, the task of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not just to deliver the Quran and convey it to mankind. Rather, he must explain what he has brought of the Divine way. The conveying cannot be carried out properly without explaining...and we must distinguish between two sources of ruling: Quranic source and Prophetic source.

To identify this point we have to know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has one of the distinguishing features over the rest of the previous messengers *Allah's peace and blessings be upon them all* which is that he is the only Messenger whom Allah *Glorified is He* entrusted with legislation. In terms of the previous messengers, they only conveyed the commands of the Allah *the Almighty*. As for Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* concerning him Allah *the Almighty* says: '...so accept whatever the Messenger gives you, and abstain from whatever he forbids you...' (*al-Hashr*: 7).

Therefore, he *peace and blessings be upon him* received the privilege of legislation and his *Sunna* is regarded as the second source of legislation after the Quran.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...so that they may reflect.’ (*an-Nahl*: 44) The Arabic word *Yatafakkaruun* (to reflect), poses the question: on what should they reflect? They should deeply think of the state of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* before his ministry, for it is not related that he was an orator, a writer or a poet. Also, it has not been related that he was a student or a teacher for the first forty years of his own life, therefore Allah *the Almighty* asked them to have a reflection on this matter.

What Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought is not some genius that burst forth at once, just like that, when he was forty years old. Usually, glimpses of genius tend to appear in one’s late teens and early twenties.

It does not make sense for the Messenger of Allah’s genius to be delayed until such an age while he was seeing people around him dying. His father died while he was in his mother’s womb. Then his mother died while he was still a small child. Then his grandfather died; so who can guarantee that he would live to forty years, when this genius of his would burst forth?

Therefore, you must think! This genius is not of Muhammad’s own will. Rather, it is a matter from the heavens. Therefore, his Lord *the Almighty* commanded him to inform them; Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Say, “If Allah had so willed, I would not have recited it to you, nor would He have made it known to you. I lived a whole lifetime among you before it came to me. How can you not use your reason?”’ (*Yunus*: 16)

That is, it is obligatory for you to think about this matter. If you had thought about it you, would have had to fall over yourselves to become Muslims. You know best who Muhammad is and you have never experienced any lying or treachery from him, nor have you ever seen him engaged in poetry or oration. Therefore, he would never be truthful with you nor would attribute lies to Allah *Glorified is He*.

We must make a distinction between the intellect and thinking. The intellect is the instrument that receives tangible entities and differentiates

among them, and general matters are derived from them that then become the principles that man lives according to, which are considered accumulated information. As for thinking, i.e. that you think of these things to deduce a specific ruling out of them.

Allah *Glorified is He* has left us with freedom of thought and freedom of intellect regarding matters related to our lives in this world. However, He controls us in compulsory matters without which the world would be ruined, for that which ruins the world is us who do not fall in line with His *Sharia*. Regarding the remaining matters from which no harm results, He gives us some scope in which to think and experiment because failing therein will not cause any harm.

When Allah *Glorified is He* sets a compulsory ruling and makes it obligatory via a clear text over which there is no disagreement. But if an issue bears multiple interpretations, it will be left for us to sort out what is correct, as making a mistake therein does not lead to ruin.

Thus, the issue is a scale of thinking that holds sway over tangible entities and regulates matters, primarily, we must distinguish between what is obligatory and what can be taken through the process of intellect. If the issue was deduced through *Ijtihad* (using reason for proper deduction) by which there is no blame to worship Allah *the Almighty*, but the problem is that people may accuse that person, with a different methodological process of *Ijtihad*, of disbelief, Allah forbid.

Concerning this issue, we admonish those people to fear Allah *the Almighty* because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘...but when he uses his judgment and commits a mistake, he will have a single reward⁽¹⁾. In contrast, there are knowledgeable scholars who are well aware of the nature of controversial issues, and they admitted that their opinion is correct despite the possibility of it being wrong, while another opinion is wrong, but

(1) 'Amr ibn Al-'As may Allah be pleased with him said, 'I heard the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, "When a judge utilizes his skill of judgment and comes to a right decision, he will have a double reward, but when he uses his judgment and commits a mistake, he will have a single reward.' See Muslim in his *Sahih*, (1716). Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih*, (7352).

there exists a possibility of it being correct. This is how different opinions co-exist and co-respect.

In the same connection, we find that Allah *the Almighty* blessed his slaves by giving them leave to use their thinking, contemplation and reflection because He destined that His creation are better than to go astray or become disbelievers. Not only were they blessed with creation and reasoning but also Allah *the Almighty* blessed them with obedience and faith.

In this vein Allah *the Almighty* reproaches those people who do not use their mind and critical thinking to get rid of their disputes and problems, and if you do not believe in the resurrection in the Hereafter and the punishment that has been prepared for the evildoers, be mindful concerning what punishment was brought down upon the wrongdoers in this world.

Reflect upon those who preceded you from the denying communities and what their fate was; are you safe from the punishment, have you distanced yourself enough?!

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

أَفَأَمِنَ الَّذِينَ مَكَرُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَخْسِفَ اللَّهُ بِهِمُ الْأَرْضَ
أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

Are those who plan evil so sure that God will not make the earth swallow them up, that punishment will not come on them from some unimagined direction [45] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 45)

The Arabic syntax in the first Arabic word *Afa'mina* '...so sure...' indicates that there is a sentence implied before this verse, which implies that they ignorant of the punishment that happened to those who opposed the previous prophets. Did they feel safe from Allah's scheme? That is, their feeling from Allah's scheme because they are ignorant of what happened to the deniers of the previous communities. Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'Are those who plan evil' (*an-Nahl*: 45). The Arabic word *Makr* (scheme) is secret plotting to cause harm against someone whom you are not capable of truly

confronting and stating as such openly. You would not secretly plot against somebody unless you were incapable of speaking out against him directly. The fact that you are plotting and scheming is proof of your ineptitude and therefore scheming is considered the first stage of cowardice; the schemer does not scheme unless he is incapable of confrontation, and the greater the scheming the greater the weakness.

Allah *the Almighty* indicates to that notion which concerns to women, says: '...This is another instance of women's treachery: your treachery is truly great.' (*Yusuf*: 28)

In the contrary, Allah *Glorified is He* regarding Satan, says: '...Satan's strategies are truly weak.' (*an-Nisa*': 76) Therefore, scheming is a proof of weakness, and as long as women's guile is awesome then their weakness is also awesome, and the same goes for Satan's guile.

In the past, they used to say, 'Beware of being defeated by a weak person.' This is because when he is able and the opportunity suits him he will not let you escape because he knows his weakness well, and he cannot guarantee that the opportunity may come to a second time. Therefore, he will not waste it, which is the opposite of the strong person as he does not desire revenge when he is given the opportunity and he may even let it slip because of his power and ability over his adversary, which means that he can do what he wants whenever he wants to. An Arab poet expressed the same meaning in his statement:

If the weak woman is given the opportunity

She kills, and that is the power of the weak

Therefore, the power of the weak may kill in contrast to that of the strong.

Then we have another notion regarding scheming, that scheming may give you victory over your equal adversary of mankind. Whenever you are exposed to someone who is stronger than you, more prudent than you and wiser in scheming than you, then maybe your scheming will be fruitless. Indeed, maybe he will overcome you with his scheming and his prudence. Thus, how the case if the One scheming against you is the Lord of all the Worlds *the Almighty*?

Allah *Glorified is He* the Ever Truthful, says: '...they schemed and so did Allah: He is the best of schemers.' (*al-Anfal*: 30) And He *the Almighty* says: '...the plotting of evil only rebounds on those who plot...' (*Fatir*: 43) The scheming of the slaves is fully disclosed before Allah *Glorified is He*. As for His scheming, no one has any power against it and from which no one can protect themselves. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* is above all schemers.

The evil scheme is the oppressive scheme that is only done for evil, as if the case with the scheming of those who have denied the Messengers throughout the ages. It is that you hatch a plot wrongly against innocent one that is truly oppressive.

The Messenger was confronted by his people who denied him with scheming and deception, which is to prove that they were incapable of confronting him directly; i.e. The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was exposed to various phases of guile, scheming and deception, and this was for wisdom that Allah *the Almighty* willed which is that the disbelievers despair of gaining victory over Him. Against him they had plotted and conspired to kill, and they had devised plans to do so, but their plans ended in failure on the night of the Emigration.

In the similar fashion another conspiracy they tried to bewitch Him⁽¹⁾ but Allah *Glorified is He* disclosed their affair and wasted their efforts. Therefore, whatever means you employ to abort this *Da'wa* (call) will be fruitless because Allah *Glorified is He* has given him victory over you, He *the Almighty*

(1) 'Aisha narrated that 'Magic was worked on the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him so that he began to fancy that he was doing a thing which he was not actually doing. One day he invoked (Allah) for a long period and then said, "I feel that Allah has inspired me as how to cure myself. Two persons came to me (in my dream) and sat, one by my head and the other by my feet. One of them asked the other, "What is the ailment of this man?" The other replied, 'He has been bewitched' The first asked, 'Who has bewitched him?' The other replied, 'Lubaid ibn Al-A'sam.' The first one asked, 'What material has he used?' The other replied, 'A comb, the hair gathered on it, and the outer skin of the pollen of the male date-palm.' The first asked, 'Where is that?' The other replied, 'It is in the well of Dharwan.' "So, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* went out towards the well and then returned and said to me on his return, "Its date-palms (the date-palms near the well) are like the heads of the devils." I asked, "Did you take out those things with which the magic was worked?" He said, "No, for I have been cured by Allah and I am afraid that this action may spread evil amongst the people." Later on the well was filled up with earth. See Al-Bukhaiin in his (*Sahih*) (3368) and Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (6/96,50)


says: ‘Allah has written, “I shall most certainly win, I and My messengers...”’ (*al-Mujadala*: 21).

In the contrary Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...that Allah will not make the earth swallow them up...’ (*an-Nahl*: 45). The Arabic word *Al-khasf* (to swallow) i.e. the earth causes what is on its surface to disappear...so if something is swallowed it means that it is hidden within the earth. Another Arabic word from the same root is *khusuf*, (a lunar eclipse), i.e. the moon’s light is hidden. In the same regard concerning Qarun, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘We caused the earth to swallow him and his home’ (*al-Qasas*: 81). This is one type of punishment, of which there are various forms as the Quran has mentioned, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And we punished each one of them for their sins: some We struck with a violent storm; some were overcome by a sudden blast; some We made the earth swallow; and some We drowned. It was not Allah who wronged them; they wronged themselves.’ (*al-Ankabut*: 40)

These are the kinds of punishment that have befallen the deniers, and it was better for those people to take a lesson and warning from those who preceded them and to take precaution against the same thing happening to them.

Back to the verse in question Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...that punishment will not come on them from some unimagined direction.’ (*an-Nahl*: 45)

The purport is that if they take precaution against Allah’s scheme and the punishment that will befall them. Allah *Glorified is He* will still come upon them from a direction that they do not perceive and has not occurred to them, therefore, they will be defeated and punished with an easy way. In this point Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... Allah came up on them from where they least expected and put panic...’ (*al-Hashr*: 2). Allah *Glorified is He* continues to say:


 أَوْ يَأْخُذُهُمْ فِي تَقْلِيلِهِمْ فَمَا هُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ

**That it will not catch them suddenly in the midst of their
comings and goings – for they cannot frustrate Allah [46]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 46)**

The Arabic word *At-taqallub* (comings and goings) means to move from one state to another, or from one place to another, and moving from a place of

residence to another place is proof of power and ability; when someone moves from his place carrying their equipment and possessions and everything he owns in order to establish a new life for himself in a new place.

Therefore, coming and going in life is one of the manifestations of power; that one is able to establish a new life and preserve one's wealth throughout the journeys of coming and going. There is no doubt that this is one of the manifestations of might, dignity, and wealth only done by the strong.

Allah *the Almighty* gives us another example concerning the people of Sheba, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Also, We had placed, between them and the towns We had blessed, other towns within sight of one another to which they could⁽¹⁾ travel easily – "Travel safely in this land by night and by day" – but [still] they complained, "Our Lord has made the distance between our staging posts so long!"' (*Saba'*: 18-19)

These are a people for whom Allah *Glorified is He* gathered all kinds of blessings and He made them safe in their own lands and travels, He also gave them places to rest during their journeys. However, astonishingly, they asked Allah *Glorified is He* to lengthen the distances between their journey-stages, as if they wanted to be distinguished from the weak that are not able to cope with the difficulty of travelling and journeying. They said, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Our Lord has made the distance between our staging posts so long!' (*Saba'*: 19) so that the weak amongst them would not be able to embark upon such distances.

Therefore, those who come and go in the earth are proving that they can either remain in a place or they can travel and they have the ability to take what they own in order to set up residence in another place. This is why they said: 'Away from home your wealth is your homeland'...and those who are able do what they want.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Let it not deceive you that those who are bent on denying the truth seem to be able to do as they please on earth' (*Al- 'Imran*: 196).

(1) 'We made distances of travel suit what the travelers need to', see Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* (3/533).

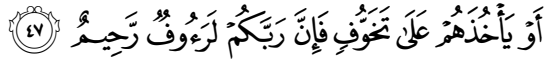
Do not let their moving about, in their journeys in the winter and summer, make you afraid, for Allah *the Exalted* is able to take them to task in their comings and goings. The purport could also be their comings and goings in their thoughts and evil schemes against the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and his Companions, as in His *the Exalted* statement: 'Indeed, even before this time have they tried to stir up discord and devised all manner of plots against you...' (*at-Tawba*: 48). They used to sit planning, scheming and plotting, to put an end to the call in its early stages.

He *the Exalted* says: '...without their being able to elude [Him],' (*an-Nahl*: 46) *Al-mu'jiz* '...being able to elude...' is the one who does not allow you to overcome him, and these people will never be able to elude Allah *the Exalted* and they will never be able to escape from His punishment because whenever they plot, their plot and their guile are known to Allah... as for Allah's scheming, if He wants to scheme against them they will never perceive it. '...they scheme: but Allah [also] schemes...' (*al-Anfal*: 30).

And He said: 'Behold, they [who refuse to accept it] devise many a false argument [to disprove its truth] [15] but I shall bring all their scheming to nought [16] Let, then, the deniers of the truth have their will: let them have their will for a little while! [18]' (*at-Tariq*: 15-17)

The one who is not able to overcome you will submit to you, and as long as he submits to you, then the way that you have brought has power over him.

Incapacity in front of someone strong can also be a proof of strength, as Quraysh were incapable when confronted with the Quran's challenge. Their incapacity with regards to Allah's Book is proof of their strength within the field in which the Quran is challenging them. This is because when Allah challenges and contests He does not contest the weak. Rather, He contests the strong within the field of this challenge.



**Or that it will not catch up with them gradually?
Indeed your Lord is kind and merciful [47]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 47)**

At-takhawwuf ‘... apprehension...’ is fear of something that has not yet happened, and thus the imagination runs wild and one expects all kinds of evil to afflict them while the reality is that only one thing will occur.

Imagine that you are waiting for a loved one and they are late for your appointment. Your imagination then starts thinking about all kinds of possibilities. I wonder if this could have happened, or maybe that happened. These thoughts have an effect on you and they cause pain to the soul. Thus one’s fears multiply, but if you wait in order to know the truth of the matter, you find that there is just one fear.

This is why they say as a proverb, ‘The occurrence of the tribulation is easier than waiting for it’, and this is because it occurs in one form. As for awaiting it, this spreads various kinds of fear and anxiety within the soul. Therefore, apprehension is more severe and greater than the occurrence of the event itself.

This fear would seize the disbelievers whenever they learned that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* had sent out a raiding party and each group from amongst them feared that it was coming for them. This is how Allah spread fear amongst all of them, even though the raiding party was heading in a specific direction.⁽¹⁾

Some of the Quranic commentators say that *at-takhawwuf* means a decrease such that Allah decreases the terrain of disbelief by way of the tribes entering Islam one after the other. Each one of them decreases the terrain of disbelief...as is mentioned in His statement: ‘And most certainly shall we try you by means

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*) (438,335) and also Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (531) in the Book of Mosques from the Hadith of Jabir ibn-‘Abdullah may Allah be pleased with him who narrated that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said: {I have been given five things that were not given to anyone before me...} which included {...and I have been supported by fear (by which the enemy is overwhelmed) from the distance that takes one month to cover...}

of danger, and hunger, and loss of worldly goods, of lives and of [labour's] fruits' (*al-Baqara*: 155)

Then the True Lord *the Exalted* concludes the verse by saying: '...And yet, behold, your Lord is Most Compassionate, Most Merciful!' (*an-Nahl*: 47)

Does this conclusion to the verse suit the threat and warning that preceded it? The intellect would say that the more suitable conclusion would be, 'Behold, your Lord is Severe in Retribution!' for example.

However, here we must know that this is a gift of Lordship that encompasses all of the servants; the believers amongst them and the disbelievers, for indeed Allah *the Exalted* summoned them all into the life of this world and He took it upon Himself to maintain their lives by way of a sun, air, earth, sky; these things were not created for one person to the exclusion of everyone else. He *the Exalted* said: 'To him who desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall grant an increase in his harvest; whereas to him who desires [but] a harvest in this world, We [may] give something thereof but he will have no share in [the blessings of] the life to come' (*ash-Shura*: 20).

It is as if there is a kind of mercy of His *Glorified is He* in the verse as well as His eagerness that they attain salvation because He *Glorified is He* is alerting them to what could happen to them if they persist in their disbelief and He is informing them of the consequences of their disbelief. The informing is an admonition, and the admonition is a mercy and grace towards them so that they do not have to receive the fulfilment of this threat and this warning.

Examples of this kind of conclusion to a verse are found several times in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*. The True Lord *the Exalted* says: '[He is] the Lord of the two farthest points of sunrise, and the Lord of the two farthest points of sunset. [17] Which, then, of your Lord's powers can you disavow? [18]' (*ar-Rahman*: 17-18)

This is a blessing that suits His statement: 'Which, then, of your Lord's powers can you disavow?' (*ar-Rahman*: 18)

And in His *the Exalted* statement: 'He has given freedom to the two great bodies of water, so that they might meet: [19] [yet] between them is a barrier which they may not transgress. [20]' (*ar-Rahman*: 19-20)

This is one of Allah's blessings that suit the conclusion of the verse: 'Which, then, of your Lord's powers can you disavow?' (*ar-Rahman*: 21) As for His *the Exalted* statement: 'All that lives on earth or in the heavens is bound to pass away [26] but forever will abide thy Lord's Self, full of majesty and glory [27] Which, then, of your Lord's powers can you disavow? [28]' (*ar-Rahman*: 26-28)

What is the blessing in 'All that lives on earth or in the heavens is bound to pass away'? Is death a blessing? Yes, death is one of Allah's blessings towards His servants because it says to the one who perseveres in goodness, 'Death will come and you will receive the recompense for your perseverance in goodness and the reward for your actions.' It says to the disbeliever, 'Pay attention and take heed...death is coming.' It is as if He *Glorified is He* is alerting the disbelievers and warning them so that they desist from what they are in. Is this not a blessing from Allah and mercy from Him *Glorified is He* towards His servants?

Likewise, look at the True Lord's statement: 'A flash of fire will be let loose upon you, and smoke, and you will be left without succour! [35] which, then, of your Lord's favours do you deny? [36]' (*ar-Rahman*: 35-36)

What the blessing is in: 'A flash of fire will be let loose upon you and smoke...?' (*ar-Rahman*: 35) What blessing is in this punishment? Yes, the one who reflects on this verse will find a great blessing in it, because it contains a threat and a warning of punishment if they persist in the disbelief that they are upon. Its contents contain a warning and eagerness for their salvation, in the same way that you would threaten your son, 'If you are neglectful in your studies you will fail and I will do such-and-such to you.' You only say this because of your eagerness for him to succeed and do well.

Therefore, the conclusion of the verse: '...And yet, behold, your Lord is Most Compassionate, Most Merciful!' (*an-Nahl*: 47) is a conclusion that suits the threat and warning that precedes it. It contains an elucidation of Allah's mercy to which He calls both the believer and the disbeliever.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى مَا خَلَقَ اللَّهُ مِنْ شَيْءٍ يَنْفَعِيهِمْ ظِلُّهُ
 عَنِ الْيَمِينِ وَالشَّمَائِلِ سُجَّدًا لِلَّهِ وَهُمْ دَاخِرُونَ

Do the [disbelievers] not observe the things that God has created, casting their shadows right and left, submitting themselves to God obediently? [48] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 48)

His statement: 'Have, then, they [who deny the truth] never considered...' (*an-Nahl*: 48) means: Have they been blind and never seen or reflected on what Allah has created? '...any of the things...' (*an-Nahl*: 48).

The word *shay'* (thing) is what they call the genus of genera (*jins al-ajnas*) and 'any of' *min* indicates the starting of what is called a 'thing, i.e. the tiniest thing in existence. This is what they call the lowest of genera...and it also indicates generality and thus the meaning of: '...any of the things...' (*an-Nahl*: 48) is: everything.

Look at anything in the universe, regardless of how small it is, and you will find that it has a shadow. '...– [how] their shadows turn...' (*an-Nahl*: 48) *Yatfiya'* '...turn...' comes from the root word *fa'a*, which means to return. What is meant here is the shadow returning to the sun once again, or the sun returning to the shadow.

If we were to look at shadows we would find that they are of two kinds; a fixed continuous shadow and a changing shadow. The fixed shadow is always in the places that never receive any of the sun's rays, such as the bottom of the sea and the depths of the earth. The moving shadow is that which is called a *fay'* (returning) because it returns from the shadow to the sun or from the sun to the shadow. Therefore, it can only be called a *fay'* if it goes back to the way it was.

But how is a shadow formed? A shadow is formed whenever an opaque object blocks the sun's rays; and thus it creates a shadow that goes in the opposite direction of the sun. This shadow has two states of elongation and one state of evenness.

It is elongated towards the east until it reaches the west. Then it starts shrinking as the sun rises and when the sun is at its zenith in the sky the

shadow becomes the thing itself. This is the state of evenness. Then the sun inclines towards the west and the elongation of the shadow becomes the opposite of the first elongation towards the west because it is now pointing towards the east.

The True Lord *the Exalted* draws our attention to this universal sign when He, says: ‘Are you not aware of your Lord [through His works]? – how He causes the shadow to lengthen [towards the night] when, had He so willed, He could indeed have made it stand still, but then, we have made the sun its guide; [45] and then, [after having caused it to lengthen,] we draw it in towards ourselves with a gradual drawing-in. [46]’ (*al-Furqan*: 45-46).

This is because if you were to look at the shadow and how it extends and how it shrinks and disappears you would find something truly amazing... because you do not notice the shadow in these two states because it is moving in a linear fashion.

What is the meaning of ‘smooth’ *insiyabi*? It is a kind of motion; motion is either smooth, or it is motion that comprises successive stops between movements.

We notice the latter in how the hands of a clock move. It is more obvious with the second hand than the minute hand, but you can barely notice it with the hour hand. If you were to observe the second hand you find that it moves with a regular beat; i.e. stop, start, stop, start etc.

What this means is that it gathers its motion while it is still, and then it releases it. This is how it experiences a moment in which it is motionless. This is what we call ‘periodic motion’. We cannot observe the motion in the hour hand because the beats are so subtle that the naked eye is incapable of observing it and noticing it. As for smooth motion, it means that every portion of time contains a portion of motion, i.e. it is continuous motion that is distributed over time.

Let us use the example of child’s growth... a newborn baby grows constantly but its mother, due to her close attachment to it, does not notice this growth because she is always looking at it. How is the movement of growth in the child? Is it periodic motion in which the child’s growth accumulates every week or every month and then it grows in one leap?

If the child's growth was as such, we would notice it, but it is not like that. Rather, it grows in a form of smooth motion which distributes the period of growth over time. So, we barely notice its growth.

Likewise, the movement of the sun is linear, such that it distributes the particulars of motion according to the particulars of time. The sun's movement is not dependent on a gears-based mechanism, as is the case with a clock, for example. Rather, it is dependent on the command of Allah, connected to a constant 'Be!'

It is as if the True Lord *the Exalted* wants to turn His creation towards a universal phenomenon within the tangible realm of existence, which each one of us can comprehend in our essence and which we can see. Amongst these manifestations is the phenomenon of the shadow whose motion man is incapable of noticing. In another verse Allah *the Exalted* says: '...as do their shadows in the mornings and the evenings.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 15)

Thus the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to spread the idea of glorification throughout the universe, as He *the Exalted* said: '...and there is not a single thing but [that it] extols His limitless glory and praise: but you [O men] fail to grasp the manner of their glorifying Him!...' (*al-Isra'*: 44) Thus everything that is called a 'thing' glorifies, regardless of how small it is.

In His *the Exalted* statement: '... [how] their shadows turn right and left...' (*an-Nahl*: 48) there is something to be noted about the Quranic rendering, as the word *yamin* ("...right...") is singular while the word *shama'il* ("...left...") is plural. This is because when the True Lord *the Exalted* said 'Have, then, they [who deny the truth] never considered any of the things that Allah has created...' (*an-Nahl*: 48).

He mentioned the smallest thing that could be imagined from amongst His *Glorified is He* creation; '...any of the things (*min shay'*)...' which is singular. Then He *Glorified is He* said: "...their shadows..." (*an-Nahl*: 48) which is plural, i.e. the sum total of these things, as man does not turn the shadow of one thing but rather, the shadow of numerous things.

Here "...any of..." indicates generality. "...any of the things..." (*an-Nahl*: 48) i.e. everything, so it is appropriate for the right to be singular and the left to be plural.

Then He *the Exalted* says: ‘prostrating themselves before Allah and utterly submissive [to His will]?’ (*an-Nahl*: 48)

What is the connection between the movement of shadows and prostration? The meaning of prostrating is to be in submission to Allah, and it is as if the movement of the shadow and its extension alongside time is proof that it is connected to its Sublime Mover, the Sublime One Who says ‘Be!’, and the shadow is one of His signs, that is subjugated to Him *Glorified is He* prostrating submissively because of His statement: ‘Be!’ and it is.

We said: there is a difference between something you arrange in a universal arrangement and something you arrange in a divine arrangement. The maker of a time bomb arranges it so that it explodes at the time that he wants, but the case is different with the arrangement of the universe.

Allah arranged the universe in a divine arrangement, based on His statement: ‘Be!’ and it is constantly waiting for this divine command: (‘Be!’ and it is), and so forth, so this is not a mechanically controlled matter. No, it is a divinely controlled matter.

This is why some people are happy to say, ‘The sun is to remain as such for several years and then its light will finish,’ and many things have resulted from this judgment. We say: no, the matter is not like that. The sun is subject to a divine, controlled arrangement and it constantly waits for ‘Be!’, which the entire universe heeds. This is why He *the Exalted* says: ‘[and] every day He manifests Himself in yet another [wondrous] way.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 29)

This is how the noble verse has made it clear that that everything that is called a ‘thing’ prostrates to Allah *the Exalted* and the word ‘thing’ *shay*’ is singular and it indicates generality. We know about prostration from the prayers that Allah has made us legally responsible for, and it is the utmost limit of submission; the submission of the essence of the slave to the One Who is worshipped, for we submit while standing, we submit while bowing, and we submit while sitting but the most complete submission is when we prostrate to Allah... and why is the most complete submission when we prostrate to Allah?

We say: it is because man has a general essence, and in this essence is the chief of the essence, such that when it is referred to one is referring to the

essence itself. What is meant is the face. When the True Lord *the Exalted* describes the passing away of existence, this is why He says: ‘...Everything is bound to perish, save His [eternal] Self (*wajh*)...’ (*al-Qasas*: 88). Likewise He said: ‘but only out of a longing for the countenance of his Lord, The All-Highest: [20] and such, indeed, shall in time be well pleased. [21]’ (*al-Layl*: 20-21) The word *wajh* (face) is used but what is meant is the essence. Thus, whenever the face prostrates to Allah *the Exalted* it shows that the entire essence is in submission because the most honoured part of a man is his face. When he presses it against the earth he is in the state of utmost submission, with his entire essence, to the One Who is worshipped *Exalted is He*.

The verse also shows that the shadow, too, prostrates to its Lord and Creator *Glorified is He*. The shadows can belong to inanimate objects like trees, for example, or a building or a mountain, and the shadows of these fixed things are also fixed and do not move. As for man’s shadow, or that of an animal, it is a moving shadow. The True Lord *the Exalted* has given an example of complete submission in shadows; because the shadows of everything are never separated from the ground. This is an example of perfect submission.

Then the True Lord *the Exalted* takes the matter of prostration from the shadows of inanimate objects one-step further, and He says: ‘...as do their shadows in the mornings and the evenings.’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 15)

This means that the essences prostrate, and likewise the shadows prostrate. This is why some of the Gnostics are astonished by the disbeliever and they say: ‘O disbeliever! Your shadow prostrates but you are refusing!’

This progression is found in His *the Exalted* statement:

وَلِلَّهِ يَسْجُدُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ مِنْ دَابَّةٍ
وَالْمَلَائِكَةُ وَهُمْ لَا يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

It is to God that everything in the heavens and earth submits, every beast that moves, even the angels – they are free from arrogance [49] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 49)

The genera of the universe that man knows of are four: inanimate objects; plants, in which one finds the property of growth; animals, in which one finds

the properties of motion and sense; man, in which one finds the property of thought; and angels, in which one finds the property of essential, luminous light. These are the genera that we know of.

The True Lord *the Exalted* takes us from the prostrating shadows that belong to fixed, inanimate objects to the things that move, and when they move their shadow also moves on the earth. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: ‘For before Allah prostrates itself all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth’ (*an-Nahl*: 49).

He then broke down this summarisation into detail by saying: ‘every beast that moves, and the angels...’ (*an-Nahl*: 49) i.e. from the least of moving things, which is the beast, to the highest of things, which is the angels.

Someone might say: ‘do all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth prostrate to Allah?’ We say to this person: Yes, because you have interpreted prostration to be the placing of your forehead on the earth, to show that the essence, in its highness and in its lowness, is prostrating to Allah and submitting completely, since you have made your forehead level with your feet.

The True Lord *the Exalted* wants us to be aware of the equality of slavehood that is found throughout all of existence. The disbeliever, even if he is rebelling against Allah in what Allah has given him a choice in; to believe or disbelieve, to obey or disobey, but Allah has given him the choice.

We say to him: indeed, you have become accustomed to rebelling against Allah, because He has asked you to believe and you have disbelieved. He has asked you, o believer, to obey and you have disobeyed. Therefore, you are used to rebelling against the True Lord. However, do not think that you have left prostrating and submitting to Allah. This is because Allah makes things you hate happen to you, but they happen to you despite you and you are submissive.

This is the meaning of His *the Exalted* statement in the previous verse: ‘...and utterly submissive [to His will]?’ (*an-Nahl*: 48) i.e. servile, humiliated and yielding, even though they are accustomed to rebelling against the True Lord *Glorified is He*.

And if not, this person who is used to going against what Allah wants in what he has a choice in, is he able to refuse when Allah wants to make him sick, or impoverish him, or cause him to die?

No, he is not able. Rather, he is utterly submissive and servile in the measures that Allah makes happen to him, even though he rejects it and even though he has become used to going against what Allah wants. Therefore, there is nothing in Allah's universe that is able to go against what Allah wants because he who goes against Allah's legislative will in what He has made him legally responsible for can only do so because of the choice that Allah has given him. If not, and if he had not been given the ability to choose, he would not have been able to rebel, as is the case with His universal will, in which there is no choice. This is what we say to the disbeliever who is rebelling against the True Lord *Glorified is He*: 'Rebel when He afflicts you with illness and say: "I will never get sick." Rebel against poverty and say: "I will never be poor."' As long as you are not able and you are submitting reluctantly, then submit with pleasure and you will benefit. Your life's problem will come to an end and you will receive a life that is purer than this life.

His statement: 'every beast that moves' (*an-Nahl*: 49) is referring to everything that crawls on the earth, and the meaning of crawling (*ad-dabb*) is moving and walking... and His statement: '...and the angels...' (*an-Nahl*: 49). That is to say, the angels are not referred to as beasts that move on land because He made their fulfilment of commands to be fulfilled via use of their wings, for He *the Exalted* said: '...endowed with wings, two, or three, or four...' (*Fatir*: 1). And He said in another verse: 'although there is no beast that walks on earth and no bird that flies on its two wings which is not [Allah's] creature like yourselves' (*al-An'am*: 38).

Thus, Allah created the bird that flies with wings which is the opposite of the beast that moves on the earth. Thus, He has taken possession of both matters; the moving beast and the angels.

The '...no...' (*ma*) in the verse is used to refer to non-sentient and non-rational beings. This is because most things in existence in the universe do not have knowledge or cognizance. This is why He *the Exalted* said in another

verse: ‘Verily, We did offer the trust [of reason and volition] to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains: but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* finishes the verse by saying: ‘... [Even] these do not bear themselves with false pride’ (*an-Nahl*: 49) i.e. the angels, who are the highest thing in Deity’s creation, do not bear themselves with false pride. Their high rank in the creation due to luminosity does not make them conceited towards their Creator *Glorified is He* because the One Who gave them this honour is Allah *Glorified is He and Exalted is He*.

As long as Allah is the One Who has given them this honour then one cannot be conceited about it because the one who prides himself can only pride himself in essential qualities, not ones that are given to him. As for the thing that is granted by someone else, it is not possible for you to pride yourself in it and be conceited towards the one who gave it to you.

This is why the True Lord *the Exalted* says: ‘Never did the Messiah feel too proud to be Allah’s servant, nor do the angels who are near unto Him...’ (*an-Nisa*: 172).

They will never refuse to worship Allah and prostrate to Him even though Allah has honoured them and given them a high rank.

Then He *the Exalted* says:

يَخَافُونَ رَبَّهُمْ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَيَفْعَلُونَ مَا يُؤْمَرُونَ

They fear their Lord above them, and they do as they are commanded [50] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 50)

What is fear (*khawf*)? Fear is fright and dread, and fear, fright and dread can only be of someone who is higher than you and observing you and there is nothing you can do about it. If you were able to do something about it, there would be no reason for you to be afraid. Therefore, you are not scared of any matters that fall within your sphere of influence. You say: ‘If such-and-such happens I’ll do such-and-such.’

If the noble angels: ‘...do not disobey Allah in whatever He has commanded them, but [always] do what they are bidden to do.’ (*at-Tahrim*: 6) then what

reason do they have to fear? We say: indeed, the fear could be because of some shortcoming on your behalf and you fear the consequences, and the fear could be out of awe, reverence and exaltation of the One Who is feared, without any sin or shortcoming. Therefore, we find the Arab poet saying the following in order to justify this fear:

I stand in awe and reverence of you, though you have no authority over Me
But the eye is filled with its beloved

Therefore, fear could sometimes be due to expecting some harm as a result of a shortcoming on your behalf, and other times due to nothing but awe, reverence and exaltation.

In His statement: ‘...high above them...’ (*an-Nahl*: 50) what is meant by being above? We know that there are six directions: above, below, right, left, front and back. Above is the direction that remains dominant and this is why, even in the building of fortresses, people construct them in high places so that they can use the advantage of height to control all the other directions. Therefore, being above is a position of highness, and being above could refer to a physical place or it could refer to a rank.

The one⁽¹⁾ who says that it refers to a physical place holds the opinion that Allah is in the sky, and the evidence is the slave girl who was asked, ‘Where is Allah?’ She pointed to the sky and said, ‘In the sky.’⁽²⁾

She pointed upwards because it is not correct for us to say, ‘Indeed Allah is below’, for Allah *Glorified is He* is transcendent above place, and as long as He is transcendent above space then He is also transcendent above time. Allah

(1) The story of the slave girl who was asked about Allah and answered 'He is in heaven'

(2) Narrated by Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (5/448), Abu Dawud At-Tayalisi in his (*Musnad*) (1105), Ibn Abu 'Asim in the book (*As-Sunna*) (1/215), and Al-Bayhaqi in (*Al-Asma' wa As-Sifat*) (p.423) from the Hadith of Mu'awiya ibn Al-Hakam As-Salmi who said: 'I said, "I had a slave-girl who used to herd sheep for me. One day, I discovered that a wolf had killed one of her sheep, and I am only human, I get upset like humans get upset, and I slapped her in the face. Then I went to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* who impressed upon me the seriousness of my act. I said, "O Messenger of Allah, should I not set her free?" He said, "Bring her to me." He asked her, "Where is Allah?" She said, "In the sky." He said, "Who am I?" She said, "You are The Messenger of Allah." He said, "Free her, for she is a believer."'

the Exalted is transcendent above being confined within both space and time because space and time were both created, and who is the One Who created time and space?

Therefore, as long as they have been created then He *Glorified is He* is transcendent above time and space.

They said that being above here is in the literal sense. Being above in a physical place, i.e. He *the Exalted* is higher than us. We say to whoever says about this ‘being above’ that Allah is higher than us; ‘From which angle, from this one or that one?’

Therefore, being above here means a rank above, and the proof is that when we see guards who guard fortresses and castles the guard is always higher than those being guarded. The guard is above in a physical sense, but is he above in rank? Absolutely, He is not.

In His *the Exalted* statement: ‘...and do whatever they are bidden to do.’ (*an-Nahl*: 50) This is obedience, and it is that you do what you have been commanded to do and that you avoid that from which you have been forbidden. However, the verse here has mentioned only one side of obedience, which is: ‘...and do whatever they are bidden to do.’ (*an-Nahl*: 50)

The verse did not say, for example, ‘and they avoid whatever they have been forbidden from’, why? We say that it is because the verse contains what is called logical correlation, and what is meant by logical correlation is that every forbiddance of something is in actuality a fact commanding to do the opposite, so every forbiddance is interpreted as a command to do the opposite.

Thus, His *Glorified is He* statement: ‘...and do whatever they are bidden to do.’ (*an-Nahl*: 50) Correlates logically with: ‘and they avoid whatever they have been forbidden from’ and thus the verse has included both sides.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* created the angels and they have no function except that they fervently adore Allah’s essence, and they include the angels who oversee the creations of Allah. They are: ‘and thus they fulfil the [Creator’s] behest!’ (*an-Nazi‘at*: 5)

And He *the Exalted* says: ‘For him are angels ranged before him and behind him, who guard him by Allah’s command...’ (*ar-Ra‘d*: 11).

They also include: 'and yet, verily, there are ever-watchful forces over you, [10] noble, recording [11]' (*al-Infitar*: 10-11).

Therefore, there are angels that have a connection to us, and they are the ones whom the True Lord *Glorified is He* commanded to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him* when Allah created him, and fashioned him with His hand and breathed into him of His spirit. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to them, 'This is the human being that you will be in the service of.' Thus, prostrating to him by Allah's command is a declaration that they are to protect him by His command, and they will write this for him, they will do this for him; they will prepare this for him and so forth.

As for the angels that have no connection to man, they are not aware of him and they do not know a thing about him; they are the ones who are meant in His *Glorified is He* statement to Satan (Iblis): '...Are you too proud [to bow down before another created being], or are you of those who think [only] of themselves as higher ranking angels?' (*Sad*: 75) Are you too proud to prostrate, or are you of the upper category of angels? This category of the angels do not have a connection to man. Their only function is to glorify and remember Allah and they are the ones meant in His statement: they extol His limitless glory by night and by day, never flagging [therein].' (*al-Anbiya*: 20)

Everything – therefore – in existence is submissive to what the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants from it, except for the exception that Allah has made for man by giving him choice, for Allah *Glorified is He* has not forced anyone, neither man nor the universe that he lives in. Allah *Glorified is He* presented the trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. It is as if they said, 'We do not want to have the ability to choose. We would rather be subjugated and have nothing to do with trust and legal responsibility!'

Why, then, did the universe, with its heavens, and earth, refuse to assume this responsibility? We say: There is a difference between accepting something at the time of its assumption and the power to do something at the time of its execution. There is a difference; we have assumption and we have execution, and before we gave an example of assuming a trust when we said: Imagine someone wants to deposit an amount of money with you because the fears

that he will waste it. They want you to keep it for them until a time comes when they actually need it. At that particular time you are able to assume the trust and you intend to carry it out whenever they ask you for it. Your determination is strong and your intention is sincere.

This is the time of assuming the trust, but when the time of execution comes maybe circumstances will force you to spend the money, or there is some obstacle that prevents you from carrying it out or your determination changes.

Therefore, the time of execution is something else. Therefore, the one who wants to free his determination does not guarantee the time of execution. He refrains from taking on the trust and he says: No, if I guarantee myself at the time of assumption, I will not guarantee myself at the time of execution.

This is an example of what happened with the heavens, the earth and the mountains when they refused to assume the trust. This is because they appreciated its responsibility and burden and the lack of guaranteeing that they would fulfil its right. This is why they refused to assume it from the very beginning.

Likewise, man must be intelligent when he takes on trusts and this is why He *the Exalted* says: ‘...Yet man took it up – for, verily, he has always been prone to be most oppressive, most ignorant.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72)

What is it of which man is ignorant? He is ignorant of appreciating his state at the time of executing the trust, and thus He oppresses himself. If he had taken the easy way out, as they say, he would have said, ‘O Lord! Make me like the heavens, earth and mountains, and whatever you cause to befall me I will obey your command.’

Therefore, from amongst Allah’s servants are those who accepted choice and assumed legal responsibility, but they also left their choice and their desire and will in favour of their Lord and Creator’s will. They say, ‘O Lord! You created us with choice. We are able to do and not to do, but we have renounced our choice in favour of your choice, and our will in favour of your will, and we obey your command. These are the servants of Allah who deserve to be attributed to Him *Glorified is He* in this way.

Therefore, there is a difference between doing something voluntarily while one has the ability not to do it and doing something under compulsion

and subjugation. The former, while he is able not to do, has placed His Lord's will regarding legal responsibility over the will of his own soul regarding his ability to choose.

Then the True Lord *the Exalted* moves on to the summit of creedal issues with regards to man. He *the Exalted* says

وَقَالَ اللَّهُ لَا تَتَّخِذُوا إِلَهَيْنِ إِلَّا هُوَ إِنََّّمَا هُوَ إِلَهٌُ وَاحِدٌ فَإِنِّي فَارْهَبُونِ ﴿٥١﴾

**God said, 'Do not take two gods' – for He is the One God —
I alone am the One that you should hold in awe' [51]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 51)**

The prohibition in the verse has come as a result of man going against what His Lord, wants. It is amazing that, human beings and the jinn as well – meaning the Arabic term *thaqalayn* – i.e. the two species in the entire universe that have choice. They have choice in some things and they are forced in other things and despite that, no genera besides them from Allah's creation stand out.

The heavens, earth, and mountains had the ability to choose, and they chose to be subjugated. The matter came to an end at the very beginning. Despite that, they are subjugated and they carry out their tasks to serve man. The sun has never protested or refused on any day. It rises over the believer as it rises over the disbeliever, and the same goes for air, earth, and dairy cattle. Everything in Allah's universe has been subjugated for everyone. Therefore, all of these things have a task and they carry out their task in the most perfect way.

This is why He *the Exalted* says regarding these things: 'Are you not aware that before Allah prostrate themselves all [things and beings] that are in the heavens and all that are on earth – the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees, and the beasts?' (*al-Hajj*: 18)

This is unanimity. Nothing contradicts what their Lord wants.

What about man's state? He *the Exalted* says: '... And many human beings...' (*al-Hajj*: 18).

He did not say, 'human beings'. Then He said: '...whereas many [others, having defied Him,] will inevitably have to suffer [in the life to come]...' (*al-Hajj*: 18).

This is the state of ennobled man whom Allah gave the ability to choose and left him to choose. All the genera carry out their duties, because they took their lot when they were given their first choice. They chose to be subjugated and to be forced.

As for humans, one of them may say, ‘There is no deity in existence; the world was created like this naturally.’ Another one will say: ‘rather, there are numerous deities, because the world contains many interests and things that cannot be controlled by one deity’, meaning: a deity for the sky, a deity for the earth, a deity for the sun and so forth.

Therefore, this person sees many things in the world and thinks that one deity cannot oversee all this. We say to him, ‘You have understood the power of Allah to be like your power as an individual. No, you must understand His power from: “...there is nothing like Him...”’ (*ash-Shura*: 11). This is because divine power does not deal with things the way you deal with things. You need work and effort, while He *the Exalted* does all of this with the word ‘Be!’ and that’s the end of the matter.

We are astonished at the contradiction of these people. One of them will say, ‘The universe was created just like that, without a deity.’ Another will say, ‘Rather, there are numerous deities.’ We say to them, ‘You are contradicting each other. Come to the religion of Allah and come to the middle way which says that there is one God. It does not negate divinity and it does not affirm plurality.’

If you think that the machinery of the universe requires numerous tools to be managed then know that Allah *the Exalted* does carry out the management of the universe by means of a process, but not by doing this and doing that, the way human beings apply themselves to their actions. Rather, He does it with ‘Be!’, and this is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says in the Qudsi Hadith:

(O My servants! If the first of you and the last of you, your living and your dead, were to gather on one plateau and each person amongst you was to ask for whatever he wished for, I would give each asker whatever he asked, for it would not decrease Me in my dominion except in the way if one of you were to dip a needle into the ocean and then take it out. This is because I am Generous and Glorious. I do whatever I want. My giving is speech and my

punishment is speech. When I command something that I want, I just have to say 'Be!' to it and it is.)⁽¹⁾

So, you who reject the idea of One Deity and think that He would tire from managing the universe in all its aspects, raise the level of divinity above examples of human beings because Allah *the Exalted* does not carry out His authority in the universe via a process. Rather, He carries it out with the word 'Be!'

Therefore, one deity is sufficient, and as long as we have submitted to one deity then beware of saying that there are numerous deities. If the True Lord *the Exalted* has negated that there be two deities then He has also negated the possibility of there being more because two is the starting point of plurality.

The meaning of "...two deities..." is two objects of worship. Thus, they would have commands and prohibitions and the commands and prohibitions would require obedience. The universe needs management, so which of the two deities would take care of managing the affairs of the universe, or would he need an assistant? If he needs an assistant, then this is a deficiency, and thus he does not deserve to be a deity. Likewise, each one of them would specialise in some action; one would do this and one would do that such that one of them would be incapable of doing what the other one does. Which aspect of life would then be dominant? It is known that the various aspects of life are shared and intertwined. This is why the True Lord *the Exalted* says: '...nor has there ever been any deity side by side with Him: [for, had there been any,] lo! Each deity would surely have stood apart [from the others] in whatever it had created...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91). And He said: 'had there been in heaven or on earth any deities other than Allah, both [those realms] would surely have fallen into ruin!' (*al-Anbiya*': 22)

What would happen if the first deity wanted something and the other one did not want it? If the thing does come about, then the second deity is incapable. If it does not come about, then the first deity is incapable. Thus, the ability of one of them is the incapability of the other. We notice in His *the Exalted* statement: 'And Allah has said: "Do not take to worshipping two [or more] deities..."'

(1) Narrated by at-Tirmidhi in his (*Sunnan*) (2495) and Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (5/77,154) from the Hadith of Abu Dharr may Allah be pleased with him

(*an-Nahl*: 51), a profound admonition. It is as if He *Glorified is He* calls us to His Oneness, says to us: ‘Put yourselves at ease with Oneness.’ The True Lord *Glorified is He* explained this ease when He said: ‘[To this end,] Allah sets forth a parable: A man who has for his masters several partners, [all of them] at variance with one another, and a man depending wholly on one person: can these two be deemed equal as regards their condition? [Nay,] all praise is due to Allah [alone]: but most of them do not understand this.’ (*az-Zumar*: 29) This means a man who works only for one master and a man who has many masters; and they are partners that differ with one another. If one of them is pleased the other is angry. If one of them needs him the other is contentious. Thus, he is always tired and burdened. As for the one who belongs to one master, the ease he is in is not lost on anyone.

In His *Glorified is He* Oneness there is ease for us. It is as if He *Glorified is He* is saying: ‘You have one objective that spares you from all other objectives and it guarantees for you that pleasure and anger are from the same source.’ Therefore, His demand is ease for us. This is why, before demanding it from us, He bears witness to it for His Essence. He said: ‘Allah [Himself] bears witness – and [so do] the angels and all who are endowed with knowledge – that there is no deity save Him...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18). If someone were to object and say, ‘How can He bear witness for His Essence?’ we would say, ‘Yes, He bears witness for His Essence *Glorified is He* because there is no one other than Him, no one with Him, so the testimony of the essence for the essence here is something natural...it is as if He *Glorified is He* is saying: ‘There is no one other than Me, and if there is a deity besides Me, then let him show himself. Let him declare his existence.

‘I am Allah. I created the universe and I took it and I did such-and-such. Either I am truthful in what I have said and the matter is settled or I am not being truthful and there is another deity who is the one who created... so where is he? Why does not he oppose me?’ This has never happened and no one from Allah’s creation has ever challenged Him. When a claim is made and no one opposes or objects to it, then it is granted to the one who made it. If someone says, ‘Maybe there are other deities that do not know that someone has taken divinity from them.’ If that were the case, then they are

not worthy of divinity because of their lack of knowledge. If they knew and they did not object, then they are cowards and they do not deserve this rank.

By bearing witness for His Essence, that there is no Allah but Him, He has turned towards the creation of the creation because if He knows that there is no deity besides Him, then when He says 'Be!' He is confident that it will be.

When Allah gives an unseen ruling this is why He says: 'I have given this ruling even though you are capable of doing or not doing, but I have given a ruling for you not to do. As long as I have given a ruling for you not to do, but you have the ability to do and you do not do it, then this is proof that there is no deity besides Me who assists you in doing.

Then the angels bear witness to the testimony for the Essence and those endowed with knowledge give a testimony with proof, as He *the Exalted* said: 'Allah [Himself] proffers evidence – and [so do] the angels and all who are endowed with knowledge...' (*Al-Imran*: 18).

We have a point to discuss in His *the Exalted* statement: '...two [or more] deities (*ilahayn ithnayn*)' (*an-Nahl*: 51) We have a number and we have that which is counted. If we said, for example, 'I met three men.' 'Three' indicates the number while the word 'men' indicates the genus of that which is counted. This is the case with all numbers except for the singular and the dual since the term for each of them indicates both the number and that which is counted.

If I were to say: 'deity' (*ilah*) it indicates that it is one and it indicates the genus. The same goes for *ilahayn* (two deities), as it indicates the dual and it indicates the genus of that which is counted. This is why it would have been sufficient for Him *the Exalted* to say in the noble verse: 'Do not take to worshipping two deities (*ilahayn*)' without saying *ithnayn* because the one word indicates both the number and that which is counted. However, the True Lord *the Exalted* wanted to emphasise this creedal issue because of its importance.

It is from the rhetorical styles of the Arabs that when they want to emphasise a word they mention a word after it which carries the actual purport that is sought.

Thus, they say: 'So-and-so is qasim wasim (good-looking and handsome)' and 'so-and-so is *hasan basan* (beautiful and handsome)' and 'so-and-so is *shaytan laitan* (witty devil)'. They want to emphasise the adjective...and likewise His statement *ilahayn* ('...two deities...') only affirms divinity, and to emphasise

this creedal issue because it is the most important issue that concerns man and it is the peak of the matter, He *the Exalted* says: ‘...two [or more] deities (*ilahayn ithnayn*)...’ (*an-Nahl*: 51). Likewise, He also says: ‘...He is the One and Only Allah (*ilah wahid*)...’ (*an-Nahl*: 51) He *the Exalted* mentions ‘...Only...’ (*wahid*) to affirm Allah’s Oneness. There is something else in the verse that we have to consider, and it is that the speech here is in the third person: ‘...He is the One and Only Allah (*ilah wahid*)...’ (*an-Nahl*: 51). And thus it would make sense in the language for Him to say here: ‘hence, of Him, of Him alone stand in awe!’

However, He changes the thread of the conversation from the third person to the first person and says: ‘...hence, of Me, of Me alone stand in awe!’ (*an-Nahl*: 51) There is wisdom behind this, and a rhetorical note because after emphasising divinity with His *the Exalted* statement: ‘...He is the One and Only Allah (*ilah wahid*)...’ (*an-Nahl*: 51).

It was correct to confront them with His Essence because as long as the matter is one of awe then awe from the first person is better than awe from the third person. It is as if the thread of the conversation says, ‘This is Him *Glorified is He* in front of you’, and this induces awe to a greater extent.

Likewise, in the chapter of *al-Fatiha* we read: ‘All praise is due to Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds, [2] The Most Gracious, the Most Merciful, [3] Lord of the Day of Judgment! [4]’ (*al-Fatiha*: 2-4). He did not say: ‘Him alone do we worship’ and continue with the third person. Instead, He changed the pronoun into the second person and said: ‘You alone do we worship; and unto you alone do we turn for aid.’ (*al-Fatiha*: 5) This is because after the servant has called to mind the attributes of majesty and augustness he then becomes worthy of facing and directly addressing Allah *Exalted is He*. His statement: ‘...hence, of Me, of Me alone stand in awe!’ (*an-Nahl*: 51) comes after the servant has called to mind the augustness of his Lord, affirmed His oneness, and knows that He is Only One God, not two deities; in which case one of them would say, ‘We will punish him’ while the other deity would say, ‘No.’ This is not the case. Rather, One Deity holds the power to punish and the power to pardon, and thus it suits the context here for Him to confront them by saying: ‘...hence, of me, of me alone stand in awe!’ (*an-Nahl*: 51)

Then He *the Exalted* says:

وَلَهُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ وَلَهُ الدِّينُ وَاصْبًاۢۙ اَفَغَيْرَ اللّٰهِ نُنۢفِقُوۡنَ ﴿٥٢﴾

**Everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him:
everlasting obedience is His right. Will you heed anyone
other than God? [52] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 52)**

We have here the letter (*lam*), and the (*lam*) can indicate possession as in the verse, or as in, 'The money belongs to Zayd (*al-malu li Zayd*). It could also indicate designation if the (*lam*) is attached to something that does not possess, such as when we say: 'The bridle is for (*li*) the horse' and 'The key is for (*li*) the door'. The horse does not own the bridle and the door does not own the key, so this is designation.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says here: 'And His is all that is in the heavens and on earth...' (*an-Nahl*: 52). In another place He says: '...unto Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth!...' (*Yunus*: 68) And likewise in: '...All that is in the heavens and on earth extols His limitless glory...' (*al-Hashr*: 24). Another time He says: 'All that is in the heavens and all that is on earth extols the limitless glory of Allah...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 1).

When the (*lam*) is for possession that which is owned could be different, as in His statement: 'And His is all that is in the heavens and on earth...' (*an-Nahl*: 52). This means that which is present in both of them, i.e. the things that are present in the heavens and on earth.

As for His statement: '...unto Him belongs all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth!...' (*Yunus*: 68), it means the things that are present in the heavens but not on earth and the things that are present on earth but not in the heavens, i.e. that which is designated for the heavens and that which is designated for the earth. This is what they call 'ownership capacity.'

If all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth belongs to Him *Glorified is He*, then no one besides Him has independent ownership. As long as no one besides Him has independent ownership then no one has essential existence. This is because their initial existence is a gift and the sustaining of their lives is also a gift. This is why they say, 'Whoever wants to stubbornly oppose with

regards to divinity must have essential existence', But this is not the case except for Allah *Exalted is He*.

