

vol. (14)

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اراون

فواط ر

المجلد (14)



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

vol. (14)

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعراوى

فواظر

المجلد (14)

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعراوى

فواظر

Published by :



AL HOŞN RESEARCH & STUDIES CENTRE

Tel +97126265151

info@alhosnuae.ae

Printing & Binding:

Printing Group

info@printinggroup.com

ISBN: 978-9948-36-806-9

First edition 1441 H. - 2020

©All rights reserved to Al Hosn Research & Studies Centre
No part of this book maybe reproduced or transmitted
including printing, publishing, photocopying, or storing
by any electronic or mechanical means without written
permission from the publisher.

the chapter of

al-Kahf

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

الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ الْكِتَابَ وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ عِوَجًا ۝١

**Praise be to God, who sent down the Scripture to
His servant and made it unerringly straight [1]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 1)**

Allah concludes chapter 17 (*the chapter of al-Isra*’) with praise, and starts chapter 18 (*the chapter of al-Kahf*)⁽¹⁾ again with praise. The phrase ‘all praise is due to Allah’ (*al-hamdu-lillah*) has always been the motto which the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* would utter among the best of utterances: Exalted is Allah (*subhan Allah*) and all praise is due to Allah (*al-hamdu-lillah*). Also, chapter 17 commences with ‘Exalted is Allah’ (*subhan Allah*), while Chapter 18 commences with ‘all praise is due to Allah’. Exalted is Allah (*subhan Allah*) is an expression exalting Him above anything that does not suit His Majesty including having a partner that shares Himself or His actions or His attributes. It is also an expression of glorifying the Divine Essence which later bestowed many blessings; so we say: all praise is

(1) The chapter of *Al-Kahf* is chapter 18 in the arrangement of the Noble Quran. It contains 110 verses, and falls in part 15 and 16 of the Book. According to all commentators it was revealed in Mecca. Al-Qurtubi, however, says that a group has said that the beginning of the chapter was revealed in Medina until the word ‘barren’ (*guruza*), but the former opinion is the correct one. The merits of the chapter of Al-Kahf have been mentioned in numerous prophetic sayings (*Hadiths*) including one narrated by Muslim (809) on the authority of Abu Ad-Dardaa’ in the book ‘*Salat Al-Musafireen*’: *Whoever memorizes ten verses from the beginning of the chapter of Al-Kahf is safeguarded from the Anti-Christ*. An-Nawawy comments in his exegesis of Muslim, “and in another narration, ‘*from the end of the chapter of Al-Kahf*’ it has been said that the reason for that is the wonders mentioned in its beginning and end which anyone who meditates upon would be safeguarded from the trial of the Anti-Christ.

due to Allah (*alhamdu-lillah*). Thus, 'Exalted is Allah' (*subhan Allah*) is an expression for exaltation and 'all praise is due to Allah' (*alhamdu-lillah*) is an expression of gratitude for blessings.

The Arabic word *al-hamd* in its general meaning comprises the notions of lauding (*thanaa*), gratitude (*shukr*) and commendation (*madh*). Although these words are similar in meaning, each of them has its own connotation. While they are all expressions of lauding, gratitude (*shukr*) is shown by someone who has received a personal favour or gift like when someone does you a favour and you show them gratitude and thank them for it.

The word praise (*al-hamd*), however, is not just a personal gratitude, but also a more general gratitude for blessings given to you as well as to others. Hence, the domain of praise (*al-hamd*) is wider than that of gratitude (*shukr*). As for commendation (*al-madh*), you could commend a beautiful design just because you like it without previously having received anything from it or its designer.

Now when Allah says (*al-hamdu-lillah*) with the definite article (*al*) which indicates exclusiveness, it means absolute, total praise (*al-hamd*) is due only to Allah. This praise incorporates all praises, even the praise you give to a person who benefits or helps you out –originally it is praise to Allah who enabled this person to be good to you. In this manner, if you trace back the praise given to any person anytime, you will find that it goes back to the Original Benefactor *Glorified and Exalted is He*.

The phrase (*al-hamdu-lillah*) is the expression by which Allah taught us to praise Him. Otherwise, if He had left us to individually choose how to praise and thank Him, without determining the expression, then people would have differed greatly in their praise, each according to their abilities of expression. We would then find the eloquent person more elegant in expression than the one who stammers, and the illiterate. Allah simplified it and made us all equal in how we thank Him. Everyone says (*al-hamdu- lillah*), the eloquent, the person who stammers and the illiterate.

Therefore, The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said as he praised and lauded Allah: Exalted are you, we are incapable of enumerating the laud you are due, You are as You have lauded Yourself. For if we tried to

enumerate the laud You are due, we would not be able to, because no one knows the extent of lauding due unto You except You, and no one else could enumerate it. All we can do is to say what You have taught us in praising you: (*al-hamdu-lillah*).

Thus, making all people equal in praising Allah is a blessing in itself, and deserves praise. So, we say: All praise be to Allah for teaching us to say (*al-hamdu-lillah*). And knowing to praise Him for teaching us how to praise Him is also a blessing! All praise be to Allah for teaching us to praise Him with (*al-hamdu-lillah*). And so, if you tried to trace the praise due to Allah, you would find it to be an endless chain of praise, upon praise, upon praise, upon praise etc. Thus, Allah remains forever the One Being praised (*Mahmoud*), and the slave remains in infinite praise.

Allah *Glorified is He* commences five chapters (*suras*) of the Quran with ‘All praise is due to Allah’ (*al-hamdu-lillah*): ‘All praise is due to Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds’ (*al-Fatiha*: 2), ‘All praise is due to Allah, who has created the heavens and the earth, and made the darkness and the light; yet those who disbelieve set up equals with their Lord’ (*al-An‘am*: 1), ‘All praise is due to Allah who has revealed the Book to His slave and has not placed therein any crookedness’ (*al-Kahf*: 1) ‘All praise is due to Allah, to whom belongs whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth; and to Him is due (all) praise in the Hereafter ...’ (*Saba’*: 1), ‘All praise is due to Allah, the Originator of the heavens and the earth, who made the angels messengers with wings ...’ (*Fatir*: 1).

However, both praises in each chapter have their own aspect. The first praise is due because Allah is the Lord of all the worlds (*rabb al-‘alamin*) with the Arabic word (*rabb*) Lord meaning the Creator and the One in charge of sustainment and upbringing (*at-tarbiya*). He created from nothingness, and provided from nothingness and assumed responsibility for bringing up his slaves. He is a Lord to all the worlds and we are obliged to praise Him for being the Lord (*ar-rabb*) of the worlds and for providing for them with His grace.

The second praise is due to Him who created the heavens and the earth, and established darkness and light. These are signs and blessings that are accurately created to sustain life and preserve all species by enabling reproduction.

Darkness and light are also among the great blessings of Allah, and they are not opposites, but complement one another. There is a function for darkness, just as light has its function. Darkness is for tranquillity and resting, and light is for effort and activity. It is not possible to endeavour in effort and to be diligent in work unless there is time to rest and calm down, thereby renewing one's energy. Hence the pairing of darkness and light is for harmonious balance, since life is not sustainable in continual darkness, just as it is not sustainable in continual light.

The third chapter (*sura*) commencing with (*al-hamdu-lillah*) is the one we are currently examining. Allah makes it clear that He does not only sustain and bring up human beings materially, but that there is a superior kind of upbringing and sustainment, that of the spirit and of values. He mentions here a true aspect of the creation of mankind, that man was not created for a material reason, but for a loftier mission: to know moral values, the Lord and religion, and to strive for another life other than this material one. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'All praise is due to Allah who has revealed the Book to His slave...' (*al-Kahf*: 1). The praise here is for the revelation of the Holy Book which comprises all moral values. We have previously said that Allah, *Exalted is He*, gracefully set the models of a correct and righteous life even before He created it. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'The Most Merciful; Taught the Quran; Created humanity; [And] taught them to communicate.' (*ar-Rahman*: 1-4) So, the teaching of the Quran came before the creation of mankind; Allah established a well-ordered pattern for life before He created His slaves based on His comprehensive knowledge of their nature and what is suitable for them. This is like an inventor of a device or instrument who fully knows its function and can determine the ways of its maintenance. The Book revealed unto Mohammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the primary directive. Therefore, you must adjust yourself onto it and know that it is the regulator of your life, and that it contains the fundamental rules of your safe-keeping.

Allah *Glorified is He* says '...to His slave ...' (*al-Kahf*: 1) as in chapter of *al-Isra'*: worshipful slavery is the aspect of dignity (for Mohammad) during the Night Journey and Heavenly Ascent. Thus Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Exalted is He who took His slave for a journey by night ...' (*al-Isra'*: 1).

Worshipful slavery is why he was raised unto Allah's presence, and why he had been chosen to receive the Book for he was a true slave before he was transported by night [on that miraculous journey]. First, he assumed the responsibility of abiding by Allah's orders and calling others to it. So, he was a sincere slave and endured what he endured for Allah's sake. And it was his reward to be raised to the rank of divine presence where he was granted the ordained prayers in order to descend back and raise his voice with it and call his people to it.

Thus, the Prophet received to deliver, and he received because he had achieved a pure state of slavery. He was ascended unto the presence of his Lord and accepted the prescribed rite of prayer to deliver it to his people; as if he were saying to them: Whoever wishes to meet Allah let him perform the prayer.

The reference to '...the Book...' (*al-Kahf*: 1) is to the Noble Quran. But the chapter of *al-Kahf* is the eighteenth chapter out of the one hundred and fourteen chapters of the Quran. In other words, the Quran is not yet complete, so why did He call it 'the Book' (*al-kitab*) before the last chapter? In my opinion, the word book (*al-kitab*) can be used to mean part of it. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'When We have recited it, repeat the recitation (*Quran*)' (*al-Qiyama*: 18). The word 'Quran' was used here to mean a recitation. So, it may refer to a single verse or a chapter or the whole Quran.

Alternatively, the intended meaning of 'the Book' could be the Quran as it was descended in its entirety from the Preserved Tablet (*al-lawh al-mahfuzh*) to the lowest heaven and then revealed in instalments according to circumstances. Hence the intended meaning here could be the complete descent (*al-inzal*) of the Book and not the revelation (*at-tanzil*) thereof.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and has not placed therein any crookedness' (*al-Kahf*: 1) meaning He established it soundly in straight-forward rectitude, with no deviation or crookedness (*'iwaj*). As He said in another verse: 'An Arabic Quran without any crookedness ...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 28). Crookedness (*i'wija*) is when something takes on a bent, a contorted extension, whereas straightness, used to mean uprightness (*al-istiqamah*) means a uniform extension, twisted neither to the right nor to the left. It is known that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points. People's lives in this world

cannot be upright unless they pursue a straight path which protects them from colliding with one another.

Allah *Glorified is He* has created mankind to complement one another, for each one of them has a talent which the others need. We have the doctor, the engineer, the carpenter, the tailor, and no one can stand alone without the talents of others. Therefore, it is imperative that different people interact with one another in life and that they complement one another in harmony. And their interaction must be regulated like traffic laws to avoid colliding with one another. On a twisting road with many curves someone approaching from here cannot see the other approaching from there, and they crash. Therefore, it is necessary for the road to be straight, so that every one of us sees the other, and avoids colliding with them. The divinely ordered path is the straight, even path which insures the safety of people in life; everyone knows their limits.

Crookedness was also mentioned in the following; Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And they ask you about the mountains. Say, “[On that Day] my Lord will blast them into dust, and leave a flat plain; you will not see therein any crookedness or unevenness’ (*Ta Ha*: 105-107). A flat plain void of anything ‘...you will not see therein any crookedness...’ (*Ta Ha*: 107): in other words it is straight; ‘...or unevenness’ (*Ta Ha*: 107). So, it is evened out, containing no depression or elevation to obscure the view and cause collision like a steep incline (*al-’aqabah*) in traffic.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* describes the Noble Quran saying:

قِيَمًا يَتَذَكَّرَ أَلْسِنًا شَدِيدًا مِّنْ لَّدُنْهُ وَيُبَشِّرَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ الَّذِينَ
يَعْمَلُونَ الصَّالِحَاتِ أَنَّ لَهُمْ أَجْرًا حَسَنًا ﴿٢﴾

Warning of severe punishment from Him, and [giving] glad news to the believers who do good deeds — an excellent reward [2] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 2)

The first Arabic word in this verse is (*qayyim*) meaning straight like the word (*mustaqim*). It refers to the Quran confirming what was said in the previous verse: ‘...and has not placed therein any crookedness’ (*al-Kahf*: 1). This is because straightness and crookedness are not always spotted with the

naked eye and you may need a precise instrument to accurately reveal their extent. You notice this phenomenon on a flat paved road which appears to be perfectly straight and even, but as soon as it rains, this seemingly evenness is exposed, and its flaws become evident. Therefore, the confirmation: '[He made it] straight (*qayyim*)...' (*al-Kahf*: 2).

The word (*qayyim*) also means supremacy and guardianship over others (*muhaymin*). You say: the guardian (*qayyim*) to mean the one legally entrusted of managing a minor's affairs. Thus, the Quran has no crookedness in it, and is also the supreme guardian over the previous [divinely revealed] scriptures.

As Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And We revealed to you the Book with the truth, verifying what is before it of the Book and a guardian (*muhaymin*) over it' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). Also, relevant in this context is where Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Then turn your face straight to the right (*qayyim*) Religion...' (*ar-Rum*: 43). The right (*qayyim*) religion also means the entrusted guardian (*muhaymin*) of previous religions. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...to warn of a severe punishment from Him...' (*al-Kahf*: 2).

And that is the reason for the revelation [of the Quran]. The Arabic word for warning (*indhar*) is to scare from an approaching calamity. Those warned here are the disbelievers since none other is warned of severe punishment. They are not explicitly mentioned here, however, to allow analysis, since the Quran must be received with open, perceptive thought, and an active mind.

Then He intensifies the punishment, referring to it as 'severe', plus [it is] '...from Him...' (*al-Kahf*: 2). The severity of any punishment corresponds to the strength of the punisher, so when a punishment is from Allah, then no one has the power to withstand it, nor can anyone escape from it.

Following this, He says: '...and to give good tidings (*yubashshir*) to the believers ...' (*al-Kahf*: 2). The Arabic verb used is (*yubashshir*) to give good tidings from (*bishara*) good tiding, the foretelling of something good to occur in future. Note that here, for the good tiding He explicitly mentions to whom it is --namely, the believers--unlike with the warning of severe punishment, where the disbelievers were not mentioned. This is from the mercy of Allah even in sentence structure. The glad tiding here is about a good reward

because it is from the All-Generous, the Infinitely Gracious (*al-mutafaddil*). Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

مَكْتَبَاتٌ فِيهِ أَبَدًا ﴿٣﴾

**That they will always enjoy [3]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 3)**

In other words, they shall stay in it for eternity. Unlike people's reward in this life for one another, Allah's reward in the Hereafter is not limited to how much you deserve. When the Supreme Benefactor (*al-mun'im*) rewards, His reward is abundant. So, when people wrong you in the assessment of your reward in this world, know that Allah is just, and will give you with extreme generosity. He is the Supremely Equitable (*al-munsif*), the Infinitely Gracious (*al-mutafaddil*). And while any reward in this world is deemed to incomplete or cut off, it is permanent in the hereafter since any blessing in this world is transient: either you leave it or it leaves you.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَيُنذِرَ الَّذِينَ قَالُوا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ وَلَدًا ﴿٤﴾

**It warns those people who assert, 'God has
offspring' [4] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 4)**

Unlike the first warning, this repeated warning is specific to the peak of disbelief: a warning to those who say that Allah has taken unto Himself a son. As for the first warning, it applies to the general disbelief, while the second is for reiteration of the specific alongside the general. The punishment reserved for those who attribute a son to Allah will be commensurate with their audacity.

The Quran has definitively explained the abomination of this act of disobedience. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And they say, "The Most Merciful has taken [to Himself] a son!"; You have done an atrocious thing, the heavens almost rupture therefrom, and the earth splits open and the mountains collapse in devastation! That they attribute a son to the Most Merciful and it does not befit the Most Merciful that He should take [to Himself] a son!' (*Maryam*: 88-92) It is surely the gravest act of disobedience to delve into the person of Allah with words

that would cause the sky to be torn to shreds, and at which the earth would crack apart, and at the horror of which the mountains would collapse.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

مَا لَهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ عِلْمٍ وَلَا لِآبَائِهِمْ كَبُرَتْ كَلِمَةً
تَخْرُجُ مِنْ أَفْوَاهِهِمْ إِنْ يَقُولُونَ إِلَّا كَذِبًا ﴿٥﴾

**They have no knowledge about this, nor did their forefathers
— it is a monstrous assertion that comes out of their mouths:
what they say is nothing but lies [5] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 5)**

This proposition which they allege and this utterance which they falsely say about Allah, from where did they get it? The truth is that they claim it while having no knowledge of it. Knowledge is either personal, or inherited from fathers and grandfathers. But they possess nothing of that and attest to something that has no reality. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘They have no knowledge of it’ (*al-Kahf*: 5). The absence of knowledge arises from one of two factors. Either a thing exists or you are not aware of it because it is concealed from you. Or because a thing has no existence in the first place, and you do not know that it has no existence because the non-existent cannot be the basis of any knowledge.

As regards His utterance: ‘dreadful is this saying that comes out of their mouths’ [*al-Kahf*: 5], the Arabic word *kaburat* (rendered as dreadful here) means to be oppressively immense and sinful to the utmost degree because they have spoken of an abominable issue; it is intolerably atrocious that this statement should come out of their mouths.

The Arabic word *kalima* (assertion) refers to a singular word that has no additional attribution. It is like the word Mohammad, the verb ‘go’, or the preposition ‘in’. They are independent words. Sometimes, this word, i.e. *kalima* is used to refer to a phrase or a speech. Similarly, the verse refers to their (false) assertion that Allah has taken a son as a word. Exactly as we say that, so and so has delivered a word (*kalima*), when in reality he has delivered a speech.

Another example of this is found in the verse wherein Allah says: ‘until when death overtakes one of them, he says: Send me back, my Lord, send me

back; Haply I may do the good in that which I have left. By no means! It is a [mere] word that he speaks' (*al-Mu'minun*: 99-100). Thus, Allah refers to the statement of theirs as a *kalima*. Another example of this is yet the words Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him*: 'Say, O followers of the Book! come to an equitable proposition (*kalima*) between us and you that we shall not serve any but Allah and [that] we shall not associate aught with Him and [that] some of us shall not take others for lords besides Allah; but if they turn back, then say: Bear witness that we are Muslims.' (*Al-Imran*: 64) Allah calls all of this discourse a *kalima*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that this word comes out of their mouths, which means that this statement is intolerably atrocious because it has already come forth from them and they actually said it. If only they had kept it to themselves, had not publicised it and regarded it too monstrous to utter, they would have been counted among the believers. A delegation from the Yemen came to the Prophet *peace be upon him* and said, 'O Prophet of Allah, we have thoughts about Allah which we cannot dare talk about. In other words, we are unable to utter them. The Prophet said, 'That is clear faith.'⁽¹⁾ Thus, what is blameworthy is that they have expressed this notion with their mouths. This is the ultimate ignominy. It is no matter how evil thoughts and ideas are when the one in whose mind they occur suppresses them. He suffers no consequences, as if they had never occurred.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* said that what they say is nothing but lies. What is not in line with reality is a lie. A wise man circulates the words in his mind and inspects them with his thought before he speaks. A proper conception of the words arises in his mind and his tongue gives voice to it. Before thinking of this conception and before uttering it, it either corresponds with reality or it does not.

Before saying, 'Mohammad is diligent,' For example, the conception of his diligence arises in your mind. That is what is called mental conception that you give utterance to when you say, 'Mohammad is diligent.' If there exists a person who is called Mohammad and is actually diligent, this mental

(1) *Narrated by Muslim*

conception and utterance corresponds with reality and thus, its communication is true. However, if there existed no person called Mohammad or he existed but was not diligent, then the verbal utterance does not correspond with reality and thus, the communication is fallacious. Therefore, this is an informative method of discourse that could be true or false.

In addition, there is also a generative method which could be neither true nor false because its correspondence to the reality happens after the verbal utterance. It is as saying to someone, 'Study your lessons.' In this case, the reality of this utterance will occur in the future. Therefore, such a generative method of discourse is not described as either truth or false.

The actual truth, from the scientific approach, is that the verbal utterance corresponds with reality and belief. Thus, if you believe in something, but it is not real, then it is fallacious in terms of reality, however you are not a liar because there is a difference between the report and the one who communicates it. This phenomenon is clear in the verse where Allah says: 'When the hypocrites come to you, they say: We bear witness that you are most surely Allah's Prophet, and Allah knows that you are most surely His Prophet, and Allah bears witness that the hypocrites are surely liars.' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1)

Thus, their statement that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is true because it corresponds with reality. However, does it concur with their conviction? No, it does not correspond to their belief. Therefore, Allah testifies that they are liars because their speech does not concur with the reality of their convictions. Allah calling them liars does not pertain to their statement that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, but rather to their saying, 'we bear witness.' Thus, calling them liars is due to their statement of bearing witness. To bear witness means that the heart is in agreement with the tongue. They bore witness with their tongues apart from their hearts.

In the verse we are studying, their utterance that 'Allah has taken a son,' had no basis in reality, so it is a fallacious ascription. Therefore, Allah said that they say nothing but lies. (*al-Kahf*: 5)

Then Allah *Glorified is He* consoles His Prophet Muhammad in order to alleviate him of what he encounters of hardships, resistance and impudence on the path of calling people to Islam. Thus, He *the Almighty* says:

فَلَعَلَّكَ بَدِخٌ نَّفْسَكَ عَلَىٰ ءَاثَرِهِمْ إِن لَّمْ يُؤْمِنُوا بِهَذَا الْحَدِيثِ أَسَفًا ﴿٦﴾

**But [Prophet] are you going to worry yourself to death
over them if they do not believe in this message? [6]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 6)**

The meaning of the Arabic phrase *bakhi' nafsak* (worry yourself to death) is to exert yourself in calling your people greatly and excruciatingly. The verse shows compassion for the Prophet Muhammad, because he overburdened himself in order to guide his people with that which Allah has not charged him with and made incumbent upon himself what Allah did not make incumbent upon him. The Prophet *peace be upon him* used to call his people to Islam and they would renounce and turn away from him. He would follow in their footsteps with regret and sorrow the way you follow a beloved one or dear companion who leaves you behind on a journey while you are filled with the bitterness of distress and separation. Therefore, it was as if the Prophet, out of his love for his people and his earnest desire to guide them, was nearly killing himself with grief.

The Arabic word *al-asaf* means profound sorrow as the Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* said, 'O my sorrow for Yusuf!' (*Yusuf*: 84) and as in the verse where Allah speaks about Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he returned to his people in anger over their worship of the calf. Allah says: 'So Musa returned to his people wrathful, sorrowing.' (*Ta Ha*: 86)

However, Allah *Glorified is He* had defined the mission of the Prophet Muhammad as conveying the Message. He made him a bearer of glad tidings and a Warner. He did not charge him regarding calling people to Islam except with that which was within His capacity. Thus, the verse is a manifestation of Allah's Mercy to His Prophet. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا مَا عَلَى الْأَرْضِ زِينَةً لِّهَا لِنَبْلُوَهُمْ أَيُّهُمْ أَحْسَنُ عَمَلًا ﴿٧﴾

**We have adorned the earth with attractive things so that
We may test people to find out which of them do best [7]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 7)**

It is as if this verse is a commentary on the previous one. It is a reminder to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the life of this

world is short and the end of this world is imminent. Therefore, there is no need for the Prophet to destroy himself out of grief over the stubborn resistance of his people. The life of every person in this world is his time in it and the actual length of existence of this world is not his business. The life of someone else will avail nothing to anyone. Thus, indeed this world is so short and quickly it reaches its end! Then they all return to Us (Allah) and We recompense them in accordance with what they did. So do not be sad, do not despair and do not trouble your soul because of their disbelief.

Allah said that He has adorned the earth with attractive things. This means that everything that is on the earth is an enchanting adornment. This adornment is the ornamentation, which glitters before the eyes and attracts it. It then, obliterates and disappears. The Quran has clarified this phenomenon for us in the verse that says: '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). So, beware not to be deceived by this ornamentation because it is splendid beauty which dries up quickly and becomes some debris.

Allah has made that which is on earth adornment in order to test us. The Arabic noun *al-bala'*, which is derived from the same root as the verb used in the verse means a trial and examination. It does not mean a misfortune as some people think because the real calamity befalls upon the one who fails in the examination. This testing of theirs is from Allah even though He knows their state and how their response will be in advance. Yet, Allah tests us in order to make it actual knowledge and actual evidence.

The closest approximation to this issue is of a pupil whose failure is foreseen by his teacher based upon what he has seen of preliminary indications including his mentality, his diligence, and attention. The teacher builds his judgement on them. Once the pupil takes the exam, he actually fails and comes to nothing. However, does this mean that we should abolish examinations in our schools and rely on the experience of the teacher with his pupils? No, we should not. Examinations are imperative as actual evidence against the one who fails. Thus, the meaning of the phrase 'so that We may test people.' (*al-Kahf*: 7), is that a trial that serves as evidence against themselves.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِنَّا لَجَاعِلُونَ مَا عَلَيْهَا صَعِيدًا جُرُزًا ﴿٨﴾

**But We shall reduce all this to barren dust [8]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 8)**

The Arabic word *as-sa'id*, (dust) is a layer of soil that appears on the surface of the earth and has no plant on it, while the word *juzuran* is a land that is devoid of vegetation or that had some plants on it but the locusts have eaten it or some plant epidemic has ruined it, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do they not see that We drive the water to a land having no herbage, then We bring forth thereby seed-produce of which their cattle and they themselves eat; will they not then see?' (*as-Sajda*: 27). In as much as the situation is like this and this world is ornamentation, which is quickly removed, then the end is near. Thus, leave them to Me to test and requite them for their deeds.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَمْ حَسِبْتَ أَنَّ أَصْحَابَ الْكَهْفِ وَالرَّقِيمِ كَانُوا مِنْ آيَاتِنَا عَجَبًا ﴿٩﴾

**[Prophet], do you find the Companions in the
Cave and al-Raqim so wondrous, among all Our
other signs? [9] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 9)**

The reason behind revealing the story of the people of the cave was a question posed by the disbelievers of Mecca who wished to put the Prophet Muhammad in an embarrassing situation. It is narrated that they sent two men, namely: An-Nudr ibn Al-Harith and 'Uqba ibn Abu Mu'it, to the People of the Scripture in Medina to ask them about the veracity of the Prophet Muhammad, the news they had about him and what was related about him in their scriptures.

Before the beginning of the Prophet's mission, the Jews of Medina used to threaten the Arab tribes of *al-Aws* and *al-Khazraj*, worshippers of idols, with the arising of a new prophet. They used to say that the time of a prophet, whom we will follow and we kill you with him like the slaughter of 'Ad and

Iram (cursed people who Allah destroyed), has surely come. Subsequently, the people of Mecca were keen to ask the Jews of Medina about the truth of Prophet Muhammad. When the two men went to the Jews of Medina, the latter said, 'If you desire to know the veracity of Prophet Muhammad, ask him about three things. If he gives you answers, then he is truthful. Ask him, 'What is the story of the group of men who passed through time in a marvellous manner? And what is the story of the wandering man who roamed the earth to the east and to the west? And what is the spirit?'

The two men then went to the Prophet and asked him these questions. Whereupon He said, 'I will answer you tomorrow.' The next day came and the day after it. Fifteen days passed without the Prophet being granted any revelation concerning these questions. This grieved the Prophet Muhammad and he was sad that he had given a promise and did not fulfil it. It is said that the reason behind the revelation delay was that he said, 'I will answer you tomorrow,' without saying, 'If Allah wills.' Therefore, Allah addressed him saying: 'do not say of anything, I will do that tomorrow,' without adding, "God willing" (*al-Kahf*: 23-24).

The above verse in itself is a proof of the truthfulness of the Prophet. It is a proof of His etiquette and fidelity in conveying from his Lord. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to give this lesson in the person of the Prophet to be a model for others. It also meant to show that how no one should disdain when someone corrects him. For here is the Prophet being corrected and set straight by his Lord. It is as if the above statement of Allah is edification for the *Ummah* in the person of its Prophet so that no student might feel disdainful of the directives of his teacher so long as the goal is reaching the truth. Therefore, do not reject the rectification of an opinion over another, even if it comes from a human being. What would you think if the rectification, the correction and edification was from the Creator and His side?

Consider the following model of the etiquette of rectification and the legitimacy of appealing a legal judgment. This lesson is mentioned in the verse, 'And Dawud and Sulaiman when they gave judgment concerning the field when the people's sheep pastured therein by night, and We were bearers of witness to their judgment.' (*al-Anbiya*': 78) The judgment of Dawud

(David) *peace be upon him* in this case was that the owner of the grain-field should take possession of the sheep which had eaten his crop of grain. However, when Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* learned of this judgment, he sought to rectify it. He said, 'Nay, the owner of the grain-field should assume control of the sheep and derive benefit from them, while the owner of the sheep should be charged of cultivating the grain-field until it returns to its former state. Then, the sheep should be returned to their owner and the grain-field to its owner.' That is why Allah says afterwards: 'So We made Sulaiman to understand it.' (*al-Anbiya*: 79) However, Allah did not accuse David *peace be upon him* of error, rather, He said: 'and to each one We gave wisdom and knowledge.' (*al-Anbiya*: 79)

Let us note here that the rectification did not come from the father to the son which would have been a natural occurrence. It came from the son to the father instead. This is in order to confirm that there is no offense or shame for the young to correct the old or for the son to the father. The goal is to reach the truth and the correct thing. In this case, Prophet Sulaiman *peace be upon him* did not turn a blind eye to the defectiveness of the judgment of his father. Rather, He gave voice to the truth and articulated it because the truth is more precious than any relationship even if it be the relationship of paternity. From this case, we understand that the rectification of one human being of another human being is a normal and acceptable affair which no one should disdainfully reject. The idea of appeal in courts is derived from here, for it is possible that a judge in a court of appeals can rectify his colleague in the court of the first instance. He might come across something or perceive an aspect of the case, which he did not.

Let us pause here to examine the fidelity of the Prophet to conveying the message from Allah. He certainly did not hold anything back of the divine revelation, even that which came as a reprimand and a rectification for him. It is as if he were reliably honest even against himself. It is the Prophet himself, who conveyed to us the verse: 'And do not say of anything: Surely I will do it tomorrow.' (*al-Kahf*: 23), and it is he who conveyed to us: 'O Prophet! why do you forbid [yourself] that which Allah has made lawful for you' (*at-Tahrir*: 1). Furthermore, he is the one who conveyed to us concerning the

battle of *Badr*: 'Allah pardon you! Why did you give them leave?' (*at-Tawba*: 43) There are many more examples alike from the verses of the Quran. Thus, His Lord praises him with saying: 'Nor of the unseen is he a tenacious concealer.' (*at-Takwir*: 24)

Even in the domain of intimidation and threatening, Prophet Muhammad did not hold back of the divine revelation a single letter. Consider the verse where Allah says: 'And if he had fabricated against Us some of the sayings, We would certainly have seized him by the right hand, Then We would certainly have cut his aorta.' (*al-Haqqa*: 44-46) Indeed, this is the absolute fidelity and truthfulness which hides nothing.

Was it not worthy for the people of Mecca to comprehend this aspect of the Prophet and consider His truthfulness when he told them about himself things they did not know and which it might be expected that he conceal from them? Is this not irrefutable evidence of his veracity in what he says?

When Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us to say 'Allah wills', as we set about to do something in the future, He is evidently bestowing a grace upon His servants. He is protecting them from having a lie attributed to themselves if they are unable to realize what he promised. Yet there is neither restriction upon anyone nor any limitation to the aspirations of human beings when we say 'Allah wills.' Some people allege and claim that saying this expression abolishes planning for the future. We tell them lay your plans as you wish, organise your affairs as you want and take the preliminary steps you feel appropriate for the success of your efforts. What harm would afflict you when you attach all of this to the will of Allah, which is in itself an aid to you in accomplishing what you desire. Hence, if you fail, you have given yourself protection presented in the will of Allah. You are not a liar, but it is Allah Who has not willed yet that you accomplish what you were aiming to do.

The truth is that no one possesses an event in the future and no one can guarantee it except Allah. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to link deeds to the will of Allah. For example, if you said, 'I will meet so and so tomorrow to talk to him about such and such a thing,' do you have control over any of the elements of this occurrence? Do you guarantee that you will live until

tomorrow? Do you guarantee that this other person will live until tomorrow? Do you have assurance that the subject of the meeting will stay the same and that no unexpected factor will befall it? Thus, why are you certain that you will do such and such tomorrow? Say 'Allah wills' and get out of this embarrassing situation.

Let us return to the verse, which we are studying. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[Prophet], do you find the Companions in the Cave and Al-Raqim so wondrous, among all our other signs?' (*al-Kahf*: 9) The verse starts with an Arabic initial word *am* which is one of the conjunctive particles. It signifies a contrast to what comes before it and directs careful consideration to what follows. It similarly occurs in the verse where Allah tells the Prophet to say: 'Say, Are the blind and the seeing alike? Or (am) can the darkness and the light be equal?' (*ar-Ra'd*: 16)

Hence, Allah wants to tell the Prophet Muhammad if the disbelievers ask you about the Companion of the Cave assuming that it is an enigmatic puzzle which will put you in an embarrassing situation, do not trouble yourself with their discourse nor with their ill intention. Moreover, do not imagine that the Companions of the Cave are the only wondrous marvel We have, for our wondrous signs are numerous and this is but one of them.

The Arabic word *al-kahf* is a fissure in a mountain and the word conjoined to it *ar-raqim* is something which is imprinted with something, i.e. a thing that could be written upon such as a stone or similar object. Perhaps it refers to a stone that was at the door of the cave upon which the names of these youths were incised. Relevant to this is the verse where Allah says about the Quran: 'It is a written book (*marqum*)' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 9). Allah asks whether the Prophet has thought that these were, among His signs, a wonder. These were not the only marvels, as all of His signs are wonders and deserving of careful meditation.

Thereafter, the following verses proceed to provide details of this marvel. Allah says:

إِذْ أَوْى الْفِتْيَةُ إِلَى الْكَهْفِ فَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا آئِنَا
 مِنْ لَدُنْكَ رَحْمَةً وَهَيِّئْ لَنَا مِنْ أَمْرِنَا رَشَدًا ﴿١٠﴾

**When the young men sought refuge in the cave and said,
 ‘Our Lord, grant us Your mercy, and find us a good way out
 of our ordeal’ [10] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 10)**

The Arabic verb *awa* which is at the beginning of the verse is related to the word *al-ma'wa* which is a shelter where people seek refuge and shelter. The subject of the verb *al-fitya* is the plural of *fata* which is a young man who is in the prime of life. Young men are those upon whom all the hopes of bearing the burdens and advancement of every difficult enterprise are pinned.

These subject-believing young men stood fast holding the banner of their conviction and their faith before the oppressive power of disbelief and the tyranny of polytheism. They were full of the youthfulness of faith and conviction. Consequently, they sought refuge in the cave, leaving their wealth, their families and all that they possessed behind them. They fled with their religion into this constrained space, which was devoid of any sustaining element of the necessities of life. Their souls were not pre-occupied with these necessities; rather they knew that they had a Lord who would take care of them. Therefore, they implored Him in humility saying: 'Our Lord, grant us Your Mercy.' (*al-Kahf*: 10) They asked for mercy from Allah to help them in their current state of being cut off from all the necessities of life. For gracious mercy in a fissure of a mountain will not come from any human being, but rather from Allah only. They also beseeched Allah to prepare for them a right guidance. In other words, they ask Allah to facilitate for them the right path to the good and to truth.

Surely, when disbelief forced these believing youths to take refuge in the constriction of the cave, they humbly pleaded and turned towards their Lord, for He alone was capable of expanding this constriction, as He said: 'Yet why did they not, when Our misfortune came to them, humble themselves?' (*al-An'am*: 43)

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَضَرَبْنَا عَلَىٰ آذَانِهِمْ فِي الْكَهْفِ سِنِينَ عَدَدًا ﴿١١﴾

**We sealed their ears [with sleep] in the cave
for years [11] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 11)**

It is said that the tent was struck (*durib*) upon the earth, i.e. the earth was covered with it after being vacant. To strike means to cause one thing to hit another with force on condition that the thing that one uses to strike is stronger than the thing which is struck or otherwise the one who strikes will be striking himself. Therefore, a poet in speaking of opponents of the notion of divine predestination said: O ye scorner of the varieties of divine decree. With yourself, you deal harshly, not with destiny. And O hitter of a rock with a staff, Did you strike the staff or did you strike the rock?

Thence, the meaning of the phrase, 'We sealed their ears,' is that we covered them with a good covering which veils them from the external world. This act of sealing their ears is the mercy for which they plead and asked Allah. When a man who works with an axe, for example, gets tired and exhausted of labour, he stands still for a while to rest. When he gets tired of standing, he sits down and when he gets tired of sitting, he lies down. If he still finds no rest, there remains nothing for him to do but to sleep. During sleep, the nerves are calmed and a person finds rest, even with the pains of the most severe illness. When a sick person sleeps, he feels no pain. That is why Allah chose for them this condition to provide rest for them during their time in the cave.

Thus, it is Allah *Glorified is He* who sealed their ears as a mercy and not a punishment because Allah desired for them the utmost degree of repose and calm sleep that is not disturbed by anything. Sleep is the ultimate repose which overcomes bodily pains in human beings.

Allah *Glorified is He* opted to seal their ears because the sense of hearing is the first operational sense in a human being and it is the first instrument of perception which functions in a child. Thus Allah *Glorified is He* mentions it first when He says: '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)

These senses are the windows of knowledge and perception for a human. When you put your finger in front of the eye of a newborn child, you find that he does not blink because he does not see until after three to ten days. Nevertheless, when you whisper into his ear, he pays attention. Thus, the sense of hearing performs its function from the time of the birth. Furthermore, the ear is also distinguished by being the only faculty of perception which does not cease during sleep since it is through hearing that one is roused from sleep

These young men went into in the cave and took shelter in it. It was a fissure in a mountain within a desert which is exposed to storms, winds and the sounds of animals and many other things liable to disturb the sleeping person. Therefore, if the Creator had left them sleeping there normally, these sounds would have disturbed them and upset their repose. Thus, He rendered their faculty of hearing inoperative and thereby, they were able to sleep for all of this period. Then Allah said that He caused this seal to be within the cave for a number of years. The Arabic word '*adada*' means many years. A limited number is known and thereby, not counted, unlike large numbers. Similarly, we say that so and so a person possess a million enumerated and in cash.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

ثُمَّ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِنَعْلَمَ أَيُّ الْحَزْبَيْنِ أَحْصَىٰ لِمَا لَبِثُوا أَمَدًا ﴿١٢﴾

Then We woke them so that We could make clear which of the two parties was better able to work out how long they had been there [12] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 12)

The Arabic verbal phrase at the beginning of the verse, *ba'athnahum* means we roused them from their long sleep. Since they had been sleeping, it is not then a question of their death. However, when the period of their sleep was prolonged, it appeared like death. The two parties whom Allah talks about are the two groups among the young men themselves as they asked one another about the length of their stay. They said it was a day or part of a day. Another interpretation refers to the two groups who differed in their determination of the length of time of their sleep.

Allah *Glorified is He* raised them in order that He might perceive which of the two parties would assess the length of their stay in the cave accurately.

The Arabic word *al-amad* which is used at the end of the verse means a period of time and a number of years.