We wil give you an example. A small boy goes against his father, but he is still dependent on him, so he says to him, 'Wait until you grow up and become independent.' When the boy becomes a young man and matures and starts earning his own money, he can then rely on himself and he thus becomes independent of his father.

Therefore, we say to the person who stubbornly opposes with regards to divinity, 'You are not capable because your existence is a gift and the sustaining of your existence is a gift. Everything can be taken away from you.' Accordingly the True Lord *Glorified is He* draws our attention towards this matter in His statement: 'Nay, verily, man becomes grossly overweening [6] whenever he believes himself to be self-sufficient [7]' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7). This person sees himself as independent from everyone else – from his point of view – but is he really independent? No, he is not independent, and the proof is that he is not able to retain what he owns.

Regarding his statement: 'And His is all that is in the heavens and on earth...' (*an-Nahl*: 52) The One to whom belongs all that is in the heavens and on earth, and He sustains His own existence with His infinite sustainment. He *Glorified is He* assuages you and says to you: 'I am All-Sustaining' – meaning: managing your affair, but not just managing (*qa'im*) but rather sustaining (*qayyum*), with hyperbole. As long as He *Glorified is He* is managing your affair, bringing you into existence out of nothing and providing you out of nothing, then your obedience must be to Him *Glorified is He* and no one else.

There is a proverb which says, 'The one who eats my food must listen to what I say'. If you are dependent in your existence, and your existence is from Allah, your provision is from Allah and the maintaining of your life's essentials is from Allah; this is why He *the Exalted* said: '... and to Him [alone] obedience is always due...' (*an-Nahl*: 52), i.e. this is the result because to Allah belongs everything that is on the heavens and on earth, and to Him alone obedience is always due, i.e. constant and continuous submission. Allah's kingdom is constant and He *Glorified is He* will never surrender His

kingdom to anyone. He still holds sway over His kingdom, and if that is the case the True Lord *Glorified is He* asks them: ‘...will you, then, pay reverence to other than Allah?’ (*an-Nahl*: 52)

The questioning here is for the purpose of rejecting and censuring. It is not possible to pay reverence to other than Allah because it is a form of idiocy that simply is not appropriate. You have learned that all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth belong to Allah and constant obedience and constant compliance belong to Him. By Him the heavens and the earth are sustained and from Him *Glorified is He* everything is brought into existence out of nothing and everything is provided for out of nothing.

Therefore, it is a form of idiocy to pay reverence to other than Him. He is the most worthy of being revered. If you revere other than Him, then this is foolishness on your part, and it will lead to ruin and destruction. You have become deluded by the countless blessings that Allah has given you. One of the blessings that He guarantees for His servants is the well-being of their aptitudes and that which is connected to them. When the intellect is sound, for example, all other matters that are attached to it are also sound and healthy. One’s life is orderly, one’s behaviour is sound and one’s transactions are sound... and this is a blessing.

The blessing is for the heart as well as for the outward form. The outward form has material pleasure. The heart has abstract pleasure, and the most important abstract pleasure which brings ease to the outward form is having one religion to guide us. Mankind has one Lord who is Omnipotent, and nothing incapacitates Him. If the life of this world becomes difficult for man, and the means becomes difficult for him, he indeed has a Lord with Whom he can seek refuge, Who will help him and suffice him. This is true ease.

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* guaranteed that we have everything we need for the soundness of our bodies by measuring the essentials of our lives in the universe. He says that He measured out the varied provision for all who seek them. (*Fussilat*: 10) In other words, Allah is assuring us that He wants nothing from us other than that we use our intellectual creativity in pondering the material substance that has been created by Allah, and to interact with it using the capability Allah has granted to our limbs, and then

we will find everything facilitated for us. He does not need us to bring our own provisions into creation; He only wanted us to use our brains in interacting with the universe.

But how can man interact with life? There are things in existence that Allah has created out of His mercy and bounty; these things serve us without us asking them to do anything; they do so by default. We do not ask the sun to rise nor the wind to blow, and so forth.

But, there are other things that serve us only when we interact with them such as the earth; if we plough, cultivate and irrigate it, it will give us what we want.

Yet, when it comes to interaction there is disparity amongst mankind, and this disparity is not in the things that serve us by default. Rather, the advancement of mankind and their disparity comes from the things with which they interact. Because the default things serve all of mankind; the sun, the air and the water, all serve the believer and the disbeliever, alike.

Therefore, man advances through the things Allah has created for him and if he interacts with them, they interact with him. But if he is negligent they will not serve him and he will not get any benefit from them. This is why someone might say, ‘The disbeliever has such and such, and he owns such and such, even though he is a disbeliever...’ and he might be amazed at the success this person has been given, whereas the believer, who believes in Allah’s Oneness, has been denied.

We say to him: Yes, he has been granted this because the two of you are equal with regards to the things which serve all mankind without any need for interaction. But he has gone way ahead of you by working hard and exerting himself and interacting with the universe using the essentials and capabilities which Allah has given him. He interacted with these things so they served him, while you sat around caring for nothing.

The progress of man can go even further when he makes the thing that serve him by default – i.e. the things that have been subjugated for him – interact with him. This is what we see now with the use of solar energy, for example, to heat water. This energy is subjugated for us already, but we

needed to tap into it. So, it was the progress of man and his strong endeavour that made him reach this height of development. All of these blessings are from Allah and this is why He says:

وَمَا يَكُم مِّن نِّعْمَةٍ مِّنَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ إِذَا مَسَّكُمُ الضُّرُّ فَإِلَيْهِ تَجْأَرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

**Whatever good things you possess come from God,
and when hardship afflicts you, it is to Him alone you
cry out for help [53] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 53)**

Allah *Glorified is He* has provided us with these blessings as a mercy from Him and a bounty, blessings that you see but cannot count or compute. However, when the blessings take a constant tempo, we start taking them for granted. Then we become distracted from the Bestower of Blessings *Glorified is He*. I can give you an example for this. Let us say you have a child to whom you give a regular allowance, for example, on the first day of every month. You find that after giving him the allowance he is not keen to see you until the beginning of the next month. If you get him accustomed to receiving his allowance every day, you will see him in the morning hovering around you and showing you himself to remind you of this ‘thing’ which you both know.

So, the regular tempo of the blessing may cause you to be distracted from the Bestower of Blessings, and you will not remember Him unless you need Him. This is why the True Lord alerts us, if I give you a blessing, beware of being deluded by it. Beware of letting the blessing distract you from the Bestower of Blessings; you will testify against yourself that there is no Bestower of blessings besides Me because once I strip you of this blessing you will not find anyone besides Me to seek refuge in and you will say, ‘O Lord, O Lord!’ You will testify against yourself. You will not lie to yourself. So, who will you turn to if you are afflicted with poverty? Who will you turn to if you are afflicted with illness? You will turn to none but Allah, Who told us clearly that when hardship afflicts us, it is to Him we cry out for help. (*an-Nahl*: 53)

It is when man goes through hardship that he turns to Allah, and it is the need that makes us seek refuge in the true source of provision. If the blessings have distracted us and caused us to forget, then hardship will remind us of the

Lord Who alone has the power to relieve us of this hardship. This is why when the people, who have unswerving belief in Allah, are afflicted with hardship, they say: ‘You have reminded me of You, O Lord.’ They take it as a blessing, as if it is saving them from the heedlessness in which they were. O Lord! You have reminded me of you... I was forgetful and distracted... I was heedless.

When man starts reflecting on the past and realizes his shortcomings, Allah relieves him of his tribulation; therefore the affliction is lifted from the slave if he embraces it and realizes that it conceals a blessing for him within its silver lining. This is why prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* draws our attention to these events that afflict us; so beware of receiving them with anxiety and apprehension; instead receive them with faith and conviction that your Lord is watching over you. With these events He is forcibly turning you back to Him so that you go back to Him and seek refuge in Him and say ‘O Lord!’

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* quotes the Lord of Might in this Qudsi Hadith: {I test those of My slaves whom I love so that they say ‘O Lord!’ ...}

Allah exclaims in another verse that if only people had learned humility when suffering came from Him! (*al-An‘am*: 43) it means that He wants us, when afflicted with a test or some tribulation, to humble ourselves before Him because being humble before Allah is proof of our vigilance. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* guides us to this reality. The one who is truly afflicted is not the one who meets hardship or trial. No. The one who is truly afflicted is the one who is denied reward.

Therefore, we say to whoever has a blessing, ‘Beware of letting the blessing distract you in such a way as to forget the Bestower of Blessings.’ As for whoever is going through tests and hardship, we say, ‘This test jolts you from your slumber, and reminds you of Allah. You will never find anyone besides Him to seek refuge in’.

When Allah tells us that it is to Him alone we cry out for help, (*an-Nahl*: 53) it means we cry out in a high voice like the bellowing of cows. No one keeps it a secret and no one is ashamed to publicly declare it even in front of those we treated haughtily. If only, when afflicted with something like this, you

would consider and take heed and say at some point, 'These events will make us seek refuge in the Lord!' Unfortunately, the opposite happens. When He relieves you of this hardship you go back to whatever it is you were doing:

ثُمَّ إِذَا كُشِفَ الضُّرُّ عَنْكُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْكُمْ بِرَبِّهِمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ٥٤

**Yet when He has relieved you of your hardship – lo and behold! – some of you attribute partners to your Lord [54]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 54)**

Amongst mankind there are those who, when Allah afflicts them with some hardship or misfortune, they humble themselves and cry out and seek refuge in Allah and supplicate to Him. Their tears may flow, and they start praying and saying, 'O so-and-so, ask Allah to do such-and-such for me', and when Allah relieves them from their hardship the cycle starts all over again. This is why He tells us in another verse that when trouble befalls man, he cries out to Allah, whether lying on his side, sitting, or standing, but as soon as He relieves him of his trouble, he goes on his way as if he had never cried out to Allah to remove his trouble... (*Yunus*: 12)

It is from the subtlety of the Quranic rendering that here Allah says: '...some of you attribute partners to your Lord.' (*an-Nahl*: 54) So, it is a group from amongst you and not all of you. As for the rest, it is possible that they are firmly established upon the truth and they consider what has happened to them and thus they do not go back. Mankind – therefore – are different with regards to this issue. One type will humble them and turn back to Allah because of one hardship that afflicts them; another will return to Allah because of two hardships, and so forth.

We have seen within the events that have happened in our countries great incidents that have caused the leaders of the people to return to Allah. We have seen those who do not know the way to the mosque praying, those who never think about making Hajj to Allah's house rushing to it, circumambulating and crying there at the *Multazam*⁽¹⁾ (place of clinging). They would not have

(1) *It is recommended to supplicate at the (Multazam) after drinking from the well of Zamzam. 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr Ibn Al-'As said: 'I saw prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him placing his face and chest against the (Multazam)', as narrated by Ibn 'Uday in (Al-Kamil) (6/2418).*

sought refuge in Allah and turned to Him had these incidents not befallen them. So, are these events, these crises and these afflictions not good for them? Surely, they are good for them.

Also, man could be afflicted with an illness causing him great pain that lasts for a long time. So, he goes to the doctors and he supplicates to Allah and seeks refuge in Him. He also asks people to supplicate on his behalf and ask Allah to cure him. He does many good acts and once Allah relieves him of this illness, he says something like, 'I consulted a skilled doctor, a useful doctor, and I did this and I did that; so glory be to Allah!' Why do you not just attribute all to Allah and remove yourself completely from this equation?

When Allah says that some people attribute partners to Him once Allah has relieved them from their hardship, (*an-Nahl*: 54), this comes as a guarantee of social security in the universe, It is like saying to mankind, 'If you offer a favour to people and they deny what you did, then do not let this discourage you from offering favours to others. People even deny the favours from The One Who is Higher than you; they have denied the favours of Allah *Glorified is He*. So, do not let their denial weaken your resolve to keep doing the good. You should persist in offering goodness so that you can deserve to be one of His selected few.

The True Lord gives us an example of denying favours in the story of prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. He tells the believers not to be like those who insulted Musa, but Allah cleared him of their allegations and he (Musa) became highly honoured in Allah's Eyes. (*al-Ahzab*: 69) His people accused him and they sat down telling lies about him and slandering him, so Musa *peace be upon him* said, 'O Lord! I ask you to stop the untruths that are being said about me...' and Allah responded to Musa: 'I have not even done this for Myself, so how can you ask Me to do it for you Musa?'

Why does the True Lord not stop the untruths that are being said about Him from being said in the first place? The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not do this in order to give us an example of how to tolerate the denial of favours. He has created His creation and provided for them and accommodated them, and despite that they have disbelieved in Him, and yet the True Lord *Glorified is He* is still their Creator and their Provider, and He still accommodates them.

Therefore, the verse contains legislation for a safety feature protecting the society from the spreading of abstaining from doing acts of goodness.

The True Lord's statement: '...attribute partners to your Lord.' (*an-Nahl*: 54), includes those who deny favours from amongst the believers and the disbelievers. But why do they associate partners with Allah? The True Lord says:

لِيَكْفُرُوا بِمَا ءَاتَيْنَاهُمْ فَتَمَتَّعُوا فَسَوْفَ تَعْلَمُونَ

**Let them show ingratitude for the favours We have shown
them; 'Enjoy your brief time – soon you will know' [55]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 55)**

So, they are arrogant like Korah (Qarun) who said that his wealth was given to him only by virtue of his knowledge. (*al-Qasas*: 78) Like when you say, 'I got this because of my own effort and work. Or like when you say to someone, 'Praise be to Allah who granted you success in your exam' and he says, 'I studied hard and stayed up all night.' Yes, you studied, but someone else studied hard to but he came down with an illness the night of the exam and had to stay at home. Same thing could have happened to you! This is what we mean by denying favours and being arrogant towards the Bestower of Blessings.

In His statement: 'Let them show ingratitude...' (*an-Nahl*: 55), did they do this in order to prove their ingratitude, and is the letter (*lam*) (meaning: so that) is to indicate purpose? No. This (*lam*) is to indicate the sequence of events, meaning that you do something with no purpose in mind but the consequence befell you anyway. You were not thinking of it; it just happened that way.

An example of this (*lam*) can be found in Allah's statement regarding the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and the Pharaoh, when He said that some of the Pharaoh's household picked Musa from the river, 'so that' he could become (by Allah's will) an enemy to them and a source of grief... (*al-Qasas*: 8). When the Pharaoh took Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* out of the river and adopted him and raised him, did he adopt him so that he could become an enemy? No, this was just what happened so that the True Lord *Glorified is He* can affirm they were heedless and that Allah stood between them and their hearts. So, it was not the Pharaoh's intention to raise his own

enemy; he just took him and raised him at a time in which children were being killed. It never even occurred to him that maybe someone feared for the child and thus cast him into the river. This is why Allah tells us that He intervenes between man and his heart (i.e. desires), (*al-Anfal*: 24).

Likewise, the mother of Musa *peace be upon him* was inspired by Allah, if she feared for him, to suckle him and then cast him in the river. (*al-Qasas*: 7) How can this be possible? How can a mother cast her child into the river if she fears for him? How can this even be conceivable? Allah *Glorified is He* came in between her and her heart's fears, so her compassion and her affections subsided. She did not reject the instructions that were given to her and thus believed that her child could be saved by casting him into the river.

His statement: 'Enjoy your brief time- soon you will know' (*an-Nahl*: 55) means 'show ingratitude for the blessings that I have given you and the hardships that I have relieved you from and enjoy yourselves in this life; because I have not made this life to be the abode of reward. Reward is in the Hereafter.' The word '...Enjoy...' here indicates that Allah continues to give blessings even to those who deny His blessings. Otherwise, if He had denied them these blessings, there would be nothing to enjoy.

He says: '...soon you will know.' (*an-Nahl*: 55) That is, you will see the consequences of your actions, and this is a threat and a warning.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِمَا لَا يَعْلَمُونَ نَصِيبًا مِّمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ ۖ تَاللَّهِ لَتَسْتَأْذِنَ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

**They set aside part of the sustenance We give them, for
[idols] about which they have no true knowledge. By God!
You will be questioned about your false inventions [56]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 56)**

This means those who disbelieve in Allah and set up idols and partners with Allah, and they attribute things to them. In the True Lord's statement: '...they have no true knowledge...' (*an-Nahl*: 56) what is knowledge?

Knowledge means that you are aware of something and this thing is true. So, it coincides with reality and you can corroborate it with evidence. But,

when one of these conditions goes missing it is not knowledge. When these people attribute a share to the idols they brought things that have no existence into reality and knowledge. They are not real things...do the idols even exist? What proof corroborates them? Allah says that they are nothing but void names which they and their forefathers have invented and for which Allah has bestowed no warrant. (*an-Najm*: 23) These idols do not actually have any existence, and in another verse Allah says that they apportioned to Him a share of the produce of the livestock He created, saying and claiming that, 'This is for Allah'- and 'This is for our idols.', and claiming that their idols' share does not reach Allah, whereas Allah's share does reach their idols! (*al-An'am*: 136)

Even when they assign a portion to the idols it is from what Allah has provided them. How come the idols' portion is not from what the idols provided since Allah's portion is from what Allah has provided? This is an admission on their behalf that their idols are inept. So, they took Allah's provision and assigned it to the idols! This is proof that their idols do not give you anything, and it is a testimony against them. So, were the idols aware of this? Therefore: '...about which they have no true knowledge...' (*an-Nahl*: 56) speaks of the idols because they do not actually have any existence. The disbelievers take what Allah has provided them and they assign it to the idols.

Then the True Lord says: '...By Allah! You will be questioned about your false inventions.' (*an-Nahl*: 56) The (*ta'*) here in '...By Allah...' is for an oath, i.e. I swear by the Might of Allah that you will be asked about the idols that you have invented. And *iftira'* is a deliberate.

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ الْبَنَاتِ سُبْحَنَهُ وَلَهُمْ مَا يَشْتَهُونَ

**They assign daughters to God — may He be exalted!
and the [sons] they desire to themselves [57]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 57)**

When you hear the word '...may He be exalted...' (*subhanahu*) then know that it is a declaration that Allah is transcendent above that which does not befit Him, namely here that He is transcendent above the attribution of daughters to Him. Allah is truly exalted and transcendent above having daughters.

In that case, can they ascribe to Him male children? They ascribed the females unto Allah and they males unto themselves, and Allah rebukes them mockingly about the rationale from choosing for themselves the males and then assigning the females to Him. What kind of unjust discrimination is this? (*an-Najm*: 21-22) They have not done the allotment in a just manner, meaning I have a son and you have a son, and I have a daughter and you have a daughter. But when you ascribe unto Allah what you dislike, the females, and you ascribe unto yourselves what you like, this allotment is flawed for two reasons:

First, they attributed the males to Allah – and this is still a deliberate lie which Allah is transcendent above. Second, they chose the lesser of the two sexes. This is, of course, just their own point of view at that time, since no one can claim that females are the lesser of the two sexes...why? Because the females are the only means for the survival of the human species, This is why Al-‘Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘If Allah were to hear what mankind says about mankind there would be no mankind’, i.e. if Allah were to respond to the desires of mankind (that they do not want girls), if He were to respond to them, what would happen? Mankind will perish. So, this is an idiotic request. It is the female that gives birth to the male and because of her progeny mankind continues.

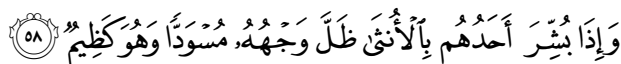
His statement: ‘...may He be exalted...’ (*an-Nahl*: 57), is a declaration that He is transcendent above having a child and a declaration that He is transcendent above having the lesser of the two sexes (from their own view). Allah tells us in the following two verses: ‘When one of them is given news of the birth of a baby girl, his face darkens and he is filled with gloom. (58) In his shame he hides himself away from his people because of the bad glad tidings he has been given... (59)’ (*an-Nahl*: 58-59) This is why Allah tells us that he has control of the heavens and the earth, that He creates whatever He will, and He grants female offspring to whoever He will, and male to whoever He will, or both male and female, and He makes whoever He wills barren.... (*ash-Shura*: 49-50)

We see above that Allah first started with the females, and then He gave us this illustration of the creation: female, male, male and female, barren. So, these are Allah’s gifts and they come in four packages. From here we can see

that infertility is also a gift from Allah for a wisdom that He intended. However, people do not see infertility as a gift. Instead they see it as wrath and affliction.

But, why consider it an affliction when you could have a disobedient son like the one who became a tribulation for his parents and was calling them to disbelief?⁽¹⁾ If barren people saw this as a gift that Allah has given them and they were content with their portion, they would then see every child in the community as their own, without going through the toil of pregnancy or rearing. They would see all the children around them as their own children and Allah would attach the children's hearts to them as if they were their own parents. It is as if the True Lord is saying to them: 'As long as you are content with Allah's gift, then I will make every child yours.'

The True Lord *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: '...and the [sons] they desire to themselves.' (*an-Nahl*: 57) This is because a son is an aide to his father and he benefits him in war and combat and he benefits him in growth, and so forth.



**When one of them is given news of the birth of a baby girl, his face darkens and he is filled with gloom [58]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 58)**

We know that glad tidings *bishara* come for something good which means they were expected to receive a girl as they would receive glad tidings, but instead they would be indignant and hateful of the glad tidings they had been given and you would find that the face of one of them: '...darkens...' (*an-Nahl*: 58) Darkening is to be contorted with fury, and this is why He says: '...and he is filled with gloom.' (*an-Nahl*: 58)

(1) This is in the story of Musa and Al-Khidr peace be upon them. Allah says, 'And so they travelled on. Then, when they met a young boy and the man killed him, Moses said, "How could you kill an innocent person? He has not killed anyone!" What a terrible thing to do!' [18: 74]. Al-Khidr peace be upon him explained the rationale for this, 'The young boy had parents who were people of faith, and so, fearing he would trouble them through wickedness and disbelief, we wished that their Lord should give them another child, purer and more compassionate, in his place'. (*al-Kahf*: 80-81)

In another verse Allah speaks about those who can control their ‘fury’. (*Al-‘Imran*: 134) The term used here is driven from plugging (*kazm*) a waterskin when it is so filled with water as if about to burst. This is what a furious person is; his veins pop out and the blood rushes to his face, but once he controls his fury he cools down.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes his state:

يَنْزَوِي مِنَ الْقَوْرِ مِنْ سُوءِ مَا بُشِّرَ بِهِ أَيْمُسِكُهُ عَلَى
هُوَ أَمْ يَدُسُّهُ فِي التُّرَابِ أَلَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

**In his shame he hides himself away from his
people because of the bad news he has been given.
Should he keep her and suffer contempt or bury
her in the dust? How ill they judge! [59]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 59)**

Allah says: ‘hides himself away from his people...’ (*an-Nahl*: 59) i.e. he hides from them because he is scared of them saying: ‘he had a girl.’ ‘...because of the bad glad tidings he has been given...’ (*an-Nahl*: 59).

We notice that ‘glad tidings’ is repeated in this verse as well, as if Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* is softening their hearts towards the baby girls and inviting the fathers to be gentle towards them. But the father is indecisive and unaware of what has happened. Therefore Allah says: ‘...Should he keep her and suffer contempt or bury her in the dust?’ (*an-Nahl*: 59), meaning: what would he do with this child of his? Is he going to keep her and suffer contempt – i.e. disgrace – or is he going to bury her in the dust – i.e. bury her alive? ‘...How ill they judge!’ (*an-Nahl*: 59) meaning that both options they consider are ill and evil; either keeping her in contempt or burying her in the dust. Some of those people, if a girl was born to them, would hate her and if they kept her, they would keep her in contempt and she would be despised and loathed her whole life, without any mistake of her own. The Arab women who were contemporary to these events were aware of something that we only learned recently when modern science discovered that the sex of the child is determined by the man and not the woman. Abu Hamza used to often

abandon his wives and become angry with them because they only gave him daughters. What did this Arab woman say who had been abandoned by her husband? She said:

Why does Abu Hamza not come to us?

Angry that we have not given birth to sons

By Allah, this matter is out of our hands

We are like the earth in which something is planted

We only give them the likes of that which they plant

The True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* establishes equilibrium in the universe via the necessities of the human soul. One of these necessities is the need for honour and dignity. But when man makes a mistake in forming his honour and dignity, he thinks that he is able to realize what he wants through his own means. If he knew that forming honour and dignity was something beyond his own means, something created by Allah and according to Allah, he would go about the matter correctly.

So, honour is not in what you give birth to, honour is to Allah, the Messenger and the believers and they are made honourable by the bond of faith. Be honourable because you are in a situation of faith and mutual responsibility; if some harm afflicts you everyone else will be by your side.

Do not hinge your honour on kinship and offspring because a disobedient child can never be any help to his parents when they are in difficulty, nor any assistance when they are in need. When you seek refuge in the bond of blood, the bond of blood can sift, as for the bond of conviction, faith, and religion, it persists.

Let us take an example of this: the solidarity and mutual assistance that occurred between the *Ansar* (the Medinan Helpers) and the *Muhajirin* (the emigrants) was beyond the imagination of any human being. There was nothing between them except the bond of solidarity and of faith...so, what happened between these amazing people? They sacrificed that which was most precious to them and that which they would normally withhold from others. We could imagine something like giving them whatever surplus they had in their houses or possessions; whoever had a mount or a house would say

to his Emigrant brother, 'Go ahead and take this mount' or 'take my house' and do this is all as though it was perfectly normal.

But within the human soul, a man would always feel instinctively protective of his wife and would never pass on that particular blessing to another man! Yet, look at how faith reshaped those people! In an isolated and unprecedented incident, one of the *Ansar* ⁽¹⁾ said to an Emigrant, 'I am ready to divorce one of my two wives so that you can have a wife to marry.' It is amazing of course, but what made him do this is not the solidarity of blood or race, but rather the solidarity of conviction and faith.

This is why all other forms of solidarity are disproved in the story of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* – and his son the disbeliever when he called on him and asked him to join the arc and not to be with those who deny the truth. His son refused and said that he will take refuge in the mountain, but Nuh (Noah) told him that nothing whatsoever will stand between anyone and Allah's judgment, except for those who have earned the mercy of Allah. (*Hud*: 42-43)

Nuh was so eager to have his son saved and he asked Allah to save him since he is his family and Allah's promise is always true. (*Hud*: 45) But Allah said to him that this boy is not of his family since his conduct was not righteous, and He told Nuh not to ask Him anything he has no knowledge of, and admonished him not to be one of those who are unaware. (*Hud*: 46) So, this son is not from Nuh's family because real filiation is the filiation of actions, not the filiation of blood and lineage.

It is true that man loves honour and he seeks it for himself, but he must always examine how this honour got established and upon which basis. Always draw your honour from Allah, the Messenger and the society of faith;

(1) Narrated by Imam Ahmad from Anas that 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn 'Awf came to Medina and the Messenger of Allah paired him with Sa'd ibn Ar-Rabi'a Al-Ansari Sa'd said to him: 'My brother! Among the people of Medina I have the most wealth. I have two orchards and two wives. See which of the two orchards you like and I shall vacate it for you, and which of my two wives is pleasing to you and I will divorce her for you.' 'Abd Ar-Rahman said in reply, 'May Allah bless you in your family and your wealth, but just show me where the market is.' He then went and bought and sold and his profits grew. This was mentioned by Ibn Kathir in (*Al-Bidaya wa An-Nihaya*) (3/228) and Al-Kandahlawi in (*Hayat As-Sahaba*) (1/362).

and all children will become yours because they share your conviction of Allah and your faith in Him. As for pursuing honour from within your own actions or seeking it in your son, how do you guarantee that you will find in him honour, support, or growth?

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

لِّلَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ مَثَلُ السَّوِّءِ وَلِلَّهِ الْمَثَلُ الْأَعْلَىٰ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾

**Those who do not believe in the Hereafter should have the contemptible image, and God should have the highest one:
He is the Mighty, the Wise [60] (the Quran, *an-Nahl*: 60)**

His statement: ‘...the contemptible image...’ (*an-Nahl*: 60) means the contemptible and despicable attributes of disbelief, stubbornness and denial, blind insight and other attributes of evil.

Why do those who do not believe in the Hereafter have a contemptible image? It is because the equation they chose to work with is faulty because the one who does not believe in the Hereafter has shortened his timeline. If it is all about ‘this’ life, then it must be too short. We said before: never look at this life from the perspective of its overall duration, but rather, from the perspective of your own timeline. The duration of the life of this universe, to you, is equivalent to the amount of time you spend in it. Whatever remains after you or whatever took place before, is relevant to other people not to you. You will have no share in it after your life ends. Hence, life is all about your own timeline: a month, a year, ten years, a hundred. This is life as it is relevant to you.

Despite that, regardless of how long the life of this universe lasts, it will come to an end. Whoever does not believe in Allah and the Hereafter has chosen badly because he cannot guarantee that he will last even beyond the average life expectancy. Even if you did live till the average life expectancy, or until you were so old, or even if you enjoyed all kinds of disobedience while in this life, how long will all this last? You will lose everything when you die.

Compare this – then – with the state of the one who believes in Allah and the Hereafter. We say to the person who does not believe in the Hereafter:

Your life here is uncertain; you can live it, or you can die. No matter how old you will get, it will all come to an end. The pleasures you take from this life are just up to your own abilities. So, you will take a portion from something limited and uncertain, and leave the entire unlimited and certain portion. If this is not a bad deal, then what is it?

As for the one who believes in the Hereafter, his deal is good because he chose a perpetual life that is prepped with pleasures according to the abilities of the Bestower of Blessings *Glorified is He and Exalted is He*. Therefore: ‘...the contemptible image...’ (*an-Nahl*: 60) means the attributes of intense evil, and this is because they are undoubtedly losers.

His statement: ‘...and Allah should have the highest one...’ (*an-Nahl*: 60), and to Allah belongs the most sublime example. As if the verse is saying to you, ‘Leave the contemptible image and take the most sublime attribute in which you will find pleasure according to the abilities of the True Lord *Glorified is He and Exalted is He*.’

The True Lord *Glorified is He* ends the verse saying: ‘...He is the Mighty, the Wise.’ (*an-Nahl*: 60) The Almighty is the One Whose Command is never overruled. There could be someone whose command is never overruled true, but Allah, Almighty and Wise, is the one who uses power and domination wisely.

Then the True Lord says:

وَلَوْ يُوَازِدُ اللَّهُ النَّاسَ بِظُلْمِهِمْ مَا تَرَكَ عَلَيْهَا مِنْ دَابَّةٍ وَلَكِنْ يُؤَخِّرُهُمْ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ
مُّسَمًّى فَإِذَا جَاءَ أَجْلُهُمْ لَا يَسْتَخْرِجُونَ سَاعَةً وَلَا يَسْتَقْدِمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

If God took people to task for the evil they do, He would not leave one living creature on earth, but He reprieves them until an appointed time: when their time comes they cannot delay it for a moment nor can they bring it forward [61]

(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 61)

In the True Lord’s statement: ‘If Allah took people to task for the evil they do...’ (*an-Nahl*: 61), we have *Al-akhdh* (taking) and *Al-mu’akhadha* (taking to task). *Al-akhdh* means to take something and encompass it fully. It reflects

that the one doing the 'taking' action has the ability to hold on to himself and to something else. For example, you can carry a pebble but cannot carry a large stone; or it could be something small but attached to something else so it is 'taken' from it by force. Taking and encompassing means that you are stronger than its adherence to itself, or its adherence to something else attached to it.

As for *mu'akhadha*, it means when someone takes something from you and you take something from him, and from this we have the statement, 'No *mu'akhadha* please!', meaning, 'Excuse me, for I have done something wrong and I deserve a recompense for it *mu'akhadha*.' Then I say, 'Pardon me *la tu'akhidhni*. I did not mean to.'

Therefore, the True Lord says here: 'If Allah took people to task for the evil they do (*yu'akhidhu*)...' (*an-Nahl*: 61). He says 'took to task' and not 'took' *ya'khudhu*. In another verse (*Hud*: 102), Allah speaks about His punishment 'overtaking' the towns in the midst of their sins: His punishment is terrible and severe. But why did He take them to task? He did so because they took His right to be the One Allah and denied it, and they also denied His right to legislate.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear that if this *mu'akhadha* takes place, it will be because of the people themselves. He says: '...for all the evil (*zulm*) that they do...' (*an-Nahl*: 61). The first evil is that they denied His Oneness. He tells us that attributing any partners to Him is a terrible wrong (evil). (*Luqman*: 13) Thus, it is as if they took from Allah His right of Oneness, and they also took from prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by calling him a liar and they took from the Book by calling it a 'spellbinding deception' All of this is evil.

If the True Lord were to take them to task for what they have done; taking from them as they take from Him. If Allah were to deal with them in this way, He would not leave a single living creature upon the face of earth. Therefore; we find in the verses the supplication: '... "O our Sustainer! Take us not to task if we forget or unwittingly do wrong!"' (*al-Baqara*: 286) meaning, we have taken a lot from You, O Lord, by way of our negligence, shortcomings and actions that go against what You have commanded, so do not take us to task for what we have done. For if Allah *Glorified is He* were to take mankind

to task for the evil that they have perpetrated. ‘...He would not leave one living creature on earth...’ (*an-Nahl*: 61).

Someone might say, ‘Allah will take humankind to task for their evil, but what have the other creatures done wrong?’ We respond by saying, ‘All other creatures were created for the sake of mankind and were subjugated for them and they are Allah’s blessings to mankind. Hence, the matter is not about punishing the other creatures, but about the ones who benefit from them; however, it could also mean the whole creation.

If Allah does not take mankind to task for their evil in this life, is He just going to leave them as such? No: ‘...but He reprieves them until an appointed time...’ (*an-Nahl*: 61). This appointed time is the end of life as we know it, and the establishment of the Hereafter, even for those who do not believe in the Hereafter. Allah just gives us respite, and in another verse, He tells us that another type of punishment is in store for the evildoers. (*at-Tur*: 47)

There could actually be goodness in this appointed time. Many Companions used to go to battle with the intention of killing the disbelievers one by one, but then they would not be able to do it and it saddened them. But the appointed time of these people had not yet come, and it was in Allah’s knowledge that these disbelievers would believe and that their faith would benefit the Muslims. Thus, Allah was keeping them in store: either they would believe or their progeny would believe.

Indeed, ‘Amr Ibn Al-‘As *Allah be pleased with him* believed, as well as ‘Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl *Allah be pleased with him* and others, and from amongst these people who attained salvation was Khalid ibn Al-Walid *Allah be pleased with him* the unsheathed sword of Allah. ‘...when their time comes they cannot delay it for a moment, nor can they bring it forward.’ (*an-Nahl*: 61) i.e. when the end comes it is not delayed, and this is something logical, but how could they hasten it? It is something inconceivable and impossible. If the appointed time has come already, then how can it be advanced? All the pieces will fall into place when we know that: ‘...nor can they bring it forward.’ (*an-Nahl*: 61) is not the apodosis of the conditional clause. The apodosis ends with ‘for a moment’ meaning: if their appointed time comes they will not be able to

delay it by a single moment, and if it has not come yet, they will not be able to hasten it, and Allah knows best.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَجْعَلُونَ لِلَّهِ مَا يَكْرَهُونَ وَتَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُهُمُ الْكُذْبَ أَنَّ
لَهُمُ الْحُسْنَىٰ لَا جُرْمَ أَنَّ لَهُمُ النَّارَ وَأَنَّهُمْ مُّفْرَطُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

**They attribute to God what they themselves dislike while
their own tongues utter the lie that the best belongs to them.
Without doubt it is the Fire that belongs to them: they will
be given priority there! [62] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 62)**

‘They attribute to Allah what they themselves dislike...’ (*an-Nahl*: 62). It is most appropriate that whatever one gives out for the sake of Allah has to be from the best of what Allah has granted. If you want to give in charity then give the best of what you have, or at least something decent, but do not give the most worthless and despicable thing you have...do not give away what you hate, like giving away stale bread, or meat that has gone bad, or shabby clothes. This is called ascribing what we dislike to Allah.⁽¹⁾

The truth is that if people were certain of the reward that Allah will give to them, they would give their Lord the best of what they love. Why? Because this is proof of your love for the Hereafter, and that you are going to be a winner on that day. So, you fill your register with the things you love. As for those who love this short life and are of its people, they give the least of what they have; for this life, in their view, is more important than the Hereafter.

Hence, we can evaluate ourselves according to what we give for the sake of Allah— are we of the people of the Hereafter or of the people of this mundane life?

The statement: ‘They attribute to Allah what they themselves dislike...’ (*an-Nahl*: 62) is explained in the previous verses: ‘...They assign daughters to

(1) He says: ‘You who believe, give charitably from the good things you have acquired and that We have produced for you from the earth. Do not give away the bad things that you yourself would only accept with your eyes closed: remember that Allah is self-sufficient, worthy of all praise.’ (*al-Baqara*: 267)

Allah...’ (*an-Nahl*: 57). So, they said that the angels are Allah’s daughters, and they assumed a kinship between Him and the jinn, and many other things that they fabricated. They ascribed daughters unto Allah while they themselves hated daughters. This is why Allah says: ‘When one of them is given news of the birth of a baby girl, his face darkens and he is filled with gloom.’ (*an-Nahl*: 58)

The issue here is not about ascribing daughters unto Allah, but that they are ascribing to Allah anything which is not to their liking. If they had ascribed unto Allah what they loved, such as boys, that too would not be accepted because they would have ascribed unto Allah that which He has not ascribed unto himself. The statements of those who said, ‘Ezra is the son of Allah’ and those who said, ‘The Messiah is the son of Allah’ are not accepted from them because they ascribed unto Allah *Glorified is He* that which He has not ascribed unto Himself.

Thus, we keep for Allah that which we love from among what Allah has permitted. He tells us that none of the believers shall attain to righteousness unless they spend out of what they cherish the most. (*Al-‘Imran*: 92) He also speaks of those who give food to others even though they love it so much. (*al-Insan*: 8)

This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* said to prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say to his people that if the Most Gracious Allah truly had a son, then he (prophet Muhammad) would be the first to worship him. (*az-Zukhruf*: 81) If He were to have a son I would believe in that son, but the truth is that He does not have a son. Therefore, the issue again is not in ascribing unto Allah that which they hate but the concept of ascribing. This is because we are slaves and we draw closer to Allah with worship, and the worshipper draws closer to the object of worship via the means the object his worship loves the most. So, when Allah urges us to spend out from what we love and from the best that we own; we should obey. Particularly after He tells us that none of the believers shall attain to righteousness unless they spend out of what they cherish the most. (*Al-‘Imran*: 92)

Respect the rights of the poor and the necessity of treating them as you would treat yourself, do not let them be the least of your concern and give them the most worthless thing you have. The True Lord wanted us to draw

closer to Him by way of the acts of worship, ritual slaughter, guidance, and sacrifices. He tells us to eat, and then feed the unfortunate poor. (*al-Hajj*: 28) This is because if you know that you are going to eat from it you will choose the best of what you have.

His statement: ‘...while their own tongues utter the lie...’ (*an-Nahl*: 62) A lie is something that is uttered by the tongue and it does not have any bearing in reality; it contradicts the reality that the heart bears witness to...but why does the heart bear witness to it? Because one’s speech may coincide with reality but we judge it to be a lie, as with Allah’s statement about the hypocrites who came and took the testimony of faith in front of the prophet, *peace and blessings of Allah be upon him*, and Allah bears witness that Muhammad is His prophet and that the hypocrites are indeed false. (*al-Munafiqun*: 1)

Is this a matter of truth or not? It is of course! Muhammad is indeed the Messenger of Allah and their speech corresponds with what Allah says, so why does the True Lord bear witness against them that they are liars? What is it that they are lying about? Actually, they are being truthful in what they are saying; you are the Messenger of Allah, but their testimony is a lie because they are not really bearing witness. Bearing witness requires that the heart be aligned with the tongue and consolidated by it, but their testimony is only an utterance that is not supported by the heart. Man is liable to say the truth at one time and lie at another, but these people, merely by saying ‘...We bear witness...’ are liars, and this is the meaning of: ‘...while their own tongues utter the lie...’ (*an-Nahl*: 62). This is because when they say, for example: ‘Ezra is the son of Allah’ or ‘Messiah is the son of Allah’ or ‘the angels are the daughters of Allah’, all of these are falsehoods uttered by the tongue with no bearing on reality; so, they are uttering lies.

If you want to know a lie that has no bearing on reality, then listen to it carefully, and you will realize that it is a lie. Like what happened with Musaylama, who claimed prophecy. Once he said: ‘I am a prophet’ the Muslims said: ‘Musaylama is a liar.’

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...that (by doing so) they earn supreme merit!’ (*an-Nahl*: 62) meaning that their lies will help them earn the supreme merit, and this is being impertinently over-presumptuous about Allah. An

example of this kind of statement is found in *al-Kahf* chapter in the story of the owners of the two gardens, when one of them went into his garden and wronged himself by saying, 'I do not think this will ever perish, or that the Last Hour will ever come, and even if I were to be taken back to my Lord, I would certainly find something even better!' (*al-Kahf*: 35-36) These are three false statements:

The first: 'I do not think this will ever perish.' Can he not see how everything is in a state of constant change? Who can guarantee that what you have will remain with you? Allah tells us in another verse of the owners of a certain garden who swore that they would harvest its fruits in the morning and made no allowance [for the Will of Allah], but then a disaster from Him struck the garden as they slept and by morning it was stripped bare, and became a desolate land. (*al-Qalam*: 19-20)

The second: 'The last hour will never come.' So, he has denied the last Hour, too.

The third: 'Even if I were to be taken back to my Lord, I would certainly find something even better.' This is the point from the verse: it consists of delusional over-presumptuousness about Allah without any foundation, such as those who claim that they have earned supreme merit when they are not worthy of it.

In another verse, Allah tells us that man never tires of asking for good, but if evil touches him he loses all hope and becomes despondent. But whenever Allah lets him taste some of His mercy after he has been afflicted, he will surely say, 'This is all my own doing: I do not think the Hour will ever come, but even if I were to be taken back to my Lord, the best reward would await me with Him.' But Allah declares that He shall most certainly inform the disbelievers of what they have done and give them a taste of severe torment. (*Fussilat*: 49-50)

This is the natural disposition of mankind! He never gets tired of asking for the good things of life and once the aspired status is achieved, he aspires for an even higher status. Yet, when misfortune befalls him, he despairs. If Allah relieves him of it and shows him mercy, he says 'This is my own doing. I deserve it. I am worthy of it.' Did you not say: 'This is a favour and blessing

from Allah'? Why then do you become over-presumptuous about Allah and assumed that the ultimate good awaits you? (*Fussilat*: 50)

{It is related that prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* despite the kingdom and augustness that Allah had given him, climbed on to the roof of his house one day and Allah tested him with a swarm of gold locusts. When Dawud *peace be upon him* saw them, he started gathering them in his garment, so his Lord said to him: 'O Dawud, have I not made you wealthy?' He said: 'Yes, but I have no wealth in comparison to your bounty.'}⁽¹⁾

His statement: '...Without doubt it is the Fire that belongs to them...' (*an-Nahl*: 62) 'Without doubt' (*la jarama*) means that they indeed earn the fire because they ascribed to Allah what they hate and their tongues uttered lies. These actions make them deserving of the Fire. The phrase *la jarama* ('...Without doubt...') comes from the word *jarim* which is a criminal (*mujrim*). Thus, the meaning is: there is no crime (*jarima*) in punishing these people because no one says that punishing a criminal is a crime. Therefore, it has two meanings; there is no doubt that they have earned the Fire and there is no crime in making the Fire the reward for their actions. '...they will be given priority there!' (*an-Nahl*: 62) The word *mufratun* ('... they will be given priority there!') has various recitations in the Quran: (*mufratun*, *mufritun*, *mufarritun*, *mufarratun*), and they all mean the same thing.

In funeral prayer (*janaza*), for example, when the deceased is of the age of legal responsibility we say in our supplication for him: {O Allah, forgive him. O Allah, show him mercy. O Allah, if he persevered in goodness then increase him in that, and if he was persistent in evil then overlook his evil deeds.} But if the deceased is young and below the age of legal responsibility, we say in our supplication for him: 'O Allah, make him *farata* (a prelude) and *dhukra* (a treasure).'⁽²⁾ What is the meaning of *farata* here? It means; let this child be 'a

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*) (972) and Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (2/413) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him, but it is about Ayyub (Job) not Dawud *peace be upon them* and Allah knows best.

(2) Mentioned by Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*) (*Fath Al-Bari* 2/302), *Book of Funerals*, chapter on Reading the Fatiha of the Book in Funerals from the statement of Al-Hasan Al-Basri: 'He reads the Fatiha of the Book over the child and he says: 'O Allah, make him (*farata*) (a prelude), (*salafa*) (advance payment) and (*ajr*) (reward) for us.'

prelude' for his parents towards paradise. He will go ahead of his parents as if paving the way for them to be forgiven by Allah and to enter Paradise. So, the meaning of *mufratun* is to precede ahead – but in this case to the Fire.

Allah says about the Pharaoh that he shall go ahead of his people on Judgment Day (*Hud*: 98) meaning he will go into the Fire before them...just as he was in front of them and was their leader in this life, he will be in front of them and will enter the Fire ahead of them in the Hereafter.

تَاللّٰهِ لَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمَمٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ فَزَيَّنَ لَهُمُ الشَّيْطٰنُ
أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُوَ وَلِيُّهُمْ الْيَوْمَ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾

**By God, We have sent messengers before you [Muhammad]
to other communities, but Satan made their foul deeds seem
alluring to them. He is the patron of these present disbelievers
too, and a painful punishment awaits them all [63]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 63)**

We know that the True Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* wears by whatever He wants for whatever He wants. As for us, we only swear by Allah. There is a Qudsi Hadith that says: {if someone is making an oath then let him make an oath by Allah or remain silent.}⁽¹⁾ Here, the True Lord swears by His essence, 'By Allah...' An oath is used to empathize a meaning, and this is why one of the righteous said when he heard this verse, 'Who angered the Bountiful Lord so much that He resorted to making an oath?' The True Lord *Glorified is He* may emphasise the oath with His essence, or He may emphasise the oath with some part of His creation, or He may negate the oath to affirm it, as in: 'Nay! I swear not by this city.' (*al-Balad*: 1), and: 'Nay, I swear not by the setting of the stars (75) and, indeed, that is a most mighty oath, if you only knew! (76)' (*al-Waqi'a*: 75-76) 'I swear not' is used to affirm that this matter is so clear and obvious that I do not need to make an oath

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (1646) in the Book of Oaths, the second narration from 'Abdullah ibn 'Umar from the Messenger of Allah that he found 'Umar Ibn Al-Khattab amongst the riders and he was swearing by his father. Allah's Messenger called them and said: {Indeed Allah has forbidden you from swearing by your fathers. If someone is making an oath then let him make an oath by Allah or remain silent.}

of it. If I were to make an oath I would swear by it, and that is why He says: 'and, indeed, that is a most mighty oath, if you only knew!' (*al-Waqi'a*: 76)

Hence, the True Lord *Glorified is He* swears by His essence in order to emphasise this matter for us. Emphasising a matter when a verdict is given in judgment, for example, is done either by admission or by oath. Once you make an oath you intend to shut out the possibility of being called a liar.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'We have sent messengers before you [Muhammad] to other communities...' (*an-Nahl*: 63) meaning, being denied by your people is nothing new, as this is the nature of those who receive the call from Allah (God) on the tongues of the Messengers *peace be upon them*, because Allah only sends the Messengers when corruption has become widespread and rampant.

Therefore, sending messengers, means that there is no other solution than the intervention of the heavens. This is because man has within himself certainty-based immunities. They include his *an-nafs al-lawama* (the self-reproaching soul) that reproaches him when he does something wrong and straightens out his conduct. It is a check that comes from within his soul. If this soul becomes stolid and accustomed to doing wrong then the society around it has to carry out this task. Thus, whoever is not checked by his self-reproaching soul should be checked by the society around him. In case that the society has also become corrupt what, then, is the solution? The solution is that the heavens must intervene to save these people. So, the heavens intervene by sending messengers whenever corruption has become widespread throughout the entire society. The community of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is distinguished by this honour from its Lord. Therefore He says to them, 'You are entrusted with taking care of My way in your souls, by reproaching yourselves, enjoining the doing of what is right and forbidding the doing of what is wrong to others. This is why I will never send another messenger amongst you, as you will be carrying out this task.' This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '[Believers], you are the best community singled out for people: you order what is right, forbid what is wrong...' (*Al-Imran*: 110).

The community of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has been entrusted with being guardians over Allah's way; either via the self-reproaching

soul or via the society which enjoins the doing of good and forbids the doing of wrong. This is an immense honour for this community.

Therefore, a messenger comes whenever *fasad* (corruption) is widespread, but what is the meaning of corruption? Corruption means that the interests of one group are maintained at the expense of another group. Thus, how would the people of corruption and those who benefit from it react to a messenger coming in order to free the people from their corruption? Are they going to welcome him with open arms? No, absolutely not. They will inevitably receive him with hatred and rejection. They will declare war against him in order to defend their interests.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* continues by saying: ‘...but Satan made their foul deeds seem alluring to them...’ (*an-Nahl*: 63).

Here, Satan intervenes. He makes the actions of the people of corruption seem goodly to them and he encourages them to wage war against the Messengers. It is as if he says to them, ‘these (the messengers) are the people who will put an end to your influence; they will deprive you of whatever enjoyments you have in the life of this world; they will snatch your positions and they will diminish your rank amongst the people. These are the people who will raise lowlives and slaves over you.’ This is how the people of corruption and oppression cling to their oppression, and they grab hold of it with their premolar teeth. They take up an attitude of hostility towards the Messengers. So, you must make yourself firm as you will receive nothing from the leaders except for disavowal, rejection and the waging of war. Then, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...He is the patron of these present disbelievers today too...’ (*an-Nahl*: 63). ‘Today’ means the Hereafter, for as long as Satan is close to them in the life of this world, makes their deeds seem goodly to them and encourages them to be hostile towards the Messengers, then let him be close to them now and let him defend them on the Day of Resurrection. The Noble Quran describes this situation in His statement: ‘Like Satan, who says to man, “Do not believe!” but when man disbelieves, says, “I disown you; I fear Allah, the Lord of the Worlds.”’ (*al-Hashr*: 16)

In their argument with Satan on the Day of Resurrection, they will say to him, ‘You misled us and you made our deeds seem goodly to us.’ What will

he say in response? He will say: 'I had no power over you except to call you, and you responded to my call, so do not blame me; blame yourselves' (*Ibrahim*: 22). The meaning of *sultan* (power over others), here, is either with a proof that convinces or with force, domination and strength that impose what you want. Satan does not have either of these. He does not have any proof to convince you to do something and he does not have any strength with which to force you to do something reluctantly.

This is how Satan argues with them and responds to their claims by merely indicating he got them into disobedience, for he has no power over them. In another verse the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Satan made their foul deeds seem fair to them, and said, "No one will conquer you today, for I will be right beside you," but when the armies came within sight of one another he turned on his heels, saying, "This is where I leave you: I see what you do not, and I fear Allah— Allah is severe in His punishment."...' (*al-Anfal*: 48) By Satan's statement: '...and a painful punishment awaits them all.' (*an-Nahl*: 63), he describes the punishment here as being *alim* (grievous), and *muhlik* (ruinous). In general, Allah describes the punishment as being *alim* (grievous), *azhim* (great), *muhin* (shameful) and severe. Punishment is a feeling and sensation of pain. Scientists have learned that all sensation is in the skin. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* in order to perpetuate the punishment of these people, states: '...When their skins have been burned away, We shall replace them with new ones so that they may continue to feel the pain...' (*an-Nisa*: 56). Thus, the punishment is continued by the continued existence and replacement of the skin. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا أُنزِلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ إِلَّا لِتُبَيِّنَ لَهُمُ الَّذِي اخْتَلَفُوا



فِيهِ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

We have sent down the Scripture to you only to make clear to them what they differ about, and as guidance and mercy to those who believe [64] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 64)

The divine writ is the Noble Quran. The True Lord's statement: '...than that thou might make clear unto them all (questions of faith) on which they have come to hold divergent views...' (*an-Nahl*: 64) is proof that different

views emerged amongst the followers of the previous messengers, but what disagreement can this be when they are all following the same prophet? What is the cause? They said: The result of this disagreement is what they call temporal authority, and in order to clarify the meaning of temporal authority we will give you the example of a sheikh of a spiritual order, for example. When he dies, his sons fight over who his successor should be, as each one of them wants it. Each one of them gathers a group of his father's followers around him. If this issue of succession had been clear in their minds this disagreement would not have started.

Likewise, temporal authority started amongst the followers of the Messengers who started writing documents and deeds, mentioning what they loved and stating what they saw as correct from their point of view. All of these people had influence with regards to what we call temporal authority. Therefore, how could they leave Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to take this authority from them and deprive them of the leadership that they had. The Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to them to make clear unto them: i.e. to return them to the way of Truth and to the straight path. The True Lord says: 'and (thus offer) guidance and grace' (*an-Nahl*: 64) *Huda* (guidance) means to demonstrate the clearest path towards a beneficial destination. The path can only be clear if it is free of difficulties and obstacles, as well as dangers. It is a clear path that is secured and easy, as well as short. It takes you to your destination via the shortest route. The opposite of *huda* (guidance) is *dalal* (error), when you are lead astray. So, if you want a path, it directs you somewhere else and it points to another, or it shows you a path that contains dangers and obstacles.

As for *rahma* (mercy), the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes the Quran as being a grace when He says: 'We send down the Quran as healing and mercy to those who believe; for those who disbelieve, it only increases their loss.' (*al-Isra'*: 82) How is the Quran a *shifa'a* (cure) and how is it a grace? A cure is when we are afflicted with a malady and our Lord *Glorified is He* says to us: 'Get rid of your malady and treat your illnesses with such and such, and leave the decision to Allah.' This is a cure. As for mercy, it is that which prevents the malady from coming back. Thus, it is a protection that exterminates the

illness at its source so that it does not return. An example of this occurs in the world of medicine. You might go to a doctor, so that he can treat you for a specific malady, like pustules in the skin, for example, and he is only concerned with that which is outward. He prescribes to you something that will treat these pustules. Yet, after a while, they come back to you once again.

As for the skilful and proficient doctor, he does not just look at the outward. Instead, he looks for the inward cause and he tries to exterminate the causes of the illness from its roots so that the illness never comes back.

If we consider the story of Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* and what Allah tested him with, we can see an excellent example of treating both the outward and the inward. His Lord tested him outwardly in a way that clearly affected his body. Then, when Allah *Glorified is He* allowed for him to be cured He asked him to: 'Stamp your foot! Here is cool water for you to wash in and drink.' (*Sad*: 42) The meaning of *mughtasal* '...to wash in...' is to wash and remove the outward effects of this test. The meaning of *sharab* 'to drink' is a drink that will cure you of the causes of this test so that it does not return.

The same goes for treating the society. The Noble Quran came when there was great corruption and numerous maladies in the world. There must be a way to cure these maladies and provide immunities that will prevent these illnesses from returning. His statement: '...to those who believe,' (*an-Nahl*: 64) means that this Quran contains guidance and mercy for those who believe in you and your message (O Muhammad). The doctor whom we have previously mentioned as an example does not treat every patient. Rather, he treats whoever has confidence in him, and this person goes to the doctor and presents his complaints to him. Then, the doctor examines him and knows his sickness.