He who examines the preceding verse finds a summary of the story and an abridged version of it included, as if it was a telegraphic report of what happened. The Companions of the Cave were believing-young men who had escaped with their religion into one of the caves. Allah sealed up their ears and thereby, they slept for a long time. He awakened them in order that He might know who could calculate the length of their sleep. Of course, this telegraph does not provide us with the details of all phases of the story. Therefore, the verses detailing the story now commence. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

تَحْنُ نَقْضُ عَلَيْكَ نَبَاهُهُم بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّمَا فُتِيَهُمْ ءَامَنُوا بِرَبِّهِمْ وَزِدْنَاهُمْ هُدًى ﴿١٣﴾

[Prophet], We shall tell you their story as it really was. They were young men who believed in their Lord, and We gave them more and more guidance [13] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 13)

The pronoun 'We' here refers to Allah *Glorified is He*. It is He, who relates what happened in truth. If the storyteller was other than Allah, one would anticipate some error, forgetfulness or omission of some of the events of the story out of some his caprice. However, if the narrative comes to you from Allah, then it is the truth. As He said in another verse: 'We narrate to you the best of narratives.' (*Yusuf*: 3).

Thus, there can be a narrative or tale which is not excellent. That is the narrative which is not precise or accurate. However, the Quranic narratives assure you the utmost precision in portraying the events and allow you to envisage all the details. The Arabic word for narrative or tale is *qissa* or *qasas*. It signifies the precision of succession. It is derived from the verb *qassa* which is to trace the succession. This function used to be carried out by men known as narrators of the Noble Hadiths. They were rigorously tracing the succession of the real facts of events. As for the Arabic word *an-naba'*, it means a prodigious report.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They were young men who believed in their Lord, and We gave them more and more guidance.' (*al-Kahf*: 13) Here

comes the detail of the story after being summarized by the Quran in the preceding memorandum and telegraph. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* were saying to His Prophet that this story has been told before, but it was narrated without veracity and it was altered. Nevertheless, our narrating of it is a true narrative which is free of falsehood.

Hence, the reality of these Men is that they were youths who believed in Allah and sacrificed for the sake of this cause. When they believed in Allah, He looked after them, illuminated their vision, fortified their hearts with patience, and increased them in faith. As He says in another verse: 'And [as for] those who follow the right direction, He increases them in guidance and gives them their guarding.' (*Muhammad: 17*) How similar this phenomenon is to a teacher who notices the signs of intelligence in one of his pupils. He sees him responsive and avid for knowledge, so he gives him his attention and bestows upon him much information.

Let us take note here that these believers who sacrificed everything and fled with their religion were still at the stage of youth. At this stage of life one gets preoccupied with this world and pays attention to its pleasures. Yet these young men were truly pre-occupied with their religion since their childhood in order to set a model and an example to the believing youth of every time and place. Their vigorous youth was that of faith and creed.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَرَبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قُلُوبِهِمْ إِذْ قَامُوا فَقَالُوا رَبُّنَا رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ
وَالْأَرْضِ لَن نَّدْعُوهُ مِن دُونِهِ ۚ إِنَّهَا لَفَدًّا قَدَّ قَلْنَا إِذَا شَطَطْنَا ﴿١٤﴾

We gave strength to their hearts when they stood up and said, ‘Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and earth. We shall never call upon any god other than Him, for that would be an outrageous thing to do [14] (The Quran, *al-Kahf: 14*)

The Arabic word *ar-rabt* which occurs as a verb at the beginning of the verse means that you bind something up and strengthen it in order to preserve what is in it the way you tie up a water skin so that water will not leak from it or a riding animal so that it will not run away. The derivations of its Arabic

root occur frequently in the Quran. For example, Allah says in the story of the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: 'And the heart of Musa's mother was free [from anxiety] she would have almost disclosed it had We not strengthened her heart.' (*al-Qasas*: 10)

Allah fastened that which was in her heart of faith. He inspired her to cast her son into the water and had Allah not strengthened her heart and made her steadfast, she would have gone after her son crying and wailing, thereby attracting attention to him as Allah says: 'she would have almost disclosed it' (*al-Qasas*: 10). That means she would have revealed the plan which Allah had ordered her to follow in order to save Musa. Thus, the heart of Musa's mother was reassured and her breast became free of detrimental agitations. Of course, the heart is the domain of agitated reactions, as evinced by the turbulence, which occurs in it, the increase in pulse-rate and the rush of blood in anger, for example.

The heart is not called breast (*fu'ad*) unless it is inflamed and agitated with emotion. When Allah strengthened the heart of Musa's mother, He made her take control over her emotions in a way that governed her actions to move along with the intended plan. Consequently, we bid the angry person whose blood boils in his veins to be calm and to control himself because calmness will assist him in attaining the truth and to reign in the unruliness of his anger. The outcome of such anger is never worthy of praise. Are you not aware of the Prophetic directive concerning the state of anger? Allah's advice is to change your current situation because this procedure provokes in you a pacific inclination and drives anger away from you. In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and their hearts vacant.' (*Ibrahim*: 43) This means that they are empty and with nothing in them. When you empty something of its contents, it fills with air.

Here, Allah says about the Companions of the Cave that He strengthened their hearts so that the creed and faith in Allah would remain in them and that their hearts are not shaken or removed by events or misfortune. This derives from the act of increasing them in guidance as mentioned in the previous verse. As regards their standing up and saying that their Lord is the Lord of the heavens and earth, it is indicative of their opposition to falsehood and their firm stance in its face. Falsehood terrified them, so they rushed to counteract it with their utterance 'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and earth.' (*al-Kahf*: 14)

There is no doubt that they heard discourse contradicting their statement as well as their doctrinal proclamation exposed them to war and oppression. Thus, the verse gives a picture of two groups that are the group of disbelief which denies the existence of Allah or attributes associates unto Him, and the group of faith which resoundingly proclaims 'Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and earth.' (*al-Kahf*: 14) If the group of disbelief called to worship other than Allah, then the group of faith said, 'We shall never call upon any god other than Him.' (*al-Kahf*: 14) They observed that if they alleged the existence of a god besides Allah '...that would be an outrageous thing to do. That is to say, we would then have transgressed the bounds and distanced ourselves far from that which is correct.

Subsequently Allah *Glorified is He* says:

هَؤُلَاءِ قَوْمًا اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ ءَالِهَةً لَوْلَا يَأْتُونَ عَلَيْهِم
بِسُلْطَانٍ بَيِّنٍ فَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا ﴿١٥﴾

These people of ours have taken gods other than Him. Why do they not produce clear evidence about them? Who could be more unjust than someone who makes up lies about God? [15]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 15)

In this verse, the Companions of the cave, the believing youth, report that their people had adopted other gods than Allah without giving any proof or clear evidence that these views they held concerning the worship of these gods were true. Thus, 'Who could be more unjust than someone who makes up lies about God?' (*al-Kahf*: 15) The most abominable wrong and most vile is that we contrive a falsehood against Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity.' (*Luqman*: 13)

Subsequently Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذْ أَعْتَزَلْتُمُوهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ فَأَوُوا إِلَى الْكَهْفِ بِنَشْرِ
لَكُمْ رَبِّكُمْ مِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَيَهَيِّئْ لَكُمْ مِنْ أَمْرِكُمْ مَرْفَقًا ﴿١٦﴾

Now that you have left such people, and what they worshipped instead of God, take refuge in the cave. God will shower His mercy on you and make you an easy way out of your ordeal [16] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 16)

This is the conversation of the young men between each other. They observed that they have withdrawn themselves from the people of disbelief, departed from their ways, and followed the path of faith in Allah, which had been made easy for them by Allah. Consequently, they added that they should go to the cave, take refuge, and shield themselves in it to flee with their religion and not to fear their people seducing or coercing them away from their religion.

Here, we note the fact that the flight of these young men was not to another country, wherein there was a way to live. Instead, they fled to a constricted cave within a mountain in the desert that contained nothing of the necessities of life. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* alerts and warns us not to say that the cave was constricted and ask how they lived in it. They were emigrants to Allah, refugees in Him and relying on Him.

Therefore, Allah says that they said that their Lord would spread out His mercy upon them. Now, constriction is the opposite of expansiveness and amplitude. Yet they uttered this statement with full trust in the mercy of Allah. They were firmly convinced that He would not abandon or forsake those who emigrate to Him and that He would expand that constriction for them through His mercy. Indeed, Allah did spread it out for them when he caused them to sleep. Do you not see that the sleeper resides freely in this world, here and there, with no limits or borders restraining him?

What happened in the story of the prophet Musa (Moses) represents example of this bountiful expansiveness. The Pharaoh and his army were pursuing him until his followers cried, 'Most surely we are being overtaken out.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 61) They were stranded as the sea was in front of them and the enemy behind them. There was no means of escape in terms of what

they could see of the reality of the situation. However, what did Musa *peace be upon him* say to his people in this situation? He uttered with a ring of deep conviction the statement of one who has complete trust in Allah's help. He said, 'By no means, surely my Lord is with me: He will show me a way out.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62)

Then, assistance from his Lord came at that very moment and they were relieved from what they faced in terms of restricted escape. Allah inspired him: 'Strike the sea with your staff.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 63) Likewise, the notion of expansiveness is expressed in the verse we are studying: 'God will shower His mercy on you.' (*al-Kahf*: 16) Then, Allah said that they also observed that Allah would prepare for them from their affair facility. The plural of the Arabic word *al-mirfaq* which occurs as the object of the verb at the end of the verse is *marafiq*. It refers to the facilities of life, which a human being cannot give up on. Allah *Glorified is He* caused them to sleep and made them in no need to the facilities of life. If they had remained awake, they would inevitably had need of these necessities.

Subsequently, Allah says:

وَتَرَى الشَّمْسَ إِذَا طَلَعَتْ تَزَّوُّرُ عَنْ كَهْفِهِمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَإِذَا غَرَبَتْ
تَقَرَّبُ إِلَيْهِمْ ذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَهُمْ فِي فَجْوَةٍ مِنْهُ ذَلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مَنْ يَهْدِ
اللَّهُ فَهُوَ الْمُهْتَدِ وَمَنْ يُضِلِلْ فَلَنْ يَجِدَ لَهُ وَلِيًّا مُرْشِدًا ﴿١٧﴾

You could have seen the [light of the] sun as it rose, moving away to the right of their cave, and when it set, moving away to the left of them, while they lay in the wide space inside the cave. (This is one of God's signs: those people God guides are rightly guided, but you will find no protector to lead to the right path those He leaves to stray) [17] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 17)

After Allah had sealed their ears and protected them from noises that would have disturbed and troubled their sleep, he also protected them from the light of the sun. Recent studies have proven the danger of sunrays especially for a sleeping person and the importance of darkness as nerves are calmed and the limbs and organs find rest in it. The sun is a one of the

creations of Allah. It has a fixed orbit and a regulated law, as Allah says: 'all [orbs] travel along swiftly in their celestial spheres.' (*al-Anbiya*': 33)

However, the Creator made the sun go beyond its regulation for them so that its light would not disturb them. He caused it to turn and incline away from the cave while it was rising and hence, the word *az-zur* means inclining away from the truth. Similarly, we say *izwarra 'an ash-shay'* to mean to turn away from something. Thus, when the sun rose, it inclined away from the cave to the right side. However, when it set, it moved away to the left of them. This way of turning aside is expressed with the verb *taqr'd*, which has an interesting semantic association with the well-known word *al-qard*, which means to give someone something they need. It is as if the sun were loaning and lending them something, as it did not let its ray in their place of slumber when it set. This is something they had no right to, so it is as if the sun were lending it to them.

Undoubtedly, this is a manifestation of the power of Allah which can create something and its opposite. We should note that Allah *Glorified is He* attributed the action of the act of turning aside to the sun. It is as if the sun were doing this of its own after Allah had regulated its movement of these actions, as you regulate a device in our day.

Allah said that they were laying within an open space thereof, i.e. the cave. He added that, 'This is one of God's signs.' So, in as much as these actions of the sun are among the signs and miracles of Allah then do not object and do not wonder how the sun tilted and changed its course. The Creator created the creation and gave each created thing its regulatory law according to which it behaves. However, He did not let each created thing act on its own merely based on its specific regulatory law; rather, He has controlling power over the regulatory law and can render it operative and inoperative if He wills. Then Allah says: 'those people God guides are rightly guided, but you will find no protector to lead to the right path those He leaves to stray.' (*al-Kahf*: 17)

Now, the controversy over divine guidance and leading astray has been around for a long time and the consequences of this polemical battle continue to exist to the present. There are always those who say, 'If Allah is the one Who guides and the One Who leads astray then why does He punish me if I go astray? This is a widespread question and it has been taken up by

orientalists and philosophers with the intention of providing a justification for the rebellious disobedient soul. In response to this, we ask every disputant: why do you restrict your objection to the issue of harm and punishment when you go astray? Why do you not mention the reward you subsequently get when you behave correctly and have faith? The limitation of your objection to the former without concerning the latter is proof that guidance, which has come to you is a benefit you have abandoned and you clung to the case in which there is harm. No one says this except those who sin against their own souls.

Guidance is of two types: The first is indicative guidance which is for everyone including the believer and the non-believer. For Allah does not indicate the way to the believer alone; rather, He shows the way of faith to the believer and the non-believer. Then whoever advances towards faith in Him, Allah will certainly consider him qualified for the second type of guidance namely, assistance. Hence, He will take him by the hand, help him, and make faith easy to his heart. Moreover, He would give him the capacity to do good, infuse his inner being with joy and facilitate his life for him.

Whomever Allah *Glorified is He* wills guidance for, He grants him guidance and whomever He wills misguidance for, He increases him in deviant straying. Yet, He has made it clear that whoever wants to be guided, he is guided aright with assistance from Allah. Thus, the non-believers are not guided aright, nor the transgressor nor the wanton sinners. This is because Allah has left each one to choose and in this manner; Allah withholds from them the guidance of assistance. Subsequently, Allah says:

وَحَسَبِهِمْ آيِقًا ظَا وَهُمْ رُقُودٌ وَنَقَلْنَا عَنْهُمْ ذَاتَ الْيَمِينِ وَذَاتَ الشِّمَالِ وَكَلْبُهُمْ بَاسِطٌ
ذِرَاعَيْهِ بِالْوَصِيدِ لَوِ اطَّلَعْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ لَوَلَّيْتَ مِنْهُمْ فِرَارًا وَلَمَلِئْتَ مِنْهُمْ رُعبًا ﴿١٨﴾

You would have thought they were awake, though they lay asleep. We turned them over, to the right and the left, with their dog stretching out its forelegs at the entrance. If you had seen them, you would have turned and run away, filled with fear of them [18] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 18)

In other words, if you had a chance to look at them, you would have imagined them awake and not sleeping. This is because their Lord preserved

them in a state of alertness and maintained their physical condition. Moreover, He manifested in them another miraculous sign as He turned them over in their sleep to the right sometimes and to the left at others in order to keep their bodies stay in their original state, not being corroded by the earth. It is well known that if a person is ordained to sleep for a long time on a patient's bed, he will be afflicted by other ills, namely bedsores that result from his continuous sleeping on one side, may Allah protect our health and yours. Thus, Allah has developed the procedure of turning them over to the right and to the left as if they were awake.

Allah says that their dog was stretching his forelegs at the entrance. Thus, it seems that they were shepherds and that their dog followed them, sat down stretching out its forelegs at the entrance of the cave. The verse continues: 'If you had seen them, you would have turned and run away, filled with fear of them.' (*al-Kahf*: 18) Allah had cast awe and fear of them into the souls of people so that if a person came across them, he would be frightened and turn away filled with horror. Their physical appearance would inspire this as they are turning over to the right and to the left, yet not one of them awoke or got up for this entire duration.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَذَلِكَ بَعَثْنَاهُمْ لِيَتَسَاءَلُوا بَيْنَهُمْ قَالَ قَائِلٌ مِّنْهُمْ كَمْ لَبِثْتُمْ قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ
يَوْمٍ قَالُوا رَبُّكُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَبِثْتُمْ فَابْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ
أَيُّهَا أَرْزُقْنِي طَعَامًا فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِّنْهُ وَلْيَتَلَطَّفْ وَلَا يُشْعِرَنَّ بِكُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿١٩﴾

In time We woke them, and they began to question one another. One of them asked, ‘How long have you been here?’ and [some] answered, ‘A day or part of a day,’ but then [others] said, ‘Your Lord knows best how long you have been here. One of you go to the city with your silver coins, find out where the best food is there, and bring some back. But be careful not to let anyone know about you [19] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 19)

Allah says that He woke them which means He roused them from their sleep. Since their long sleep that lasted three hundred and nine years was like

death, He uses the Arabic phrase *ba'athnahum*, (We resurrected them.) The awakening/resurrecting here is due to a specific matter. It was in order that they ask one another about the length of time they spent in the cave. They divided into two groups. The first group inquired about the length of time they had spent. In response to this question, the other group responded in a manner compliant with human nature concerning normal sleep. They said that they have remained thus a day, or part of a day. For a human being is not capable of assessing the length of his sleep with accuracy, but the norm in sleep is that it be as such, a day or part of a day.

On pondering over this verse, scholars have deduced that when they asked each other this question, they could find nothing about themselves that would have suggested the passage of a long period. They found themselves in the same state in which they went to sleep. Their condition had not changed, for example, from youth to old age, nor had their hair turn grey. Therefore, they answered that they had been sleeping for a day or part of a day. Had they found themselves grey-haired and aged, they might have estimated the time corresponding to this state of old age.

This is the case of a perplexed person when asked about time without having any idea of its duration. For indeed it is lengthy in Allah's view but short in the person's view. This is like the statement of Allah in the chapter of *al-Baqara* where Allah says: 'He said, How long have you tarried? He said, I have tarried a day, or a part of a day. Said He, Nay! you have tarried a hundred years; then look at your food and drink years have not passed over it; and look at your Donkey; and that We may make you a sign to men.' (*al-Baqara*: 259)

In the passage above, the man judged the length of his staying to be a day or part of a day, because he found himself in the same state with nothing having changed in him. Then, how can the truth be derived in light of the two divergent utterances? Allah *Glorified is He* stated that the period was a hundred years, while 'Uzair (Ezra) stated that it was a day or part of a day. Undoubtedly, we are before a sign of the Creator and a miracle of His miracles, which none could be capable of except the Lord of time and space, the One Who contract time into a day or part of a day and the One Who spread time to a hundred years.

Thus, the Creator has manifested evidence of the truth of both utterances regarding this miracle. The food of 'Uzair, which remained in its state of freshness and did not change is evidence for it being a day or part of a day, while his donkey, which he saw to be dry bones, signifies evidence for it being a hundred years. Glorified and Exalted is Allah Who brings together a thing and its opposite simultaneously.

Then Allah narrates their discourse, 'Your Lord knows best how long you have been here' (*al-Kahf*: 19). These were the words of the group who wanted to close the dispute on this issue. Thus, they told their brothers that they had to put aside this matter, which is of no benefit, and leave it to Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* constantly bids us to skip an endless debate to some other topic and shift it to a fruitful, useful issue. Thus, they said, 'One of you go to the city with your silver coins, find out where the best food is there, and bring some back. But be careful not to let anyone know about you.' (*al-Kahf*: 19)

The Arabic word *Al-wariq* as used in the verse means money consisting of silver coinage. They sent one of them with what they had of coins to purchase food for them from the town; as soon as they awoke, their exceptional state ended and they reverted to their natural condition, and thus sought nourishment. However, we should take into account that hunger did not impel them to the unrestricted seeking of food. Rather, you see them earnestly concerned about the purity of their food, along with selecting the best of it, the cleanest of it and the most free from that which is forbidden.

In addition, they were not lax in being wary of their people, for the one amongst them to go on this mission was to enter the town surreptitiously and to be subtle in the matter so that no one of the populace would be aware of him because the reason for this is that they awoke in the same state they slept in and were therefore still on their guard with regard to their people, thinking that they were pursuing them and searching for and seeking to kill them.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِنَّهُمْ إِنْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَيْكُمْ يَرْجُمُوكُمْ أَوْ يُعِيدُوكُمْ
فِي مِلَّتِهِمْ وَلَنْ تُفْلِحُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٢٠﴾

If they found you out, they would stone you or force you to return to their religion, where you would never come to any good [20] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 20)

This was a precaution on their part for the sake of religion so as to protect their doctrinal creed which they fled with, for they thought that if the people of the men of the cave were to stone them, then the men of the cave will be still be prosperous in the Hereafter, which will not be the case if they were to turn to disbelief. So, if the people of the men of the cave were to manage to bring them back to their religion, the men of the cave will not achieve success neither in this world nor in the Hereafter.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَعْتَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ لِيَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ حَقٌّ وَعَدَّ اللَّهُ حَقًّا وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا إِذْ يَتَنَزَّعُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ أَمْرَهُمْ فَقَالُوا ابْنُوا عَلَيْهِم بُيُوتًا رَبُّهُمْ أَعْلَمُ بِهِمْ قَالَ الَّذِينَ غَلَبُوا عَلَىٰ أَمْرِهِمْ لَنَتَّخِذَنَّ عَلَيْهِم مَّسْجِدًا ﴿٢١﴾

In this way We brought them to people's attention so that they might know that God's promise [of resurrection] is true and that there is no doubt about the Last Hour, [though] people argue among themselves. [Some] said, 'Construct a building over them: their Lord knows best about them.' Those who prevailed said, 'We shall build a place of worship over them' [21] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 21)

The saying of Allah *the Almighty*, 'In this way We brought them to people's attention so that they might know that Allah's Promise [of resurrection] is true and that there is no doubt about the Last Hour' (*al-Kahf*: 21) indicates clearly that the [story of the] Men of the Cave serves as a basis of proof of the coming of the Last Hour and of resurrection after death. It was as if it was said unto them, 'So here you are, still alive in this world, although Allah *the Almighty*

caused you to sleep this long period of time and then awakened you.' They had been discovered, and they were still alive.

Then He *the Almighty* says; '[though] people argue amongst themselves. [Some] said, "Construct a building over them. Their Lord knows best about them."' (*al-Kahf*: 21) This dispute occurred amongst the group that came across the Men of the Cave. It appears that they were religious people, so they wanted to preserve this Divine sign. It is certain that the moment they discovered the Men of the Cave, the latter reached their predestined end and died.

This incident needs to be recorded in history and memorialised. For this reason, it became a widely circulated parable for the whole world so that the story be known of these youths who made such a sacrifice for the sake of their doctrinal conviction and fled with their religion from the abundance and spaciousness of life to the constriction of the cave. In this way, they became an example to every group devoted to their belief, and a proof that Allah *the Exalted* comes to the aid of those who are attached to Him, and furthermore, He defends them and immortalises their memory until the coming of the Final Hour.

Therefore, some of those who discovered them said to each other, '...Construct a building over them ...' (*al-Kahf*: 21) which simply implies a structure. However, the others opposed them insisting that the building should be a *masjid* (place of worship); Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Those who prevailed said, "We shall build a place of worship over them."' (*al-Kahf*: 21) They decided to build upon them a *masjid* so that it would be a place for prostrating to Allah *the Almighty* and for worship in order that it be a building commensurate with this tremendous, eternal wondrous sign.

Then Allah *the Most High* speaks about the disputations arising from the curiosity of people regarding knowledge of the number of the Men of the Cave and other details concerning them, all of which is in truth, knowledge of no benefit, along with which the ignorance of it causes no harm.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

سَيَقُولُونَ ثَلَاثَةٌ رَابِعُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ وَيَقُولُونَ خَمْسَةٌ سَادِسُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ رَجْمًا
 بِالْغَيْبِ وَيَقُولُونَ سَبْعَةٌ وَثَامِنُهُمْ كَلْبُهُمْ قُلْ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِعِدَّتِهِمْ مَا يَعْلَمُهُمْ
 إِلَّا قَلِيلٌ فَلَا تُمَارِ فِيهِمْ إِلَّا مِرَاءً ظَهْرًا وَلَا تَسْتَفْتِ فِيهِمْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٢﴾

[Some] say⁽¹⁾, ‘The sleepers were three, and their dog made four,’ others say, ‘They were five, and the dog made six’ – guessing in the dark – and some say, ‘They were seven, and their dog made eight.’ Say [Prophet], ‘My Lord knows best how many they were.’ Only a few have real knowledge about them, so do not argue, but stick to what is clear, and do not ask any of these people about them [22] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 22)

There was a disagreement amongst people concerning the number of the Men of the Cave. Some of them said, ‘They were three, with their dog being the fourth’, while others said, ‘They were five, with their dog being the sixth.’ Yet, Allah *the Almighty* commented on these statements, saying that *rajman bi al-ghaib* (they were vainly guessing about the unseen) since this was merely talk without true knowledge. This indicates to us its erroneousness and being at variance with reality. Furthermore, there are those amongst them, i.e. scholars who were those who said, ‘They were seven, with their dog being the eighth.’ The Quran makes no comment on this last statement which indicates that it was the closest to the correct number.

Then comes the decisive saying on this issue: ‘... say: "My Lord knows best how many they were." Only a few have real knowledge about them...’ (*al-Kahf*: 22). So, Allah *the Exalted* has not clarified for us their actual number, but ordered us to leave this to His Knowledge and not to investigate a question which is futile and without benefit. Hence, the important thing is that

(1) It has been said that those referred to here are Christians, for a group of them came to Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him from Najran [of southern Arabia] and when there was mention of the Men of the Cave, the adherents of the Jacobite sect said: ‘They were three, with their dog being the fourth’; while the adherents of the Nestorian sect said: ‘They were five, with their dog being the sixth’; and the Muslims said, ‘They were seven, with their dog being the eighth’. It has also been said that this was a narration from the Jews who urged the polytheists [of Mecca] to ask the Prophet about the Men of the Cave. Cited by Al-Qurtubi in his (*Tafsir*), 5/4112

the basic outline of the story is confirmed which is the following: There were some young people, vigorously unyielding in their religion, who fled with their faith and made every sacrifice for its sake so that they would not be seduced away from it by the people of disbelief and oppression, and thus, they took refuge in the cave; then Allah *the Almighty* did with them what he did and made them an *aya* (sign), an *'ibra* (moral lesson), a *mathal* (parable) and a *qudwa* (model to be followed).

As for the fine details of the story, these are secondary matters which neither cause one to advance or to fall back. Therefore, after this, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... So do not argue, but stick to what is clear, and do not ask any of these people about them' (*al-Kahf*: 22); that is to say, do not dispute over them.

Then, came the curiosity of people who inquired about the length of the story, its locality, along with the identity, number and names of the personages involved, even as far as discussing the name of their dog. All of these are secondary matters, which do not benefit the tale nor harm it. Here, we must be aware that when Quranic narratives are vague about their characters, this ambiguity is rooted in wisdom, for if you were to investigate the vagueness of the protagonists in the narrative of the Men of the Cave, you would find it to be the very source of elucidation of the fundamental outline of the story. However, if the Quran informed us, for example, of the location of these young people, some would have said, 'This incident of the youthful group is peculiar to this place since there was a limitation of freedom of thought there.'

Also, if the Quran had specified their era, some would have surely said, 'There occurred what happened to them because in their era it was possible to achieve such deeds.' Furthermore, if it had specified the persons and identified them, they would have said, 'The like of these persons will not come again.'

For this reason, Allah *the Exalted* rendered them obscure in order to realise the desired benefit of the narrative. He rendered them obscure in terms of time, in terms of place, in terms of number, along with rendering them obscure in terms of personal identity. Allah *the Almighty* did so in order that the narration of them would become known throughout this entire world in this form without being linked to time or place or specific personages. Thus, it bore the banner of truth, and the following of its example is obligatory and applicable in all times

and places and for all people. This, then, is the very essence of the message of the narrative, and this is clearly the moral of the tale.

Consider His saying: 'a believing man of Pharaoh's family exclaimed' (*Ghafir*: 28). In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* sufficed stating ever so clearly that he was 'a believing man' without mentioning anything else about him. What is important in this regard is the steadfastness in faith, no matter who this believer is, whatever era he lives in, whatever place he dwells in and whatever name or description he is called under.

Likewise, in the saying of Allah *the Exalted* 'For those who are bent on denying the truth Allah *the Almighty* has propounded a parable in [the stories of] Nuh's (Noah's) wife and Lut's (Lot's) wife ...' (*at-Tahrim*: 10), He did not mention anything about the two of them, nor did he identify the two of them with further specifics. This is due to there being no benefit in exact designation here, as the import and intention of the verse is the clarification that guidance is solely in the Hands of Allah, that even a Prophet sent by Allah *the Almighty* is not able to guide his own wife or those closest to him and that a woman has absolute freedom of belief.

Similarly, His saying, 'And for those who have attained to faith Allah has propounded a parable in [the story of] Pharaoh's wife ...' (*at-Tahrim*: 11), Allah *Glorified is He* did not inform us who she was, nor did He identify her with further detail since to pinpoint her with precision neither helps nor hinders. What is important is that we know that Pharaoh, who alleged his own divinity, with all of his tyrannical power and authority, was unable to induce his wife to believe in him.

Hence, doctrinal belief and faith are personal matters of the heart which cannot be forced upon a person. In the following verse, we have the wife of Pharaoh believing in Allah *the Most High* saying: '... Lord, build me a house near You in the Garden. Save me from Pharaoh and his actions. Save me from the evildoers.' (*at-Tahrim*: 11)

Regarding the story of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [We have propounded yet another parable of Allah and consciousness in the story of] Maryam (Mary), the daughter of 'Imran ...' (*at-Tahrim*: 12).

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* has specifically identified her by name, even the name of her father. Why is this? It is said that this is due to the event which she will be exposed to is a unique occurrence and something special to her, which will not be repeated with anyone else. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* identifies her clearly and specifies her unmistakably. However, for the general situation which repeats itself, there is wisdom in that it should remain ambiguous, unrelated to a particular person, time, or place. This is the case with the story of the Men of the Cave, which Allah *the Almighty* made vague so that it would be a *qudwa* (parable and an exemplary model) for every believer, of all times and in every place.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَقُولَنَّ لِشَيْءٍ إِنِّي فَاعِلٌ ذَٰلِكَ غَدًا ﴿٢٣﴾

**Do not say of anything, 'I will do that tomorrow' [23]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 23)**

In this verse under study, the Mercy of Allah for His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* reveals itself, for He did not wish to offensively shock him *peace and blessings be upon him* with the issue of this infringement. Instead, He gave him what he desired, granting him what he asked for in the matter of the Men of the Cave. Then, at the end, He reminded him of this contravention in the manner of a gentle admonition by saying: 'And never say about anything, "Surely, I shall do this tomorrow," without [adding], "If Allah so wills"...' (*al-Kahf*: 23-24).

We have previously mentioned that when the people asked the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* about this story, he told them, 'I will give you an answer tomorrow.' He did not say, 'If Allah so wills.' Yet Allah *the Almighty* did not censure him, rather, He fulfilled his need and then drew his attention to the matter of this infringement. This was of the Mercy of Allah for His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

In a similar fashion, Allah *Glorified is He* addressed His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* with His saying: 'May Allah, pardon you [O, Prophet]! Why did you grant them permission...?' (*at-Tawba*: 30). Here, Allah *the Exalted*

precedes with pardon and confirms it since this particular affair is of the past, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was known to have a tendency for clemency and magnanimity. Then, following this, He blames him. It is as if someone asked you for help or assistance, but had previously misbehaved towards you, so it is more in keeping with good manners not to bluntly offend him concerning his misbehaviour by bringing it up first thing, rather, it is better to take care of his need, and then remind him of what he did wrong.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِلَّا أَنْ يَشَاءَ اللَّهُ وَاذْكُرْ رَبَّكَ إِذَا نَسِيتَ وَقُلْ
عَسَى أَنْ يَهْدِيَنِي رَبِّي لِأَقْرَبَ مِنْ هَذَا رَشَدًا ﴿٢٤﴾

Without adding, ‘God willing,’ and, whenever you forget, remember your Lord and say, ‘May my Lord guide me closer to what is right’ [24] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 24)

In other words, on the assumption that you forgot to say, ‘If Allah so wills’ at the moment of commencing some task, it is incumbent upon you to repeat it again in order to make up for having forgotten it at the outset.

Concerning His saying, ‘... and say, "May my Lord guide me closer to what is right"' (*al-Kahf*: 24), this supplication means that He *the Most High* guides me and aids me so that I will never forget again and that He establishes His Remembrance as *lazima* (fixed attribute) to my inherent commitments in every act of my actions so that I do not launch any activity except by saying: ‘If Allah so wills’. Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَيْسُوا فِي كَهْفِهِمْ ثَلَاثَ مِائَةٍ سِنِينَ وَازْدَادُوا تِسْعًا ﴿٢٥﴾

[Some say], ‘The sleepers stayed in their cave for three hundred years,’ some added nine more [25] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 25)

This verse provides us with a snippet from the detailed communication which Allah *the Exalted* granted to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings*

be upon him concerning the Men of the Cave. It tells us about the number of years which the youths spent in their cave as being three hundred years. This is the actual number of years according to the calculation of the sun. For this reason, Allah *the Exalted* did not say three hundred and nine years; instead He said '... some added nine more.' (*al-Kahf*: 25) However, when the Men of the Cave heard this saying, they objected and exclaimed, 'We recognise three hundred years, but are not cognisant of the additional nine years. This is because their calculation of this period was based on solar years.'

It is well known that when the Creator created the heavens and the earth, He divided up time in an astronomical manner. Thus, He established the sun as the token of the day, which we recognise by its rising and setting. Since the sun does not indicate to us the beginning of the month, the Creator made the month tied to the moon which appears as a crescent at the beginning of every month. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Behold, the number of months, in the sight of Allah, is twelve months, [laid down] in Allah's decree on the day when He created the heavens and the earth ...' (*at-Tawba*: 36).

Hence, if you calculated these three hundred years according to the lunar calendar, you would find them to be three hundred and nine years. Thus, according to your solar calculation they are three hundred years, and according to our lunar calculation, they are three hundred and nine. We know that the Christian era year exceeds the *Hijri* [lunar year] by about eleven days in every year.

It is from the Wisdom of the Creator that dating in Islam is linked to the phases of the moon. Just imagine if the pilgrimage, for example, were tied to a single month according to the solar calendar in a single climatic condition which did not change. Then, if pilgrimage were in winter, it would remain thus every year. How much hardship would this present to those for whom pilgrimage in winter was not agreeable? The situation is similar to fasting.

However, according to the lunar calendar, these rites of worship move throughout the year; hence, they come in summer at times, in autumn at times, in winter at times and in spring at times. Thus, every person can accomplish this ritual worship at a time of year that suits him. Therefore, it is said, 'O, time, you comprise all time.'

The one who meditates deeply on the relationship of the rites of Islam with the revolving of astronomical bodies will find many wondrous signs and marvels. For example, if you examined the call to prayer in light of this revolving, you would discover that the phrase *Allah Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest) is a continuous call, ceasing neither during the day nor during the night in the dominion of Allah *the Almighty*. At the time at which you call out *Allah Akbar*, someone else is calling out *ashhad an la ilah illa Allah* (I bear witness that there is no deity except Allah), while someone else is calling out *ashhad an Muhammad Rasul Allah* (I bear witness that Muhammad is the Messenger, of Allah). In this way, the call to prayer is a *dawalayk* (ever-repeated summons in a systematic pattern that never ceases).

The same holds true for prayer; for at the time you are engaged in *Azh-Zhuhur* (mid-day prayer), there are others engaged in *Al-a'sr* (mid-afternoon prayer), others in *Al-maghrib* (sunset prayer) and yet others in *Al-isha'* (the evening prayer). The universe of Allah *the Almighty* is thus never for one instant devoid of someone standing, bowing or prostrating [in worship]. Hence, the words of the call to prayer and the actions of prayer pervade all moments of time, and in every manner of worship.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا لَيْسُوا لَهُ غِيبُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَبْصَرَ بِهِ
وَأَسْمَعُ مَا لَهُمْ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا يُشْرِكُ فِي حُكْمِهِ أَحَدًا ﴿٢٦﴾

Say [Prophet], 'God knows best how long they stayed.' His is the knowledge of all that is hidden in the heavens and earth – How well He sees! How well He hears! – and they have no one to protect them other than Him; He does not allow anyone to share His rule [26] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 26)

In His saying 'How well He sees! How well He hears!' (*al-Kahf*: 26), the Arabic form of this expression *absir bi-hi wa asmi'* is one of amazement *ta'ajjub*; in other words, it connotes how powerful is His sight and how intense is His hearing. This is because it is the sight and hearing which take in everything without limitation.

Regarding His saying: '... they have no one to protect them other than Him; He does not allow anyone to share His rule' (*al-Kahf*: 26), it is as if Allah *the Exalted* is reassuring His slaves that His speech is true, and neither varies nor changes since He is One, Unique without any associate who might alter His speech.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says to His Prophet:

وَأَتْلُ مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنْ كِتَابِ رَبِّكَ لَا مُبَدِّلَ
لِكَلِمَاتِهِ وَلَنْ تَجِدَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مُلْتَحَدًا ﴿٢٧﴾

**[Prophet], follow what has been revealed to you of your
Lord's Scripture: there is no changing His words, nor can
you find any refuge except with Him [27]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 27)**

What this means is that after the questions which the disbelievers of Mecca asked Prophet Muhammad concerning that which his Lord informed him and enabled him to respond to them, then they must know that he has a Lord who is intimately compassionate unto him; He will not leave him, nor will He abandon him to their deceitful plotting. For if they desired to create a constricting dilemma for the Prophet, Allah *the Almighty* has removed him from it. Thus, he should not imagine that the obstacles which his opponents erect shall have any effect on the topic of his mission of calling people unto Islam.

If Allah's backing for him should be slow in coming, then Prophet Muhammad should know that Allah *the Most High* wishes to put to the test the soldiers of truth who will carry the message until the Final Hour arises. For none survive in the realm of faith except the strong and those matured [by trial]. The misfortunes and hardships which occur in the path of calling others to Islam are meant to sift the people of faith such that none can remain steadfast through them except the one who is sufficiently trustworthy to bear this religious creed.

As for His saying: '...There is nothing that could alter His Words...' (*al-Kahf*: 27), this is because no one has the capability of changing the Words of Allah *the Almighty* unless there were alongside Him another god. Just as it is

known that He is the sole deity and has no associates, then know that His Saying is the truth, which neither changes nor varies. What follows, '...there is no changing His Words...' (*al-Kahf*: 27) means that there is no place of shelter to go to, for Allah *the Exalted* is sufficient for you and He is the most excellent Guardian. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

'Why – is it not enough for them that We have bestowed this revelation on you from on high, to be conveyed [by you] to them? For, verily, in it is [manifested Our] grace, and a reminder to people who will believe.' (*al-Ankabut*: 51)

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْغَدْوَةِ وَالْعَشيِّ يُرِيدُونَ
وَجَهَّةً، وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ تُرِيدُ زِينَةَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَلَا تُطِعْ مَنْ
أَغْفَلْنَا قَلْبَهُ، عَن ذِكْرِنَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ وَكَانَ أَمْرُهُ فُرُطًا ﴿٢٨﴾

Content yourself with those who pray to their Lord morning and evening, seeking His approval, and do not let your eyes turn away from them out of desire for the attractions of this worldly life: do not yield to those whose hearts We have made heedless of Our Quran, those who follow their own low desires, those whose ways are unbridled [28]

(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 28)

This verse was revealed in regard to *Ahl as-suffa* (the People of the Portico)⁽¹⁾ who were a group of the sincere devotees of Allah and who had

(1) *The context for the revelation of this verse is narrated by Salman Al-Farisi Allah be pleased with him who said: There came to the Messenger peace and blessings be upon him [a group] of those whose hearts were being reconciled [to Islam after the conquest of Mecca, including.] 'Uyyina ibn Hisn, Al-Aqra' ibn Habis and others of their social rank, and they said: 'O Messenger peace and blessings be upon him of Allah the Almighty, if only you would sit at the front of the seated council and remove away from us those [people] and the bad smell of their garments --by which they meant Salman, Abu Dharr and the indigent Muslims who wore woollen garments and nothing else-- then we would sit with you and converse with you and learn from you.'* Whereupon Allah the Almighty revealed: "And Convey [to the world] whatever has been revealed to thee of thy Sustainer's writ. There is nothing that could alter His words; and thou canst find no refuge other than with Him. [27] And contain yourself in patience by the side of all =

also withdrawn themselves from normal activity to devote themselves to worship. Thus, people spoke ill of them and raised objections about them: 'Why do they not work? Why are they not preoccupied like all other people?' Indeed, they even went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and told him, 'We want you to pay attention to us and to leave those *Al-majadhib* (idiots).' At this, Allah *the Almighty* revealed: 'Content yourself with those who pray to their Lord morning and evening, seeking His approval...' (*al-Kahf*: 28). Therefore, when we see the like of these (those whom we call the possessed ones *Al-majadhib* and who have withdrawn themselves from normal activity to devote themselves to the worship of Allah *the Almighty*), it is incumbent upon us not to disdain them, nor to underestimate them nor to have doubts about them. Allah *the Almighty* has created mankind in such a way that makes them complement one another. For example, a rich man, who might be indulged in all acts of pleasure and thereby lost his hereafter for this worldly life, might hurry to this religiously committed person (dervish), who does not concern himself with the delights of this life and who pays no attention at all to its pleasure, asking him to make supplication to him so that Allah *the Almighty* will remove his affliction. Thus, it is as if Allah *the Almighty* uses these dervishes to drive the attention of those people to the ultimate fact that the pleasure of this life is finite.

It is truly astonishing that when some adversity or misfortune befalls this worldly person, so great and of such high rank, you will see him rushing to this pious old man, kissing his hand and asking him for his prayers. It is as if the Creator had furnished these men possessed by the love of Allah *the Most High Al-majadhib* in order to restrain through them the recalcitrance, or *jimah*, of

= *who at morn and at evening invoke their Sustainer, seeking His countenance... [28]" (al-Kahf: 27-28) until he reached "...Verily, We have readied a fire is countenance..." (al-Kahf: 28) in which He threatened [the arrogant and hard-hearted] with Hellfire. So, Prophet Muhammad got up to search for [these pious but poverty stricken Muslims] until he located them at the back of the mosque where they were invoking Allah the Almighty [he peace and blessings be upon him then] said: 'Thankful praise be to Allah the Almighty who has not caused me to die before commanding me contain myself in patience by the side of men of my community; with you in life and with you in death.' This is narrated by Al-Wahidi in (Asbab An-Nuzul), page 171, and also by Al-Qurtubi in his (Tafsir) (5/4121).*

worldly people, those overly engrossed in the whirlpool of this world and deeply deceived by its alluring splendour.

In addition, you will frequently see worldly people striving to be of service to these pious slaves. One day⁽¹⁾ we prayed the sunset prayer in the mosque of Sayyiduna Al-Husayn *Allah be pleased with him* in Cairo, and amongst us was an important businessman who suddenly took out a sum of money and asked a worker to change it into lower denominations of Egyptian pounds. The worker then returned with the sum in the form of Egyptian pounds in small denominations, whereupon the important businessman said to him, ‘No, no. I must have Egyptian pounds of larger denominations because so-and so, the one possessed by the love of Allah *the Most High, Al-majdhub* at the door of the mosque only accepts large denominations of Egyptian pounds!’ At this, I said to myself, *subhan Allah!* (May Allah be praised!) There is a *majdhub* at the door of the mosque who has engrossed in the solicitude of the most important businessman in Egypt, who is avid to please him and to give him what he wants.’

Then He *the Almighty* says: ‘And do not let your eyes turn away from them...’ (*al-Kahf*: 28); in other words, keep your eyes upon them, and do not turn your gaze away from them to others from among worldly people. This is due to the *madad* (the moral assistance) of being looked at by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which comprises spiritual sustenance for the believers. The verse continues: ‘... out of desire for the attractions of this worldly life...’ (*al-Kahf*: 28). What this means is that if you were to have done this and turned away from it then, it would be as if you coveted the *Dhina* (beguiling beauty) of the life of this world and its *zakhirif* (vain embellishments).

In the command to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to remain in close contact with the People of the Portico and not to turn away from them in preference for worldly people, there was that which fortified these individuals of deep faith who made their worship of Allah *the Almighty* and coming closer to Him their *daydanhum* (regular practice) and their primary preoccupation.

(1) The story of the man bewitched with Al-Hassan and the great economist.

However, is it required that all people be like the People of the Portico, withdrawn from the normal activities of life for the sake of worship? The answer is of course not, for Allah *the Most High* rendered them a small minority amongst people, establishing in every local one or two of them in order that they might be an example, reminding people and curbing the unruly capriciousness of their strivings towards this lowly, worldly life.

It is astonishing to see someone claim to himself without justification the state of these pious ascetics, making people believe that he is *majdhub* (possessed by the love of Allah) and *wali* (that he is a saint), while swindling and deceiving. One does not falsely lay claim to something unless there is some benefit behind it such as the one who lays false claim to medicine or lays false claim to knowledge for what he perceives to be the advantages of a doctor or a scholar. Amazingly enough, we might find someone falsely claiming to be a 'dervish' to the extent that he tries his utmost to convince others with this allegation, or that he is a *wali* (a Patron of Allah). Here, we should take into account that one will not claim something unless he will get a benefit or an advantage from it. For example, someone may claim to be a doctor or a scholar due to the advantages of these two positions. Accordingly, when he sees how people respect and dignify those dervishes in spite of the fact that the latter had not indulged in the pleasures of this worldly life, he claims to be so. Hence, why should these pretenders not lay claim to this state of pious asceticism? Why should they not enjoy all of these bounties without the slightest effort? Alas, the status of these truly pious slaves would not have been distorted, nor would people have spoken ill of their behaviour, except on account of this spurious, pretentious caste which relished a life of laziness and abasement.

Returning to the verse under study, then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do not yield to those whose hearts We have made heedless of Our Quran...' (*al-Kahf*: 28).

This is because He did not command you to turn away from these aforementioned pious men and to give your attention to worldly people, those who neglect the remembrance of Allah *the Exalted*. However, regarding the one whose heart finds secure repose in Allah's Remembrance and has tasted the sweetness of faith, He does not issue such an order. Indeed, such a person

is *Al-majadhib Al-awliya'* (as close one can be to the saintly ones possessed by love of Allah and of the People of the Portico). Moreover, perhaps his soul might entice him to be like them. So, how could He give the order to turn away from them?

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has propounded the correct stance to take with regard to this world by saying, 'Allah *the Almighty* revealed to this world that whoever serves me, then serve him, and whoever serves you, then avail yourself of him...⁽¹⁾ Hence, this world and its inhabitants are in the service of the believer whose heart is filled with faith, and whose attention is focused exclusively on Allah *the Most High* in all circumstances.

As for His saying, 'those who follow their own low desires...' (*al-Kahf*: 28), this means that this one who incites you against the People of the Portico with his heart being heedless of Allah's Remembrance only because he pursues his passionate cravings. Thus, his desires and vain pleasures have cut him off from the remembrance of Allah *the Exalted*. So, as long as he is preoccupied with things that correspond to his passionate cravings, he will not be concerned with what Allah *the Most High* demands. Indeed, he is too busy with what his soul demands. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'None of you truly believes until his desires are in accord with what I brought'.⁽²⁾ Thus, a true Muslim, possessed of sound faith, is he whose desires and longings are in conformity to the well-ordered Path of Allah, not deviating from it. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But if the truth were in accord with their own likes and dislikes, the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into ruin ...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71).

Concerning His saying, '... those whose ways are unbridled' (*al-Kahf*: 28), this means that his situation is one of loss and ruin, as if he had uselessly squandered his own soul.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) *This Hadith is not viewed as having a sound chain of transmission, though it is supported by similar Hadith.*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated by Ibn Abu 'Asim in the book (As-Sunna) (1/12) on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr.*

وَقُلِ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُؤْمِنْ وَمَنْ شَاءَ فَلْيُكْفُرْ إِنَّا أَعْتَدْنَا
 لِلظَّالِمِينَ نَارًا أَحَاطَ بِهِمْ سُرَادِفُهَا وَإِنْ يَسْتَعِثُوا يَعْثُوا بِمَاءٍ كَالْمُهْلِ
 يَتَسَوَّى الْوُجُوهَ يَتَسَوَّى الشَّرَابُ وَسَاءَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٢٩﴾

Say, 'Now the truth has come from your Lord: let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so.' We have prepared a Fire for the wrongdoers that will envelop them from all sides. If they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like molten metal, scalding their faces. What a terrible drink! What a painful resting place! [29] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 29)

Regarding His saying, 'Say, "Now the truth has come from your Lord..."' (*al-Kahf*: 29), in essence, it is also saying, 'Say, "The truth has come from your Lord"'. In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* chose the Arabic word *Ar-rabb* (Lord) and did not say 'from Allah *the Almighty*', this is due to all believing that it is *Ar-rabb* is the One Who creates, as indicated by His saying: '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!' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87).

Another relevant verse in this respect is His saying: 'And thus it is [with most people] that if you ask them, "Who is it that has created the heavens and the earth?" They will surely answer, Allah ...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87).

The meaning of '... from your Lord ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29) is that by your own proper admission, the One Who created you, *rabbakum* (provided for your upbringing) and took responsibility for your maintenance, is the One Who revealed to you this truth. As for '... your Lord ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29), that is to say not solely my Lord, rather your Lord and the Lord of all people.

The truth is that which is fixed and immutable, and inasmuch as it is from Allah *the Exalted* no one will alter it. Thus, the one who changes his words is the one who pronounces on something and is ignorant of something contrary to it, and afterwards he corrects it. However, the Truth is from Allah *the Almighty* since nothing is beyond His Awareness, and nothing escapes His Knowledge.

For this reason, there is no rectification of any ruling of His rulings on the part of anyone of His creation.

Now, *Ar-rububiya* (sustaining Lordship) is a blessing, and your Lord Who created you and bestowed bountiful blessings upon you is the One Who raises you like a father who brings up his son. Therefore, no one is opposed to sustaining Lordship. However, as for *Al-uluhiya* (Supreme Divinity), its requirement is to obligate: Do such-and-such, and do not do such-and-such. Hence, He addresses you in the capacity of sustaining Lordship with regard to matters which are for your welfare and does not address you in the capacity of Supreme Divinity which circumscribes your choices. By nature, man does not incline to that which circumscribes his choices. For this reason, he has recourse to the worship of other deities since they do not make demands.

Therefore, we find those who falsely ascribe divinity to themselves, or claim prophethood, always tend towards lightening of the requirements of the prescribed way. This is due to their knowing that heaven-sent religious paths are difficult for people since they impose restrictions upon their activity and upon their freedom of choice. Thus, when Musaylama laid false claim to prophethood, he noticed that people were discontent with having to pay obligatory alms tax, so he eliminated it from them. Likewise, when Sijah, a woman who laid false claim to prophethood, she lightened the prayer. They made these concessions, and if they had not done so, how else would they have united people behind them?

How similar are the false pretenders of former times with the false pretenders of today who sell the religion for some contingent benefit of this world, for example, those who give people formal legal opinions making permissible what Allah *the Exalted* has forbidden, such as *Al-ikhtilat* (unrestricted mingling of the sexes) and other issues in order to render the matter of religion easy for people. Now, although religion is innate to the human soul, a person will incline to one who relieves him of some of its perceived burdensome requirements. You would be astonished to see certain well-educated people and holders of advanced degrees going to *Ad-dajjalin* (deceiving charlatans) and taking them at their word. Amongst them are those who delude themselves that they are following a religion which makes them feel at ease, and in the shadow of which they do whatever they want.

Therefore, inasmuch as you are believers in *Ar-rububiya* (Sustaining Lordship) of creation, and *Ar-rububiya* (Sustaining Lordship) of providing maintenance and bestowing benefits, then it is imperative that you believe in that which has come from your Lord, as we say in the adage: 'The one who eats my food listens to my word.' Yet, in addition to all of that, and in spite of the grace of Allah *the Almighty* and His blessings upon them, they tell them, 'There is no compulsion in faith': '... let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so...' (*al-Kahf*: 29). What this means is that the benefit of faith accrues to you yourselves.

According to one of the Qudsi Hadiths, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* narrated that Allah *the Almighty* says⁽¹⁾: 'Verily you will never possess an advantage for Me that you could benefit Me, and you will never possess a disadvantage for Me that you could do harm to Me. And even if the first of you and the last of you, and the living amongst you and the dead amongst you, and the present amongst you and the absent from amongst you were to come together in the state of the heart of the most God-fearing single man amongst you, this would not increase My Dominion in the least. And even if the first of you and the last of you, and the living amongst you and the dead amongst you, and the present amongst you and the absent from amongst you were to come together in the state of the heart of the most depraved single man amongst you, this would not decrease My Dominion in the least.'

The Hadith continues: 'And even if the first of you and the last of you were to gather *'ala sa'idin wahid* (together as one) and each of you were to petition me with his request, and I were to grant it to him, this would not diminish from that which I have except as the inserting of a needle when one of you plunges it into the sea. Verily, I am *jawwad* (magnanimous), *wajid* (omnipresent) and *majid* (glorious). My boon is speech, and My punishment is speech, for verily My Decree regarding anything is if I will it, I say to it "Be!" and thus it is.'

(1) *A nearly identical Hadith is narrated by At-Tirmidhi in his (Sunnan) (2495), and by Ahmad in his Musnad (5/154, 177) on the authority of Abu Dharr Allah be pleased with him.*

Thus, the benefit of faith reverts to a believer, as He says: 'Whoever does what is just and right, does so for his own good; and whoever does evil, does so to his own hurt... ' (*Fussilat*: 46), but I want for human beings to always be in a state of blessing from me, for I myself bestow upon them the blessings of this world, and I also want to bestow upon them the blessings of the Hereafter.

This verse under study follows His saying: 'Content yourself with those who pray to their Lord morning and evening, seeking His approval... ' (*al-Kahf*: 28). When the adversaries of Islam saw the Message gradually spreading, they attempted to stop it, not by aggression on their part against those who believed, rather regarding Prophet Muhammad. They did so by sending a delegation to him and said to him, 'O, Muhammad, we have been sent to you in order to plead with you. You have introduced in your people something which no one has introduced before you. You have insulted our gods, disgraced our discernment, and reviled our religion. So, if you desire wealth, we will gather together wealth until you become the richest amongst us, and if you desire glorious rank, we will make you lord over us and establish you as our chief. Also, if you desire kingship, we will make you king.'

Thereupon, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'By Allah, I have no desire for what you are speaking of; rather, my Lord has sent me to you with the truth. Thus, if you take heed and obey, then so be it. However, if you do not, then verily Allah is my ally against you.'⁽¹⁾

This was their attempt to influence him in the expectation that if the affairs were secret, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* might

(1) *Ibn Hisham narrated this incident in (As-Sira An-Nabawiya) (1/295-297), with slightly different wording, summarised as follows: Fifteen of the notables of [the tribe of] Quraysh gathered at the Ka'ba and sent for Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him in order to speak to him. They offered him wealth, kingship, nobility and glorious rank or providing him with the treatment of a shaman (At-tibb) if he were afflicted by Jinn. Thereupon, [The Prophet] replied: 'Nothing of which you speak concerns me. I did not come with what I came with seeking your wealth, nor superior standing among you, not kingship over you. But rather, Allah the Almighty has sent me to you as a Messenger peace and blessings be upon him and has revealed a scripture unto me... Hence, if you accept what I have brought you, then that is your good fortune in this world and the Hereafter. And if you reject it from me, then I will show steadfast patience [in waiting] for the decree of Allah the Almighty until Allah the Almighty decides between me and you.'*

be more obliging. However, when they did not attain the object of their desire, they said to themselves, 'We shall solicit (The Prophet's) favour through one whom he loves, for perhaps he was embarrassed to accept the proposal from us as we are his antagonists. So let us send to him one whom he loves.' Thus, they went to his paternal uncle Abu Taleb, but when his paternal uncle spoke to him, he *peace and blessings be upon him* made his famous statement, 'By Allah, O, my paternal uncle, if they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand in order for me to give up this mission, I would not abandon it until Allah causes it to be triumphant or I perish for its sake.'⁽¹⁾

Then, when this attempt also failed, they came at him from a third vantage point by saying, 'Let us reach a compromise between us: you should stay away from those impoverished persons and turn your attention away from them and not attach yourself to them. Instead, turn your attention towards us.' At this point Allah *the Almighty* revealed: 'Content yourself with those who pray to their Lord morning and evening, seeking His approval' (*al-Kahf*: 28). Then Allah *the Exalted* made it clear that Islam or the religion which he had revealed does not take its commands from the people unto whom it was revealed; on the contrary, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to establish for them the criteria of the truth, and he summons his people to them. Hence, how could they themselves establish these criteria and thus bid the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to turn away from the poor and give his attention to them? Therefore, the Prophet said: 'Say, "Now truth has come from your Lord ..."' (*al-Kahf*: 29) because He sent him with the Truth as a messenger unto them, and he has not come except for others' guidance. So, if they wish to direct him according to their desires, then he has reversed the matter. Their summoning him to turn away from those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening and to turn his attention to

(1) Ibn Hisham narrated this incident in (*As-Sirah An-Nabawiya*) (1/266), as attributed to Ibn Ishaq, that when [the leading unbelievers of the tribe of] Quraysh asked Abu Taleb to restrain Muhammad from them, the latter said to his brother's son: 'O son of my brother, your people have just come to me, telling me such-and-such... So, spare me and spare yourself, and do not burden me with a matter that I cannot bear.' At this, the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* made this statement above. Then Abu Taleb said, 'Keep to your path, O son of my brother, and say whatever you like, for, I swear by Allah *the Almighty* I will never forsake you for anything.'

them is proof of the falseness of their faith. They are not serious about following him, and therefore, he has no need of them.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... Let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29). This means let them enter Islam on this basis: that every truth comes down from Allah *the Almighty* not that the truth be obtained from them and that he returns it thus back to them. Nay, rather, the truth is that which Allah *the Exalted* sent with him for them. So, on this basis whoever wills, then let him believe, and whoever wills, then let him disbelieve.

We have previously clarified the issue of this verse by saying that if we find a command without the demanded action actually being desired, then we should be aware that the command is being used for another purpose. This is like when a father says to his negligent child, 'Play as you wish!' However, of course, he does not mean to order his child to play; rather, he wishes to intimidate him and to censure him.

The same holds true for the following verse: '...Let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29). Otherwise, if you took the verse at its face meaning, then the one who believes would be obedient to the command, '... Let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so...' (*al-Kahf*: 29), and also the insubordinate one would be obedient to the command, '... and let those who wish to reject it do so ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29). Thus, both of them would then be obedient, so on what grounds would one be punished but not the other? Thus, the command here is not actually meant to be such; instead it is for equalisation and intimidation. That is to say, it is all the same for you whether you believe or do not believe, for you are free in this matter. Since the proceeds of faith revert unto you, Allah *the Most High* can dispense with you and with your faith. Likewise, *khalq Allah* (the human creations of Allah) who believe in Muhammad, they, too, are in no need of you, for Allah's *istighna'* (state of being able to dispense with you) extends to the Messenger's independence of needing you, and Muhammad shall triumph and the religion of Allah *the Exalted* shall spread without you.

Allah *the Almighty* desired that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* call out the summons of Islam in Mecca and to proclaim it publicly in the ears of leaders of disbelief and the fiercely arrogant of the Arabian Peninsula against whose opinion and directive no one resisted, as they had a special status and supremacy amongst the Arab tribes.

Through the wisdom of Allah, He willed that *An-nasr* (the victorious support) for Islam did not come at the hands of these, for if triumph had come due to their assistance, it would have been said that they were the ones who coordinated the victorious backing and dominance over the Arabs. They would have united in solidarity around one of their own in order to rule the entire world through him. However, tribal solidarity for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not produce faith in him; rather, faith in Muhammad is what gave rise to zealotry for the Prophet and his message.

Then the True Lord *the Most High* says: 'We have prepared a Fire for the wrongdoers that will envelop them from all sides. If they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like molten metal, scalding their faces. What a terrible drink! What a painful resting place!' (*al-Kahf*: 29) Punishment mentioned in this verse is for those who choose disbelief. However, why does the verse terrify and amplify the issue of punishment? This is due to the enunciation of terrible consequences, terrifying by it, shocking by it and warning of it, so that people do not fall into the deeds which inevitably bring about chastisement. Nay; rather, it is in order that they desist from sin and stay far removed from causing its effects. Hence, scaring people from the punishment and terrifying them by it is a Mercy from Allah *the Almighty* unto His slaves, because fear of punishment will hinder them from committing offenses, which merit it.

The meaning of the Arabic word *a'tadna* in the verse (translated as 'We have readied') means in essence 'We have prepared.' So, the matter of punishment is accomplished in advance. Paradise and Hellfire have been created in reality, and they are prepared and set up; in other words, they will not be prepared in the future, for the effective and wise preparations have already been done. Allah *the Exalted* has prepared Paradise to accommodate all of mankind if they believe, just as He has prepared Hellfire for all of mankind if they disbelieve. Thus, if a portion of mankind believes and a portion disbelieves, then the place in

Hellfire of the one who believes remains vacant, and the place in Paradise of the one who disbelieves remains vacant. For this reason, He *the Most High* said with regard to this issue: 'For such will be the paradise which you shall have inherited by virtue of your past deeds' (*az-Zukhruf*: 72).

Thus, Allah's creation of Paradise and Hellfire is a fully regulated matter, and there shall never occur any shortage or overcrowding. Indeed, all of us have his prepared place set aside specially.

Regarding His saying: '... for the wrongdoers ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29), the Arabic word employed in this prepositional phrase, *Az-zhalim*, is derived from the same root as *Azh-zhulm* (with the basic meaning of injustice), which is to take a right [from someone] and give it to someone else. *Azh-zhulm* has many forms, with the most heinous and gruesome of which is *Al-ishrak* (associating other powers or presumed deities with Allah *the Almighty*) because you are taking the supreme right of Allah in worship and giving it to other than Him. This is the summit of *Azh-zhulm*. Then come lesser forms of inequity and injustice. Each one who thus sins against himself will receive punishment to the extent of his injustice except if he is *mushrik* (one who associates other powers or deities with Allah *the Most High*), for the punishment of such a one is permanent and continuous; it does not end nor does ever let up on him. However, if a believer commits an act of injustice less grave than that of *Ash-shirk* (associating other powers of deities with Allah), he will be chastised for it—if he has not repented or been forgiven by Allah *the Exalted* for it—then He will cause him to enter paradise.

In His saying: '... will envelop them from all sides ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29), the Arabic word *As-suradiq*, a kind of tent, is used with the meaning of something which surrounds them. Thus, it is as if Allah *the Exalted* has set up a tent over Hellfire, encircling them and confining them, in such a manner that their eyes can see no place devoid of fire. Thus, a condemned person's vision of a place free of fire might inspire him with the hope of escaping. However, Allah *Glorified is He* wishes to cause them to despair of escaping. Then He *the Almighty* says: 'If they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like molten metal, scalding their faces. What a terrible drink! What a painful resting place!' (*al-Kahf*: 29)

The Arabic word *Al-istighatha*, used as a verb and translated as 'beg for' in this verse, is a cry of pain from the one who is in pain to someone who could relieve him of that pain. Allah *Glorified is He* says another verse: '... It is not for me to respond to your cries, nor for you to respond to mine...' (*Ibrahim: 22*); what this means is that when they cry out due to the punishment, I am unable to calm down your screaming, and you, likewise, will not calm down my screaming.

Hence, when the people of hellfire cry out for relief from the pain of punishment, they *yughathu* (receive a downpour) which is an expression that strongly suggests that they will receive a shower of something of the Mercy of Allah; that some gift of clemency will come to them or that the punishment might be decreased in intensity. However, that will not happen as Allah says: 'They will be relieved with water like molten metal, scalding their faces. What a terrible drink! What a painful resting place!' (*al-Kahf: 29*) This means that if they ask for aid in the form of cold water to ease them of the pain of hellfire, they will then suddenly find themselves beneath a shower of water like molten lead.

The Arabic word *Al-muhl*, translated here as molten lead means the dregs of boiling oil which is also called *Ad-durii*, or it means some sort of molten metal such as lead, and this requires more intense heat, that needed for boiling water. In this manner, they are given an increase of heat above and beyond the heat of the fire and are tormented from whence they anticipated mercy.

His saying, '... they will be relieved water ...' (*al-Kahf: 29*), expressed by the passive voice verb *yughathu*, is derisive and sarcastic in style, for the norm in linguistic style is that you address the one you are speaking to be based on the exigencies of his condition. Hence, you felicitate him when he is in a condition of gladness, and you console him when he is in a condition of sadness with words corresponding to his state, but if you diverge in your words from what the circumstances require, then this runs counter to *Al-balagha* (rhetoric) unless you intend *At-tahakkum* (derision) or *Al-istihza'* (scorn).

Thus, His saying concerning disbelievers, 'If they call for relief, they will be relieved with water like molten metal ...' (*al-Kahf: 29*), is derision towards them because its expression diverges from what normal circumstances would

require. This is similar to when the father says to his child who failed an exam, 'Congratulations on your failure.'

Likewise, the meaning of the following, '... scalding their faces ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29), is that the water is so intensely hot that it broils their faces before it enters their mouths: '...What a terrible drink!' (*al-Kahf*: 29) means the water that is poured upon them. Regarding the following, '...What a painful resting place!' (*al-Kahf*: 29); the Arabic word employed in this verse, *Al-murtafaq*, is something upon which a person rests his elbow in order to sit in a relaxed manner. However, by Allah *the Almighty* is there repose in hell? Thus, this again is a form of derision towards them and a means of causing them to lament all the more. Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the tyrants of this world and especially its mighty and powerful ones who defy Him: 'Taste it – you who [on earth] has considered yourself so mighty, so noble!' (*ad-Dukhan*: 49)

In this matter the True Lord *the Most High* speaks in a variety of styles. Amongst these is the utilisation of the word *An-nuzul* which is what is prepared to honour guests. This expression is found in His saying: '[But,] verily, as for those who attain to faith and do righteous deeds – the gardens of Paradise will be there to welcome them (*nudhulan*)' (*al-Kahf*: 107).

Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[But,] behold, as for those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah' and then steadfastly pursue the right way – upon them do angels often descend, [saying:] "Fear not and grieve not, but receive the glad tidings of that Paradise which has been promised to you! We are close unto you in the life of this world and [will be so] in the life to come; and in that [life to come] you shall have all that your souls may desire, and in it you shall have all that you ever prayed for, as a ready welcome from Him who is Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy!"' (*Fussilat*: 30-33) The One Who has prepared this welcome and this hospitality is the Much-Forgiving and the Dispenser of Mercy, and the One Who prepares a welcome for His guests, does so to the extent of His infinite bounty and the breadth of His magnanimity. So what do you imagine will be the welcome Allah *the Exalted* has readied for His *awliya*' (beloved ones and the saintly ones close to Him)?

The verse concludes with His saying, '... Much-Forgiving, a Dispenser of Mercy!' (*Fussilat*: 32) since there is no believer except that he had committed

some misdeed, or he had thought about doing so, It is as if Allah *the Most High* is saying, 'Beware of mentioning what you may have done wrong while you are in this beneficent place of welcome, for Allah *the Almighty* is Much-Forgiving of your misdeeds, a Dispenser of Mercy unto you. He accepts your repentance and erases the effect of your misdeed.'

The discussion is of *An-nuzul* (the welcome reception) in Paradise, for it is a place of deferential honour and hospitality. However, if this term is used in reference to Hellfire, then it is meant as *At-tahakkum* (derision) and *As-sukhrirya* (mockery) for those condemned to it. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But if one happens to be of those who are wont to call the truth a lie, and [thus] go astray, a welcome (*muzulan*) of burning despair [awaits him in the life to come.]' (*al-Waqi'a*: 92-93), in which He *the Almighty* employs the word *An-nudhul* in circumstances not in conformity with it.

After the Divine Command in His saying: '...Let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so...' (*al-Kahf*: 29), He wishes to elucidate the ruling for each of the two choices of faith and disbelief. This He does in the rhetorical manner of *Al-laff wa An-nashr* (involution and evolution) which is a well-known manner of expression in Arabic in which several things are mentioned and subsequently their *ahkam* (rulings or judicious consequences) are set forth according to their initial sequential order, or these rulings are mentioned randomly in no specific order.

An example of the first type of involution and evolution which is based upon logical ordering is found in His saying: 'For it is out of His grace that He has made for you the night and the day, so that you might rest therein as well as seek to obtain [what you need] of His bounty...' (*al-Qasas*: 73); what this means is so that you might rest at night and seek of Allah's bounty during the day.

The sequential order here is evident in that the first ruling applies to the first item ruled upon, and the second ruling applies to the second item ruled upon, and so forth. This pattern is reflected in the following line of a poet:

My heart, my eyelid, my tongue, and my Creator

These four elements are to be provided with explanatory predicates, so what is their story, and how will they be described? The poet says:

My heart, my eyelid, my tongue, and my Creator

Content is, weeping is, grateful is, and Much-Forgiving is.

Thus, they are to be understood according to the following order: My heart is content, my eyelid is weeping, my tongue is expressing gratitude, and my Creator is Much Forgiving.

At other times involution and evolution are expressed in a random fashion without sequential order, trusting that the intelligence of the listener will trace back everything to its proper origin. This is the case of the verse which we are presently examining. You will thus note that Allah *Glorified is He* says, '... Let those who wish to believe in it do so, and let those who wish to reject it do so...' (*al-Kahf*: 29) in which He begins with the choice of faith and then mentions disbelief. However, in the consequential ruling on each of these two, He mentions the ruling on disbelief first: '...We have prepared a Fire for the wrongdoers ...' (*al-Kahf*: 29).

Subsequently, after this, He mentions the ruling on the believers by saying: 'As for those who believe and do good deeds— We do not let the reward of anyone who does a good deed to go to waste—' (*al-Kahf*: 30). In consideration of the fact that the speaker is a Judicious Lord, there is not a letter of his speech except that it has significance, and that behind it lies wisdom. Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* speaks of belief, He made it a choice subject to the will of the slave, but He preferred that faith be first and that it come before disbelief. However, when He speaks of the ruling upon each of these two, he began with the sentence for disbelief. This is derived from the principle that '*Dar* (the warding off) of a *mafsada* (cause of evil or corruption) takes precedence over *jalb* (the attainment) of *manfa'a* (a benefit).'

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ إِنَّا لَا نُضِيعُ أَجْرَ مَنْ أَحْسَنَ عَمَلًا ﴿٣٠﴾

As for those who believe and do good deeds – We do not let the reward of anyone who does a good deed go to waste [30]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 30)

Commenting on the verse in question, we notice that Allah *the Almighty* attaches good deeds to faith since the latter is the source of any behaviour,

and therefore no benefits are derived, i.e. if one believes but does not work in accordance with that faith, as we know that the advantage of faith is that a believer must abide by the proscriptions and the commandments ordained by Allah *the Exalted* which is why the combination of faith and good deeds are repeatedly mentioned in the Quran; Allah *the Exalted* says: 'By the declining day, man is [deep] in loss, except for those who believe, do good deeds, encourage one another to the truth, and encourage one another to steadfastness.' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3)

The reason for this is that once faith affects believers to do good deeds, they therefore will inevitably be exposed to hardship and difficulty which requires urging one another to be steadfast to the truth. In connection with this point, we have an exemplary model of the companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who bore the burden of *da'wa* (calling others to Islam) and patiently endured injury and insult for the sake of Allah *the Almighty*.

Back to the verse being examined, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We do not let the reward of anyone who does a good deed go to waste.' (*al-Kahf*: 30) The Arabic relative pronoun *man* (anyone who) is generally applied for a believer and a disbeliever alike. Hence, He *Glorified is He* did not say: 'Verily, We do not neglect the reward of any who is perfectly correct in faith.' This is because a disbeliever may do good things, and thus Allah *the Almighty* will not waste his deeds; rather, he will be only rewarded in this worldly life, yet he will receive nothing in the Hereafter.

If a disbeliever makes innovative efforts and does well in a branch of knowledge or agriculture or commerce, he will not be deprived of the outcome of his diligent work. However, his recompense will be hastened for him in this world, and he will have no portion of reward in the Hereafter.

In this respect, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and We shall turn to the deeds they have done and scatter them like dust.' (*al-Furqan*: 23)

Likewise, He *Glorified is He* says: 'If anyone desires [only] the fleeting life, We speed up whatever We will in it, for whoever We wish; in the end We have prepared Hell for him in which to burn, disgraced and rejected.' (*al-Isra'*: 18) Furthermore, He *the Almighty* says: '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)

The verse indicates to disbelievers who are content with their worldly life and whatever good they did was only for the sake of pleasing people not Allah *the Almighty*. Hence, when such a person reaches the Hereafter, he will find nothing but distress and regret, as he will be taken by surprise with the Existence of Allah *the Exalted* in Whom he did not believe. It is logically known that a human being seeks his reward from the one for whose sake he undertook his deeds; however, these people did not perform their deeds for Allah *the Most High*; rather, they did so for humanity, society and fame. So, they gained the reward in this worldly life and there remains nothing left for them in the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

أُولَئِكَ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهِمُ الْأَنْهَارُ يُحَلَّوْنَ فِيهَا مِنْ
أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَيَلْبَسُونَ ثِيَابًا خُضْرًا مِنْ سُنْدُسٍ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٍ مُتَّكِينَ
فِيهَا عَلَى الْأَرَائِكِ نَعْمَ الثَّوَابُ وَحَسُنَتْ مُرْتَفَقًا ﴿٣١﴾

They will have Gardens of lasting bliss graced with flowing streams. There they will be adorned with bracelets of gold. There they will wear green garments of fine silk and brocade. There they will be comfortably seated on soft chairs. What a blessed reward! What a pleasant resting place! [31]

(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 31)

The word ‘they’ refers to those who believed and performed good deeds, so their reward will be in accordance with what Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘They will have Gardens of lasting bliss’ (*al-Kahf*: 31). We have already seen images of gardens in this world, and the word (gardens) can be correctly understood through both legal and lexical definition; legally, it is known as being the abode which Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared as a reward for believers in the Hereafter. Lexically, it is a place in which there is cultivation, fruit and trees, and which keeps whoever goes through it hidden. The Arabic

derivations of the etymological root of the word for garden based on the letters 'j' and 'n' all revolve around hiding and concealment. Thus, insanity (*junun*) is concealment of the rational mind and the jinns are invisible created beings, and *Al-junna* is a shield which veils the body from an attacker, etc.

We have previously said that when Allah *Glorified is He* speaks to us about something regarding the Unseen world, He does so with words that already exist in our language, so we have the meaning at first, and its own word will then come later in order to be easily understood. In case of this point, when Allah *the Almighty* speaks of the Unseen world, as what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I have prepared for My pious worshipers such things as no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of and nobody has ever thought of.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, from where can we come up with words or expressions which identify such ideas of which we have no knowledge? For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* expresses them in terms that bear the same resemblance with our language. However, He gives them a description which distinguishes them from a garden of this world, as He *the Almighty* says: 'Here is a picture of the Garden promised to the pious; rivers of water forever pure ...' (*Muhammad: 15*).

We are familiar with what river is and we know what water is, but then comes His saying, 'water forever pure ...' (*Muhammad: 15*) in order to distinguish water of the Hereafter from that of this world. Likewise, the same holds true for the second part; He *Glorified is He* says: 'rivers of milk forever fresh ...' (*Muhammad: 15*).

Wine in this world is quite well known, but it is not delicious for the one who drinks it. Thus, the one who drinks gulps it quickly. This is due to it not being pleasant to the taste or smell, and is not the same for, a glass of juice,

(1) Narrated by *Muslim* (2824), *Ahmad* in his *Musnad* (2/466), and by *Abu Na'ym* in his book *Al-Hilyah* (2/262) on the authority of Abu Hurayra, the full version is 'The Prophet, said, "Allah said, 'I have prepared for My pious worshipers such things as no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard of, and nobody has ever thought of. All that is reserved, besides which, all that you have seen, is nothing.'" Then he recited: – 'No soul knows what is kept hidden (in reserve) for them of joy as a reward for what they used to do.' And it was explained by Sheikh *Ash-Sha'rawy* in his book "*Ahadith Qudsiah*", 1/69:85.

for example which you drink sip by sip in order to relish its taste and enjoy it. Likewise, the wine of this world ruins minds in contrast to the wine of the Hereafter. Therefore, when Allah *the Exalted* gave it the name ‘wine’ so that we might have some idea of it, He distinguished it to be delicious, unlike the wine of this world, for our language does not contain words for the things which Allah *Glorified is He* will create for us in paradise, as it comprises that which no eye has seen, nor ear has heard. The perceptions of the eye are fewer than the perceptions of the ear, since the eye provides you only with the scene which you can see, whereas the ear provides you with that which is said by you and by others. Then, the saying of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, ‘...and nobody has ever thought of it ...’ increased the scope of that which paradise comprises to that which we are unable to perceive. In the same verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... rivers of honey clarified and pure ...’ (*Muhammad*: 15). Allah *the Exalted* uses the Arabic word *Musaffa* (clarified and pure) in order to distinguish it from the honey that we already familiar with. It is known that people in the past used to get honey from the mountains, to which pebbles and sand stuck. Therefore, He distinguished the honey of paradise by describing it as being filtered of all extraneous matter.

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘They will dwell amid thornless lote trees’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 28); we are aware of lote-trees of this world, and they are thorny trees. However, those of the Paradise will not be like this, as they will be thorn-less lote-trees (*sidr makhdud*) not causing a hand to bleed like the lote-trees of this world.

Back to the verse being examined, Allah *Glorified is He* distinguishes *Al-Janna* (the garden) of the Hereafter from the gardens of this world; He *the Almighty* says: ‘They will have Gardens of lasting bliss ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 31). In other words, they will live in a perpetual residence which does not come to an end. This is of course unlike the gardens of this world. Suppose that someone in this world enjoys houses and palaces in luxuriant grounds and gardens, which comprise the blissful garden of this world; will it last for him? Verily, the gardens of this world, however great their pleasures and enjoyment may be will escape you, or you will leave them behind.

The Arabic word '*adan*' refers to the name of paradise. Yet, there is a difference between one place of residence and another in Paradise, just as you see public gardens and private gardens. In paradise, a believer has a private residence in the Garden of Eden.

Concerning the rivers of paradise, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... Gardens graced with flowing streams ...' (*Muhammad*: 12); in another verse, He *the Almighty* says: '... Gardens graced with flowing streams ...' (*at-Tawba*: 100). Thereby, He gives us two images of the flowing of water in order to indicate that water originates from far away and flows in rivers under paradise. You, in this worldly life, might be concerned, lest someone might hinder the water from reaching you, that he might restrain it by a dam. Therefore, He *the Almighty* says to you: 'Rest assured, for the water flows from below the gardens. In other words, water flows from Paradise itself, and thus no one can hold it back from you.'

In this verse, it is as if the Allah *Glorified is He* is giving us a subtle indication that we will be able to establish residences for ourselves on the surface of the water, along with being able to utilise the watery surfaces upon which to erect buildings. The watery surfaces of the Nile or the irrigation embankments of the barrages all the way to Damietta are a case in point. Here, you would find large, expansive areas where you could erect pillars in the water. Then, you could employ architectural engineering permitting us to construct enough houses for the residents of this region while leaving the agricultural land as it is for vegetables and grains and for people's nourishment.