This is how the Noble Quran is heard by whoever believes in it, and that is why it is guidance and grace for believers. It leaves within you illuminative insights that elevate you and raise you up to the highest degrees. On the other hand, someone else hears it and he does not understand any of it and he says, as the Noble Quran narrates:

'Some of these people listen to you [Prophet], but, once they leave your presence, they sneer at those who have been given knowledge, saying,

‘What was that he just said?’ (Muhammad: 16) And He says: ‘Say, ‘It is guidance and healing for those who have faith, but the ears of the disbelievers are heavy, they are blind to it, it is as if they are being called from a distant place.’ (Fussilat: 44)

Therefore, the Quran is one and the same, but how it is received is different. Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَاللَّهُ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا
 إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

**It is God who sends water down from the sky and with it
 revives the earth when it is dead. There truly is a sign in this
 for people who listen [65] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 65)**

In this verse the True Lord is turning our attention towards a tangible, material sign that is not denied by anyone, which is the sending down of rain from the sky. The dead earth is brought back to life with this rain. This is a concrete evidence of His power and that He is the Only One on which His creation rely. It is as if He *Glorified is He* is saying to them: ‘If I give you such-and-such and I provide you with your material needs, which shows that I take care of you, then when I send a way down to you that benefits you and make right your condition, you must believe in it.’ This is a tangible, material proof that leads them to affirm the metaphysical way that has come at the hands of the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in His statement: ‘We send down the Quran as healing and mercy to those who believe...’ (*al-Isra*: 82)

His statement: ‘It is Allah who sends water down from the sky’ (*an-Nahl*: 65) is a tangible, cosmological sign that no one denies. Then, He says: ‘and with it revives the earth when it is dead’ (*an-Nahl*: 65). The death of the earth means the state of it being barren and desolate with no crops or plants. To people, this is sheer destruction. Whenever the earth becomes barren, they look up for clouds which would bring rain and revive the dead earth with plants and herbage after being dead and lifeless.

If the water of the sky was withheld from the earth you would all have died of hunger. So, consider the evidence provided in this tangible sign, as a

proof of the veracity of the incorporeal sign, i.e. Allah's way that has been conveyed to you by His Messenger *peace be upon them*. Just as you have trusted Me with the former, trust Me with the latter. Then, He says: '...There truly is a sign in this for people who listen.' (*an-Nahl*: 65) However, this sign is seen with the eyes and not heard. The True Lord says: '...for people who listen.' (*an-Nahl*: 65) Why? Some said: 'Allah *Glorified is He* mentions this sign in order to turn their attention towards the way that will come to them at the hands of the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This way will be heard from the one who will convey it, i.e. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. There is another example of this in His statement: 'Say [Prophet], 'Just think, if Allah were to cast perpetual night over you until the Day of Resurrection, what Allah other than He could bring you light? Do you not listen?'' (*al-Qasas*: 71)

Light is seen, not heard, but He says: '...Do you not listen?' This is because He mentions the night, and at night (in the darkness) hearing is the means of awareness.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَلَكُمْ فِي الْأَنْعَامِ لَعِبْرَةٌ لِّتُذَكَّرُوا فِيهَا بَطُونُهُمْ مِنْ
 بَيْنِ فَرَثٍ وَدَمٍ لَّبَنًا خَالِصًا سَائِغًا لِلشَّارِبِينَ ﴿٦٦﴾

**In livestock, too, you have a lesson – We give you
 a drink from the contents of their bellies, between
 waste matter and blood, pure milk, sweet to the
 drinker [66] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 66)**

The universe that Allah has created contains numerous genera and the lowest of them is inanimate objects that are exemplified in the earth, the mountains, water, and other things. Then we have plants, then animals and then man.

In the previous verse the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us an example of an inanimate object which stirs and swells with the rain and it gives us plants. Here He turns us towards a sign in a higher genus, which is the animal species. 'In livestock, too, you have a lesson...' (*an-Nahl*: 66). The meaning of *al-an'am* (cattle) is camels, cows, sheep, and goats. They have been mentioned in the

chapter of *al-An'am* in His statement: '[Allah gave you] eight animals, in [four] pairs: a pair of sheep and a pair of goats— ask them [Prophet], "Has He forbidden the two males, the two females, or the young in the wombs of the two females? Tell me based on knowledge if you are telling the truth." [144] And a pair of camels and a pair of cattle— ask them [Prophet], "Has He forbidden the two males, the two females, or the young in the wombs of the two females? Were you present when Allah gave you these commands?" So, who is more wicked, than he who fabricates lies against Allah with no basis in knowledge in order to lead people astray? Allah does not guide the evildoers' (*al-An'am*: 143-144) These are *al-an'am* (cattle).

In His statement, *ibra* 'a lesson' is something that you consider and from which you deduce what shows you the power of the Wise Maker *Glorified is He*. These *'ibar* (lessons) provide you with the proof for the veracity of His way so, you believe in it.

One of the related meanings of *ibra* is *'uboor* (traversing) and moving from one thing to another, i.e. you take a lesson from one thing and it benefits you in something else. We also have tears *al-'abra* with which you show and manifest things that are hidden inside you. The meaning of a lesson in creating cattle is: 'In livestock, too, you have a lesson— We give you a drink from the contents of their bellies, between waste matter and blood, pure milk, sweet to the drinker.' (*an-Nahl*: 66) The root letters *saqa* (give drink) appear in the Quran as *saqa* and as *asqa*. Some said that their meaning is the same, but it is a matter of fact that each of them has its own meaning, yet their general meaning is the same. We have *saqa* in His statement: 'their Lord will give them a pure drink' (76: 21) meaning: He gave them something to drink. The present tense is *yasqi* (gives). We also have His statement in the story of Moses *peace be upon him*: 'He watered their flocks for them...' (*al-Qasas*: 24).

As for *asqa*, as in His statement: '...and we bring down water from the sky for you to drink—you do not control its sources.' (*al-Hijr*: 22) This means that He *Glorified is He* sends water down from the sky which people do not drink while it is coming down. Rather, it goes into the earth for whoever wants to drink. The True Lord does not make people open their mouths while rain comes down so they can drink it. No. Rather, it is stored in the earth for whoever wants it. The present tense of *asqa* is *yusqi*.

Therefore, there is a difference between the two words, even if they have the same general meaning, and there is a difference between you being given something which you benefit from on the spot, such as His statement: 'their Lord will give them a pure drink' (*al-Insan*: 21) and you being given something that you can benefit from afterwards, such as in His statement: '...and We bring down water from the sky for you to drink—you do not control its sources.' (*al-Hijr*: 22)

This is why they say that a person who does goodness may do it immediately, and give a needy person a piece of bread, for example. Alternatively, he could delay it by giving him something that will give him a constant income and thus he can eat from his income whenever he wants. The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us this idea in the chapter of *al-Kahf* in the story of the two-horned one. He says: '...when he reached a place between two mountain barriers, he found beside them a people who could barely understand him.' (*al-Kahf*: 93) If they did not understand a word of what he was saying how did Dhu 'Al-Qarnayn (Two-Horned One) communicate with them and how did they say: '...They said, "Dhu 'Al-Qarnayn, Gog and Magog are ruining this land. Will you build a barrier between them and us if we pay you a tribute?"' (*al-Kahf*: 94) We say: the one who wants to do what is good and right will strive and make efforts on his own to do so. It is as if he is striving to understand them and he is being patient with them in order to arrive at a way of communicating with them. At the same time, he could have abandoned them and left them on the pretext that they do not understand and they do not speak. When Dhu 'Al-Qarnayn (Two-Horned One) wanted to build a barrier for them, he did not build it by himself. Rather, he taught them how to build so that they could do it themselves whenever they wanted to, and not have need of him. He said: "Bring me lumps of iron!" and then, when he had filled the gap between the two mountainsides [he said], "Work your bellows!" and then, when he had made it glow like fire, he said, "bring me molten metal to pour over it!"' (*al-Kahf*: 96) Therefore, he taught them and did a favour for them that would never end. His statement: '...the contents of their bellies...' (*an-Nahl*: 66) means what is in the bellies of cattle. This is because the pronoun is the third person masculine singular because it is being used in reference to the genus.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* willed for this milk to be extracted: ‘...between waste matter and blood, pure milk...’ (*an-Nahl*: 66) *Farth* is the food waste in the tripe of the cattle. The lesson here is that Allah has given us that which is between the excess, which is the dung of the cattle and the remnants of food in their stomachs, and it has a repugnant smell and dirty, repulsive form, and the blood, which has a red colour. It is also not palatable. From these two things, the Creator *Glorified is He* extracts pure milk for us to drink that is untainted by the colour of blood or the smell of dung.

Who is able to do such a thing other than the Creator *Glorified is He*? The True Lord *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by describing this milk: ‘pure milk, sweet to the drinker’ (*an-Nahl*: 66) i.e. the one drinking it likes its taste, enjoys it and does not choke on it. Rather, it is palatable and when it is drunk it goes down easily because there are foods and drinks that are pleasing to you and they go down pleasantly and you enjoy them, but they might not be wholesome. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...then eat it with enjoyment and with wholesome result.’ (*an-Nisa*: 4) The word *hani’an* (‘...with enjoyment...’) means that you enjoy it and *mari’an* (‘...with wholesome result.’) means that it is beneficial for the body. It is good for you because you could find pleasure in something while eating it or drinking it, but then it causes you hardships afterwards. Thus, it brings you pleasure, but it is not good for you.

Milk is one of Allah’s blessings that indicate His *Glorified is He* power. There is a lesson in His extracting it from between the dung and the blood. It is as if the True Lord is giving us this lesson in order to take us from the tangible meaning that we witness to the values-based meaning that is found in His way. Thus, the One Who made this lesson for us to rectify our outward form is capable of making a way for us that will rectify our hearts.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَمِنْ ثَمَرَاتِ النَّخِيلِ وَالْأَعْنَابِ نَتَّخِذُونَ مِنْهُ سَكَرًا
وَرِزْقًا حَسَنًا إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

**From the fruits of date palms and grapes you take
sweet juice and wholesome provisions. There truly is
a sign in this for people who use their reason [67]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 67)**

The fruits of the date palm are obviously Dates. Grape plants are known as *karm* (vines). The Quranic expression here is that when Allah has favoured His servants with wholesome sustenance, He did not favour them with it so that they could be intoxicated by the grapes, or make intoxicants from them. Rather, the True Lord gives us a lesson here, as this verse was revealed before the prohibition of *khamr* (vintage/wine).

It is as if the verse is bearing a prelude for the prohibition of intoxicants which they now sanction and commend. This is why the scholars said, ‘Indeed the one who reads this verse with perspicacity of the future will know that Allah has a ruling regarding intoxication that will come.’

How did they conclude that Allah has a ruling that will come regarding intoxication? They said: ‘Because He describes the sustenance as being wholesome whereas He did not describe intoxicants as being wholesome which means that they are not wholesome. This is because we eat the fruits of the date palm, i.e. dates, as they are and likewise we eat grapes directly without any interference from us in what Allah has created for us. However, if we alter the nature of something that it becomes an intoxicating substance, we corrupt the nature of something that Allah has chosen to be wholesome sustenance for us. It is as if the True Lord is alerting His slaves. I do not favour you with what I have prohibited, and I have not yet prohibited it. So, regard this intoxication—as you see it—as a source of enjoyment for you. However, take a lesson from the fact that I have not described it as wholesome; if it is not wholesome it is then harmful. So, if ever the prohibition comes I have already alerted you from the very beginning. Then the true Lord says: ‘...There truly is a sign in this for people who use their reason.’ (*an-Nahl*: 67) This is because the intellect demands that we compare between two things, and that we ask:

how come He did not describe intoxicants as being wholesome? Does it not mean that Allah does not love this matter and He is not pleased with it? It is as if the verse contains the intention of the prohibition, so if ever the prohibition of intoxicants is sent down this was paving the way for it.

The message in the verse is: the astonishing matter that informs you that Allah, the One Who has created things for you that are for the well-being of your constitution and your material from, is fully Capable and in charge of legislating for you that which will guarantee the well-being of your morals as well as your spiritual, ethical hearts.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَوْحَىٰ رَبُّكَ إِلَى النَّحْلِ أَنِ اتَّخِذِي مِنَ الْجِبَالِ بُيُوتًا وَمِنَ الشَّجَرِ وَمِمَّا يَعْرِشُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

And your Lord inspired the bee, saying, ‘Build yourselves houses in the mountains and trees and what people construct [68] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 68)

The bee is one of Allah’s creations, and Allah has placed within each of His creations, and within their natural inclinations that which brings about their benefit. He explains this in His statement: ‘Who created [all things] in due proportion; (2) who determined their destinies and guided them. (3)’ (*al-A’la*: 2-3) This means: He *Glorified is He* created this to be such-and-such and that to be such-and-such according to what is suitable for the nature of each. Therefore you find every creation besides man going its way without any divergence. Man, for example, may eat beyond his capacity, and he may reach the limit of indigestion. Then, he complains about being sick and asks for medicine. As for animals, whenever they eat their meal, they always eat what suffices them and nothing more, even if you force them to eat. This is because they are governed by a mechanical natural inclination. They do not have intellects with which they can choose.

We have mentioned donkeys as an example of the natural inclination in animals. They are always accused and mentioned as an example of stupidity. For example, when you urge a donkey to cross over a stream, it will look at the stream as if it is measuring the distance very precisely. If it finds that it is

within its capacity, it jumps across without any hesitation. If it finds that it is beyond its capacity and ability it turns back and does not dare do it, even if you hit it and shout at it. You cannot force it to do something that is beyond its capacity. This is because it is governed by an instrumental natural inclination that Allah *Glorified is He* has put within it, as opposed to man who thinks about matters like this to choose which one suits him; this would lead to such-and-such and that would lead to such-and-such. We can liken this natural inclination in animals to the electronic brain that only gives you the information that you have fed it. As for the sublime, human intellect, it is able to think, choose, and compare and prefer between alternatives.

The True Lord *Glorified is He*: ‘And your Lord inspired the bee...’ (*an-Nahl*: 68). The True Lord may favour some of His servants and teach them the language of birds and animals. They are, thus, able to communicate with them and address them, as in the story of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*.⁽¹⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who created them and originated them. He inspires them with whatever He wills. What is *wahy* (inspiration)? *Wahy* is when someone higher informs someone lower via hidden means that of things we do not know. If one informs the other by obvious means, then this is not *wahy* (inspiration). *Wahy* (inspiration) requires that the one inspiring is higher, that the one inspired is lower, and the inspiration itself which is what is normally meant by *wahy* (inspiration). The True Lord *Glorified is He* has the absolute power to inspire whatever He wants to whatever He wants from His creation. The True Lord *Glorified is He* inspired inanimate objects in His statement: ‘When the earth is shaken violently in its [last] quaking, when the earth throws out its burdens, when man cries, “what is happening to it?” on that Day, it will tell all because your Lord will inspire it [to do so].’ (*az-Zalzala*: 1-5)

Allah taught it via secret means that are specific to the Creator’s power regarding His creation. Here; He *Glorified is He* inspires the bee. He also

(1) The True Lord, *The Most High* says: ‘And [in this insight] Sulaiman (Solomon) was [truly] Dawud’s (David) heir, and he would say: “O you people! We have been taught the speech of birds...”’ (*an-Naml*: 16) He also said about Sulaiman *peace be upon him* and his hosts: ‘till, when they came upon a valley [full] of ants, an ant exclaimed: “O you ants! Get into your dwellings, lest Sulaiman and his hosts crush you without [even] being aware [of you]!” [18] Thereupon [Solomon] smiled joyously at her words... [19]’ (*an-Naml*: 18-19).

inspired the angels: ‘Your Lord revealed to the angels: “I am with you: give the believers firmness...”’ (*al-Anfal*: 12). He *Glorified is He* also inspired the Messengers: ‘We have sent revelation to you [Prophet] as We did to Nuh (Noah) and the prophets after him, to Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac), Ya’qub (Jacob), and the Tribes, to Isa (Jesus), Ayyub (Job), Yunus (Jonah), Harun (Aaron) and Sulaiman (Solomon)...’ (*an-Nisa*: 163).

He inspired those who draw near amongst His slaves: ‘And how I inspired the disciples to believe in Me and My messengers...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 111). He inspired them with illuminative insights that passed through their hearts. He also inspired the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: ‘We inspired Moses’ mother, saying, ‘Suckle him...’ (*al-Qasas*: 7).

This is Allah’s inspiration to whatever and whomever He wants from His creation: the angels, the earth, the Messengers, His servants who draw near, the mother of Musa *peace be upon him* the bees and so forth.

The inspiration can also be from other than Him *Glorified is He* and it is also called *wahy*, as in His statement: ‘The evil ones incite their followers...’ (*al-An’am*: 121). He also says: ‘...In the same way we assigned to each prophet an enemy, evil humans and evil jinn. They suggest alluring words to one another in order to deceive...’ (*al-An’am*: 112).

However, when the word *wahy* (inspiration) is used in an absolute sense without any restriction, it refers to the revelation from Allah that is given to the Messengers *peace be upon them*. Therefore, the scholars of jurisprudence say, ‘*Wahy* is Allah’s informing each of His Prophets of His way.’ The scholars of jurisprudence leave aside all the other kinds: the inspiration of natural inclinations, the inspiration of the creation, the inspiration of one’s natural disposition and so forth.

Allah says: ‘...“Build yourselves houses in the mountains and trees and what people construct.”’ (*an-Nahl*: 68)

There are many researchers, since time immemorial, who have been obsessed with studying bees and the stages that they go through in life. Among them was a researcher who followed the historical phases of bees and learned that when bees were first found they were living in mountains. Then, they dwelled in trees and made nests in them. After that, they dwelled in apiaries that were

made by man and they are what we now know as industrial cells or beehives. What is amazing is that this researcher does not know the Noble Quran, and despite that what he learned corresponds exactly with what is in the Quran. Likewise, He discovered that the most ancient kinds of honey are what are found in the caves of mountains. This fact was reached by way of burning honey and transforming it into carbon. Then within this carbon formed from honey, the content of radioisotope carbon-14 was measured, in order to determine its age. This is how they discovered that the honey in the caves was the oldest kind of honey, followed by the honey of trees and then the honey of beehives.

Therefore, Allah inspired the bee via hidden means that we do not know. The process of inspiration differs according to the one inspiring and the one being inspired. We can find an example of this process in the astute servant whose master merely gives him a quick glance from which he understands everything, whether his master wants something to drink, something to eat, or anything else?

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

ثُمَّ كُلِي مِنْ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ فَاسْلُكِي سُبُلَ رَبِّكِ ذُلًّا يَخْرُجُ مِنْ بُطُونِهَا شَرَابٌ
مُخْتَلِفٌ أَلْوَانُهُ فِيهِ شِفَاءٌ لِلنَّاسِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

**Then feed on all kinds of fruit and follow the ways made
easy for you by your Lord.' From their bellies comes a drink
of different colours in which there is healing for people.**

There truly is a sign in this for those who think [69]

(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 69)

The effective cause behind honey being a cure for man is that the bee eats from all kinds of fruit. The variation of fruits makes honey rich in beneficial elements. Whenever man consumes it each element goes towards a part of the body, and thus it has a cure by Allah's leave.

Yet, what happens nowadays? We see some people saying, 'I consumed a lot of honey and I did not feel any benefit.' We say, 'It is because we have interfered with the process and we have corrupted the nature that Allah created for us. Initially we left bees to eat all manner of fruit, but in brief we

put sugar, for example, in the place of natural flowers and blossoms. This is why the taste of honey changes and it loses its characteristic that the Noble Quran has mentioned. Therefore, the person who follows the prices of honey finds a clear disparity in price from one kind to another, in accordance to the quality of the honey and the extent to which it conforms to the natural type that the Noble Quran has mentioned.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘and follow the ways made easy for you by your Lord’ (*an-Nahl*: 69) meaning: roam freely amongst the flowers here and there. This is why we cannot build houses for bees to reside in. They must be allowed to roam freely from one garden to another. Whenever the crops dry bees eat from their own honey, but now people take all the honey and leave nothing behind, and put sugar in its place from which the bees eat throughout this period.

The True Lord says: ‘...made easy for you...’ (*an-Nahl*: 69) i.e. humbled, facilitated and compliant. A bee goes out and speeds along these various paths and nothing stops it or prevents it. It flies here and there, from one flower to another. Have you seen a tree, for example, that rejects a bee? No, because everything has been subdued for the bee and facilitated for it.

It is due to His wisdom and His mercy that Allah has subjugated the paths of life for us, and subjugated that which we benefit from. If it was not for his subjugation of these things we would not have benefited from them. You can see a huge camel being herded by a small boy, and he makes it kneel down and carry loads. He leads it wherever he wants. On the other hand, when the camel gets angry or flies into a rage no one is able to control it. The small boy was not controlling it out of his own power, but because Allah had subjugated it for him.

As for a snake, for example, despite its small size it represents a danger that causes everyone to be scared of it and afraid of getting close to it. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* has not subjugated it for us, and it scares us even though it is so small. Likewise, if we reflect on the flea, for example, how small and paltry it is, and despite that it deprives us of sleep and denies us the pleasure of sleeping peacefully. Is anyone able to subjugate the flea for himself?

There is profound wisdom in this and it is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying to us: 'If I subjugate something for you, even if it is one of the biggest creatures like camels or elephants, you are able to benefit from it. If I do not subjugate it for you then you have no power to subjugate, no matter how small and paltry it may be. Therefore, the matters are not in your power. Rather, you should take them as Allah *Glorified is He* has created them for you.

'...From their bellies comes...' (*an-Nahl*: 69). This is because the bee sucks up nectar from here and there and then a divine, cooking process takes place within it which turns this nectar into pure honey. This is because someone might think that it takes the nectar and then purifies it as it is, but the Quran did not say 'from their mouths' but rather 'from within'. This is the divine laboratory that gives us honey which contains a cure for mankind.

'...a drink of different colors...' (*an-Nahl*: 69). As long as the bee eats from all manner of fruit and the fruits have differing gifts according to their different substances, different colours and different tastes and smells, then the fluid must be of many hues '...in which there is healing for people...' (*an-Nahl*: 69).

Therefore, we find many doctors, may Allah reward them with goodness, who are very interested in bees' honey. They have performed several experiments to know its medicinal value but these efforts are hindered because they cannot find the natural honey that Allah created. Despite this and despite man's interference in the bees' nourishment there is still some benefit in it and it maintains the quality of being a cure. The most important of these is the absorption of water from the body. If there is any microbe that you want to get rid of, suck the water out of it and it will die immediately.

If ever there is a supply of the natural honey that Allah has created, the Creator's wisdom becomes manifest through its cure. However, if man interferes in this process he corrupts it. The parts of the universe that man has no say in, continue as normal without any divergence, such as the sun, the moon and the celestial bodies and so forth. Man is the only creation that goes against Allah's way.

The thing you do have a say in, you can interfere in according to the way of its Creator, or you leave it. This is because when you interfere in it according to the way of its Creator, it gives you well-being and goodness and if you interfere in it according to your own way, you corrupt it.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘When it is said to them, “Do not cause corruption in the land”, they say, “We are only putting things right.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 11) It is because they do not know. They cannot distinguish between corruption and rightness. The Quran contains examples of people who spread corruption in the earth and think that they are doing good works. He says: ‘Say [Prophet], “shall we tell you who has the most to lose by their actions, whose efforts in this world are misguided, even when they think they are doing good work?”’ (*al-Kahf*: 103-104)

Whoever invented the car and these other machines that emit toxins and pollute the environment that Allah has created-it is true that they saved us time and effort when we need to move and transport things- yet, look at the damage that people have done because of these machines. Look at car exhausts and their effects on human health. Inventors of these machines should have weighed up the benefits and the harms that would result from their invention. Add to this the horrific crashes and collisions that cost lives. By Allah, have you ever seen two camels in a collision? Therefore, we must weigh up the benefits and the harms before we embark upon something, so that we do not corrupt the natural state that Allah has created for us.

In His statement: ‘in which there is healing for people’ (*an-Nahl*: 69) *an-nas* (people) is an aggregation that has different maladies from one individual to the next as well as their different ways of dealing with the causes of maladies. So, how can this fluid be a cure for all maladies in their various forms? We say: it is because this fluid that Allah has prepared for us with His power has come in many colours; from nectar that has numerous kinds, forms, tastes and elements. It is not just one mixture that all of mankind drinks. Rather, it comes in different and various kinds, according to how people differ, or the maladies they have would vary. Every element within it treats one of these maladies. The True Lord says: ‘There truly is a sign in this for those who think.’ (*an-Nahl*: 69)

At-tafakkur (pondering) means to think about what you are concerned with to derive something with which you are not concerned. This is how information becomes rich because if information does not cross-pollinate and if no propagation happens to it, it stops and becomes frozen. Man is then afflicted with apathy with regards to his ambitions. When man is afflicted with this

kind of apathy progress stops: the progress that we see in the world is the result of thinking and using the intellect.

Therefore the True Lord *Glorified is He* alerts us when we pass by the phenomena of the universe. He warns us not to pass by them in heedlessness and turn away. Rather, we must think about them and reflect on them. He says: ‘And there are many signs in the heavens and the earth that they pass by and give no heed to’. (*Yusuf*: 105) This verse is prompting us to contemplate on the phenomena of the universe. Moreover, it is warning against turning away and being heedless of Allah’s signs because by thinking we derive from the universe that which we benefit from.

If we take the example of the person who invented the steam engine and how he arrived at this invention that has benefitted humanity, we find that he arrived at it while boiling water. He noticed that the lid was being raised above the pan, so he asked himself: why is the lid being raised? He thought about it and used his intellect until he discovered steam power. He was then able to use this power to propel and move vehicles.

Likewise, Archimedes—and several others—by thinking and reflecting on the phenomena of the universe, learned about laws of nature that led to beneficial inventions that we enjoy today. Consider the person who invented the wheel. How difficult was it for man to carry loads? What was the maximum that he was able to carry? After they invented the wheel and used it to carry things man became capable of carrying and moving several times the weight than he could before.

As for the person who invented reservoirs, how difficult was it to extract water from wells, or from rivers? After the work of the reservoirs and pumping the water, we have come to find water in our homes merely by opening a tap.

These are all fruits of using the intellect for pondering and contemplating on the phenomena of the universe. The intellect uses the raw materials that Allah has created, about which He prompted us to think and from which to derive benefit. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying to us: ‘I have given you the necessities of life. If you want the luxuries of life and its conveniences then use the blessings of your intellect, pondering and contemplating to reach these luxuries.

Here the True Lord *Glorified is He* draws our attention towards another point, which is that He *Glorified is He* makes out of tangible matters that which makes us understand abstractions, in order to draw our attention towards His way. This is why we are taken from the tangible to abstract, as He says:

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَكُمْ ثُمَّ يَنْوَفِّكُمْ وَمِنْكُمْ مَنْ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَوَّلِ الْعُمُرِ
لِكَىٰ لَا يَعْلَمَ بَعْدَ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

**It is God who has created you and in time will cause you to die. Some of you will be reduced, in old age, to a most abject state, so that, after having knowledge, they will know nothing at all: God is truly all knowing and all powerful [70]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 70)**

Here He says: ‘It is Allah who has created you...’ (*an-Nahl*: 70). This is a fact that no one denies, and no one has claimed it for themselves. He has provided you with the essentials for your life on earth as well as plants and animals, the cattle that give you pure untainted milk that is pleasant to drink and the bees that contain a cure for men.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has given us life and He has given us the essentials of life. He has also given us that which removes the hardships of life. As long as you have affirmed these tangible realities then hear: ‘It is Allah who has created you and in time will cause you to die. Some of you will be reduced, in old age...’ (*an-Nahl*: 70).

When we hear ‘...has created you...’ we acknowledge that Allah has created us, but how did He create us? This is something we do not know because it is not an industrial process. The One Who created is the True Lord *Glorified is He* alone. He is the One Who informs us about how He created. Yet, man interferes and involves himself in matters that he knows nothing about. Therefore, you see those who say that man comes from monkeys, and other such nonsense that has no basis in reality. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us: ‘If you want to know how you were created then listen to the One Who created you. Beware of listening to anyone else. This is because: ‘I did not make them witnesses to the creation of the heavens and

earth, nor to their own creation...' (*al-Kahf*: 51). This is a process that Allah *Glorified is He* has not shown to anyone: '...I do not take as my supporters those who lead others astray.' (*al-Kahf*: 51) That is, I did not take any assistant to help me with creating.

Mudil is that who leads men astray. A *mudil* is the person who says something to you as if it was true, but he is misleading you. Therefore, our Lord *Glorified is He* gives us an idea in advance here: 'Be warned. People are going to come who will try to mislead you regarding the subject of creation, and they will alter reality. Beware of believing them because they were not with Me when I created you and thus they are only claiming to have knowledge of this issue.'

The same can be said of the creation of the heavens and the earth, as Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who created them and He *Glorified is He* is the One Who informs us of how He created them. When He *Glorified is He* says: 'And Allah has created you' (*an-Nahl*: 70), we have to say: 'We hear and we obey, with pleasure. O Lord, You created us and You know how You created us. We do not ask anyone else about this and we do not ask anyone but You about this.'

Then, He says: '...and in time will cause you to die...' (*an-Nahl*: 70), i.e from Him *Glorified is He* was the beginning and to Him *Glorified is He* is the return. If the beginning is from Him and the return is to Him, and your life is between these two parentheses, then do not rebel against Allah in what is between these two parentheses because it does not befit you. You came from Him and you will return to him, so why rebel?

Here, our Lord *Glorified is He* gives us proof of His absolute power regarding death. This is because death does not follow any rule. Someone may die as an embryo in their mother's womb, as a child, as a youth or an old man. They may even be reduced to a most abject state, meaning, living a long life. What do we mean by a most abject state? Man is reduced, after strength and youth, dignity and rank, commanding and forbidding and going about in the earth arrogantly. He is reduced to weakness in everything, even in the most distinguishing aspect of his formation: his thinking. After gaining knowledge and memorizing using a powerful memory, he goes back to being

like a small child. He does not remember anything and He is unable to do anything. This is so to know that the issue is not inherent in you. Rather, it is a gift to you from your Creator *Glorified is He* to know that when He decrees death for us it is a mercy for us. Moreover, it veils us from weakness and senility, before we need people to help us and assist us in the simplest of life's tasks and to be commanded by those whom we used to command.

From this angle, death is one of Allah's blessings upon us. In order to be convinced of this fact look at the people who have been granted long lives such that they have reached what the Quran called '...a most abject state...', and how they suffer from weakness and how their families suffer from taking care of them, such that the closest people to them wish for them to die. Death is therefore a blessing, especially for the believer who acts righteously and longs for his reward from Allah. You see him being happy about death; for he has furnished his Hereafter and he would love to proceed towards it. This is the opposite of the person who squandered himself and did not prepare for this day. You see him scared and apprehensive, because he knows what's in store for him.

Thumma '...and in time...' is a connector that indicates sequence with delay; i.e. time elapses between the two events. Thus, He *Glorified is He* created you. Then, after some time and delay, the second event happens; He causes you to die. This is different to the particle *fa* (will) which indicates sequence with immediate succession; that is, the two events happen successively without interruption, as in His statement: 'then He causes him to die and be buried' (*'Abasa*: 21). After death, the burying takes place without any delay.

The True Lord says: '...Some of you will be reduced, in old age, to a most abject state...' (*an-Nahl*: 70). A most abject state means the worst state, the vilest and the most worthless. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* brought man out of his mother's womb while knowing nothing. He says: 'It is Allah who brought you out of your mothers' wombs knowing nothing, and gave you hearing and sight and minds...' (*an-Nahl*: 78).

These are the means of knowledge that man has. When he is reduced to a most abject state these senses lose their ability and their functioning becomes weak. Man, then returns to how he began, knowing nothing, after being afflicted with senility and decrepitude. The tools of cognizance have stopped

working. Man starts forgetting and his memory becomes weak and incapable of retrieving what he used to know.

The true Lord says: '...ceasing to know anything of what he once knew so well...' (*an-Nahl*: 70).

Thus, they call these senses *al-warith* (that which inherits). The True Lord *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: '...Allah is truly all knowing and all powerful.' (*an-Nahl*: 70) This is because He *Glorified is He* has the creation in His hand from the beginning and in His hand, He has their death and return, and this requires knowledge, as He *Glorified is He* said: 'How could He who created not know His own creation...' (*al-Mulk*: 14). Thus, there must be knowledge because the one who makes something must know what is good and what is bad for it. This requires the ability to realize, for knowledge alone is insufficient.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَاللَّهُ فَضَّلَ بَعْضَكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ فِي الرِّزْقِ فَمَا الَّذِينَ فُضِّلُوا بِرَادَى رِزْقِهِمْ
عَلَى مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَهُمْ فِيهِ سَوَاءٌ أَفَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَجْحَدُونَ ﴿٧١﴾

**Allah has given some of you more provision than others.
Those who have been given more are unwilling to pass their
provision on to the slaves they possess so that they become
their equals. How can they refuse to acknowledge God's
blessings? [71] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 71)**

If we contemplate on the universe and what is around us, we find that we are only equal in one thing which is that we are slaves of Allah. We are only equal in this. As for everything else, we are different. We have different colours, different bodies, forms, talents, and provisions.

What is amazing is that this divergence is the essence of conformity; for divergence can arise from conformity and conformity can arise from divergence. In example, if you and your friend go to a restaurant and order a chicken, and you naturally like the breast of the chicken, while your friend prefers another part, this is a difference. When the food comes you find that this difference is

the essence of agreement. You have what you like and so does he. This is a difference that leads to agreement. If we were to suppose that both of you like the breast, for example, this is an agreement that could lead to a conflict. When the food comes, we would sit and ask: who gets the breast? The True Lord *Glorified is He* has created us to be different concerning some things, and He wanted this divergence to be a kind of integration between us. How can integration be?

Do you imagine, for example, that there is someone who possesses all talents such that if he wanted to build a house, he would be the engineer that designs, the builder who builds, the worker who carries, the carpenter, the blacksmith, the smelter and so forth? Do you imagine that there is someone like this? No.

However, the Creator *Glorified is He* distributed these talents amongst mankind so that each one of them would need someone else for the things that they are not talented in, and this is how integration is achieved in the world. Therefore, the differences between us are the essence of conformity. Moreover, they form one of His signs as well as a wisdom that the Creator willed. He says: ‘...but they continue to have their differences...’ (*Hud*: 118); this is how He created us.

Otherwise, had we all been created with the same talents and abilities, would it make sense for us all to be philosophers, doctors, or scientists? Who would build? Who would farm? Who would manufacture? Thus, it is due to Allah’s mercy that He made us different yet complementary to each other.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah has given some of you more provision than others...’ (*an-Nahl*: 71).

People look at sustenance from only one angle, as it is wealth according to them. This person is rich and this person is poor. The truth is that sustenance is not just in wealth. Rather, everything that you benefit from is your sustenance. The sustenance of this person is his intellect. The sustenance of this person is his muscular strength. This one thinks and that one acts.

Therefore, we must not look at sustenance as if it is only one kind. Rather, we must look at the different gifts that Allah has created for His creation: health,

power, intelligence, wisdom, courage etc. These are forms of sustenance in which there is disparity amongst mankind.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* undertook the matter of sustenance, He made the disparity therein ambiguous. The verse has not defined who the preferred is and who the preferred over is. The word *ba'd* (some) is ambiguous so that we can understand that each part *ba'd* is preferred in some aspect, and preferred over in another aspect. The strong is preferred over the weak in strength, and the weak person is preferred in the knowledge and wisdom that he has. Therefore, Allah has given every individual He created a gift that does not recur among people in order to interact with one another. Finding a gift presented to one person and not the other necessitates that the two persons come together out of need and not out of favour. How is that? A strong man working for a weak man who has no strength to work excels due to his strength, while the weak excels due to the money or wage he pays to the strong in order to allow him to provide for himself and his children. Allah *Glorified is He* has not willed to make it a matter of superiority of someone over the other; rather, He made it a mutual exchange of needs required by men to preserve life.

Thus, it is a matter of necessity and not a matter of one person conferring a benefit upon another. Doing a favour is not compulsory, as not everyone is able to give away without receiving something in return or work without a wage. It is only the necessity that governs this issue. Since what binds the society is the necessity, not the superiority, and as long as the world continues to be connected by necessity, each individual who sees himself superior in one aspect should not be deluded by his superiority. He should consider the favours of others over him. Thus, arrogance amongst humankind is wiped out as each person complements the other.

We gave the example of a wealthy man of nobility and a high rank. He might need the help of a simple worker to fix some installations in his house. He may be unable to find a worker or he may find the worker busy. This wealthy man remains unhappy and sleepless until this simple worker comes to help him and do what he needs. This is how the possessor of wealth and dignity needs someone who gained no gift of this life other than carrying out

such simple tasks within houses. At the same time, he is preferred over the wealthy man in this aspect. Thus, all in this universe are equal. No one has some familial relationship with Allah that causes Allah to flatter and pay him compliments. We are all servants of Allah, and He has distributed these gifts among all humankind so that they interact with one another and each one of them can remain dependent on the other. Thus, interconnection is established in the society. This issue has been presented in another verse wherein Allah says: ‘Will they distribute the mercy of your Lord? We distribute among them their livelihood in the life of this world, and We have exalted some of them above others in degrees, that some of them may take others in subjection.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) Some understand that the poor is subjugated to the rich; however, the truth is that both of them are subjugated to the other. The poor is subjugated to the rich when he works for him, and the rich is subjugated to the poor when he pays him. Regarding this, an Arab poet said that a man is for a man, whether Bedouin or urbanite. Some are serving some even if they do not perceive it.

We give the example of what people believe to be the lowest occupation, even though all occupations are honourable. There is no low occupation as long as someone is using it to provide for himself and his family in a lawful way. Baseness is found in a person who is idle, useless, and not proficient in anything. People look down at a shoebblack as that he is less than they are. If they look at the tin of varnish that he uses, they would find many workers, scientists, engineers, and wealthy people working for him to produce this tin. He excels all of them when he buys this tin of varnish. People, however, do not look at how all these people are subjugated to this simple worker.

Regarding the statement of Allah: ‘that some of them may take others in subjection.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) Who subjugates the other? Each one of us is subjugated to the other. You are subjugated to me concerning what you do proficiently and so do I regarding what I do proficiently. This is the wisdom of Allah among His creation so that harmony and integration is established between the individuals of the society.

Allah *Glorified is He* has not made these professions innate within us. He has not rendered such and such a person to such and such a profession. However, he who is satisfied with the profession that Allah has decreed for

him—no matter how low it may seem in the eyes of people—excels in it, works hard and exerts his effort for it, Allah *Glorified is He* elevates him in a way that makes people wonder due to his acceptance of this job. Actually, you see people look at, point to and wonder at someone who was a porter or a labourer. Indeed, he was, but because he was pleased with what Allah had foreordained for him, and he perfected and excelled in his craft, Allah compensated him, elevated and raised his rank.

This is why they say that whoever works sincerely in any job for ten years, Allah will make him a master for the rest of his life, whoever works sincerely for twenty years, Allah will make his children masters and whoever works for thirty years, Allah will make his grandchildren masters. That is because nothing goes to waste with Allah. There is no one higher or lower amongst us. Beware of thinking that you are higher than people. We are all equal, but some master their work and some do not. This is why it is said that the value of every person is estimated by how they excel.

Do not look at someone from one angle only. Consider all angles instead and you will find that Allah *Glorified is He* is Just with distributing His gifts amongst humans. We said that if you were to compare between people, you would find the sum total of each individual is equal to the sum total of every other individual. This means that when you take, for example, the health, wealth, children, strength, courage, peace of mind, a righteous spouse, dignity, rank and so forth you will find that the total share of each one of us is equal to the other, at the end of the comparison. You beat me in strength and I beat you in knowledge and so on. That is because we are all servants to Allah and none of us have any familial link or relationship with Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Those who have been given more are unwilling to pass their provision on to the slaves they possess.’ (*an-Nahl*: 71) He refers to the owned slaves. The meaning is that We have not ever seen any of you, whom Allah has favoured with provision, take it and distribute it amongst his servants. You have never done this. However, Allah is not blaming them for this behaviour and He is not demanding them that they distribute the provision of Allah among their servants. Rather, the verse is a proof against them as well as an evidence of their evil actions towards Allah.

It is as if the Quran is asking them if anyone ever amongst those whom Allah has given more provision than others gives out voluntarily and distributes from that provision amongst his servants. Since no one has ever done this, how can you take the right of divinity and lordship of Allah, in addition to His right to be worshipped and given vows and invoking His name when slaughtering, and assign these rights to the idols and statues? You have never done this with what you own, so how can you allow yourselves to take the rights of Allah and give them to the idols and statues?

Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘He sets forth to you a parable relating to yourselves: Have you among those whom your right hands possess partners in what We have given you for sustenance?’ (*ar-Rum*: 28) This means that you have not done this in terms of yourselves, so how can you do this in terms of Allah? That is a point that refers to the differentiation between the way you deal with Allah and that with your own selves.

Then Allah says: ‘so that they become their equals.’ (*an-Nahl*: 71) This means that you, O disbelievers, have made your idols equal to Allah, set them up as His partners, and worshipped them alongside Him *Glorified is He*.

Despite that, Allah *Glorified is He* has given us provision and favoured us; He has preserved our wealth and its ownership. He has not commanded us to give our wealth to people for no work or exchange of benefits. When He asks you to give your needy brother more than what He has obliged you to, He says ‘who is it that will offer Allah a goodly gift, so He will multiply it to him.’ (*al-Baqara*: 245) Even though it is Allah who grants provision and blessings, He asks you to offer a gift. It is as if He respects your work and effort and respects your private ownership over what He has granted you. He says, ‘offer Me a loan’ due to His Awareness of the place that wealth possesses in the souls and how careful the lender is to ensure that the debtor can pay it back. Thus, He attributed that gift to reassure the lender that the act of paying back is guaranteed.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: ‘How can they refuse to acknowledge Allah’s blessings?’ (*an-Nahl*: 71) This means that after Allah has blessed them with provision and has not asked them to distribute it among

others; they denied this blessing and rejected the bounty of Allah. They set up idols and statues as partners to Allah, took His right of divinity and lordship, and gave it to the idols and statues. Such is the essence of denial and rejection.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَاللّٰهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَزْوَاجًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنْ أَزْوَاجِكُمْ بَنِينَ وَحَفَدَةً
وَرَزَقَكُمْ مِّنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَتِ اللَّهِ هُمْ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

And it is God who has given you spouses from amongst yourselves and through them He has given you children and grandchildren and provided you with good things. How can they believe in falsehood and deny God's blessings? [72]

(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 72)

In the previous verse, Allah *Glorified is He* legalised the peak of the matters, which is the matter of creed. He decreed that we do not give something that Allah has designated for Himself, such as His right of being worshipped and His right of Divinity and obedience and so forth. We must assign these to no one besides Allah. If this creedal matter is sound, all the matters of the universe are sound.

Allah *Glorified is He* explains that He created us from one, and from that one He created a spouse for him in order to give birth and multiply as survival is dependent on two matters. The first matter is represented in preserving life. Allah has guaranteed this by blessing us with various forms of provision so that we eat, drink, and retain life.

After discussing the retention of life via provision in the previous verse, Allah mentions the second thing which is the preservation of life through the survival of the species. He says: 'And it is Allah who has given you spouses.' (*an-Nahl*: 71)

The word *Al-azwaj* is the plural of *zawj*, which does not just refer only to a man. It refers to both a man and a woman. This is because the word *zawj* refers to something that has an equal like it. Thus, each one of them is a *zawj* in itself, the man is a *zawj* and the woman is a *zawj*. Therefore, it refers to a singular entity that has an equal like it.

The words of Allah, ‘from amongst yourselves’ means from one living entity, as He says in another verse: ‘He has created you from a single being, then made its mate of the same.’ (*az-Zumar*: 6) This means that He took a piece from the male and created the female there from as He created Eve from Adam. It could mean that He created its spouse of the same kind as mentioned in the verse: ‘created its mate of the same [kind]’ (*an-Nisa*: 1). Moreover as Allah says in another verse: ‘Certainly a Messenger has come to you from among yourselves’ (*at-Tawba*: 128), i.e., from your same kind.

Thus, the matter could be of both meanings. It is fine that some accept the idea that Allah created Eve from Adam’s rib, i.e., from a part of him. In addition, there is no objection to those who say that Allah created Eve independently as He created Adam and brought them together. The first opinion adopts the meaning of partitive, while the second adopts the meaning of the same kind.

We have stated that when a plural meets a plural, it entails a division into units. For example, a teacher addresses his students and says, ‘Take out your books.’ They are a plural and their books are a plural. Will each student take out all his books and others’? No, they will not. Rather, everyone will take out his own book. Therefore, it entails a division into units exactly as in His statement: ‘And it is Allah who has given you spouses from amongst yourselves.’ (*ar-Rum*: 21) This means that He created a spouse for each one of you. In order to make sure of this fact and that the creation began with Adam we shall take things back to the past. We will find that everything that increases in the future was less in the past. For example, the population of the world today is greater than it was last year. The further we go into the past, the more the numbers decrease until we arrive at one man, Adam *peace be upon him* and with him his wife Eve. That is because giving birth starts with two. Therefore, the words of Allah that say: ‘Who created you from a single being and created its mate of the same [kind]’ (*an-Nisa*: 1) is a true statement that is supported by deduction and statistics. This is why our Lord bestows blessings upon us by creating spouses for us. He also bestows blessing upon us by making them from our own kind and not from another species. Man’s intimacy and companionship can only be attained by his own genus. That is one of the greatest blessings which Allah has conferred upon us. Can you imagine what

it would be like if Allah had made spouses for us from another genus? How would that be? This spouse has things in common with us and differs from us in one thing. We share the same shape, the same outward form, the same intellect, the same parts including two eyes, two ears, two hands, two legs, etc. All this helps to foster tenderness, intimacy, and companionship.

We differ in one thing, which is the gender; this is a male and this is a female. Therefore, we are all one kind, but different in gender so that we can complement one another in the way that Allah willed to populate the earth. It is possible for a male to be transformed to a female or vice versa. That is why Allah has put precautionary measures in place for this phenomenon. The man, for example, has a small breast and other organs that could be transformed in case a transformation is needed. This is a wise composition and a sublime power.

Therefore, Allah has given us spouses from amongst ourselves so that love, tenderness, intimacy, and companionship increase between us. We read in the story of our master Solomon *peace be upon him* and the hoopoe, that when Solomon was checking on the birds, he noticed that the hoopoe was absent. He said, 'I will most certainly punish him with a severe punishment, or kill him, or he shall bring to me a clear plea.' (*an-Naml*: 21) This is the authority of the kingdom, which Allah gave to Solomon. The scholars said that this verse means that He would place him amongst other than his kind. Therefore, placing him amongst other than his own species is a kind of punishment. Being (from your own kind) is a blessing and mercy from Allah.

In another verse, Allah mentions three components for maintaining the marital relationship. He says: 'And one of His signs is that He created mates for you from yourselves that you may find rest in them, and He put between you love and compassion; most surely there are signs in this for a people who reflect.' (*ar-Rum*: 21) When we reflect on these three phases, we find the first one is tranquillity between the two mates. Each one of them finds happiness in the other feels relaxed and pleased and fulfils each other's needs. Whenever this level of tranquillity is disturbed and one of them dislikes the other, the role of love and tenderness comes into play. It holds fast to the reins of the marital life and provides both the husband and the wife with a sufficient degree of acquiescence. Whenever one of them neglects his duties

towards the other, the role of mercy comes in. It makes each one of them show mercy toward his partner, forgive his weakness, have pity for his sickness and thereby the marital life continues and beats the storms that come along the journey of life.

When all these phases are exhausted and there is no tranquillity and tenderness between them any longer and no one shows mercy to the other, it is impossible for them to stay together, and it is wise of them to leave one another. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* made divorce lawful as a solution to these kinds of situations. Nevertheless, He has made it the most disliked permissible act so that we do not venture into it unless it is necessary.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘and through them He has given you children and grandchildren.’ (*an-Nahl*: 72) Children are the first circle of family that preserves the life and the grandchildren are the second circle. Man, by his very nature, loves life and hates death. He sees it claiming souls around him every day. Thus, he believes that death is inevitable, and he is certain that life will leave him; therefore, he wants to keep life going through his children. This explains why so many of us love having sons who represent an extension of their fathers. A man looks forward to seeing his grandchildren whenever Allah grants him children and guarantees the first generation. He wants to preserve the life for him and his children after him. This is why a poet addressed his son saying, my son, O me, after I am gone. This is how people view their children; they are a reminder of them when they pass away as if his name goes on without an end.

This phrase shows us the necessity of taking care of generations by integrating the generations. We have two mates, the children, and grandchildren. What is the benefit of the generations integrating? What is the benefit of the grandparents and their grandchildren being contemporary and mixed with one another? We notice that a little kid begins to realise things when his senses start functioning. He starts picking up things from those around him and learns from them. If he has older siblings, he learns the words mom and dad from them, for example, and if he does not have siblings then we teach him these words. This is why we see that the second child is more intelligent than the first; the third is more intelligent than the second is and so on because he

learns from those before him as well as those around him. His realization, experiences and information increases.

Let us imagine that this son becomes a father and a grandchild who is contemporary to the generations of the father and the grandfather, comes along, and grows up in their arms. You thereby see him learning from his father how to be active in life and how to earn a livelihood. At the same time, he learns religious values from his grandfather as he stays constantly home after getting old and dedicates his time to obedience and worship. Thus, the young boy can hear him reciting the Quran, calling him to fetch a copy of the Quran, and bringing him his prayer mat and other phrases through which the boy learns these values.

Therefore, the grandson picks up from his father a kind of movement and activity, while he learns some values from his grandfather's generation. Thus, a distance between the generations leads to defects in the formation of children. Allah *Glorified is He* wants the generations to stick together so that the educational aspects of both moral values and movement and activity integrate in terms of the child.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'provided you with good things.' (*an-Nahl*: 72) He provided us with good things in terms of the provision that Allah has made for the preservation of life, as well as the marriage that Allah has made for the survival of the species. Then, He asks how they believe in falsehood and deny the blessings of Allah. The word falsehood refers to the idols that they have set up besides Allah.

The verse contains a question of both astonishment and rebuke. How can you deny Allah's blessings and it is He Who created you in the beginning from one living entity and created his spouse from it? It is He Who created spouses from amongst yourselves and placed between you tranquillity, tenderness and mercy. It is He Who gave you children and grandchildren and conferred upon you the blessings of provision to maintain your lives, as well as the blessing of spouses in order to maintain your species. He has given you blessings and comfort. In addition, it is He who created you from nothing, and it is He Who has provided for you from nothing. Are you going to deny His blessings after all? Are you going to turn to the worship of idols that cannot benefit or harm you

instead of turning to Him? Have the idols done any of this for you? Have they blessed you with any of these blessings? These idols are in need of you. They take from you and do not give you. This one starts leaning and you have to stand it up again while that one is broken and you have to fix it.

This is why He says in the following verse:

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ رِزْقًا مِّنَ
السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

Those they worship beside God have no power to provide anything for them from the heavens or the earth: they can do nothing [73] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 73)

The act of worshipping means that the worshipper obeys the object he worships. This obedience requires that commands are carried out and prohibitions are avoided. But does the act of worshipping consist of nothing more than this? No, it does not. Every movement in life that assists worship is also an act of worshipping, and the things that are needed to fulfil an obligation are an obligation as well. To clarify this matter, suppose that you want to perform the obligatory prayers that Allah has prescribed. You need strength to carry out this obligation. You only obtain this strength from food and drinks. Consider the simplest kind of food you can imagine, a loaf of bread. Consider how many men gave a hand to make it from the time it was a grain of wheat placed in the earth until it became a tasty loaf of bread.

Indeed, all of those people who took part in this process are carrying out a positive function in life. This function is considered an act of worship in itself because it helps you with your worship. Moreover, when you want to pray, you have to cover yourself. Look at a garment that a prayer cannot be performed without it. Everyone who took part in cultivating it and manufacturing it until it reached you are all engaged in an act of worship by being involved in making this garment. Therefore, everything that helps you worship Allah is also considered as worship, and every activity in the universe that leads to one of these things is also an act of worship.

When Allah *Glorified is He* summons the believers to the Friday Prayer, He says: ‘O you who believe! When the call is made for prayer on Friday, hasten

to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know.' (*al-Jumu'a*: 9) He did not take them out of a vacuum, but rather from their work. Why did He mention trading specially? They said it is because trading is the objective of all the activities of life. It is the medium between the producer and the consumer. In addition, the Quran did not say Leave the factories or the fields. That is because there are things that do not bear their fruits immediately. The farmer has to wait months before he can reap what he has sown. The manufacturer has to wait until he can sell his goods. However, trading is a transaction that takes place on the spot, and it is the centre of attention. Likewise, it did not say leave off buying because the seller must sell, but the buyer might buy reluctantly. Thus, the Quran uses the most precise thing that attaches you to time, which is trading. When we finish the prayer, we have been commanded to return to work and strive throughout the earth.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Those they worship beside Allah.' (*an-Nahl*: 73) He wanted to talk about the authority that they prefer over Allah, which are the idols. Allah is the One Who created them, provided them with the good things of life, favoured them with spouses from their own kind and gave them children and grandchildren. It was obligatory for them to worship Him because of His blessings and His bounty. The one who does not worship Allah for His sake, has to worship Him for His blessings and his need of Him. Thus, we have the act of worshipping Allah because He deserves to be worshipped and another act of worshipping because of the outcomes of His attributes. Whoever does not worship Him because of who He is, worships Him because of His Blessings.

Since the act of worshipping requires that commands are carried out and prohibitions are avoided, how can there be worship with regards to those idols that they have taken? How can you worship them when they do not command you to do anything and do not forbid you from anything? This is the first criticism regarding worshipping other than Allah, such as the sun, the moon, an idol or a tree. Moreover, what do the idols or other objects of worship give to those who worship them? What kind of reward have they prepared for them? How do they punish those who have disbelieved in them? Therefore, it is a deity without a way.

Religiosity is a natural inclination in the soul and man resorts to it in times of weakness and need. Allah is the One Who loves that we seek refuge in Him, supplicate to Him, and ask Him to fulfil our needs. He has a way that entails requirements that destroy the control and oppression of the soul and it also entails legal commandments that are difficult on the soul. Therefore, the disbelievers resort to worshipping idols and statues because they are deities without any legal commandments and objects of worship without any requirements.

How easy it is for someone to draw close, cling to a deity and say that he is his servant without him commanding me to anything or forbidding me from anything! How easy it is to please the natural inclination in the soul towards religiosity by worshipping a deity like this! However, you must not forget that such a deity that demands no legal responsibility cannot be asked of for anything, nor can you take refuge in him in times of adversity. Such thinking is illogical; exactly as they do not demand anything of you, they are incapable of bringing you any benefit or harm.

This is why we have found those who claim prophecy are those liars who make the ways of worship easy for people. They allow for them what the religion has prohibited, such as the casual mixing of men and women and other things, and they do it to attract the greatest possible number of followers. For example, Musaylama, the liar, came and wanted to make legal responsibilities easy for people and thus, abolished the prayer. Someone else came and abolished the *zakat* (alms). This facilitation has attracted many gullible people who feel constrained by legal responsibilities and they thus incline towards an easy religion that suits their worldly concerns. Therefore, we have found that those liars have many supporters and advocates. However, the facts are quickly revealed and these deceived people discover the truth about their prophets!

In the statement of Allah: ‘Those they worship beside Allah have no power to provide anything for them,’ (*an-Nahl*: 73) we notice that this verse goes one-step further in showing the falsity of worshipping idols. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* said about them in another verse: ‘have not created anything while they are themselves created.’ (*an-Nahl*: 20) Allah negates the power to create from them. Rather, they are the ones who are created. One would go outside, like a particular rock, work on it with a pickaxe

and fashion it to look like something. He then would take the rock as a deity and worship it besides Allah.

When Allah negated from them the power to create, He wanted, here, to elevate the proof one-step further. Thus, He negates their ability to own even something because it happens that someone can own something that he has not created. Thus, the verse affirms here that they merely own nothing at all. Allah says that those false deities have no power to provide anything from the heavens or the earth. Sustenance comes from the sky in the form of rain and from the earth in the form of plants. It is from these two sources that Allah's sustenance comes. With this water of the sky and the plants of the earth, Allah *Glorified is He* secures the essentials of life and its necessities for us. Thus, if you want the luxuries of life, strive with the essentials of life that Allah has given you in order to arrive at these luxuries. The real, direct sustenance lays in the rain that Allah sends down to us from the sky and the plants that He causes to grow from the earth. To clarify this, suppose that you have a mountain of gold or silver. One day you are starving. Are you able to eat the gold or silver? You are in need of a piece of bread, not a mountain of gold or silver. A loaf of bread that saves your life in this situation is better than all that wealth. This is the direct sustenance, which Allah has provided for His servants. As for money, it is indirect sustenance. You cannot eat it or live off it.

The word *shay'a* (anything) is the minutest thing to which can be referred. The idols and statues do not possess any sustenance, regardless of how small. This is because someone might say, 'They do not possess enough sustenance to suffice them'. No, rather, they do not possess anything at all.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* tells us something else in His statement: 'they can do nothing. (*an-Nahl*: 73) This means they do not possess any sustenance at the present, and they will not possess any in the future. This cuts off all hope for them. They do not possess anything today and they will not possess anything tomorrow. This is because there are things whose ruling is decisive yet temporary and there are suspended rulings that can be resumed afterwards. However, this phrase 'they can do nothing' is a decisive ruling that will not be resumed afterwards. This is why we find these people who love to find faults in the Quran arguing about the verses 'Say: O unbelievers! I do not serve that which you

serve, Nor do you serve Him Whom I serve. Nor am I going to serve that which you serve, Nor are you going to serve Him Whom I serve.’ (*al-Kafirun*: 1-5)

They see the repetition in this chapter as incompatible with the eloquence of the Quran. We say if you were to contemplate, you would see that there is no repetition in the chapter. This chapter contains a cutting of relations that is constant and permanent. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘You shall have your religion and I shall have my religion.’ (*al-Kafirun*: 6) This refers to the present, in the future and until the Day of Resurrection. The verses ‘I do not serve that which you serve, Nor do you serve Him Whom I serve’ is a cutting off of relations in the present, but who can reassure that perhaps other relations will be resumed afterwards? Thus, we have the next statement: ‘Nor am I going to serve that which you serve, Nor are you going to serve Him Whom I serve.’ There is no repetition; rather, it is cutting off hope that there will be any resumption of relations in the future. Therefore, the issue is concluded now and it is ending decisively. Likewise, the meaning of the statement of Allah: ‘they can do nothing’ (*an-Nahl*: 73) is that they cannot do anything now or in the future.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَا تَضَرِبُوا لِلَّهِ الْأَمْثَالَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ

**So do not make up images about God: God knows
and you do not [74] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 74)**

The word *Al-amthal* is the plural of *mithal*, which means an equal or a peer. The verse prohibits us from likening Allah to something else because Allah *Glorified is He* is One in His essence, One in His attributes and One in His actions. Beware of saying that any essence is similar to His essence or that any attributes are similar to His attributes. If you ever find that an attribute of Allah has a similitude in human beings then you must understand in the light of the verse that states: ‘nothing like a likeness of Him.’ (*ash-Shura*: 11)

Allah *Glorified is He* is forbidding us from coining similitudes for him. It is He Who gives the examples because He is Wise and He does it in the correct place to clarify an obscure issue by way of an observed issue. This is why He

says: 'and Allah's is the loftiest attribute.' (*an-Nahl*: 60) This means that to Allah is the most sublime attribute in everything. If you find attributes that are shared between you and Allah, declare that Allah is transcendent above any likening or any partner or equal and say that there is nothing like unto Him.

You exist and Allah exists; however, your existence was preceded by non-existence and it is followed by non-existence. His existence, on the other hand, was not preceded by non-existence and it will not be followed by non-existence. Allah gave an example of Himself to us in order to explain His illumination to the universe and it is not an example of His light, as we may think. Rather, it is a similitude of His illumination, not His light.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth; a likeness of His light is as a niche in which is a lamp, the lamp is in a glass, [and] the glass is as it were a brightly shining star, lit from a blessed olive-tree, neither eastern nor western, the oil whereof almost gives light though fire touch it not—light upon light—Allah guides to His light whom He pleases, and Allah sets forth parables for men, and Allah is Cognizant of all things (*an-Nur*: 35).

Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth because tangible or spiritual light causes guidance. Tangible light is like the light of the sun, the moon, and other sources of radiance. This tangible light is what clarifies things for you so that you can go about in the universe with vision and guidance. If you were to try going about at night without light and radiance to guide you, you would bump into things around you that might be stronger than you and break you and harm you or you might be stronger than it and break it. Thus, that which guides your steps is tangible light. Light can also be spiritual and this is the light of values and morals. This light also allows you to go about in life with vision and guidance, and it protects you from getting lost in the unexplored territories of ideas and theories. This is the value-based light that Allah sent down for us in His Noble Book, about which He says: 'indeed Our Messenger has come to you making clear to you much of what you concealed of the Book and passing over much; indeed, There has come to you light and a clear Book from Allah. With it Allah guides him who will follow His pleasure into the ways of safety and brings them out of utter darkness into light by His will and guides them to the right path.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 15-16) the Quran is a light, but it is spiritual with values, morals and virtues.

Do not say about this example that it is an example of the light of Allah. Rather, it is an example of the power of His illumination of the universe. If we were to reflect on the rest of the verse, we would realise this. Allah says: ‘a likeness of His light is as a niche.’ (*an-Nur*: 35) Some people say that the *mishkat* (niche) is a lamp. However, it is not. It is an aperture or blocked window in the wall that is known by rural people who have them in their old buildings. It is a non-penetrating cavity in the wall in which the lamp is placed. However, the subject lamp is not a normal lamp. It is in a glass and the glass protects the radiance of the lamp from being scattered by the wind from every direction. At the same time, it allows for a sufficient amount of air to get in so that it can continue burning. This is how the radiance is—constant and pure—and it does not emit any smoke that would ruin the purity of the glass.

People of the countryside know about gas flames that do not have any glass and the black, harmful smoke that they emit. Therefore, the lamp in this case is of the utmost purity and strength. That is because the glass is also not a normal glass. It is a glass that is like a brightly shining star that consequently illuminates by itself.

This lamp is fuelled by oil that is not normal. Indeed, it is oil from an olive tree in a moderate climate, which is neither eastern nor western. This oil is so pure and immaculate that it shines, even though fire has not touched it and this is why it gives us the maximum extent of power. This is why He described the lamp as light upon light.

After you have learned about the qualities of this lamp and that it is placed in a small aperture, then by Allah, is it possible for there to be a speck of darkness in this aperture? Therefore, this is not an example of His light, as His light cannot be encompassed. Rather, it is an example of His illumination of the universe, which is the aperture and the energy in this example. Thus, the meaning of His statement that He is the Light of the heavens and the earth is that He is the One Who illuminates them. In addition, as it is illogical for there to be a speck of darkness in this aperture, the same goes for His light and His illumination of the universe. This is the tangible light, which Allah has provided for the universe.

After that, the Quran talks about the spiritual light that is sent down on the righteous servants of Allah illuminating manifestations and sublime inspirations

that we receive in Allah's houses. Allah says, 'In houses which Allah has permitted to be exalted and that His name may be remembered in them; there glorify Him therein in the mornings and the evenings, Men.' (*an-Nur*: 36-37) Thereby, we gather between tangible light and the spiritual light, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.

This is why when Abu Tammam wanted to praise the Caliph he likened him to the Arabs who were famous for their courage, generosity, wisdom, and intelligence, and he said that he had the fearlessness of 'Amr shaped in the magnanimity of Hatim and in the wisdom of Ahnaf, as well as the intelligence of Iyas. An envious person objected to this likening of Abu Tammam and he said to him, 'How can you liken the Caliph to the worst of the Arabs? He claimed that the Caliph had 1,000 like 'Amr in his army, and amongst his guards he had 1,000 like Hatim. In order to get himself out of this dilemma and extricate himself from this trap that had been set by his envier, Abu Tammam spontaneously said: do not rebuke my parable of him. Who besides him is exceptional in magnanimity and courage? For Allah has given the least parable of His light which is a similitude from the niche and the lantern.

However, Allah has forbidden us from giving examples of Him because of our lack of knowledge; He is fully capable of giving examples of even the smallest and most trivial of created things from our point of view. He says: 'Surely, Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable –[that of] a gnat or anything above that.' (*al-Baqara*: 26)

Thus, do not undervalue the affair of this gnat and do not look down on the fact that Allah is using it as an example because He does not disdain to use it as an example. This is because the gnat contains all the apparatuses of life formation that are found within you and in the largest of animals, such as elephants and camels. In addition, a gnat that you look down on may be stronger than you are and incapacitate you concerning your strength, manoeuvring, and power.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and should the fly snatch away anything from them, they could not take it back from it.' (*al-Hajj*: 73) I ask you by Allah, are you able, with all your strength and capacity, to retrieve that which the fly has taken from your food? Are you able to do this? Therefore, when Allah

gives an example for you, you must respect it. You must also look for the wisdom that is behind it and know that He mentioned this example of this vile creature, from your point of view, in order to clarify an obscure matter for you and draw your attention to it.

Because of the importance of coining similitudes in order to clarify obscure matters, poets resort to this method in order to facilitate the process of understanding. A poet may come across a complicated matter that only intelligent people can comprehend and wants to make the lay people understand it, such as the case of the envier who manifests through his envy the merits and noble traits of the one he envies, as the innocent person may be accused unjustly and leads him to be elevated amongst his people.

An Arab poet took this meaning, put it into poetry and gave an example of it in order to clarify it. He said: When Allah wants to proclaim a hidden virtue, He places it on the tongue of the envier. If it were not the fire burning that which is around it, The sweet scent of the incense would not be known.

Look at how he turned a spiritual matter into a general matter that is known by the common people. You may have a virtue that is hidden, concealed, and unknown to anyone, until you come across an envier who accuses you and tries to distort your image. Thereby, you are exposed to everyone, and all your talents and virtues are manifested. This is similar to sweet-smelling incense whose scent we cannot smell unless we burn it.

The reason behind this poetic similitude is that one of the people of good used to visit, from time to time, one of the houses in the town in which there was an infirm, old woman who needed help. He would help her as much as he could. Located within the vicinity was the home of a beautiful young woman, who was coveted. One of the enviers took advantage of the situation and accused the righteous man of visiting this beautiful young woman. The people actually started following him and saw him going to the house of the infirm, old woman. Thus, the people came to know of one of his virtues that had not been known to anyone previously. We have seen throughout history those who have been wrongly accused and disgraceful things were said about them. Then justice exonerated them, and they became known as heroes who deserve

to be honoured. If they had not been subject to those accusations, we would have never known about their merits and noble traits.

Allah mentions the rationale behind the prohibition of giving examples. He says: 'Allah knows and you do not' (*an-Nahl*: 74). It is because we do not know, while Allah *Glorified is He* gives examples to us because He knows and places them in their appropriate place. After Allah has prepared us to receive the examples and has made our minds ready to accept them from Him, He mentions the following example.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

ضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا عَبْدًا مَمْلُوكًا لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ وَمَنْ رَزَقْنَاهُ مِنْ آرَاقٍ حَسَنًا فَهُوَ
يُنْفِقُ مِنْهُ سِرًّا وَجَهْرًا هَلْ يَسْتَوُونَ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

Allah presents this illustration: a slave controlled by his master, with no power over anything, and another man We have supplied with good provision, from which he gives alms privately and openly. Can they be considered equal? All praise belongs to God, but most of them do not recognize this [75] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 75)

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us an example of two parties. The first party is a slave whom Allah describes as being restricted in his movement and he is not able to do any kind of work. This is because a slave may be a slave but he works, as one whom you allow to work in commerce, for example, even though he is a slave. There is also the literate slave who agrees with his master that he will pay a certain amount of money in order to buy his freedom. Thus, the master gives permission to let him to work so that he can acquire the agreed upon amount of money. However, this slave mentioned in the verse is owned and unable to do any sort of work or endeavour.

The second party is a free master whom Allah has bestowed goodly sustenance that is lawful and good. Allah enables him to give out in all kinds of ways; secretly and openly. Such is a high rank as he has sustenance from Allah that is described as being lawful with no suspicion in it and Allah

enables him to spend out from it. Spending occurs according to what suits the situation. Sometimes, it is appropriate to do it secretly and other times it is appropriate to do it openly. Allah says: ‘If you give alms openly, it is well, and if you hide it and give it to the poor, it is better for you.’ (*al-Baqara*: 271)

These are the two parties of the example, which has been given to us. We see that the Quranic context leaves it to us to make the judgment as if Allah is saying that He is pleased with our judgment. Are they equal? Allah *Glorified is He* does not let us provide the answer unless the answer is going to agree with what He wants. The only logical answer to this question is that no, they are not equal. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* made us articulate this judgment.

Allah gave this example to the idol-worshippers who eat from Allah’s sustenance and worship other than Him. Allah *Glorified is He* likened the idols to the owned slave who is unable to do anything. In addition, He gave the other example to the master whom Allah has provided with goodly sustenance and spends out from it secretly and openly. Have you not seen the statement of Allah in another verse: ‘and made complete to you His favours outwardly and inwardly’ (*Luqman*: 20) that clarifies their mistake in renouncing the worship of Allah, despite the sustenance He has bestowed upon them, in favour of worshipping idols, who do not give them anything?

Here, the wisdom behind Allah leaving the judgment in this similitude is made clear. It comes in the form of a question so that the judgment can be taken from their mouths; bearing witness against themselves and thereby putting an end to their denial and disputation.

There is another point we should make about the phrase: ‘Can they be considered equal?’ The discussion is about two people, so it would be logical to say, ‘are the two equal?’ So why does He go from the dual to the plural? We observe that it is because the example, even though it is a singular being compared with a singular, generally applies to a number of owned servants and another a number of masters who possess goodly sustenance thus to generalise the given example. Therefore, the fact that the pronoun differs here does not contradict the rhetoric of the Quran. Rather, it is a subtle rendering because the Speaker is Allah *Glorified is He*.

Likewise, in the verse where Allah says: 'And if two parties of the believers quarrel make peace between them.' (*al-Hujurat*: 9) Some people see a defect in the verse because it starts by talking about a dual, uses a plural pronoun afterwards in the word *iqtatalu* (fighting) and then it goes back to the dual in *baynahuma* (be twen them). We say to those people that if you were to ponder on the meaning, you know that what you have assumed to be a defect and what you have considered a discrepancy in the style is in fact the utmost limit of precision in the Quran's expression. This is because the discussion is about two groups which means that it is a dual, indeed. However, will each group hold onto one sword when the two groups fight each other? No, they will not. Rather, each soldier from each group will hold on to his own sword. Thus, the fighting occurs between the sum totals of a group versus the sum total of the other group. Thus, it is appropriate to use a plural because fighting is an action that is essential to each individual within the two groups.

When the time comes to make a treaty, does every soldier from this group make an agreement with every soldier from the other group? No, they do not. Rather, the treaty is the prerogative of the chiefs, rulers, and leaders of each group. Thus, we return to the dual regarding the treaty, as these people represent one group, these people represent the other group, and then the treaty is concluded between the two of them. Therefore, the change in the pronoun here is a sign of rhetorical inimitability, because the Speaker is Allah *Glorified is He*.

Regarding the statement: 'All praise belongs to Allah' (*an-Nahl*: 75), it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying, 'Praise be to Allah that your judgment has agreed with what I want, for you have spoken and you have given your judgment.' Then Allah says that most of them do not recognize this. This shows that the minority understands and this is what they call 'maintaining the possibility' because when the Quran was sent down, there was a group from the disbelievers and a group from the People of the Book who were thinking about attaining faith and embracing this religion. If the Quran had negated knowledge and understanding from everyone, these people would have been shocked and maybe have dissuaded from thinking about faith. Thus, the Quran maintains the possibility that people amongst them have knowledge and understanding and that they desire to have faith.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا رَجُلَيْنِ أَحَدُهُمَا أَبْكَمُ لَا يَقْدِرُ عَلَى شَيْءٍ
وَهُوَ كَلٌّ عَلَى مَوْلَاهُ أَيْنَمَا يُوَجِّههُ لَا يَأْتِ بِخَيْرٍ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي هُوَ
وَمَنْ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَهُوَ عَلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٧٦﴾

Allah presents another illustration: two men, one of them dumb, unable to do anything, a burden to his carer – whatever task he directs him to, he achieves nothing good – can he be considered equal to one who commands justice and is on the straight path? [76] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 76)

This is another example of two men. One of them is dumb, which means that he cannot speak. Being dumb must be preceded by being deaf because speech is a product of hearing. If we take a small Arab child and raise him in an English environment, we will find him speaking English and the opposite is true. This is because speech is not a genus, blood, or flesh; rather, it is a product of the environment. If one does not hear anything, how can one speak? This is why Allah describes the disbelievers and says: ‘Deaf, dumb and blind – so they will not return [to the right path]’ (*al-Baqara*: 18).

This deaf person cannot do anything in terms of work or that which will bring a benefit. Allah says that he is a burden to his caregiver, which means that he is dependent on his master and does not even benefit himself. Despite that, he could have some wisdom that allows him to provide something to his master, but he does not even have this. Whatever task his master directs him to, he achieves nothing good. Therefore, he is of no good and absolutely of no benefit, neither to himself nor to others. These are the qualities of the first man.

What about his opposite? Allah asks, ‘Can he be considered equal to one who commands justice?’ (*an-Nahl*: 76) This is the first attribute of the second man. He enjoins doing what is right. This attribute of enjoining what is right necessitates that he has heard a way, his ears paid attention to it and his tongue articulated it enjoining doing what is right. This attribute is the

opposite of the dumb person who is incapable of doing anything. In addition, he is on the straight path, i.e. he heads towards the target directly and takes the shortest of routes. That is the opposite of being of no good to any task. The question here is, are these two equal? The logical answer is no, they are not.

This is another example of the idols, as they do not hear, do not speak, do not state anything clearly and they are incapable of doing anything for themselves or for those who worship them. Rather, the idols are dependent on them as those who worship it are the ones who bring them from mountain rocks, sculpt them, erect them and fix them when they break and so forth. This is how they are the ones who serve the idols and gain no benefit whatsoever from them.

Thus, if you do not regard the first man and the other man, who enjoins what, is right and follows a straight way, equal, how can you regard a deity that has the attribute of absolute perfection to be equal to idols that have no capacity to benefit or harm you? It could be an example of the believer and the disbeliever as indicated by the statement of Allah *Glorified is He* in the previous example, 'Allah presents this illustration: a slave controlled by his master.' And opposes him, 'and another man we have supplied with good provision.' (*an-Nahl*: 75) However, here, Allah did not say a slave or a man, but rather, He said 'two men'.

Regarding His opposite, He says: 'and another man We have supplied with good provision' (*an-Nahl*: 75) and He *the Almighty* does not say 'slave' or 'man'. Only here, He *the Almighty* says: '...two men...' (*an-Nahl*: 76). It is possible to understand from this that He *the Almighty* has likened the dumb person to the disbelieving man and the one who enjoins what is right and follows a straight way to the believing man.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلِلَّهِ غَيْبُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا أَمْرُ السَّاعَةِ إِلَّا كَلَمْحِ الْبَصَرِ
أَوْ هُوَ أَقْرَبُ إِنَّكَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

**All that is hidden from view in the heavens and earth
belongs to God. The coming of the Hour of Judgment is like
the blink of an eye, or even quicker: God has power over
everything [77] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 77)**

Allah *the Almighty* teaches us that the world is either a *mulk* or a *malakut*. The world *mulk* is used to refer to the world that we sense and touch while the word *malakut* is used to refer to what is hidden from us and we do not see it.

When Allah *the Almighty* graciously bestowed upon Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* He said: ‘In this way We showed Abraham [Allah’s] mighty dominion over the heavens and the earth, so that he might be a firm believer’ (*al-An’am*: 75). Therefore, in His Universe, Allah *the Almighty* has that which is manifest and that which is unseen. The manifest has universal laws that all mankind can see. It also has unseen things that no one sees and they are not shown to anyone. There are even things within your own essence that are hidden and not known to any human being. Likewise, people have things that are unseen that you do not know. This unseen is what we call ‘the hidden reality of man’. Therefore, certain things are hidden from me and certain things are hidden from someone else. This unseen that we do not know is considered by some people to be a deficiency within us, while in actual fact it is a type of perfection in the human soul, because if you want to know what is hidden within other people, then let them know what is hidden within you.

If you had to make a choice in this matter, you would choose that each person to maintain what is hidden within them and not shown to anyone. I do not know what is hidden within people and they do not know what is hidden within me. This is why they say: ‘That which is covered is beautiful’.

Veiling the unseen is an aspect of perfection in the universe because it nurtures and enriches the benefit therein. How? Imagine that you know an upright man who has many good deeds; then you come to know of one evil deed of his that was veiled. You see this evil deed and it is enough to arouse a

dislike in you towards his good deeds, to make you despise and avoid him and thus you do not benefit from him at all. If this evil deed had been veiled from you, you still would have been able to benefit from his good deeds. This is how the unseen spreads benefit throughout the universe.

In some narrated traditions Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O son of Adam, I have veiled you from others and I have veiled others from you. If you want, I can reveal you to others and I can reveal them to you. Also, if you want, I can leave the veil down until the Day of Resurrection.'⁽¹⁾ Now, put yourself in the place of the one being addressed in this *Hadith*. What would you choose? I believe that everyone would choose to be veiled, for as long as you love to be veiled and you hate for your secrets to be exposed to people, then beware of trying to know the secrets of others.

Al-ghayb (the unseen) is that which is hidden from the senses, such as hearing, seeing, smelling, and tasting, as well as what is hidden from the intellect, such as spiritual realisations.

There is an unseen element that Allah *the Almighty* has placed in His universe for which there are preliminary steps, or means, that lead to it not being unseen, such as electricity, gravity and other things. They were unseen before they were discovered, and the same goes for all discoveries and secrets that science discovers for us. They were hidden from us at one time and then they became witnessed at another time. This is because Allah *the Almighty* does not give us all the secrets of His universe at once. Rather, He sends them down according to a measure and He unveils it for us according to a reckoning. He *the Almighty* says: 'There is not a thing whose storehouses are not with Us. We send it down only according to a well- defined measure.' (*al-Hijr*: 21)

That which was unseen in the past has become manifested and witnessed today, because Allah *the Almighty* unveiled the means for us that allowed us to

(1) *I have not found this tradition despite an extensive search. However, Al-Hakim At-Tirmidhi narrated from Al-Hasan, and Al-'Aqili from him from Anas that Allah the Almighty says: 'I am more generous and greater in pardons than that I should veil a Muslim slave in the life of this world and then reveal him after I have veiled him. I do not cease to forgive My slave as long as he seeks forgiveness from Me. Al-'Albany mentioned it in (Al-Jami' As-Saghir (4/4050) and degraded it as weak.*

arrive at it. This is an unseen for which Allah *the Almighty* laid down preliminary steps in order for it to be arrived at by whoever explores the universe. Thus, whenever Allah *the Almighty* allows it and the time has come for it to emerge, Allah *the Almighty* then enables one of the explorers to discover it, either by way of exploring, or even by way of a mistake in an attempt or by coincidence.

This is why, when you look at all the inventions and discoveries, you find that 90% of them were made by coincidence. The exploration was not trying to or even concerned with arriving at it. This is what they call ‘unseen occurrences’.

The unseen is a case in point: if you assign your child to solve a geometric exercise, and the meaning of solving the exercise is that the child arrives at the point that you want him to arrive at, what will the child do? He will take the given figures that you give him and he will use the theorems that he has and whatever intelligence he has in order to derive what is sought. The child here has not brought anything new. Rather, he has used what has been given to him. In the same way, the secrets and hidden things of the universe are arrived at when someone explores that which is given in the universe.

Allah *the Almighty* says about this kind of unseen: ‘Allah *the Almighty*: there is no Allah, but Him, the Ever Living, the Ever Watchful. Neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him. All that is in the heavens and in the earth belongs to Him. Who is there that can intercede with Him except by His leave? He knows what is before them and what is behind them, but they do not comprehend any of His knowledge except what He wills.’ (*al-Baqara*: 255)

Thus, when Allah *the Almighty* allows it, secrets are unveiled for them; either by exploring, by mistake, or even by coincidence. When the time comes for something unseen to emerge and be discovered, and it coincides with some human exploration, the two then meet. If not, Allah *the Almighty* then manifests it for us without any exploration and without any effort from us.

There is another type of unseen, which is the absolute unseen. It is hidden from every human being as Allah *the Almighty* has exclusive possession over it. There are no preliminary steps or means for arriving at it, as there are with the first type. Allah, *The Almighty*, has said regarding this unseen: ‘He is the One who knows what is hidden. He does not disclose it except to a messenger of His choosing.’ (*al-Jinn*: 26-27)

If the Messenger informs us of something of the unseen, we do not say: 'He knows the unseen' because he only knows what Allah *the Almighty* has informed him of from the unseen. Therefore, this is an unseen that no one ever encompasses by themselves.

A part of this absolute unseen is an unseen that Allah *the Almighty* has exclusive possession over, and He does not even show it to Messenger Muhammad. When Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* was asked about the Hour, whereupon he said: 'The one being asked about it knows nothing more than the one asking.'⁽¹⁾ In the Night Journey and Ascent, he *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*, tells us that Allah *the Almighty* gave him three vessels; the vessel that He commanded him to convey, which is the vessel of the Message; a vessel in which He gave him a choice and he only gives it to the people who have prepared their conduct, those who accept Allah's Secrets and whose intellects do not deny them; and a third vessel that is particular to Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*.

This is why the narrator of the Hadith says: 'Indeed the Messenger of Allah *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*, gave me two vessels. As for one of them, I disseminated it, i.e., I narrated it and told it to people. As for the other, if I were to disclose it, my throat would be cut. This is from the secrets of which Messenger Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*, chose certain people to preserve.

Allah's statement: 'And for Allah (alone) is the knowledge of the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth...' (*an-Nahl*: 77). This is what we call a mode of restriction, by placing the preposition and the object of the preposition first. This means that the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth is restricted to Him *the Almighty*. If we said, for example: 'the knowledge of hidden reality of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah *the Almighty*' it would then be possible for someone to add 'and other than Allah *the Almighty*.' As for: 'And for

(1) *In the Book of Faith from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him in the Hadith of Gabriel peace be upon him that he said to the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him whilst in the form of a man: 'O Messenger of Allah the Almighty when will the Hour be established?' He peace and blessings be upon him said: 'The one being asked about it knows nothing more than the one asking.' Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) (50) and also Muslim in his (Sahih) (10).*

Allah (alone) is the knowledge of the hidden reality of the heavens and the earth...' (*an-Nahl*: 77), it means that it belongs to Him alone and He has no partner. The meaning of the heavens and the earth is what is between them and what is behind them, but what are popularly known from Allah's creations is the sky and the earth. Then He says: '...The coming of the Hour of Judgment is like the blink of an eye, or even quicker ...' (*an-Nahl*: 77).

The verse only mentions this hidden reality because it is the hidden reality that Allah *the Almighty* has exclusive possession over and no one knows its time except for Him. Thus, it suits the discussion about the unseen that this absolute unseen is mentioned which only Allah *the Almighty* knows about.

What is the meaning of *lamh al-basar* (like the blink of an eye)? We have numerous verbs that all indicate seeing in a general sense, even though each verb has its own specific meaning. We say: *ra'a* (to see), *nadhara* (to look), *ramaqa* (to glance), *lahadha* (to notice), and *lamaha* (to behold). *Ra'a*, for example, means the whole eye. *Ramaqa* is done above; *lahadha* is done to the side; and all of them are connected to some movement of the pupil. This movement is what we call *lamaha*.

Therefore, 'the blinking of an eye' is the movement of the eye's pupil towards the thing that is being seen. If you want to see what is above you, you move your pupil upwards. If you want to see what is below, you move your pupil downwards, and so forth. The movement is the twinkling of the eye. The pupil moves from place to place.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* likened the Hour, according to Him, to be like the twinkling of the eye. However, the twinkling is an event, and events need stretches of time. The stretches of time may be lengthy in and of themselves, but be short according to the one seeing.

Modern science has enabled us to understand this issue through the production of slow-motion replays. We have the opportunity to watch the event again very closely. We see them, for example, repeating a scene from a football match so that you can see every single detail. You see the scene that passed by like the twinkling of the eye presented in front of you slowly, taking a much longer time.

When the time moves quickly, it accumulates and you cannot measure it according to any scale, neither minutes nor seconds.

Therefore, actions take place within particular periods of time; and the same applies to the twinkling of the eye during which the eye's pupil moves within a particular period of time. This is not the case with the Hour. Rather, this is the best approximation that man has and the closest likening there is to understanding how the Hour is according to Him *the Almighty*.

If someone said to you: 'What's up with so-and-so? What's he up to?' you would start with a rendition of events...such-and-such happened. If we said: 'What is the affair of the Hour? What will happen when it is established, when the living die, first of all, and then everyone is revived from Adam *peace be upon him* onwards, and then everyone is gathered, reckoned and finally we receive reward and punishment?'

Events that are numerous and great happen to great numbers of the creation, amongst both human beings and (jinn), and this all happens like the blinking of the eye according to us. However, beware of thinking that this needs time with regards to Allah *the Almighty*.

Things according to Him, *The Almighty*, do not need to be subject to a process. They are only subject to 'Be!' and it is. Even the expression *kun* (Be!) is comprised of two letters: *kaf* is an utterance and it has a stretch of time; *nun* is an utterance and it has a stretch of time. The affair of the Hour is closer than the *kaf* and the *nun*, but there is nothing more minute in our understanding.

When Allah *the Almighty* speaks about the people of the grave He says: 'On the Day they see it, it will seem they lingered (in this life) an evening (at most,) or its morning.' (*an-Nazi'at*: 46)

At the same time, we see that they missed a lot while in their graves. Therefore, how can they measure the time? It is measured according to your tracking of events. When there is no event, there is no time. This is what we see with the sleeping person who cannot determine how long he spent sleeping unless it is according to how it is with the majority of human beings.

This is why, in the story⁽¹⁾ of the People of the Cave who slept for 309 years, they said: '...We have spent there a day, or part of a day...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 113).

(1) The story of the men of the cave

This is the predominant norm amongst people because they woke up and they did not find anything around them that indicated a lengthy passage of time. The situation as it was for them had not changed at all. If they had woken up and found themselves to be old men after they had been young they would have realised that time had passed. Therefore, time in relation to the lack of an event is invalid time.

Or we say that it is the affair of the Hour, in that Allah *the Almighty* makes it gather mankind except for the twinkling of the eye because everything that happens therein we cannot measure according to time. This is because that which is measured according to time is only an event that comes from a doer who has power and strength that can be distributed over time.

If you want to transfer this thing from here to here, then time and effort is required of you. If you assigned a child to transfer this thing, it would take more time and require more effort. Therefore, the time corresponds conversely to the power of the doer.

This is why when the Messenger *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him* related the Night Journey and Ascent⁽¹⁾ to the people they said: 'Do you claim that you made the journey in one night, which we strike the livers of camels for one month?' This is because their movement requires a process and practical application. It takes an amount of time that corresponds to their abilities to move with camels from Mecca to Jerusalem. Muhammad *Allah's peace and blessings be upon him*, did not say: 'I travelled by night'. Rather, he said: 'I was taken by night.' The One Who took him was Allah *the Almighty* so the period of time is measured according to Allah *the Almighty*.

(1) *The Hadith of the Night Journey has been narrated by Muslim in his Sahih (162) in the Book of Faith from the Hadith of Anas ibn Malik, and is also narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in his Dala'il An-Nubuwwa (2/362), from the Hadith of Ibn 'Abbas that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said: 'I was taken by night.' They said: 'Where to?' He said: 'To Jerusalem.' They said: 'You then woke up amongst us?' He said: 'The Messenger of Allah The Almighty peace and blessings be upon him said: 'Yes.' There was no one left except he clapped his hands, or held his head in amazement, or clamoured and considered it an enormity. He said: 'There were some amongst the people who had travelled there and seen the mosque and one of them said: 'Are you able to describe the mosque for us?' and the Hadith continues.*

Likewise, if the time of the Hour is measured according to His Power, then it is like the blinking of the eye, or it is closer than that. It is only a comparison to facilitate your understanding.

His statement: '...Allah has power over everything,' (*an-Nahl*: 77), i.e. the affair of the Hour is like this because Allah *the Almighty* is fully capable of doing anything. As long as events differ according to how capabilities differ, then Allah's power is the Sublime Power that does not need a period of time to bring about events.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَاللَّهُ أَخْرَجَكُمْ مِنْ بُطُونِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمُ
الْسَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَرَ وَالْأَفْعِدَةَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ

**It is God who brought you out of your mothers' wombs
knowing nothing, and gave you hearing and sight and minds,
so that you might be thankful [78] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 78)**

The saying of Allah '...out of your mothers' wombs...' (*an-Nahl*: 78), i.e. the wombs because they are on the inside, and the covering on a covering is considered a covering, as if you were to say: 'in my pocket is such-and-such cash, or 'in my wallet is such-and-such cash'. The two expressions mean the same thing.

Ummahatikum '...your mothers...' is the plural of *umm* (mother), and it would be logical to assume that the plural of *umm* is *ummahat*, i.e. mothers. However, He said: 'It is Allah who brought you out of your *ummahatikum* (mothers' wombs)...' (*an-Nahl*: 78) and added the letter [(ha')] i.e. in the Arabic word: *ummahatikum*].

When the foetus is in the womb of its mother, its life is one of subordination, as all of its functions are subordinate to its mother. When Allah *the Almighty* wills for it to be born, He makes its life essential and independent. At the time of birth, the obstetricians say: 'the foetus is in a natural position' or 'the foetus is in an unnatural state'. What is the meaning of the foetus being in a natural position at the time of birth?

The natural position means that at the time of birth the head of the foetus is pointing downwards. This is the natural position because Allah *the Almighty* wanted to bring it out as a new creation: ‘...and then We bring (all) this into being as a new creation...’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 14).

It is as if it was a creation, but it was subordinate to its mother, so Allah *the Almighty* brings it out as a new, independent creation in and of itself. Then, the head is thus pointed downwards, and it is the first part of the newborn that emerges, and merely by emerging the process of breathing starts.

From this moment, the foetus is separated from its mother. By breathing, it comes to have an identity. If there is difficulty in getting the rest of its body out, it still has the opportunity to breathe, and this is from Allah’s kindness because the foetus, in this situation, does not choke while the rest of its body is coming out.

If the opposite takes place, then the head is pointing upwards and the foetus comes out with its feet first, and merely by its legs emerging, it is separated from its mother. It needs an essential life and it needs to breathe. If ever the process of childbirth is difficult, the foetus can choke and may even die.

Science took an issue from the universe that was settled and proven. He said: ‘knowing⁽¹⁾ nothing’ (*an-Nahl*: 78).

This is because the means of knowledge and realisation are not yet functioning. When Allah *the Almighty* wants it to be known, He creates means of knowledge for it, which are the five senses: hearing, seeing, smelling, touching and tasting. These are the outward senses with which man acquires knowledge and information and realises what is around him.

Even though modern science has manifested some other senses for us, physiologists say: ‘If you carry two pieces of iron, for example, what sense do you use to distinguish between them in terms of weight?’ This cannot be

(1) *Al-Qurtubi* gives three opinions about this in his (*Tafsir*) (5/2877):

- 1) You know nothing about the covenant being taken from you while you were in the loins of your ancestors.
- 2) You know nothing regarding whether felicity or wretchedness has been decreed for you.
- 3) You know nothing regarding that which benefits you.

known by touching, hearing, seeing, tasting or smelling. Therefore, there is a new sense that feels weight, and this is the muscular sense.

Likewise, there is the sense of difference which enables us to know how thick a fabric is, for example, when you are in a clothing store by rubbing the fabric between your fingers, you are able to distinguish between thick and thin.

The newborn child, therefore, does not know anything, and this is something natural because the means of knowledge and realisation that it has are not yet carrying out their function.

His statement: 'and gave you hearing and sight and minds...' (*an-Nahl*: 78). Physiologists have made it clear to us that this Quranic order is a natural one. After birth, the child hears first. Then, after about ten days, it sees. You can try this out yourself. You can see that the child is scared of a high voice a few days after birth, but if you put your finger in front of its eyes, it does not blink because it cannot see yet.

From seeing and hearing, which are the masters of all the senses, information is formed that is located in the minds. This is the existing Quranic order, and it is the natural order that agrees with modern science.

We notice in the verse that hearing is singular, while *absar* (sights) and *af'ida* (minds) are plural: '...and gave you hearing and sight and minds...' (*an-Nahl*: 78).

Why is not hearing mentioned in the plural? The One speaking here is Allah *the Almighty*. This is why there are expressions that are subtle and inimitable. Let us look at why hearing is singular here.

He has distinguished between hearing and the other senses, for when there is a sound in this place, everyone hears it. There is nothing in the ears that prevents hearing and there is no lock that we can lock if we do not want to hear. It is as if hearing is one and the same for everybody. As for seeing, it differs because we do not all look at one thing. Rather, that which is seen differs amongst us. This person looks at the roof, this person looks at the pillars, and so forth.

Therefore, that which is seen is different for us, as the eye has a natural lock that can be lowered over the eye so that it does not see. Thus, it is as if *absar* (sights) with us differs and varies.

The same goes for minds. They are mentioned in the plural because they differ and vary; one person is aware and he realises, while someone else is unaware and does not realise, and one person may be more aware than someone else.

Therefore, hearing being singular here is one of the signs of the Quran's subtlety in its inimitable expression because the One speaking is the Lord of Might.

We also notice that hearing is mentioned before the other senses because it is the first tool of realisation, and it accompanies man from the moment he is born until he leaves this world. It is never absent from him, even when he is sleeping because by way of hearing, he is summoned from his sleep.

We have said that in the story of the people of the cave, they could not have slept such a deep sleep for 309 years unless Allah *the Almighty* had veiled this sense from them, and thus they were not roused by any sounds. He *the Almighty* says: 'And thereupon We veiled their ears in the cave for many a year' (*al-Kahf*: 11), i.e. We told the ears to be inactive during this period of time so that they would not be disturbed by the sounds of the desert and roused from their sleep. Allah *the Almighty* wants them to have rest and a deep sleep.

Allah *the Almighty* says: 'and gave you hearing and sight and minds' (*an-Nahl*: 78). Are these tools of realisation found after birth or are they present beforehand? We must distinguish between hearing and its instrument. Before birth, the instruments of seeing, hearing, tasting, and so forth are formed for the foetus, but they are instruments that do not function. The foetus in its mother's womb is subordinate to her and does not have an essential life. Whenever it emerges in the life of this world and has an independent life, Allah *the Almighty* makes these instruments carry out their function.

Therefore, the meaning of: '...but He has endowed you with hearing...' (*an-Nahl*: 78) is that He endowed you with listening, and not the instrument of hearing.

His statement: '...so that you might be thankful.' (*an-Nahl*: 78) is revealing that hearing, sight and minds will give us a lot of new information and several realisations that will benefit us in our lives and in the essentials of our existence. We will also use them to benefit others, and these are blessings that deserve gratitude from us.

Whenever you hear a sound, praise Allah *the Almighty* for bestowing you with ears that hear; whenever you see an exceptional view, praise Allah *the Almighty* for bestowing you with eyes that see. Whenever you smell an immaculate scent, praise Allah *the Almighty* for bestowing you with a nose that smells. This is how the blessings necessitate that gratitude is shown to the Giver of Blessings.

In order to know Allah's Blessings upon you, look at those who have been denied them. Reflect on your state and their state, the blessings of life and pleasure that you have and what they have been denied.

Then Allah *the Almighty* moves us on to something else in His Statement:

أَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الطَّيْرِ مُسَخَّرَاتٍ فِي جَوِّ السَّمَاءِ مَا
يُمْسِكُهُنَّ إِلَّا اللَّهُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ

Do they not see the birds made to fly through the air in the sky? Nothing holds them up except God. There truly are signs in this for those who believe [79] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 79)

Here Allah *the Almighty* moves us towards another indication of the universe. After telling us about man and what is around him, for before Allah *the Almighty* created him in this existence, He prepared the essentials of his life for him, including the sun, the moon, the stars, the earth, the sky, the water and the air; all these things existed before man so that they could pave the way for his existence in this universe.

After guaranteeing to maintain our lives by way of sustenance, Allah *the Almighty* wants us to maintain the species by way of marriage and proliferation. He wants us to enrich our beliefs by looking at Allah's dominion and the wonders that it contains so that we can conclude that Allah *the Almighty* has engineered His Universe in an exceptional and interlocking way and He has ordered it masterfully without there being any collision. Allah says: 'The sun cannot overtake the moon, nor can the night outrun the day: each floats in [its own] orbit.' (*Ya Sin*: 40)

Look at Allah's vast universe; how many stars and celestial bodies it contains and how it is full of movement, stillness, and orbiting. Despite all of this, there are no collisions. There is never any harm resulting from it. The entire universe moves along in a precise order and wondrous harmony. In order to

make this reality clear, look at what man has made; how many collisions and accidents happen that cause thousands of deaths.

This is an example that everyone witnesses: the birds in the sky; what is it that prevents them from falling down to earth? It is as if Allah *the Almighty* must turn us towards a greater issue: ‘Allah keeps the heavens and earth from vanishing; if they did vanish, no one else could stop them. Allah is most forbearing, most forgiving.’ (*Fatir*: 41)

We must affirm and believe in this issue as we cannot encompass with our eyes the mass of the earth, or the mass of the sun and the stars. We are not capable of knowing everything that is in the universe. Therefore, we must affirm and believe in our Lord’s statement and not argue about it.

Here is an example that you see every day: ‘Do they not see the birds made to fly through the air in the sky? Nothing holds them up except Allah. There truly are signs in this for those who believe.’ (*an-Nahl*: 79)

Beware of saying that it is the flapping of the wings, as we can see birds holding their wings firmly in the air. Despite that, they do not fall to the ground. There is, therefore, something else preventing them from falling and this is why He says in another verse, ‘Do they not see the birds made to fly through the air in the sky? Nothing holds them up except Allah...’ (*al-Mulk*: 19) This means that they are in a state of spreading their wings, and in a state of drawing them in, and they remain suspended and do not fall down. Likewise, we find birds that have long wings but they do not fly, such as the goose and other birds. Therefore, the matter has nothing to do with wings. Rather, it is one of Allah’s signs that holds this bird in mid-air. You see it flying freely without any restriction. Nothing attracts it towards the earth and nothing attracts it towards the sky. Rather, it is free to ascend when it wants to ascend and descend when it wants to descend.

This is a tangible sign that we can use as proof of Allah’s Omnipotent Power of which only Allah *the Almighty* can inform us. Whenever He says, ‘Allah keeps the heavens and earth from vanishing; if they did vanish, no one else could stop them. Allah is most forbearing, most forgiving’ (*Fatir*: 41), we believe and we affirm. In addition, His statement: ‘... through the air in the sky?’ (*an-Nahl*: 79) refers to the air that surrounds the earth. The one who

reflects on the universe finds that air is the principle factor behind things being established in the universe such as mountains, buildings, and so forth. What is it that prevents them from falling?

Beware of thinking that it is cement, iron and the engineering of the building. No. Rather, it is the air that surrounds them from all sides. The proof is that if you remove the air from one side, it will collapse immediately towards that side because the air has pressure. If you remove the air on one side, you decrease the pressure and thus it collapses. The air, therefore, is what governs this matter. Because of the air, the birds are able to balance themselves in the sky, fly as they wish and move as they wish.

Then, He *the Almighty* says: 'there truly are signs in this for those who believe.' (*an-Nahl*: 79), that is, the bird that flies in the sky has signs, i.e. wonders, wonders in how it has been made and how it has been created, and you must think about them and contemplate them.

In order to know about this sign in birds, we can look at what happened to the first man who tried to fly. He was an Arab called 'Abbas ibn Firnas⁽¹⁾, the first person to attempt to fly in Andalusia. He made wings for himself and threw himself off from a high place; so what happened to the first human aviator? He flew a short distance. Then he fell on his posterior and it broke because he forgot that the issue is not just flying. There is also descending, which he forgot to prepare for, and it escaped him that it is the tail that maintains balance whilst descending.

The same goes for those who make airplanes. How much does it cost? How many instruments and devices do they need for the sake of measurement and control? After that it needs a pilot to control it or a dispatcher to direct it. When they wanted to make an airplane, they made it in the shape of a bird in the sky, with two wings, a nose and a tail, but despite that, what happens if the engine fails or there is a lack of balance?

(1) An Andalusian inventor from the people of Cordova; He lived during caliph 'Abd Ar-Rahman, the Second, in the ninth century CE. He was a philosopher and a poet, and he had knowledge of astronomy. He was the first person to make a device for measuring time and in his house he made models of the sky, the stars, and other things, as well as lighting and thunder. He died in 274 AH. (*Al-'A'lam*; *Al-Zirikli*) (3/264).

Therefore, the bird in the sky is a sign that deserves to be looked at and contemplated so that we can know the power of the Creator. He *the Almighty* says: ‘for those who believe.’ (*an-Nahl*: 79) They believe in the existence of He who exists by necessity, and they believe in His Wisdom and the precision of His making. There is nothing like it in the human manufacturing, regardless of the degree of precision and mastery.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ سَكَنًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُمْ مِنْ جُلُودِ الْأَنْعَامِ
يُؤْتَا تَسْتَخِفُّونَهَا يَوْمَ ظَعْنِكُمْ وَيَوْمَ إِقَامَتِكُمْ وَمِنْ أَصْوَابِهَا
وَأَوْبَارِهَا وَأَشْعَارُهَا أَثَثًا وَمَتَاعًا إِلَىٰ حِينٍ

**It is God who has given you a place of rest in your homes
and from the skins of animals made you homes that you find
light [to handle] when you travel and when you set up camp;
furnishings and comfort for a while from their wool, fur,
and hair [80] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 80)**

His statement: ‘It is Allah who has given you a place of rest in your homes’ The word *sakan* “...rest...” is taken from *sukun* which is the opposite of movement. Thus, we call the house a *sakan* because man seeks refuge therein and he takes a rest from life’s activities outside the house. Therefore, outside there is movement and inside the house there is rest.

A *sakan* can be material, like the house, which is an outward *sakan*, or it can be spiritual, as He *the Almighty* says regarding spouses: ‘...He creates for you mates out of your own kind, so that you might incline (*taskanu*) towards them.’ (*ar-Rum*: 21) The wife is a spiritual *sakan* for her husband, and this is what they call the *sakan* of the heart. If someone were to say that: ‘...your houses...’ (*an-Nahl*: 80), it means that we are the ones who build them and erect them, so how can Allah *the Almighty* make them for us?

We would say: how did you make them? What did you use to build them? Did you make them from a forest or wood, or did you build them from clay or brick? All of these materials are from the material of the earth that Allah *the Almighty*

has given you. The same goes for the intellect that thinks and designs and the strength that builds and constructs. All of it is from Allah *the Almighty*.

Therefore '...has given you...' can be done either directly or indirectly, as He created all these materials for us. This is direct creation. Then He helped us and made us strong enough to build, and this is indirect creating.

However, in which places are houses built? Houses are only built in places of settlement which provide the essentials of life. Thus, before we set up a city for people to live in, we must first of all make sure that it has the essentials of settlement, such as food, drink, facilities, services, water, sanitation, and so forth. If these essentials are available, then there is no objection to building here, and if you do not find facilities in the desert or countryside, then this place is not suitable for houses or permanent structures. Rather, they are suited to: '...and from the skins of animals made you homes that you find light (to handle) when you travel and when you set up camp...' (*an-Nahl*: 80).

We see the people of the countryside using animal skins to make houses, such as tents and pavilions, where we see them moving frequently, seeking places of pasture and grass and travelling in order to find places for grazing and water. This is how their life is constantly in transit from one place to another, so it suits them to have a house made out of animal skins or wool or fur; something that is easy to carry. They set it up wherever they encamp, and they take it with them wherever they go. *Adh-Dha'n* (travel) means to be in transit from one place to another.

Therefore, the word *sakan* indicates settlement as well as all the essentials of life being available. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says to Adam *peace be upon him*: 'dwell you and your wife in this garden' (*al-Baqara*: 35), i.e. the place in which you find rest and in which you have blessings. Thus, it was designated for him as a place of residence and *sakan*. This place of residence could be general or it could be specific. For example, if I said: 'I *askun* (live in) Alexandria.' This is a general *sakan*. If you intended an actual *sakan* that is specific to you, you would say: 'I live on such-and-such street, in building number such-and-such, in apartment number such-and-such'. Maybe you have a private room in this apartment.

Therefore, this *sakan* is specific to your actual *sakan* in which you find tranquillity, relaxation, and privacy. A *sakan* needs essential stability that no one else can share with you. This is why we see some residents in buildings complaining about the inconvenience and the noise. They wish to live in separate houses that guarantee sufficient rest for them and in which no one can bother them.

Therefore, when we look at *sakan* and *sukun*, we need a confined space that guarantees absolute privacy for us, and it could even just be a room. However, it means the actual *sakan* that is specific to you. Privacy could even mean that we make a specific bed for each child within the same chamber.

Whenever we look at activity in life, we find that man, on the contrary, requires space because activity requires space within a place. Whoever has a farm requires a country estate, and whoever has a country estate wishes for a second and a third and so forth because the activities of life need vast and ample space.

This is of the first type, which is the material and outward *sakan*, and it is of the greatest of Allah's Blessings towards His slaves that they have a *sakan* that they can find shelter in and in which they can have a rest from the fatigue and activity of life.

When Allah *the Almighty* wanted to punish the children of Israel, this is why He made their *sakan* to be the entire earth and He denied them the blessing of having an actual, private *sakan*. He said: 'and after that We said to the Children of Israel: dwell now securely on earth...' (*al-Isra'*: 104). The earth is a general place in which all of mankind lives, and they do not have one country that gathers them together. Rather, Allah *the Almighty* dispersed them throughout the earth and did not give them a specific homeland, as He said in another verse: 'And We dispersed them as (separate) communities all over the earth...' (*al-A'raf*: 168). Even in the countries in which they live, we see them isolated from other people in places that are specifically theirs and they do not assimilate with others. This is how they have inhabited the earth and no country has been designated for them.

As for the second type of *sakan*, which is the spiritual *sakan* or the *sakan* of the heart, it is the *sakan* of the husband that he gets from his righteous wife

who mitigates his fatigue and his concerns in life. She smiles in his face when he is happy, she assuages his anger when he is angered, and she embraces him with the love, compassion, and sincerity that she has. This is the spiritual *sakan*, which is the *sakan* of the heart.

As for His *the Almighty* statement: 'Furnishings and comfort for a while from their wool, fur, and hair' (*an-Nahl*: 80), the word *aswaf* (rough wool) is that of sheep; *awbar* (soft, furry wool) is that of camels and *ash'ar* (plain hair) is that of goats. What is the difference between these three in terms of use? People use both rough wool and soft, furry wool because its hair is very fine and can be combed, woven and used to make mattresses, carpets, quilts, clothes and other things that man needs. As for the plain hair of goats, its hair is thick and cannot be combed or woven, so it cannot be used in these textiles. He says: 'furnishings and comfort for a while...' (*an-Nahl*: 80). *Al-Athath* (furnishings) is what is found in the house and is required for life's activities, such as carpets, mattresses, clothes and curtains.

Al-Mata' (comfort) is used to refer to things which you enjoy and benefit from, and the difference between them and furnishings is that furnishings do not change very much. As for goods, they change according to one's needs. So, for example, you need to change your old television so that you can get a new one, a colour television, for example, but you rarely change your refrigerator, or washing machine, for example.

This is because man may become deluded when he has all that he needs in life, and these blessings may distract him from what is required by the Giver of Blessings. Thus, he is preoccupied by the blessings that he has been given from the Giver of Blessings who has blessed him with them. This verse comes as a warning.

Beware of being deluded by goods and furnishings because goods are only temporary. They do not last. No matter how fortunate you are with goods in the life of this world, it will all inevitably come to one of two things: either you will leave them when you die or they will leave you when you become impoverished and needy. Therefore, they are going, so you must always remember His Statement, '...for a while...' (*an-Nahl*: 80) The

comfortable blessings of this worldly life are temporary, but the comfortable blessings that the Giver of Blessings bestows are eternal.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَاللَّهُ جَعَلَ لَكُم مِمَّا خَلَقَ ظِلَالًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم مِّنَ الْجِبَالِ
أَكْنَانًا وَجَعَلَ لَكُم سُرِيرًا بِحُكْمِ الْحَرِّ وَسُرِيرًا لِّتَقِيَهُمْ بِأَسْكُنُكُمْ
كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ نِعْمَتَهُ عَلَيْكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

It is God who has given you shade from what He has created, and places of shelter in the mountains; garments to protect you from the heat, and garments to protect you in your wars. In this way He perfects His blessings on you, so that you may devote yourselves to Him [81]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 81)

After Allah *the Almighty* talked about the people who have houses that are suited to settlement, and the essentials of life are at hand, He then talked about the people who are constantly travelling and in transit and what suits them, such as lightweight houses that can be carried while travelling. Then, here, He talked about those people who do not own anything, not even animal skins. What do these people do? Allah *the Almighty* has made shade for them so that they can shade themselves from the glare of the sun. He has made caves and tunnels for them in mountains that they can seek shelter in and live in. This is how the verses have encompassed all the states in which human beings can possibly be. Allah *the Almighty* has distributed His blessings amongst mankind such that each one of them has blessings from Allah *the Almighty* that suit him or her.

As for the people who do not have a house to shelter them, and they do not have any cattle from which they can take animal skins and make a house, Allah *the Almighty* has made trees for them that give them shade from the sun's heat and He has made caves for them in mountains in which they can seek refuge and shelter.