Perhaps we could also apply this procedure to the general countryside whereby the farmers could erect their houses and livestock in the same manner over canals and drainage ditches widely distributed over our country without decreasing the agricultural areas. Giza, Dokki, and Mohandeseen regions were at one time lands producing an abundance of crop fields, serving to supply the food needs of Cairo before urban expansion. When foreign experts were brought in to expand Cairo, they focused on the desert and established Misr Al-Jadida (New Egypt), and not one of them transgressed a single hand-span of agricultural terrain. Instead, they incorporated into their plans green-

spaces for every house. Hence, this verse offers a suggestive idea which might solve our housing crisis and preserve the narrow agricultural area.

Another point is raised in the same verse when Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...There they will be adorned with bracelets of gold ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 31). One might say, ‘Why will men be adorned with bracelets of gold?’ All of this is superficial ornamentation and vain beautification which we see today in the aspirations of people to wrongly beautify their life with adornments; nowadays we see youth wearing bracelets, likewise, and bracelets of gold in the Hereafter are vain beautification and superficial ornamentation. In another verse Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘... they will be adorned with silver bracelets’ (*al-Insan*: 21) And in another illustrative verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...they will be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls, where they will wear silk garments.’ (*Fatir*: 33)

In this respect, bracelets are defined as of gold, silver, or pearls. Hence, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said of this embellishment in the Hereafter that it will amount to what the ritual ablution amounted with a believer. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... they will be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls, where they will wear silk garments.’ (*Fatir*: 33)

In this verse, we have noticed that the adornment is for beauty, and not amongst the necessities; thus, the Arabic verb *yuhallawna* (they will be adorned) is in the passive voice. In other words, they were adorned by others, and He *Glorified is He* did not say, ‘They will adorn themselves.’

Afterwards Allah *the Almighty* spoke about clothing which is amongst the necessities; He says: ‘... There they will wear green garments of fine silk and brocade ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 31). The verb in this verse is in active voice, as the action was undertaken by them. As for the previous mention of bracelets, this was a favour from Allah *Glorified is He* and the favour was given precedence over the action undertaken by themselves, as what is mentioned in another verse; He *the Almighty* says: ‘Say [O, Prophet], "In Allah's Grace and Mercy, let them rejoice ..."' (*Yunus*: 58). *Raher*, it means that one should not say, 'I did such-and-such on my own accord.' It is due to the Favour and Mercy of Allah; in other words, we find Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* confirming this truth by saying: ‘The good deeds of any person will not

make him enter Paradise.' (i.e., none can enter Paradise through his good deeds). They (the Prophet's Companions) said, 'Not even you, O, Allah's Messenger?' He said, 'not even myself, unless Allah bestows His Favour and Mercy upon me.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, you should not consider your deeds as great because they are little comparing to Allah's Grace and Mercy since your very beginning with no charging until the age of puberty. Therefore, whatever good deeds you have, they are still little.

Likewise, whatever you accomplish of pious and obedient act, it is merely nothing to compensate the due Right of Allah over you. Thus, if we grant you with entry into Paradise, this is due to the Favour that comes only from Ours because you have already taken your due right previously and in advance in this world. However, He makes a distinction, with the point of the active voice for He *Glorified is He* says: '... they will wear ...' (*al-Kahf*: 31) which is to say that, as a result of good deeds they performed; however, as for beautification and adornment with the point of the passive voice, He *Glorified is He* says: '... they will be adorned ...' (*al-Kahf*: 31) which can be a man who outfits his daughter for marriage providing her with the necessities of life and then supplements of luxuries and the adornments of life such as chandeliers or carpets, etc.

In this respect, clothing is amongst the necessities of life which Allah *Glorified is He* has bestowed upon his slaves, as He says: 'Children of Adam, We have given you garments to cover your nakedness and as adornment for you...' (*al-A'raf*: 26). The final Arabic word of this passage *Ar-reesh* (ornament) is finery which people use for ostentation and pleasure.

Returning to the verse under study; concerning the clothing worn in paradise, they are two kinds of clothes mentioned in the verse; the first Arabic word *As-sundus*, translated as 'fine silk', while the second Arabic word *Al-istabraq* translated as 'brocade' is heavy, thick silk material.

Consequently scholars have pondered over the non-Arabic words, such as *Al-istabraq* and *Al-qistas* which mean balancing scales, both of which are of

(1) Narrated by both *Al-Bukhari* (6463) and *Muslim* (2816) on the authority of *Abu Hurayrah*

Persian origin, and the word *Amen*, which we use as a feature of prayer, has an origin being Yemeni or Abyssinian. They asked how the Quran can employ these terms, while it is originally an Arabic Quran. In response, we can ask, ‘did the Quran introduce these terms into the Arabic language at the moment of revelation, or did they already exist and were widely used?’ The Arabs surely knew these words and employed them, and they became Arabic terms circulating in speech and became current with taking the pattern of Arabic words.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point among the words which have been in common use in Arabic which is the English word bank (*bank*). Perhaps it was easier to use than the classical Arabic term *masrif*, and for this reason the Arabic Language Academy acknowledged it and introduced it officially into Arabic. Therefore, the question that has been previously raised of such scholars as to whether it might have been acceptable if the Quran had initially introduced them and gave them leave for daily usage, but the case is different because those terms had been used and widely understood by all, that is to say, they became a part of Arabic language.

Returning to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... There they will be comfortably seated on soft chairs...’ (*al-Kahf*: 31). The Arabic word *Al-ittika*’ is used as a verb in this passage meaning that a person sits in a reclining position on his side which relaxes him. The Arabic word *Al-a’ra’ik*, translated here as couches are elevated seats or beds which are decorated like a sofa for example. The verse is being completed and Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...What a blessed reward....’ (*al-Kahf*: 31) Then the verse ended logically consistent when He *Glorified is He* says: ‘what a pleasant resting place!’ (*al-Kahf*: 31) What this means is that this is certainly in accordance with the circumstances in Paradise as opposed to what has been told concerning the people of Hellfire, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...What a painful resting place!’ (*al-Kahf*: 29)

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلًا رَجُلَيْنِ جَعَلْنَا لِأَحَدِهِمَا جَنَّتَيْنِ
 مِنْ أَعْنَابٍ وَحَفَفْنَاهُمَا بِنَخْلٍ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُمَا زُرْعًا ﴿٣٢﴾

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 [32] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 32)

This verse in question is still related with those who urged Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to divert attention away from those who pray to their Lord morning and evening, seeking His approval. Herewith, people are divided into two sections: one group being arrogant and greedy for glorious rank of reputation and power while another group being weak and submissive, not having a glorious reputation. However, Allah *the Exalted* establishes His signs to include everyone with equalisation set in between. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* sets a living parable, amongst people you can notice, a wealthy disbeliever and a poor believer, and you should carefully contemplate the situation of both of them.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Tell them the parable of two men...’ (*al-Kahf*: 32) in which the imperative form of the Arabic verb *daraba* is translated to one of its different meanings that is to propound, and its noun is *Ad-darb* which means that you cause something or someone to feel pain so the one beating should be stronger than the one beaten. Otherwise if you struck that which is stronger than you are, it would be as if you had struck yourself. For instance, a poet says:

O you who strike a rock with a staff

Did you strike the staff or did you strike the rock?

The striking or setting a parable (*darb al-mathal*) is for attracting attention and sentiments so that it takes you out of one state and puts you in another, as for the case if something is obscure, and you do not understand. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* gives an example, thereby clarifying and drawing your attention to it. For this reason, Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘Tell them the parable of ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 32). We have previously explained that proverbs and parables are part of the speech of the Arabs, echoing back to some idea or meaning, and

then it becomes widely understood by all then combined until it becomes a proverb or metaphor. For example, we used to say the generosity of Hatim (*karam* Hatim), so you call out to a generous person as ‘Hatim’. The reason for this is due to Hatim becoming famous for generosity; this quality was attributed to him in speech. Other examples of people whose names became metaphors for the qualities they embodied include the following: ‘Amr Ibn Ma`idd famed for his courage and boldness, Iyas famed for his intelligence and Ahnaf Ibn Qays famed for his forbearance (*Al-hilm*). Therefore, the poet Abu Tamam said, lauding the caliph:

(He is like) The courage of `Amr, the generosity of Hatim

With the forbearance of Ahnaf, and the intelligence of Iyas

Then certain rivals of Abu Tamam sought to disparage his poem and to belittle him in the sight of the caliph, saying to the poet, ‘Verily, the caliph is above and beyond the one you have described. How can you make a comparison with those you mention? In his army are a thousand like `Amr, and among his treasurers are a thousand like Hatim. So how can you compare him to the uncouth ones of the Arabs?’ As one of them said:

And the eulogizer compared him in daring and wealth

To one, if you saw him, was the most insignificant servant

For in his army are fifty thousand like `Antar

And among his treasurers are a thousand Hatims

Then Allah *Glorified is He* inspired Abu Tammam with a rebuttal, in the same metre and rhyme:

Do not disavow my coining a parable for him with one who is beneath him

In extraordinary generosity and courage

For Allah Glorified is He has coined a parable with the inferior

For his light with the niche and the lantern

Thus, a parable is propounded to draw the attention of people, and to elucidate an ambiguous case. 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).

Subsequently, the Quran provides us with many parables to clarify specific issues. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Those who take protectors other than Allah can be compared to spiders building themselves houses– the spider's is the frailest of all houses– if only they could understand.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 41)

Another parable concerning the breaking of promises and the lack of fidelity, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Do not use your oaths to deceive each other– like a woman who unravels the thread she has firmly spun...' (*an-Nahl*: 92). Another relevant example Allah *the Almighty* says: 'they are like people who [labour to] kindle a fire; when it lights up everything around them, Allah takes away all their light, leaving them in utter darkness, unable to see.' (*al-Baqara*: 17)

Yet another example portraying the transient state of this world, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Tell them, too, what the life of this world is like; We send water down from the skies and the earth's vegetation absorbs it, but soon the plants turn to dry stubble scattered about by the wind. Allah has power over everything.' (*al-Kahf*: 45)

A parable clarifies obscure things with something evident and clear, known to everyone who hears it. In this respect, for example, a poet wishes to describe a hunchback, portraying him in a depiction so detailed and precise that it is as if you were looking at him:

Shortened are his neck veins, sunken is the back of his head

As if he were waiting to be slapped

And if his neck were slapped once

And he sensed the second follow-up slap, his head and neck conjoined.

Back to the verse under study; Allah *Glorified is He* says to His Messenger: 'Propound, O, Muhammad, for them a parable for a wealthy, self-sufficient disbeliever, and for a poor person when he is content with faith.'

Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And propound to 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.' (*al-Kahf*: 32) However, the question is was this parable or proverb really extant? And did the two men really exist in history? Yes, they were actually of the Jewish

people⁽¹⁾, and their names were Barakus and Yahudha. Yahudha was a content believer, but Barakus was wealthy and self-sufficient. Each of them had inherited eighty thousand *dinars* from their father. Barakus received his share and bought a piece of land which he cultivated and a castle in which he lived, and he got married and eventually had many children and an entourage. As for Yahudha, he saw fit to give his share away in charity, thereby purchasing himself a land and a castle in paradise, preferring the lovely-eyed virgins (*Al-hur Al-‘ayn*) and children in perpetual paradise to a wife of this world and its progeny and delights.

Consequently, Barakus felt that he was self-sufficient with what he owned and was deceived by it. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘But man exceeds all bounds when he thinks he is self-sufficient.’ (*al-‘Alaq: 6-7*)

The first failure is to be preoccupied by the enjoyment of blessings and to neglect the Bestower of Blessings (*Al-Mun`im*) and to believe that what surrounds you of blessings is the fruit of your efforts and your work, along with being the result of your striving and skills. Such was the case concerning what Qarun (Korah) said, for Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...but he answered, "This wealth was given to me on account of the knowledge I possess."' (*al-Qasas: 78*) Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* abandoned him to his knowledge and his skill, so that he might remain greedily intent upon his possessions, relying on what he possessed of knowledge and strength until Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘We caused the earth to swallow him and his home...’ (*al-Qasas: 81*), and neither his possessions nor his knowledge were of any use to him.

Hence, these two images are actually real in society: the arrogant disbeliever who regards himself as self-sufficient and superior with his wealth, and the believer who is content with the frugal lot that which Allah *Glorified is He* has assigned to him.

Just ponder over the agronomy apparent in the verse Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... for one of them We made two gardens of grape vines, surrounded them with date palms, and put corn fields in between.’ (*al-Kahf: 32*)

(1) The story is of Barakus and Yahudha

Allah *Glorified is He* has taught us to establish walls of date palms around gardens and orchards to form an enclosure which blocks winds and storms. In this verse, He mentions date palms and grapes, which are types of fruit, before mentioning grain which aids basic living; similarly, He previously mentioned bracelets of gold, which are superfluous ornamentation, before mentioning clothing, which is amongst a primary necessity.

Concerning the linguistic meaning of the word Janna (garden) which indicates hiding and concealing, it is applicable in our daily life, for people today create gardens around their houses so as to hide them from the sights of others. A person has a private residence and also general facilities for his close friends; therefore, he establishes for them another residence so that no one will gaze at the female members of his family. For this reason these two divisions are called reception area and inviolable area.

Likewise, we find mention of two gardens in another verse Allah *the Almighty* says: 'There was a sign for the people of Sheba, too, in their dwelling place: two gardens, one on the right, one on the left. "Eat from what your Lord has provided for you and give Him thanks, for your land is good, and your Lord most forgiving"' (*Saba'*: 15). Allah says:

كَلَّمَا الْجَنَّتَيْنِ ءَاثَتَ أَكْطَهَا وَلَمْ تَظْلِمِ مِّنْهُ شَيْئًا وَفَجَّرْنَا خِلْفَهُمَا نَهْرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

Both gardens yielded fruit and did not fail in any way; We made a stream flow through them [33] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 33)

That is to say, the gardens provide the fruits required from them. The Arabic word *Al-ukul*, translated as 'yield' means that which is eaten. We know that the crops of agricultural fields follow each other in close succession; thus, they supply you something today, something tomorrow, something the day after tomorrow and so forth.

Allah *the Almighty* says: '... and did not fail in any way ...' (*al-Kahf*: 33). The Arabic word *tazhlim* means to wrong or treat unjustly but it is translated in this verse as 'fail', mainly suggesting to us charitable deeds in this world. In essence, the earth is inanimate and does not do wrong nor withhold what is due to you nor squander your toil. So, if you exert your effort and labour, it

bestows generously; when you sow a modest measure of seeds in it, thus, it provides you with more than ten times that measure. Likewise, when you put a single seed in it, it yields for you thousands.

Hence, the earth is magnanimous, exceedingly generous on the condition that you do what is required of you in terms of ploughing, sowing, maintenance, and irrigation. Furthermore, the sky might relieve you of the latter obligation and irrigate for you.

When Allah *Glorified is He* wished to propound a parable for the compounding of heavenly recompense, 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...’ (*al-Baqara*: 261). Thus, if the earth gives you seven hundred grains for each grain you plant, then how do you imagine the magnanimity of the Creator of the earth is? There is no doubt that His gift will be tremendous. After this He says: ‘... Allah gives multiple increase to whoever He wishes: He is limitless and all knowing.’ (*al-Baqara*: 261)

Thus, then, the earth does not commit injustice. Indicative of the earth’s fairness is that it gives to you according to the extent of your effort and hard work therein. Allah *Glorified is He* also fully appreciates the value of this toil of yours and thanks you for this effort. Once Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw a companion’s palm was cracked due to hard labour, and he commented, ‘Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger love this hand.’

Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger love it because it has worked, not to the extent of its own need; rather, it has worked for itself and for others. Otherwise, if every worker only worked to meet his own need, then how would those who cannot work survive? Therefore, it is must upon those with ability and strength to work for what suffices them, and also suffices those who are incapable of working. Furthermore, supposing you will not give something in charity to the needy, yet you will sell the surplus you do not require, so this is considered a kind of facilitation for people and cooperation with them.

How similar is the earth in its giving and generosity to a mother who is open-handed to you in giving if you had been dutiful to her, and likewise the same could be said about the earth. Indeed, a mother by her nature may give unto you without anything expected in return, treating you with compassion

even if you are ungrateful. Likewise for the earth, for do not you see that it yields various plants for you which you have not sown or toiled for? So how would it be if you treated it with hard labour and good fertilisers? No doubt, it would give even more to you. The truth is that the earth is not our mother in merely an allegorical sense; rather, it is our mother in a very real sense, for we are made of its soil and are a part of it. When a person becomes sick, for example, and becomes burdensome to all people who cannot look after him, only his mother inclines compassionately and keeps him out of harmfulness. Similarly, if he dies and becomes a corpse, every beloved brother and relative disdains him, while the earth takes him in its embrace, absorbing every bit of him, and concealing him at a time when he is in dire need of being concealed.

Returning to the verse under study; He *Glorified is He* then says: ‘...We made a stream flow through them.’ (*al-Kahf*: 33) This is due to water being the origin of agriculture. So, Allah *the Almighty* provided both gardens with water exclusive to each, emerging from within each of them and flowing forth abundantly through them; this water does not come from outside, hence it cannot be held back by anyone.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَانَ لَهُ ثَمَرٌ فَقَالَ لِصَاحِبِهِ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَنَا أَكْثَرُ مَالًا وَأَعَزُّ نَفَرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

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’ [34] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 34)

In other words, the man’s situation was not limited to having two gardens in which there were date palms, grapes and a grain-field that provided him with his food. Indeed, on top of this fruit he possessed other resources of gold and silver and children, since a child is the fruit of his father. He will soon say to his brother: ‘I am greater than you in wealth and mightier in terms of numbers of dependents.’

Then a dialogue takes place between both of them: ‘...One day, while talking to his friend, he said, "I have more wealth and a larger following than you."' (*al-Kahf*: 34) This is quite clear proof that what was previously mentioned

concerning the two gardens and what they encompassed of blessings led him haughty arrogance and that this is the cause of his statement to his friend. The Arabic word *As-sahib*, translated as ‘friend’ in this verse, is the person who accompanies you, even if you do not have affection for him. The Arabic expression *yuhawiru-hu*, rendered above as ‘while talking to him’ means he argued with him such that one of them says something and the other responds to it, until they reach a conclusion. So what did he say to his companion? Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... he said, "I have more wealth."' (*al-Kahf*: 34)

Referring to his two gardens and what they comprise of blessings. He then continued: ‘... and a larger following than you.’ (*al-Kahf*: 34) This is implied previously as a part of his abundant fruit this one viewed himself pretentiously as self-sufficient on the basis of his possessions and children.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَدَخَلَ جَنَّتَهُ وَهُوَ ظَالِمٌ لِّنَفْسِهِ قَالَ مَا أَظُنُّ أَنْ تَبِيدَ هَذِهِ أَبَدًا ﴿٣٥﴾

He went into his garden and wronged himself by saying, ‘I do not think this will ever perish [35] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 35)

We previously knew that there were two gardens, so why did He *the Almighty* say: ‘He went into his garden ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 35)? We reply that if a person had two gardens, he would not be able to enter both of them at the same time; instead, the moment he enters it, he will go to a single garden, then afterwards he can enter the other one.

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and wronged himself...’ (*al-Kahf*: 35); a person may do wrong to someone else, but how can he do wrong to his own self? A person wrongs his own soul when he gives free rein to his delights and desires since he thereby deprives it of other objects of true desire and causes it to fail to attain what is last and greater. A person’s wrongdoing and sin fall back upon himself because the self has two sides: greedy self and emotional self which restrains through human pure character *Al-fitra*. Thus, the issue here is therefore one of dispute between these elements. Hence, one says, ‘The fiercest enemy of a person is his own self.’ However, if you were to say, ‘How is this possible, when we both are considered one thing?’ Yet, if you

thought about it deeply, you would find that when your self speaks to you of something, you then rebuke it. This is because within you are two personalities: a personality that is innately upright and another personality which is avidly possessive and lustful. Hence, if the lustful-self inclines towards some forbidden desire or becomes perverted, the innately upright self will set it straight and rectify its behaviour. Therefore, we have said that the Divine approach in all religions has been that, when refractory disobedience becomes generalised amongst people, and there is no longer anyone to admonish or to guide aright, Allah *the Exalted* sends for them a messenger to guide and to remind them of higher realities. The exception applied only to faithful community of followers (*ummah*) of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is because He shouldered them with the message of their prophet and placed their guidance in their own hands, not only but also brought forth from them those who carry the banner of the call unto Allah *Glorified is He*. For this reason, they will not have need for another messenger, and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the final seal of the prophets and messengers.

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is reassuring us that corruption and immorality will never be generalised. For if there exist amongst this community of followers (*Al-ummah*) those who are sinful, on the other hand there also exist those who bear the banner of commanding what is right and forbidding what is wrong. This issue is essentially required and is the foundation upon which Islamic society stands.

Returning to the verse under study; Allah *the Exalted* then says: '... I do not think this will ever perish.' (*al-Kahf*: 35) So, does this mean that he is wronging against his own self by merely entering the garden? No, he does not because it is his garden which he is free to enter as he pleases. Rather, what is meant by the wrong or injustice in this verse is what went through his mind and what he said to himself as he entered. Thus, he certainly wronged his own self when he had the idea that superiority is based on wealth and by being deceived by bounteous blessing. Hence, he said, 'I do not think this blessing will ever perish or that this luxuriant garden will ever come to an end or be annihilated.' The tangible reality before his eyes had indeed deluded him, causing him to think it unlikely that all this blessing could be extorted. Moreover, his delusion tempted him even further than Allah says:

وَمَا أَظُنُّ السَّاعَةَ قَائِمَةً وَلَئِن رُّدِدْتُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي لَأَجِدَنَّ خَيْرًا مِنْهَا مُنْقَلَبًا ﴿٣٦﴾

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 [36] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 36)

Therefore, he gives his delusion a full free. Furthermore, if it were acceptable for him to say: ‘...I do not think this will ever perish!’ (*al-Kahf*: 35), it would be inadmissible for him to say: ‘or that the Last Hour will ever come...’ (*al-Kahf*: 35). Afterwards when he denied the coming of the Last Hour, he was reminded by innate concerns and then rectified himself by saying: ‘even if I were to be taken back to my Lord’ (*al-Kahf*: 36). What this means is that in any case, if I am brought back to my Lord on the Day Resurrection, then there, I will have even more than this and greater. It is as if he was assured that Allah *the Almighty* had prepared for him that which is better than this.

Let us examine the utterance of this arrogant one, ungrateful concerning the blessings and favours of Allah upon him; thus he was completely deluded by it. He says: ‘...even if I were to be taken back to my Lord...’ (*al-Kahf*: 35). Therefore, he acknowledges that he has a Lord unto whom he will return, but if he is a liar, then at least he should be mindful and not be self-contradicted! Since what he exhibited was haughty arrogance, delusion and doubt about the arising of the Last Hour, and this is incompatible with his utterance ‘my Lord’ and is not consistent with it.

As for the Arabic word *munqaaiban*, translated as ‘my last resort’ in the verse being examined, means a place of return or refuge; Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ لَهُ صَاحِبُهُ وَهُوَ يُحَاوِرُهُ أَكَفَرْتَ بِالَّذِي خَلَقَكَ مِنْ تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِنْ نُطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ سَوَّكَ رَجُلًا ﴿٣٧﴾

His companion retorted, ‘Have you no faith in Him who created you from dust, from a small drop of fluid, then shaped you into a man? [37] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 37)

Commenting on this verse being examined, then his believing companion responds to him debating and arguing in order to reveal that which is right:

'Have you no faith in Him who created you from dust ...' (*al-Kahf*: 35). In other words, his previous speech was all focused on himself, and all his marks of superiority, along with his denial of higher realities. Does he speak of all of this and does not remember his beginning and being moulded out of dust which is the origin of your creation: 'from a small drop of fluid, then shaped you into a man?' (*al-Kahf*: 35) At this point the small drop of fluid refers to the basis of procreation which is to refer to the process of shaping so that he is well finished and perfectly completed.

The Arabic phrase *sawwa-ka*, translated in this verse as 'shaped you' means to make something in a way which corresponds to its function in life. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; the iron rod is straight and sound, but the iron hook at the end is curved. Thus, the curvature of the iron hook is the essence of its soundness and conforms to its function, for its function is for us to catch or seize something, and if this iron hook were straight, it would not perform its intended function.

The initial particle in the verse, consisting of the vocalised glottal stop 'a' and followed by the verb *kafarta* is translated as 'have you no faith' and is not interrogative in meaning as it might be. Rather, it is an interjection of disapproval and censure for what his companion said, and for what he said out of denial (*kufir*) and forgetfulness concerning the reality of his situation and the beginning of his creation.

Dust or earth is defined as the origin of mankind, and it is also a phase amongst the complete process of his creation. With regard to the creation of the human being, Allah *Glorified is He* has variously mentioned it as being 'out of water', 'out of dust', 'out of dark slime transmuted' and 'out of sounding clay, like pottery'.

As a result of man's stages of creation, some people raise objections to these different things cited in the creation of the human being. In reality, they are only one process which has multiple transitional phases. If you add water to dust or earth, it becomes mud. Then, if you mix the components of the mud together, it becomes transmuted dark slime; then if you left it to dry out a bit and become cohesive, it becomes argil clay. Hence, they are sequential steps for a single issue.

Allah *Glorified is He* says concerning the response of the believing man:

لَنَكْفُرَنَّ بِمَا كُفَرْنَا بِهِ وَلَا نُشْرِكُ بِرَبِّنَا أَحَدًا ﴿٣٨﴾

But, for me, He is God, my Lord, and I will never set up any partner with Him [38] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 38)

Regarding the original Arabic word of His speech at the beginning of the verse *lakinna*, translated as ‘But, for me...’ (*al-Kahf*: 35), it means ‘but I’ with the deletion of the initial vocalised glottal stop of the word *ana* and the assimilation of the phoneme ‘n’ of *lakin* into the following ‘n’ of *ana*. The word ‘but’ (*lakin*) is used here in the sense of rectification, as the believer is correcting what his companion said. Paraphrased, the believer said, ‘I am not like you in the opinion you have expressed. If you have reneged in the One Who created you from dust, then out of a drop of sperm, and then fashioned you into a well-formed man, I, therefore, have not denied my faith in the One Who created me. Therefore, my conviction is only to believe in Allah *the Almighty*’: ‘... He is Allah, my Lord ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 35).

You should note that the disbeliever did not say ‘Allah *Glorified is He* is my Lord’, rather, the phrase ‘my Lord’ occurred in the casual context of his speech. There is a significant difference between the two statements. Since the Lord (*Ar-rabb*) is the Creator Who assumes responsibility for up bringing and this fact is not doubted by anyone; there is no possible objection. However, the doubt concerns Allah *Glorified is He* Who is worshipped and obeyed. The meaning is the Lord deals with sustenance, whereas Divinity demands duties and obligations. Thus, the disbeliever acknowledged Lordship, but denied Divinity and commandments.

Then the believer reaffirms his faith by saying: ‘... and I will never set up any partner with Him.’ (*al-Kahf*: 35) The believer was not content with merely clarifying to his companion the state of disbelief in which he was. Rather, he desired to transmit his faith to others; this is the nature of a believer to be keen about the guidance of others. After having made his faith clear in Allah *the Almighty* he wished to teach his companion how a believer should be. In other words, faith of a believer is not complete until he loves for his brother

what he loves for himself. In addition, a believer should be mentally grounded to attempt to guide a disbeliever, for a believer's behaviour has been made correct regarding others, and the good of a believer comprises the inclination to correct the behaviour of a disbeliever through faith. Therefore, instead of cursing your enemy, it is better to pray to him for guidance, since your invocation against him will only increase your distress on his account. Thus, in this verse he is calling his companion to follow the way of guidance; Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَوَلَوْلَا إِذْ دَخَلْتَ جَنَّتَكَ قُلْتَ مَا شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَا قُوَّةَ إِلَّا بِاللَّهِ
 إِنَّ تَرَنِّيًا أَنَا أَقَلُّ مِنكَ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا

**If only, when you entered your garden, you had said,
 “This is God’s will. There is no power not [given] by God.”
 Although you see I have less wealth and offspring than
 you [39] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 39)**

In contemplation of this verse, the believer wants to teach him the acceptable reaction of faith in receiving a blessing by referring everything to Allah *the Almighty* because man has nothing to do with its reception, for it all came by His Mercy. The question here is from where did the nourishment from these gardens and orchards come? They came from the earth which Allah *the Exalted* created for you, without your efforts or having played any role. Likewise, the strength which enabled you to work is gifted to you, and it may also be taken from you at any time, rendering you feeble and incapable of doing anything. Hence, when you examine all of these issues you find them referring back to the supreme gift from Allah *Glorified is He*.

Another example for more illustrations is to look at the chair on which you are comfortably sitting, it being of exceptional elegance and amazing craftsmanship; from where did the craftsman get its material? If you track it back, you will find it as a piece of wood from some forest. If you were to ask the forest: ‘Where did you get this wood?’ it would answer you, ‘From Allah *Glorified is He*.’

Therefore Allah *the Exalted* teaches us the proper mental attitude with regard to His favours upon us. Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Consider the seeds you

sow in the ground. Is it you who make them grow or is it We?’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 63-64) This seed which you have sown in your field, did you sit next to it in order to make it flourish and draw it from the earth so that it is developed by your interference day after day? Rather, all you did for it was to plough the earth and sow the seeds. Even regarding the procedure of ploughing, Allah *the Almighty* made beasts of burden subservient for you so that you could undertake this activity, and you would not have had the capacity to subjugate them for this work; it is only Allah *Glorified is He* Who made them subservient and submissive to serve you. With support to this idea, Allah *the Most High* says: ‘... and made them obedient, so that some can be used for riding, some for food’ (*Ya Sin*: 72). You would not have been capable of subjugating them by yourself.

Thus, if you analysed any blessing of the blessings which requires your work, you would find that your portion therein also is gifted by Allah *Glorified is He* and is granted from Him. Even after the crop matures with flowers and bears fruit, it is not safeguarded from being ruined by some diseases, or some disaster that befalls it. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘If We wished, We could turn your harvest into chaff and leave you to wail, "We are burdened with debt; we are bereft."' (*al-Waqi‘a*: 65-67)

Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘We have tried them as We tried 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]. A disaster from your Lord struck the garden as they slept, and by morning it was stripped bare, a desolate land.’ (*al-Qalam*: 17-20)

Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Consider the water you drink. Was it you who brought it down from the rain cloud or was it We?’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 68-69) This water of which you drink, sweet and cool, are you aware of how it descends? Have you seen the steam of water rising into the atmosphere? Have you seen how clouds gather driven by the wind? Do you have any consciousness of this process? Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘If We wanted, We could make it bitter...’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 70). What this means is that it could have been made so intensely salty, of which you could derive no benefit.

Thus, whenever Allah *the Almighty* bestows any blessing upon his slaves, he reminds them of its opposite, for it is not due to their endeavours, and it is

incumbent upon them to extend thanks to Him in order that it remains forever. Otherwise, if it is out of their handiwork, let them safeguard it themselves!

Similarly, with regards to the question of the human being creation, Allah *Glorified is He* makes it clear that He grants life and abolishes it with death. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Consider [the semen] you eject. Do you create it yourselves or are We the Creator? We ordained death to be amongst you. Nothing could stop Us.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 58-60)

At this point Allah *the Most High* tells His created beings that if you yourselves are the creators, then you sustain and keep death away from you, i.e. you cannot. In this verse, He recalls the blessing in creating, and He is the only One Who can abolish this blessing of the origin of mankind.

With regard to the creation of fire, it is a different matter, since Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Consider the fire you kindle. Is it you who make the wood for it grow or is it We?' (*al-Waqi'a*: 71-72) However, in this case, Allah *the Exalted* only mentions His Power in the creation of fire and its igniting, but He does not mention what its opposite is. He did not say, 'We are capable of extinguishing it.' Yet He mentioned the creation of the human being and his capability of negating it with death, and the creation of crops and His capability to turn them into broken stubble and the creation of water and His capability to make it salty. Fire is the exception since it is He Who wills it to be lit and blazing continuously, in order that it remains a reminder to all people. Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'We made it a reminder and useful to those who kindle it.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 73)

Let us also give attention in the foregoing verses to one of the features of inimitability and precision of Quran's expression. The speaker is the Lord Who speaks of everything in a manner which suits Him. So, in the case of agricultural process with the interference of the human being such as ploughing, sowing, irrigation, and so forth, we notice that He affirms the action of destructing these crops in order for man not to be deceived by his actions.

As for the statement regarding water — and the human being has no part in its formation — there is no need for use of the intensification particle as in the previous example. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'If We wanted, We could

make it bitter...’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 70) without emphasis since the human being makes no claim of having any merit in this process of descending water from the sky.

Let us return to the verse under study with the believer who admonishes his disbeliever companion and instructs him on how to receive Allah's favour upon him. Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘If only, when you entered your garden, you had said, “This is Allah's Will. There is no power not [given] by Allah.”’ (*al-Kahf*: 39) The Arabic phrase at the beginning of the verse means ‘why not’ and is for urging and incitement. Hence, whenever a person sees something which pleases him among his possessions or children, even if he finds his own face attractive in the mirror, he is obligated to say, ‘This is Allah’s will. There is no power not [given] by Allah *Glorified is He*.’

In a relevant Hadith, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: ‘If it is not said in the presence of a blessing, this is Allah’s Will. There is no power not [given] by Allah.’

Therefore, whenever a moment a blessing of Allah be attractive, you must not be distracted thereby and caused you to forget the very One Who blessed you; rather, you should say, ‘This is Allah’s Will. There is no power not [given] by Allah.’ That is to say that none of this is due to my power or my action; rather, it is a favour of Allah, and therefore, you ascribe the blessing to its Creator and its Benefactor. Furthermore, inasmuch as you have ascribed the blessing to its Creator, then you have sought His protection and requested His preservation for it, and have thereby guaranteed its continuance.

We have noted that Ja‘far As-Sadiq *Allah be pleased with him* had great knowledge of the treasures and secrets of the Quran. He was aware of the human self and what afflicts it of vicissitudes, disturbing the happiness of life, in terms of fear, anguish, anxiety, deception, or even the splendour of life aspirated by humans.

So, Ja‘far As-Sadiq used to find out for these ailments that which corresponded to them from the remedies of the Quran. Thus, he used to say regarding fear: ‘I am amazed at those who fear but do not seek refuge in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* who says, ‘Allah is enough for us. He is the best

protector.' (*Al-'Imran*: 173), for I have heard Allah *Glorified is He* say after this: 'They returned with grace and bounty from Allah. No harm befell them...' (*Al-'Imran*: 174).

'And I am amazed at those who are overcome by anxiety since anxiety is obstruction of the heart and confusion of the mind due to something whose cause is unknown, and I am amazed at those who are overcome by anxiety and do not take refuge in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '... There is no God but You. Glory be to You; I was wrong.' (*al-Anbiya*': 87), for I have heard Allah *Glorified is He* say after this: 'We answered him and saved him from distress ...' (*al-Anbiya*': 88), not only this, but moreover: '... this is how We save the faithful...' (*al-Anbiya*': 88). This is like a general description for every believer, and not particular to Prophet Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon him* to whom these latter verses refer.

For the saying of the believer who is affected by anxiety, '... There is no God but You. Glory be to You; I was wrong' (*al-Anbiya*': 87), signifies 'I have no safe sanctuary nor place of refuge but You': '... I was wrong' (*al-Anbiya*': 87). Or in other words, 'I admit sin and laxity, so perchance what I have committed of sin and what I have done to wrong my soul is the cause of this anxiety which troubles me.'

Continuing with the words of Ja'far As-Sadiq *Allah be pleased with him* 'I am amazed at those who are the object of deception. How they do not take refuge in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...But [as for me,] I commit myself unto Allah ...' (*Ghafir*: 44), for I have heard Allah *the Exalted* saying after this: 'And Allah preserved him from the evil of their scheming ...' (*Ghafir*: 45).

Since Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who assumes the obligations of responding to them and confronting their cunning with His cunning, as He *the Most High* says: 'And the disbelievers schemed [against 'Isa (Jesus)]; but Allah brought their scheming to nought, for Allah is above all schemers.' (*Al-'Imran*: 54)

'I am also amazed at those who seek this world and its [transient] charms--that is, the one possessed of avid cravings in this world, eager for its ornaments--how they do not take refuge in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* '... Whatever Allah wills [shall come to pass, for] there is no power save with

Allah!' (*al-Kahf*: 39), for I have heard Allah *the Exalted* say after this: '... If only, when you entered your garden, you had said, "This is Allah's Will. There is no power not [given] by Allah." ...' (*al-Kahf*: 39) For if you said this regarding your blessing, it will be preserved and grow, and if you said it regarding the blessing of someone else, Allah *the Almighty* will bestow upon you something superior to it.

It is an amazing thing that an impoverished believer, who possesses nothing of the goods of this world, guides his disbelieving companion to the keys of blessing which cause him to get more of the benefits of this world, in spite of what he already has at his disposal of its favours. The key, then, to augmentation of blessing in this world and to the continuance of favour in it is that we say: '...This is Allah's Will. There is no power not [given] by Allah...' (*al-Kahf*: 39).

The believer continues his speech, expounding to his companion that which he reproached him for in terms of his being destitute and his companion being wealthy, was along with his companion being superior to him in his possessions and his progeny: '... Although you see I have less wealth and offspring than you ...' (*al-Kahf*: 39).

Then, he reminds him that Allah *Glorified is He* is capable of altering this state of affairs by saying:

فَعَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَن يُؤْتِيَنِي خَيْرًا مِّنْ جَنَّتِكَ وَيُرْسِلَ عَلَيْهَا
حُسْبَانًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ فَنُصَبِحُ صَعِيدًا زَلَقًا ﴿٤٠﴾

**My Lord may well give me something better than your
garden, and send thunderbolts on your garden from the
sky, so that it becomes a heap of barren dust [40]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 40)**

The Arabic word '*asa*, (it may well be) implies *Ar-Raja'* (expectant hope). If this expectant hope is from Allah *the Almighty*, then it will come to pass without a doubt. Hence, whenever you say in the presence of someone else's state of blessing, 'Whatever Allah wills [shall come to pass, for]. There is no power save with Allah!', Allah *the Exalted* gives you that which is superior to that regarding which you said, 'Whatever Allah wills [shall come

to pass, for]. There is no power save with Allah!' Also, if you acknowledge the blessing of Allah upon you and traced its merit back to Him, He gives you increase [of blessings], a point which is proved by His saying, '... If you are grateful [to Me], I shall most certainly give you more and more...' (*Ibrahim*: 7). With regard to His saying, 'My Lord may well give me something better than your garden ...' (*al-Kahf*: 40), it means that Allah *the Most High* is able to change one's condition from wealth to poverty and vice versa. So, you have no power to preserve this blessing, just as you certainly had no power to bring it about originally. Therefore, it is possible that my Lord will bestow upon me a blessing like unto yours, while leaving your blessing intact. However, the Will of Allah *the Exalted* could transform your blessing and eliminate it; Allah says: '... and send thunderbolts on your garden from the sky...' (*al-Kahf*: 40) which means that this blessing--in which you exult and the flourishing of which you are so proud and which makes you feel so superior to Allah's created beings--maybe Allah *the Almighty* will send down a calamity upon it.

The Arabic word *Al-husban* (calamity) in the verse, signifies a thing which is *mahsub* (calculated) and determined with *hisab* (precision and reckoning) as is the case in His saying: '[At His behest] the sun and the moon run their appointed courses (*bi-husban*)' (*ar-Rahman*: 5). The Creator established the sun and the moon for the cognisance of time: '... so that you might know how to compute the years and to measure [time] ...' (*Yunus*: 5). We would not be cognisant of the calculation of years and the measurement [of time] unless they themselves were regulated according to a precise system which never becomes unbalanced, exactly like a watch which you would not be able to know and regulate the time unless it is itself correctly regulated.

The etymological pattern *hasib husbana* (which means he calculated with precise reckoning) is similar to *ghafar ghufrana* (which means he forgave with full remission). Allah *the Exalted* did indeed send down upon this garden— in which its owner exulted—a bolt of lightning, calculated and carefully calibrated with the extent of this garden such that it did not affect anything beyond it. This was in order that [the owner] would not say, 'It is a general cosmic sign which has afflicted me just as it has afflicted others.' Nay, indeed it is a specific thunderbolt, calculated for this garden to the

exclusion of others. Allah *Glorified is He* then says: '...so that it becomes a heap of barren dust.' (*al-Kahf*: 40) In other words, this garden-so luxuriantly cultivated with grain-crops and fruit, brimming with date-palms and grape-vines-after being struck by a lightning bolt, has become a *sa'id* (sterile plateau), that is to say, barren and covered in dust. A relevant usage of the same word occurs in His saying regarding the performance of ritual *At-tayyamu*m (ablution with fine soil when no water is available); Allah says: '...then take resort to pure dust...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43). However, this is not all what happened to the garden, rather, it became '... a heap of barren dust' (*al-Kahf*: 40). The final Arabic descriptor *zalaqa* in the verse signifies dampened dust upon which the feet slide, and thus it is not suitable for anything, even walking upon.

أَوْ يُصْبِحَ مَأْوَاهَا غَوْرًا فَلَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ لَهُ طَلْبًا ﴿٤١﴾

**Or its water may sink so deep into the ground
that you will never be able to reach it again [41]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 41)**

The Arabic word *ghawra* in the verse (sinks deep into the ground) means 'sunken profoundly into the earth'. At this point, you might object by saying, 'Water could be sunken into the earth, but we could still extract it with machines.' For this reason, He *the Almighty* causes [the owner of the garden] to despair of any stratagem he might think of by stating plainly, 'that you will never be able to reach it again.' (*al-Kahf*: 40) In other words, you will not reach it by any means at your disposal. In the same respect, Allah *Glorified is He* says in another place in the Quran: 'Say [unto those who deny the truth]: "What do you think? If of a sudden all your water were to vanish underground, who [but Allah] could provide you with water from [new] unsullied springs?"' (*al-Mulk*: 30) Take note that this speech of the believer to his disbelieving companion is merely an expectation he is addressing to him, as expressed by 'My Lord may...' (*al-Kahf*: 40). It is an expectation which has not yet occurred and which has not attained the *iqa'ayat* (intervention phases) of *Al-qadar* (Divine foreordainment).

Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

وَأُحِيطَ بِشَمْرِهِ فَاصْبَحَ يَقْلِبُ كَفَيْهِ عَلَى مَا أَنْفَقَ فِيهَا وَهِيَ خَاوِيَةٌ
 عَلَى عُرُوشِهَا وَيَقُولُ يَا لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أُشْرِكْ بِرَبِّي أَحَدًا ﴿٤٢﴾

And so it was: his fruit was completely destroyed, and there he was, wringing his hands over what he had invested in it, as it drooped on its trellises, and saying, 'I wish I had not set up any partner to my Lord' [42] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 42)

In this manner, *At-tanfidh* (anticipation preceded by effectuation), as if Allah *the Exalted* were responding positively to the believing man, and not refuting his expectation. 'And so it was: his fruit was completely destroyed ...' (*al-Kahf*: 42). The Arabic verb *uhita* (were encompassed) in the verse suggests that He made an encompassing wall around the fertile garden. Thus, it had no outlet, as He *the Almighty* said in another verse: '...so that they believe themselves to be encompassed ...' (*Yunus*: 22). Note in the verse under study that Allah *Glorified is He* said, literally: *uhita bi thamarih* (his fruit was encompassed). He did not say, for example that his grain-field or his date palms were encompassed. This is because the walling-in might be around something which later bears fruit. However, the walling-in here occurred around the fruit itself, while it was close to being harvested and close to being consumed. In this manner, the disaster inflicted is more intense. Fruit is the goal and the final product of grain-fields.

Then, the True Lord *the Most High* depicts the regret of the owner of the garden and his grief over it, by saying: '...and there he was, wringing his hands over what he had invested in it...' (*al-Kahf*: 42); in other words, striking one hand against the other means a person does so when he is taken by surprise by an event he did not anticipate. Thus, he stood there dumbfounded, not knowing what to say, smacking his hands against one another, not speaking until he had recovered from the horror of this surprise and the consternation it caused him. However, what was he wringing his hands over? He was wringing his hands over what he had spent on it '... as it drooped on its trellises ...' (*al-Kahf*: 42).

In this passage, the Arabic word *khawiya* means ruined, barren of vegetation, completely barren. Likewise, He says in another verse says: 'Or [are you, O

man, of the same mind] as he who passed by a town deserted by its people, with its roofs caved in ...' (*al-Baqara*: 259).

The Arabic word *'urush* (trellises or roofs above) of course implies something raised, but when the thunderbolt came down upon them from the sky, it demolished the structural frames [of the fruit], and turned its high points to its low points. So, the trellis fell first, and then the walls collapsed on top of it.

Regarding His Words, '... and saying, "I wish I had not set up any partner with my Lord."' (*al-Kahf*: 42), the disbeliever said this after being restrained from speaking by the terrible surprise and beating his hands against one another, and then he snapped out of his consternation and blurted out this instantaneous verbal inclination: 'I wish I had not set up any partner with my Lord.' (*al-Kahf*: 42) Desiring that he had not associated anyone with Allah *the Almighty* because *Ash-shuraka'* (the associates besides Allah) which he had assumed were of no benefit to him.

Allah says:

وَلَمْ تَكُنْ لَهُ فِئَةٌ يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانَ مُنْصِرًا ﴿٤٣﴾

He had no forces to help him other than God – he could not even help himself [43] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 43)

What this means is that he had no helpers or supporters to protect him from this which had befallen him or to shield him from the devastation which enclosed his garden. Concerning His saying, '... than Allah nor could he even help himself' (*al-Kahf*: 43), this is because it would not have been appropriate for him to triumph, and victory for him is inadmissible. Why is this?

Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

هَذَاكَ الْوَلِيَّةُ لِلَّهِ الْحَقِّ هُوَ خَيْرٌ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ عُقْبًا ﴿٤٤﴾

In that situation, the only protection is that of God, the True God: He gives the best rewards and the best outcome [44] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 44)

The verse opens with the Arabic word *hunalika*, (for this it is) which means at the time of this situation, the time at which the thunderbolt descended

from the sky and struck the garden, rendering it utterly devastated. At such a moment, you remember *Al-mun'im* (the giver of Blessings) and wish that you had not associated anything with Him *the Almighty*. Hence, His saying *hunalik* signifies a precise time, the time of climax, climax of misfortune and of distress.

The Arabic word *hunalik* occurs in the Quran for wondrous phenomena, and summons to phenomena even more wondrous. An example of this is found in the story of Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* when he goes into the chamber of our lady Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* and finds her with *rizq* (nourishment); Allah says: 'He would ask, "O, Maryam (Mary), from whence came this unto you?" She would answer, "It is from Allah. Behold, Allah grants sustenance unto whom He wills, beyond all reckoning."' (*Al-Imran: 37*)

Now, it was Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* who was her guardian, charged with providing her with food and drink, so when he saw her with various types of food which he did not bring to her, he asked her from where it had come. Whereupon, she responded, 'It is from Allah *the Almighty*. Verily, He grants sustenance unto whom He wills, beyond all reckoning.' This statement gave hope to Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* for the benevolent Favour of Allah *the Exalted* and he desired to seize upon this opportunity. So, he petitioned Allah in prayer to grant him a son, though his wife had been barren until then. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '*Hunalika* (In that self-same place), Zakaryya (Zechariah) prayed unto his Lord ...' (*Al-Imran: 38*).

The Arabic word *Al-walaya*, (all protective power) in the verse under examination means that you have a *waliy* (patron) who supports and protects you. The *waliy* is the one who has power over you and who defends you in the time of adversity. According to another reading, the word *Al-wilaya* is pronounced with an 'i' after the 'w', with the meaning of dominion or *Al-mulk* (sovereignty). This is what we find in His saying: 'With whom will *Al-mulk* (sovereignty) rest on that Day? With Allah, the One Who holds absolute sway over all that exists!' (*Ghafir: 16*)

Concerning His saying: 'the only protection is that of Allah, the True God.' (*al-Kahf: 44*), this is due to He being the One to reward good deeds with recompense better than this world and all that is in it; He *the Almighty*

says: 'He gives the best rewards and the best outcome' (*al-Kahf*: 44); that is to say, *Al-'aqiba* (the best outcome) with pure sustenance in the garden of Eternity.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* has coined for us a similitude, and has elucidated for us the final end of the wealthy disbeliever and the impoverished believer. Moreover, He has made clear to us that a person should not be deceived by blessing nor deluded by felicity and *An-na'im* (ease) because these are gifted by Allah *the Most High*. Therefore, always keep *Al-Wahib* (the Giver) and *Al-Mun'im* (the Bestower of Blessings) in your mind, so that He might preserve for you your blessings. Otherwise, you would be like this ungrateful man who deemed himself so superior and exulted in the favour of Allah *the Almighty* whose final end was as you have seen.

This is a parable concerning *Al-amr Al-juz'i* (a particular incident) which is linked to a broader, single precept. If you examined it with insight, you would find that it applies to this entire world, for it is a small-scale model of the state of the life of this world. For this reason, the True Lord *the Most High* proceeds from the particular parable to the general parable by saying:

وَأَضْرِبْ لَهُمْ مَثَلَ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا كَمَاءٍ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ فَاخْتَلَطَ بِهِ
بَبَاتِ الْأَرْضِ فَأَصْبَحَ هَشِيمًا تَذْرُوهُ الرِّيْحُ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ مُّقْنَدِرًا ﴿٤٥﴾

Tell them, too, what the life of this world is like: We send water down from the skies and the earth's vegetation absorbs it, but soon the plants turn to dry stubble scattered about by the wind: God has power over everything [45]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 45)

In this verse, the True Lord makes the unknown clear to us by what is known of this world. Scholars of Arabic language say that this verse comprises *tashbih tamthil* (allegorical representation). Since, in this verse, He likens the state of this world in terms of its brevity and its ephemerality to water which descends from the sky, and then the earth is irrigated with it and produces varieties of crops and fruit. However, quickly these plants dry up and turn into *hashim* (fragmented chaff) dispersed by the wind. This image, as one says, is drawn from the manifold; in other words, the aspect of

resemblance in it is not one thing, rather, it is several things. So, if *At-tashbih* (a simile) is composed of multiple things, then it is a *mathal* (parable). On the other hand, if a comparison is between a single thing and another single thing, it is called a similitude or *mithl* (likeness), as when we say, 'This is *mithl* (like that).' Therefore, He says: 'Hence, do not coin any similitudes for Allah!' (*an-Nahl*: 74) because Allah *the Exalted* is beyond all comparison

In such a manner, this world appears beautiful, flourishing, bounteous, sweet, and verdant, and then suddenly you find nothing of it in your hands. For this reason, the Quran calls this *dunya* (world), a word related to the Arabic verb *dana* meaning to be low or vile, which suggests the disdainful insignificance. Otherwise, then, what more base description than this with which could it be described? This is so that we might be cognisant that what stands opposed to it is *'ulya* (a higher) life.

It is as if Allah were saying to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Just as I propound for them the parable of the two men and what happened to them, I now propound for them a parable of the life of this world and that it fluctuates dramatically with its inhabitants. Also, it changes with them, so I propound a parable of this world for them drawn from the reality of this world itself.'

The meaning of '... and the earth's vegetation absorbs it ...' (*al-Kahf*: 45) is that the rain causes the plants of the earth *ikhtalata* (to mingle) and to mesh with each other, along with the twigs and branches intertwining. This is an image of plants in fertile soil, but if the earth were salty, and not fecund, it would produce plants in single units, a stick here, and a stick there.

However, do the plants remain in their state of greenness and freshness? No, rather, indeed, how rapidly they desiccate, fragment, and become dry stubble, which the wind rips away and scatters. This is a metaphor for this world when it takes on its embellishment itself and is beautifully adorned, as He says: '...until – when the earth has assumed its artful adornment and has been embellished, and they who dwell on it believe that they have gained mastery over it – there comes down upon it Our Judgment, by night or by day...' (*Yunus*: 24).

Then, in the verse under study, He says: 'Allah has power over everything.' (*al-Kahf*: 45); He is always fully capable of eliminating something and bringing forth its opposite, as He *the Most High* says: '... but, behold, We are most certainly able to withdraw this [blessing]!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 18)

Likewise, He has the power and ability of creation, and He has the power and ability of annihilation; hence the quality of power and ability is never separated from Him, which is why He gives life and decrees death, He raises in power and dignity and He debases and humbles, He contracts and He expands, He harms and He benefits.

In view of the previous debate of the owner of the garden who exulted in his possessions and his progeny, there comes corresponding mention of wealth and offspring. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

الْمَالُ وَالْبَنُونَ زِينَةُ الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ
 الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ أَمَلًا ﴿٤٦﴾

**Wealth and children are the attractions of this worldly life, but
 lasting good works have a better reward with your Lord and
 give better grounds for hope[46] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 46)**

These are the basic elements of people's distraction and *fitna* (strife) in this world: wealth and children; however, why did He *the Almighty* put wealth first? Is it more precious to people than children are? We say, 'The True Lord gave precedence to wealth over children not because it is dearer or more valued, but due to wealth being more general amongst those being addressed, contrary to children. For every person has material possessions, even if they be few, but as for children, this is a particularity, since there are people who are deprived of them.'

Moreover, children are not possible without wealth since procreation and bearing offspring require marriage and expenditure. Thus, everyone has some wealth, but not everyone has children. The wise pronouncement in this verse is a general matter, which is the following: 'Wealth and children are the attractions of this worldly life...' (*al-Kahf*: 46). The Arabic word *zina* (adornment) in the aforementioned statement means that which is not of the necessities of life; hence it is merely outward form and ornamentation, for a believer is

content with what has been decreed to him and lives his life without wealth and without children. Indeed a person may be made unhappy by his wealth or made miserable by his child to the degree that he wishes he had died before he was provided with this wealth or this child.

The issue of bearing children has become a mental complex and difficulty amongst many people. Hence, you see a man distressed and preoccupied with worry because he wants a son in order to gain *'izwa* (a line of descent) and *'izza* (social standing), and yet perhaps he will be granted a son and face humiliation on his account. Likewise, how many problems are caused in homes because the wife does not bear children? If only people were convinced that childbearing is a blessing from Allah *the Almighty* and that *As-salb* (deprivation) is also a blessing from Him, then everyone would find relief. Have we not read the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Allah's alone is the dominion over the heavens and the earth. He creates whatever He wills. He bestows the gift of female offspring on whomever He wills, and the gift of male offspring on whomever He wills, or He gives both male and female [to whomever He wills] and causes to be barren whomever He wills, for, verily, He is All-Knowing, infinite in His Power.' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50)

Thus, sterility in itself is a blessing and gift from Allah *the Exalted* which if a person accepted from his Lord, He would compensate him for his sterility by making all children his children. They would look to him and treat him as if he were their father, and he would thereby taste the delight of children without having to trouble himself in the raising of anyone, to shoulder the anxiety of anyone.

Likewise, the one who is distressed because Allah *the Most High* bestows daughters upon him, but no sons, and is exactly like the one about whom Allah *the Almighty* says: 'for whenever any of them is given the glad tidings of [the birth of] a girl, his face darkens, and he is filled with suppressed anger.' (*an-Nahl*: 58)

Indeed, he desires a son in order that he might have *'izwa* (a line of descent) and *'izza* (honourable status), but he has forgotten that the honourable status of a believer is through Allah *the Almighty* not through other than Him. We say, 'By Allah, if you received a daughter with joy and contentment on the basis that she is a gift from Him, it would be a causal factor in her finding a husband who is more benevolent to you than your own son, then

she in turn might bring forth a son for you who would be dearer to you than your own son.'

Hence, wealth and children are of the adornment of life and its outward embellishment, but not an imperative necessity. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has demarcated this world for us by saying: 'Whoever finds himself sound in body, with peace of mind--that is to say, no one threatens his security--and in possession of his day's nourishment, then it is as if this world has given him possession of all it has to offer.'⁽¹⁾

Thus, whatever exceeds this is *zina* (adornment), and hence a person is able to live without wealth or children, to live according to values which bestow blessings upon him, and with satisfaction rendering him content with his Creator.

Returning to the verse under study; Allah then says: '... but lasting good works have a better reward with your Lord and give better grounds for hope.' (*al-Kahf*: 46) This means that neither wealth nor children will go with you into the grave and will not protect you from punishment. Only enduring *Al-baqiyat As-salihah* (good deeds) will be of benefit to you. [This is illustrated in an anecdote wherein] Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was once given an ewe as a present, and Lady 'A'isha *Allah be pleased with her* knew that the Messenger of Allah most liked the shoulder of the ewe as its meat is tender and light. Therefore, she saved the shoulder for him *peace and blessings be upon him* and gave the rest away in charity. Then, when he came, he asked, 'What have you done with the ewe?' Whereupon she replied, 'All of it is gone except for its shoulder.' At this he laughed and said, 'Nay, rather, all of it *baqiyat* (has remained) except its shoulder.'⁽²⁾

In another Hadith, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'O, son of Adam, have you anything of your possessions except what you have eaten and thus used up, or what you have worn and thus worn out, or what you have given away in charity and thus preserved?'⁽³⁾ This is the meaning of '... but lasting good works have a better reward ...' (*al-Kahf*: 46).

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by At-Tirmidhi (2346) and Ibn Majah (4141).*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad in his (Musnad) (6/50) and At-Tirmidhi (2470).*

(3) *This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad in his (Musnad) (4/24, 26), Muslim (2958) and At-Tirmidhi (2342).*

The question which now comes to mind is the following: 'If neither wealth nor children represent a necessity of the necessities of life, then what are the necessities of life?' The necessities of life is everything which makes this world *mazra'a* (a place to sow crops) for the Hereafter, and a means of attaining perpetual, ever-lasting, pleasurable, happy life. It is a place where you do not finish with *An-na'im* (a source of felicity) and then leave it, nor does any source of felicity finish with you and leave you, for it is the bliss of paradise.

The necessities, hence, are religion and the well-ordered Path of Allah, along with the values which regulate the activities of life in accordance with that which Allah *the Almighty* intended in the creation of life.

As for the Arabic phrase *wa Al-baqiyat* in this passage, meaning roughly 'and/but enduring things/deeds', since He begins it with the conjunction (*wa*); it signifies that what comes before it is not to be considered among enduring things or deeds. Rather, the preceding is ephemeral along with the ephemerality of this world. Then, He describes these enduring deeds or things as *As-salihat* (being good and righteous) to distinguish between them and *Al-baqiyat As-sayyi'at* (enduring bad or evil deeds) by which one earns everlasting existence in Hellfire.

Concerning the saying of Allah, '... but lasting good works have a better reward ...' (*al-Kahf*: 46), one might ask *khayr* (better) in whose view? Since every addition to a compound phrase adds to the power of the phrase compounded, *khayru-ka* (your better issue) is not the same as *khayr man huw aghna min-ka* (better is one who is wealthier than you), and this is not the same as *khayr al-hakim* (the better ruler/judge). So, what would you think of *Al-Khayr* in the view of Allah? The full conclusion of this passage answers the question: '... but lasting good works have a better reward with your Lord and give better grounds for hope.' (*al-Kahf*: 46).

The Arabic word *Al-amal*, occurring at the end of the verse and translated as 'hope' is what a person aspires to from that which is not available to him in his current state. Thus, if he is in possession of *khayr* (some benefit or blessing), he aspires to that which is superior to it. Here, we stress that the highest hope lies with Allah *the Exalted*. All of this makes it clear for us that this world is ephemeral and that we are journeying to an eternal time. For this

reason, the True Lord *the Most High* adds as a complement after *Al-baqiyat As-salihah* (enduring good deeds) that which corresponds to this, so He *the Almighty* says:

وَيَوْمَ نُسِطُ الْجِبَالَ وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ بَارِزَةً وَحَشَرْنَاهُمْ فَلَمْ نُغَادِرْ مِنْهُمْ أَحَدًا ﴿٤٧﴾

**One day We shall make the mountains move, and
you will see the earth as an open plain. We shall
gather all people together, leaving no one [47]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 47)**

In other words, keep in the forefront of your mind the day that We will make the mountains go away, and this world will come to an end; perform enduring good deeds since, verily, We will send into oblivion the mountains which you perceive to be so firmly established and stable, whose size, mass, strength and solidity have survived countless generations without changing. The Arabic expression *tasyir al-jibal* (causing the mountains to disappear) in the verse means their removal from where they stand. Similarly, He said in another verse: 'and when the mountains are made to vanish as if they had been a mirage.' (*an-Naba'*: 20) In another verse, He says: 'and when the mountains are made to vanish.' (*al-Kahf*: 3) Likewise, He *Glorified is He* says: 'and when the mountains are scattered like dust.' (*al-Mursalat*: 10) He further says: '[It will take place] on a Day when the sky will be like molten lead and the mountains will be like tufts of wool.' (*al-Ma'arij*: 9-8)

Let us take note that the True Lord mentions the strongest immovable manifestation in the life of this world. Yet, there are other things on the earth which are strong and well grounded, such as skyscraper buildings and massive age-old trees, as well as many others. However, if He *the Almighty* is going to pulverise these mountains and remove them from their locations, then everything else on the face of the earth is all the more evanescent. Then He says: '...and you will see the earth as an open plain.' (*al-Kahf*: 47)

The earth is everything which supports and carries you of this world on which we live and everything that rises above you and shades you, namely the sky. As for the Arabic word *bariza* (void and bare) in the verse above, it is related to

Al-baraz which is empty space. In other words, you will see the earth as an empty space, void of all that was upon it of various mountains, buildings, and trees, even of the ocean which covers a large portion of the earth.

All of these perceived forms will have vanished without a trace, as if *barazat* (the earth came into view after having been hidden): some of it beneath mountains, some of it beneath trees, some of it beneath buildings and some of it beneath water. Thus, it becomes a vast empty expanse, without a single landmark for anything.

In a similar sense, there is what we call *Al-mubaraza* (single combat duel) whereby you witness one strong youth saying to another, 'Step outside!'; what this means is into an open space so that the latter will not find anything to defend himself with, or a wall, for example, against which he could brace himself. We say, 'so-and-so *baraza* (came out) to so-and-so and *baraza-hu* (meet him in combat)', and this means that the former fought with the latter.

Regarding '...We shall gather all people together, leaving no one...' (*al-Kahf*: 47), it means that Allah *the Almighty* assembled them for the Day of Judgment, for they departed this world in stages from the time of Adam *peace be upon him* as death harvests souls, and now the day has come on which all of them are gathered together. Concerning the phrase '... leaving no one ...' (*al-Kahf*: 47), it means that He *the Most High* shall not omit a single one of them. All will be subject to His Examination. The Arabic word *nughadir* (leaving out) is derived from the root (*gh-d-r*) all of which derivations lead to the connotation of *At-tark* (leaving or neglecting). Thus, the Arabic word for *Al-ghadr* means neglecting loyalty and breaching of faith.

Even the Arabic word *ghadir* which is a word for a small stream or creek is called *ghadir* because when rain falls on the earth, it goes away and leaves only a little bit in footprints.

Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

وَعَرِّضُوا عَلَىٰ رَبِّكَ صَفًّا لَّقَدْ جِئْتُمُونَا كَمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ أَوَّلَ
 مَرَّةٍ بَلْ زَعَمْتُمْ أَلَّنْ نَجْعَلَ لَكُمْ مَوْعِدًا ﴿٤٨﴾

**They will be lined up before your Lord: ‘Now you have come to Us as We first created you, although you claimed We had not made any such appointment for you’ [48]
 (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 48)**

Concerning His saying, 'They will be lined up before your Lord ...' (*al-Kahf*: 48), the Arabic word *Al-'ard* used as a passive voice verb in the verse '*uridu*, signifies that *Al-'arid* (the examiner or reviewer) receives that *Al-ma'rud* (which is being examined or reviewed) in an ordered manner such that all aspects of the latter are shown. This is similar to when a commander inspects troops at a military review, for example, hence he sees every one of his soldiers. The Arabic word *saffan* used as an adverb in the verse, means *sufufan* (in well-ordered rows). Even the angels will come in well-ordered rows, as He says: 'and [the majesty of] your Lord stands revealed, as well as [the true nature of] the angels, rank upon rank.' (*al-Fajr*: 22)

In other words, it is an organised process in which no one can disguise himself, and there will be no escape from it for anyone. They will be rows interposed in a way that no row will be concealed from the one near next to it; hence, everyone will be clear in all their states.

In a Hadith related by Mu'adh ibn Jabal *Allah be pleased with him* Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told us, 'Allah the Almighty will assemble humanity and then cry out, "O, My slaves! Procure your arguments and prepare your responses, for verily you are gathered, held accountable and answerable. O, angels! Stand my slaves up in rows on the tips of their toes for *Al-hisab*' (the Reckoning)."⁽¹⁾

You should just try to imagine the strenuous effort and pain which the one who stands on his toe-tips experiences. Normally, the weight of the body is distributed onto both feet in a standing position and onto a chair in a sitting

(1) This Hadith is narrated by *Al-Qurtubi* in his (*Tafsir*) (5/4148), attributing it to *Abu Al-Qasim 'Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Mundah*; it is also related by *As-Suyuti* in (*ad-Durr Al-manthur*) (5/400).

position and onto the entire body in the state of sleep, and in this way, the weight of the body is alleviated according to the position that it is in. However, if all of the weight is concentrated onto the tips of the toes of both feet, there is no doubt that it is a painful and onerous posture. It is so difficult for people that they wish only to abandon it, even if for hellfire.

Then, He says: 'Now you have come to Us as We first created you...' (*al-Kahf*: 48); that is to say, that you will return to the state in which you descended from your mother's womb, naked, possessing nothing not even that which might cover your private parts. This significance is portrayed in detail in His saying: '[And Allah shall say:] "And now, indeed, you have come unto Us in a lonely state, even as We created you in the first instance, and you have left behind you all that We bestowed on you [in your lifetime]. And We do not see with you those intercessors of yours whom you supposed to have a share in Allah's Divinity with regard to yourselves! Indeed, all the bonds between you [and your earthly life] are now severed, and all your former fancies have forsaken you!" (*al-An'am*: 94)

Concerning His saying: 'although you claimed We had not made any such appointment for you' (*al-Kahf*: 48), the statement in this verse is addressed to disbelievers who denied the Resurrection and the Final Reckoning. The Arabic word *za'amtum*, translated as 'you were wont to assert', is derived from the same root as the Arabic word *Az-za'm*, which is the wrapping of a lie.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَوَضَعَ الْكِتَابَ فَتَرَى الْمُجْرِمِينَ مُشْفِقِينَ مِمَّا فِيهِ وَيَقُولُونَ يَا وَيْلَتَنَا
 مَا لَ هَذَا الْكِتَابِ لَا يُغَادِرُ صَغِيرَةً وَلَا كَبِيرَةً إِلَّا أَحْصَاهَا
 وَوَجَدُوا مَا عَمِلُوا حَاضِرًا وَلَا يَظْلِمُ رَبُّكَ أَحَدًا ﴿٤٩﴾

The record of their deeds will be laid open and you will see the guilty, dismayed at what they contain, saying, 'Woe to us! What a record this is! It does not leave any deed, small or large, unaccounted for!' They will find everything they ever did laid in front of them: your Lord will not be unjust to anyone [49] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 49)

Regarding His saying, 'The record of their deeds will be laid open ...' (*al-Kahf*: 49), this means that the angels will lay it open at the command of

Allah *the Almighty* and each one will be given his *kitab* (record). Hence, it will be a scene composed of multiple images, for the one who obtains his record in his right hand will be joyous and say: '...Come, you all! Read this, my record!' (*al-Haqqa*: 19), proudly displaying it to people, to show what is in it, for it is an honourable record with nothing in it to be embarrassed about; therefore he is proud concerning it and summons people to read it. Thus, he is like a pupil who obtained high marks and then rushes jubilantly to show them and proclaim them publicly. This is in contradistinction to the one who is given his record in his left hand, since he says: '... Oh, would that I had never been shown this my record, and neither known this my account! Oh, would that this [death of mine] had been the end of me! Of no avail to me is all that I have [ever] possessed, [and] all my power of argument has died away from me!' (*al-Haqqa*: 25-29). Surely, this is disgrace, contrition, and regret over an embarrassing document.

Returning to the verse under examination: '... and you will see the guilty, dismayed at what they contain ...' (*al-Kahf*: 49) is referring to the fearful and trembling. In this verse, the True Lord depicts for us the state of fright of these in order to scare His slaves, to warn them and to magnify the punishment in their minds, while they are still in a period to make amends and to rectify their comportment. This is part of the Mercy of Allah *the Exalted* unto His slaves.

Their first condition is *Al-ishfaq* (one of apprehension), which is a process of a heart slumping and beating loudly. Then comes the inclination to speak: '...saying, "Woe to us!..."' (*al-Kahf*: 49) The Arabic word *ya* in this passage, (translated as 'Oh'), is an exclamatory particle, as if they were saying: 'Oh, our misfortune! Oh, our perdition!' This is your time [it has come], so get ready. Relevant to this is His saying in the narrative of the two sons of Adam *peace be upon him* when Qabil (Cain) killed Habil (Abel) which was the first instance of murder and the first death among the offspring of Adam *peace be upon him*. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* sent a raven to him to teach him how to bury his brother. Whence, he said: '... Oh, woe is me! Am I then too weak to do what this raven did, and to conceal the nakedness of my brother's body?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31) The expression in the verse above: '... Oh, woe is me!'

(*al-Ma'ida*: 31) means 'Oh, my perdition', as if he is grieving over the situation he finds himself in and that the raven is cleverer and more experienced than him. This is so that we might not be unjust to these creatures and say, 'They are beasts that do not understand.'

Regarding the saying of Allah, '... What a record this is! It does not leave any deed, small or large, unaccounted for!' (*al-Kahf*: 49), it means that it, i.e. the record, omits neither small nor large [deeds], but it has reckoned them and calculated them; '... They will find everything they ever did, laid in front of them...' (*al-Kahf*: 49) which means that everything they have ever done is noted down and drawn up in their records. He says: '... your Lord will not be unjust to anyone ...' (*al-Kahf*: 49) because Allah *the Exalted* is Ever Equitable and All Just holding against them only what they have done.

Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ كَانَ مِنَ الْجِنِّ فَفَسَقَ عَنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّهِ
 أَفَتَتَّخِذُونَهُ وَذُرِّيَّتَهُ أَوْلِيَاءَ مِنْ دُونِي وَهُمْ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ بِئْسَ لِلظَّالِمِينَ بَدَلًا

We said to the angels, 'Bow down before Adam,' and they all bowed down, but not *Iblis*: he was one of the jinn and he disobeyed his Lord's command. Are you [people] going to take him and his offspring as your masters instead of Me, even though they are your enemies? What a bad bargain for the evildoers! [50] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 50)

The story of the Angels prostrating to Adam *peace be upon him* is frequently repeated in the Noble Quran, and each time the verses provide us with a specific, subtle observation. In this verse, the True Lord is telling us: 'It is incumbent upon you to keep well in mind the enmity of Satan towards your father Adam and to keep well in mind that he took an oath upon himself in the presence of Allah *the Almighty* that he would lead all of you astray. Hence, it is imperative for you to be mindful of this enmity, so that if he talks to you about something, then remember his animosity towards you.'

Whenever Allah warns us of the devil, He is surely cultivating in us *Al-mana'a* (the immunity) with which we can resist him, along with the

immunity from committing something which does harm in the future when he takes you by surprise. You place [this immunity] in the body in the form of *hamid* (a benign) microbe, and this is [like] an inoculation which accustoms the body to fighting a disease and to overcome it if it afflicts him.

Likewise, the True Lord provides us with immunity against the devil, and He reminds us of how he was in relation to our father Adam *peace be upon him* and of his haughty refusal to prostrate to him. We must always bear in mind [Satan's] utterance: '... Tell me, is this [foolish being] the one whom you have exalted above me? Indeed, if you wilt but allow me a respite till the Day of Resurrection, I shall most certainly cause his descendants – all but a few – to obey me blindly!' (*al-Isra'*: 62)

So, be on your guard, given that We will cause mountains to vanish, and will level the earth, and will compile for everyone their own record of you. So, beware of standing in a distressing situation on the Day of Resurrection, and then be taken by surprise at *kitab* (a record) which does not omit small or large [deeds]. Therefore, endeavour to repent unto Allah *the Exalted* and to set right that which is between you and your Lord.

The command in the verse under examination is meant for the angels: 'We said to the angels ...' (*al-Kahf*: 50), for they are the most noble of created beings since they do not disobey Allah *the Most High* in what He commands them, and they carry out what they have been ordered to do. When Allah *the Almighty* orders the angels, who possess these qualities, to prostrate to Adam, this means *Al-khudu* ('humble submission'). It also means that this is *Al-khalifah* (the vicegerent) whom I command you [angels] to be in his service.

It is for this reason that He called [the angels]: *mudabbirat amran* (the executors of command). In addition, He says about them: '[thinking that] he has unrelenting hosts of loyal helpers, in front of [man] and behind him, guarding him at Allah's command...'*(ar-Ra'd*: 11). Thus, it is as if *muhimma* (the assigned mission) of these angels is to be with *Al-bashar* (mankind) and in their service. Therefore, if the True Lord *the Most High* has mobilised these angels, and they are the most noble of created beings, for serving mankind, and if He commanded them to prostrate to him as a demonstration of their submissiveness to man, then it is even more evident that He has made the

entire creation, with its earth and sky, submissive to him and that He has placed it in his service. For in this verse, He has mentioned the most noble of created beings in order that the rule apply to all that are beneath [the angels].

We have previously said that scholars have differed greatly concerning the nature of Iblis (Satan): Is he one of the jinns or one of the angels? However, this verse has definitely cut short this controversy and settled it, for He says: '...and they prostrated, except for Iblis (Satan). He was of the jinns...' (*al-Kahf*: 50). So, inasmuch as the Quran provides an unequivocal text which clarifies the species [of Satan], then no one has the right to say that he was one of the angels.

Now, given that [Satan] was one of the jinns, which is a species with freedom of choice to do or not to do, he clearly chose not to do as indicated in the passage: '... and departed from the command of his Lord.' (*al-Kahf*: 50) which means he returned to his original state and defied the command.

As for His saying, 'Then will you take him and his descendants as allies other than Me while they are enemies to you?' (*al-Kahf*: 50), this is a baffling phenomenon, for, in light of what [Satan] did, how can you make him your *waliy* (protecting patron), apart from Allah *the Almighty* Who created you and provided you with sustenance? Hence, He *the Most High* is more entitled to this *walaya* (sovereign guardianship).

The Arabic phrase *wa dhurriyatu-hu*, (translated as 'and his descendants' in the passage above), suggests that Iblis (Satan) procreates, that he has offspring and that they engage in marriage. However, we might also say that *dhurriyatu-hu* means all those who follow in his path of deviance and temptation, even if they are human beings as He says: 'And thus it is that against every prophet, We have set up as enemies *Ash-shayatin* (the evil forces) from among humans as well as from amongst Al-jinns (invisible beings) that whisper unto one another glittering half-truths meant to delude the mind ...' (*al-An'am*: 112).

Concerning the final phrase in the verse under study, Allah says: 'Wretched it is for the wrongdoers as an exchange.' (*al-Kahf*: 50), and this indicates that taking Satan, who arrogantly refused to prostrate to your forefather, as a master and to abandon the sovereign power of Allah *the Almighty* Who ordered the angels to prostrate to your forefather, is an act of wretchedness.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

مَا أَشْهَدْتُهُمْ خَلْقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَا خَلْقَ
 أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَمَا كُنْتُمْ تُتَّخَذُونَ الْمُضِلِّينَ عَضُدًا ﴿٥١﴾

**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 [51]
 (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 51)**

Surely, this Iblis (Satan) whom you have taken as patron and master aside from Allah *the Exalted* and to whom you have given *Al-miza* (distinctive preference) and to whom you have lent your ears, I (Allah *the Almighty*) have not granted (such devils) to witness by mere sight the creation of the heavens and the earth. Moreover, they were not even present at this since the creation of the heavens and the earth came before their own creation. Likewise, they were not witness to their own creation since at the moment I (Allah *the Exalted*) created them, they were non-existent. Indeed, they did not witness anything of this so that they might inform you.

Concerning the saying of Allah, 'I do not take as My supporters those who lead others astray.' (*al-Kahf*: 51), it refers to assistants, helpers and supporters. Hence, you [the devils] did not witness the creation, nor did you help Me in it.

The Arabic word *Al-'adud*, (translated as 'helpers' in the verse), is power that comes to your aid and supports you. The word derives from '*adud Al-insan* (the upper arm of a man) since he applies the use of his hands to the majority of his tasks. When he applies himself to his tasks with his hands, a whole group of his limbs is set into motion, contracting and expanding, to the right and to the left, the upper body, as well as the lower body. All of these movements require an organisational force or a motor which is *Al-'adud*. In the movements of the hand, along with the precision with which it performs its function, are wondrously great signs which evince the precision *As-san'a* (of its own making).

When human beings fabricated modern machines which resemble the human arm and hand, you will note that the driver of a bulldozer, for example, undertakes multiple movements in order to make this machine move. However,

as for you, you make your hand move as you please without being aware of what is occurring. How are these movements accomplished for you simply by thinking about them, without effort from you or *At-tadbir* (conscious planning and direction)?

All of your parts are subservient to your will. So if you want to stand up, for example, you stand up instantaneously. Therefore, beware of believing that you are a mechanical creation. Rather, you are *san'a rabbaniya* (of divine fabrication) far-removed from mechanical devices. As proof of this, if the Creator willed to bring some part of you to a standstill, He would command the brain to break off its connection with it, resulting in complete paralysation whereby you would be incapable yourself of dispelling it or repairing it.

A relevant usage of the same word is also His saying in the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: '... We shall strengthen your *'adud* (arm) through your brother ...' (*al-Qasas*: 35), which means that We will fortify you and provide you with support and help.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَوْمَ يَقُولُ نَادُوا شُرَكَاءِيَ الَّذِينَ زَعَمْتُمْ فَادْعُوهُمْ
 فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا بَيْنَهُم مَّوْبِقًا ﴿٥٢﴾

**On the Day God will say, 'Call on those you claimed were
 My partners,' they will call them but they will not answer;
 We shall set a deadly gulf between them [52]
 (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 52)**

In other words, Allah is saying, 'Recall, O, Muhammad, that your community of faithful might recall with you this Day: "On the Day Allah will say, 'Call on those you claimed were My partners ...'" (*al-Kahf*: 52). 'In this verse, the True Lord tells the disbelievers to call out to their *shuraka'* (associates) whom they have adopted aside from Allah. The Arabic word *za'amtum*, (translated as 'you imagined') means that they have lied in their claim that they are Allah's: '... They will call them, but they will not answer; We shall set a deadly gulf between them.' (*al-Kahf*: 52) This is a mark of their odiousness, along with their flaunting and ill manners with Allah, for they

should have been ashamed to face Him and returned to the truth, admitting to what they lied about. However, instead, they persisted: '... They will call them...' (*al-Kahf*: 52). It is conceivable that amongst those they associated with Allah *the Almighty* are *dun At-taklif* (people beneath any responsibility) and *fawq At-taklif* (people above any responsibility). Hence, for example, amongst disbelievers are those who say 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is an associate of Allah, and amongst them are those who say 'Uzair (Ezra) *peace be upon him* is an associate of Allah. This is all groundless falsehood, for will they respond to them?