We notice here that the verse has mentioned the shade that protects us from the sun's heat and it has not mentioned the cold, for example. This is

because the Noble Quran was sent down in the Arabian Peninsula, which is a hot country, so its need of shade is greater than its need of warmth.

Regarding His statement: 'shade...' (*an-Nahl*: 80), *zhilal*, i.e. shade, is the plural of *zhill*, and it offers protection from the sun and from its rays, and the *dhill* can be described as being *zhill zhalila*, i.e. shade that is also shaded. This is what we see in the making of tents, for example, when they make a roof for it from one layer which receives the sun's heat. If you block the sun's rays, you cannot block the sun's heat, and at this point they resort to making a roof comprised of two layers with some distance between them in order to mitigate the sun's heat. Here we say that the shade itself is shaded, and the same goes for the shade of trees when the leaves shade one another. Under the shade of trees you feel cool, pleasant air. You are protected from the sun's light and you can feel a breeze, so you do not feel constricted. This is why one poet described a garden by saying:

In the heat of the sun-baked ground the valley protected us
 Copious, abundant rain watered it
 It blocked the sun wherever we turned
 For it obstructs the sun and allows for a breeze
 This is how the trees protect us from harm and give us benefits.

Regarding His statement: '...places of shelter...' (*an-Nahl*: 81) the word *aknan* '...places of shelter...' is the plural of *kin* which is a cave or hollow that can be a place of residence and privacy for whoever seeks refuge and shelter in it. The word *kin* is from veiling because it veils people. We say *anknun!* to a child, for example, and it means: 'Be still and cover yourself.'

He *the Almighty* says: '...garments to protect you from the heat, and garments to protect you in your wars...' (*an-Nahl*: 81). *As-sarabil* '...garments...' is that which is worn, such as clothes or armour, '...protect you from heat...' (*an-Nahl*: 81), i.e. they give you shelter from the heat; so He has said heat here as well. This is why we have found some scholars trying to find a way out of this verse by saying that the meaning is protection from the heat and protection from the cold. The verse is sufficient in only mentioning heat and

not cold because if one thing is mentioned, its opposite is also implied. There is no need to mention both, as one of them implies the other.

Such an argument is commendable on their behalf, and it is accepted regarding this verse, but if we were to think about the other verses that talk about this subject, we would find that one of them is talking about heat which is this verse. Another one talks about cold which is His statement: ‘And livestock, He created them too. You derive warmth from them...’ (*an-Nahl*: 5), i.e. from the skins of cattle and their wool we take that which protects us from the cold and warms us up. This is how the verses complement each other and the meaning is harmonious.

An examination of how man warms himself will find that wearing clothes does not give man heat that warms him up. Rather, it only maintains that heat that is already in the body because man’s heat is essential and from within him and with this the Creator maintains man. The doctors say that a healthy body temperature is (37) degrees and it does not differ whether someone lives at the equator or lives with the Inuit in the Arctic. This is the general temperature of the body.

At the same time, the various organs of the body may have different temperatures, each according to what suits it. The liver, for example, has a temperature of (40) degrees and its function is disrupted if its temperature decreases. At the same time, the temperature of the eyelid is 9 degrees. If it were to be increased by 1 degree, the eyeball would dissolve and the person would not be able to see. Thus, He *the Almighty* maintains the temperature of these organs in the body and not a single one of them overcomes the other.

When I travelled to America and went to one of the extremely cold regions, this is why the first advice they gave me was not to cover my ears with my hands. Why? They said: ‘Because the hands’ temperature is lower than the ears’ temperature. Placing a cold hand over the ear could cause a lot of harm.’

Therefore, everything that we use to protect ourselves from the cold of winter, such as clothes and covers, does not provide us with heat. Rather, they preserve our natural heat and prevent it from seeping out. This is how heating works. You can place your hand on your bed before you sleep and you find that it is cold, but in the morning you find that it is warm. Thus, the bed acquires heat from your body heat, and not the other way around.

As for His statement: ‘...and garments to protect you in your wars...’ (*an-Nahl*: 80), the Arabic word *Al-ba’s* means war, and the clothes that protect you from violence are the armour that soldiers wear in war to protect themselves from blows.

However, this verse, within the context of discussing some of Allah’s blessings given to us, such as settlement and rest (*sakan*), and the things He has made for us, such as houses and other means of shelter, provide a life of calm, peace, and blessing. What is the reason, then, for mentioning war here? It is because life has a maxim of security for all. If this maxim of security is disrupted, then the people must stand against whoever it is that is disrupting the society’s security, and to be prepared for this at all times. In times of peace we must be prepared for war, and this is why it talks about war and being prepared for it, as well as talking about tranquillity, settlement and blessings.

When Allah *the Almighty* sends down signs with all the evidence of the truth that bring the way of the heavens to us, He says: ‘We sent Our messengers with clear signs, the Scripture and the Balance, so that people could uphold justice...’ (*al-Hadid*: 25). This is the way that is based on proof and conviction, and if this way is not suited to some people and they rebel against it, then force and compulsion are used. He says: ‘We also sent iron, with its mighty strength and many uses for mankind (*al-Hadid*: 25) He says: ‘... In this way, He perfects His blessings on you...’ (*an-Nahl*: 80).

It is from the fullness of Allah’s blessings that He protects the blessings from those who try to deprive us of them. We lie in wait for them and we strike their hands because if we left alone those who sow corruption in our society, they would deprive us of these blessings, and we would remain under threat and never experience the joys and pleasures of life. Therefore, there can be no blessing unless the general security of the society is maintained.

He says: ‘...so that you may devote yourselves to Him...’ (*an-Nahl*: 80). To surrender yourselves means that you give the reins of surrender to Allah *the Almighty* to whom you have submitted. You would only give your reins to someone you trust, and man may give his reins to someone like him who is good at something that he himself is not good at. Whenever you are in need,

you hand over your reins to someone else like you. He is equal to you in the fact that he has only a little information, and in that he has a little bit of wisdom, but despite that, you submit your affair to him simply because he is good at something that you are not. Thus, will you not hand over your reins and submit your affair to your Lord and Creator, the One Who created all these blessings for your sake? Therefore, these blessings are mentioned and then the command to submit and surrender to Him so that we submit out of certainty and conviction. Allah *the Almighty* derives no benefit from our obedience, and He is not harmed by our disobedience. If we obey Him, it does not add anything to His kingdom, and if we disobey Him, it does not take anything away from His kingdom.

Therefore, submitting the reins and the affair to Allah *the Almighty* is in our interest. Thus, when man submits his reins to someone else, that person may have an interest that distorts his opinion of the matter. When Our Lord *Glorified is He* instructs us with a ruling, He has no interest, so there is no distortion. It is only for our benefit.

After enumerating the blessings that are within oneself, one's surroundings, one's place of rest and one's impressions, He said: 'After this, beware of submitting your reins to other than Me. If I cause something to happen to you that takes you out of the benefit of security, then I do not cause something to happen to you that takes you out of the same security unless it is for a purpose that is safer.' This is why we say there is no worship like submission because submission to a ruling is submission to the Wise, submission to One Who does not benefit. As long as you have submitted your reins to your Lord, the wisdom behind these events happening to you becomes clear to you so that you can know your pleasure regarding His ruling according to His wisdom. Thus, you say, I am pleased with your ruling, O Lord! This is why we say in our supplications: 'I praise you for everything You have decreed and everything you have predestined, praising with pleasure for Your ruling and with certainty of Your wisdom,' i.e. You have wisdom, O Lord, in making these events happen to me, even though I do not see it.

The one who knows the rank of submission to Allah *the Almighty* in what He makes happen to him and the tests that befall him is never displeased or

angry because by doing so he would prolong the duration of the decree since Allah *the Almighty* does not lift the decree from His slave until he is pleased with it, as Allah *the Almighty* does not force him. If you want the decree to be lifted from you, then be pleased with it, first of all. If the decree is not lifted from you, then know that the place of pleasure within you has not been accepted. Maybe you are showing pleasure on your tongue, but your heart is still angry and displeased.

The one who submits his reins to Allah *the Almighty* and returns every event that happens to him or test that befalls him to Allah *the Almighty* and to the wisdom of the One Who causes it to happen, it is as if Allah *the Almighty* says to him "You have understood what I mean" and the test is lifted from him.

Regarding the station of submitting to Allah *the Almighty* we always remember the story of our master Abraham *peace be upon him* when he was commanded to slaughter his son Ishmael *peace be upon him*. Is there any test greater than that a man having to slaughter his son who was given to him in old age, and to slaughter him with his own hands? Indeed it is a test at different levels and from different sides, and if only the command had come via clear revelation. However, it came while he was sleeping, and it could have been interpreted, but the visions of prophets are true. We see Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* relating the matter to his son for fear that his heart would turn away from his father when he takes him in order to slaughter him, and also so that his son can share in the pleasure for Allah's predestination and not be denied the reward of this test. He said to him: '...I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you...' (*as-Saffat*: 102). The purpose here was not to alarm or scare him, rather he says to explain to him this matter of worship that our Creator has commanded us to do so that he can also have insight and so that his heart does not turn away from his father. This is why the son was wise in his response. He said: 'O my father, do as you are commanded. You will find me, if Allah wills, of the steadfast.' (*as-Saffat*: 102) As long as the command is from Allah *the Almighty* then apply it, and this is how Isma'il (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* submitted just as Abraham *peace be upon him* had submitted. He said: 'When they had both submitted to Allah, and he had laid his son down on the side of his face...' (*as-Saffat*: 103).

‘..When they had both submitted...’ means the father and son, and they were pleased with Allah’s decree. The respite came and the decree was lifted. Both of them understood the command from Allah *the Almighty* and it was not just the decree that was lifted from them. Rather, ‘We ransomed Him with a tremendous sacrifice, but not only this. We also granted him another son: ‘...And (in time) We gave him the glad tiding of Isaac...’ (*as-Saffat*: 112).

Therefore, maybe you will submit your reins to Allah *the Almighty* and know that He created the entire universe for you before He brought you into existence therein and provided you with all the necessities of life in order to guarantee that your life continues and that your species survives, and He gave you all these pleasures to enjoy.

Thus, the One Who has blessed you with all of this without having any need of you is worthy of you submitting the reins of your affair to Him and submitting to Him.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْكَ الْبَلْغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٨٢﴾

**But if they turn away [Prophet], your only
duty is to deliver the message clearly [82]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 82)**

It means, do not be sad, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* if your people turn away from you, as you are only commanded to clearly deliver the message. Allah *the Almighty* addresses him in another (verse): ‘(Prophet), are you going to worry yourself to death because they will not believe?’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 3)

The Arabic word *bakhi*’ means to destroy yourself, He said: ‘If We had wished, We could have sent them down a sign from heaven, at which their necks would stay bowed in utter humility.’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 4) However, the religion is not based on controlling the outward, and the difference between controlling the outward and controlling the heart is that it is possible for you to take a gun and force me to do what you want, but you can never force my heart onto something that it does not believe in. Allah *the Almighty* wants our


hearts, not our outward forms. If He had wanted our outward forms, He would have forced them and subjugated them, and not a single person would deviate from His will.

When Allah *Glorified is He* sent Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* as a messenger and a king, no one was able to oppose his power due to the authority that he had as a messenger from Allah. However, his call was based on the clear delivery of the message to the people without exerting any compulsion on them.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse: 'A clear delivery of the message (is entrusted to you),' (*an-Nahl*: 82). Thus, the messengers are only obligated to deliver the complete and perfect message that details the necessary activities of life. The divine commandments of Allah *Glorified is He* are comprehensive guides for our lives. They start with the statement, 'There is no deity but Allah *Glorified is He*' and even include the commands to remove harm from the road of others. Nothing of importance in our societies has been left out of these commandments. Allah's rules perfectly encompass all of mankind's interests. If you do not embrace it as a religion, you should embrace it as a way of life.

The nations that show animosity towards Islam face problems in their daily activities that have no solutions within their own legal statutes. Thus, they are forced to resort to other solutions that agree in many terms with the solutions present in the Quran.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:


يَعْرِفُونَ نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ يُنْكِرُونَهَا وَأَكْثَرُهُمُ الْكَافِرُونَ

**They know God's blessings, but refuse to
recognize them: most of them are ungrateful [83]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 83)**

The Quran has narrated the following description about them in other verses: 'Now if you ask those (who worship any being other than Allah) as to who it is that has created them, they are sure to answer, 'Allah.' How perverted, then, are their minds (not to submit to Him)!' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87) Allah *Glorified is He* also says about

them: ‘And they rejected the verses in their wickedness and self-exaltation, although their minds were convinced of their truth.’ (*an-Naml*: 14) This is because they are fully aware that Allah *Glorified is He* had created them and created the heavens and the earth. If they are fully aware of Allah’s blessing upon them, why do they still refuse to acknowledge these blessings? It is because having faith in Allah *Glorified is He* and acknowledging His blessings has to be followed by the performance of specific tasks. Certainly, it would have been easy for them to utter the testimony of faith, ‘There is no deity but Allah,’ but they knew the requirements of that testimony. If you believe that there is no deity but Allah *Glorified is He* then no one should issue your legislations but Him. No one should command your life but Allah, and only Allah can forbid certain forms of sustenance and declare other forms as lawful.

Therefore, the requirements of the testimony of faith were to restrict the whims of the polytheists and diminish their leadership status. These words would have prevented them from acting oppressively and tyrannically, as this new order transformed the former masters and slaves into equal men. Therefore, the truth that this religion presented would have restricted their activity. Thus, despite them being fully aware of Allah’s presence, they did not believe in His Message, as they knew the requirements of such a religion.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse: ‘Since most of them are disbelievers in the truth,’ (*an-Nahl*: 83). The words of the verse say, ‘...most of them are disbelievers,’ but we know that all of them were disbelievers. The reason behind this wording was that the Quranic style always maintained the possibility and provision that a minority of the disbelievers were contemplating Islam. Therefore, we must keep this minority in mind and leave the door open for them to potentially embrace the truth. If the Quran had said that all of them were disbelievers, it would have excluded these few people who were thinking about becoming Muslims. Likewise, this phrasing takes into consideration the children of these disbelievers who have not yet reached the age of legal responsibility.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا ثُمَّ لَا يُؤْذَنُ
لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَلَا هُمْ يُسْتَعْنُونَ

**The day will come when We raise up a witness
from every community, when the disbelievers will
not be allowed to make excuses or amends [84]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 84)**

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* drew our attention that this life is not a mere matter of religious opinion, where believers and disbelievers just have different choices. The reality is that we will all experience a resurrection and a reckoning. We will return to Allah *Glorified is He* and be rewarded or punished after we stand before Him. If you do not remember Allah's past blessings, then bear in mind your future meeting with Him. The witness (*shaheed*) is the nation's prophet, who will testify that he conveyed Allah's message to his people.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'And thus have We willed you to be a community of the optimal way, so that (with your lives) you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you,' (*al-Baqara*: 143). It could be that Allah *Glorified is He* assigned the nation of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as witnesses upon the rest of the people because they conveyed Allah's message to them. Thus, all the believers in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are required to convey what Prophet Muhammad has conveyed to them so that they can be worthy witnesses on that Day of Judgment.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Whereupon the disbelievers will not be allowed to plead (ignorance),' (*an-Nahl*: 84). When the witnesses testify against them, the disbelievers will not be allowed to offer any excuse, as Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'Nor (will they) be allowed to offer excuses,' (*al-Mursalat*: 36).

Some of the disbelievers will say: '...O my Lord! Let me return (to life), so that I might act righteously in whatever I have failed (in my time)!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 99-100) This plea will not be answered because if they were to be returned to the life of this world, they would only repeat their previous

sins. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And if they were brought back (to life), they would return to the very thing which was forbidden to them,’ (*al-An‘am*: 28).

In Allah’s words: ‘And neither will they be blamed (*la yusta‘tabun*) (to give an excuse),’ (*an-Nahl*: 84). The Arabic words *la yusta‘tabun* are used to indicate that these disbelievers will not even be blamed for their sins, as this may give them the luxury of making excuses for their actions. This Arabic phrase comes from the Arabic word ‘*itab* (rebuke). The ‘*itab* is the anger and resentment that you may feel towards someone who has committed an unexpected offence. If this type of anger is directed towards a dear person, you will probably direct blame at them and make it clear why you are angry at their actions. They may have an excuse or explain that their actions were unintentional. If their explanation satisfies you and your anger fades away, it is said that they ‘have answered and removed the blame’ (‘*atabak*). At that, you will have essentially forgiven that person. Therefore, people only rebuke others who are dear to them, with whom they are eager to continue a relationship and from whom they did not expect any intentional offense.

In the case of this verse, disbelievers will not be given that opportunity on the Day of Judgment, to excuse themselves from the disbelief that necessitated rebuke. There is no more time for blame to be directed to them because the Hereafter is the abode of reckoning and not the abode of action and repentance. The time of legal responsibility has come to an end. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا الْعَذَابَ فَلَا يُخَفَّفُ عَنْهُمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

**When the evildoers face punishment it will not be
lightened for them nor will they be given any respite [85]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 85)**

In the first part of the verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And when the transgressing evildoers behold the suffering (that awaits them, they will realize that),’ (*an-Nahl*: 85). It is as if the punishment will be displayed in front of their eyes before they have direct contact with it. This is how Allah will inflict various kinds of punishment upon them because the soul can feel pain on witnessing the coming punishment before the body experiences the

tangible pains of the senses. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...it will not be lightened for them (by virtue of their pleading),’ (*an-Nahl*: 85) and says ‘...and neither will they be granted respite,’ (*an-Nahl*: 85). They will not be granted any deferral or delay. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذَا رَأَوْا الَّذِينَ
 كُنَّا نَدْعُوا مِنْ دُونِكَ فَأَلْقَوْا إِلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلَ إِنَّكُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

When the idolaters see the partners they joined with God they will say, ‘Our Lord, these are the partners we used to invoke beside You,’ but the partners will retort, ‘You are liars’ [86] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 86)

This is when Allah *Glorified is He* will gather all the polytheists and those false gods they attributed as partners with Allah, such as devils, human beings, jinn, or idols. On the Day of Resurrection, these polytheists will face the false deities they had worshipped and will be confronted by them. When the polytheists see that these partners had led them astray and made disobedience, idolatry and disbelief seem acceptable to them, they will say, “They are the reason behind our disbelief and going astray.” This is also the way Allah *Glorified is He* had described these false deities in another verse: ‘(On that Day) it will come to pass that those who had been (falsely) followed (or worshipped) shall disown their followers, and the latter shall see the suffering (that awaits them), with all their hopes cut to pieces!’ (*al-Baqara*: 166)

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Those (of them) who had been weak (on earth) will say unto those who had taken pride in their arrogance, “Had it not been for you, we would certainly have been believers!”’ (*Saba*: 31) Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse we are studying: ‘Thereupon (those beings) will fling at them the retort,’ (*an-Nahl*: 86). This means that they will respond to them in the same coarse manner, while answering them with undisputable proof.

Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding what Satan (Iblees) will tell the disbelievers on that Day of Judgment: ‘Yet I had no power at all over you, only that I called upon you and you responded to me. Hence, do not blame me, but blame yourselves. It is not for me to respond to your cries, nor for you

to respond to mine,’ (*Ibrahim*: 22). Therefore, they will respond to them with the statement, “We had no power over you. We incited you and you responded to us. We had no strength with which to force you to do your sins, nor any proof to convince you of disbelief.” This is why they accuse them of lying, regarding their claims of ignorance: ‘Behold, you have indeed been lying (to yourselves)!’ (*an-Nahl*: 86)

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالْقَوَا إِلَى اللَّهِ يَوْمَئِذٍ السَّلَامُ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

And on that Day they will offer total submission to God: their false deities will desert them [87]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 87)

To offer their surrender (*as-salam*) means to submit fully to His Power, as the time to make a choice has ended and the period to make a decision has passed. Either you fulfil your actions in this world, or you will not be able to fulfil your duties into eternity. Allah *Glorified is He* will ask His creation: ‘With whom does sovereignty rest on this Day (of Judgment)?’ Indeed, the command and sovereignty will all belong to Allah *Glorified is He* and as long as they have not submitted voluntarily and out of choice, then let them submit reluctantly and by force.

A distinguishing factor of faith will become clear at this point. Embracing the true faith in this world made us surrender to Allah *Glorified is He* voluntarily. On the other hand, disbelievers will be made to submit by force on the Day of Judgment, when the truth is finally unveiled. Allah *Glorified is He* will confront His creation on a day when they will have no choice.

Allah says: ‘And all their false illusions (that they had worshipped) will have forsaken them (*dalla* ‘*anhum*).’ (*an-Nahl*: 87)

In this verse, the word *dalla* has numerous meanings. One of these meanings is that their intercessors (or false idols) will be hidden from them. They will actively seek to find them for support, but they will not find them. This meaning of the word *dalla* can be found in Allah’s statement: ‘(The polytheists say,) “What! After we have been (dead and) lost in the earth

(*dalalna fel ard*), shall we indeed be (restored to life) in a new act of creation?" (as-Sajda: 10) Here, the words *dalalna fel ard* mean "hidden in the earth." According to the polytheists' false arguments, they assumed that the earth will eat up their atoms and conceal them from any resurrection. Thus, *dala* here means "hidden." Another application of the word *dalal*, in the Arabic language, is when we use the word *daalla*, to mean a beast of burden that is lost from its owner.

The meanings of *dalal* also include "or getting", as in Allah's words: 'So that if one of them should forget (*tadil*), the other could remind her.' (*al-Baqara*: 282) Its meanings also include "the confusion of a person," as in Allah's words to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'And (Allah) found you lost on your way (confused) (*dalan*) and guided you,' (*ad-Duha*: 7). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was never misguided and separated from Allah's way. Then, what does this verse mean? This verse indicates that the Prophet was confused regarding what the chiefs of the people (who were supposed to have superior intellect) believed in. The actions they were committing were incompatible with a sound intellect and an illuminated natural disposition.

Therefore, when Allah *Glorified is He* says in our current verse: 'And all their false illusions (that they had worshipped) will have forsaken them,' this means that their false deities and intercessors, which they claimed and lied about in this world, will be hidden from them. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَصَدُّوا عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ زِدْنَاهُمْ
عَذَابًا فَوْقَ الْعَذَابِ بِمَا كَانُوا يُفْسِدُونَ

**Because of the corruption they spread, We shall
add torment upon torment for those who
disbelieved and barred others from the path
of God [88] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 88)**

There is a great difference between disbelief and turning others from the path of Allah *Glorified is He*. Disbelief is a grave sin that is connected to an individual person. It does not affect anyone else. So, refuse to believe in Allah *Glorified is He* if you wish. We seek refuge in Allah *Glorified is He* from your beliefs, but you are free in this world!

On the other hand, calling others to disbelief and turning them away from the path of Allah *Glorified is He* are transitive sins that affect other people and are thus twofold. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘They will certainly have to bear their own burdens, and other burdens besides their own’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 13).

If someone asks, ‘How can that be when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another’s burden’ (*al-An’am*: 164), we say that there is no contradiction between the two verses. Each individual still carries his own burdens. Those who turn others from the path of Allah *Glorified is He* will carry their followers’ burdens as well as their own. As for the followers, they will only have the burdens of their own disbelief.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse: ‘We will heap suffering upon suffering.’ (*an-Nahl*: 88) The first punishment is the punishment of disbelief. The second punishment is for the sins of turning others from Allah’s path.

This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘Whoever lays the tradition of a praiseworthy act will have the reward for it and the reward of whomever else does it until the Day of Resurrection. Whoever lays the tradition of a blameworthy act will bear the burden of it and the burden of whomever does it until the Day of Resurrection.’⁽¹⁾

So, beware of the eyes and ears of society falling on you, whilst you are in a state of contravening Allah’s way because this contravention will have an influence on others, and it will be a cause for sins in which you will have a share. If this happens, you will be bearing your own evil deeds and the evil deeds of others following you.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘In return for all the corruption that they wrought.’ (*an-Nahl*: 88) To make corruption (*ifsad*) is the intention and action of ruining what is beneficial to society. If you had left it without interference, it might have been guided to Allah’s way. Therefore, you may have corrupted that which was right and prevented that which is rectifiable from being corrected, Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) Narrated by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (4/361.362), Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* (207) and at-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2675) from the narration of Jareer ibn ‘Abdullah may Allah be pleased with him. At-Tirmidhi said, ‘It is a good, authentic (*hasan sahih*) Hadith.’

وَيَوْمَ نَبْعَثُ فِي كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْهِمْ مِنْ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَجِئْنَا بِكَ شَهِيدًا عَلَى هَؤُلَاءِ
وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ تَبَيِّنًا لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُدًى وَرَحْمَةً وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

The day will come when We raise up in each community a witness against them, and We shall bring you [Prophet] as a witness against these people, for We have sent the Scripture down to you explaining everything, and as guidance and mercy and good news to those who devote themselves to God [89]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 89)

Allah's statement: 'A witness against them from among themselves' (*an-Nahl*: 89) could mean that the witness will be from their own kind and tongue. Therefore, the people who convey Allah's way to mankind, such as the preachers and Imams, will testify before Allah *Glorified is He* against the people who were negligent and sinful.

Another meaning of the words: '...from among themselves' (*an-Nahl*: 89) could also be that their own body parts and organs will testify against their sinful actions. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another chapter: 'On the Day when their own tongues, hands, and feet will bear witness against them by (recalling) all that they did!' (*an-Nur*: 24) Another verse says: 'And they will ask their skins, "Why did you bear witness against us?"' (*Fussilat*: 21) If the witness is a part of the person's own body, it will provide strong evidence and indisputable proof. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And you (O Muhammad) We will bring forth to bear witness regarding these people (whom your message has reached).' (*an-Nahl*: 79) Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will be a witness over his own nation and as a witness over all the witnesses.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We have bestowed upon you this (Divine) Book to make everything clear' (*an-Nahl*: 89). This Divine Book is the Noble Quran that clarifies everything that mankind needs in their societies. In the science of logic, the word *shay'* (thing) is known as the genus of genera. Anything that can be called a thing is clarified in Allah's Book. Someone may argue, "If that's the case, then why do we ask scholars and scientists to use independent reasoning (*ijtihad*) in order to extract specific rulings?" The answer is that the Quran has come as a miracle that lays the foundations and

principles (of healthy reasoning). Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* gave Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the right to legislate, by Allah's guidance. Allah says: 'Hence, accept (willingly) whatever the Apostle (Prophet Muhammad) gives you (thereof), and refrain from (demanding) whatever he forbids you.' (*al-Hashr*: 7) Therefore, the customary practice (tradition) of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* whether in his verbal statements, physical actions or consents and confirmations (regarding the actions of others) is affirmed by the Noble Book. In addition, his traditions explain the Noble Book and clarify its meanings. The sunset prayer, for example, consists of three units. This is not specifically mentioned in the Noble Quran. 'Hence, accept (willingly) whatever the Apostle gives you (thereof).' (*al-Hashr*: 7)

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified this matter when he wanted to send his companion, Mu'adh ibn Jabal *may Allah be pleased with him* as a judge for the people of Yemen. He wanted to ascertain that Mu'adh's judgments would be righteous, and therefore asked Mu'adh, "With what will you judge?" Mu'adh responded, "With the (decrees of the) Book of Allah." Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "And if you do not find (the decrees) that which you need (in Allah's Book)?" Mu'adh answered, "Then with the traditions (*Sunnah*) of Allah's Messenger (Prophet Muhammad)." Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "And if you do not find (the decrees) that which you need (in the Prophetic traditions)?" Mu'adh answered, "I will employ my independent legal reasoning, and I will spare no effort (in reaching the most righteous judgment)." To these answers, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Praise be to Allah, who has granted insight to the messenger of His Messenger, to carry out that which pleases Allah and His Messenger."⁽¹⁾

Therefore, independent legal reasoning can be used to deduce rulings from Allah's Book. In the new matters and events that confront us, for which there are no clear judiciary texts in the Quran or in the Prophetic traditions (*Sunnah*), we are permitted to use independent legal reasoning to reach the righteous judgment.

(1) Narrated by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (5/220, 226, 242), Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* (2587) and At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (1327) from the Hadith of Mu'adh ibn Jabal *may Allah be pleased with him*.

Here, we should mention the story⁽¹⁾ of Imam Mohammad 'Abduh⁽²⁾ *may Allah bestow mercy upon his soul* regarding a conversation he had in Paris with an orientalist (a Western academic who studies the Eastern cultures). The orientalist said to the Imam, "Is there not a verse in the Quran that says: 'No single concept have We neglected in Our Book?'" (*al-An'am*: 38) Imam Mohammad responded, "Indeed!" The orientalist asked him, "Show me from the Quran, then, how many loaves of bread are found in an *ardab* of wheat? Imam Mohammad answered, "We ask the baker, as he has the answer to this question." The orientalist argued, "I want the answer from the Quran which has not neglected a single concept." The Imam answered, "This Quran taught us to ask the people of knowledge regarding that which we do not know, as Allah says: 'So ask the people of remembrance (and knowledge) about that which you do not know.' (*al-Anbiya*': 7) Therefore, the Quran has given us the way to solve all our problems, even if we cannot find specific verses in Allah's Book that detail particular answers. The Quran has mentioned the principles and foundations of knowledge. We are then allowed to exercise independent legal reasoning regarding the contemporary branches of knowledge and the new matters that appear before us. If a general ruling is found in the Quran, then it is obligatory to take with it the rulings that have been issued by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because Allah has authorised him to issue and interpret rulings.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Hence, accept (willingly) whatever the Apostle (Prophet Muhammad) gives you (thereof), and refrain from (demanding) whatever he forbids you.' (*al-Hashr*: 7) The same applies for the consensus (*ijma'*) between the scholars of Islam because Allah *Glorified is He* says: '(Whoever) follows a path other than that of the believers, shall We leave unto him that (misguidance) which he himself has chosen.' (*an-Nisa*': 115) Therefore,

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- (1) The story of Imam Mohammad 'Abdu being asked, in Paris, on the number of loafs of bread made from one *ardab* of wheat (nearly 78 kg of wheat).
 - (2) The former Mufti of Egypt (1849 - 1905), one of the most senior figures of reform and renewal in Islam. He was born in 1849 in one of the villages of Western Egypt. He studied at the Ahmadi Mosque in Tanta and then Al-Azhar. He wrote Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Karim and Risalat-At-Tawheed. With Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani, he published the magazine named Al-'Urwa al-Wuthqa. He died in Alexandria in 1905, at the age of 56. (Al-'Alam lil-Zirikli, 1/302)

every exercise of independent legal reasoning should be referred to the people who have the necessary knowledge that allows legal reasoning: ‘Whereas (regarding their argument,) if they would but refer it unto the Apostle (Prophet Muhammad) and unto those from among the believers who have been entrusted with authority, such of them who are engaged in obtaining intelligence would indeed know (the legal ruling of) it.’ (*an-Nisa*: 83)

Therefore, the Quran certified the legal rulings that are issued from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If Prophet Muhammad did not mention a particular issue, the Quran directed us to the ruling that is reached by consensus between the scholars of Islam. If such consensus is not available, the Quran ordered us to follow the rulings attained by independent legal reasoning by eminent scholars. Such rulings will therefore be authentic and set according to reasoned Quranic methodology.

Here we must distinguish between the mention of everything and the mention of essential issues in the Quran. What exactly does the Quran turn our attention to? The Quran directed us to the rulings that require legal responsibility from a servant who believes in Allah *Glorified is He*. There are universal matters that man can benefit from without prior and exact knowledge. For instance, if man knows about the earth having a spheroid shape and that it revolves around the sun as well as other matters of the universal laws, then that knowledge is indeed well and good. However, many men who are ignorant in these aspects of knowledge still benefit from their laws.

An illiterate person who lives in the countryside, for example, can benefit from electricity without knowing its nature and physical principles. He can benefit from its laws by merely pressing a light switch with his finger.

If Allah *Glorified is He* had explained the physical laws of the universe in a very forthright manner in the Quran, this would have turned the Arabs away from its meanings. They did not know anything about the movements of the universe and did not have the educational refinement that allowed eminent scientific contemplation. When the Arabs asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the crescent moons, the Noble Quran answered: ‘They will ask you about the crescent moons (*al-ahilla*). Say (to them, O Muhammad), “They indicate the periods of time for (various dates of) mankind,

and the (time for) pilgrimage.” (*al-Baqara*: 189) *Al-ahilla* (crescent moons) is the plural of *hilal*. This is the part of the moon that appears at the beginning of every month, when it looks like a lunar clipping. Then it gradually increases in size until it becomes a full moon, when it is completely round. Then it decreases gradually until it returns to its original shape. This is a wonder that the Arabs saw with their eyes, and so asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about it. How did the Quran respond to them? The Noble Quran did not explain to them that a crescent moon is formed because the sun’s light only illuminates a smaller part of the moon. This detail was not to be encompassed by the contemporary minds of that time. That is why the Quran directed them to look at the Creator’s wisdom behind crescent moons. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Say (O Muhammad), “they indicate the periods of time for (various dates of) mankind, and the (time for) pilgrimage.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 189) Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* directed their attention to their traditional activities by explaining the wisdom behind the changing moon. At the same time, the Quran left the scientific principles behind this phenomenon to be explained to the Arabs by later scientific discoveries. They will find in the Quran that which will help them to understand this subject.

Therefore, Allah’s statement: ‘No single concept have We neglected in Our Book’ (*al-An‘am*: 38) is referring to all the concepts that produce legal responsibility. It is these concepts that will deserve reward or punishment in the Hereafter. As for scientific matters of the universe, the Quran mentioned them only in simple terms that can be understood in simple times, leaving the task of meticulous explanation to the following periods of scientific knowledge.

This is why the secrets of the Noble Quran were not all divulged in the century of its revelation. If that had happened, the following centuries of people will not have found reason to contemplate its verses, looking for deeper meanings. Thus, the minds contemplating the Quran gradually became more responsive to its meanings with the passing of ages. New ideas were brought forth in every century. These new depths of contemplation were suited to humanity’s progress in discovering the scientific phenomena of the universe.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* once saw some people artificially pollinating date palms. This is the biological process of fertilization, in

which they use the male gametes to fertilize the female parts of the trees. The Prophet said, “(Even) if you had not done that, it would still bear fruit.” These people mistakenly abandoned the process in the next season and the date palms did not bear adequate fruits. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked about this, he said, “You know more about the affairs of your life in this world.”⁽¹⁾

The issue of pollination is a worldly affair that is subject to experimentation and research. It is not part of Prophet Muhammad’s revealed tasks to change these matters that mankind’s minds agree upon scientifically. He only directed us to the rulings of legal responsibility in which desires differ. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* settled these issues with divine rulings.

There are material surges in this world concerned with inventions and discoveries that subjugate the secrets of the universe to serve mankind. Does mankind differ over the benefits of these material inventions? Do we say, for example, that electricity is an American or a Russian phenomenon? Do we attribute chemistry to a particular country, naming it as English or German chemistry? These inventions and discoveries are products of laboratory experiments that are widely agreed upon by all mankind. However, at the same time, we find mankind arguing over theoretical principles and fighting with each other to uplift them. Thus, we have socialists, capitalists, existentialists, secularists and so on. Religion has come to put an end to these quarrels, laying down the absolute and divine truth in such matters.

We see the countries in each ideological camp trying to steal the inventions and discoveries of their opponents. They send their spies to keep an eye on the latest technologies that others have devised. Do they invest the same efforts to steal theoretical principles? On the contrary, they actually construct barriers and precautionary measures so that these principles are not transferred to their countries and citizens!

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made himself an exemplar role model to clarify this matter. Some people might say, “It is not

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2362) from the hadith of Anas ibn Malik may Allah be pleased with him.

fitting for Allah's Messenger to suggest an action to the people that later turns out to be amiss." Here, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to establish a principle in the minds of the people who will talk about matters of religion: beware of involving yourselves in applied material scientific matters without prior study and proper procedure. These scientific issues earn the same results for the believers and the disbelievers.

When scientists discovered that the earth is spheroid and that it revolves around the sun, some theologians objected and tampered with a concept that has nothing to do with religion. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in effect, through this story, had warned these theologians about this error.

What can these theologians claim after scientists have already invented methods of travel to celestial distances, from which the earth was clearly photographed as a spheroid body? We say to these theologians that they should not have placed material claims in the name of religion that they are unable to prove.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And (this Book is) a guidance, a grace and a glad tiding to all who have surrendered themselves to Allah *Glorified is He*.' (*an-Nahl*: 89) Allah *Glorified is He* described the Quran as being "a guidance". If the Quran was sent to make everything clear to mankind, some people might think it would have been more suitable if Allah *Glorified is He* had described the Quran as 'a guide'. Instead, He described it as "a guidance" in itself which indicates that it is the core and essence of guidance. "A guide" is someone who may have established guidance temporarily. In a similar manner, you may describe a person as being "just" in their rulings. However, when you say that a person is "justice," this means that the characteristic of justice is permanently embodied in their character. Similarly, there is a difference between the Arabic words '*alim* (one endowed with knowledge) and '*aleem* (one who knows everything). Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But above everyone who is endowed with knowledge, there is One Who knows all (*aleem*).' (*Yusuf*: 76)

What is the meaning of guidance? Guidance is the sign to the shortest route that leads to one's destination. Then, in the same verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Quran: '... a grace.' There is a verse in another chapter in which the Quran is described as a grace: '(It is) a cure (to the spirit) and is a grace.' (*al-Isra*': 82)

“A cure” (*shifa*) means that the Quran treats certain maladies. “A grace” (*rahma*) means that it also prevents affliction with maladies. Therefore, whoever acts in accordance with the Quranic way will have glad tidings of immense and eternal reward from Allah; *Glorified is He* in permanent blessings. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَأْمُرُ بِالْعَدْلِ وَالْإِحْسَنِ وَإِيتَايَ ذِي الْقُرْبَىٰ وَيَنْهَىٰ عَنِ الْفَحْشَاءِ
وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَالْبَغْيِ يَعِظُكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

God commands justice, doing good, and generosity towards relatives and He forbids what is shameful, blameworthy, and oppressive. He teaches you, so that you may take heed [90]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 90)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* gave three commandments: justice, the doing of benevolent good and generosity towards (one’s) close people. He *Glorified is He* also gave three prohibitions: doing all that is shameful or all that runs counter to reason, as well as harbouring envy towards others. When this verse was revealed, Ibn Mas‘ud *Allah be pleased with him* said, “The most comprehensive verse in the Quran, regarding being good, is this verse.”⁽¹⁾ This is because the verse combined all the virtues that can possibly be in the Noble Quran.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was eager to guide our master ‘Uthman ibn Maz‘un⁽²⁾ to embrace Islam. This is because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was very eager to present Islam to people in which he saw sublime morals and qualities that would enhance the Muslim community. It is as if he mourned seeing these transcendent qualities in a human being that had not yet embraced Islam.

‘Uthman ibn Maz‘un wanted to take his time to contemplate Islam. Then, one day, he was sitting with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon*

(1) Mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his *Tafseer* (5/3892)

(2) He is ‘Uthman ibn Maz‘un Al-Jumahi, Abu As-Sa‘ib, a Companion. He was one of the leaders of the Arabs in the age of ignorance (*al-jahiliyyah*). He became Muslim after thirteen other men and he emigrated to the land of Abyssinia twice. He was martyred at Badr. When the Prophet may the peace and blessings of Allah be upon him came to him, he kissed him while he was dying, until his tears were seen flowing down ‘Uthman’s cheek. (4/214)

him in a gathering and saw the Prophet raising his eyes towards the sky. Ibn Maz'un asked him, "What happened?" Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* answered: "Indeed (Angel) Gabriel has just revealed to me this statement of Allah: 'Behold, Allah orders justice (*al-'adl*) and benevolence (*al-'ihsan*), and generosity towards (your) close people (*'etaa' dhil-qurbaa*); and He forbids all that is shameful (*al-fahsha'*) and all that runs counter to reason (*al-munkar*), as well as envy; (and) He exhorts you (repeatedly) so that you might bear (all this) in mind.'" (*an-Nahl*: 90)

Ibn Maz'un *may Allah be pleased with him* later narrated, "Then (on hearing that), the seed of faith was firmly planted in my heart with this verse that combined all the qualities of goodness."⁽¹⁾

He went on to inform Abu Talib about the verse. When Abu Taleb heard the verse, he exclaimed, "O' Quraysh! Believe in that which Muhammad has brought, for indeed he has come to you with the best of morals."⁽²⁾

It is also narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to present his message to the Arab tribes, while Abu Bakr and 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with them* accompanied him. 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* narrated, "The Messenger of Allah (Prophet Muhammad) met a gathering of people who looked respectful and dignified. He called unto them to bear witness that there is no deity but Allah and that Muhammad was the Messenger of Allah. Maqrun ibn 'Amr, who was from Shayban ibn Tha'laba's tribe stood and asked him, 'O brother from Quraysh. What is it that you are calling us to?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Behold, Allah orders justice (*al-'adl*) and benevolence (*al-'ihsan*), and generosity towards (your) close people (*'etaa' dhil-qurbaa*); and He forbids all that is shameful (*al-fahsha'*) and all that runs counter to reason (*al-munkar*), as well as envy; (and) He exhorts you (repeatedly) so that you might bear (all this) in mind.'

(1) Mentioned by As-Suyuti in *Ad-durr Al-manthur* (5/159) and attributed to Ahmad, Al-Bukhari in (*Al-Adab*), Ibn Abu-Hatim, At-Tabarani, and Ibn Mardawayh from the narration of Ibn 'Abbas *may Allah be pleased with them*. It was also mentioned by Al-Wahidi in *Asbab an-Nuzul*. (166).

(2) Mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his *Tafsir* (5/3891). Abu Taleb said, "Follow my nephew, for by Allah he only enjoins the best of morals."

(*an-Nahl*: 90) ‘Uthman responded, “Indeed you have called us to the best of morals and the most righteous of actions. Quraysh were wrong when they opposed you and united their forces against you.” Uthman ibn Maz‘un conveyed the verse to ‘Ikrimah ibn Abu Jahl, who in turn recited the verse to Al-Walid ibn Mughaira. Al-Walid thought about what he had heard and said, “By Allah, indeed, it has sweetness and upon it is beauty. Its highest verses bear fruit and its simplest verses flow abundantly. Its words are elevated above all other words and it is not the speech of human beings.”⁽¹⁾ Despite this testimony of Al-Walid about the Quran, he did not believe in its message. They said about him, “It suffices him that he was a positive witness to the Quran, despite remaining a disbeliever.”

This is how this verse entered the hearts of these people and became firmly established therein. The verse is comprehensive and complete. It calls to every act of goodness and forbids every act of evil.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in the verse: ‘Behold, Allah *Glorified is He* orders justice (*al-‘adl*).’ (*an-Nahl*: 90) What is justice? Justice (*al-‘adl*) is equality (*insaf*), fairness and a lack of biased inclination. This justice can only be exercised between two mutually contradictive forces. In the Arabic language, a just human being is described as a *munsif* (fair person). This is because when two opponents are stood before him, he gives each of them half (*nisf*) of his interest. It is as if he divides himself into two equal parts, without inclining to any of them in the slightest form. This is fairness.

The scale which is used to measure weights was introduced for the sake of fairness. It differs in its precision according to the value of what is being weighed. The sensitivity of a wheat scale does not have the same sensitivity as a jewellery scale, for example. Utmost precision is required in the scales of drug manufacturers as the smallest errors can turn medicine into poison. We have witnessed a massive development in scales to the extent that we can now weigh smaller things than were ever imagined.

Justice is present in all matters of life. Its peak is testifying that there is no deity but Allah. Its simpler forms include removing harm from people’s roads.

(1) Mentioned by *Al-Qurtubi* in his *Tafsir* (5/3897)

Justice is required in all matters of legal responsibility. It is essential in matters of creed, which are the functions of the heart, and in practical matters, which are the actions and functions of the limbs.

So, how is justice present in matters of creed? Some of the disbelievers are atheists, who deny the presence of any deity in existence, thus denying the existence of Allah *Glorified is He*. Other disbelievers are polytheists who believe that there are multiple deities. These opinions and views contradicted each another and justice came with the advent of Islam. There is only one God, Allah *Glorified is He* and He has no partners. He is transcendent and His attributes are above being likened to anything in His creation.

Allah *Glorified is He* has hearing, but it is not like the hearing of created beings. We do not deny any of His attributes, as this is the misguided belief of *al-mu'attila* (who deny Allah's attributes). Also, we do not compare Him to anything else in His creation because that is the misguided belief of *al-mushabbiha* (who liken Allah's attributes to His creation). Rather, we say that there is nothing like Him *Glorified is He* and we adopt the position of justice and the middle ground.

Likewise, one of the matters of creed, in which the justice of Islam is evident, is the issue of pre-determination and free will. Islam takes the middle ground between two groups of people. The first is those who say that man does all of his actions out of his own free will without any divine intervention by Allah *Glorified is He* thus earning reward and punishment as a result. The second group claims that all of man's actions come from Allah *Glorified is He* and are forced upon His slaves. Islam comes with justice and the middle ground in this issue by saying, "Man carries out his actions voluntarily with the ability that Allah *Glorified is He* has created within him to choose the right from the wrong."

In legislation and rulings there is a big difference between the Revealed Law of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and the Revealed Law of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* regarding the law of just retribution (as capital punishment for murder) (*qisas*).

For example, in the time of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* materialism had become so predominant amongst the children of Israel that

they said to Musa (Moses): ‘Allow us to see Allah, face to face.’ (*an-Nisa*: 153) They did not understand the idea of unseen punishments and were not convinced by it. Therefore, it was appropriate, and even necessary for them, to have just retribution in their legislations. If Allah *Glorified is He* had left them without such laws, there would have been a lot of killing amongst them. They could only be deterred by the materialistic ruling, “Whoever kills is to be killed, and killing annuls out killing.”

The children of Israel transgressed appropriate bounds in their demands to see Allah *Glorified is He* as seeing Allah contradicts with His transcendence and divinity. If you were to see Him with your eyes, you would be defining Him within a limited space. Therefore, not being able to see Allah *Glorified is He* is part of the essence of His perfection. How can we desire to see Him *Glorified is He* when we cannot even see some of His creation. For instance, what do we know about the nature of the spirit that exists in our bodies? How do we intend to carry out our actions? How do we think and live? Where do our souls exist? Whenever a person dies, the spirit, the Divine Secret, is separated from the body. The body turns into a corpse and the people rush to bury it into the ground. Has anyone seen the spirit or heard it? Have you been able to perceive it with any of your senses?

If the spirit, which has been created by Allah *Glorified is He* cannot be perceived by the intellect, then what about Allah Himself, the One Who created this spirit? It is from His divinity that no human vision can encompass Him, whereas He encompasses all human vision.

Likewise, there are things that religion requires, such as truth. It is one of the ideals that all human beings call for and require actions to adhere to. What is the shape of this truth or its colour? Is it long or short? If we are incapable of imagining truth, which has been created by Allah *Glorified is He* then how can we imagine Allah Himself and desire to see Him?

It was from the excessive materialism of the children of Israel that in the Talmud they set up a group of searchers for Allah *Glorified is He*. The children of Israel, relying on their absolute belief in materialism, portrayed Allah *the Almighty* in their Talmud as someone sitting on a rock and putting His legs in a large, marble bowl at which a whale came, Glory be to Allah!

As a result of this materialism, the world needed overwhelming spiritual energy. This spirituality had to be overflowing to achieve balance in this world. The Revealed Law of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* came to provide such spirituality after the exaggerated materialism and excessiveness in what the commandments of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had taught. So, how can the law of just retribution be applied here when the Revealed Law of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* wanted to establish the spirituality of the people?

The Law of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) was revealed to impose serenity between the victim's family and the murderer. In this law, it suffices that one person was killed in the dispute, and we should preserve the life of the other person without stirring up any quarrels, rancour, or hatred among the people. Thus, this Revealed Law of Prophet 'Isa (Jesus) called for the killer to be pardoned.

After that, Islam was revealed to adopt the position of justice and the middle ground in this ruling. Islam affirmed just retribution (capital punishment), but additionally, allowed the calls for pardon to be made. It gave the guardians of the murdered person the right to have just retribution, but at the same time, called unto them to pardon the murderer. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And if something (of his guilt) is remitted to a guilty person by his brother, this (remission) shall be adhered to with fairness and restitution to his fellow-man shall be made in a goodly manner.' (*al-Baqara*: 178) We can notice here that the Quran called them brothers in order to soften their hearts and remove their malevolence.

Just retribution in Islam has an exalted wisdom. Its objective is not to propagate the crime, but rather to preserve the lives of other people in society, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For, in (the law of) just retribution, O you who are endowed with insight, there is a life for you.' (*al-Baqara*: 179) Thus, whoever wants to preserve his life should not threaten the lives of others. When Allah *Glorified is He* gave the right of just retribution to the guardian of the deceased victim, it enabled his anger to be cooled and his rage to be calmed. He is given a chance to think about pardoning the murderer, while he also has the right to exact revenge. This is how this ruling removes rancour from the hearts and puts out the fire of vengeance between people.

This is why, in some countries, where the practice of revenge for murder is prevalent, the murderer asks the guardians of the deceased for pardon by approaching them with the burial shroud in his hand. He places himself before the deceased victim's family and confesses his crime, "Here I am, in front of you. You have the right to kill me (in retribution for your victim) and this is my burial shroud." The guardian of the deceased's rights, or the person in the legal position to exact revenge, usually pardons the murderer in most of these cases. This is the justice that Islam has brought. It is the religion of moderation and optimal rulings.

This pardon, by the guardian, is a tool of reconstruction and a means of love. When they have the right of just retribution, but choose to forgive the murderer, pardoning the murderer's life becomes a gift from the family of the deceased victim. This is a favour that the family of the murderer will remember. They will choose to say, "The blood of our son has been spared."

We can see another example of the justice of Islam and its optimal stances in the jurisprudence concerning the issue of menstruation. In the Revealed Law of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* the woman leaves the side of her husband during the period of menstruation. In the Revealed Law of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* the wife could remain beside her husband, but was also allowed complete physical intimacy during that period.

Islam gave the just ruling in this issue and allowed the menstruating woman to stay in the same place as her husband and her family, but without her husband approaching her intimately throughout this period. 'And they will ask you (Muhammad) about (woman's) monthly periods. Say, "It is a vulnerable condition. Keep, therefore, away from (marital consummation) with women during their monthly periods, and do not approach them (intimately) until they are cleansed. When they are cleansed, approach them as Allah has bidden you to do." Verily, Allah loves those who turn unto Him in repentance, and He loves those who cleanse themselves.' (*al-Baqara*: 222)

The same principles of justice apply if we look at the economic aspects in our lives. Economy is the channel through which life is maintained, as it provides our food, drink, clothes, and other items of livelihood, and maintains the survival of the species through the economies of marriage. The provision

of these items needs the activities of production and consumption, through which life continues. If one of them were to stop, society would fall into inactivity and idleness.

Based on that, Allah *Glorified is He* has distributed His blessings amongst His servants. Thus, I serve everyone with the knowledge I have and everyone serves me with their knowledge and skills. Therefore, the activities of life can prosper, when the world that you live in contains benefits for you, as well as hopes that entice you. If you partake in these activities, you earn wealth that drives your livelihood. Then, you must strike a balance between your immediate needs and your hopes for the future.

If you spend everything that you earn on your present expenses, then you ruin your chances of realising your hopes for the future. You will not find what you need to build a house, for example, or buy a car, or increase your standard of living with some of life's luxuries. This is what we call waste and blunder. On the other hand, it does not suit a normal human being to be stingy and miserly, by saving everything they earn without any spending. Such a person would not be partaking in the process of consumption and would thus be a cause of inactivity and corruption in society. The Quran dealt with this matter in a subtle way in Allah's words: 'And neither allow your hand to remain shackled to your neck, nor stretch it forth to the utmost limit (of your capacity), (so that you do not) find yourself blamed (by your dependents), or even destitute.' (*al-Isra'*: 29) Therefore, do not withhold your hand from appropriate spending, out of miserliness and stinginess, as you will be rebuked by your wife, children and people around you. Everyone will dislike that attribute of miserliness. Likewise, do not waste and squander your wealth without account, as you will fall short of realizing your hopes. If that happens, you will be grieved when you see the economically thrifty people fulfilling their roles in life, while you are not able to fulfil these roles due to poverty, poor planning and having wasted away all of your earnings.

This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Behold, the squanderers are, indeed, of the ilk of the devils.' (*al-Isra'*: 27) He also says: 'And (the righteous are) those, (who) are neither wasteful nor niggardly whenever they spend on others, but are (always) mindful of the just level between those (two extremes).' (*al-Furqan*: 67)

Therefore, justice is an essential principle in all the elements of the divine commandments, whether these commandments are related to creed or to the daily activities of man. This justice is based on optimization and moderation. This is the concept behind the common Arabic saying: "The best of solutions is the one between two extremes."

Allah *Glorified is He* also says in this verse: '...and benevolence (*al-ihsan*).'
(*an-Nahl*: 90) What is meant by the doing of good in benevolence (*al-ihsan*)? To clarify the definition of benevolence, let us compare it with the meaning of justice.

Justice means that a person should receive their deserved rights with ultimate precision. If they are guilty of sin, they should be punished with just retribution. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Thus, if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him just as he has attacked you.'
(*al-Baqara*: 194) Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'Hence, if you have to respond to an attack (in retribution), respond only to the (equal) extent of the attack directed against you.'
(*an-Nahl*: 126)

On the other hand, benevolence means that you abandon your deserved rights and relinquish your fair shares for Allah's pleasure. If you observe this principle, you will act according to Allah's statement: 'And (those righteous people who) hold their anger in check, and pardon their fellow-men and Allah loves the benevolent doers of good.'
(*Al-Imran*: 134) There are several levels of benevolence in people, each level according to the person's capabilities and willingness for moral development. The first of these stages is to keep one's anger in check (*qazhm al-ghaydh*) which comes from the Arabic word for closing a water bag after it has been filled (*qazhm al-qerba*). In this state of benevolence, the person is to contain the anger within their heart, enduring the troubled feelings that they have towards the others who have wronged them. In addition, they should not let this anger lead to any retributive reaction, but instead, they should suffer the pain of this anger without compensation. This is why it is better to move on to a higher stage of benevolence which is the stage of pardon.

In the second state of benevolence, the believer should ask the question, "Why do I allow myself to be a victim of this anger? Why do I have to suffer its pain and bitterness?" Then, he should relieve himself from this anger by

pardoning the wrongdoer. If someone makes progress in pardoning, they can then strive to reach the third stage of benevolence, which is the stage of doing good to the one who has wronged them. Thus, in the third state of benevolence, which is doing good to those who have harmed us, the believer can go beyond what is required of them and ascend to the rank of those who truly know Allah *Glorified is He*. Transgressors act according to their capacity and exact revenge according to what suits them. The one who progresses to the rank of high benevolence leaves the matter to Allah's capacity, and what is our capacity compared with the capacity of Allah?