Amongst *mushrik* in are those who have adopted other deities, such as the sun, the moon, idols, and other things. Amongst them are also those who worship people like them and are, likewise, subservient to them. These (latter false deities) will be there with them on that day, and their worshippers will surely invoke them and call out to them by saying, 'Come over here and argue on our behalf and get us out of the situation we are in. We have indeed worshipped you and have obeyed your every command.' Allah *the Almighty* says of them: '... We worship them for no other reason than that they bring us nearer to Allah ...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 3) yet, from whence will they attain to what they desire? Indeed, the ties between them have been severed, and their pretence has expired: '... but they will not answer ...' (*al-Kahf*: 52). Then Allah *the Exalted* will place between the caller and the called *wadi sahiq* (a bottomless valley): '... but they will not answer; We shall set a deadly gulf between them.' (*al-Kahf*: 52)

The Arabic word *Al-mawbiq* at the end of the verse (translated as 'a deadly gulf') is a place in which perdition or annihilation occurs; it is a valley which is one of the ones from *Juhannam* (hellfire) in which all perish. Or the word refers to a mortally perilous place, separating the caller and the called, such that no caller can have recourse to the called, nor can the called come to caller's aid and help him since between them lies a source of annihilation.

A relevant usage of another form of this word is found in His saying: 'If He willed, He could still the wind, and they would remain motionless on its surface. Indeed in that are signs for everyone patient and grateful, Or He could destroy

them for what they earned, but He pardons much' (*ash-Shura*: 33-34). What this means is to be destroyed.

It is truly amazing that this is the first act of obedience on their part to Allah *the Almighty* for when He tells them, 'Call on those you claimed were My partners' (*al-Kahf*: 52), they respond positively to this command, while they certainly did not obey other commandments.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَرَاءَ الْمُجْرِمُونَ النَّارَ فَظَنُّوا أَنَّهُمْ مُوَاقِعُوهَا وَلَمْ يَجِدُوا عَنْهَا مَصْرِفًا ﴿٥٣﴾

The evildoers will see the Fire and they will realize that they are about to fall into it: they will find no escape from it [53]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 53)

The Arabic word *ra'a*, (translated as 'will behold' in this verse), is related to *Ar-ru'ya*, seeing or looking which is when the eyesight falls upon a visible object. Also, the looking is on the part of those who will be punished in Hellfire. However, *Ar-ru'ya* (the looking) could also be on the part of hellfire which is going to punish them since it beholds them, awaits them and summons them. Furthermore, He says: 'On that Day We will ask Hell, "Are you filled?" It will answer, "[Nay,] is there yet more [for me]?"' (*Qaf*: 30) In other words, it is like Hellfire is saying, 'Here I am, gazing in anticipation at them, and ready to receive them.'

The Arabic word *Al-mujrimun*, (translated as 'those who were lost in sin' in the verse under examination) are those who commit sins, at the front of which is *Al-kufr* (disbelief) in Allah *the Almighty*. Hence, *Ar-ru'ya* (the looking) in this verse is mutual. The punisher and the punished, each of them looks at the other, recognising each other.

Concerning His saying, '... and they will realise that they are about to fall into it ...' (*al-Kahf*: 53), the Arabic word *Azh-zhann* (know) is intended to mean certainty. That is to say, they are certain that they will fall into it. This is like the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'who know with certainty that they shall meet their Lord ...' (*al-Baqara*: 46). This means that they are convinced.

With regard to the final statement in the verse: '... They will find no escape from it.' (*al-Kahf*: 53), it means that as there is an unbridgeable gulf between the two of them; they can also find no escape route to flee through or refuge to seek shelter in or any place to which they might go far from the fire, hence the chasm is there and all means of departure is lost.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَا فِي هَذَا الْقُرْآنِ لِلنَّاسِ مِنْ كُلِّ
 مَثَلٍ وَكَانَ الْإِنْسَانُ أَكْثَرَ شَيْءٍ جَدَلًا

**In this Quran We have presented every kind of description
 for people but man is more contentious than any other
 creature [54] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 54)**

We have previously spoken about the distribution or dispersal of miracles. I said that *At-tasrif* means the transmutation or conversion of something to multiple things. An example is when Allah shifts the course of winds so that they do not come from a single direction, rather from here at times and from there at others. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* transmutes parables and moral lessons, which means that He brings them forth in multiple situations and in various depictions.

He *the Most High* sets forth parables concerning a phenomenon which might be invisible so as to strike the ears of people with them. Hence, He provides a similitude for it and employs an evident, tangible phenomenon for them so that they precisely comprehend it.

Now, inasmuch as Allah *the Almighty* has provided diverse forms of every kind of moral lesson in this Quran, then the one who does not understand has no excuse, for the Quran has brought forth multiple facets to teach people with all their variations of modes of understanding and talents. Hence, one finds the illiterate listening to it and taking from it according to the ability of his understanding. The half-educated also listens to it and understands according to his level of education. While the great scholar takes from it according to his vast knowledge and finds in it the object of his desire. Nay, even more than this, the specialist in any branch of knowledge and science

finds in the Quran the most precise details since Allah *the Almighty* has expounded everything in it.

Then, He says, '...man is more contentious than any other created being.' (*al-Kahf*: 54) which means that man is much given to quarrelling and disputation of opinion. The Arabic word *Al-jadal* (contention) is defined as an argument that includes an attempt of each side to establish the veracity of his ideology or his discourse. Now, argumentation can be rooted in falsehood, with a view to verifying proof of heretic tendencies, and one may engage in fraudulent manoeuvring in order to justify his ideology even if it is mistaken. This is faulty argumentation based on passionate inclinations. However, argumentation can also be rooted in truth, and it is thus viewed as constructive disputation which strives to arrive at the truth. Under this case, it is very far from partiality, passionate inclination, or ulterior motives.

When the Noble Quran speaks of contention or argumentation, it says: 'And do not argue with the followers of earlier revelation otherwise than in a most kindly manner ...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 46). Likewise, He *the Almighty* says: '...and argue with them in the most kindly manner...' (*an-Nahl*: 125).

Once Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed by the dwelling of 'Ali and Fatima *Allah be pleased with them* to awaken them for the pre-dawn prayer; he knocked on their door again and again. However, it seems that they were immersed in deep sleep, then he cried out to them, 'Are you not going to pray?'⁽¹⁾ Then 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* responded, by saying, 'O, Prophet Muhammad, verily our souls are in Allah's hands. If He wills, He will release them [from the death-like state of sleep], and if He wills, He will hold onto them.' Prophet Muhammad laughed and said, 'Man is more contentious than any other created being.'

This is because man has multiple whims and contrasting inclinations, which is why he attempts to prove the correctness of his fancies and desires with argument, contending with the truth, beguiling and dodging cunningly.

If you scrutinise his opinion, you will find that he has some capricious desire that he is striving for and bent on realising. You notice this matter

(1) *This Hadith was narrated by Imam Ahmad (1/77), Muslim (206) and Al-Bukhari (7348).*

clearly when you chose one of several roads to follow with your companion, for example, because it is the easiest and most direct of them. Then, all of a sudden, he proposes another road to you and tries to convince you of it by every means, but the truth is that he has a hidden motive and a whimsical desire which he wishes to attain.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا مَنَعَ النَّاسَ أَنْ يُؤْمِنُوا إِذْ جَاءَهُمُ الْهُدَىٰ وَيَسْتَغْفِرُوا رَبَّهُمْ
إِلَّا أَنْ تَأْتِيَهُمْ سُنَّةٌ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ قُبُلًا ﴿٥٥﴾

Now that guidance has come to them, what stops these people believing and asking forgiveness from their Lord before the fate of earlier peoples annihilates them or their torment confronts them? [55] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 55)

What is it that which prevents them from believing after the Quran was revealed to them although We provided it with varied miracles and parables?

In another verse, Allah *the Exalted* clarifies the reason behind their opposition to faith; thus He says: 'for, indeed, many facets have We given in this Quran to every kind of lesson [designed] for [the benefit of] mankind! However, most men are unwilling to accept anything but blasphemy, and so they say, "[O, Muhammad,] We shall not believe you till you cause a spring to gush forth for us from the earth, or you have a garden of date-palms and vines and cause rivers to gush forth in their midst in a sudden rush, or you cause the skies to fall down upon us in smithereens, as you have threatened, or [till] you bring Allah and the angels face to face before us, or you have a house [made] of gold, or you ascend to heaven – but nay, we would not [even] believe in you ascension unless you bring down to us [from heaven] a writing which we [ourselves] could read!" Say you, [O, Prophet], "Limitless in His Glory is my Lord! Am I, then, aught but a mortal man, an apostle?"' (*al-Isra*': 89-93)

All of these harassing questions and this stubbornness on their part is what stands between them and faith in Allah *the Almighty*. However, whenever He produces a miracle which a people requests, then they do not believe in it,

thus, He annihilates them. Therefore, He says after this: '... before the fate of earlier people annihilates them ...' (*al-Kahf*: 55). Hence, this is the miracle that awaits them, so there should come upon them the customary action of Allah *the Exalted* in annihilating those who disbelieve in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Before the advent of Islam, it was Heaven which would intervene to support correct belief, as it would demolish their towns and houses upon them. Prophet Muhammad, at that time, was responsible only for inviting people to have faith and delivering of his Message, and it was not part of his mission to summon people unto war or rigorous effort while spreading his Message. The religious community of Prophet Muhammad is the exception, for it has been entrusted to bear the sword in order to chastise those who secede from obedience to Allah *the Almighty*.

As for His saying, '...and asking forgiveness from their Lord...'*(al-Kahf*: 55), it refers to what has passed in terms of abusive bickering, harassing questions and haughty arrogance over accepting the truth. This is followed by the passage, '... the fate of earlier people annihilates them ...'*(al-Kahf*: 55) which indicates the annihilation of disbelievers. Then comes the final phrase of the verse, which is '... or their torment confronts them?' (*al-Kahf*: 55) The Arabic word *qubulan* is rendered above by a reference to the Hereafter and manifestly evident before them, or it may be understood as the plural of *qabil* and thus signifies numerous kinds or sorts of chastisement in accordance with His saying: 'But verily, for those who do evil, there is a punishment aside from that...'*(at-Tur*: 47). That is to say, they will have punishment other than the fire, as the types of chastisement for them are numerous.

Subsequently, Allah consoles His Prophet Muhammad in order that he pays no attention to the doings of the disbelievers and does not allow himself to be consumed with regretful grief at their opposition, by saying:

وَمَا نُرْسِلُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرِينَ وَمُنذِرِينَ وَيَجِدُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
بِالْبَطْلِ لِيَدْحِضُوا بِهِ الْحَقَّ وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَمَا أُنذِرُوا هُزُوًا ﴿٥٦﴾

We only send messengers to bring good news and to deliver warning, yet the disbelievers seek to refute the truth with false arguments and make fun of My messages and warnings [56] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 56)

We have already stated that argumentation may be based on truth, or it may be based on falsehood, just as those who disbelieve are doing in this verse. They are arguing on the basis of falsehood and making use of every stratagem to refute the truth, which is to say, to obstruct, and eliminate it. Regarding the passage, '... and make fun of My Messages and warnings' (*al-Kahf*: 56), the Arabic term *ayat* (Messages) refers to the cosmic signs of creation which are there to confirm the veracity of Prophet Muhammad; it also refers to the signs of the Quran and the signs of rulings and commands which they have taken derisively and mockingly and which they have not given any importance to what they contain of stern warning.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنْ ذُكِّرَ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ فَأَعْرَضَ عَنْهَا وَنَسِيَ مَا قَدَّمَتْ يَدَاؤُهُ إِنَّا جَعَلْنَا عَلَى قُلُوبِهِمْ
أَكِنَّةً أَنْ يَفْقَهُوهُ وَفِي آذَانِهِمْ وَقْرًا وَإِنْ تَدْعُهُمْ إِلَى الْهُدَى فَلَنْ يَهْتَدُوا إِذًا أَبَدًا ﴿٥٧﴾

Who could be more wrong than the person who is reminded of his Lord's messages and turns his back on them, ignoring what his hands are storing up for him [in the Hereafter]?

We have put covers over their hearts, so they cannot understand the Quran, and We put heaviness in their ears: although you call them to guidance [Prophet] they will never accept it [57] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 57)

In the opening of the verse, 'Who could be more wrong ...' (*al-Kahf*: 57), is expressed in the form of a question in order to emphasise the statement. This is as if your companion alleges that you have not cultivated your relation with him and have not been kind to him. So, you might tell him by means of

notification, 'I did such-and-such for you.' However, the notification or information may be true, or it may be false.

For example, if you presented the issue by means of a question, you would tell him, 'Did I not do such-and-such for you?' Hence, you would get a confirmation from him, and evidence against him would come from his own words, while you seem not to comprehend anything about a conflict except that you are sure that his answer will only be what you desire. In this manner, Allah transforms it into a rhetorical question, 'Who could be more wrong than the person who is reminded of his Lord's Messages ...' (*al-Kahf*: 57), thereby leaving it up to us to respond, so that we ourselves say, 'No one is more wicked than someone who does that.' Thus, confirmation is the lord of proofs.

Regarding His saying: '... and turns his back on them ...' (*al-Kahf*: 57) means that the disbeliever has rejected the Messages of Allah. Concerning His saying: '... ignoring what his hands are storing up for him [in the Hereafter]?' (*al-Kahf*: 57), this means that he forgot his misdeeds. It was his obligation to pay heed to these signs and thus to believe in them, for perhaps Allah *the Almighty* might have forgiven him due to his faith, and hence exchanged his misdeeds for good deeds.

Then He says: '... We have put covers over their hearts, so they cannot understand the Quran ...' (*al-Kahf*: 57). The Arabic word *akinna* (veils) is the plural of *kin*, and it means coverings. Allah *the Exalted* has placed covers over their hearts, so faith does not enter into them, and disbelief does not exit from them, but this is not oppression on His part towards His slaves; Allah *the Almighty* is utterly exalted from that. Rather, it is a response to what they have requested and compliance with what they desired. Thus when they showed their love of disbelief and their chests were expanded with it, He *the Most High* increased it in them since He is a Lord Who gives His slave what he wants.

Allah says in another verse: 'In their hearts is disease, so Allah lets their disease increase, and grievous suffering awaits them because of their persistent lying.' (*al-Baqara*: 10) Along the same lines, He says: 'Allah has sealed their hearts and their hearing, and over their eyes is a veil ...' (*al-Baqara*: 7).

The saying of Allah '... so they cannot understand the Quran ...' (*al-Kahf*: 57) encourages them to understand it along with the Miracles of Allah *the Almighty*

for they were previously reminded of them, and they turned away. So Allah *the Exalted* has deprived them of comprehending and understanding them.

As for His saying, '... and We put heaviness in their ears' (*al-Kahf*: 57), it refers to deafness, hence they do not hear. Concerning the saying of Allah, '...Although you [Prophet] call them to guidance, they will never accept it.' (*al-Kahf*: 57), it is only expected after Allah has sealed their hearts and their ears and has closed off any access they might have had to knowledge and guidance; guidance comes originally from hearing the saying of truth, whereupon your heart receives it with contentment and your limbs react to it with steadfast adherence. Therefore, you hear with your ear and accept with your heart, while the limbs are affected by it, responding obediently with strict observance to what has been commanded. As long as the ear is overcome by hollowness and deafness, you will not hear. If you did hear something, your heart would reject it, and the limbs would not react except to what the heart has been filled with in terms of convictions.

Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

وَرَبُّكَ الْغَفُورُ ذُو الرَّحْمَةِ ط لَوْ يُؤَاخِذُهُمْ بِمَا كَسَبُوا لَعَجَلٌ
 لَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ بَلْ لَهُمْ مَوْعِدٌ لَّنْ يَجِدُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ مَوْئِلًا ﴿٥٨﴾

Your Lord is the Most Forgiving, and full of mercy: if He took them to task for the wrongs they have done, He would hasten their punishment on. They have an appointed time from which they will have no escape [58] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 58)

Part of Allah's Mercy unto the disbelievers is that He does not treat them with punishment or annihilate them. Instead, He gives them a respite and turns away from them because they have an appointed time from which they will not escape, nor will they slip away, nor will they have any shelter that might protect them from Him. There is no doubt that Allah *the Almighty* has far-reaching Wisdom in giving them a respite in this world, for perchance He will bring forth from amongst these one who believes in Him and one who will bear the banner of religion and defend it. Indeed, this has occurred frequently in the history of Islam. From the loins of Abu Jahl came 'Ikrima

Allah be pleased with him and Allah the Almighty gave respite to Khalid Ibn al-Walid Allah be pleased with him and thus he became the greatest military commander of Islam.

Subsequently, Allah Glorified is He says:

وَتِلْكَ الْقُرَىٰ أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ لَمَّا ظَلَمُوا وَجَعَلْنَا لِمَهْلِكِهِم مَّوْعِدًا

**[Just like] the former communities We destroyed for doing wrong: We set an appointed time for their destruction [59]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 59)**

In this verse, the Arabic word *tilka* (those) is a demonstrative pronoun for a feminine word which in this case is *Al-qura*, or communities. The letter 'k' in this word is an addressing form, and so the Message here is addressed to Prophet Muhammad, while his community of followers is implicitly included in the message to him. For Allah's Speech to him *peace and blessings be upon him* is speech to his community of followers. However, the demonstrative pronoun does not occur except for something definitive, existent, and tangible. An example of this occurs in His saying: 'Now, what is this in your right hand, O, Musa (Moses)?' (*Ta Ha*: 17)

So, where are these communities or towns? Did they exist in the era of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Yes, there were vestiges and ruins of these settlements which indicated them. Prophet Muhammad and people could see them during their journeys to the Levant and other places. Among the examples of these are the settlements of Thamud- people of Saleh (Shelah), as well as the settlements of the people of Lut (Lot) about them. Allah the Almighty says: '... and, verily, [to this day] you pass by the remnants of their dwellings at morning-time and by night. Will you not, then, use your reason?' (*as-Saffat*: 137-138)

Tilka is thus a demonstrative pronoun to what is existent and tangible, indicating that which remains of these settlements after they were engulfed in the punishment of Allah the Almighty and that which overwhelmed them of His punishment that cannot be held back from a people who are given to sin and inequity.

As for the Arabic word *Al-qura* (communities) in the verse under study, it is the plural of *qariya* which applies to a place where the staples of life and its necessities are available. They comprise even more than the necessities and staples of normal life, for the word *Al-qariya* is only applied to a place in which the staples of life are bountiful, with abundance sufficient for one who comes upon it as a guest to find in it a hospitable meal. If it is a large settlement, abundant sustenance comes to it from everywhere, as if it is a mother, hence we call it *umm Al-qura*, ‘the mother of settlements’.⁽¹⁾

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذْ قَالَ مُوسَى لِفَتَاهُ لَا أَبْرَحُ حَتَّىٰ أَبْلُغَ مَجْمَعَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ أَوْ أَمْضِيَ حُقُبًا ﴿٦٠﴾

**Moses said to his servant, ‘I will not rest until I reach the place where the two seas meet, even if it takes me years!’ [60]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 60)**

Regarding His saying: ‘Musa (Moses) said to his servant...’ (*al-Kahf*: 60), it reminds Prophet Muhammad of the time when Musa (Moses) said to his servant boy so-and-so, or Joshua ibn Nun, a descendant of Yusuf (Joseph), who was a boy that followed and served [Moses] in order to learn from him. Then this passage comes: ‘I will not rest until I reach the place where the two seas meet ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 60). However, what is the story of Musa (Moses) and his servant? Is there any relation between it and our context here?

The pertinence of the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* here is that the disbelievers of Mecca had sent [a group] to the Jews to ask them concerning information on Prophet Muhammad since they were people of the Scripture and more knowledgeable about heavenly topics. The disbelievers of Mecca wanted to know their opinion about Prophet Muhammad and if he were telling the truth or not. The Jews said to the delegation from Mecca, ‘Ask him about three things, if he responds to you [correctly], then he is a true prophet. Ask him about the youths who disappeared in the old ages, about the

(1) This description for Mecca occurs in His *the Almighty* saying: ‘And thus have We revealed to you an Arabic Quran, that you may warn the mother city and those around it, and that you may give warning of the day of gathering together wherein is no doubt; a party shall be in the garden and (another) party in the burning fire.’ (*Ash-Shura*: 7)

wandering man who roamed the earth and about the Spirit.' So, they immediately returned and asked him *peace and blessings be upon him* these questions, whereupon he told them: 'I will answer you tomorrow'.⁽¹⁾

This indicates that the response to these questions was not in his possession, which is a proof for him and not against him, for the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* never blurt out words just like that without knowledge in order to answer them. Instead, he remained silent until the response would come from Allah *the Almighty*. This stems from his gracious manners with his Lord who educated him in the most refined way.

Fifteen days passed without receiving any Divine revelation by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* concerning this issue, until the situation became distressing for him. However, the disbelievers and hypocrites were delighted since they had found a shortcoming concerning him. Hence, they took advantage of this chance to find fault with him. However, Allah *the Almighty* had disciplined His Prophet Muhammad above all else to show them that he would not say anything about these issues except on the basis of revelation from Him, for he neither speaks on the basis of caprice nor does make pronouncements based on his opinion.

Had these people been discerning, they would have understood that the slowness in this matter was proof of the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. For this reason, the story of Musa (Moses) is narrated in this passage in order to rebut people's abuse and to make it clear to them that a prophet does not know everything. Is it an incumbent upon him to answer you about everything? Is he to be chided on the spot for not being aware of a particular matter?

These miracles occur in order to say to the Jews and those who were entangled in their subterfuge from amongst the disbelievers of Mecca, 'You are so zealous for Musa (Moses), the Torah and Judaism. Yet here is Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* himself learning not from Allah *the Almighty* but from a slave like him, and he travels in pursuit of him seeking knowledge.'

(1) This is narrated by Ibn Kathir in his *(Tafsir)* (3/71) who attributes it to Ibn Ishaq.

These miracles occur in order to say to them, ‘O, you who dictated these questions to the disbelievers of Mecca and manifested malicious joy over when revelation was delayed for Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him!* Understand that the delay in revelation is for you to be aware that the Prophet does not utter anything from his own caprice. So, this issue should have drawn your attention to the truthfulness of him and his integrity; for he is not stingy regarding the unseen.’

It is said that the motive behind the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* who had a very close relationship with his Lord, is that he asked Him: ‘... O, my Lord! Show [Yourself] unto me, so that I might behold You...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 143). Musa (Moses) was emboldened to make such a request by the fact that Allah *the Almighty* had spoken to him: ‘Now, what is this in your right hand, O, Musa (Moses)?’ (*Ta Ha*: 17) Musa had a prolonged conversation with his Lord. Who is it that Allah *the Almighty* speaks to does not seek to draw out the period of intimacy in discourse with Him? Hence, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said: ‘...It is my staff. I lean on it, and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep. [Many] Other uses have I for it.’ (*Ta Ha*: 18) In this way, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* extended the time of intimacy and talk with Allah *the Exalted*. Therefore, he asked Him, ‘O, Lord, does there exist anyone on the earth more knowledgeable than me?’ His Lord then replied to him, ‘Yes, there is someone more knowledgeable than you on the earth. So, go to the place at the junction of the two seas and there you will find one of my slaves who is more knowledgeable than you.’ Hence, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* took his servant and went off to the junction of the two seas.

It is related in a Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that once Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was preaching and he was asked, ‘Who is the most knowledgeable?’ He said, ‘I am.’ That is to say amongst mankind. However, then Allah *the Almighty* informed him, ‘No, there is on the earth someone who is more knowledgeable than you amongst mankind.’⁽¹⁾ This was in order that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* not become conceited over what Allah *the Exalted* has taught him. Subsequently, He says: ‘I will not rest until I reach the place where the two seas meet, even if it takes me years!’ (*al-Kahf*: 60)

(1) *This Hadith was narrated by Al-Bukhari (4725-4727) in the context of the verse in question. Ahmad also narrated it (5/117).*

The Arabic expression *la abrahu*, i.e. 'I shall not give up' really means 'I shall not abandon'. Some believe that *la abrahu* means 'I shall not leave the place where I am', but it really means 'I shall not abandon that which I am in the course of doing'. So, if I am sitting, I will not leave off sitting, and if I am walking, I will not leave off walking. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had made this statement while he was seeking the junction of the two seas and travelling towards it. Thus, the meaning is 'I shall not abandon my journey to that place until I reach the junction of the two seas.'

The same form of the Arabic root *baraha* occurs in His saying concerning the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: 'Therefore, I will by no means depart from this land until my father permits me or Allah decides for me, and He is the best of the judges.' (*Yusuf*: 80) This was said by Yusuf's (Joseph's) oldest brothers after he took his brother Benjamin and prevented him from departing with them. Hence, here the oldest brother was ashamed to meet his father who had made them take a solemn oath of responsibility to bring Benjamin back and to return him to him.

The Arabic phrase *majma' al-bahrayn*, or the junction of the two seas, means the place where they meet, thus become one sea, such as the Tigris and Euphrates, for example, at *Shatt-al-'Arab*. Finally, regarding His saying, '...even if it takes me years!' (*al-Kahf*: 60), the Arabic word *Al-huqub* means untold years, which is a long period of time estimated to be about seventy or eighty years. So, if the minimum number assigned to the plural form is three, then this means that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* would travel for two hundred and twenty years, assuming that the period is seventy years long. Thus, the meaning is 'I shall not abandon my voyage to that place, even if I have to travel for two hundred and ten years.' This is due to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* being filled with a yearning desire to see this man who was more knowledgeable than him, for how was this possible when he was a prophet and a divinely knowledgeable man. For this reason, his Lord informed him that the knowledge given to this man was imparted directly by Allah *the Almighty* not from any of mankind.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَمَّا بَلَغَا مَجْمَعَ بَيْنَهُمَا نَسِيَا حُوتَهُمَا فَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ سَرَبًا ﴿٦١﴾

But when they reached the place where the two seas meet, they had forgotten all about their fish, which made its way into the sea and swam away [61] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 61)

The Arabic verb *balagha* in the dual form, rendered as 'they reached' refers to Musa (Moses) and his servant. The Arabic phrase *majma' bayna-hima* literally means the junction between the two seas. They forgot all about their fish. It is an indication that both of them were affected by forgetfulness. Although carrying the fish was entrusted to the servant of Musa (Moses), and he forgot about it, yet it was up to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to remind him about it. The leader of a group must pay attention to every minor detail of the travelling party, normally he would be the last to leave a site in order to inspect it and see if perhaps someone had forgotten something. Hence, the moment they got up to continue their travelling, Musa (Moses) should have rectified the situation and reminded his servant about what they had with them as provisions for the journey.

The Arabic word *Al-hut*, or fish, is a well-known kind of fish. In some countries, they use the word *hut* to refer to all kinds of fish. They had prepared it to eat if they became hungry during the journey; it was roasted, and the youth was carrying it in a basket. Regarding His saying, '... which made its way into the sea and swam away' (*al-Kahf*: 61), it means that the roasted fish got out of the basket and flowed off towards the sea. The Arabic word *As-sarab* means an underground passage; it is an adverb, which is translated here as disappeared from sight. It is similar to a tunnel or subterranean vault. It may also mean declivity or descent, as we say, 'The water leaked down, or *tassarraba*, from the water-skin.' This is because the level of water in the skin is so high that it leaks down from it. This is amongst wondrous marvels that a roasted fish should jump, that life should return to it, that it should head towards the sea as it knows that water is its home and its proper place.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَمَّا جَاوَزَا قَالَ لِفَتْنِهِ ءَايِنَا غَدَاءَنَا لَقَدْ لَقِينَا مِنْ سَفَرِنَا هَذَا نَصَبًا ﴿٦٢﴾

**They journeyed on, and then Moses said to his servant,
'Give us our lunch! This journey of ours is very tiring' [62]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 62)**

That is to say that in their travelling they went beyond the junction of the two seas and the meeting point. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* told his servant, 'Get our lunch ready for we have become exhausted from travelling.' The Arabic word *An-nasab*, used adverbially means fatigue. So, this means that the two of them travelled all the way to the junction of the two seas and then rested. When they had gone beyond this place, they were exhausted; therefore Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* asked for food. At this instant, the servant remembers that he had forgotten the fish.

قَالَ أَرَأَيْتَ إِذْ أَوَيْنَا إِلَى الصَّخْرَةِ فَإِنِّي نَسِيتُ الْحُوتَ وَمَا أَنسَنِيهِ
إِلَّا الشَّيْطَانُ أَنْ أَذْكُرَهُ، وَاتَّخَذَ سَبِيلَهُ فِي الْبَحْرِ عَجَبًا ﴿٦٣﴾

**And [the servant] said, 'Remember when we were resting by
the rock? I forgot the fish – Satan made me forget to pay
attention to it – and it [must have] made its way into the
sea.' 'How strange!' [63] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 63)**

This is the speech of the servant of Musa (Moses). The verse begins with the Arabic expression *a-ra'ayta*, which means 'Would not you believe it?' What this means is that all I can relate of the situation is that when we took shelter beneath the rock at the junction of the two seas in order to rest, 'I forgot the fish ...' (*al-Kahf*: 63). Let us note here that he said, 'I forgot', while in the previous verse he said 'ready to forget'; this is because the latter is notification from Allah *the Almighty* whilst the former is that of the servant of Musa (Moses).

The verse indicates that a leader is followed and does not leave it up to his followers to act independently in all things since a follower might neglect some aspect of the travel and might be preoccupied with other things, causing him to forget what he is charged with concerning a matter of the journey.

Then the servant excuses himself for having forgotten the fish by saying: '... Satan made me forget to pay attention to it ...' (*al-Kahf*: 63); it is Satan who played with his thoughts and inclinations such that he made him forget his duty and made him forget to remember the fish. Regarding His saying '...and it [must have] made its way into the sea. How strange!' (*al-Kahf*: 63) It means that the fish made its way to the sea in an amazing way. In the aforementioned verse, He *the Almighty* says [about the fish]: 'which made its way into the sea and swam away.' (*al-Kahf*: 61); this was the state of the fish, but in the verse, He says 'in an amazing way', since the servant is relating what happened and finds it amazing, for how could a roasted fish move with life and jump from a basket, along with making its way straight to the water?! Now this is truly one of the marvels, as it violated the customary norm.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ ذَلِكَ مَا كُنَّا نَبْغُ فَأَرْتَدَّا عَلَىٰ آثَارِهِمَا قَصَصًا

**Moses said, 'Then that was the place we were looking for.'
So the two turned back, retraced their footsteps [64]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 64)**

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said, 'Then that was the place we were looking for.' (*al-Kahf*: 64) using the Arabic verb *nabghi* with the meaning of searching for. Hence, this place at which they lost the fish is the intended destination, as if the fish was more aware of the meeting place than Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. In this way, the location of the place was made known, for it is the junction of the two seas where they meet and become one sea. This image exists only on the geographic arena of the tribe of Israel in Sinai. There is located the Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez where they conjoin into a single sea at the Egyptian Ra's Mohamed Region.

Then He says: '... So the two turned back, retraced their footsteps' (*al-Kahf*: 64); this means that they returned upon the imprints of their feet as tracers do. They retraced their footsteps with precision until they arrived at the place where the fish slipped away. It was the appointed meeting place which Allah *the Exalted* had fixed for Musa (Moses), in order that he would find there the upright slave.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَوَجَدَا عَبْدًا مِّنْ عِبَادِنَا ءَاتَيْنَاهُ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِنْدِنَا وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ مِمَّا لَدُنَّا عِلْمًا ﴿٦٥﴾

And found one of Our servants – a man to whom We had granted Our mercy and whom We had given knowledge of Our own [65] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 65)

We have previously discussed worship based slavery or servitude, which, if it is to Allah *the Almighty* then it represents honour and highly dignified status; however, if it is for other than Allah *the Exalted* then it represents debased servility and shameful abasement. We have said, 'Verily, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not undertake the Night Journey and Ascension except because he was a slave of Allah *the Almighty* as He said: 'Limitless in His Glory is He Who transported His servant by night ...' (*al-Isra*': 1). It is as though in servitude to Allah *the Most High* the slave takes the best of his master, whereas in servitude to men the master takes the best of his slave.

Then the True Lord describes this upright slave by saying '... a man to whom We had granted Our Mercy and whom We had given knowledge of Our own' (*al-Kahf*: 65). Scholars have discussed the meaning of the Arabic word *Ar-rahma*, translated in this verse as grace, saying that it occurs in the Quran with the meaning of prophethood. This is illustrated in His saying: 'And they say, too, "Why was not this Quran bestowed from on high on some great man of the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31), Allah's response to them was the following: 'But is it they who distribute your Lord's Grace (*rahma*)?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

The ultimate grace comes at the hand of Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* and at the hands of the Divinely-sent messengers. However, this grace in the verse comes from His Presence directly, without the mediation of an angel. Therefore, He says: 'whom We had granted ...' (*al-Kahf*: 65). Then, He says, '...of Our own...' (*al-Kahf*: 65), in which the Arabic phrase *min I'ndi-na* conveys the meaning of from Our Presence and Possession meaning that it refers to the bestowal and the source of this knowledge given to the righteous man.

After this, He says: '...whom We had given knowledge of Our own' (*al-Kahf*: 65), that is to say, from Our Presence and Possession without the

mediation of Divinely-sent messengers. This is why it is called mystic knowledge, as if there is no impediment to Allah *the Almighty* to select one of His slaves and to confer upon him special knowledge which is even unknown by messengers.

Hence, we must differentiate between knowledge and emanations coming by way of a Divinely sent messenger and his directives, and knowledge and emanations coming directly from Allah *the Exalted* to whomever He selects from amongst His slaves. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brings exoteric rulings related to prescriptions and proscriptions: 'Do this' and 'do not do that'. However, there are other rulings which are not exoteric, having inward justifications above outward ones. It was these latter rulings which Allah *the Almighty* accorded to the upright slave 'Al-Khidr' *peace be upon him*.

This is proved by the fact that a prophet brings rulings which forbid killing and destroying other people's possessions, yet along comes Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* and destroys a ship and kills a youth. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* objects to these acts because he has no knowledge of their justification. If Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had cognisance of the justification for making a hole in the ship, he himself would have immediately set about making one in it.

Thus, the knowledge of Musa (Moses) is not the same as the knowledge of Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* which is why Al-Khidr said to him, '... Behold, you will never be able to have patience with me for how could you be patient about something that you cannot not comprehend within the compass of your experience?' (*al-Kahf*: 67-68)

To paraphrase Al-Khidr's words to Musa (Moses), 'So this knowledge is not in your possession, for my knowledge is of the elite amongst saints, and your knowledge is of the intelligence of Divinely-sent messengers.' The two types of knowledge, in reality, are not opposed to each other, though the knowledge of sainthood has esoteric or inward justifications and the knowledge of Divine Message has exoteric or outward justifications.

Subsequently, He *the Almighty* says:

قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰ أَنْ تُعَلِّمَنِي مِمَّا عَلَّمْتَنِي رُشْدًا ﴿٦٦﴾

Moses said to him, ‘May I follow you so that you can teach me some of the right guidance you have been taught?’ [66] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 66)

It is as if Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is teaching us the etiquette of the acquisition of knowledge and the proper conduct of a pupil with his teacher. Although Allah commanded him to follow Al-Khidr, he did not say, for example, ‘Verily Allah *the Almighty* has commanded me to follow you.’ Nay, rather he was polite with him and sought his permission in this manner: ‘May I follow you ...’ (*al-Kahf*: 66).

The Arabic word *Ar-rushd* (consciousness of what is right) means a good comportment in things and the appropriate course of action in the cause of that which you are concerned with. I have previously said that *Ar-rushd* comes at the age of adulthood, though this does not mean that everyone who has reached adulthood is rightly guided, for a person can be mature but not rightly guided and may even be foolish. For this reason, when the True Lord *the Most High* spoke of orphans by saying: ‘And test the orphans [in your charge]...’ (*an-Nisa*: 6) which means to examine them. Now, the examination of an orphan occurs when he is still under your guardianship. So, you should entrust him with work that will enhance his condition and give him a portion of his bequeathed wealth, allowing him to handle it under your gaze and under your care in order to see how his conduct will be.

You must aspire to train him to face life, not to isolate him from it until he attains unto consciousness of what is right, *Ar-rushd*, and then give him his bequeathed wealth, for then he will not be capable of disposing of it because of his lack of experience. If he fails, the experiment will have been a loss for him. Hence, then, the examination of an orphan is done while he is still under your guardianship and within your hearing, sight and supervision, a matter which is appropriate for him.

The same passage concerning orphans continues: ‘... until they reach a marriageable age ...’ (*an-Nisa*: 6) which is the age of legal maturity, but after this, He does not say, ‘Then give them their [bequeathed] wealth’ because

after reaching adulthood there is another condition: '... then, if you find them to be mature of mind ...' (*an-Nisa'*: 6). Thus, the legal guardian is obligated to follow this sequential order: to watch over the orphan while he is under his guardianship and to push him into the struggle of life and its experiences until he becomes capable of confronting life so that he does not fumble about ruinously with his wealth due to his lack of experience and expertise. Then, if you become aware of his being correctly guided after attaining adulthood, you shall give him his bequeathed wealth that he might dispose of it. However, if you do not sense mature discernment in him or correct conduct, then do not give over to him the wealth to squander it with his misconduct.

Therefore, in this same sense, He says: 'And do not give over to those who are weak of judgement your wealth' (*an-Nisa'*: 5) In this verse, He does not say 'their wealth' because the weak-minded possesses no wealth as long as he is weak-minded or foolish. Rather, it is your wealth that you might dispose of in a generous and correct fashion and preserve it for its owner until the time that you are certain of his mature and correct discernment.

Thus, the *rushd* which Musa (Moses) was seeking from the upright slave was primarily concerned with the appropriate conduct and wisdom in comprehending things. However, does this mean that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was not rightly guided? No, rather, he was rightly guided in his proper path as Divinely sent prophet, that is, in the conveyance of exoteric rulings.

As for the *rushd* which he was seeking, it was the *rushd* of the path of the upright slave. The latter indicated to him that he sought something that was not known to him, but this does not disparage the high station of prophethood since Allah *the Almighty* says: '... and you have been granted very little of [real] knowledge' (*al-Isra'*: 85). He said to the Prophet: '... but [always] say, "O, my Lord, cause me to grow in knowledge!"' (*Ta Ha*: 114)

Thus a poet said:

'The more I increase in branches of knowledge,

I grow in the certainty of my ignorance.'

Increasing one's knowledge today means that he lacked this part of knowledge yesterday, and likewise, he is deficient today in terms of what he

will learn tomorrow. Whenever a person is of broad horizons and a lover of knowledge, you will notice that every time he becomes acquainted with a particular matter, he longs to learn about something else, for always he has a voracious appetite for knowledge, never having enough in accordance with the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'There are two who are insatiable, never getting their fill: the seeker of knowledge and the seeker of wealth.'⁽¹⁾

There is also the example of the poet who turned his attention to his soul whenever it invites him to delusion, presumptive pride, and vanity at what he possesses of inconsiderable knowledge, yet he is vigilant of its deception, so he said:

The soul said: I have learned a great deal

I replied: this great deal is an insignificant acquisition.

He then produces a clarifying simile:

A ladle from the ocean fills the jug

Thus it believes itself to be the great ocean.