Therefore, benevolence is more suited to the believer than exacting revenge. However, how can a person be able to pardon those who have done wrong to them, or even respond in kindness towards them? Imagine that you have two children and one of them transgresses against the other. What position would you take regarding their dispute? Towards Which one of them would your heart incline? There is no doubt that your heart would incline towards the one who had been transgressed against, and the transgression could lead you to cheer that child up with a gift or act of kindness. You will show that child compassion and generosity in order to make them feel better. The cause of your kindness is their sibling's offence against them. So, it is the offence that caused your compassion towards the child and led you to be gentle in bringing them mindful gifts. Therefore, it should be natural for the person who was wronged to be benevolent towards the transgressor and to thank them for being the cause of similar blessings from Allah. This is why Al-Hasan Al-Basri *Allah rest his soul* said, "Should I not show thanks towards the one who placed Allah at my side (and support)?"

Benevolence means to go beyond what Allah *Glorified is He* had obliged you, in the same nature of worship that Allah had commanded. For example, we worship Allah by performing five daily obligatory prayers. A benevolent believer can perform more prayers than obligated. The same principle of benevolence applies to paying the charity alms, fasting, and performing the Pilgrimage. Benevolence, in these cases, involves doing more than what Allah *Glorified is He* had obliged us to do.

Benevolence can also be practiced by refining the quality of the acts of worship, without actually increasing the quantity of these acts. For example,

you can perform the obligatory daily prayers without increasing their number, but working to excel in your piety and reverence during those five prayers, according to the famous tradition of Angel Gabriel. In this tradition, Angel Gabriel *peace be upon him* was sent to teach the companions about Islam by asking questions to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In this tradition, Angel Gabriel *peace be upon him* asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the acts of benevolence (*ihsan*). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, answered: “*Ihsan* (benevolence) is that you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him. You cannot actually see Him, but you should realize that He sees your actions.”⁽¹⁾ Thus, you must be mindful of Allah’s presence during your acts of worship, constantly reminding yourself of His majesty, beauty and perfection *Glorified is He*. If you are not able to reach this stage of servitude and piety, then you should realize and believe that Allah *Glorified is He* sees your every action. This belief will allow you to reach these levels of benevolence because you will be giving the acts of worship their due rights without faults or neglect.

A burglar will not rob a house if he knows that its owner can see him. If humans respect and fear other people when they witness their crimes or laxity, is it then right to commit such crimes knowing that Allah *Glorified is He* watches our every action? This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith: “O My servants! If you believe that I cannot see you, then there is a fault in your faith. If you believe that I can see you, then why did you consider My Sight lesser than the sight of others?”

Some scholars have set definitions for the words *al-‘adl*, *al-ihsan* and *al-munkar*, mentioned in the verse we are studying: ‘Behold, Allah orders justice (*al-‘adl*) and benevolence (*al-‘ihsan*), and generosity towards (your) close people (*‘etaa’ dhil-qurbaa*); and He forbids all that is shameful (*al-fahsha’*) and all that runs counter to reason (*al-munkar*), as well as envy; (and) He exhorts you (repeatedly) so that you might bear (all this) in mind.’ (*an-Nahl*: 90)

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (50) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him and narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (8) in the Book of Faith from the Hadith of ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab may Allah be pleased with him.

They said that *al-'adl* (justice) means that your inward thoughts resemble your outward actions. *Al-Ihsan* (benevolence) means that your inward thoughts transcend your external actions. *Al-munkar* (disavowed actions that run counter to reason) means that your inner thoughts are lower than your outer actions.

They defined '*etaa' dhil-qurbaa* (generosity towards your close people) as giving away what you have to your surrounding circle of people. They said, "The world is made up of connected relationships. If every able person chooses to help the poor and needy people around him, with everyone giving abundantly as Allah *Glorified is He* has given to them, goodness would spread throughout society. We would not find anyone who is penniless and needy. This is because these spheres of goodness will encompass all of society and may even interlock so that several givers complement each other. In that manner, there would not be any poor people in our societies."

The verse has urged people to give those closer to them because distant people who are far from your reach are still within someone else's sphere of giving. Some poor people may be close to several benevolent circles. Thus, they may receive amply from multiple charitable sources. In this manner, life will be perfected as the resources of life are equally distributed to all mankind.

Some scholars have said that the words: 'And generosity towards (your) close people (*'etaa' dhil-qurbaa*)' is concerned with the relatives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in particular. These scholars saw that meaning because the relatives of Prophet Muhammad are forbidden from taking the alms which are permitted for other poor people. Therefore, any poor relatives of Prophet Muhammad's progeny would be at a disadvantage that distinguishes them from other poor people. These scholars saw that it does not befit us to allow the relatives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to fall into need of alms. Even though you are encouraged to aid your relatives, you must not forget that the relatives of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* have a higher claim to your support, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The Prophet has a higher claim on the believers than (they have on) their own selves.' (*al-Ahzab*: 6)

These are all the commands that we can find in this verse. If a society implemented these commands and its individuals adorned themselves with

these attributes, it would develop morally to a sublime extent. Man would leave his rights for retribution and revenge in the favour of forgiveness, pardoning and transcendent benevolence. Blessings will be prevalent in this society and goodness will be made equal for everyone.

A society that implements these qualities is a happy and safe society that is led by love, faith, and excellence. Indeed, it would be worthy of eminence among the earth's nations.

Allah *Glorified is He* also says in this verse: 'And He forbids all that is shameful (*al-fahsha* ') and all that runs counter to reason (*al-munkar*), as well as envy.' (*an-Nahl*: 90) These are the prohibitions, which along with the aforementioned commands uphold an upright Quranic way that guarantees the welfare of society.

The first of these prohibitions is the prohibition of that which is shameful or an abomination (*fahisha*). Anyone who follows the Noble Quranic verses will find that adultery (*zina*) is the only sin that the Quran has called an abomination. Thus, this word can be defined as adultery, or an action that violates Allah's rulings. Why is adultery particularly prohibited in this verse? This is because sins, other than adultery, are connected to the surroundings of the human soul. On the other hand, adultery distorts the human soul itself. It leads to confusions in lineage and tarnishes people's honour. It could lead a man to doubt his wife and children and causes corruption of a grave magnitude in society. This is why the Quran clearly mentioned this sin in another verse, in which Allah says: 'And do not approach adultery, for, behold, it is an abomination and an evil way.' (*al-Isra*': 32) One of the things that the scholars have said regarding abominations is that they are the grave sins which put their perpetrators to shame. They hide these sins from other people and are unable to declare them openly because they know, within themselves, that these sins should not be disclosed to others.

Bad conduct is a sin whose perpetrator commits it daringly and openly, and people reject it. Based on this, we have two stages of sin:

The first is that the perpetrator is afraid society would find out about it, so he keeps it to himself, and this is called *immorality*. The second is that the perpetrator does it openly and society rebukes him for it. This is *bad conduct*.

Injustice is oppression in all of its forms, and it has connections to several things, the gravest of them is what happens in creed when one associates partners with Allah, as He *Glorified is He* says: 'Indeed, association [with him] is great injustice.' (*Luqman*: 13) The meaning of *injustice* here is that you strip the True Lord *Glorified is He* of one of His attributes and set up others as partners with Him when He has created you and provided for you. There is also the wronging of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in that it was never known of him to give a sermon or recite poetry, just as he was never known to lie or possess any other blameworthy qualities. Despite all of this, when the Quran was sent down to him, they said that he was a liar, a magician and insane. What wrong can be greater than this wrong?

Injustice also includes wronging oneself when he fulfils his immediate passions and spurious pleasures, which lead to regret, grief and pain in the long term. Such a person has gravely wronged oneself and brought upon oneself what one cannot bear, let alone man wronging someone else with all kinds of oppression and its various forms.

The verse has classified all the commands and prohibitions which guarantee the welfare of society such that it covers the qualities of noble conduct, and conduct is more general than creedal doctrines, more general than a miracle that is believed in, more general than some part of legal responsibility and more general than something that has no limit, a ruling, or a sin.

His statement: 'He exhorts you.' Exhortation means to remind people of a ruling, as we have already been informed of the ruling so that we can know it. However, there is a chance we may be heedless of it, thus the exhortation and the reminder of it. We need it to be repeated so that we do not become heedless again. Usually, an exhortation is only given regarding something that has value, and as long as the thing has value, then you will only choose it for someone you love. Likewise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* loves His creation. This is why He exhorts them and reminds them to persist so that they can always be on the Straight Path in order to enjoy His blessings in the Hereafter, just as they have enjoyed the blessing of causes and means in this life. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَوْفُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ إِذَا عَاهَدْتُمْ وَلَا تَنْقُضُوا الْأَيْمَانَ بَعْدَ تَوْكِيدِهَا
وَقَدْ جَعَلْتُمُ اللَّهَ عَلَيْكُمْ كَفِيلًا إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

**Fulfil any pledge you make in God's name and do not break oaths
after you have sworn them, for you have made God your surety:
God knows everything you do [91] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 91)**

Fulfil means to deliver what you pledged to do. Pledges are not made on an obligatory matter, but rather on a permissible one only. You are free to meet me tomorrow and I am free to meet you. However, if we agree and we pledge to one another to meet tomorrow at a certain time and a certain place, then the matter has been transformed from the permissible to the obligatory. Each one of us is now required to fulfil his pledge, because each has put his interests on hold and organised his affairs in accordance with this meeting. Thus, it is not right for one of us to fulfil a pledge, while the other backs out since this will cause a lack of equal opportunity. It is known that the interests of the servants in this life are based on pledges being fulfilled.

Some people may regard fulfilling pledges as being required of oneself only or that it is a burden upon oneself and no one else. However, the truth is that it is upon you and others. Just as someone else asks you to fulfil a pledge, he also asks others to fulfil pledges. Therefore, do not look at every matter of legal responsibility in this way. Rather, look at it as being for your benefit.

Whoever regards Allah's Commandments and Rulings as only applying to him will become tired, for just as the True Lord *Glorified is He* has given you commandments for the benefit of mankind, He has given mankind commandments for your benefit. When He forbids you from stealing, for example, beware of thinking that He has restricted your activity with regards to others because He *Glorified is He* has forbade all of mankind from stealing from you. Who is the winner, then? I have restricted your freedom with a ruling, and you are one individual, but I have restricted all of creation for your sake.

Likewise, when the Revealed Law commanded you to lower your gaze from what is inviolable with regards to other people, it commanded other people to lower their gazes for what is inviolable with regards to you.⁽¹⁾

(1) He *Glorified is He* says: 'Tell the believing men to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts. That is purer for them. Indeed, Allah is acquainted with what=

Hence, do not understand legal responsibility to be against you. Rather, it is for you, and in your interest.

Many wealthy people avoid spending out, and they are very restrained in doing so. Amongst them are those who consider it a loss because they do not know the wisdom behind the rich being commanded to help the poor. They do not know that we are insuring their lives for them. Here we see this life constantly being in flux. How many wealthy people become poor and how many powerful people become weak? Therefore, when money is taken from one who is wealthy, we assure him: Do not be scared if circumstances restrict you, or if your wealth becomes poverty. Just as we took from you when you were rich, we will give to you when you are poor. This is how we should look at matters of legal responsibility.

“The covenant of Allah” is the object of one’s pledge to Allah, and the first is to have faith in Him. As long as you believe in Allah, then look at what He has commanded you. Beware of violating one of His commands because inadequacy in any matter of legal responsibility is considered a deficiency in your faith. Belief in Allah means that you testified to what Allah testified for Himself in His statement: ‘Allah witnesses that there is no deity [worthy of worship] except Him.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18) The first to bear witness is Allah *Glorified is He* for Himself, and this is a testimony of The Essence for The Essence. “And the angels” is the testimony of witnessing and “all who are endowed with knowledge” is with proof and evidence.

Therefore, the first pledge between you and Allah is that you believe in Him as a deity that is Wise and fully Capable as well as a Creator and a Nurturer; so listen to what He is demanding of you because if you do not listen and implement, then know that your initial pledge of faith has been violated. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not make disbelievers legally responsible; as there is no pledge between Him and them. He only makes those who believe legally responsible, and you find that every verse that gives a ruling begins with this call of faith: ‘O you who believe!’ (*al-Baqara*: 183).

= they do. And tell the believing women to reduce [some] of their vision and guard their private parts.’ (*an-Nur*: 30-31)

As in His statement: ‘O you who believe! Fasting is ordained for you.’ (*al-Baqara*: 183) O you who believe in Me as a Lord and are pleased with Me as a deity, listen to Me because I am giving you the law of maintenance for your lives. This law will make you happy with Allah in the Hereafter after it has made you happy with causes and means in this life.

Regarding His statement: ‘and do not break oaths after their confirmation.’ *Oath* is used to swear and confirm by saying, “By Allah” and “I swear to Allah,” etc. It is not befitting for you to violate the oaths that you have confirmed. You are required, instead, to fulfil them because if you do, others will fulfil theirs with you. Do not look at the command as only applying to you. Look at it from the other side as well.

Likewise, pledges between mankind are taken from within the pledge of faith to Allah *Glorified is He* because when we make this pledge, we have Allah bear witness to this pledge and we say, “Between me and you is Allah’s pledge,” and we include the True Lord *Glorified is He* between us in order to consolidate what we have pledged. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘While you have made Allah, over you, a witness,’ Allah is a witness, an observer and a guarantor.

Regarding His statement: ‘Indeed, Allah knows what you do.’ Know that Allah is watching over you, and He knows the secrets of consciences and what the hearts conceal. Beware when making a pledge of making it while intending to break it. Beware of making a pledge deceptively, as your Lord *Glorified is He* knows all that you do. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* continues by saying:

وَلَا تَكُونُوا كَالَّتِي نَقَضَتْ غَزْلَهَا مِنْ بَعْدِ قُوَّةٍ أَنْكَا تَتَّخِذُونَ
أَيْمَانَكُمْ دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ أَنْ تَكُونَ أُمَّةٌ هِيَ أَرْبَىٰ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ إِنَّمَا يَبْلُوكُمُ
اللَّهُ بِهِ ۖ وَلَيَبْيِّنَنَّ لَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ مَا كُنتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾

Do not use your oaths to deceive each other – like a woman who unravels the thread she has firmly spun – just because one party may be more numerous than another. God tests you with this, and on the Day of the Resurrection He will make clear to you those things you differed about [92] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 92)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is giving us a clarifying example of those who violate pledges and oaths. The example is the foolish Qurayshi woman

Ritta bint 'Amir. She used to command her slave-girls to spin wool from dawn to noon. Then she would command them to untwist the yarn they had spun from noon until mid-afternoon.⁽¹⁾ The one who reflects on this example will find many lessons.

First of all, what is spinning wool? Spinning is a process that women used to do in ancient times. They would bring a material that could be spun, such as wool or fur, or cotton nowadays, and these things consist of fine hairs that differ in length from one kind to another. They call them fibre and they say, 'this is a short fibre,' and 'this is a long fibre'.

Spinning means that from these hairs we form a long, extended, streamlined thread without any knots in it so that it can be used for fabric afterwards. This process is done by a primitive device called a spindle. Women mix these fine hairs and then twist them using the spindle so that in the end there is a long, streamlined, consistent thread without any knots in it.

The verse here has mentioned women doing this job because it was an exclusive job to women in that era. Women would be in their homes practicing these simple handicrafts that can be used to make furniture for the house, such as mattresses, as well as clothes and other things.

Even now, we see women still doing this feminine job, protecting their honour from the crush of life and the battleground of free mixing. Nowadays, the spindle has developed into a knitting machine or sewing machine, which makes it easier for women to do these jobs. It maintains them in their homes and spreads an atmosphere of co-operation in the home between the mother and her children. Here we have an example of a productive families' project in which the women play a significant part in the advancement of society, as there is no objection to women working as long as the work is noble and it preserves her honour and her sanctity.

The Quran has given us an example of women working in the pre-Islamic Ignorance. This job needs effort and time with regards to spinning, and it

(1) *Mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his (Tafsir) (5/2898) and attributed to Al-Fara'. Al-Qurtubi said: "This was narrated by 'Abdullah ibn Kathir and As-Suddi, and they did not name the woman. Mujahid and Qatada said: "This was an example, not a reference to a specific woman."*

needs even more with untwisting and unravelling. This is a very difficult process. Maybe she commanded the slave-girls to unravel as well as weave, and this is why they called her the foolish woman of Quraysh.

The word strong in His statement: ‘...after it was strong’ indicates the stages that the process of spinning goes through, and how difficult it is, beginning with a piece of wool from a sheep or fur from a camel. Then there is the mixing of the parts of each fibre from these hairs such that a part of each fibre from these hairs is in the middle of the other so that they can be joined together in this mixing. Then the women turn the spindle between their fingers so that in the end we have some centimetres of thread. If we were to compare this primitive process to the manufactured spindles that we have today, it would become clear to us how difficult it was for them.

It is as if the Noble Quran is likening the person who makes a pledge and consolidates it with a firm oath (and then makes Allah a trustee and witness over what he says) to the women who spun this yarn and bore such difficulties. Then she began to untwist what she had accomplished and unravel what she had spun.

Likewise, the word also indicates that every job requires strength, and this strength is in either moving that which is still, or stopping that which is moving. This is why He *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘Take what We have given you with determination.’ (*al-Baqara*: 63) This is because we want to move you towards what is stationary and good, and we want to hold you back from that which is moving and evil.

This is what they call, in physics, *Law of Inertia*. A moving object will keep moving until something forces it to be stationary. Likewise, a stationary object will remain stationary until something propels it.

Many are astonished at how satellites can keep going around in space for several years. What is the fuel that propels these satellites for all these years? The truth is that there is no fuel that propels them. Fuel is only used in the phase of release, until it has gone beyond the range of air and gravity. If the satellite or spaceship stabilises itself beyond the range of air and gravity it keeps going round and moving by itself without any fuel. Thus, the moving object keeps moving and the stationary object remains stationary.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is using this observed example to warn us against breaking pledges and untwisting them because He *Glorified is He* wants to maintain the interests of creation. They are based on mutual contracts and pledges established between them. Whoever violates a pledge or breaks an oath is not to be trusted. There is no confidence in his activity in life. Society turns away from him and isolates him from co-operation that is based on reciprocal confidence between people.

Regarding His statement: '[by] taking your oaths as [means of] deceit between you' (*an-Nahl*: 92), the word deceit means that you insert something into the thing that is of the same kind but of lesser quality in order to cheat and deceive, such as inserting some 18-karat gold into a standard measure of 24-karat gold, or putting kernels that have been exposed to the sun, for example, amongst almonds to make it look like they are also almonds. It is as if oaths are based on sincerity and fulfilment, but the one making the oath intends to cheat and deceive. He makes a vow, but he intends to deceive with it '...because one community is more plentiful [in number or wealth] than another community.'⁽¹⁾ This is the rationale behind using oaths to deceive one another: a deceptive, false oath. This is because the one who sells kernels that have been exposed to the sun as if they were almonds has made an increase (i.e., he has taken more than his right and depreciated the rights of others). The rationale behind deceptive oaths is greed and the demand for more at the expense of others.

The increase could also come about in another way. For example, you make a pledge to a person to do something and you carry out your pledge, oaths, and contracts for him. Then you come across someone who is more powerful than the first person is, whether it is in terms of strength, or authority, but you thus break the former pledge because the latter is more profitable.

In situations like this, man must be on his guard; who knows? Maybe this person will do to you what you did to him, and you will be meted out with

(1) *Mujahid said regarding the occasion why this verse was revealed: "It was sent down regarding the Arabs who had a tribe amongst them that made an oath with another. Then a more numerous and powerful tribe approached one of these two tribes and it betrayed the oath it had made to the first in favour of this greater tribe. [Tafsir Al-Qurtubi] 5/2898]*

that which you meted out to others. Beware, for if you dare to do something to Allah's creation, Allah may encourage someone to make you taste from the same medicine. If you run a trade or have a profession, beware of cheating people. Remember that you have interests that lie with them. In their hands, you have trades and professions, and if you dare to do something to them, Allah will encourage them against you because He *Glorified is He* says: 'I am the All-Sustaining'; You sleep whereas I do not sleep. This is a matter to which we must pay close attention.

Whoever dares do something to people, Allah encourages people against him, and whoever is sincere in his work and proficient, Allah places it in the hearts of creation to tend to his needs. His statement: 'Allah only tries you thereby' means that Allah tests you with this pledge, as He *Glorified is He* knows what you think when you make a pledge and whether are you planning to fulfil or break it?

Imagine that you intend to fulfil the pledge but then something happens between you and him which prevents you from doing it. Allah *Glorified is He* knows the true realities of matters and nothing is hidden from Him.

Therefore, the test here does not mean a disaster or affliction. Rather, it is merely a test, but a disaster and affliction for those who fail the test. The consideration here is of the consequences. 'And He will surely make clear to you on the Day of Resurrection that over which you used to differ.' On the Day of Resurrection, adversaries will come together and the fact will be made plain, and the judgment will come regarding what we differed over in this life. Imagine that someone was blind about justice in this life in certain things. We say to him, "You were blinded regarding justice here, but you will not be blinded regarding the justice of the heavens. Wait for the day in which we will be gathered and everything will be sorted."⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his (Sahih) (1713) in the Book of Judicial Decisions (4) from the Hadith of Umm Salama who narrated Allah's Messenger peace and blessings be upon him as saying: "You bring to me, for (judgment) your disputes, some of you perhaps being more eloquent in their plea than others, so I give judgment on their behalf according to what I hear from them. If I judged anything for him which is from the right of his brother, he should not accept it, for I would have sliced off a portion of the Fire for him."

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَجَعَلَكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَلَكِنْ يُضِلُّ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَيَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَلَسْتَ مِنْ عَمَّا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

**If God so willed, He would have made you all one people,
but He leaves to stray whoever He will and guides whoever
He will. You will be questioned about your deeds [93]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 93)**

If Allah had willed, He would have made the entire world one single community that is upon truth, not upon misguidance, one single community upon faith and guidance, just as He made all the other creation one single community in submission to what Allah wants from them. This is because the entire universe was created even before the creation of man. Out of His Wisdom, Allah *the Almighty* subjugated all the creatures to mankind, to the extent that we find no creature whatsoever objecting to that act of subjugation; the inanimate objects did not object, nor did plants nor did animals.

All of these beings go along unimpaired just as Allah has willed them to. It is amazing that man is the one and only creation in the universe that is defective, and this is because man has freedom of choice: to do or not to do.

This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Do you not see that to Allah prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the moving creatures and many of the people? But upon many the punishment has been justified.’ (*al-Hajj*: 18)

This is how all these creations prostrate to Allah without exception, except man. He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and many of the people? But upon many the punishment has been justified.’ Why is there this difference with mankind? It is because mankind has the ability to choose. Each one of them is capable of doing and not doing. Is this matter outside of Allah’s will or is this what Allah wants?

They have said that Allah applies His absolute power in creating subjugated things, such that nothing acts out of the purpose for which it was created. It would have been possible for man to be in this form of subjugation, but in this state he does not add something new to the universe. Are angels not in a state

of subjugation? Subjugation affirms Allah's power, as nothing exists from His power and His will. However, the ability to choose affirms one's love for Allah *Glorified is He*. This is a difference that we must contemplate.

For example, if you had two servants, one of them called Sa'eed and the other Mas'ud, and you take the former and tie him to you with a rope and at the same time you let Mas'ud go about freely; when you command both of them—and both of them obey and comply—whose obedience is more beloved to you: obedience due to compulsion and subjugation or obedience out of choice?

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* created man and ennobled him by giving him the ability to choose whether to obey or disobey. Whenever he is voluntarily obedient while being capable of disobedience, this affirms his love for his Lord *Glorified is He*.

It is inescapable that conditions for free will must be fulfilled. The first of them is the intellect, as it is the tool that is used to make choices. Likewise, insane people are not regarded as legally responsible. If the intellect is present and functioning properly, then there must be maturity, and this is achieved when man becomes capable of reproduction and comes to have a distinct identity. This is a feature of maturity because one is deficient in formation prior to it, nor is one qualified for legal responsibility. If one has a mature intellect, then he must have the ability to choose. If he is forced to do something, he will not ask about it. If one of these three conditions is missing, then the ability to choose has no meaning, and with this the True Lord *Glorified is He* guarantees the wellbeing of man with regards to the ability to choose.

Even though the True Lord *Glorified is He* has honoured man with the ability to choose, it is from His mercy towards him that He has placed within him some organs that are forced and subjugated and man has no say regarding them.

If we contemplated these organs, we would find that they are essential, and the life of man is based on them. It is from Allah's mercy towards us that He has made these organs function and carry out their tasks without us feeling anything.

The heart, for example, works regularly whilst we are awake and asleep, without us feeling it. The same goes for breathing, the kidneys, the liver, the intestines and other organs that function in a state of subjugation to His power, just like inanimate objects, plants, and animals.

It is from Allah's benevolence towards His creation that He made these organs to be subjugated because, by Allah, if you had to choose with regards to the function of these organs, how would you breathe, for example, while sleeping?

Therefore, it is from Allah's mercy that He has made you with the ability to choose with regards to actions that are presented to you. This why they say, "Man is the father of options." Animals, for example, which are the closest species to man, do not have these options, and they are not aware of them. If you harm an animal, it will harm you back. It does not have any other option. However, if you harm a human being, then it is possible that he could respond similarly, or do more than what you have done, or less. Or, he could pardon and forgive. It is the intellect that prefers one of these options.

Therefore, had the True Lord *Glorified is He* willed to make mankind one single community, He would have done so, as He *Glorified is He* says: 'Had Allah willed, He would have guided the people, all of them.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 31) But He *Glorified is He* did not will that, and the proof is His statement: "However, He leads astray him whom He wills and He guides aright whom He wills.' (*an-Nahl*: 93) This verse is used by those who like to quarrel and bicker, and those who are shortsighted with regards to understanding Allah's Book. They say: "As Allah is the One Who leads people astray, then why does He punish them?" We are amazed at this understanding of Allah's Book, and we say to these people: 'Why do you look at leading astray and pay no attention to guidance? How come you do not say, "As Allah is the One Who has guidance in His hand, and He is the One Who guides, then why does He enter us into Paradise?" Therefore, this is something that is said by immoderate people because the meaning of the previous verse is that He judges this on the basis of one's actions of misguidance and one's actions of guidance similar to what happens in an exam committee. We do not say that the committee passed so-and-so and they failed so-and-so. This is not their job. Rather, their job is to look at the answer sheets and based on them, they decide whether someone has passed or failed.

Likewise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not make a servant go astray. Rather, He judges from his actions that they are actions of misguidance. The meaning, therefore, is that He judges to be astray whomever He wills and He

judges to be guided whomever He wills. No one can turn this matter into the opposite meaning, and the proof is what He *Glorified is He* says afterwards: "...and you will surely be asked about all that you ever did!" (*an-Nahl*: 93)

The servant is only asked about his actions. The meaning of questioning here is the freedom of choice with regards to action. How can you be asked about something that you have no say in? Therefore, let us understand this verse according to what the True Lord *Glorified is He* intends by it.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَنْخَذُوا أَيَّمَنَكُم دَخَلًا بَيْنَكُمْ فَتَزِلَّ قَدَمٌ بَعْدَ ثُبُوتِهَا وَتَذُوقُوا
الْسُّوءَ بِمَا صَدَدْتُمْ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلَكُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٩٤﴾

Do not use your oaths to deceive each other lest any foot should slip after being firmly placed and lest you should taste the penalty for having hindered others from the path of God, and suffer terrible torment [94] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 94)

The word *deceit* here clarifies the consequence of deceiving, which is: '...lest a foot slip after it was [once] firm.' The verse contains a prohibition against taking oaths with the purpose of cheating, deceiving and fraud because the consequence of this action will be corruption that will destroy society from its foundations. Mutual trust, which is the basis of co-operation and life's activity, will be lost between people. The one who makes pledges and violates them, and make oaths and breaks them will become well known for breaking pledges and violating contracts.

Because of this, people will take back their trust in him, and no one will dare do a transaction with him. He will become despised by people, after he had been regarded as trustworthy and upright and held in high esteem. This is the meaning of His statement: '...lest a foot slip after it was [once] firm.' With this, his right in society is lost. He is punished for his evil actions and he reaps the fruits of the corruption that he sowed in society. When this evil behaviour spreads, life's activity becomes idle, and confidence and trust are lost.

Therefore, this is a slip and fall after firmness and strength, after being trustworthy and after being someone whose pledges and contracts were accepted

by people. They loved to co-operate with him because of his word of honour and his sincerity in promises, before he regressed and degenerated and lost this rank.

This is why we find the people of finance and commerce saying, “so-and-so’s position in the market has been shaken,” i.e. his foot has slipped because he violated pledges and broke oaths and other things that do not befit someone worthy of trust in the market. Someone like this ends up declaring their bankruptcy in the world of co-operation with people.

As for being true to one’s pledge, contracts, and oaths, this makes your feet firm and unshakeable in the activities of life. You see the wealth of all people as His wealth, and you find those who own wealth approaching you and placing their wealth in your hands because of the good reputation you enjoy and your integrity and trustworthiness in co-operation.

When Islamic legislation legalized partnerships for us, it took into consideration these kinds of people who only have a good reputation, trustworthiness, integrity, and fidelity. This is their capital. If a partner goes into the agreement with the capital that he has, then this is a partner who has a word of honour and noble conduct, and he has a reputation amongst people and a distinguished past with regards to co-operation. This is what they call ‘the company of the elite’, and this distinguished person in the world of finance and trade did not get this esteem except by earning the respect and trust of the people, and because of the virtues and noble characteristics that he already had.

Likewise, we might see this trust, not in some individual, but in some brand or trademark. We see it being bought and sold, and it has a high value in the market because of the respect and appreciation of the people that it has earned. This is also the result of sincerity, commitment, and trustworthiness.

His statement: ‘...and you would taste evil [in this world] for what [people] you diverted from the way of Allah.’ *Evil* is the punishment this person is afflicted with due to being despised and held in contempt amongst people in this life, and the depression of his state due to loss of trust.

His statement: ‘...for what [people] you diverted from the way of Allah.’ The discussion here is about those who violate pledges and oaths and do not fulfil them, so does this entail turning away from Allah’s way? First of all, the meaning of Allah’s way is everything that makes the activity of life orderly

and makes it continue in honour, trustworthiness, and sincerity. Based on this, the one who violates pledges and does not hold true to contracts gives society a bad example that makes the possessors of wealth hold on to their wealth, and the people of goodness withdraw. If you lent someone money and they did not pay you back, I do not think you would lend to someone else. Therefore, there is no doubt that this is turning away from Allah's way, and making people abstain from doing goodness. His statement: '...and you would have [in the Hereafter] a great punishment.' In addition to the loss that afflicts them in this life, after their foot has slipped, and all other kinds of punishments that will befall them in this life, there is still the tremendous suffering that awaits them in the Hereafter.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَشْتَرُوا بِعَهْدِ اللَّهِ ثَمَنًا قَلِيلًا إِنَّمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

**Do not sell for a small price any pledge made in God's name:
what God has [to give] is better for you, if you only knew [95]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 95)**

In this verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is forbidding us and warning us. Beware of making Allah's covenant, which you have affirmed for people, and you have made Allah a guarantor over it, as merely by making the pledge, its execution becomes obligatory upon you.

Or, it is Allah's covenant (i.e. His legislation) – that you have pledged yourself to act according to and preserve, which is belief in Allah and the veracity of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in conveying from Allah and to the *ummah* the rulings that he has brought. Beware of deeming something else to be more valuable because if you violate your pledge with Allah for some of the temporary pleasures of this life, then you have made this thing to be more valuable than your pledge with Allah, because the price, regardless of how much, will be small.

Then the justification for this comes in His statement: 'Indeed, what is with Allah is best for you.' What is best for you, in truth, is not the pleasures of this life, regardless of how many they are. Rather, it is that which is with Allah and

He made this clear in His statement: ‘...all that is with you is bound to come to an end, whereas that which is with Allah is everlasting.’ (*an-Nahl*: 96)

What makes man break his pledge? It is seeing some superficial benefit beyond what he has pledged himself to, and this takes him away from what he pledged himself to in favour of this superficiality. However, if he used his intellect and reflected on the matter, he would know that what he is striving for is very low in value, and a small, temporary profit when compared with what has been stored away for him if he holds true to the pledge. This is because whatever share he has taken from this life must come to an end.

The intellect says that if something is small and everlasting, it is better than something that is great but does not last, so what do you think about something that is small and ceasing, as opposed to something that is great and unceasing?

Here is an example: if I were to give you enough fruits to remain with you for a week or a month, and you ate them all in one day, you would have only enjoyed them one time and you would miss out on numerous meals that you would have had if you had eaten the fruits over a longer period of time. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* alerts you to the fact that what is with Allah is truly the best for you, and He makes your scales of faith to be exact. It is foolish to sell that which is great and everlasting for the small and ceasing: ‘...if only you could know.’

The verse contains precision in calculating and precision in comparing, as well as precision in solving economic equations. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

مَا عِنْدَكُمْ يَنْفَدُ وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَاقٍ وَلَنَجْزِيَنَ الَّذِينَ
صَبَرُوا أَجْرَهُمْ بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

**What you have runs out but what God has endures,
and We shall certainly reward those who remain
steadfast according to the best of their actions [96]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 96)**

The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear that man's share in this life is a temporary contingent. Either you will leave it when you die or it will leave

you via trials that are made to happen to you. As for that which is with Allah, it is everlasting and has no end. ‘And We will surely give those who were patient their reward.’ The word “patient” indicates that man will be exposed to agitations within the soul that will result in him hesitating between holding true to the pledge and violating it, when he sees the shining glimmer of wealth and the passion of the soul are provoked within him. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says to him: ‘Be patient. Be patient. Don not be hasty. Compare the matter calmly, bear every psychological difficulty, and overcome the passions of the soul in order to arrive at a praiseworthy result.’

The student who works hard, toils and bears the difficulties of studying and learning is patient with regards to immediate passions because he desires something that is longer and deferred. Behind the studying and learning, there is a greater objective and a loftier goal. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘And We will surely give those who were patient’ with the difficulties of holding true to pledges. ‘Their reward according to the best of what they used to do.’ A reward that is an increase according to the best reward there is because when man does something that is obligatory or recommended he earns a reward. As for the merely permissible, the presumption is that there is no reward, but Allah’s bounty also rewards him for it.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

مَنْ عَمِلَ صَالِحًا مِّن ذَكَرٍ أَوْ أُنْثَىٰ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَنُحْيِيَنَّهُ حَيٰوةً
طَيِّبَةً وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَجْرَهُم بِأَحْسَنِ مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٧﴾

**To whoever, male or female, does good deeds and
has faith, We shall give a good life and reward
them according to the best of their actions[97]**

(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 97)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is giving us a general issue of equality between men and women, as pledges were customary between men and women, and it is not for women to participate in giving pledges, such that even they partook in a pledge with the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* on the day of the

oath of allegiance at 'Aqaba, he made one of the Companions receive the oaths of the women on his behalf.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, women are far from this battleground because this is from the particular customs of men. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to say to us: 'We do not prevent the female from having righteous actions.'

Do not assume that the matter is applied to men and not women, as righteous actions are accepted from both the male and the female in equal measure, as long as the condition of faith is fulfilled. This is why He *Glorified is He* says: '...while he is a believer.' This is what causes the action to have some benefit and to be accepted by Allah. Therefore, faith is a condition for the acceptance of righteous actions. Whenever the condition of faith is fulfilled, the male and the female are equal with regards to reward and recompense.

He *Glorified is He* says: 'We will surely cause him to live a good life.' This is the natural consequence of righteous actions through which the person who does them seeks Allah's countenance and the abode of the Hereafter. Allah gathers two shares of reward for him: a share in this life by giving him a good, happy life⁽²⁾ and a share in the Hereafter. 'We will surely give them their reward [in the Hereafter] according to the best of what they used to do.'

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

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- (1) *Ibn Hisham mentioned in (As-Sira) (2/466) that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him would not shake hands with women. He would only take the oath of allegiance from them and when they had affirmed it, he would say: "You are free to go for you have pledged your allegiance."*
 - (2) *In his (Tafsir), Al-Qurtubi relates five opinions regarding the interpretation of a 'good life':*
 - 1) *Lawful provision. This is the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, Sa'id ibn Jubayr and 'Ata'*
 - 2) *Contentment. This is the opinion of Al-Hasan Al-Basri and 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb.*
 - 3) *Enabling success to carry out acts of obedience, as it leads to pleasing Allah. The meaning of this was stated by Ad-Dahak.*
 - 4) *Paradise: this is the opinion of Mujahid, Qatada and Ibn Zayd. Al-Hasan Al-Basri said: 'Life is not good for anyone except in paradise.'*
 - 5) *The sweetness of obedience: this is the opinion of Abu Bakr Al-Waraq.*



فَإِذَا قَرَأْتَ الْقُرْآنَ فَاسْتَعِذْ بِاللَّهِ مِنَ الشَّيْطَانِ الرَّجِيمِ

**[Prophet], when you recite the Quran, seek God's
protection from the outcast, Satan [98]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 98)**

Seek refuge means to seek recourse and cling to Allah from something that you fear, and you do not seek recourse and you do not cling, nor do you seek protection or help unless you sense within yourself that you are weak with regards to struggling against your enemy. If your enemy is Satan (Iblis) because of the power and authority that Allah has given him, and the means that he has to get through to the human soul, then you have no strength and no power in your struggle against him unless you seek recourse in Allah, the Powerful Who created you and created this Satan. He alone is the Fully Capable when it comes to protecting you from him; as Satan is in battle with man until the Day of Resurrection. Satan swore an oath to the True Lord *Glorified is He* and He said: "[Iblis] said, "By your might, I will surely mislead them all. Except, among them, Your chosen servants.'" (*Sad*: 82-83)

All you have to do is throw yourself at the mercy of your Lord *Glorified is He* and cling to Him, as He is the Powerful and the fully Capable when it comes to defending you from that which you cannot defend yourself. Do not struggle against him with your own power because you have no ability regarding him. Do not let him be alone with you because if he is alone with you, he will take you away from Allah and he will have predominance. This is why we always say: 'there is no power and no strength except in Allah'; no power: there is no departure from disobedience. No strength means that there is no ability to obey except with Allah.

We can see a young boy walking down the street, for example, and he may come across someone of a similar age who transgresses against him. However, if he is in the company of his father, no one dares do anything to him. So, what do you think about him being in the company of his Lord *Glorified is He* and he throws himself into the protection of Allah *Glorified is He*? When addressing seeking refuge in Allah, we remember a principle of faith that was taught to

us by the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in his Noble Hadith: "If someone seeks refuge in Allah, give him refuge."⁽¹⁾

Thus, it is necessary for the believer to give refuge to whoever seeks refuge in Allah, even if it is regarding the things most beloved to him. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is giving us an example in this when He married a girl ⁽²⁾ who was very attractive and beautiful, so much so that his wives were jealous of her and they started plotting against her and trying to get rid of her so that she would not have precedence over them in the Prophet's heart, but how could they do this? They tried to take advantage of the fact that this girl was still young and inexperienced. She had sound intentions and a pure conscience. She did not have any of the experiences of life from which she would have learned about wickedness and plotting. Furthermore, she was still in the euphoria of her delight at becoming a mother of the believers. She was trying her hardest to please the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Prophet's wives took full advantage of this. One of them said to her: "When you are with the Messenger of Allah say to him: 'I seek refuge in Allah from you' because he loves this statement." The girl took this statement because of her sound intentions, her love of Allah's Messenger, and her eagerness to please him. She said to him: "I seek refuge in Allah from you" and she did not know the meaning of this expression, so he said to her: "You have sought refuge in a refuge. Return to your family."⁽³⁾ In other words, as long as you have sought refuge in Allah, then I accept this seeking of refuge because you have sought refuge in One Who makes it obligatory for us to leave you for His sake. Then the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* divorced her in compliance with this seeking of refuge.

(1) *Related by Ahmad in his (Musnad) (1/250), Abu Dawud in His (Sunnan) (5108), and An-Nasa'i in his (Sunnan) (5/82) from the Hadith of Ibn 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with them both that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said: "If someone seeks refuge in Allah give him refuge, and if someone asks you by Allah's countenance give to him."*

(2) *She is the daughter of Al-Jawn. Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani said in (Al-Fath) (9/357): "The truth is that her name is Umayma bint An-Nu'man ibn Sharahil Al-Kindiyyah."*

(3) *Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) (5254-5257) and Ibn Majah in his (Sunnan) (2050) from the Hadith of 'A'isha Allah be pleased with her*

Therefore, whoever seeks refuge in Allah must be given refuge by the believers. The believers must be Allah's soldiers for whoever seeks Allah's protection, and must grant them asylum until they are safe.

If you want to read the Quran, then seek refuge in Allah from Satan, the accursed because the Quran is Allah's speech. If we were to believe that Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who is speaking, then we would know that reading the Quran is different from any other reading. When reading the Quran you must be engaged in the following things: The first: call to mind the sanctity of the One Who sent it down *Glorified is He* Whom you believe in and Whose speech you have accepted. The second: call to mind the veracity of the Messenger in conveying the Quran that was sent down to him. The third: call to mind the greatness of the Noble Quran because of its various aspects of inimitability and the rulings and good manners that it contains.

Therefore, you have three things that you should prepare when reading Allah's speech in His Noble Quran and each one of them is a righteous action that Satan will not leave you to carry out without interfering, whispering to you, and attempting to turn you away from what you are engaged in. At the same time, you will not be able to prevent him unless you seek Allah's help against him, and seek refuge in Allah from him. Based on this, we must seek refuge in Allah from Satan before reading the Quran.

Despite that, there is no objection to understanding the meaning of seeking refuge to be after reading the Quran, and the purport would be: if you have read the Quran, seek refuge in Allah (i.e. after reading). This is because after reading Allah's Book, you leave it with a provision of faith and sublime manifestations, and you have come across the good manners and rulings that are required of you. Thus, you must seek refuge in Allah from Satan so that he does not ruin this provision and these manifestations, or turn you away from implementing these morals and rulings.

'Satan, the expelled [from His mercy],' the one who is damned and banished from Allah's mercy is not a new creation that we need to try out in order to know his nature and how to deal with him. Rather, he has a long history of enmity with us, beginning with our father Adam *peace be upon him*.

Allah warned Adam *peace be upon him* about him when He says: 'O Adam! Verily, this is a foe unto you and your wife.' (*Ta Ha*: 117) And before he was cursed, damned and banished from Allah's mercy, he threatened us by saying: 'I shall most certainly cause his descendants – all but a few – to obey me blindly!' (*al-Isra'*: 62)

Therefore, there is a long history of enmity between us and him that began with the creation of man and will continue until the Hour is established.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّهُ لَيْسَ لَهُ سُلْطَانٌ عَلَى الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَلَى رَبِّهِمْ يَتَوَكَّلُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

**He has no power over those who believe and trust
in their Lord [99] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 99)**

Due to some wisdom that the Creator *Glorified is He* intended, He gave Satan some power and authority. Either authority can be the power of proof which actually convinces you and you are pleased with it and convinced of it, or it can be the authority of compulsion and domination which forces you and makes you do something under compulsion, without you being convinced.

Therefore, the implementation of what is sought has two powers: the power of proof which illuminates and clarifies the marks of truth for you, and the power of compulsion which forces you to implement what is sought without you being convinced, even if you do not see it.

The truth is that Satan does not possess either of these powers. This is clear in the True Lord's statement on the tongue of Satan on the Day of Resurrection: "And Satan will say when the matter has been concluded: 'Indeed, Allah had promised you the promise of truth. And I promised you, but I betrayed you. But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; but blame yourselves. I cannot be called to your aid, nor can you be called to my aid. Indeed, I deny your association of me [with Allah] before. Indeed, for the wrongdoers is a painful punishment.' (*Ibrahim*: 22)

This is a dialogue that takes place on the Day of Resurrection after the matter has come to an end and the truth has been revealed, and the time for openness and confrontation has come. Satan will say to his followers, disavowing

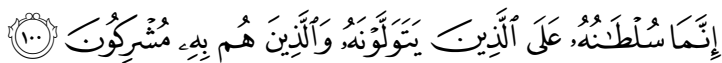
any responsibility: ‘I had no power at all over you.’ In other words, I had no power of proof with which to convince you to do something out of pleasure, nor did I have the power of compulsion with which to force you to do something you were reluctant to do. I merely indicated and whispered and you came to me obediently.

‘I cannot be called to your aid, nor can you be called to my aid.’ We are in an equal state of failure. I cannot help you and you cannot help me. This is because a cry is from someone who is in a critical situation or adversity and they are not able to get themselves out of it. Thus, they cry in a loud voice in the hope that someone will come and rescue them. Therefore, the meaning is that I cannot remove the reason for your cries and you cannot remove the reason for my cries.

Likewise, in another dialogue that took place between the people of falsehood who supported one another in this life, and this is the confrontation on the Day of Resurrection: ‘And stop them; indeed, they are to be questioned. [They will be asked],’ “What is [wrong] with you? Why do you not help each other?” But they, that Day, are in surrender. And they will approach one another blaming each other. They will say, “Indeed, you used to come at us from the right. The oppressors will say, “Rather, you [yourselves] were not believers, And we had over you no authority, but you were a transgressing people.”’ (*as-Saffat*: 24-30) The meaning of the phrase: “from the right” is that man carries out his action with both his hands, but the right hand is the support, so he comes to him from the right, i.e. from the direction of the active hand.

So, who did Satan have power over, along with this dominance and compulsion? The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear that Satan has no mastery over those who believe in Him as their Lord, and who seek refuge in Him and hold fast to Him. As long as you believe in Him, then you are in His Company and under His protection, and Satan, who is a creation of Allah, cannot have dominance over you.

Therefore, the fortress that protects us from Satan’s scheming is faith in Allah and putting one’s trust in Him. Who, then, does Satan have dominance over? The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear that it is the opposite side, as He says:



**His power is only over those who ally themselves with him
and those who, because of him, join partners with God [100]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 100)**

The meaning of ‘who take him as an ally’ is that they take him as a guardian and they obey his command. They submit to his whisperings and they follow his footsteps. ‘Those who take him as an ally and those who through him associate others with Allah,’ or the meaning is they associate partners with Allah because Satan has commands and prohibitions and they obey him therein which is the essence of worship. It is as if they worshiped him instead of Allah by obeying him in what he commanded and prohibited. Allah *Glorified is He* has called Satan’s method of misguidance and enticement ‘whispering’, and whispering is actually the sound of jewellery when women move their hands; a gentle sound that has attraction and seduction which stirs up the desires of the soul. Likewise, Satan gets through to you by way of enticement and embellishment. Whenever he has stirred up the desires of your soul and it has talked you into disobedience, he leaves you with it because at this point his task is finished.

However, does the soul only commit disobedience due to the whispering of Satan? No, because the soul that incites to evil can commit disobedience by itself without whisperings from Satan, who may whisper, incite and encourage an act of disobedience for it.

How, therefore, does one distinguish between these two acts of disobedience? When the soul desires some act of disobedience, or a passion that it sees, it persists in pursuing it until fulfilled. If you struggle against your soul and try to turn away from this passion, it urges you towards it and demands that you give in to it.

However, when Satan whispers some passion to you and finds that you have some resistance, he turns your attention towards something else because he wants you to be disobedient in any way, shape or form.

An example of this is what we see with bribery, and we seek refuge in Allah because if you refuse to be bribed by money, he embellishes bribery by way of gifts for you. If you refuse to be bribed by gifts, he embellishes the

idea of being bribed by having some interest taken care of. This is how this accursed creature remains behind you until he finds one of your weak spots. Therefore, he is not like the soul which desires one passion. Rather, he wants to attack you with whatever means are available.

In order to prevent Satan from getting through to us and to be on our guard against him, we must know that Satan has a great deal of knowledge with which he reached the ranks of the angels. Indeed, they called him ‘the peacock of the angels,’ and it is possible to know something of Satan’s knowledge by looking at the subtlety of his oath, when He swore to the True Lord *Glorified is He* that he would entice the children of Adam into grievous error by saying: ‘[Iblis] said, “By your might, I will surely mislead them all. Except, among them, your chosen servants.”’ (*Sad*: 82-83)

This is how Satan knew how to swear an appropriate oath. He did not say, “...by my power” or “...by my proof I will beguile the creation into grievous error.” Rather, he knew that Allah *Glorified is He* has the attribute of might, and He is Almighty and never defeated. This is why He gave His creation the freedom to believe in Him. He said: ‘Let, then, him who wills, believe in it, and let him who wills, reject it.’ (*al-Kahf*: 29)

The meaning is thus, by Your might over Your creation, whoever wants to believe, believes, and whoever wants to disbelieve, disbelieves. I will use this as a means to beguile humanity into grievous error, but I will not dare approach those whom You have selected and chosen. I will not interfere with those who are truly Your servants. I have no say regarding them, and I have no power over them.

Likewise, we must know that Satan is exact in his planning. This is one of his means of getting through to people, and his deceit, which calls on us to be on our guard against this accursed creature. Satan has no need to go to taverns, for example. The people there have spared him the effort and trouble of having to whisper to them. These people are his followers and loved ones, and they relieve him through their disobedience of Allah. However, he needs to go to the mosques to ruin whatever the people of obedience are doing.

This issue was clarified and understood by the revered Imam Abu Hanifa An-Nu‘man, who was well-known for his intelligence, and he was fully aware of

Satan's deceit and means of getting through to people, all of which made him very capable in giving legal verdicts. Someone came and presented this issue to him: He said: "O Imam, I had some money that I buried in some place, and I put a sign over it. Then a torrential stream came and wiped out the sign, so I have not been able to find it. What should I do?" Abu Hanifa smiled and said: "My dear son, this has nothing to do with knowledge." In which chapter of jurisprudence will Abu Hanifa find this issue? "However, I will give you something clever to do." And, indeed, the Imam's genius came up with a clever idea that showed his level of knowledge and understanding. He said to him: "Get up in the night, perform your ablutions, stand before your Lord and do the night prayer (*tahajjud*). In the morning tell me what happened."

At the dawn prayer, the man met him with a smile on his face, and he said: "I found the money." He said: "How?" The man said: "While I was standing before my Lord in prayer, I remembered the place and I went there and I found my money." The Imam laughed and said: "By Allah, I knew that Satan would not let you spend your night with your Lord."

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذَا بَدَّلْنَا آيَةً مَكَانَ آيَةٍ وَاللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا
يُنزِّلُ قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ مُفْتَرٍ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

When We substitute one revelation for another – and God knows best what He reveals – they say, ‘You are just making it up,’ but most of them have no knowledge [101]

(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 101)

Substitute: to take away a verse and remove it and I put another verse in its place.

One meaning of the word ‘verse’ is the one in the Noble Quran, which we call the bearers of rulings. If another verse is something amazing, then what aspect of wonder is there in the verses of the Quran? The aspect of wonder in the verses of the Quran is that you find these verses amongst an unlettered nation. It was sent down to an unlettered prophet amongst nomadic Bedouins

who were good at nothing but eloquence of speech. Then you find these verses bearing laws, rulings, and good manners that intimidated the two most powerful, civilizations at the time: Persian in the East and Roman in the West. You see them looking attentively at Islam, and they desire the rulings that can save them. Is this not amazing?

This is the final kind of verse, which is the verses of the Noble Book and which we call the bearers of rulings. Do they change, like the others kinds of verses? We say: the verses of the Book do not change because Allah's rulings are required of whoever was contemporary to Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* just as the rulings are required of whoever is alive when the Hour is established.

Islam was preceded by Judaism and Christianity, and we have the command of Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to change the direction of prayer from Jerusalem to the honoured *Ka'ba*. The Jews⁽¹⁾ objected to this and said: "What is with Muhammad? He does not stick to anything. He commands one thing today and tomorrow he will command the opposite. If the correct House is the *Ka'ba*, then their prayer towards Jerusalem is invalid. If Jerusalem is the correct one, then their prayer towards the *Ka'ba* is invalid." This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: 'And when We substitute a verse in place of a verse – and Allah is most knowing of what He sends down – they say, "You, [O Muhammad], are but an inventor [of lies]."'

The purport of the True Lord's statement: '...substitute a verse in place of a verse' is that We brought a verse that showed a ruling that contravenes what came in the Torah, for indeed facing the *Ka'ba* in the Quran replaced facing Jerusalem in the Torah.

His statement: '...and Allah is most knowing of what He sends down.' Every verse is sent down according to its context: the nation, the environment, the place and the time.

(1) *Related by Al-Bayhaqi in (Dala'il An-Nubuwwa) (2/574), in a chain of transmission that is discontinued at the level of a Companion (mursal) from the Hadith of Az-Zuhri that the direction of prayer was changed towards the Sacred Mosque in Rajab, sixteen months after the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him had left Mecca. The Jews started saying: 'The man misses his hometown, and his father's house. What is with these people? They abandon their direction for prayer and then pray in another direction.'*

‘You, [O Muhammad], are but an inventor [of lies].’ They accused Allah’s Messenger of deliberately lying, and that this change was from him, not revelation from Allah *Glorified is He* because Allah’s rulings do not contradict one another. We say: yes, Allah’s rulings do not contradict one another within the same religion. However, if religions differ, then there is no objection if rulings differ.

Therefore, the verses of the Noble Quran do not change, but abrogation does take place, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: ‘We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it.’ (*al-Baqara*: 106)

Here are a few examples of abrogation in the Noble Quran: When the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Remain, then, conscious of Allah as best you can.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16)

He made ability the standard of action. When the Legislator *Glorified is He* saw that ability was insufficient, He mitigated the ruling for us, such that He did not make us legally responsible for that which is beyond our capacity, like [the exemption] from fasting for the sick or the traveller, for example. He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Allah does not burden any human being beyond its ability.’ (*al-Baqara*: 286)

And He says: ‘Allah does not burden any human being with more than He has given him.’ (*at-Talaq*: 7)

After that, it is not for us to distort the verses and say, “Indeed, the soul can no longer bear and endure such-and-such ruling.” The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the One Who knows what the soul can bear, and He charges it according to its capacity. If He charges it, then He knows what it can bear. The evidence is that when there is difficulty, He automatically lessens the load for you, as He *Glorified is He* said: ‘Now, Allah has lightened [the hardship] for you, and He knows that among you is weakness.’ (*al-Anfal*: 66)

Because, in the beginning of Islam, when the courage of the Muslims and their strength was strong, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘If there be twenty of you who are patient in adversity, they might overcome two hundred.’ (*al-Anfal*: 65) Meaning a proportion of one to ten, and when He *Glorified is He* saw that there was weakness within them, He says: ‘Now, Allah has lightened [the hardship] for

you, and He knows that among you is weakness. So if there are from you one hundred [who are] steadfast, they will overcome two hundred,' (*al-Anfal*: 66), i.e., a proportion of one to two, as Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who knows the truth of our capacity. He charges us according to what we are capable of, and He lessens the load for us when there is a need. Thus, it is not correct for us to involve ourselves in this issue and measure our capacity according to our own whims.

One of the examples of abrogation is that the Arabs, in the past, would not give parents any wealth based on the consideration that parents are approaching the end of their lives. Instead, the entire share would go to the children based on the consideration that they are just starting out in life.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to give a share to the parents, He made it a bequest. He says: 'Prescribed for you when death approaches [any] one of you if he leaves wealth [is that he should make] a bequest for the parents.' (*al-Baqara*: 180)

When faith had settled within the souls, He made it a fixed inheritance, and He changed the ruling from being a bequest to something better, which is inheritance. He *Glorified is He* says: 'And as for the parents [of the deceased], each of them shall have one-sixth.' (*an-Nisa*': 11)

Therefore, whenever the True Lord *Glorified is He* changes a verse, He abrogates it and replaces it with something better. This is clear in the prohibition of wine, for example, where we see this solid gradualism which takes into consideration the nature of the human soul, and that this matter is one of the habits that have taken souls captive; hence the gradualism. This is not a creedal matter that needs a decisive ruling over which there is no argument. Look at this gradualism in the prohibition of wine. He *Glorified is He* says: 'And from the fruits of the palm trees and grapevines you take intoxicant and good provision.' (*an-Nahl*: 67)

The people of perception and understanding of what Allah means heard this verse and said, "Indeed, Allah has planned something in this verse, and this is because He described sustenance as being wholesome, and He did not say anything about intoxicants. He did not describe them as wholesome. This indicates that there will be further discussion about wine later on."

When the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked about wine in the Quran, he answered them: ‘They ask you about wine and gambling. Say, “In them is great sin and [yet, some] benefit for people. But their sin is greater than their benefit.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 219)

This came in the form of advice and instruction, not in the form of a ruling or legislation. All believers must trust the speech of their Lord that He will make a way out from the prison of this evil habit.

Then it was noticed that some people were praying while they were intoxicated, such that some of them would say in their prayer, “I worship what you worship.”⁽¹⁾ The ruling then came: ‘O you who believe! Do not pray while you are in a state of drunkenness, [but wait] until you know what you are saying.’ (*an-Nisa*: 43)

The requisite of this ruling is to keep them away from wine most of the time, as they cannot pray without being intoxicated unless they abstain from it for a sufficient amount of time before the prayer. This is how they got used to abstaining from it most of the time, just as doctors nowadays treat their patients who smoke, for example. They advise them to cut down gradually so that they can eventually overcome this habit.

This is how the Wise Legislator *Glorified is He* made the souls arrive at the stage in which they were accustomed to leaving off wine, and they started to turn away from it. Then the souls became ready to receive the absolute prohibition. He *Glorified is He* says: ‘O you who have believed, indeed, intoxicants, gambling, [sacrificing on] stone alters [to other than Allah], and divining arrows are but defilement from the work of Satan, so avoid it that you may be successful.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 90)

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* abrogated a verse and a ruling and replaced it with what is better.

(1) In his (Tafsir) (1/500) Ibn Kathir mentions the reason for revelation behind this verse, which is that ‘Ali ibn Abu Talib said: “Abd Ar-Rahman ibn ‘Awf prepared some food for us and invited us, and we drank some wine and the wine was taken from us. We then started to pray and the person leading us said: ‘Say: O you who deny the truth! I do not worship what you worship and we worship what you worship.’ Then Allah *Glorified is He* sent down: ‘O you who believe! Do not pray while you are in a state of drunkenness, [but wait] until you know what you are saying.’ (*an-Nisa*: 43)

What is astonishing is that we see some scholars who are bigoted about the Quran, and they do not accept the opinion that there is abrogation in it. How, when the Quran itself has said: ‘We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it.’ They said, “It is because there is something called (*al-budaa*)”⁽¹⁾ because abrogation requires, according to them, that Allah legislated a ruling, then it appeared to Him that it was an error and therefore He substituted it.” We say to these people: you have missed the mark with this statement because the meaning of abrogation is to declare that a previous ruling no longer applies and a new and better ruling has taken its place. This is the meaning of abrogation that is found in the Noble Quran. Amongst them are those who stop at the True Lord’s statement: ‘We replace with a better or a similar one.’

And they say that ‘We bring forth [one] better than it’ provides rationale for the change, and a necessity that requires abrogation, which is that something else is better, so what is the rationale behind the change in His statement: ‘...or similar to it’?

First of all, regarding His statement: ‘We bring forth [one] better than it,’ someone might say, “Why did not He bring the better one from the beginning?” We say, it is because when the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 102)

This is a high station of Allah-consciousness. No one can do this except the elite from amongst Allah’s servants. This verse troubled⁽²⁾ the Companions and they said, “Who is able to do this, O Messenger of Allah?” Then this verse came down: ‘So fear Allah as much as you are able.’ (*at-Taghabun*: 16) Allah *Glorified is He* made Allah-consciousness to be according to ability, and this is how the first verse was abrogated in terms of what it required. However, the

(1) *Ibn Kathir* said in his (*Tafsir*) (1/151), “All the Muslims agree that abrogation is possible in Allah’s rulings because of the profound wisdom therein and all of them say that it happens.”

(2) Sa‘id ibn Jubayr said, “When this verse was sent down, action became unbearable for the people. They stood until their veins swelled and their foreheads festered. Then Allah *Glorified is He* sent down this verse to make things easier for the Muslims.” ‘So fear Allah as much as you are able.’ The first verse was thus abrogated. This has been mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his (*Tafsir*) (4/277).

possibility for progress remains. Whoever wants to make progress in fearing Allah will find blessings therein. Allah will increase the number of people like them and reward them with goodness, and whoever is incapable takes the second verse.

If we were to look at these verses again, we would find that the first: 'O you who have believed, fear Allah as He should be feared.'

Even though it calls for a great deal of fear of Allah, those who act according to it are only a few. Meanwhile, the second: 'So fear Allah as much as you are able.'

Even though it has made fearing Allah to be according to ability, those who act according to it will be many.

From this angle, the second is better than the first, as we say, "Something small and constant is better than something great that is discontinued."

As for His statement: '...or a similar one,' i.e. the first is like the second, why the change here? What's the reason?

We say that the reason here is to test those who are legally responsible in terms of their obedience and submission, to see if they move from one matter to something like it in which there is no difficulty in this one and no facilitation in the other. Will they comply and obey, or will they argue and debate?

A clear example of this is what happened when the direction for prayer was changed. It was not difficult for the people to face Jerusalem, and it was not easier for them to face the *Ka'ba*. The matter was a test of their obedience and submission to Allah.⁽¹⁾ There were those amongst the people who would say, "We hear and we obey," and they would carry out Allah's Command without any argument. There were also those amongst them who would object, deny and accuse Allah's Messenger of lying about Allah.

Another example is what we see in the rites of the pilgrimage, such as the *Sunnah* of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which he taught us, of kissing the black stone, even though it is a stone. We also throw

(1) He *Glorified is He* says: 'And We did not make the *qiblah* which you used to face except that We might make evident who would follow the Messenger from who would turn back on his heels.' (*al-Baqara*: 143)

pebbles in Mina, even though they are just stones. Therefore, these are matters for which the intellect has no scope.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘But most of them do not know.’ The True Lord *Glorified is He* negates their previous statement: ‘You, [O Muhammad], are but an inventor [of lies].’

And He says to them: “No. He is not inventing and he is not lying. This is false accusation. The fact is that most of them do not understand.”

The phrase ‘most of them’ does not necessarily have to be the opposite of the least. Thus, it is possible for us to say, “most of them do not know,” as well as “most of them know,” as in the True Lord’s statement: ‘Do you not see that to Allah prostrates whoever is in the heavens and whoever is on the earth and the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, the moving creatures and many of the people? But upon many the punishment has been justified.’ (*al-Hajj*: 18)

This is by consensus. All creatures prostrate to Allah *Glorified is He* except for man. Amongst man are many who do prostrate and there are also many who will inevitably have to suffer in the life to come. The Quran did not say: “a few will inevitably have to suffer.”

On the premise that: ‘most of them do not know.’

Therefore, there is a minority who know the veracity of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in conveying from his Lord, and they know that these people are lying and fabricating when they accuse Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* of lying. They also know the veracity of every verse in its place, and the wisdom that Allah intends through each verse.

So, who are these people who know from amongst the ranks of the disbelievers and idol-worshippers?

They said, “There were amongst them people who had superior intellects and an understanding of matters, and they knew what was true and correct in this matter. However, they denied it, as the True Lord says: ‘And they rejected them, while their [inner] selves were convinced thereof, out of injustice and haughtiness.’ (*an-Naml*: 14)

Amongst these people were those who were thinking about guidance, and Islam was enticing them. It is as if they had a plan to submit, and they were preparing themselves for it, and they knew that what the disbelievers were saying, along with their accusations of Allah's Messenger, were false and fabricated.

Also amongst these people were actual believers, but they lacked the essential strength to defend themselves and tribal solidarity which could protect them from the scheming of the disbelievers. Furthermore, they did not have the ability to emigrate. Thus, they were still living amongst the people of Mecca except that they were believers, and they knew the veracity of Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and what the disbelievers were fabricating about him. However, they were unable to openly declare their faith.

Regarding these people, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'and it is He who withheld their hands from you and your hands from them within [the area of] Mecca after He caused you to overcome them. And ever is Allah seeing what you do. They are the ones who disbelieved and obstructed you from *al-Masjid al-Haram* while the offering was prevented from reaching its place of sacrifice. And if not for believing men and believing women whom you did not know – that you might trample them and there would befall you because of them dishonour without [your] knowledge.' (*al-Fath*: 24-25) They would have entered upon the people of Mecca and gotten into an utter state of confusion, between believer and disbeliever, and they would have unknowingly killed their own believing brothers.

'[This was so] that Allah might admit to His mercy that He willed. If they had been apart [from them], We would have punished those who disbelieved among them with painful punishment.' (*al-Fath*: 25) If they had been distinguished in some way, the disbelievers on one side and the believers on the other, We would have imposed grievous suffering upon those who were denying the truth.

Therefore, even though most of them do not understand and they accuse you of lying and inventing, there is still the non-majority who know that they are liars when they say: 'You, [O Muhammad], are but an inventor [of lies].' As long as they accuse you of inventing, then respond to them by saying:

قُلْ نَزَّلَهُ رُوحُ الْقُدُسِ مِنْ رَبِّكَ بِالْحَقِّ لِيُثَبِّتَ الَّذِينَ
 ءَامَنُوا وَهُدًى وَبُشْرَى لِلْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

**Say that the Holy Spirit has brought the Revelation with
 the Truth step by step from your Lord, to strengthen the
 believers and as guidance and good news to the devout [102]
 (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 102)**

In this verse the True Lord *Glorified is He* is responding to the fabrications of the disbelievers regarding Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and their accusation that he is deliberately lying and invented those verses himself. Thus, He did not say to him: “O Muhammad, say to these people.” Rather, He sent down the Pure Spirit.

“Holy” means “purified”. The meaning of “Pure Spirit” is the ambassador of revelation, Gabriel *peace be upon him*. In another verse, He says about him: ‘The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down.’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193)

And He says about him: ‘[That] indeed, the Quran is a word [conveyed by] a Noble Messenger, [Who is] possessed of power and with the Owner of the Throne, secure [in position], Obeyed there [in the heavens] and trustworthy.’ (*at-Takwir*: 19-21)

Regarding the True Lord’s statement: ‘...to make firm those who believe.’ Gabriel *peace be upon him* did not bring this Quran from himself. Rather, it is from Allah setting forth the truth. Neither Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought this Quran from himself nor did Gabriel *peace be upon him*. The Quran is from Allah.

His statement: ‘...to make firm those who believe and as guidance and good tidings to the Muslims.’ (*an-Nahl*: 102) Meaning: to make those who have believed firm in their faith in the verses that the Messenger has brought. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* knows best about the verses that are sent down, and that every verse is suited to its time, place and environment. There is proof that the believers are obedient and submitting to Allah *Glorified is He* and they affirm everything that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has conveyed from his Lord *Glorified is He*.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ نَعْلَمُ أَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ إِنَّمَا يُعَلِّمُهُ بَشَرٌ لِّسَانُ الَّذِي يُلْحِدُونَ
إِلَيْهِ أَعِجِبِي وَهَذَا لِسَانٌ عَرَبِيٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٠٣﴾

We know very well that they say, ‘It is a man who teaches him,’ but the language of the person they allude to is foreign, while this revelation is in clear Arabic [103]

(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 103)

In this verse, there is another accusation of Allah’s Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* yet the Quran willingly discloses it because whoever hears an accusation or fabrication must hear the response. The Quran wants to expose the reality of these people, manifest the invalidity of their arguments and how confused they are.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘And We certainly know that they say, “It is only a human being who teaches the Prophet.”’ (*an-Nahl*: 103)

Prior to that they said that Allah’s Messenger was a madman and Allah *Glorified is He* cleared him of this by saying: ‘And indeed, you are of a great moral character.’ (*al-Qalam*: 4)

Someone who is upon a sublime character cannot be a madman because a virtuous character is only found within its proper place, and the proof is His statement: ‘You are not, [O Muhammad], by the favour of your Lord, a madman.’ (*al-Qalam*: 2)

Prior to that, they also said that he was a sorcerer, which reflects their utter confusion in their own misguidance. If the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is indeed a sorcerer, then how come he has not bewitched them just as he has bewitched the believers and brought the matter to an end?

Furthermore, they also claimed that he was a poet, even though they were the most knowledgeable of people in the arts of speech, be it poetry, prose or oratory. They had never noticed any of these things from him. Rather, it is merely falsehood when they persist in their stubbornness and are too arrogant to accept the truth.

Here, they come with something new with which they deny Allah's Messenger. They said: 'It is only a human being who teaches the Prophet.' They claim that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would frequently visit one of the people of knowledge who would teach him the Quran. They said, ⁽¹⁾ "It is a boy from Banu 'Amir ibn Lu'ay, and his name is 'Ya'ish." He knew how to read and write, and he would get books from the markets and read the stories of previous peoples, such as 'Antara, Dhat Al-Humma and others. When it came to identifying this individual whom they claimed that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was learning from, their opinions contradicted one another. Some of them said that his name was 'Addas'. Others said it was Salman Al-Farisi *may Allah be pleased with him*. Others, still, said it was Bal'am ar-Rumi, who was a European, Christian blacksmith who knew a lot about the People of the Book, and so forth. The True Lord *Glorified is He* answers these people and manifests the emptiness of their fabrications and their persistence in denying Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying: 'The tongue of the one they refer to is foreign, and this Quran is [in] a clear Arabic language.'

The tongue is the language that is spoken. They pointed towards someone whose speech is not eloquent or rhetorical, such as when we see foreigners speaking Arabic, for example.

We notice here that the Noble Quran did not say non-Arab because there may be some of the non-Arabs who can master eloquent Arabic, as we have seen with Sibawayh⁽²⁾, the author of (*Al-Kitab*), which is the greatest Arabic grammatical reference work and it is still used today. He was non-Arab.

(1) Al-Mahdawi stated this on the authority of 'Ikrimah (mentioned by Al-Qurtubi in his (*Tafsir*) 5/2904), and other opinions have been mentioned:

- 1) It was a boy belonging to Al-Fakih ibn Al-Mughayra whose name was Jabr, and he was a Christian.
 - 2) It was a boy belonging to 'Utba ibn Rabi'a whose name was 'Addas.
 - 3) 'Abis, a boy belonging to Huwaytab ibn 'Abd Al-'Uzza.
 - 4) Yasar Abu Fukayha, the slave of Ibn Al-Hadrami, and the two of them had become believers.
- (2) Sibawayh: He is 'Amr ibn 'Uthman Al-Harithi Bilwala', the leader of the grammarians. He was born in one of the villages of Shiraz (148 AH). He went to Basra and learned under Khalil ibn Ahmad and surpassed him. The word (*sibawayh*) in Persian means =

Therefore, how can the Quran originate from these people who are not eloquent and can barely speak the Arabic language? How can these people be teaching Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he has brought a miracle in eloquence and rhetoric?

How could he have learned from these people, when it is not confirmed that he met any of them apart from 'Addas, of whom it is said that he met once, and it is also not confirmed that he *peace and blessings be upon him* frequently visited a teacher, either from these people or anyone else?

Likewise, the Noble Quran contains verses, rulings, miracles and information that would have required the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to spend a long time with these people in order to learn and acquire this knowledge. But they never knew him to be doing any of these things.

Is it logical that everything in the Quran could be with any one of these people? If that were the case, this person would have the same rank and position amongst his people that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had. They would have pointed their fingers at him, and his prestige would have become widespread, but none of this happened.

Allah's statement: 'this Quran is [in] a clear Arabic language.' The Prophet Muhammad's language and that of the Noble Quran are clear, plain Arabic language in which there is no ambiguity or obscurity.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ لَا يَهْدِيهِمُ اللَّهُ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ

**If people do not believe in God's revelation, God does not guide them, and a painful punishment awaits them [104]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 104)**

In His statement: '...those who do not believe in the verses of Allah.' The True Lord *Glorified is He* strips the attribute of faith from these people, so how can He say afterwards: 'Allah will not guide them'? Are they not unbelievers and misguided? We say: guidance is of two types: The first type is that of

= 'the scent of apples'. He died in Shiraz in the year 180 AH at the age of 32. (*Al-'A'lam* by Az-Zirikli 5/81)

indicating and showing the way; both the believer and disbeliever share it because Allah has clarified the path for everyone. For example, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And as for Thamud, We guided them, but they preferred blindness over guidance.’ (*Fussilat*: 17) The second type is that of support and enabling success; this is exclusive to the believer. For example, He says: ‘and those who are guided – He increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness.’ (*Muhammad*: 17) Therefore, the meaning of ‘Allah will not guide them’ is the guidance of support and enabling success.

It would also be correct for us to suggest an alternative interpretation whereby it means that Allah does not guide them to the Path of Paradise, but rather, He guides them to the Path of the Fire, as He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Indeed, those who disbelieve and commit wrong [or injustice] – never will Allah forgive them, nor will He guide them to a Path. Except the Path of Hell’ (*an-Nisa*’: 168-169).

The proof is what Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards: ‘...and for them is a painful punishment.’

In return, He *Glorified is He* says regarding the believers: ‘...and will admit them to the Paradise which He has promised them.’ (*Muhammad*: 6) He guided them and defined its Path for them.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّمَا يَفْتَرِي الْكَذِبَ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ
وَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ

**Falsehood is fabricated only by those who do not
believe in God’s revelation: they are the liars [105]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 105)**

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying: “If you invent things about Allah’s Messenger and accuse him of lying, then indeed the real lie is that you deny Allah’s signs and you do not believe in them.”

We notice in the conclusion of the verse that the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not say: “It is they who are disbelievers.” Rather, He says: “lying” to indicate the repulsiveness of lying and that it is an attribute unfit for believers.

This is why, when the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked, “Does the believer steal?” He *peace and blessings be upon him* said: “Yes,” because Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Now as for the man who steals and the woman who steals.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 38) As long as He has legislated a ruling and specified a punishment for it, then the matter is found and likely to happen.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was also asked, “Does the believer commit adultery?” He said, “Yes,” because Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘As for the adulteress and the adulterer...’ (*an-Nur*: 2). He *peace and blessings be upon him* was then asked, “Does the believer lie?” He said, “No.”⁽¹⁾ This Hadith clarifies for us the repulsiveness of lying, and how it can be weightier than other wrong actions. Allah has specified a known punishment for each of them, while at the same time has not specified anything for lying in order to indicate that it is a crime that is weightier and beyond punishment.

Therefore, lying is an attribute that does not befit believers, and it is not conceived that they would do such a thing. This is because if someone has become known for being a liar because people have become accustomed to his lies, then we fear that if he were to say, “I bear witness that there is no deity [worthy of worship] but Allah and that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah,” someone will say, “He’s a liar, and this is just another one of his lies.” Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

مَنْ كَفَرَ بِاللَّهِ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِيمَانِهِ إِلَّا مَنْ أُكْرِهَ وَقَلْبُهُ مُطْمَئِنٌّ بِالْإِيمَانِ وَلَكِنْ
مَنْ شَرَحَ بِالْكُفْرِ صَدْرًا فَعَلَيْهِمْ غَضَبٌ مِنَ اللَّهِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ

With the exception of those who are forced to say they do not believe, although their hearts remain firm in faith, those who reject God after believing in Him and open their hearts to disbelief will have the wrath of God upon them and a grievous punishment awaiting them [106] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 106)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* previously spoke about the ruling for the believers and the ruling for the disbelievers. Then He talked about those who

(1) Related by Imam Malik in his (*Muwatta'*) (p.99) from the Hadith of Safwan ibn Salim, which is discontinued at the rank of a Companion (*mursal*)

violate oaths and do not hold true to them. Then He talked about those who invent things about Allah's Messenger and those who deny Allah's signs. All of these are issues of faith that must be raised.

In this verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes it clear to us that faith is not merely something that is spoken: 'There is no deity [worthy of worship] but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' The statement by itself is insufficient. We must bear witness to it, which requires that both the heart and the tongue are in agreement with each other regarding this statement.

The one who contemplates this issue will find that logical division requires that we have four states. The first is that the heart and the tongue are in affirmative agreement with each other regarding faith, and this is why we say, "Indeed the believer is logical in his faith; because he says what his heart conceals."

The second is that the heart and the tongue are in negative agreement with each other in disbelief; and thus the disbeliever is also logical in his disbelief, just like the believer.

The third is that one believes on their outside but conceals disbelief within his heart, and this is the state of the hypocrite. The hypocrite is illogical in his faith because he manifests the opposite of what he conceals within himself in order to benefit from the privileges of faith.

The fourth is that one believes in their heart and articulates statements of disbelief on their tongue. This fourth state is what is intended in this verse. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is giving us a detailed exposition here of someone who disbelieves after faith. What is the cause of this disbelief? What is its reward?

His statement: 'Whoever disbelieves in Allah after his belief?' This is a conditional sentence whose apodosis is not mentioned until the end of the noble verse. First, let us look at a detailed exposition of this disbelief, as it is either under duress in which man has no say and he is forced to make a statement of disbelief, while at the same time his heart remains true to his faith. 'Whoever disbelieves in Allah after his belief... except for one who is forced [to renounce his religion] but his heart is secure in faith.' Then the Noble Quran goes quiet

regarding this person in order to show that there is nothing held against him, and there is no harm in a believer using dissimulation, which is a concession that protects a person from the sources of destruction in circumstances like these.

Throughout the history of Islam, there are numerous examples of this concession being used. A statement of disbelief is articulated while one's heart remains true to faith. And, in the honoured Hadith, "My nation is excused from what they do by mistake, out of forgetfulness, and what they are forced to do."⁽¹⁾

History mentions that Yasir Abu 'Ammar *may Allah be pleased with him* and his wife Sumayya *may Allah be pleased with her* were the first martyrs in Islam; and how were they martyred? They were amongst the very first Muslims, and they were subjected to a great deal of torture until the disbelievers presented them with the option of articulating a statement of disbelief in exchange for being pardoned. What did these two martyrs do? They came out openly with the truth, and they persisted in faith until they attained martyrdom for Allah's sake, without resorting to the concession of dissimulation.

Their son 'Ammar *may Allah be pleased with him* was the first person to take it, when he was subjected to the torture of the idol-worshippers.

The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was told that 'Ammar ibn Yasir *Allah be pleased with him* had disbelieved, but He refuted this and said, "Indeed, the faith of 'Ammar is from the top of his head to the tips of his toes, and the faith in 'Ammar is admixed with his flesh and blood."⁽²⁾

Then 'Ammar *may Allah be pleased with him* approached the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and he was crying. He told him what the idol-worshippers had done to him and he said, "By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, I was not freed from their hands until I insulted you and said good things about their gods." The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did nothing but wipe away 'Ammar's tears with his noble hands

(1) *Al-Qurtubi said in his (Tafsir) (5/2909): "Even though the chain of transmission of this narration is not authentic, its meaning is authentic according to the consensus of the scholars." This is the opinion of Al-Qadi Abu Bakr ibn Al-'Arabi. Abu Muhammad 'Abd Al-Haqq mentioned that its chain of transmission is authentic. He said: "Abu Bakr Al-Asili mentioned it in (Al-Fawa'id) and Ibn Al-Mundhir in (Kitab Al-Iqna')." "*

(2) *This is mentioned by Al-Wahidi in (Asbab An-Nuzul) (p.162).*

and say to him, “If they return to you, let them hear again what you told them.”⁽¹⁾ This concession made some of the Companions angry, and they went back to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask about it: “What about Bilal?”⁽²⁾ He said, “‘Ammar used the concession while Bilal came out with the truth.”

There is no doubt that of these two positions regarding confronting falsehood and its people, the position of declaring the truth and being patient in adversity is superior, and a more exalted rank than taking the dispensation because in the first, one believes with their heart and tongue, while in the other, one believes in their heart only and articulates disbelief on the tongue.

This is why, in the apostasy movement, Musaylamah, the Liar tried to go about the tribes in order to extract a testimony from them regarding the veracity of his prophethood. He said to one man, “What do you say about Muhammad?” The man said, “He is the Messenger of Allah.” He then said, “What do you say about me?” The man said cleverly, “You are the same,” which means that he got himself out of this tricky situation without openly acknowledging the Prophethood of this liar.

He met another man and asked him, “What do you say about Muhammad?” The man said, “He is The Messenger of Allah.” He then said, “What do you say about me?” The man said mockingly, “Speak up, because I have just become deaf.” He denied what Musaylama was claiming, and as a result he was killed. When the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* learned about these two men, he said, “One of them used the concession. The other spoke out with the truth.”⁽³⁾

(1) Mentioned by As-Suyuti in (*Ad-Durr al-Manthur*) (5/170), and he attributed it to ‘Abd Ar-Razzaq, Ibn Sa’ad, Ibn Jarir and Al-Hakim, and it was declared authentic by Al-Bayhaqi in (*Ad-Dala’il*).

(2) This was because Bilal may Allah be pleased with him lowered himself for Allah. Thus, they started torturing him and saying to him, “Renounce your religion” while he would say, “One, one” until they became bored of him. Then they shackled him and placed a fiber rope around his neck, and they pushed him toward their youth who played with him between the two mountains that surround Mecca.

(3) Mentioned by As-Suyuti in (*Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*) (5/172), and he attributed it to Abu Shayba on the authority of Al-Hasan. Ibn Kathir has mentioned a narration in his (*Tafsir*) (2/588) showing that the first of them was Habib ibn Zayd Al-Ansari.

The scholars have spoken about coercion in Allah's statement: '...except for one who is forced [to renounce his religion] while his heart is secure in faith.' They have clarified the various aspects of coercion and the ruling respective to each one. They are as follows.

- If someone is forced to do something that affects them personally, such as if it was said to them, "Drink wine or I will kill you" or "torture you." In this situation, one has to drink the wine in order to save oneself because it is a matter connected to oneself, not to mention there are those who disobey Allah by drinking it. If it is said to someone, "Disbelieve in Allah or I will kill you" or "torture you," they said, "This person has a choice: either resort to dissimulation and use the concession that Allah has legislated for them or they can come out with the truth and be defiant."
- If the coercion is connected to the rights of someone else, such as forcing you "Kill so-and-so or I will kill you," it is not permissible for you to kill this person because if you were to kill him, you would be killed out of just retribution, so what's the point?

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* talked about the ruling of those under coercion while their heart remains true to faith, He then talks about another type: 'But those who [willingly] open their breasts to disbelief.' It refers to a person who gladly articulates a statement of disbelief. Indeed, he is happy with it and his heart opens up to it. This is the type that is intended in the apodosis: 'Upon them is wrath from Allah, and for them is a great punishment.'

Even though the verses made no mention of the person being coerced, and there is no punishment specified because the person is under duress, they have made it clear that the one who opens his heart to disbelief will have Allah's condemnation fall upon him in this life, and they have a tremendous suffering in the Hereafter.

Just as we have seen, throughout Islamic history, examples of the first type who were under duress yet their hearts remained true to faith, we have also seen those who opened up their hearts to disbelief, and they are the hypocrites. Amongst them are those who later submitted and made good their Islam, and amongst them are 'Abdullah ibn Sa'ad ibn Abu As-Sarh from the tribe of 'Amir ibn Lu'ay. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّهُمْ أَشْتَحِبُّوا الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا عَلَى الْآخِرَةِ
وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

This is because they love the life of this world more than the one to come, and God does not guide those who reject Him [107] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 107)

“That is” refers to the above-mentioned suffering that they deserve. The word *preferred* means to prefer and love something more than necessary because if an intelligent person were to look at the life of this world in relation to his life span, he would find that it is short and too low to be loved for its own sake, and he would find that it has many changing circumstances that befall its people, and thus no state is constant. He would look and see that states change from wealth to poverty, from health to sickness, from strength to weakness, so how can one prefer this life over the Hereafter?

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants us to give both this life and the Hereafter the love that each of them deserves. We love this life without any exaggeration. We love it because it is a field that we can cultivate for the Hereafter. If not, then how can we seek recompense and reward from Allah? This is why we say, “Indeed the life of this world is too important to be forgotten, yet too paltry to be the ultimate objective. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...without forgetting your [rightful] share in this world.’ (*al-Qasas*: 77) A partial understanding of the verse shows that it is calling to action in this life and taking one’s portion from it, but the one who reflects on the meaning of the verse will find that the True Lord *Glorified is He* is making the like of this world something insignificant and likely to be forgotten and neglected, so He reminds us of it and encourages us to take our share from it. Reminding someone, “Do not forget such-and-such” implies that it could be forgotten, and this is one of the aspects of moderation and balance in Islam.

It suffices us that this life has been described as “the lowest” as there is no description lower than this description. The opposite must necessarily be “the highest,” which is the Hereafter. Yes, we do not deny the value of this life, and we do not disregard its right because it contains life, sense and activity, righteous actions, good memories and so forth.

However, despite all of this, it will come to an end, while the Hereafter is the true, everlasting and permanent life that will never come to an end and will never be threatened by death, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who have believed, respond to Allah and to the Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you the life.' (*al-Anfal*: 24) What is the meaning of 'gives you the life' when the Quran is addressing people who are alive and who have their sustenance? They said that: 'gives you the life' means the true, everlasting life that has no end.

Regarding His statement: '...over the Hereafter,' someone might say, "The verse is talking about those who do not believe in the Hereafter, so how can it say about them that they: '...preferred the worldly life over the Hereafter'?" We say: amongst those who do not believe in the Hereafter are those of whom Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'As it is, they swear by Allah with their most solemn oaths, "Never will Allah raise from the dead anyone who has died!"' (*an-Nahl*: 38)

There are also those of whom He says: 'But even if [it should come, and] I am brought before my Lord, I will surely find something even better than this as [my last] resort!' (*al-Kahf*: 36) Therefore, amongst these people are those who believe in the Hereafter, but they prefer the life of this world.

Allah's statement: 'And that Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.' (*an-Nahl*: 107) He does not provide them the guidance of support and enabling success. It is as if their disbelief precedes their lack of guidance, or we can say that because they are disbelievers, Allah has not guided them.

This is why Allah judges against them with His statement:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ طَبَعَ اللَّهُ عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ وَسَمْعِهِمْ
وَأَبْصَرِهِمْ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْغَافِلُونَ

**These are people whose hearts, hearing, and sight
have been closed off by God: they are heedless [108]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 108)**

Sealed means that He has stamped them and the purport of the stamp is to retain inside something that remains inside and does not come out and something outside remains outside and does not enter.

The difference between a human stamp and our Lord's seal is that the most we can do is stamp important things like private letters, for example, or we want to close off some place, and we stamp it with red wax in order to be certain of who closed it despite that we find people who are crafty and are able to pry open the stamp and maybe even put it back the way it was.

As for when the True Lord *Glorified is He* stamps something, no one is able to be crafty. The meaning, therefore, is that the disbelief in the hearts will never come out, and the faith outside of it will never come in. This is because the heart is the vessel that the senses pour into, and the senses are the means of grasping information, the most important of them being hearing and seeing. Hearing is for hearing revelation and what has been conveyed from Allah. Seeing is so that you can see proofs of Allah's power in His universe and the wonder of His making such that it draws your attention towards Allah's power, and it calls you to have faith in Him. Whenever these senses deviate from what Allah wants from them, and they provide the heart with other than the proofs of faith, their function shuts down.

The ears are the instruments of hearing that may hear empty talk, as they do not hear something specific. Likewise, the eyes are the instruments of seeing that may see what Allah has forbidden, as they do not see something specific. Therefore, what will reach the heart via these senses?

As long as the heart does not hear the guidance and does not see proofs of Allah's Omnipotence in His universe, it will never contain anything apart from disbelief. If someone seeks faith, he should remove disbelief from his heart, as it is not possible for disbelief and faith to be gathered in one heart. There is a law relevant to materialism called the Pauli Exclusion Principle, which can be noticed when we fill an empty bottle with water, as the amount of water that enters the bottle is equal to the amount of air that comes out. The same applies to moral matters.

Therefore, if a person seeks belief, he should remove disbelief and all vain desires from his heart. Then, he should use his intellect to search for both proofs of disbelief and faith, and open his heart to that which convinces him. However, he should not look for proofs of faith while having disbelief in his heart. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah does not put two hearts

within a man's breast....' (*al-Ahzab*: 4) It is mentioned in *Athar* (narrations from the Companions): "Love of the worldly life and the love of Allah do not gather together in the same heart." This is because man has one heart in which two opposites cannot come together, according to Allah's will, so a person should not make it overcrowded with what it contains.

As Allah *Glorified is He* seals the hearts of the disbelievers, this indicates that He gives His slaves what they want, even if it is disbelief. This means that as the disbelievers seek and feel at ease about disbelief, Allah seals their hearts in a manner that makes disbelief implanted in their hearts, so faith will never enter them. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* will intensify disbelief in their hearts, as He says: 'There is disease in their hearts, so Allah has increased their disease...' (*al-Baqara*: 10).

Allah increases their disbelief and does not care about them. Allah says: '...they are heedless.' (*an-Nahl*: 108) The heedless person is the one who should pay heed to a matter, but does not do so. He needs something to alert his heart. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the discussion about these people with His saying:

لَا جَرَمَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْخَاسِرُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

**And there is no doubt that they will be the losers
in the Hereafter[109] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 109)**

The Arabic word '*la jarama*,' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, means 'there is no doubt.' Therefore, the verse means that there is no doubt that these people will be losers in the Hereafter owing to the sins they committed and lead to their loss. Accordingly, their loss has been affirmed.

When we reflect on the previous verses, we will find the reasons for their loss, beginning with their saying about Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'You are just making it up' (*an-Nahl*: 101). And their saying: 'It is a man who teaches him.' (*an-Nahl*: 103) In addition, they did not have faith in Allah's verses, fabricated lies about Allah, felt at ease about disbelief, and preferred the worldly life to the Hereafter. All these reasons entail their loss in the Hereafter, the Day on which all people will be held to account.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلذَّيْنِ هَاجَرُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا فُتِنُوا ثُمَّ
جَاهَدُوا وَصَبَرُوا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١٠﴾

But your Lord will be most forgiving and most merciful to those who leave their homes after persecution, then strive and remain steadfast [110] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 110)

His saying: ‘...after persecution...’ (*an-Nahl*: 110) refers to the believers’ subjection to trials and painful torment because they became Muslims. His saying: ‘...But your Lord will be most forgiving and most merciful.’ (*an-Nahl*: 110)

It is out of Allah’s Mercy that He allows His slaves who have transgressed against themselves to repent, and He accepts their repentance because if He does not allow the sinners to repent, they would despair of Allah’s Mercy. In addition, those who have committed minor sins may turn into criminals that cause troubles in the society because they have lost hope in turning to the path of righteousness and have not found any motivation to stop sinning.

However, Allah accepts the repentance of the sinners and forgives the wrongdoers, as mentioned in the Hadith: “Allah *Glorified is He* will continue to stretch out His Hand in the night so that the sinners of the day may repent, and continue to stretch His Hand in the daytime so that the sinners of the night may repent, until the sun rises from the west.”⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* increases the bounties He bestows on the repentant if he repents sincerely and regrets the sins he has committed as He will change their evil deeds into good deeds, as He says: ‘Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. And ever is Allah Forgiving and Merciful.’ (*al-Furqan*: 70)

(1) Related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2759) from the Hadith of Abu Musa Al-Ash’ari. Imam An-Nawawi mentioned in ‘*Sharh Muslim*’, ‘Al-Mazari said that what is meant by the Hadith is the acceptance of repentance. The expression ‘stretches out His hand’ is used because when the Arabs were pleased with something, they would stretch their hands out to show pleasure and satisfaction. If they hated it, they would keep their hands clenched. Thus, they were addressed in the manner they could understand. This expression is figurative because the real hand as a limb when referring to Allah is impossible to express.’

If the sinners considered this fact, they would reform themselves and save themselves from sins. Therefore, Allah's legislation of repentance is considered mercy and His acceptance of the sinner's repentance is also considered mercy. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...then He turned to them so they could repent...' (*at-Tawba*: 118). This means that Allah has legislated repentance in order for them to repent.

If the deluded person, who wants to misuse Allah's Mercy and Grace, decides to commit many evil deeds in order for Allah to change them into good deeds, he should realise that he may not meet the conditions set for the sinners whom Allah transforms their evil deeds into good deeds. In addition, he cannot guarantee that Allah will give him respite so that you can repent, as death comes suddenly.

Then Allah says:

يَوْمَ تَأْتِي كُلُّ نَفْسٍ تُجَادِلُ عَنْ نَفْسِهَا وَتُوَفَّى
 كُلُّ نَفْسٍ مَا عَمِلَتْ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ

**On the Day when every soul will come pleading for itself,
 every soul will be paid in full for all its actions – they will
 not be wronged [111] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 111)**

The meaning of this verse may be connected and related to the previous verse, so that the purpose of this verse is: 'But your Lord will be most forgiving and most merciful...' (*an-Nahl*: 110). Then, He says: 'On the Day when every soul will come pleading for itself...' (*an-Nahl*: 111). This will take place on the Day of Resurrection. Another meaning of the verse is that Allah *Glorified is He* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'On the Day when every soul will come pleading for itself...' (*an-Nahl*: 111) does man have more than one soul so that one can plead on behalf of the other? The truth is that man has one soul in this worldly life and the Hereafter, but the soul he has in the worldly life differs from the one he will have on the Day of Resurrection. This is because Allah has granted it in the worldly life freedom to choose what to do; so some souls are obedient, others are disobedient, submitting or haughty.

On the Day of Resurrection, the soul will face Allah Whom it has disobeyed in the worldly life, so haughtiness will be of no benefit in that situation. It will only plead and defend itself for what it has done in the worldly life while Allah says: ‘...To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? To Allah, the One, the Prevailing.’ (*Ghafir*: 16)

The Noble Quran states examples of the soul pleading on the Day of Resurrection. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...By Allah, our Lord, we did not associate with Allah anything in His Divinity.’ (*al-An‘am*: 23) ‘[As for] those who choose other protectors beside Him, saying, “...We only worship them because they bring us nearer to Allah...”’ (*az-Zumar*: 3) and ‘...Our Lord, show us those who misled us of the jinn and men [so] we may put them under our feet...’ (*Fussilat*: 29).

Therefore, it is one soul that pleads for itself on a day on which no soul will avail another; it will be preoccupied with its own anxiety and will be held to account for its own sins. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘On the Day a man will flee from his brother, his mother and his father, his wife and his children, each of them will be absorbed in concerns of their own on that Day.’ (*Abasa*: 34-37) Allah *Glorified is He* also says: ‘...every soul will be paid in full for all its actions – they will not be wronged.’ (*an-Nahl*: 111)

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us a brief view about the reckoning and reward on the Day of Resurrection, as Allah’s scale is that of justice and uprightness that does not oppress anyone. ‘So whoever does an atom’s weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom’s weight of evil will see it.’ (*az-Zalzala*: 7-8)

Allah’s saying: ‘...will be paid in full...’ (*an-Nahl*: 111) shows that Allah’s scale is just and involves no shortage or injustice, as all people are slaves of Allah and have no precedence over one another except by their deeds. If He shows them mercy, then this will be out of His bounty, and if He punishes them, then this will be out of His justice. Allah says: ‘...We did not wrong them; they wronged themselves.’ (*an-Nahl*: 118)

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَضَرَبَ اللَّهُ مَثَلًا قَرْيَةً كَانَتْ ءَامِنَةً مُطْمَئِنَّةً يَأْتِيهَا رِزْقُهَا
رَغَدًا مِّن كُلِّ مَكَانٍ فَكَفَرَتْ بِأَنْعُمِ اللَّهِ فَأَذَافَهَا اللَّهُ لِيَاسَ
الْجُوعِ وَالْخَوْفِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

Allah presents the example of a town that was secure and at ease, with provisions coming to it abundantly from all places. Then it became ungrateful for Allah's blessings, so Allah afflicted it with the garment of famine and fear, for what its people had done [112] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 112)

Allah has tackled belief in Allah and the veracity of His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in conveying His Message, the implementation of Allah's religious instructions mentioned in the Book and the Sunnah. On the other hand, He has also tackled disbelief, obstinate disputation and stubborn disobedience of Allah, the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the religious instructions. Then He has willed to give us a tangible example from our life on this point, so He has given us this parable. The word "parable" refers to two matters that are similar in a specific aspect, so that a person can say, "So-and-so is just like so-and-so."

The objective behind giving parables is to clarify something unknown by mentioning something known. For example, if you do not know a certain person, we can say about him that "he is like so-and-so" – who is known to you – in height and complexion...etc. After collecting all the information about this person, you will have a complete image of this person that you do not know.

Therefore, you must beware of making up images about the One to Whom there is no equal, as Allah says: 'So do not make up images about Allah...' (*an-Nahl*: 74). This is because Allah does not have any equal or peer, with regard to His Entity, Attributes or Actions. He is the One Who gives examples, but we may make up images only for created beings.

There are many examples in the Quran that clarify unknown matters by giving examples of matters known to us, and explain moral and intangible matters using tangible and perceptible matters. An example on this point is the parable that Allah *Glorified is He* gives concerning spending in His cause,

and that He multiplies the rewards many times for the one who does so. Consider how the Quran illustrates this meaning: ‘Those who spend their wealth in Allah’s cause are like grains of corn that produce seven ears, each bearing a hundred grains. Allah gives multiple increase to whoever He wishes: He is limitless and all knowing.’ (*al-Baqara*: 261)

Accordingly, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies the unseen and unknown matter by something tangible and known to everyone so that this unknown matter becomes clear in our minds. Whoever reflects on this example will find that the matter which Allah has clarified entails more bounties than those stated in the example He has given. If these multiplied bounties are earned from the earth, which has been created by Allah *Glorified is He* then what about the bounties bestowed by the Creator?

The word “*daraba*” which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse is derived from the concept of coining a currency, as in the past, currencies were made of gold and silver for fear of fraud, as people would mix gold with copper. Experts in the field of currencies coined them by stamping them so that they would be approved, trusted and could be exchanged.

Likewise, if Allah “*darba mathalan*” (gives an example) by something known, it settles in the mind and becomes acknowledged. Allah says in the following example: ‘Allah presents the example of a town...’ (*al-An‘am*: 112). The objective behind presenting this example is that Allah wants to clarify that when He grants man with all kinds of bounties, but he does not show gratefulness, does not fulfil Allah’s right regarding them, and instead uses these bounties to disobey Him, he makes himself liable to be deprived of these bounties. In addition, he exposes himself to a disastrous and evil end. Thus, a person should show gratitude to Allah for His bounties and fulfil His rights regarding them so that the bounties can be maintained. A poet said in this regard:

If you enjoy a bounty, take care of it,
As acts of disobedience remove the bounties,
Preserve them by thanking Allah,
As Allah is severe in retaliation.

Is the town that Allah presents as an example a specific town or any town in general? Some scholars said that this town may refer to Mecca or any other town. In any case, the identification of this town has no effect on the objective behind presenting the objective.

The Arabic word “*qaryah*,” which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, refers to the town in which the passers-by settle. It also refers to the people who settle in this town, as stated in Allah’s saying: ‘Ask the town in which we were and the caravan in which we came...’ (*Yusuf*: 82). The intended meaning is, “ask the people of the town,” because the town as a place cannot be asked. The Quran exegetes held the view that the verse contains a metaphor that is related to a place.

However, with the advancement of modern science, Allah gives us a new aid, as He says: ‘We will show them Our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...’ (*Fussilat*: 53).

Nowadays, new discoveries enable us to take pictures and record the voices of people. For example, it is possible to make a video record of a meeting and display it even after the attendees of the meeting leave the meeting place.

This means that we can keep the images and sounds of people from many years ago. Accordingly, we may say that a town may be asked and may answer because it has a conscious memory that records things, and it retains what it has recorded. In addition, scientists attempt to bring back the images and sounds from the beginning of creation in view of the fact that they are present in the atmosphere in the form of waves that never go away or disappear. These waves are similar to the rippling of the water after throwing a stone into it. The circles formed as a result move away until they gradually disappear.

Therefore, asking the town can be understood literally. There is no doubt that asking the town would be more significant than asking its people because people may lie while the town itself does not lie. Understanding the noble verse in this way shows the miraculous nature of the Quran.

Allah says: ‘...that was secure and at ease...’ (*an-Nahl*: 112). The word “*aminah*,” which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, means that the town was safe and secure from aggression or attack, and security is one of the greatest bounties which Allah bestows on countries and His slaves.

The word “*mutma’innah*,” which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, means that it has the essentials of life, so it does not need anyone or anything else. Life therein is stable and comfortable, and man feels at ease only in a place that is free of disturbances and that contains all the essentials of life. Thus, security and ease are the secret of happiness and stability in life. Allah shows the bounties He bestowed on Quraysh, saying: ‘[He did this] to make the Quraysh feel secure, secure in their winter and summer journeys. So let them worship the Lord of this House: who provides them with food to ward off hunger, safety to ward off fear.’ (*al-’Asr*: 1-3)

When man feels sated and secure, he enjoys a stable life. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gives an exemplary image of worldly life, saying, “Whosoever begins the day feeling family security and good health; and possessing provision for his day is as though he possessed the whole world.”⁽¹⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* describes this town in the following verse: ‘...with provisions coming to it abundantly from all places...’ (*an-Nahl*: 112). It is well known that people seek sustenance, but this town is provided with sustenance, a point which gives preponderance to the opinion that this town is Mecca because Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Have we not established for them a safe sanctuary to which are brought the fruits of all things as provision from Us? But most of them do not know.’ (*al-Qasas*: 57)

Whoever manages to live in Mecca can see that it contains fruits and products from all over the world. As such, the people of Mecca have gained all bounties and enjoyed all the essentials of a secure and happy life. Did they respond to these bounties by thanking Allah? Did they use Allah’s bounties in showing obedience to Allah and seeking His pleasure? However, what happened was that: ‘...it became ungrateful for Allah’s blessings...’ (*an-Nahl*: 112). They showed ingratitude for these bounties and used them in opposing Allah’s religious instructions and *sharia* (Islamic Law). Therefore, the result was: ‘...so Allah afflicted it with the garment of famine and fear, for what its people had done.’ (*an-Nahl*: 112)

(1) *Related by Abu Na’im in ‘Al-Hilya’ (5/249) and Ibn Hibban (2503 – ‘Mawarid Azh-Zham’an’) from the Hadith of Abu Ad-Darda’ Allah be pleased with him. Al-Haythami mentioned it in ‘Majma’ Az-Zawa’id’ (10/289), and attributed it to At-Tabarani, saying, ‘Some of the narrators in the chain of transmission are proved to be weak.’*

This verse contains a warning from Allah *Glorified is He* for every community that refuses to show gratitude for Allah's bounties and uses them in opposing Allah's religious instructions, as their end will be like the end of these people, as follows: '...so Allah afflicted it...' (*an-Nahl*: 112).

The Arabic word "*dhawq*," which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, means putting the food or drink on the tongue to find out the flavour it has. Therefore, the word "*dhawq*" is specific to the flavour of things, but Allah did not say that He caused this town to taste the flavour of hunger. He said: '... so Allah afflicted it with the garment of famine and fear...' (*an-Nahl*: 112). Allah assimilates hunger and fear to a garment that man wears, and the one who reflects on the verse will find that the Quranic style is very accurate, as hunger and fear have turned into a garment that is worn by a hungry and scared person. How can this happen?

Hunger first appears as a feeling in the stomach. If there is no food, the fats stored in the body are consumed. If the fats run out, the body consumes the flesh, then the bones in cases of severe hunger. We notice that the person who suffers from severe hunger has pale face and his skin is withered and lean, then it becomes wrinkled and dry. This is how hunger leaves an effect on the skin and looks like a garment that the hungry person wears. Hunger can be noticed from the outward appearance of the hungry person not from his stomach, as the paleness of his complexion appears. Allah *Glorified is He* says about the poor who are not able to travel in the earth: '...you will know them by their [characteristic] sign. They do not ask people persistently [or at all]...' (*al-Baqara*: 273).

The same applies to fear, even though its place is the heart, but it does not manifest itself on the body in the same way. When fear increases, the limbs and the whole body shake. Therefore, fear manifests itself on the body like a garment that a person wears.

The Quranic expressions embody the internal feelings and make them tangible in a manner that can be seen by the eyes, but Allah *Glorified is He* expresses them using the sense of taste because it is the strongest sense. Likening hunger and fear to a garment shows how they cover the entire body, just as a garment covers it. Thus, hunger is not just in the stomach and fear is not just in the heart.

In addition, lovers and those who talk about love say that love is located in the heart. They talk about hearts as one poet said:

The thoughts of your memory enjoy my love,
I feel them in my heart.

When love increases and feelings are promoted, love moves from the heart to all the limbs of the body, as one poet said:

I have no organ except that it contains ardent love,
As if my organs have been created as hearts.

Allah's saying: '...for what its people had done.' (*an-Nahl*: 112) means that Allah *Glorified is He* did not oppress them or act unfairly towards them. Rather, what befell them resulted from their deeds, their turning away from Allah's path and their ingratitude towards His bounties. Therefore, Allah deprived them of these bounties. They rejected Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* denied him as a Messenger, harmed his Companions and plotted to kill him so that he supplicated against them saying, "O Allah, be harsh and severe with Mudar and afflict them with years like those of Joseph."⁽¹⁾ Allah answered Prophet supplication and He dressed them in the garments of hunger and fear so that they were eating dead animals and mixing hair and fur with blood to eat them.

They remained in this state for seven years until they roared, fed up, and reached the utmost state of tiredness and fatigue. They sent a delegation to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, "This is what you have done to the men of Mecca, so what do you think of its women and children?" Then he sent some lawful and good food for them to eat.

As for the garments of fear, this was embodied in the detachments that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent from Medina in order to scare and frighten them, and to let them know that the Muslims had strength and might.

(1) [Related by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (1006) and Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2/470, 502, 521) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him]

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ رَسُولٌ مِنْهُمْ فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

A messenger who was one of them came to them, but they called him a liar. So punishment overwhelmed them in the midst of their evildoing [113] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 113)

We have seen how the people of Mecca enjoyed all bounties which were embodied in the fact that the town was secure and at ease. This is considered a material bounty with which Allah preserves man's outward form, but he still needs something to preserve his values and morals.

This is considered as the most important bounty which Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed on them when He sent a Messenger from among them. What is the benefit of having material bounties in a land in which values are unstable and morals were shaken? Thus, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came to them to reform their moral behaviour and corrupt principles.

Allah's saying: '...who was one of them...' (*an-Nahl*: 113) means that he belonged to their race from their kind and was not alien to them. In addition, he was not only from the Arabs, but he belonged to Quraysh which was the best Arab tribe. Then, Allah says: '...but they called him a liar...' (*an-Nahl*: 113). They should have believed him due to his good and perfect qualities they knew about him, and the truthfulness and trustworthiness of which he was known. However, they not only denied the material bounties, but they also denied the moral bounties represented in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah says: '...So punishment overwhelmed them ...' (*an-Nahl*: 113) The verse does not say: 'Allah overwhelmed them with punishment'; rather, it says: '...So punishment overwhelmed them ...' (*an-Nahl*: 113) This means that punishment yearns for them and rushes to take them. The verse contains a form of personification that indicates the severity of their suffering.

In addition, Allah says in another verse: 'On the Day We will say to Hell, "Have you been filled?" and it will say, "Are there some more?"' (*Qaf*: 30)

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَكُلُوا مِمَّا رَزَقَكُمُ اللَّهُ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَاشْكُرُوا
نِعْمَتَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ كُنتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَهُ

So eat of the good and lawful things God has provided for you and be thankful for His blessings, if it is Him that you worship [114] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 114)

We said that when the people of Mecca experienced severe conditions to the extent that they were eating corpses, Messenger Muhammad sent good and lawful food to them out of his mercy. Allah says: ‘So eat of the good and lawful things Allah has provided for you’ (*an-Nahl*: 114). This means that the sustenance is not from Messenger Muhammad, but from Allah ‘...good and lawful things’ (*an-Nahl*: 114). This is because before the coming of Islam, people indulged in eating what is unlawful and impure. Messenger Muhammad wanted to draw their attention to the fact that Allah’s sustenance was lawful, good and wholesome, so he replaced the unlawful with the lawful and the impure with the pure.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and be thankful for His blessings...’ (*an-Nahl*: 114). This is a warning to them not to be ungrateful for Allah’s bounties, as they experienced the consequences of this ingratitude, as Allah deprived them of security and dressed them in the garment of fear. He deprived them of their satiation and affluence, and afflicted them with the garment of hunger. Therefore, they should have taken a lesson from what happened previously ‘...if it is Him that you worship.’ (*an-Nahl*: 114) Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّمَا حَرَّمَ عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَيْتَةَ وَالدَّمَ وَلَحْمَ الْخِنْزِيرِ وَمَا أُهْلَ لِغَيْرِ اللَّهِ بِهِ
فَمَنِ اضْطُرَّ غَيْرَ بَاغٍ وَلَا عَادٍ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ

He has forbidden you only these things: carrion, blood, pig’s meat, and animals over which any name other than God’s has been invoked. But if anyone is forced by hunger, not desiring it nor exceeding their immediate need, God is forgiving and merciful[115] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 115)

After Allah says: ‘So eat of the good and lawful things Allah has provided for you...’ (*an-Nahl*: 114). He has repeated one of the notions previously

mentioned in *al-Baqara* and *al-Ma'ida*. Allah says: 'He has only forbidden to you dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], there is no sin upon him. Indeed, Allah is Most-Forgiving and Most-Merciful.' (*al-Baqara*: 173)

Allah says in the chapter of *al-Ma'ida*: 'Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3). They used to eat unlawful food, but as long as Allah sent to them a Messenger for them to have faith, they should have eaten lawful and good food. Why is this notion repeated here? There are two reasons: The first is that Allah *Glorified is He* does not want to give them a general illustration of the ruling, but a personified image of the situation because they were hungry and were willing to eat anything even if it was corpses. However, Islam forbids eating carrion and clarifies that they should eat lawful and good food. The second is that the texts differ. In the chapter of *al-Baqara* Allah says: '...and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah...' (*al-Baqara*: 173). In the following verse, Allah says: '...over which any name other than Allah's has been invoked...' (*an-Nahl*: 115). This is not just diversity in style, as the meaning is completely different. This is because '*ihlal*' means mentioning the Name of Allah when slaughtering, but people used to say, 'In the name of al-Lat' and 'In the name of al-'Uzza'. Thus, they invoked the names of false gods that they took as partners besides Allah, and did not mention the Name of Allah, the Bestower. They sometimes mentioned the names of other than Allah when slaughtering, and sometimes they invoked any name other than Allah over the animals.

How can this happen? Scholars said that there are two types of slaughtering: sometimes people slaughtered in order to draw near to the idols so that they invoked other than Allah (idols) over the slaughtered animals. At other times, they slaughtered animals just to eat without drawing near to anyone, so they did not invoke Allah over these animals.