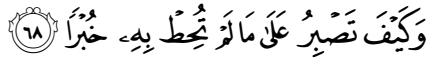
Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

قَالَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٦٧﴾

The man said, 'You will not be able to bear with me patiently [67] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 67)

In this verse, the upright slave dictates the conditions of this companionship and elucidates for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* the nature of his knowledge and his path by informing him, 'Your path is not the same as my path, and my knowledge is from a source of intelligence that is more subtle than yours. You will notice ways of conduct on my part that you will not be able to endure because you possess no knowledge of their hidden secrets.' It is as if he is searching for excuses for Musa's (Moses's) inability to endure with him. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) *This Hadith was narrated by At-Tabarani in (Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir) (10/223, Hadith 10388).*



How could you be patient in matters beyond your know- ledge? [68] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 68)

What this means is that: do not be aggrieved that I said, ‘You will never be able to have patience with me since you have no experience of the manners of action that you will be exposed to. Likewise, how can you patiently endure something of which you have no knowledge of?’

Let us take into account that this conversation between Musa (Moses) and Al-Khidr⁽¹⁾ was characterised by the etiquette of discussion. Also, the difference of opinion between the two paths: the path of exoteric rulings and the path of that which is at variance with exoteric rulings. Yet, each of them accepts the opinion of the other and respects it, while not opposing it or disapproving of it. This is in contrast to the adherents of various schools of Islamic jurisprudence who rebuke one another, and even go so far as to declare each other disbelievers. Therefore, if they find, for example, a devoted slave of Allah’s slaves whom Allah *the Almighty* has selected for something of His Emanations, he leads a mystical order and has followers, we see those who censure him. The situation may reach the stage of vilification and defamation and even pronouncing the charge of infidelity.

The saying of Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* ‘How could you be patient in matters beyond your knowledge?’ (*al-Kahf*: 68) reveals one of the aspects of etiquette between teacher and student, inasmuch as he accords respect to his opinion and searches for an excuse for him if he opposes him. Thus, both of them have their own particular path and neither remonstrates on the basis of his path against the path of the other.

So, what did the student say after listening to these conditions?

(1) According to Mujahid [a great early scholar of the Quran], he was called Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* because when he prayed, everything around him became green (*ikhdarra*). Similarly At-Tirmidhi narrates a Hadith on the authority of Abu Hurayra who says that the Prophet Muhammad of Allah the Almighty said: {He was called Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* because he sat on a white fur which suddenly quaked beneath him [becoming] green (*khadra*)}. This was cited by Al-Qurtubi in his (*Tafsir*) (5/4169).

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قَالَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِن شَاءَ اللَّهُ صَابِرًا وَلَا أَعْصِي لَكَ أَمْرًا ﴿٦٩﴾

**Moses said, 'God willing, you will find me patient.
I will not disobey you in any way' [69]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 69)**

The meaning is the following, 'I accept your conditions, O, teacher, so rest assured, for I will not argue with you and will not oppose you in anything.' He prefaces his statement with reference to the Divine Will by saying: 'Allah willing,...' (*al-Kahf*: 69), in order to gain his favour and fill his heart with compassion towards him, Regarding, 'you will find me patient...' (*al-Kahf*: 69); this means that whatever you do '... I will not disobey you in any way.' (*al-Kahf*: 69)

In this manner, he establishes himself as the one to submit to orders and the teacher as the one to issue orders, for the learner is submissive to commands.

Allah says:

قَالَ فَإِنِ اتَّبَعْتَنِي فَلَا تَسْأَلْنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ حَتَّىٰ أُحَدِّثَ لَكَ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا ﴿٧٠﴾

**The man said, 'If you follow me then, do not
query anything I do before I mention it to you
myself' [70] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 70)**

This is a confirmation from Al-Khidr to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them* and an enunciation of the protocol that he must adhere to in accompanying him, 'If you follow me, then do not question me until I inform you.' It is as if he is teaching him the etiquette of acquiring knowledge and being patient in receiving it, avoiding hastiness in wishing to understand every issue in and of itself.

Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَكِبَا فِي السَّفِينَةِ خَرَقَهَا قَالَ
 أَخْرَقْنَاهَا لِنُغْرِقَ أَهْلَهَا لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا إِمْرًا ﴿٧١﴾

They travelled on. Later, when they got into a boat, and the man made a hole in it, Moses said, ‘How could you make a hole in it? Do you want to drown its passengers? What a strange thing to do!’ [71] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 71)

The verse’s opening verbal phrase in Arabic *fa-ntalqa* (the two went on their way) means they travelled together. This is what they did until they boarded a ship which was set up to transport passengers. The first thing Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* did was to set about making a hole in it and destroying it. At this point, Musa (Moses) could not bear this deed, and this matter grew intolerable in his soul. Thus, he could not endure it and said, ‘How could you make a hole in it? Do you want to drown its passengers? What a strange thing to do!’ (*al-Kahf*: 71)

It is an astonishingly strange or shockingly horrible thing. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* forgot what he had pledged himself to do in terms of obedience to the upright slave and not defying him, but he could not patiently endure what he saw of his actions.

It is as if the True Lord desires to teach us that hypothetical statements are one thing and actual deeds are another. Thus, you might hear beautiful speech from someone which appeals to you, but as soon as the time for work and implementation comes, you witness nothing. Generally, words are said in a manner of liberality, such as the person who tells you, ‘You can depend on me in this matter. You have my full support.’ However, as soon as you are in genuine need of him, you are like the one grasping water and find nothing forthcoming from him.

Let us take note here that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was not content with questioning: ‘... How could you make a hole in it? Do you want to drown its passengers? What a strange thing to do!’ (*al-Kahf*: 71) Rather, indeed, he transgressed to accusing him of committing a detestable and shockingly horrible deed, for the hypothetical saying of Musa (Moses) is one thing, and his witnessing the piercing of the ship and its destruction without apparent cause is quite another; Moses evoked a legal ruling concerning the destruction of someone else’s property, not to mention the possible drowning of the ship’s

passengers. Thus, he saw the matter as grave and the harm done very great. This is because Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* takes from one store of intelligence and Al-Khidr takes from another store of intelligence.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٢﴾

He replied, 'Did I not tell you that you would never be able to bear with me patiently?' [72] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 72)

This is another lesson from Al-Khidr to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them*, whereby he said, 'Surely, my statement to you was truthful. I warned you that you would not be able to endure what you witness of my actions. Yet, here you are raising objections against me, while we had agreed and made a pact that you would not question me about anything until I myself inform you of it.'

Subsequently, the True Lord *the Most High* says:

قَالَ لَا تُؤَاخِذْنِي بِمَا نَسِيتُ وَلَا تُرْهِقْنِي مِنْ أَمْرِي عُسْرًا ﴿٧٣﴾

Moses said, 'Forgive me for forgetting. Do not make it too hard for me to follow you' [73] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 73)

Musa (Moses) apologises to his teacher for what words escaped him and requests his indulgence and not to blame him. The statement: '...Do not make it too hard for me to follow you.' (*al-Kahf*: 73) means: 'Do not impose upon me in the matter of following you distress and hardship.' So, Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* pardoned him and the journey resumed.

فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا لَفِيًّا عَلِمًا فَقَتَلَهُ، قَالَ أَفَنَلَّتْ نَفْسًا
زَكِيَّةً بغيرِ نَفْسٍ لَقَدْ جِئْتَ شَيْئًا نُكْرًا ﴿٧٤﴾

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!' [74] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 74)

You will notice that the first transgression on the part of Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* was against property which he destroyed, but in this instance the case

increases to the gravity of killing a blameless person without just cause. Now for what offense was this youth killed who had not even reached the age of maturity? For this reason, Musa (Moses) said concerning the first act: '...What a strange thing to do!' (*al-Kahf*: 71), that is in order to say astonishingly strange. However, here he says: '... What a terrible thing to do!' (*al-Kahf*: 74), that is to say what was done was atrocious; this is because the crime is very grave.

The Arabic phrase *An-nafs Az-zakiya* 'innocent human being' means a person who is clean and pure, being untarnished by any sins or offenses against Divine commandments.

Similarly, the response of Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* contrasts with his first response. In the first instance he said, 'did I not tell you that you would never be able to bear with me patiently?' (*al-Kahf*: 72) which generally means, 'I spoke in general terms.' However, He *the Almighty* says:

قَالَ أَلَمْ أَقُلْ لَكَ إِنَّكَ لَنْ تَسْتَطِيعَ مَعِيَ صَبْرًا ﴿٧٥﴾

He replied, 'Did I not tell you that you would never be able to bear with me patiently?' [75] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 75)

In this statement he emphasises what he said and stresses that it was to Musa (Moses) that he spoke, employing the Arabic prepositional phrase *la-ka*, meaning 'to you', or in other word, 'I told you in person.'

Subsequently, after the second time in which Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* disagreed openly with his teacher Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* he makes another pledge for himself.

Allah says:

قَالَ إِنْ سَأَلْتُنِي عَنْ شَيْءٍ بَعْدَهَا فَلَا تُصَاحِبْنِي قَدْ بَلَغْتَ مِن لَدُنِّي عُذْرًا ﴿٧٦﴾

Moses said, 'From now on, if I query anything you do, banish me from your company – you have put up with enough from me' [76] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 76)

In this manner, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* barred the route for himself and gave himself a single chance after which separation between them would

occur. Hence, it was said in a Hadith, 'May Allah have mercy on us, and on my brother Musa (Moses) whom if he had persevered patiently, we would have come to know a great deal.'⁽¹⁾ Now, here comes the third incident, and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* has no excuse after that.

Regarding the meaning of 'You have put up enough from me' (*al-Kahf*: 76) is 'You have done everything one could possibly do for me, and henceforth I will have no excuse.'

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَانْطَلَقَا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَنِيَا أَهْلَ قَرْيَةٍ اسْتَطَعَمَا أَهْلَهَا فَأَبْوَأَ أَن يُضَيَّفُوهُمَا فَوَجَدَا
فِيهَا جِدَارًا يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْقُضَ فَآقَامَهُ. قَالَ لَوْ شِئْتَ لَتَّخَذْتَ عَلَيْهِ أَجْرًا ﴿٧٧﴾

And so they travelled on. Then, when they came to a town and asked the inhabitants for food but were refused hospitality, they saw a wall there that was on the point of falling down and the man repaired it. Moses said, 'But if you had wished you could have taken payment for doing that' [77] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 77)

The Arabic word *istat'am* (asked for food) means to request nourishment. Asking for food is the truest kind of question since only a hungry and needy person asks for food. On the other hand, if one were to ask you for money, we could say that he is hoarding it. However, no one stands in the way of food, and withholding food from one who asks for it is a proof of stinginess and deeply rooted meanness in one's character. This is what the inhabitants of this village did when the two of them passed through it and requested food, but they refused to feed them.

(1) *This Hadith was narrated by Muslim in his (Sahih) (2380) with the following wording: 'May Allah's mercy be upon us and upon Moses, if only he had not rushed to the opinion of astonishment, but [instead] he was overcome by censuring his companion.' Another differently worded Hadith, also found in Muslim, and in Ahmad (5/121) reads: 'May Allah the Almighty have mercy on Moses, how I wish that he had been steadfast in patience so that he might have related to us [more] of the narrates of the two of them.'*

The one who scrutinises this verse will notice the manner by which the Quran depicts the extent of these people's miserliness and stinginess, along with the depravity of their nature. For example, He does not say: 'but they refused to feed the two of them', instead He says: '...but were refused hospitality ...' (*al-Kahf*: 77). There is a difference between providing food and providing hospitality. Refusing to feed means that they withheld food from them, but refusing to provide the two of them with any hospitality means everything that it is possible to offer a guest, even simply a shelter and a warm welcome. This is the ultimate thing that can be envisaged regarding the meanness of these people.

You will also note the repetition of the Arabic word *ahl*, rendered 'people' in the verse. Hence, when He says: '...when they came to a town...' *(al-Kahf*: 77), this would normally lead to the use of a personal pronoun referring to these people in the next phrase; thus one would say, 'They asked for food.' However, He says: '... and asked the inhabitants for food ...' *(al-Kahf*: 77). Is this because when they entered the village, they encountered all of its inhabitants, or did they encounter only some of them who meet them as they entered?

Naturally, they encountered only some of them upon entering the village. However, the request for food was to all the people of the village, as if the two of them passed by every house in the village and asked all of its residents, one after the other without exception. Hence, it is as if they were all united in stinginess and meanness of character.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says: '... they saw a wall there that was on the point of falling down, and the man repaired it.' *(al-Kahf*: 77) As soon as the two of them arrived, they found a wall that wanted to collapse. One knows that free will is only a characteristic of someone who thinks and has consciousness. So, if the verb occurs in relation to an unconscious or inanimate object, then it means to be 'on the brink of'. In other words, a wall that was about to collapse based on what we perceive in it of relevant signs, such as cracking and fissures, for example.

This understanding of the issue of the wall's wanting or willing accords with those of superficial thinking and narrow-mindedness. However, as for those of broad minds who use the intelligence to think and investigate, who

are meticulous in their examination of issues, they have no objection to the notion that a wall could have a will. This is based on the concept that everything in the universe has a life which corresponds to it. It is the prerogative of Allah *the Exalted* to speak to it and for there to be a verbal exchange between the two of them. Did Allah *the Almighty* not say: 'and neither sky nor earth shed tears over them ...' (*ad-Dukhan: 29*)?

So, if the sky can weep, then it has gone beyond mere discourse, and it has acquired perceptions and feelings. It possesses feelings and sentiments which may be far beyond the sentiments of men. Thus, His saying, '...and neither sky nor earth shed tears over them...' (*ad-Dukhan: 29*), is evidence that it weeps over the loss of upright, pious persons.

Companion 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was once asked about this issue. He responded, 'Yes, when a believer dies, two places weep over him: a place in the sky and a place on the earth. As for the place of weeping on the earth, it is the place where he prayed. As for the place of weeping in the sky, it is the place where his good deeds would ascend to.'⁽¹⁾ This is a proof of the harmonious relationship of a believer with the universe around him which prostrates to Allah *the Almighty* actively glorifies Him and is obedient to Him. Furthermore, it loves those who are piously obedient and finds the disobedient repulsive and detests and curses them. For this reason, the Arabs say, 'The place found him repugnant, which means that it disliked him because he was not in harmony with it since the place was obedient and he was disobedient; likewise, the place exalted Allah *the Almighty* while he was heedless. Consequently, His saying concerning the wall in, '...was on the point of falling down...' (*al-Kahf: 77*), is a statement to be taken literally.

Henceforth, these created things have feelings, and they possess the ability to weep and to feel grief over the loss of those they love. In a relevant

(1) *This was narrated by Ibn Kathir in his (Tafsir) (4/142) and he attributes it to Ibn Abu Hatim from 'Ali Allah be pleased with him with the following wording: 'There is not a devoted slave except that he has his place of prayer (Musalla) on earth and a place to which his good deeds ascend in heaven. And surely the partisans of the Pharaoh did not have righteous deeds on earth, and no deeds ascending towards heaven ' Then 'Ali Allah be pleased with him recited: '... and neither sky nor earth shed tears over them ...' (ad-Dukhan: 29).*

Hadith, it is narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Indeed, I am cognisant of a rock in Mecca that used to greet me before I was given my prophetic mission.'⁽¹⁾

It is narrated in Prophet Muhammad's biography that a stump of a palm tree against which he would lean during the Friday sermon yearned for him along with pebbles glorifying Allah actively in his hand. I do clarify it again that we should not say that the pebbles glorify Allah *the Exalted* in the hand of Prophet Muhammad because pebbles also glorified Allah in the hand of the leading disbeliever Abu Jahl; rather, we should say that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard the praising glorification of the pebbles in his two hands.

There is nothing strange that the Quran should provide us with examples of the speaking on the part of such things, for scientists in our modern age are conducting research into the language of fish, birds and bats, from which they took the idea of radar. They have concluded that animals have presentiments of the occurrence of earthquakes, especially the donkey, which immediately flees the place before the earthquake occurs. Thus, they have means of perception and a language by which they comprehend one another and a means of articulation by which they express themselves.

Returning to the verse under study; Allah *the Almighty* says regarding what Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* did with the wall that was on the verge of collapsing: '...and the man repaired it' (*al-Kahf*: 77) He fixed and restored it. Then there comes the statement: 'Musa (Moses) said, 'If you had wished, you could have taken payment for doing that.' (*al-Kahf*: 77) This is the statement of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* influenced by what he perceived of the meanness of the village people and their miserliness. It was as if Musa (Moses) was saying, 'We asked them for food, but they did not feed us. They did not even offer us a shelter. So, why should we undertake a job like this for them without compensation?'

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad in his (Musnad) (5/89, 95) and Muslim in his (Sahih) (2277).*

This statement was made by Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* because he was unaware of the wisdom behind this deed.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ هَذَا فِرَاقُ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنِكَ سَأُنَبِّئُكَ بِمَا أُوَيْدِ مَا لَمْ تَسْتَطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا

He said, 'This is where you and I part company. I will tell you the meaning of the things you could not bear with patiently[78] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 78)

The verb 'replied' in this verse refers to Al-Khidr. The word 'this' signifies what you just did in saying, 'If you had wished, you could have taken payment for doing that.' (*al-Kahf*: 77) Now, it had previously happened that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had placed a condition upon himself that if he raised any objection against his teacher, this time it would be the end of journey for the two of them. It is as if Al-Khidr had not done anything on his part since it was Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* who had said: '... if I query anything you do, banish me from your company. ...' (*al-Kahf*: 76); however, in this verse he is questioning him. Hence, there remains nothing but the parting of ways: 'He replied, "This is where you and I part company."' (*al-Kahf*: 78)

His saying, 'This is where you and I part company' (*al-Kahf*: 78) is to be considered a fundamental regulation from the True Lord *the Most High* and a proof that these two paths of knowledge and action do not meet which means that each one of them continues to have its own way: the seeker has his path and the non-seeker has his path, and neither of them should raise objections against the other. Rather, each should adhere to the well-bred approach within the bounds of what Allah *the Almighty* had taught him.

Then He *the Most High* says: 'I will tell you the meaning of the things you could not bear with patiently' (*al-Kahf*: 78). This means 'I will not leave you while these questions remain in your soul, so that you will have no ill-thoughts about me. I will inform you of the true reality of these acts to which you objected in order for you to know that Allah *the Almighty* did not deceive you, rather, indeed, He sent you to someone who could teach you something which you did not know.'

Then Al-Khidr began to reveal to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* the wisdom of these actions, respectively. It is as if a companion of yours censured you for something, and you are keen to maintain his affection, so you tell him, ‘Give me a moment so that I might clarify for you what happened. I did such-and-such for such-and-such a reason.’ You do this to assuage his heart and to dispel any misgivings he may have about the matter.

It is said that this is part of the proper etiquette of comradeship, for it is not permissible that we part ways in disagreement. We should part ways in harmony and good will since separating in disagreement causes the breach to grow and invites the cutting of relations. Hence, before we go our separate ways, we should tell each other that the issue is such-and-such, and thus things are cleared up and souls become serene.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَمَّا السَّفِينَةُ فَكَانَتْ لِمَسْكِينٍ يَعْمَلُونَ فِي الْبَحْرِ فَأَرَدْتُ أَنْ أَعِيبَهَا
وَكَانَ وِرَاءَهُمْ مَلِكٌ يَأْخُذُ كُلَّ سَفِينَةٍ غَصْبًا ﴿٧٩﴾

The boat belonged to some needy people who made their living from the sea and I damaged it because I knew that coming after them was a king who was seizing every [serviceable] boat by force [79] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 79)

In the Arabic expression *li-masakin* (to some needy people), the initial preposition indicates possession, which is that the boat was owned by them. This verse has settled the dispute between scholars regarding the meaning of the Arabic word *Al-faqir* (impoverished person) and *Al-miskin* (a needy person); which of them is in greater want from the other? Based on this verse, *Al-miskin* (the needy one) is he who owns something which does not suffice him such as those who owned the boat in the story in hand; the Quran refers to them as *masakin*. As for *Al-faqir* (the poor), this is he who does not own anything.

Regarding the meaning of ‘...made their living from the sea...’ (*al-Kahf*: 78), it signifies that the domain of their work was the sea. They laboured in it by transporting passengers or goods, or by fishing and the like.

Concerning His saying: '...and I damaged it...' (*al-Kahf*: 78), the speaker here is Al-Khidr *peace be upon him*. He attributes to himself the desire to render it defective and does not attribute it to Allah *the Almighty* deeming Him above that which is improper. However, regarding favourable things, he attributes the matter to Allah *the Exalted* and thus he said, '... and so your Lord willed it that when they come of age they should bring forth their treasure ...' (*al-Kahf*: 82). For this reason, at the end of the narrative he ascribes everything he did to Allah *the Almighty* by saying: '... And I did not do [any of] this of my own accord ...' (*al-Kahf*: 82).

Then He *the Almighty* says: '... because I knew that coming after them was a king who was seizing every [serviceable] boat by force.' (*al-Kahf*: 78) In this statement, the Arabic word *kull* (every) traces an absolute enclosure, leaving nothing outside of it. It says that the king seizes every boat, whether it is damaged or undamaged. However, the true reality is that he only seizes sound boats to make use of them and has no need for a damaged, unsound one. It is as if the thread of the verse contains an assumed description, that is to say, he seizes every sound boat by force from its owner. The Arabic word *Al-ghasb*, used adverbially and translated here as 'by brute force', is that which is taken without right, with compulsion, force and confiscation. This takes on multiple forms, such as theft which is taking money or possessions from its guarded place, covertly, by breaking drawers or a cabinet. Seizure is taking someone else's money or property by force with the person witnessing it, in this situation resistance and conflict exist between the usurper and the one being usurped.

Another form of it is snatching which is taking another person's money or property just like that in public view, but in a wily manner. Someone snatches something and flees with it without you being able to catch him. Hence, snatching is done openly but without resistance. Another form is embezzlement whereby you take someone else's money or property, while you have his trust and confidence. It occurs clandestinely and is replete with a stratagem that conceals it.

Inasmuch as the issue here is one of forcible seizure, then the proprietor of the thing will inevitably resist, even if only partially, seeking to defend his right. It might thus turn out that the usurper leaves him his money or property. Hence the matter, then, involves dispute and confrontation.

Therefore, making a hole in the boat outwardly appears to be a criminal attack on valuable property, and this is legally forbidden, but if this violation were the cause of saving the entire boat from seizure, then this is all right. A damaged boat is better than no boat. If Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had been cognisant of this wisdom, he himself would have hastened to make a hole in it.

As long as the circumstances are like this, then we are obligated to transform the boat into a defective one and to ruin it by making a hole in it or by removing a board from it in order to cause the usurping king to avoid seizing it.

The Arabic adverbial phrase *wara'a-hum* (behind them) imparts the meaning of in front of them because this tyrant was lying in wait for boats which passed by him. So, whatever sound boat he found, he would seize it. Thus, in reality, he was in front of them. Within the scope of His saying, 'with hell awaiting him (*min wara'i-hi*), and he shall be made to drink of the water of most bitter distress' (*Ibrahim*: 16), is hell behind him or in front of him?

The Arabic word *wara'a* is also employed with the meaning of *ba'd* (after), as is the case in His saying: '... whereupon We gave her the glad tidings of [the birth of] Ishaq (Isaac) and after Ishaq (Isaac), of [his son] Yaqub (Jacob).' (*Hud*: 71)

The Arabic word *wara'* also occurs with connotation of 'other than', as in Allah's saying about the qualities of believers: 'and who are mindful of their chastity, [not giving way to their desires] with any but their spouses – that is, those whom they rightfully possess [through wedlock], for then, behold, they are free of all blame, whereas such as seek to go beyond that [limit] are truly transgressors.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 5-7)

Similarly, in His saying, 'Forbidden to you are your mothers... But lawful to you are all [women] beyond these...' (*an-Nisa'*: 23-24), this word in question, *wara'*, may be employed to give the meaning of behind; Allah says: 'And Lo, Allah accepted a solemn pledge from those who were granted earlier revelation [when He bade them]: 'Make it known to mankind, and do not conceal it!' But they cast this [pledge] behind their backs...' (*Al-Imran*: 187). Thus, the Arabic word *wara'* occurs in the Quran with four meanings, namely in front of, behind, after and other than (or beyond). This is amongst the qualities which distinguish Arabic from other languages and which also distinct the Arab

aptitude, which is capable of discerning the appropriate meaning for the context, from all other languages. In the same connection, the word *Al-a'yn*, for example, may give the following meanings: the seeing eye, a wellspring of water, gold and silver, spy, etc. It is the context which determines the intended meaning.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَمَّا الْغُلَامُ فَكَانَ أَبَوَاهُ مُؤْمِنِينَ فَخَشِينَا أَنْ يُرْهَقَهُمَا طُغْيَانًا وَكُفْرًا ﴿٨٠﴾

The young boy had parents who were people of faith, and so, fearing he would trouble them through wickedness and disbelief [80] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 80)

In this verse, the Arabic word *Al-ghulam* (young man) refers to the boy who has not yet attained puberty or the age of legal obligation. Inasmuch as he is too young to be bound by the rulings of religion, he is still in the age of purity and innocence from sinful offenses. For this reason, when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* opposed his killing and said: '... How could you kill an innocent person? He has not killed anyone! ...' (*al-Kahf*: 74) which means the lad was pure and blameless. There is no doubt that the death of a youth at this age is better for him and in his interest than waiting till he is polluted with sinful offenses, for he at this particular age will not be held accountable for his deeds. Therefore, his purity and blamelessness is that which summoned us to hasten taking his life. This all concerns the boy, but what about his father and mother?

In this regard, He *the Most High* says: 'The young boy had parents who were people of faith... ' (*al-Kahf*: 80). How often are children a source of tribulation for parents, especially in the light of the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'O, you who have attained to faith! Behold, some of your spouses and your children are enemies unto you, so beware of them ...' (*at-Taghabun*: 14)?⁽¹⁾

The tribulation through offspring stems from the aspirations of the parents for them and their endeavour to improve their situation. It might be that the material means are insufficient, thereby pushing the father to the unlawful for the sake of his children. In the case of the boy in question, Allah *the Exalted*

(1) Regarding wives and children being enemies, Ibn Kathir says in his (*Tafsir*) (4/376): 'This means that that they distract one from pious deeds.'

was fully aware that he would be source of tribulation and temptation for his parents. As they were true believers, He *the Almighty* did not want tribulation to afflict them, which is why He determined that He would bring them back to Him in a state of faith.

It is as though the decision of Allah *the Almighty* was for the good of the boy and the good of the parents, as a boom granted to both parties. A profound wisdom lies concealed behind the outwardly apparent event against which Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was so opposed.

Therefore, when a child or small boy close to us dies, it is viewed as ignorance that we should be excessively grief-stricken over him, lamenting his childhood which has been lost and his youth which he never enjoyed. We are not aware of the pleasure that has been prepared for him. We are unaware that whichever of our children are taken before maturity, his residence in paradise is not circumscribed because all of it belongs to him: he can run in it as he desires, sit in it wherever he likes, sit in the company of the Prophets and in the company of the companions, with no one barring him. Therefore, they are called 'the free-roaming entrants of paradise'.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and so, fearing he would trouble them through wickedness and disbelief,' (*al-Kahf*: 80). The Arabic word *khashayna* means (we were afraid). When a son is born, he is considered the apple of our eye since he will support his parents. However, this son may also be the reason for the ruin of his father's religion, pushing him to telling lying, accepting bribery and stealing. Hence, this son leads his father to hellfire, and it is better that Allah *the Almighty* removes him from the path of the father, so that the latter will not be oppressed; Allah then says:

فَأَرَدْنَا أَنْ يُبَدِّلَهُمَا رَبُّهُمَا خَيْرًا مِمَّنْهُ زَكْوَةٌ وَأَقْرَبَ رَحْمًا ﴿٨١﴾

**We wished that their Lord should give them another child
– purer and more com- passionate – in his place [81]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 81)**

Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* does not miss the opportunity of ascribing good to Allah *the Almighty* thus, he says, 'I love this deed and desire it, yet the One

Who replaces the bad son with the good son, in reality, is Allah *the Almighty*: 'We wished that their Lord should give them another child, purer... in his place.' (*al-Kahf*: 81) Hence, this good is from Allah *the Almighty* and I am but an agent for realising it.'

Regarding His saying: '... another child, purer and more compassionate, in his place' (*al-Kahf*: 81), the Arabic word *dhakatan* is used adverbially; it gives the meaning of greater purity and chastity. There follows the saying of Allah: 'purer and more compassionate ...' (*al-Kahf*: 81); that is, they desired a son to be of benefit for the two of them in this world and to be a delight for them. However, inasmuch as this world is transient, without eternal existence and out of the fact that He *the Almighty* was fully Aware of the point that this first son would be a source of tribulation and temptation for his parents, draw them into acts of sinful disobedience and misdeeds, and would cause them to be afflicted with punishment, it was the Divine Mercy that decreed to take him from this life rather than letting them enjoy him in this transient world, and then suffer with him in the eternal Hereafter.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَمَّا الْجِدَارُ فَكَانَ لِغُلَامَيْنِ يَتِيمَيْنِ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ وَكَانَ تَحْتَهُ كَنْزٌ لَهُمَا وَكَانَ
 أَبُوهُمَا صَالِحًا فَأَرَادَ رَبُّكَ أَنْ يَبْلُغَا أَشُدَّهُمَا وَيَسْتَخْرِجَا كَنْزَهُمَا رَحْمَةً مِّنَ
 رَبِّكَ وَمَا فَعَلْتُهُ عَنْ أَمْرِي ذَلِكَ تَأْوِيلُ مَا لَمْ تَسْطِعْ عَلَيْهِ صَبْرًا ﴿٨٢﴾

The wall belonged to two young orphans in the town and there was buried treasure beneath it belonging to them.

Their father had been a righteous man, so your Lord intended them to reach maturity and then dig up their treasure as a mercy from your Lord. I did not do [these things] of my own accord: these are the explanations for those things you could not bear with patience' [82]

(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 82)

Regarding the wall belonging to two boys, it signifies that they had not yet reached the age of maturity, and moreover, they were two orphans. Beneath this tottering wall was a treasure for these two boys who were then

not capable of managing it. Now, just imagine what would happen if the wall collapsed and this treasure was discovered, with its gold glittering before the eyes of this people whose qualities we know. Having just refused to give food or merely a place to shelter for Musa (Moses) and Al-Khidr, the least they could be described as is that they were vile and not to be entrusted with anything. As we have become accustomed to saying about extreme loss: 'The loss of orphans is on the table of the depraved.'

Thus, there is no doubt that what Al-Khidr did, regarding building the wall and erecting it or restoring it is to be viewed as a kind of slap in the face to these vile ones, corresponding to the ungracious way they dealt with them. They were repaid two-fold when Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* deprived them of this treasure.

So, the motive for repairing the wall stems from what was beneath it of wealth, which had to be preserved until these two boys grew older. It is as if the True Lord *the Most High* had sent him to these two boys at this precise time when the wall was beginning to decay (the signs of its collapse were evident) in order to set about repairing it before it fell and the matter of the treasure was revealed while its two owners were still in a state of weakness and inability to protect it.

Then Al-Khidr repaired the wall and restored it to its previous state, a restoration of one whom Allah *the Almighty* had given instruction from above. It is said that he built it in a temporary fashion corresponding to the age of the two boys; in other words, he built it for a prescribed period which would end with the two boys reaching maturity and having the capacity to protect it, and then it would collapse. Now, this is quite a precise procedure which no one could gauge except one who had been given special knowledge from Allah *the Almighty*.

Based on this verse under study, it appears that the two boys were twins of the same age, a point which is proved by the saying of Allah: '... so your Lord intended them to reach maturity ...' (*al-Kahf*: 82). The Arabic word *Al-ashudd* (of age) means attaining strength or power by which the bodily organs and limbs become fully developed and mature. Now, the apparatus of the body become fully developed when a person becomes capable of siring offspring.

You will note here that the True Lord *the Almighty* says, '...reach maturity...' (*al-Kahf*: 82), or more literally 'attain to full strength', rather than saying they attain to mature discernment and conduct. This is because there is a difference between *Ar-rushd* and *Al-ashudd*. The former means correct conduct in affairs, whereas the latter means strength or power. Here, the two boys are in need of strength, which will protect their treasure from these depraved ones, and hence, the expression '*ashudda-huma*' is appropriate in this context.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... and then dig up their treasure as a Mercy from your Lord ...' (*al-Kahf*: 82); they should recover it with what they possess of strength and virility. Regarding the Arabic word *Ar-rahma* (grace), it is a quality granted to one in order to protect him from malady. In this sense, it is clear in His saying:

'Thus, step-by-step, We bestow from above through this Quran all that gives health [to the spirit] and is a grace to those who believe [in Us]...' (*al-Isra*': 82). In the same verse, the Arabic word *shifa* (health to the spirit) means to treat a disease that is present and to cure it; the word *rahma* refers to that which prevents the return of the malady another time.

Likewise, as concerns what happened to the two boys, it was a Grace from Allah *the Exalted* to protect their wealth and to preserve their due rights. Then, Al-Khidr does not neglect to ascribe the favour to its proper owner, to abolish from his own soul delusion arising from knowledge and assuming superiority over his companion; he says: '...I did not do [these things] of my own accord....' (*al-Kahf*: 82) That is to say, he admitted that what has been occurred was by order of Allah *the Almighty* and what I taught you was from revealed to me from on high since I have no superiority over you. This is a lesson in the good manners of humility and acknowledging the source of favour.

Then, Al-Khidr *peace be upon him* says: '... These are the explanations for those things you could not bear with patience.' (*al-Kahf*: 82). In this passage, the Arabic word *ta'wil* (real meaning) means to trace back a matter to its true significance and explaining whatever was obscure in it.

Following this, the verses move to another question from amongst the three questions which the disbelievers of Mecca, at the advice of the Jews,

asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about. It is the question about the wandering man who roamed the lands; Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ ذِي الْقَرْنَيْنِ قُلْ سَأَتْلُوا عَلَيْكُمْ مِنْهُ ذِكْرًا

[Prophet], they ask you about Dhu Al-Qarnayn. Say, ‘I will tell you something about him [83] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 83)

This verse contains reference to Dhu Al-Qarnayn (the two-horned man); this was actually his nickname. This is perhaps because he was two-horned in his physical make up, or he wore a crown which had two orientations, or because he reached the two rising and setting places of the sun in the east and the west.

Scholars have different views concerning Dhu Al-Qarnayn; amongst them are those who say: ‘He is Alexander, the Great of Macedonia, who roamed the lands.’ However, Alexander, the Great, was in Macedonia in the west, whilst Dhu Al-Qarnayn means that the man penetrated the east and the west. This is what prompted a meticulous scholar of India, Abu Al-Kalam Azad, the Indian Minister of Education, to say that he is not Alexander the Great, rather, he is Cyrus the Great, and that this was his voyage into the east and the west and between the two dams. Moreover, Alexander was a pagan idol worshipper, and a student of Aristotle, whereas Dhu Al-Qarnayn was a believing man as we shall come to know from his story.

In general, the interest of a story does not consist in identifying the personage himself because the personification of the events of the story weaken its impact, constraining it with the precision of a personal identification which does not go beyond anyone else, which is why some claim that a specific personal issue does not repeat itself.

Therefore, even if scholarship came up with his positive identification, we would say, ‘This occurrence or this deed is particular to this person.’ However, the True Lord *the Most High* desires to propound for us a parable, applicable to any person, and what would be his conduct and his action if Allah *the Almighty* enabled him and granted him power and authority.

If the Quran had defined this personage as Alexander or Cyrus or even someone else, it is an individual occurrence which does not go beyond this

person, thereby deflecting the soul from taking him as a model. The story then loses its moral significance and its effective impact. If there were a benefit in identifying him, Allah *the Exalted* would have identified him for us.

We have previously made it clear that when the True Lord propounded a parable of those who disbelieved, He says, '... Nuh's (Noah's) wife and Lut's (Lot's) wife ...' (*at-Tahrim*: 10), which means that He did not identify them with their given names. This is because the objective in propounding the parable here is to tell Prophet Muhammad that even prophets may be unable to guide people who are closest to them. This is due to faith being a personal affair, and no one has authority in it over anyone else.

Similarly, when Allah *the Almighty* propounds a parable for those who believed, He says: '...Pharaoh's wife...' (*at-Tahrim*: 10). This is Pharaoh who misguided people and claimed divinity, yet his wife was a believer. It is as if Allah *the Exalted* is telling all people that embracing a particular religion is a personal viewpoint which is not influenced by anyone, whoever it might be, neither by the guidance of a prophet nor the sinful seduction of the most misguided of those gone astray who also claim divinity.

In this manner, Islam preserves for woman her role and her power, along with respecting her opinion.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* relates this story without specific personification in order that it might serve as a pattern and a model which can be followed by everyone. Otherwise, if the story had been made to revolve around a specific person, it would have been bound to this personage alone. However, when Allah *the Exalted* speaks of Maryam (Mary), we find Him specifying her by name, even the name of her father. This is because the circumstances that surrounded Maryam (Mary) *Allah be pleased with her* was a matter which was particular to her, it will never occur again amongst the daughters of Adam; therefore, He specifies and designates her identity since personification is necessary in such instances.

However, when He leaves a parable or story without specification, then it is suitable for repeating itself in any time and at any place, as we have seen with the story of the People of the Cave. Why else would Allah *the Almighty* make vague the names, the place, the time and the number of people involved

except in order that they might serve as an example and a model to believing youths in any time, at any place or for any given number.

Concerning His saying, '[O, Prophet], they ask you about Dhu Al-Qarnayn...'
(*al-Kahf*: 83), we should note that the topic of questions asked for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the Quran comprises a significant extent in it. People asked him sixteen times, as recorded in the Quran. One of these questions is in the past tense; Allah says: 'And if My servants ask you about Me – behold, I am near ...' (*al-Baqara*: 166). They occur fifteen times in the imperfect tense as in His saying: 'They will ask you about the new moons ...' (*al-Baqara*: 215).

Also in His following sayings: 'They will ask you as to what they should spend on others. Say: "Whatever of your wealth you spend shall [first] be for your parents...."' (*al-Baqara*: 215) 'They will ask you about fighting in the sacred month....' (*al-Baqara*: 217) 'They will ask you about intoxicants and games of chance ...' (*al-Baqara*: 219), '... And they will ask you as to what they should spend [in Allah's cause]. Say: "Whatever you can spare..."' (*al-Baqara*: 219), '... And they will ask you about [how to deal with] orphans. Say: "To improve their condition is best." ...' (*al-Baqara*: 220), 'And they will ask you about [woman's] monthly courses ...' (*al-Baqara*: 222) 'They will ask you as to what is lawful to them ...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 4) 'They will ask you [O, Prophet] about the Last Hour ...' (*al-A'raf*: 187) In this chapter, it occurs three times and also in 'they will ask you [O, Prophet] about the Last Hours: "When will it come to pass?"' (*an-Nazi'at*: 42) 'They will ask you about the spoils of war ...' (*al-Anfal*: 1), 'And they will ask you about [the nature of] Divine inspiration ...' (*al-Isra'*: 85), 'And they will ask you about the Two-Horned One. ...' (*al-Kahf*: 83) 'And they will ask you about [what will happen to] the mountains [when this world comes to an end]. Say, then: "My Lord will scatter them far and wide."' (*Ta Ha*: 105)

These are fifteen questions in the imperfect tense, though responses to them are varied and all of them issue forth from Allah, the All-Wise. Therefore, it is necessary that the variance of response to each question has something to which to pay attention. Amongst these questions are those which were asked by adversaries and believers. Concerning the questions

asked by the believers, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* forbade them to ask until they were calm, even if their questions were regarding the pre-Islamic age and they wish to become aware of the opinion of Islam with regard to them. Thus, it is as if they forgot the customs and norms of the pre-Islamic period and were desirous that all of their affairs be legally regulated in accordance with Islam.