Therefore, the verse is repeated for certain wise reason, and Glory be to the One Who said these meanings. Allah says: '...But if anyone is forced by hunger, not desiring it nor exceeding their immediate need...' (*an-Nahl*: 115).

People may be forced when they do not find anything to eat and to keep themselves alive.

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us a concession to eat unlawful food when we are forced by hunger in order to preserve our lives. The meaning of '*ghayra baghin*' which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means that we should not exceed our need. If you were driven by necessity and had some carrion and lawful food, you should not eat the carrion in the presence of the lawful food.

'...nor exceeding their immediate need...' (*an-Nahl*: 115). This means that we should take only the amount that preserves one's life but without satiation. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Allah is forgiving and merciful.' (*an-Nahl*: 115)

In the chapter of *al-Baqara*: '...there is no sin upon him....' (*al-Baqara*: 173). The meaning is the same, but in the verse which is mentioned in the chapter of *an-Nahl*, Allah's Forgiveness and Mercy are mentioned, and in the verse mentioned in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, the reason behind this mercy and forgiveness is mentioned.

Some atheists want to find fault in the Quran and say that if Allah has forbidden these things, then what is the reason behind their existence in the universe? Do you think that everything in the universe is created to be eaten? Is there not any another function? Is there any another benefit besides eating? If Islam has forbidden eating something, it has allowed gaining benefits in other ways.

For example, Allah has forbidden eating pigs, but He created them for another purpose; they play a role in cleaning the environment because they eat rubbish. Therefore, they are useful in our life. Likewise, snakes are not eaten, but they play a role in life: the preparation of poison which is used in treating certain diseases. There are many other examples.

We must know that Allah *Glorified is He* has not forbidden any of these things except for some wisdom. Man must learn from his material formation and experiences that which helps him understand religious values. If he considers the devices around him, such as machines, cars, and planes and so on, he would find that each of them is operated by a certain type of fuel which may not suit other devices. For example, the type of fuel that is used for operating cars—benzene—does not suit planes, as they use a more refined type

of fuel. Therefore, everything has an appropriate type of fuel. Likewise, Allah has made certain foods suitable for man, as he is created by Allah Who determines the food he is permitted to eat and that which he is forbidden from eating. In addition, He knows what is good for him and what may harm him.

That which is forbidden, such as carrion due to the harm it contains, may be permissible in itself, but forbidden for a specific person, such as a sick person who is not allowed to eat a certain food. This is because it may harm his health or delay his recovery. It is a temporary prohibition until its reason is cleared.

Another type of prohibition is that when something is lawful in itself and involves no harm, but it may be prohibited as a punishment; for example, when punishing a child for being naughty by denying them sweets.

Therefore, prohibition has many reasons, and we will soon find other examples.

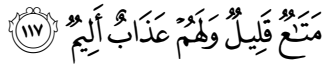
Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَقُولُوا لِمَا تَصِفُ أَلْسِنَتُكُمُ الْكَذِبَ هَذَا حَلَالٌ وَهَذَا حَرَامٌ لِنَفْتَرُوا
 عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَفْتَرُونَ عَلَى اللَّهِ الْكَذِبَ لَا يُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١١٦﴾

**Do not say falsely, ‘This is lawful and that is forbidden,’
 inventing a lie about God: those who invent lies about God
 will not prosper [116] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 116)**

The phrase ‘*tasif alsinatikum al-kadhib*’ which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means that lies are clearly manifested, as their speech does not only include lies, but it describes them. The meaning of lying is manifested by their saying: ‘...This is lawful and that is forbidden...’ (*an-Nahl*: 116). This is a lie and a fabrication against Allah *Glorified is He* because He alone is the One Who declares things to be lawful and unlawful. Therefore, beware of declaring something to be permissible or impermissible based on your own desires because this is a fabrication against Allah: ‘...inventing a lie about Allah...’ (*an-Nahl*: 116). Allah also says: ‘...those who invent lies about Allah will not prosper.’ (*an-Nahl*: 116)

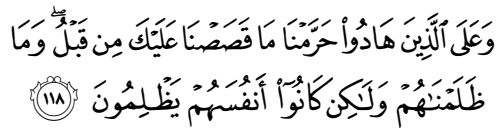
If some people were deceived by their lies and acquired some immediate benefit, their lies will be revealed and these interests will cease. Allah *Glorified is He* describes what those people will receive from the worldly life:



**They may have a little enjoyment, but painful punishment
awaits them [117] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 117)**

This means that what they obtained by fabricating lies about Allah is a temporary enjoyment, and He will deny them the great and everlasting enjoyment about which Allah says: ‘Whatever you have will end, but what Allah has is lasting...’ (*an-Nahl*: 96). Allah also says: ‘...but painful punishment awaits them.’ (*an-Nahl*: 117)

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:



**[Prophet], We forbade the Jews what We told you about.
We did not wrong them; they wronged themselves [118]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 118)**

After the verses have tackled what Allah has allowed and What He has prohibited, and have clarified that Allah is the only One Who has the right to declare things lawful or unlawful, Allah has prohibited things as a punishment and not because it is unlawful in itself. An example on this point is when preventing a child from taking sweets as a punishment for his bad behaviour.

Allah punished the Jews by making these things impermissible for them though they are lawful for other people. This punishment was specific for them.

Allah’s saying: ‘...what We told you about ...’ (*an-Nahl*: 118) refers to what is mentioned in the chapter of *al-An’am*: ‘And to those who are Jews We prohibited every animal of uncloven hoof; and of the cattle and the sheep We prohibited to them their fat, except what adheres to their backs or the entrails or what is joined with bone. [By] that We repaid them for their injustice. And indeed, We are truthful.’ (*al-An’am*: 146) ‘...every animal of uncloven hoof...’ (*al-An’am*: 146) means animals whose fingers are not separated. The Arabic word ‘*al-hawaya*’, which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means the intestines. All these things that are mentioned in

the verse are permissible to all people except the Jews, as Allah has made them impermissible for the Jews as punishment because of their oppression and transgression. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For wrongdoing on the part of the Jews, We made unlawful for them [certain] good foods which had been lawful to them, and for their averting from the way of Allah many [people]. And [for] their taking of usury while they had been forbidden from it, and their consuming of the people's wealth unjustly...' (*an-Nahl*: 116). This means that because of their oppression, Allah had made these good and lawful things impermissible for them.

This is because whoever invents a ruling and fabricates lies about Allah, prohibiting what Allah has permitted or permitting what Allah has prohibited, must be punished in a manner appropriate to their sin. Therefore, that which is permissible for other people is made impermissible for them. The Jews had committed oppression because they transgressed against the limits and instructions set by Allah. The first and severest act of oppression is associating partners with Allah in His Divinity: '...surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity.' (*Luqman*: 13)

Oppression refers to giving someone's right to someone else. An example of their oppression is what they said to Musa (Moses) after crossing the sea and finding people who were worshipping idols. They asked Musa (Moses) to make a god for them as those people had gods. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We took the Children of Israel across the sea; then they came upon a people intent in devotion to [some] idols of theirs...' (*al-A'raf*: 138). Another example of their oppression is that they worshipped the calf instead of Allah. In addition, they oppressed Musa (Moses) because they did not believe him, as Allah says: 'But no one believed Moses, except [some] youths among his people, for fear of Pharaoh and his establishment that they would persecute them. And indeed, Pharaoh was haughty within the land, and indeed, he was of the transgressors...' (*Yunus*: 83). Another example of their oppression: 'And [for] their taking of usury while they had been forbidden from it, and their consuming of the people's wealth unjustly. And we have prepared for the disbelievers among them a painful punishment....' (*an-Nisa*': 161)

Because of their oppression and taking other people's rights, Allah prohibited for them what is lawful for other people. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

‘We did not wrong them; they wronged themselves.’ (*an-Nahl*: 118) They oppressed themselves by accepting to earn little and immediate enjoyment and denied themselves the true and everlasting enjoyment.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

ثُمَّ إِنَّ رَبَّكَ لِلَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا الشُّوْءَ بِجَهْلَةٍ ثُمَّ تَابُوا مِنْ بَعْدِ
ذَلِكَ وَأَصْلَحُوا إِنَّ رَبَّكَ مِنْ بَعْدِهَا لَغَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١٩﴾

But towards those who do wrong out of ignorance, and afterwards repent and make amends, your Lord is most forgiving and merciful [119] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 119)

Allah *Glorified is He* gives His slave a chance to repent and seek Allah’s Forgiveness. It is out of Allah’s Mercy that He has legislated for them repentance from sins, and accepts it from them. If He did not accept the people’s repentance, the sinner, who has committed even one sin, would become a criminal that causes trouble in the society. By allowing repentance, Allah protects society from these troubles.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained the status of repentance, saying, ‘Verily, Allah is more pleased with the repentance of His slave than a person who has his camel in a waterless desert carrying his provision of food and drink and is lost. He, having lost all hopes (to get that back), lies down in shade and is disappointed about his camel, when all of a sudden he finds that camel standing before him. He takes hold of its reins and then out of boundless joy blurts out: “You are my slave and I am Your Lord. He commits this mistake out of extreme joy.”’⁽¹⁾

The word ‘*thumma*’ which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the verse, indicates their numerous sins. Despite this fact, Allah forgives their sins in order to clarify the vast difference between Allah’s mercy and the disobedient people’s insistence on ingratitude toward Allah and disobedience.

Allah’s saying: ‘...out of ignorance...’ (*an-Nahl*: 119) refers to their recklessness, foolishness and weak-mindedness, which are all categorized under ignorance,

(1) [Related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2747) from the Hadith of Anas ibn Malik]

as they believed in something that is not real. Ignorance here does not refer to lack of knowledge, but it refers to insistence on an issue that contradicts reality. The intended meaning is that one looks for some immediate goodness, according to one's opinion, and leaves off postponed goodness according to *sharia* (Islamic Law). This meaning is indicated by Allah's saying: 'The repentance accepted by Allah is only for those who do wrong in ignorance [or carelessness] and then repent soon after...' (*an-Nisa'*: 17) '...out of ignorance...' (*an-Nahl*: 119) refers to their foolishness and rashness, as the disobedient person knows the ruling, but they are heedless of it and do not think about the consequences of their acts of disobedience. If they thought about these consequences, they would not commit these acts. Accordingly, the person who commits an act of disobedience only does so absent-mindedly.

Therefore, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The one who commits an illegal sexual intercourse is not a believer at the time of committing illegal sexual intercourse, a thief is not a believer at the time of committing theft and a drinker of alcoholic drink is not a believer at the time of drinking.'⁽¹⁾

If the sinner pays heed to the severity of the punishment, he would not approach an act of disobedience, but his foolishness and stupidity make him unable to consider the punishment and embellish for him the transient enjoyment and pleasure.

For example, a person has a pressing sexual instinct, which is the most mischievous human instinct. He thinks of committing adultery – we seek refuge in Allah from it – and before he commits it, we show him an oven and we remind him of the punishment of this crime. What is he going to do? Will he insist on his crime? No, because he was forgetful and heedless, but when you remind him of the punishment, he will back down. Therefore, his stupidity and foolishness turned him away from considering the consequences of the crime, distracted him from taking the right action, and caused him to look at matters in a superficial and hasty manner.

(1) *Related by Muslim in his Sahih (57) in the Book of Faith from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him also Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (2475)*

Allah's saying: '...and afterwards repent and make amends ...' (*an-Nahl*: 119). Repentance, which is referred to in this verse, is the sincere repentance, which entails that the sinner determines to desist from committing his sin. If he does so, Allah will accept his repentance. The sinner may commit the same sin again if he is too weak to stop or hold himself back. However, he should repent again because one of Allah's Names is the Acceptor of Repentance, which means that He frequently accepts the repentance of His slaves. Thus, Allah's slaves should not stop repenting, whatever numerous their sins are, but when they commit a sin they must repent.

In addition, if the slave repents properly and sincerely, does righteous deeds instead of the evil ones, Allah will turn their evil deeds into good deeds. This shows how Bountiful, Forgiving, and Merciful our Lord is. Allah's saying: '...your Lord is Most Forgiving and Most Merciful' (*an-Nahl*: 119) indicates that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is concerned with the believers, and that Allah's Forgiveness of their sins pleases him.

In this verse, Allah addresses Prophet Muhammad and informs him that He will forgive the sinners from among his nation. Then Allah *Glorified is He* describes Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* saying:

إِنَّ إِبْرَاهِيمَ كَانَ أُمَّةً قَانِتًا لِلَّهِ خَنِيفًا وَلَمْ يَكُ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٣٠﴾

**Abraham was truly an example: devoutly obedient to
God and true in faith. He was not an idolater [120]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 120)**

After the previous verses state some of the history of the Jews and some of the history of the people of Mecca, they tackle Allah's close elect, Ibrahim (Abraham).

Why has Allah mentioned Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) in particular? Because he is the father of the Prophets. In addition, he is loved by all people, even the idolaters say that they follow Ibrahim's (Abraham) religion, the Christians say that he was a Christian and the Jews say that he was a Jew.

This noble verse analyses the identity of Ibrahim (Abraham), clarifies his specific characteristics, and refutes and invalidates those people's claims regarding him. These are his characteristics: 'Abraham was truly an example...' (*an-Nahl*: 120).

The word '*ummah*', which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means a group from the general sense, and the context defines its number. For example, '*ummah*' of poets' means a group of poets, which can also be small in number. Allah says: 'When he came to the well of Midyan, he found there a group of people watering [their flocks]...' (*al-Qasas*: 23). In this verse, a group of shepherds are called an *ummah* because they had set out for the same purpose, which was to water their animals. The word '*ummah*' can also refer to a nation in a specific place, such as the nations of Persia and Rome. In addition, it can refer to a group that follows one of the Prophets. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...there was no nation but that there had passed within it a warner.' (*Fatir*: 24)

The word '*ummah*', which is stated in the Message of Prophet Muhammad, refers to all nations because he was sent to all mankind and gathered all the nations in one *ummah*. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[Messengers], this community of yours is one single community and I am your Lord, so serve Me...' (*al-Anbiya*: 92)

The meaning of one community is that it gathers all the communities. Therefore, Ibrahim (Abraham) held the rank of an entire community because absolute perfection belongs to Allah alone, and the perfect qualities given by Allah to His Messengers are called human perfections.

As for people other than the Messengers, these perfect qualities—such as forbearance, courage, and generosity—are distributed amongst them, and every person obtains one of them. These perfect qualities are only gathered in Messengers.

When reflecting on the character of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham), we will find that he has perfect qualities that are only found in an entire community. Likewise, when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* defined his position amongst Allah's Messengers, he said, 'Goodness is in me (which is the human perfection that Allah gave him) and in my *ummah*'⁽¹⁾ This means that each member of this *ummah* has taken a part of his perfect qualities, which are distributed amongst his entire *ummah*.

When you follow the history of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) in Allah's Book, you will find a good attribute in each situation. If you gather all of

(1) *Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani said, 'I do not know it, but its meaning is authentic.' It has been mentioned by Al-Qari in 'Al-Asrar Al-Marfu'ah' (457), As-Suyuti in 'Ad-Durar Al-Muntathirah' (220) and Al-'Ajluni in 'Kashf Al-Khafa' (1/476).*

these attributes together, you will find that they can only exist within an entire community, as he is the leader and good example who comprises all the attributes of goodness. The word '*ummah*' indicates that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* acts as a whole community in terms of his worship and obedience to Allah.

Allah's saying: '...devoutly obedient to Allah and true in faith.' (*an-Nahl*: 120) means that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) was humble and submissive to Allah in his worship '...and true in faith.' (*an-Nahl*: 120) The original meaning of '*hanaf*' means inclination in the literal sense. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) came when the world was in a state of corruption and crookedness concerning values. Thus, Ibrahim (Abraham) deviated from this crookedness and corruption.

Allah *Glorified is He* only sends Messengers when corruption has become widespread. Therefore, his deviation from crookedness and corruption means that he was an upright person who deviated from crookedness and corruption.

Then Allah concludes the verse by saying: '...he was not an idolater.' (*an-Nahl*: 120) This is the fourth attribute of Allah's close elect, Ibrahim (Abraham), after He had described him as being *ummah*, devoutly obeying Allah. All these characteristics negate the possibility of him associating partners with Allah, so what is the point of negating idolatry saying: '...he was not an idolater' (*an-Nahl*: 120)? We must distinguish between the different kinds of idolatry. Major idolatry refers to associating partners with Allah, which is considered as the most grievous degree of idolatry, and minor idolatry which refers to the belief that things created by Allah can also form and create things. The verse: '...he was not an idolater' (*an-Nahl*: 120) refers to minor idolatry because the aforementioned qualities negate that he was involved in major idolatry. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* willed to negate that he was involved in minor idolatry, too.

Therefore, when he was thrown into the fire, he did not turn to the available means, even though they were brought by Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. When Jibril (Gabriel) offered to help him, he said: 'I will receive no help from you.'⁽¹⁾ Thus, he was not involved in any minor idolatry and has no reason for it.

(1) *Al-Qurtubi mentioned it in his Tafsir (6/4183) while explaining Allah's saying: 'Allah said, "O fire, be coolness and safety upon Abraham"' (Al-Anbiya': 69) from the Hadith of=*

Allah Glorified is He says:

شَاكِرًا لِّأَنْعَمِهِ أَحَبَّتَهُ وَهَدَّاهُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ

**He was thankful for the blessings of God who
chose him and guided him to a straight path [121]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 121)**

Allah's saying: 'He was thankful for the blessings of Allah' (*an-Nahl*: 121) contains an allusion to the people of Mecca who showed ingratitude to Allah's bounties while their town was safe and at ease. They should not have been ungrateful because they claimed that they followed the creed of Ibrahim (Abraham) who was grateful to Allah for His bounties.

Allah's saying: '...who had elected him...' (*an-Nahl*: 121) means that Allah chose him to be a prophet and tested him, as He says: '...when Abraham was tried by his Lord with commands and he fulfilled them...' (*al-Baqara*: 124). This means that Allah tested him with some commandments which he fulfilled in the most perfect way, so his Lord said to him: '... [Allah] said, "Indeed, I will make you a leader for the people..."' (*al-Baqara*: 124). However, out of his love for leadership to be passed on to his offspring, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) said: '...And of my offspring' (*al-Baqara*: 124). Then, Allah corrected and clarified the matter for him, stating that there will be wrongdoers from among his offspring, so He says: '...My covenant does not include the wrongdoers...' (*al-Baqara*: 124). Therefore, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) learned from this situation and practiced caution thereafter. When he wanted to ask his Lord to provide sustenance to the people of Mecca, he said: 'and [mention] when Abraham said, "My Lord, make this a secure city and provide its people with fruits – whoever of them believes in Allah and the Last Day...."' (*al-Baqara*: 126) Allah also corrected this request, as the situation in this verse is different from the one stated in the previous verse which was concerned with leadership in values and religion, a mission which cannot be fulfilled by a wrongdoer. As for sustenance provided by Allah as Lord, it is bestowed on the believer and the disbeliever,

= Ubay ibn Ka'b. He mentioned that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) said, 'Allah's knowledge of my state makes me dispense with asking.'

the obedient and the disobedient. Allah provides all people with sustenance. Therefore, He says: ‘... And whoever disbelieves...’ (*al-Baqara*: 126). This means that He will also provides sustenance to the disbeliever.⁽¹⁾ Here, the greatness of Lordship, which nurtures the Prophets, becomes manifest, and it makes them a reflection of the essence of Lordship. All the situations of the Prophets give us a summary of human perfection.

An indication of Abraham’s precision in carrying out what was asked of him can be seen in his attitude towards building the House. After Allah had shown him its place, He removed from it the effects of floods and uncovered its foundations. It would have been sufficient for Abraham *peace be upon him* to fulfil his Lord’s command by making the building as high as his hands could reach, but he eagerly wanted to fulfil the command in the most perfect way, and execute it with precision and caution. So, he thought about bringing a high stone that he could stand on in order to make the building higher, and thus he brought the stone that is known as the place (*maqam*) of Abraham *peace be upon him*. His son helped him throughout the process; and this is why he brought a stone only two men could lift.

Likewise, there is his position of faith and his relinquishment of means when he left his wife Hajar and his young son Ishmael in a valley that had no vegetation and none of the essentials of life or means of living.⁽²⁾ This is because he did not believe in means but rather in the Original Cause of those means, and as long as Allah *Glorified is He* will provide them with the necessary means to stay alive. This is why Hajar asked him, ‘Was this place chosen by

(1) *Ibn ‘Abbas* Allah be pleased with him said: ‘Abraham wanted to restrict sustenance only to the believers, then Allah sent down: ‘...And whoever disbelieves...’ (*Al-Baqara*: 126). Allah gives them sustenance just as He gives the believers. He lets them enjoy themselves for a short time, but in the end He will drive them to the torment of the Hellfire, wretched is the destination. Then *Ibn ‘Abbas* recited: ‘To each [category] We extend - to these and to those - from the gift of your Lord. And never has the gift of your Lord been restricted.’ (*al-Isra*’: 20) This was mentioned by *Ibn Kathir* in his *Tafsir* (1/175).

(2) This is why we have His statement about Abraham that he said: ‘Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near Your sacred House, our Lord, that they may establish prayer. So make hearts among the people incline toward them and provide for them from the fruits that they might be grateful.’ (*Ibrahim*: 37)

Allah or by you?' When she learned that it was from Allah, she said, 'Then, He will never abandon us.' It is as if Abraham's faith had affected his wife, and her heart became full of certainty in Allah *Glorified is He*.

'And guided him to a straight path' How, after all these characteristics of faith, can the verses say 'and guided him'? Are these not all characteristics of guidance? We say: what is meant is that his guidance was increased, as He *Glorified is He* said: 'And those who are guided – He increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness.'

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَعَايَنَاهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا حَسَنَةً وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٢٢﴾

**We gave him blessings in this world, and he is
among the righteous in the Hereafter [122]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 122)**

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is explaining that Abraham's reward is immense in this life, before the reward of the Hereafter. The meaning of good in this life is the fact that he is loved by the people of all religions, the multitude of prophets amongst his offspring, his noble biography, and that he is always mentioned in goodness. Here we talk about his attributes, virtues and we boast about him. This is Allah's gift to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* in this life because he attained a high degree in his obedience and worship of Allah. Abraham *peace be upon him* requested this rank from his Lord, as he said: 'My Lord, grant me right judgement and join me with the righteous. And grant me a reputation of honour among later generations.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 83-84)

The ability to judge means the wisdom to put things in their proper place. His statement: 'in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous.' If this is his reward in this life, then there is no doubt that his reward in the Hereafter will be even greater.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

ثُمَّ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْكَ أَنْ اتَّبِعْ مِلَّةَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ حَنِيفًا وَمَا كَانَ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

**Then We revealed to you [Muhammad], ‘Follow the creed of Abraham, a man of pure faith who was not an idolater’ [123]
(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 123)**

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* had mentioned some of the attributes of His dear friend Abraham *peace be upon him* such as being one (*ummah*), devoutly obeying Allah’s will, turning away from all that is false and being free of lesser idolatry, in addition to being grateful for His blessings, being elected and chosen by his Lord and so forth, He said: ‘follow the religion of Abraham, inclining toward truth.’ It is as if the peak of Abraham’s virtues and rewards is that we have revealed to you, O Seal of the Messengers, to follow his creed. The creed of Abraham is the Revealed Law of Allah’s Oneness. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* reaffirms Abraham’s innocence with regards to idolatry by saying: ‘and he was not of those who associate with Allah.’

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّمَا جُعِلَ السَّبْتُ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اخْتَلَفُوا فِيهِ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَحْكُمُ
بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فِيمَا كَانُوا فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

**The Sabbath was made obligatory only for those
who differed about it. On the Day of Resurrection
your Lord will judge between them as to their
differences [124] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 124)**

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* had talked about Abraham, the father of the Prophets, and mentioned some of his attributes and virtues, He talked about the children of Israel with regards to an issue in which they contravened Allah’s Command after they had requested it themselves. It is as if the Quran is saying to them: ‘You claimed that Abraham was a Jew, so here are Abraham’s attributes. How do your attributes compare? Where are you in comparison to Abraham *peace be upon him*?’

The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us examples of their contravening what Allah had commanded, and that they were not like Abraham *peace be upon him*. So, He mentions what happened with them concerning the Sabbath. The

Children of Israel asked for a day in which they could rest and take a break from work and be free to worship Allah. Their prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* suggested to them that this day be Friday, as it is the day in which Allah completed the creation of the universe in six days, as well as being the day in which he chose His dear friend Abraham *peace be upon him*. However, they refused Friday and chose Saturday instead. They said: 'Indeed, Allah created this life in six days beginning on Sunday and finishing on Friday. Then He rested on Saturday. Likewise, we want to rest and be free to worship Allah on Saturday', and this was their desire and choice.

As for Christians, they refused to follow the Jews with regards to Saturday, or Abraham *peace be upon him* with regards to Friday, so they chose Sunday based on the fact that it is the day creation began.

As for the nation of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah chose Friday for them as the day of the completion of blessings.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, the Jews asked for Saturday and they chose it as a day to rest from work and be free to worship. This is what they asked for and their Lord *Glorified is He* acceded to their request and commanded them to free themselves for worship on this day. He acceded to their request in order to manifest their bickering, stubbornness and that they would not fulfil what they had undertaken even though they had chosen it themselves. He also did so in order to put an end to their arguments. If He had chosen a day for them, they would have objected to it, but instead they chose a day for themselves.

The story of the Sabbath with regards to the Jews came to serve a general creedal issue, which is that the signs that come to affirm the veracity of the Messengers in conveying from Allah *Glorified is He* can be from Allah or those who receive a messenger. The habit of the children of Israel was to deny

(1) *Related by Muslim in his (Sahih) (847) in the Book of Friday from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra and Hudhayfa may Allah be pleased with them that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said, 'It was Friday from which Allah diverted those who were before us. For the Jews, it was Saturday and for the Christians it was Sunday. Allah turned towards us and guided us to Friday. In fact, He made Friday, Saturday and Sunday as days of prayer. In this order, they come after us on the Day of Resurrection. We are the last of the people in the life of this world and the first among the creation to be judged on the Day of Resurrection.'*

everything, and this is why He *Glorified is He* said: ‘And nothing has prevented Us from sending signs except that the former peoples denied them.’ (*al-Isra’*: 59) They would suggest a sign and then deny it every time.

The story of the Sabbath is mentioned in many places, such as His statement: ‘And ask them about the town that was by the sea – when they transgressed in [the matter of] the sabbath – when their fish came to them openly on their sabbath day, and the day they had no sabbath they did not come to them. Thus did We give them trial because they were defiantly disobedient.’ (*al-A’raf*: 163)

The Jews violated their pledge with Allah—as was their habit—went against what they had pledged themselves to and went fishing on Saturday. Allah plotted against them and infuriated them, as various kinds of fish would appear on the surface of the water like sailboats, and they would gain nothing from this except grief and regret. They would say, ‘maybe they will come tomorrow;’ but then Allah would dash their hopes.

“...and the day they had no Sabbath they did not come to them.” The Noble Quran described what they were doing as transgression because they transgressed what Allah had legislated. He *Glorified is He* said: ‘And you had already known about those who transgressed among you concerning the Sabbath, and We said to them, “Be apes, despised.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 65)

And His statement: ‘The Sabbath was only appointed for those who differed over it.’ The phrase ‘who differed over it’ reveals the existence of two opposing groups regarding this issue, and the truth is that this differing was not between the Jews themselves, but rather between them and their Prophet who had chosen Friday for them. They differed with him and chose Saturday; so Allah attributed the differing to them. The meaning is that the Sabbath was only ordained as proof against those who hold divergent views about it because it affirms their hostility towards a day of worship. After they had suggested and chosen it, it became evidence of their guilt.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

أَدْعُ إِلَى سَبِيلِ رَبِّكَ بِالْحُكْمَةِ وَالْمَوْعِظَةِ الْحَسَنَةِ وَجِدِّ لَهُمْ يَأْتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ
 إِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ ضَلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِهِ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ

[Prophet], call [people] to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good teaching. Argue with them in the most courteous way, for your Lord knows best who has strayed from His way and who is rightly guided [125] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 125)

After the verses had talked about the most sublime exemplar of faith that can be found in man, embodied in the person of the Father of the Prophets, Abraham *peace be upon him* they then made the greatest of his virtues to be the fact that Allah commanded the Seal of His Messengers (Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*) to follow him, and then they explained some of the general features regarding the way of calling to Allah. His statement: ‘Call to the way of your Lord.’ The True Lord *Glorified is He* would not instruct Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with this command unless He knew that he would implement what he had been commanded; he will call people and he will bear the responsibilities that such action entails.

‘With wisdom’ meaning wisdom is to put something in its proper place, but why does calling to Allah require wisdom? It is because you only call to Allah’s way someone who has deviated from this way. When someone has deviated from Allah’s way, you find that this person has become accustomed to disobedience. Therefore, you have to be gentle with him in order to extract him from what he has become accustomed to. Severity and harshness in this kind of calling will just chase him away, because you are being harsh in two aspects: The first is the severity and harshness of the call itself, and the second is the severity of getting him to leave off the ways of life that he loves and has become accustomed to. If you treat him with gentleness and you present the call to him properly, he will yield to you by leaving off whatever he was doing against the divine way.

Generally speaking, it is known that advice is a heavy matter for people, especially in matters of religion. Beware; do not make the person you advise think that you are more knowledgeable than he is or that you are better than he is. Beware of confronting the person because of some deficiency he has, and do not embarrass him in front of others, because if the caller does any of

these things, it will be counterproductive. This method will make the person defensive and may even make him haughty and stubborn.

This method of calling is what is meant by His statement: ‘...with wisdom and good advice.’ With regards to this stage of wisdom and advice, a story is related that happened between Al-Hasan Ibn ‘Ali and Al-Husayn ibn ‘Ali. This story is a true embodiment upon which the caller must be:

It is related that they saw a man who was not performing his ablution properly and they wanted to teach him how to do it properly without hurting his feelings. So, they pretended that they were having a disagreement, and they were both saying to each other, ‘You do not perform your ablution properly.’ They then asked this man to arbitrate for them by watching each of them perform his ablution, and then he would decide who was better. So, both of them did it and they performed properly. The man gave his decision by saying, ‘Both of you have done it properly. I am the one who hasn’t done it properly.’ Indeed, it is an advice in the most sublime and wisest of examples.

Another example of calling is given to us by the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when a young man came to him who was in the peak of his youth, and he was complaining about his lack of patience with regards to his sexual desire, which is, as we have said, the most petulant of man’s natural inclinations.

The young man came and said, ‘O Messenger of Allah! Allow me to commit fornication!’ This is how bold he was. He did not hide his illness. This is how he sought the help of the doctor in order to clearly demand some medicine, and knowing the illness is the first step towards the cure. What did the Messenger of Allah say? Look at the way of calling. How is it? How did the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* gently rid him from the illness? He did not scold him, rebuke, nor harmed him. Rather, he took him and gently patted him on the shoulder. Then He said, ‘Would you want that for your mother?’ He said, ‘No, O Messenger of Allah. May I be ransomed for you?’ He *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Likewise, people would not want that for their mothers.’ Then he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Would you want that for your sister?’ He said, ‘No, O Messenger of Allah. May I be ransomed for you!’ He said, ‘Likewise, people would not want that for their sisters.’

In the same manner, he went to mention paternal and maternal aunts as well as wives. Then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* placed his noble hand on the young man's heart and supplicated for him: 'O Allah, purify his heart and fortify his private parts.' Then the young man stood up and he despised the fornication that he had intended, and said, 'By Allah, my soul has no concern for this except that I remember my mother, my maternal aunt and my wife.'⁽¹⁾

Think about this gentleness in explaining the correct ruling, as treating illnesses in society requires understanding, good manners, tenderness, and mindful conduct. We even see the disbelievers, when they give someone some bitter medicine, they encase it in something soft and sweet so that the patient can swallow it and take it easily. In this matter, how similar is the treatment of bodies to the treatment of hearts?

The experts in calling to Allah say, 'Advice is heavy, so do not send it as a weapon, and do not make it an argument. The realities are bitter, so use it with soft speech.'

When He *peace and blessings be upon him* heard of something that displeased him, some sin or abomination from the nation of faith in Medina, He *peace and blessings be upon him* would get on his noble pulpit and say, 'Why would people say such-and-such?'⁽²⁾

It suffices to give a general instruction without hurting any of the people. An example of this is what the intelligent people in the countryside would resort to

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- (1) *Related by Ahmad in his (Musnad) (5/206,207) and At-Tabarani in (Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir) (8/190,295) from the Hadith of Abu Umama may Allah be pleased with him in which the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said, 'O Allah, forgive his sin, purify his heart and fortify his private parts.' After that the young man did not go anywhere near this act.*
- (2) *Related by Muslim in his (Sahih) (1401) in the Book of Marriage from the Hadith of Anas may Allah be pleased with him who narrated that some of the Companions of Allah's Messenger asked his wives about what he did in private. Someone of them said, "I will not marry women." Someone among them also said, "I will not eat meat," and someone else among them said, "I will not lie down in bed." He praised Allah and glorified Him, and said, "Why would people say such-and-such, when I observe prayer and I also sleep, I observe the fast and leave off fasting, and I also marry women? Whoever turns away from my standard practice (Sunnah) is not of me."*

when one of them had been robbed or something of value had gone missing. They would declare that the missing or stolen object was lost and then say, ‘On such-and-such night, after the moon has set, we will throw the dust.’ The meaning of ‘we will throw the dust’ is that each one of them would bring an amount of dust and throw it in front of the house of the person who owned the lost item. In the morning, they would look through the dust until they found what they had lost. They would achieve their goal without making the matter public and without offending anyone. Maybe, if they had confronted the thief, he would have denied it and the matter would have become more complicated.

‘And argue with them in a way that is best.’ An argument is a discussion of proofs regarding some matter, and both sides must present their proof in the kindest manner with gentleness without being rude or haughty. In the course of an argument like this, you must not make your opponent angry because he might bicker about one word from you and then use it as a pretext to get up and leave.

His statement: ‘Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way.’ Some people might ask, ‘How is this conclusion to this verse connected to the subject of calling to Allah?’

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to explain the sensitivity of this mission to us, and that it is based on sincerity for Allah in giving advice. The caller should never be fraudulent when he is calling, and have some ulterior motive in mind. Also, you could be advising someone but harbour arrogance towards the one being exhorted, or feeling that you are better or more knowledgeable than he is.

Amongst mankind – and we seek refuge in Allah – there are those who gather the outward trappings of some subject and then they think that they are scholars. They harm people more than they benefit them.

Therefore, even if fraud is accepted in some things, it is never accepted in the field of calling to Allah, so beware of cheating with Allah while doing something for Him, because He *Glorified is He* knows best those who lead mankind astray and bar them from Allah’s path, and He knows best as to those who are rightly guided.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says⁽¹⁾:

وَإِنْ عَاقَبْتُمْ فَعَاقِبُوا بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبْتُمْ بِهِ وَلَئِنْ صَبَرْتُمْ لَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لِلصَّابِرِينَ ﴿١٦٦﴾

If you [believers] have to respond to an attack, make your response proportionate, but it is best to stand fast [126]

(The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 126)

We notice that an identical meaning is found in Allah's statement: 'So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you.' (*al-Baqara*: 194) Therefore, even though the True Lord *Glorified is He* has legislated that we respond to an attack to the same extent that we have been attacked, He made it difficult for it to be carried out. Who can measure the response to make sure that it is to the same extent as the original attack, such that it is absolutely like for like without any transgression? It is as if the difficulty in measuring and making sure that the attack and the response are the same is an indication that it is recommended to leave it for that which is better, as He *Glorified is He* said: 'But if you are patient – it is better for those who are patient.'

Allah made room for patience and made it better than responding to the attack and the difficulty in measuring and making sure that the attack and the response are the same, let alone the fact that patience unites hearts and removes enmity, as the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: 'And not equal are the good deed and the bad. Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend.' (*Fussilat*: 34)

(1) *The occasion for revelation behind this verse: Ad-Daraqutni relates from Ibn 'Abbas who said, "When the idolaters retreated from those who were killed at the battle of Uhud, the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him went there and saw a scene which he strongly disliked. He also saw Hamzah may Allah be pleased with him with his stomach ripped open, nose burnt and ears cut off. He said, "If it were not for the fear of causing more grief to the women or that it becomes a standard practice after me, I would leave him until Allah resurrects him from the bellies of predatory animals and birds. I shall kill seventy men of them [of the disbelievers of Quraysh] in revenge." Then this verse came down: 'And be patient, [O Muhammad], and your patience is not but through Allah.' (an-Nahl: 127) Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him was patient and did not seek equal retribution for Uhud.' Al-Qurtubi mentioned this in his (Tafsir) (5/2927) as well as Al-Wahidi in (Asbab An-Nuzul) (p.162).*

In this the impulses of the self are repelled and the outlets of revenge are blocked, thus putting an end to hatred and resentment. And His statement: ‘...it is better for those who are patient.’ It is better for a few reasons:

1. By being patient and not responding to an attack in a similar manner puts an end to quarrelling and allows the society to be relieved of having to fear a never-ending cycle of hostility.
2. Whoever is oppressed, and they are patient with that oppression, they guarantee that Allah *Glorified is He* will be with them because Allah is vigilant over His oppressed servants, and He places them in His company and custody. This is why they said that if the oppressors knew what Allah prepared for the oppressed, they would withhold their oppression.

The one who follows the verses of patience in the Noble Quran finds similarity in how some of these verses finish. He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is of the matters [requiring] determination.’ (*Luqman*: 17) In another verse: ‘And whoever is patient and forgives – indeed, that is of the matters [requiring] determination.’ (*ash-Shura*: 43)

Do not forget that the One Speaking is Allah. Therefore, the meaning is not the same, as every letter has a meaning, and the situations are different. Look at the subtlety of the Quranic rendering. The afflictions that befall man are of two types.

The first type: there are afflictions that befall man out of Allah’s decree and destiny, and he has no adversary therein, such as someone who is afflicted with regards to his health, or the loss of wealth, or home destruction, and so forth. With these kinds of afflictions man feels the pain of loss and the agony of deprivation, but he does not have any resentment towards anyone. Hence, patience with these events is relatively easy because it is a decreed and destined trial. There is no need to emphasise patience. The following verse suits this situation: ‘And be patient over what befalls you. Indeed, [all] that is of the matters [requiring] determination.’

The second type: these are the afflictions that are brought about by someone’s actions, such as killing, for example. It is a loss in which you do have an adversary, and it provokes your resentment and anger. It pushes you to

seek revenge whenever you see the killer. Patience with this is more difficult for the self to bear it because it requires endurance, as in the second verse: ‘And whoever is patient and forgives – indeed, that is of the matters [requiring] determination.’ Patience here is hard and there is an open opportunity for Satan to turn hearts and incite resentment and hatred.

We also notice in the first verse that He said: ‘be patient,’ while in the second verse “is patient and forgives,” because he has an adversary in front of him who is calling him to forgive him.

A story is related about a Jewish moneylender who gave a man some money on the condition that he returns it at a specified time. He further stipulated that if the man did not pay him back on time, he would cut out a piece of his flesh. The man agreed and when the time came to pay the money back, the man was unable to do so. The Jew brought the matter before the judge and told him about the agreement that they had between them. The judge was a man of intelligence, so he said, ‘The contract between you is sound and legally binding.’ Then he ordered him to bring a knife and he said, ‘Take a lump of his flesh, but do it with one blow, but if you take more or less we will take it from your flesh.’ When the Jew saw how difficult it would be, he preferred peace and reconciliation with his enemy.

The question now is: what is the connection ⁽¹⁾ between this verse: ‘And if you punish,’ and that which comes before it: ‘Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good advice.’?

Calling to Allah is a way that draws the attention of man – Allah’s vicegerent on His earth – to adhere to Allah’s way that He has appointed him to be the vicegerent of, and He has laid down this way for him so that he can organise his activities in life. The caller confronts these people who sow corruption in the earth and realise benefits for themselves at the expense of others. Whoever realises benefits for himself at the expense of others must have strength and power, which enable him to transgress, oppress, and have mastery.

(1) *Al-Qurtubi said in his (Tafsir) (5/2928): ‘The meaning is rightly connected to the Meccan event that precedes it because the degrees gradually proceed from the one who calls and advises – to the one who argues – to the one who is rewarded for his action, but what the majority have related is affirmed’, which is that this verse was revealed in Medina.*

When the way of Allah *Glorified is He* came to set right the activity of these people and extract them from what they had become accustomed to, deprive them of their power to transgress and oppress, and strip them of this whip that they were benefiting with, it was inevitable that they would dispute it and oppose it. This is because they were confronted with the natural intensity of advice and rectification, as well as the difficulty of leaving off that to which they had become accustomed.

The caller, therefore, must be characterised by wisdom, gives good advice and must argue with them in the most kindly manner. If ever their affair turns into aggression against the caller; if ever corruption is rampant and the wickedness of people's character is overwhelming, we will then need a different method, since the method of wisdom no longer works.

We must assume the position that is required by conventional integrity even if we have the power to respond in the way that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has legislated for us, without us having a violent dispute or being excessive in attacking. Then His statement comes: 'And if you punish [an enemy, O believers], punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed.' The verse contains a warning against going beyond the extent to which one was attacked when responding, and this is how your adversary learns that you are subject to a divine, just way before which everyone is equal. Even though they have deviated and committed a crime, the punishment is to the same extent and does not transgress that extent. Perhaps that will turn them towards the fact that the One Who commanded it did not give free rein to the wickedness of revenge. Rather, He guided it and called it towards pardon and forgiveness so that this could be more conducive to their guidance.

This divine instruction of restricting the punishment to be of the same extent as the inflicted harm was directed at a believer who was beloved to Allah's Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and one whom he held in high esteem—his uncle and Companion, Hamza ibn 'Abd Al Muttalib, the master of the martyrs, *may Allah be pleased with him*.

The disbelievers mutilated him at Uhud, and Hind split open his abdomen and bit into his liver. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was extremely troubled and saddened by the matter and it affected his soul. He

faced this situation bearing two kinds of emotional attachment: the attachment of faith and the attachment of kinship, as Hamza ibn 'Abd Al Muttalib was his uncle who had supported him and stood by him. Being affected by these emotions Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "If Allah grants me victory over them, I will mutilate 30 of their men."⁽¹⁾ However, the True Lord, the Just, Who had sent down the scales of justice and truth to creation, calmed him down and straightened out this matter for him and his community after him. He said: 'And if you punish [an enemy, O believers], punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed.'

The one who reflects on the Quranic style in this verse will notice that it contains an invitation to have sympathy and compassion towards one's adversary, for the One speaking is Allah, and every letter has a meaning, so do not try to understand the speech merely in a general sense. Rather, reflect on it and you will find that behind every letter there is a purport and a meaning that is sought.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to fill hearts with compassion and place the response to an attack, which has to be to the same extent, within the narrowest scope. This is mercy, even with one's enemies. This mercy causes them to have love for Islam, calls them to it, and this is how these enemies can turn into soldiers in the ranks of those calling to Allah. Likewise, His statement, 'And if you punish,' is an indication that responding to an attack requires strength and preparedness, as He *Glorified is He* said: 'Hence, make ready against them whatever force and war mounts you are able to muster, so that you might deter thereby the enemies of Allah, who are your enemies as well, and others besides them of whom you may be unaware, [but] of whom Allah is aware.' (*al-Anfal*: 60)

It is as if He is saying: 'Always be prepared and in a state of strength so that you are able to respond when someone attacks you.' Also, in the presence of strength and preparedness, the enemy is deterred, frightened and would not dare attack from the outset. With strength and preparedness, balance is maintained in society, as no one thinks about attacking someone who is strong.

(1) Mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his (*Tafsir*) (3/592) and he attributed it to Muhammad ibn Ishaq in (*As-Sirah*).

This is what we see nowadays between the countries of the world in their frantic conflict over arming themselves with destructive weapons.

Someone may ask regarding this issue: ‘As long as Islam is instructing pardon in this matter, then why does not it affirm it from the beginning? What is the point of talking about responding to the attack in a similar fashion? We say: It is because a society cannot be sound in its formation unless every person in the society is safe in his person, honour, wealth, and so forth. This security can only come about with some form of strength that maintains it, just as the society has balance, and this balance can only be maintained by some strength that guarantees that rights and responsibilities are carried out and fulfilled, as well as guaranteeing that people can carry out their activities without being oppressed.

Likewise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has an exalted wisdom in legislating punishment for crimes, as the goal of the Wise Legislator is to limit crime and prevent it from happening. If the killer knew that he was going to be killed, he would not dare commit the crime. In legislating punishment, there is mercy for the society, and its safety and security are preserved.

We see some people objecting to the punishment for apostasy. They say: ‘How can you kill someone who apostates from your religion? Where is freedom of belief, then?’ We say: By legislating that, the ways of entering this religion are restricted such that no one enters it unless they are absolutely convinced and their belief is firmly established. If the person knows this ruling from the beginning, then they are free to enter or not enter, and no one can force them. However, when they enter, they should know the ruling for apostasy.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, Islam has legislated punishment in order to preserve the society’s equilibrium and to be a deterrent so that crime does not happen from the outset. However, when it does happen, one resorts to another form of treatment that uproots hatred, enmity and resentment from society.

(1) From Ibn ‘Abbas may Allah be pleased with him who said, ‘The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said: “If someone changes their religion, kill them.”’ Related by Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (1/282,283), Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*) (12/267- (*Fath Al-Bari*)), Ibn Majah in his (*Sunnan*) (2535) and also At-Tirmidhi (9458)

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says⁽¹⁾:

وَأَصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرُكَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَلَا تَكُ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

So [Prophet] be steadfast: your steadfastness comes only from God. Do not grieve over them; do not be distressed by their scheming [127] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 127)

The verse mentions the virtue of patience as if to pave the way for the command here: 'be patient' so that everyone can follow Allah's command, after presenting to them the considerations and reasons that make patience a form of bravery, not weakness: 'It is courageous to be a coward sometimes.' If ever Satan whispers to you, and he entices you to seek revenge and you become filled with rage, then it is courageous to be patient and not obey Satan. His statement: 'And be patient, [O Muhammad], and your patience is not but through Allah.' It is from Allah's wisdom and mercy that He has made you patient in adversity because in patience there is goodness for you, and Allah is the One Who helps you to be patient, and He protects you from Satan's whispering and evil thoughts that provoke your anger and drag you towards revenge. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants His servants to direct themselves towards complying with His commands, and if He knows that this is in their intention He takes charge of their affair and He helps them.

Beware of believing that patience comes from you, from within yourself, as Allah wants you to direct yourself towards patience by merely having the intention to do so. When you direct yourself towards it, Allah mobilises good thoughts for you that help you, make the matter easy for you, and make you pleased with it; and then your patience becomes beautiful, free of anger or opposition towards it.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: 'And do not grieve over them.' Allah favoured the Arab nation which received the call to Allah on the tongue of His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by sending a Messenger amongst them who was from them. They knew of his descent and lineage as

(1) *Ibn Zayd said, 'It is abrogated by the permission to fight,' while the majority of people hold the position that it is reinforced, i.e. be patient in pardoning as opposed to responding to an attack in like manner. [(Tafsir al-Qurtubi) 5/2930]*

well as his history and character, as He loved his people and full of concern for them to be guided. Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; [he is] concerned over you and to the believers is kind and merciful.’ (*at-Tawba*: 128) Their difficulty heavily weighs upon him, and he is saddened by their suffering and toil. He is full of concern for them and he wants to bring about all kinds of goodness for them. He clarified this meaning in the Noble Hadith: ‘The similitude of how I am with regards to my community is like that of a man who stoked a fire, and then flies and butterflies started falling into it, so I am holding on to you by your trousers and you are still falling into it.’⁽¹⁾

This is why the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* grieved for his people when he saw their disbelief, stubbornness, and haughtiness towards accepting the Truth, as he wants guidance and goodness for them. When you love someone, you want them to have what you see as goodness, such as someone who goes to a market and finds that it is successful and doing well, so he tells those whom he loves about it, such as his family and his friends. Likewise, when the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* tasted the sweetness of faith, he wanted to share its pleasure and enjoyment with them.

Here the True Lord *Glorified is He* is comforting His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and relieving him of that which is distressing him about his people. He says to him: ‘Do not grieve over them, and do not make your soul take on more than it can bear. All you have to do is convey the Message.’ His Lord addresses him in another verse: ‘Then perhaps you would kill yourself through grief over them, [O Muhammad], if they do not believe in this message, [and] out of sorrow.’ (*al-Kahf*: 6) Do not destroy yourself by grieving over them. And His statement: ‘...and do not be in distress over what they conspire.’ The meaning of distress is that something vast shrinks in front of you, and it is smaller than what you had measured it to be. It happens to man in various degrees, as someone could feel unwelcomed by their own country and thus they move to another country.

Maybe the entire life of this world has become constricted for someone, and in this situation, his soul is able to give him space. If his soul becomes

(1) *Related by Muslim in his (Sahih) (2284) in the Book of Virtues, from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with them*

constricted, then he has reached the utmost limit of constriction, as He *Glorified is He* said about the three⁽¹⁾ who stayed behind from fighting for Allah's cause (*jihad*) with Allah's Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'And [He also forgave] the three who were left behind [and regretted their error] to the point that the earth closed in on them in spite of its vastness and their souls confined them.' (*at-Tawba*: 118)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* prohibits His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from being in a state of distress because of what the disbelievers are devising because the one who is constricted by something is the one who will not find any option within his scope of thought that will get him out of this distress. It is only the person who knows that he has an exit and a way out that will never be distressed.

The meaning thus: O Muhammad, Allah is with you. He will make a way out of this distress for you, and He will respond to what these people are devising. 'But they plan, and Allah plans. And Allah is the best of planners.' (*al-Anfal*: 30)

This is why he said, 'There is no worry when You are the Lord.' When this life becomes constricted for you, as well as your family and loved ones, and even your soul becomes constricted, Allah opens things up for you so that you can be in His Company. This is why He *Glorified is He* said afterwards:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ مُحْسِنُونَ ﴿١٢٨﴾

**For God is with those who are mindful of Him
and who do good [128] (The Quran, *an-Nahl*: 128)**

This is the issue of being in Allah's company for those who are conscious of Him. Those who are conscious of Allah are in His custody and company. When you are in your Lord's company, who dares to scheme or plot against you?

(1) They are Ka'b ibn Malik, Hilal ibn Ummayah and Marara ibn Ar-Rabi', and they stayed behind from fighting with Allah's Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the military expedition of Tabuk without an excuse. They were punished by being avoided by the Muslims for approximately fifty days and nights. Their souls became constricted and the earth became constricted for them, but they were patient with Allah's Command and they were firm until Allah made an opening for them because of their honesty with Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* in admitting that they stayed behind without an excuse. [summarized from (*Tafsir Ibn Kathir*) 2/399]

During the journey of emigration from Mecca to Medina, Allah's Company was manifested and embodied in the cave, when the disbelievers had surrounded them. Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *may Allah be pleased with him* said to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'If one of them were to look under his feet, he would see us.' The Messenger Muhammad, being certain of this company, responded to him by saying: "O Abu Bakr! What do you think of two and Allah is the third of them?"⁽¹⁾

How is this response from Allah's Messenger connected to what Abu Bakr *may Allah be pleased with him* had said? The meaning is that as long as Allah is the third of them, then they are in Allah's Company, and Allah is not encompassed by human vision. So, whoever is in His company is also not encompassed by human vision.

His statement: '...who are conscious of Him' The general meaning of "being conscious of Allah" is to obey Allah by following what He has commanded and avoiding what He has prohibited. The meaning of 'Be conscious of Allah!' is that you must place a defence and a barrier between yourself and Allah's punishment which will protect you, and this is done by following what He has commanded and avoiding what He has prohibited because the True Lord *Glorified is He* has the attributes of mercy, as He is the Most Compassionate, the Dispenser of Mercy, and the Much-Forgiving. He also has the attributes of Might, as He is the Lord of Retribution, the All-Compeller, and the Almighty, so place a defence between yourself and these attributes of retribution.

His statement: '...and those who are doers of good.' The doers of good are those who obligate themselves in worshipping Allah to do more than what Allah has obligated them to do. It is of the same category as that which Allah has obligated them. Thus, if the Revealed Law has prescribed five prayers for you which are to be performed in the day and at night, then to do good would mean to increase and do whatever optional prayers you are capable of. If it is obligatory to fast in the month of *Ramadan*, then to do good would mean to fast some days in other months, and the same goes for *zakat* and everything else Allah has made obligatory.

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*) (4663) and Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (2286) from the Hadith of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *may Allah be pleased with him*.

This is why we find that doing good (*ihsan*) is the highest rank in the religion, and this is clear in the Hadith of Gabriel *peace be upon him* when he asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about (*islam*), (*iman*), and (*ihsan*), he *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘(*Ihsan*) is that you worship Allah as if you are seeing Him, and even though you cannot see Him, He certainly sees you.’⁽¹⁾

The noble verse reveals to us that those who are conscious of Allah have a reward and they have company, and that those who do good also have a reward and company. Everyone is according to their level because the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives to His creation from His attributes of perfection according to the extent of their company with Him *Glorified is He*. Those who are content with what Allah has obligated them are not equal to those who do good and increase. The latter must have some merit and distinction.

In the chapter of *adh-Dhariyat*, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Indeed, the righteous will be among gardens and springs, accepting what their Lord has given them. Indeed, they were before those doers of the good.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16) He did not say ‘believer’ because believers only do what Allah has obligated them to do, but what aspect of (*ihsan*) do they have? He *Glorified is He* says: ‘They used to sleep but little of the night. And in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness, and from their properties was [given] the right of the [needy] petitioner and the deprived.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17-19)

All of these are optional matters that go beyond what Allah has obligated them to do. We must be aware of the fact that the purport of His statement: ‘And from their properties was [given] the right of the [needy] petitioner and the deprived,’ is not (*zakat*), but rather, optional charity because regarding (*zakat*) He *Glorified is He* has said: ‘a due share.’ (*al-Ma’arij*: 24)

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*) (16/4777), as well as Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (9) in the Book of Faith from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him. Ibn Hajar said in (*Al-Fath*) (1/230): ‘To do good (*ihsan*) in worship is to have sincerity, humility and one’s mind free of thoughts whilst engaged in it and to be observant of The Object of Worship, such that in being overwhelmed by witnessing the True Lord *Glorified is He* with one’s heart, it is as if one is seeing Him with one’s eyes, which is the meaning of his statement: “as if you are seeing Him.” You call to mind that the True Lord *Glorified is He* is watching over you and seeing everything that you do, and this is the meaning of his statement: “He certainly sees you.”’

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Verse 87	517	Verse 117	601
Verse 88	518	Verse 118	601
Verse 89	520	Verse 119	603
Verse 90	527	Verse 120	605
Verse 91	541	Verse 121	608
Verse 92	543	Verse 122	610
Verse 93	548	Verse 123	611
Verse 94	551	Verse 124	611
Verse 95	553	Verse 125	614
Verse 96	554	Verse 126	618
Verse 97	555	Verse 127	624
Verse 98	557	Verse 128	626