In scrutinising responses to these questions, you will find one which comes as a direct answer without the imperative verb 'say' (addressed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*); this is clear in His saying: 'And if My servants ask you about Me – behold, I am near ...' (*al-Baqara*: 186). You will also find one in which the imperative verb 'say' is conjoined to the conjunctive particle *fa* such as His saying: 'And they will ask you about [what will happen to] the mountains [when this world comes to an end]. Say, then: "My Lord will scatter them far and wide."' (*Ta Ha*: 105)

The rest of the questions all occur with the response beginning with the imperative verb 'say'. So, what is the wisdom in conjoining the verb with the conjunctive particle *fa* in this verse as contrasted with all the others? It has been said that when Allah *the Almighty* uses 'say' in a response, then this tells that this is an answer to a question that Prophet Muhammad was actually asked; the meaning is they really asked it. As for the conjunctive particle *fa*, it occurs in response to a question that he has not been asked, but that he will be asked in the future. Hence, regarding His saying 'And they will ask you about [what will happen to] the mountains [when this world comes to an end] ...' (*Ta Ha*: 105), the question has not yet been posed. So, the meaning is the following: 'If they ask you, then say', as if it were a provisional measure for a response to a question which will be asked in the future.

Now, if you asked, 'Then what is the wisdom in the manner of response to His saying, 'And if My servants ask you about Me – behold, I am near ...' (*al-Baqara*: 186), which is void of both 'say' and 'then, say', in spite of the conjunctive particle 'if', which requires the *fa* in its response clause?'

We would respond, 'Because the question here is about Allah *the Almighty* and He wishes to respond to them concerning it by eliminating the mediation of anyone. Therefore, the response comes directly without any mediator:

"And if My servants ask you about Me – behold, I am near; I respond to the call of him who calls ..." (*al-Baqara*: 186).'

Returning to the verse under study, Allah says: '[O, Prophet], they ask you about Dhu Al-Qarnayn...' (*al-Kahf*: 83); the verse refers to his history and reports concerning him and the mission that he undertook. Allah *Glorified is He* also says '...Say, "I will tell you something about him."' (*al-Kahf*: 83) What honour could be greater than this honour?! Behold, the True Lord *the Most High* takes upon Himself the history of this man and narrates it in His Noble Quran which will be recited and used in worship until the Day of Resurrection. What this means is that the example of this man will remain as long as the Quran remains, eternal along with its eternity. His influence in what he did will remain a model, and he is an example to those who do what he did. If this signifies anything, it signifies that good deeds are remembered with Allah *the Almighty* before they are mentioned amongst mankind.

Hence, what remembrance is more lasting than mentioning the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn by Allah *the Exalted*? The Arabic prepositional word *min-hu* (something by which) means some of his account and history, not all of it.

The Arabic word *dhikr* (remembrance) occurs with multiple meanings in the Noble Quran, all of which meet in honour and high standing, remembrance and esteem. As soon as the word is uttered, the immediate impulse is to think of the Quran, as we find in His saying: 'Behold, it is We Ourselves Who have bestowed from above, step-by-step, this reminder, and, behold, it is We Who shall truly guard it [from all corruption].' (*al-Hijr*: 9) After this, it is used to refer to any scripture which Allah *the Almighty* has previously revealed; Allah says: 'And [even] before your time, [O, Muhammad,] We never sent [as Our prophets] any but [mortal] men, whom We inspired, and if you have not [yet] realised this, ask the followers of [earlier] revelation.' (*an-Nahl*: 43)

The word *Adh-dhikr* may also be used to express what pertains to this of renown, honour, high-standing and immortalisation of a name, as is clear in His saying: '[O, men!] We have now bestowed upon you from above a Divine revelation in which is your eternal honour...' (*al-Anbiya*': 10). Likewise is His saying: 'and verily, this [revelation] shall indeed become [a source of] eminence for you and your people ...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 44).

That is to say, good reputation, honour, and high standing are fulfilled inasmuch as the Quran mentions this name. Since when a name is mentioned in the Quran, its renown is disseminated and reverberates unto the horizons.

We have said in regard to the story⁽¹⁾ of Zayd ibn Haritha *Allah be pleased with him* that he became a slave after he was kidnapped from his people and sold in Mecca to Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* then, she gave him as a gift to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; for this reason they called him Zayd, son of Muhammad. Then when his family learned of his existence in Mecca, his father and paternal uncle came, and they spoke to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* concerning returning him to his family. So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Give him the choice.' When they gave Zayd the choice, he said, 'I would never choose anyone over the Messenger of Allah.' Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* honoured him and called him Zayd, son of Muhammad. When Allah *the Almighty* wished to abolish formal adoption, He *the Almighty* said: '[And know, O, believers, that] Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men, but is Allah's prophet and the Seal of all prophets ...' [*al-Ahzab*: 40], and He said: '[As for your adopted children,] call them by their [real] fathers' names. This is more equitable in the sight of Allah ...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5). So, do not say, 'Zayd, son of Muhammad', rather, say, 'Zayd ibn Haritha'. It was then that Zayd was saddened at this change, feeling that he had thereby lost the great honour of being ascribed to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, the True Lord *the Most High* mends the sentiment of Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* renders his name a distinguishing mark which rings out in the Quran, being recited and used in worship until the Day of Resurrection. Zayd is the sole companion who is mentioned by name in the Book of Allah *the Almighty* in His saying: '[But] then, when Zayd had come to the end of his union with her, We gave her to you in marriage ...' (*al-Ahzab*: 37).


Thus, what is higher and greater than this honour?! Let us carefully examine this verse: '[As for your adopted children,] call them by their [real] fathers' names. This is more equitable in the sight of Allah...!' (*al-Ahzab*: 5).

(1) The story of Zayd ibn Haritha *Allah be pleased with him*

Allah *the Almighty* did not accuse His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of lying as He says: '...This is more equitable in the sight of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5). Thus, what Prophet Muhammad did was also equitable and just, but that which Allah commanded was more equitable and more just.

Hence, then, the mention of Dhu Al-Qarnayn in the Book of Allah is a great honour and in it is an indication that the one who does good has his place of distinction and station with Him, along with being rewarded in that his memory is immortalised and his reputation will endure amongst people in this world.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:


 إِنَّا مَكَّنَّا لَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَءَاتَيْنَاهُ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ سَبِيلًا

We established his power in the land, and gave him the means to achieve everything [84] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 84)

The Arabic word *At-tamkin* (established him securely), used as a verb, means that he is given the means by which he would be able to undertake all of the affairs he desires. This is because he is trustworthy in unhindered management of affairs based on the well-ordered Path of Allah *the Almighty*. Similarly, in another verse concerning Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And thus We established Yusuf (Joseph) securely in the land [of Egypt]. He had full mastery over it, [doing] whatever he willed ...' (*Yusuf*: 56). Thus, it means granting him the means to achieve any objective he wishes, and thereby, he manages affairs. However, why did We establish him with such security? We established him securely because he is trustworthy in freehanded management of affairs in accord with the well-ordered Path of Allah *the Almighty*.

Regarding His saying, '... and gave him the means to achieve everything' (*al-Kahf*: 84), it means that Allah granted him the causal forces by which he could attain to what he wanted. There is nothing that he wants except that Allah *the Exalted* provided him with the means of attaining it.

So, what did he do?



**He travelled on a certain road [85]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 85)**

The Arabic phrase *atba'a sababa* (he chose the right means) signifies that he did not set out for an end except by the means which Allah had granted him. The True Lord had certainly established Dhu Al-Qarnayn with full mastery on the earth and gave him the means for accomplishing anything. Yet, he did not rely on that which he was given, but he did not desist from action and was not indolent. Instead he took from Allah's Gifts to him something of every means.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ مَغْرِبَ الشَّمْسِ وَجَدَهَا تَغْرُبُ فِي عَيْنٍ حَمِئَةٍ وَوَجَدَ عِنْدَهَا
قَوْمًا قُلْنَا يَا الْقَارِنِينَ إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ تُعَذِّبُ وَإِنَّمَا أَنْتَ تُنذِرُ فِيهِمْ حَسَنًا ﴿٨٦﴾

**Then, when he came to the setting of the sun, he found it
[seemed to be] setting into a muddy spring. Nearby he found
some people and We said, 'Dhu Al-Qarnayn, you may choose
[which of them] to punish or show kindness to' [86]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 86)**

His reaching to the setting place of the sun is proof that he was not initially in this place; rather, he came to it from the east. As regards the Arabic expression *maghrib ash-shams* (the setting of the sun), does the sun actually set and go away *taghrub*? It sets and goes away in the eye of the beholder in one place, for if you watch the sun at the moment of setting, you will find that it sets, for example, into an island. However, if you go to the island, you will find it setting in another place and so forth. Hence, its setting has the meaning of its vanishing from your own sight. Since the sun never disappears, it is ceaselessly rising and setting; the meaning thus is when it sets on a people, it rises on others. For this reason, there are multiple easts and wests.

It is this which has given us the perpetuity of the Remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* and its endless cycle on tongues at all times, for when we are praying the *Adh-dhuhr* (midday prayer), for example, others are praying

Al-'asr (the mid-afternoon prayer), yet others are praying *Al-maghrib* (the sundown prayer) and *Al-fajr*. In this manner, Allah *the Exalted* is mentioned at all times by means of every prayer time. Hence, the followers of mystical knowledge say, 'O duration! In you is all of time.'

Then He *the Almighty* says: '...he found it [seemed to be] setting into a muddy spring...' (*al-Kahf*: 86); this refers to a wellspring in which there was water. We have previously said that the Arabic expression *Al-hama' Al-masnun*, the first term of which is used in a slightly different form in the statement, is mud which has turned black from prolonged existence in water. In investigating this matter, the great scholar of India Abd Kalam Azad⁽¹⁾, in agreement with the honourable late Sheikh 'Abd Al-Jalil I'sa, said that it was a place called Azmir.

Regarding His saying, '... and nearby he found a people...' (*al-Kahf*: 86), this means that it was close to this wellspring. The verse continues: '... and We said, "Dhu Al-Qarnayn, you may choose [which of them] to punish or show kindness to."' (*al-Kahf*: 86) Hence, this is delegation of full authority to him for Allah *the Almighty* and none are delegated with full authority except the one who is trustworthy in managing affairs. With reference to '... you may choose [which of them] to punish them ...' (*al-Kahf*: 86), it is evident that they were disbelievers or idolaters, not believing in Allah *the Exalted*. So, you can either punish them for their disbelief or deal with them in a kind manner.

However, what aspect of kindness or goodness did Allah *the Almighty* intend him to apply? In this verse, He means that they might be amongst the people of heedlessness whom the Message of faith had not reached, so show them the right way and direct them to the Religion of Allah *the Almighty*. Then, whoever of them believes treat him with kindness, and whoever insists on clinging to his disbelief punish him. Thus, you must first engage them with a gracious admonition and a clear enunciation, and then afterwards you can judge them based upon their conduct.

(1) Abu Kalam Azad: He is Ahmad ibn Khayr Ad-Din, of Indian fatherhood and Arab motherhood and culture, who was born in Mecca (1302 AH); his ancestors come from Delhi. He studied under the scholars of Al-Azhar and became a commentator of the Quran and one of the great orators of the Muslims of India and one of their leaders during their independence movement. He served Minister of Education in India until he died of a stroke in 1377 AH (from *Al-A'lam* of az-Zirikli).

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

قَالَ أَمَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ فَسَوْفَ نَعَذِّبُهُ ثُمَّ يُرَدُّ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ فَيُعَذِّبُهُ عَذَابًا نُكْرًا ﴿٨٧﴾

He answered, ‘We shall punish those who have done evil, and when they are returned to their Lord He will punish them [even more] severely[87] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 87)

His statement, '... We shall punish ...' (*al-Kahf*: 87) gives us an indication of the respite these people will be granted, a grace period which will permit him to admonish them, remind them and teach them the requirements of the religion of Allah *the Almighty*.

We have previously said that there are different kinds of iniquity, the most horrendous and highest form of which is ascribing partners or associates to Allah *the Almighty*. He says: '... for, behold, such [a false] ascribing of divinity is indeed an awesome wrong.' (*Luqman*: 13) Then He *the Almighty* says: '... and when they return to their Lord, He will punish them [even more] severely.' (*al-Kahf*: 87) Hence, we will not punish him to the extent of what he did; rather, we shall only chastise him with temporal punishment. This is because temporal punishments were legislated to preserve the balance of society and to restrain those who will not be restrained by admonishment. Otherwise, what is the benefit of admonishing non-Muslims? This is why we see people who believe neither in Allah *the Almighty* nor in the Resurrection and the Hereafter legislate these temporal punishments in order to maintain the probity of their condition.

After the chastisement of this world and its punishment, there is a more severe punishment in the Hereafter: '...punish them [even more] severely,' (*al-Kahf*: 87). The severe punishment refers to something we are not cognisant of, something we have no experience of or familiarity with. When we are caused suffering in this world, we are chastised according to our primal nature and according to our strength. However, Allah's punishment in the Hereafter is something which we do not know, and it is beyond our powers of perception and capacities.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَأَمَّا مَنْ ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَلَهُ جَزَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ وَسَنَقُولُ لَهُ مِن أَمْرِنَا يُسْرًا ﴿٨٨﴾

While those who believed and did good deeds will have the best of rewards: we shall command them to do what is easy for them [88] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 88)

Concerning His saying, '... will have the best of rewards...' (*al-Kahf*: 88), it means we will grant him excellent recompense. This is followed by: '... We shall command them to do what is easy for them.' (*al-Kahf*: 88) which means that we will speak pleasant words to him, which will encourage and incite him, and if we charge him with obligations, we will charge him with easy things that are not burdensome.

This verse establishes for us the basis for the procedure of compensation which itself is the source of equity of society and the cause of its advancement. For the society without means of requital which rewards the diligent and punishes the slacker is a society which ends up in chaos and a state of negligence. Since if people feel safe from reaping the consequences of their actions, they become lazy, and it is possible that what Egypt suffers from today is a result of poor management traced back to those people in society who are above the law, whom we cannot punish, and thus the others become negligent.

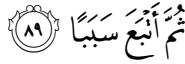
Likewise one notices that those who gain good salaries and receive bonuses do not work and that he who gains them is the one who curries favour, ingratiates himself, flatters others and dissimulates his motives. These have their crooked ways in which they excel, but as for the one who is diligent and works with sincerity, his strength is consumed and he is preoccupied with performing his job well and with mastery. He has not time for such devious courses, for he seeks to please with his work and his excellent performance. Now this is the one who deserves honour and deserves bonus pay. You should imagine the extent of corruption and negligence which is caused by this inverted and crooked state of affairs.

Hence, then, the equity of society and the basis for its advancement is the following: '... He answered, "We shall punish those who have done evil, and when they return to their Lord, He will punish them [even more] severely. While those who believed and did good deeds will have the best of rewards.

We shall command them to do what is easy for them." (al-Kahf: 87-88). So, how beautiful it would be if we earmarked encouragement bonuses and prizes, along with holding ceremonies of honour for the distinguished and exemplary on the condition that the criteria of selection are based on due right and equity.

The Arabic word *Al-husna* (goodly) signifies the superlative degree of *Al-hasan* (perfection), and it is feminine. Thus, if we grant him such good reaction, then it is good and excellent with all the more reason. Relevant to this is His saying: 'For those who persevere in doing good there is the ultimate good in store, and more [than that] ...' (*Yunus*: 26).

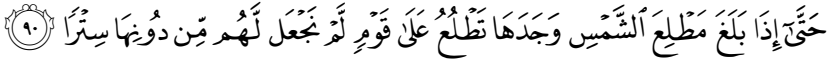
Allah says:



**He travelled on [89]
(The Quran, al-Kahf: 89)**

That is to say, he went on to another place.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:



**Then, when he came to the rising of the sun, he found
it rising on a people for whom We had provided no
shelter from it [90] (The Quran, al-Kahf: 90)**

Concerning His saying, '... to the rising of the sun ...' (*al-Kahf*: 90), the same applies to what we said about its setting. This is due to its ceaselessly rising as it does not rise from a single place. Rather, each of us has a place at which it rises, and each of us has a place where it sets according to the expanse of the horizon.

Then He *the Almighty* says: '... he found that it was rising on a people for whom We had provided no coverings against it' (*al-Kahf*: 90). The Arabic word *As-satr*, translated as coverings in this verse, is a barrier between two things; it is either to mollify heat or to mollify cold. Thus, Dhu Al-Qarnayn had gone to a nomadic people who live as wanderers like some tribes in the

middle of Africa, for example, or else they have nothing to shield them from the sun such as dwellings in which they live, or trees beneath which they might seek shade. We call people such as these ‘sun-struck ones’ since they do not possess that which shelters them from the heat of summer or the cold of winter, and they are a backward people, primitive and uncivilised. Allah *the Exalted* provides such people something in their skin which compensates them for these things which they lack. Hence you observe in their skin that which furnishes them with warmth in winter and coolness in summer. This we find even in normal environments, regarding a human being’s face which is exposed to heat and cold along with alterations of weather. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* fashioned it with a particular nature that can withstand these variations in contrast to the rest of the body covered with clothing, for if a part of it is uncovered, it will be intensely sensitive to heat or cold. Likewise, amongst animals are those which Allah *the Almighty* has granted special traits in their skin, allowing them to live at the frozen arctic pole without being affected by its cold.

Now, these primitive peoples live like that, adapting to their environment, the issue of clothing does not preoccupy them. They do not think of them, even when civilised people come to them and they see clothing and how it constitutes embellishment and covering for their private parts; therefore, make us of it.

Let us observe here that the Quran does not tell us anything about these people and what Dhu Al-Qarnayn did with them. If it had made an analogy of the situation with the previous people whom he encountered at the setting of the sun, we might have said that perhaps he civilised them and provided them with the means of progress.

Some commentators of the Quran believe that Dhu Al-Qarnayn went to a place where the day was three months long, or six months long. His arrival coincided with the presence of the sun, so he did not witness its setting in that location during the duration of his stay there, and did not see any cover against it which might shield them from it. Hence, it seems that he might have gone to the extreme north.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

كَذَلِكَ وَفَدَّ أَحَطْنَا بِمَا لَدَيْهِ خُبْرًا ﴿٩١﴾

**And so it was: We knew all about him [91]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 91)**

The Arabic word *kadhalik* (thus) means in this way did he travel, just as he went to the west, he went to the east. He *the Almighty* then says:

ثُمَّ اتَّبَعَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩٢﴾

He travelled on [92] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 92)

That is, he went to another place. Allah then says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا بَلَغَ بَيْنَ السَّدَّيْنِ وَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمَا قَوْمًا لَا يَكَادُونَ يَفْقَهُونَ قَوْلًا ﴿٩٣﴾

**Then, when he reached a place between two mountain
barriers, he found beside them a people who could barely
understand him [93] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 93)**

A barrier is a structure between two things. It might be something immaterial and tangible, such as a mountain. It refers here to two mountains between which there is a gap. Inasmuch as Allah *Glorified is He* says 'between two mountain barriers', the word 'between' in this verse necessitates the existence of a gap between the two mountain barriers from which comes the enemy. Allah says that Dhu Al-Qarnayn found beside the two barriers a people who could barely understand him. They did not know how to speak, and likewise, they could not understand speech. He who can comprehend can also communicate. Thus, these people neither understood what was said to them nor spoke. They could hardly understand, or in other words, they did not even come close to understanding. Thus, Allah has not just negated the process of understanding from them but its proximity as well. It is as if there was no hope that Dhu Al-Qarnayn would be able to make them comprehend.

How does He Allah *the Exalted* tell that they could not speak and then directly after this say, 'They said, "O, Dhu Al-Qarnayn."' (*al-Kahf*: 94) where He affirmed their ability to speak? It appears that Dhu Al-Qarnayn addressed them in sign language and found a way to communicate with them based on

their movements of speaking in order to execute what they wanted. Undoubtedly, this process required much effort and patience on his part to communicate with them. Otherwise, he could have left them on the excuse that they did not speak nor understand.

Hence, he is a model example of a believing man who is keen to do good and who spares no effort in helping and guiding. Hand gestures have now become a renowned and well-known language. It has its rules and students who communicate with it exactly as we communicate today with a dumb person. Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالُوا يٰذَا الْقَرْنَيْنِ اِنَّ يٰجُوجَ وَمَاجُوجَ مُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْاَرْضِ فَهَلْ
تَجْعَلُ لَكَ خَرْجًا عَلٰى اَنْ تَجْعَلَ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَهُمْ سَدًّا ﴿٩٤﴾

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?’ [94] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 94)

Allah says that they communicated with Dhu Al-Qarnayn, which means they used signs that transmitted the meaning like verbal expression. They inevitably made use of something like gestures, for example, to learn about each other. Gog and Magog are people behind the two mountains barriers. They reached these people through this gap in between. They harmed and attacked them. Thus, they offered to pay him a tribute, i.e. a compensation and tax to close this gap for them and prevent their enemies from passing through it to them, Thereupon, Allah *Glorified is He* says about Dhu Al-Qarnayn :

قَالَ مَا مَكَّنِّي فِيهِ رَبِّي خَيْرٌ فَاَعِينُونِي بِقُوَّةٍ اَجْعَلْ بَيْنَكُمْ وَبَيْنَهُمْ رَدْمًا ﴿٩٥﴾

He answered, ‘The power my Lord has given me is better than any tribute, but if you lend me your strength, I will put up a fortification between you and them [95] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 95)

Similarly, the communication was through means of signs and gestures. He wanted to make them understand that he was in no need of compensation as Allah conferred upon him many blessings. However, he is in need of workforce to assist and support him in the execution of this work.

We understand from this verse that he who has been given a firm position on the earth has to assist for the sake of Allah. Furthermore, the assistance has to be sufficient so as not to render the one being assisted continually to need your help all the time. Assistance needs to be given in a way that renders him independent of requiring help in the future. You might teach how to do something instead of giving money that will be spent immediately and would once again become needy. Hence, it is said, do not give me a fish but teach me how to catch fish. Such is a consistent and continuous assistance that has its own soul and life.

Since Dhu Al-Qarnayn was well established upon the earth and endowed with many blessings and wealth, he had no need for money but for human labour power. Thus, he said, 'lend me your strength,' (*al-Kahf*: 95). He wanted a powerful and sincere human strength and energy in order to 'put up a fortification between you and them.' (*al-Kahf*: 95)

He did not say he would erect a dam or barrier because a solid dam is deficient. If it was shacked, for example, in one side of it, the other side will be shacked as well. Therefore, he put up for them a rampart. He built a wall in the front and another in the back and made filled in between them with earth. In this manner, the rampart would be flexible and would not be affected if it were hit by an earthquake, for example. The earth it contained would act like springs, which absorbs shocks. To fill up something with rubbles is to pile up layers of soil, one on top of the other, so that a hole is filled up and levelled out with the surface of earth. Hence the expression we hear when someone reproaches his companion who does not want to listen, 'Fill this subject up.'

ءَاتُونِي زُبَرَ الْحَدِيدِ حَتَّىٰ إِذَا سَاوَىٰ بَيْنَ الصَّدَفَيْنِ قَالَ انْفُخُوا
حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَعَلَهُ نَارًا قَالَ ءَاتُونِي أُفْرِغْ عَلَيْهِ قِطْرًا ﴿٩٦﴾

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!' [96] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 96)

Dhu Al-Qarnayn was not wandering and roaming by himself. Allah had given him a way. This means that he was not alone; rather, he had an army, power, soldiers, and equipment with him. He was accompanied by men and

labourers and had food supplies and necessary provisions of a long voyage. He could have ordered his men to work on this fortification; however, he ordered the people there and engaged their services in order to train and teach them since they were capable and had the necessary human strength for this work.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah does not lay on any soul a burden except to the extent to which He has granted it.' (*at-Talaq*: 7) So inasmuch as Allah has given you the power, then work and do not depend on others. Thus, you find Dhu Al-Qarnayn ordered them three commands: lend me your strength, bring me lumps of iron, and bring me molten metal that I may pour upon it.

Dhu Al-Qarnayn used lumps of iron and molten copper. However, how did he construct a fortification with iron and copper? This structure resembles what engineers do today in architecture with steel reinforced concrete. He used iron and filled its gaps with molten copper to be more solid so that the enemy would not only be able to pierce it, but it was exceptionally smooth and slippery so that they would not be able to climb and get over it. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'when he had levelled [them] between the two mountain walls.' (*al-Kahf*: 96) This means that he had levelled between the two walls with the two mountains. A relevant usage of this is found in the verse, 'Who then is more unjust than he who rejects Allah's communications and turns away from them?' (*al-An'am*: 157) This means to turn away from it to the side. Dhu Al-Qarnayn then said, 'Blow [with bellows]' He ordered them to blow in the iron which he had set alight. When the iron had flared up, he called for molten copper. In this manner, the red-hot iron smelted with the molten copper and constituted a solid, high, and slippery wall.

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَمَا أَصْطَلَعُوا أَنْ يَظْهَرُوهُ وَمَا أَصْطَلَعُوا لَهُ نَقْبًا ﴿٩٧﴾

**Their enemies could not scale the barrier, nor
could they pierce it [97] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 97)**

Gog and Magog were incapable of pass over the fortification `or climbing and penetrating it.' This is because it was smooth and slippery wall that have nothing to cling on. Moreover, they could not pierce it because it was solid. Then Allah says on the tongue of Dhu Al-Qarnayn:

قَالَ هَذَا رَحْمَةٌ مِنْ رَبِّي فَإِذَا جَاءَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي جَعَلَهُ دَكَّاءُ، وَكَانَ وَعْدُ رَبِّي حَقًّا ﴿٩٨﴾

**[And he said, ‘This is a mercy from my Lord. But when my Lord’s promise is fulfilled, He will raze this barrier to the ground: my Lord’s promise always comes true’ [98]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 98)**

Dhu Al-Qarnayn, as a righteous man who did not neglect to ascribe the blessing to the prime Bestower of Blessings. He acknowledged that he was merely an intermediary and an instrument for carrying out the command of Allah. He said that was a Mercy from his Lord because he took the empowering constituents which Allah granted him and utilised them in the service of His slaves. Everything is a creation of Allah, including thought, power, and strength, the resources, and elements of nature. Thus, I do not have the right to say that I did such-and-such.

Dhu Al-Qarnayn proclaimed that when his Lord's promise is fulfilled, the barrier would be razed to the ground. The promise of Allah referred to in this context signifies the Hereafter. Therefore, he tells them not to think that the solidity of this barrier and its strength are lasting and eternal. This is a worldly accomplishment that Allah will raze and level it to the ground when His promise of the Hereafter and the Day of Resurrection come. He warns them against being vainglorious and arrogant against others after having been humbled and humiliated by Gog and Magog. It is as if he gives them more notice and immunisation to protect them from becoming tyrannical after becoming independent. Moreover, he says that his Lord's Promise always comes true (i.e. inevitably occurs without a doubt).

The latest investigation into the issue of Dhu Al-Qarnayn and the building of the barrier concludes that it happened at a place now known as Balkh, while the two mountains are of the Caucasus Mountains; they really exist and have a gap in between of them, where there is a built structure. It is also said that the one who built this was Cyrus the Great and that this place is between today’s Caspian Sea and the Black Sea.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَتَرَكْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ يَمُوجُ فِي بَعْضٍ وَنُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَجَمَعْنَاهُمْ جَمَاعًا ﴿٩٩﴾

On that Day, We shall let them surge against each other like waves and then the Trumpet will be blown and We shall gather them all together [99] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 99)

Allah *Glorified is He* says that He shall leave them, on the Day of Resurrection, to surge over each other like the waves of water. One will not be able to differentiate between them just as he cannot separate particles of water of waves. All people will become mixed up; the strong with the weak and the frightened with the frightening. They are now at the Day of Resurrection where the enmities of this world have terminated and every person is preoccupied with his own matter.

Allah refers to the blow of the Trumpet. This is the second blow since the first is that which will cause everyone to fall dead, as He says, ‘And the trumpet shall be blown, so all those that are in the heavens and all those that are in the earth shall swoon except such as Allah pleases; then it shall be blown again, then lo! They shall stand up waiting.’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 68)

Thus, the first blow is the one that will cause people to fall dead, while the second is the one which will cause the Awakening and Resurrection. Now, being struck by a blow can cause death or make someone lose consciousness for a period and then regains consciousness. The kind of blow that causes death occurs in the verse wherein Allah says, ‘And to Thamud when it was said to them, “Enjoy yourselves for a while.” But they revolted against the commandment of their Lord, so the rumbling overtook them while they saw.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 43-44)

Regarding the second blow that causes loss of consciousness, it is like that which happened to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* ‘And when Musa (Moses) came at Our appointed time and his Lord spoke to him, he said, “My Lord! Show me [Yourself], so that I may look upon You.” He said, “You cannot [bear to] see Me but look at the mountain, if it remains firm in its place, then will you see Me”; but when his Lord manifested His Glory to the mountain He made it crumble and Musa (Moses) fell down in a swoon; then when he recovered, he said, “Glory be to You, I turn to You, and I am the first of the believers.”’ (*al-A’raf*: 143) The high unshakeable solid mountain was rendered level when Allah disclosed Himself to it and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*

was struck and fell to the ground unconscious. Now if Musa (Moses) was rendered senseless due to sighting that which had been exposed to the divine manifestation, what would the direct sight of Allah Himself have been like? It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* had taught Musa (Moses) a lesson. He told him that He was not unwilling to disclose Himself to Musa (Moses); however, He wanted him *peace be upon him* to look at the mountain before seeing Him *Glorified is He* so that it might be a lesson for him. Thus, seeing Allah is not forbidden according to the Quran, however can we bear the manifestation of Allah?

Thus, it is a mercy from Allah to us that we do not see Him in our worldly state. However, in the Hereafter, the Creator shall fashion us in another manner and shall create us in a way that is compatible with the Self-Disclosure of Himself to the believers. He says, '[Some] faces on that day shall be bright, Looking to their Lord.' (*al-Qiyama: 22-23*) We notice that this new preparation occurs in all the matters of the Hereafter wherein one is nourished, but does not excrete. This is because your nature in the Hereafter will not be the same as yours in this world.

Thus, the question posed by Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was a precise and scientific inquiry. He said, 'My Lord! Show me [Yourself].' (*al-A'raf: 143*) This is like asking for the procedure of beholding Him, since Musa (Moses) cannot see Allah with his nature and constitutional make-up.

Considering this incident, we can understand the Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wherein he said, 'Do not give a prophet superiority over another, for on the day of Resurrection all the people will fall unconscious and I will be the first to emerge from the earth. I will see Musa (Moses) standing and holding one of the legs of the Throne. I will not know whether Musa (Moses) has fallen unconscious or the first unconsciousness was sufficient for Him.'⁽¹⁾ It is said that the reason is that he has fallen unconscious once in this world and Allah does not make His slave fall unconscious twice.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim



**We shall show Hell to the disbelievers [100]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 100)**

This verse tells that Hell shall be presented to the disbelievers to see and witness it. This presentation is also for the believers as Allah says, ‘And there is not one of you but shall come to it.’ (*Maryam*: 71) Some believe that this means that everyone shall enter it. In fact, it means that everyone shall see it and pass by it. Similarly, one might come to water and reach it without drinking from it. This is because the route along which everyone must pass is laid on top of the Hellfire so that both the believer and disbeliever shall see it.

Observing Hell before entering paradise on the part of a believer will show him the extent of the Favour and Mercy of Allah on him as He *the Almighty* has saved him from that punishment. He will realise the grace of faith granted to him and the way Allah guided him to, so that he could pass by this place safe and unharmed. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* reminds us of this case, saying, ‘whoever is removed far away from the fire and is made to enter paradise, he indeed has attained success.’ (*Al-Imran*: 185)

However, the disbeliever will be presented to the hellfire and thereby will see it first thing. This sight will be the sight of distress, regret, and terror before entering it, as he knows that he is going into it and that he will not evade it. This case is mentioned in the chapter of *at-Takathur* wherein Allah says, ‘Abundance diverts you, until you come to the graves. Nay! You shall soon know, Nay! Nay! You shall soon know. Nay! if you had known with a certain knowledge, you should most certainly have seen hell; Then you shall most certainly see it with the eye of certainty; Then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the blessings.’ (*at-Takathur*: 1-8)

Allah wants to say that if only we would take that certain knowledge concerning what the hellfire and its punishment from Him, we would be like the one who has seen it. That is because He conveys to us a scientific, truthful image of it. This is what we call the knowledge of certainty. However, in the Hereafter, we shall see the hellfire itself. This is the eye of certainty, that is, it is a visual view that will be realised on the Day of Resurrection when we pass along the bridge that is laid over hell.

Allah, out of His Mercy, Grace and Magnanimity, will make this point the last association of the believers with hellfire and will save them from it. Thus, Allah says at the end of this chapter, ‘Then on that day you shall most certainly be questioned about the blessings.’ (*at-Takathur*: 8) However, the disbelievers have a third phase with hellfire, which is the truth of certainty that occurs when they enter hell and become in direct contact with its heat. Allah says, ‘And if he is one of the rejecters, the erring ones, He shall have an entertainment of boiling water, And burning in hell. Most surely this is a certain truth. Therefore, glorify the name of your Lord, the Great.’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 92-96)

Thus, we have the knowledge of certainty, which is the theoretical image of hellfire that Allah declared. He *the Almighty* told us that among the descriptions of hellfire are such-and-such, and warned us against it while living in this ease and comfort of this world. In addition, we have the eye of certainty which happens in the Hereafter when we pass along the bridge and see hellfire with our own eyes. Finally, there is the truth of certainty which is for the disbelievers when they are cast into it and come into direct contact with it in reality.

I once told you about New York and described it to you. Then I would be giving you a truthful theoretical picture of it. If you believed me, then that would be the knowledge of certainty. If you were to pass by it and see it with your own eyes from abroad of an aeroplane, this would be the eye of certainty. If you stayed and wandered around it, this would be the truth of certainty.

Therefore, the representation of hell to the disbelievers is not the same as that to the believers as it is certainty that will be realised by entering it and coming into direct contact with it.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

الَّذِينَ كَانَتْ أَعْيُنُهُمْ فِي غِطَاءٍ عَن ذِكْرِي وَكَانُوا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ سَمْعًا

Those whose eyes were blind to My signs, those who were unable to hear [101] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 101)

This verse refers to those disbelievers whose sight is veiled in such a way that prevents them from perceiving the vision of guidance. In addition, they were unable to hear that which benefits the listener such as the warnings and

admonition. Their ears were there and capable of hearing and they listened with them. However, they did not derive benefit from it because they fled from listening to the truth and admonition and closed their ears not to hear it. Thus, they have paid no attention to any good. As for the believers, Allah says, ‘And when they hear what has been revealed to the messenger you will see their eyes overflowing with tears on account of the truth that they recognise.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 83)

Thus, the aversion of those disbelievers to what they heard rendered them as if they had no sense of hearing. Similarly, we say in our colloquial dialect that someone is deaf towards me. In other words, he does not want to listen to me. Thus, the Quran recounts what the disbelievers of Mecca said, stating, ‘And those who disbelieve say, “Do not listen to this Quran and make noise therein, perhaps you may overcome.”’ (*Fussilat*: 26) The polytheists of Mecca meant to jumble the Quran and not give men a chance to listen to it. They knew that the Quran has influence on people, and thus they acted like this. Their ears and their inclination for eloquence let them know very well that the Quran has a great impact on its listener to the degree of taking over his soul. It is inevitable that the eloquent Arabs will be touched by the Quran. It is inescapable that they will admit that it is a miracle that it is not a speech of man. This will definitely call them to believe that these words are the words of Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. For this reason, they warned one another not to listen to this Quran and talk frivolously about it.

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Woe to every sinful liar who hears the communications of Allah recited to him, then persists proudly as though he had not heard them; so announce to him a painful punishment.’ (*al-Jathiya*: 7-8) The situation might go beyond the question of avoiding listening to hindering speech, as Allah says, ‘Has not the account reached you of those before you, of the people of Nuh (Noah) and `Ad and Thamud, and those after them? None knows them but Allah. Their messengers come to them with clear arguments, but they thrust their hands into their mouths and said, “We do surely reject the message you have brought and we are in disquieting about what you are summoning us to.”’ (*Ibrahim*: 9) Thus, the issue is not about avoiding listening only, but hindering speech as well, for

perhaps a word might reach their ears while they are attentive and thereby, will be influenced. Thus, they stopped themselves from speaking, as it is said be quiet and zip your mouth.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَفَحَسِبَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنْ يَتَّخِذُوا عِبَادِي مِنْ دُونِي أَوْلِيَاءَ
 إِنَّا أَعْنَدْنَا جَهَنَّمَ لِلْكَافِرِينَ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٢﴾

Did they think that they could take My servants as masters instead of Me? We have prepared Hell as the disbelievers' resting place [102] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 102)

Allah wonders whether they were blind to the truth and believed they could adopt His slaves as masters other than Him. We have previously discussed that the devoted slaves are the believers in Allah who are enraptured in love for Him and who have given preference to the desired intentions of Allah over the preferences of their own souls. We have also made clear the distinction between the slaves and servants of Allah.

The verse here talks about the disbelievers, who have adopted the devoted servants of Allah who are close to Him as allies instead of Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah says about those beloved servants, 'The Messiah does by no means disdain that he should be a servant of Allah, nor do the angels who are near to Him.' (*an-Nisa*': 172) How can you take them as masters instead of Me and resist Me while they are My beloved ones?! Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'and the Christians say, "The Messiah is the son of Allah."' (*at-Tawba*: 30)

Others say that the angels are the daughters of Allah. How can you take them as masters aside from Allah while they do not disdain from being servants to Him? They see their eminence and dignity in worshipping Him; however, you take them as masters instead of Him! It is as if Allah reprimands them and says if only you had not taken My enemies as masters; this is a form of heedlessness on their part. Therefore, their requital shall be a hell prepared for them.

Thus, the rest of the verse proclaimed that hell shall be their resting place. A resting place is like what is prepared to honour a guest, such as hotels for example. Thus, this is meant as derision and ridicule of them.

Allah says:

قُلْ هَلْ نُنَبِّئُكُمْ بِالْأَخْسَرِينَ أَعْمَالًا ﴿١٠٣﴾

Say [Prophet], ‘Shall we tell you who has the most to lose by their actions [103] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 103)

The imperative verb ‘say’ addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The hyperbole form of the word loser ‘the greatest losers’ is used in this context. Their loss is due to their deeds. These greatest losers are described in the following verse wherein Allah says:

الَّذِينَ ضَلَّ سَعْيُهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ يَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّهُمْ يُحْسِنُونَ صُنْعًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

Whose efforts in this world are misguided, even when they think they are doing good work? [104] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 104)

The efforts of those people (the deniers of the Truth) have gone astray because they committed evil and believed it was good. Thus, misguidance comes to them from where they expected guidance. They build hospitals, schools, and charitable associations; they cry out for equality and other good values and account themselves as having done good works and having advanced good. However, were those deeds for the sake of Allah? The reality is that they performed them for the sake of people, fame, and history. Therefore, they receive their rewards from people and history in the form of aggrandisement, honour and the immortalisation of their memories.

Thus, their efforts are worthless. It has vanished as if it were nothing. It was like a mirage that Allah *Glorified is He* depicts in the verse, ‘whose efforts in this world are misguided, even when they think they are doing good work.’ (*an-Nur*: 39) Allah does not neglect the due rights of those people nor does He withhold reward from them as they have done well in pursuing causal factors. However, this compensation will be in this world since their work and excellent pursuance of causal factors was for this world. Thus, they shall have no portion in the reward of the Hereafter. Allah *Glorified is He* has made this issue clear when He says, ‘Whoever desires the gain of the hereafter, We will

give him more of that gain; and whoever desires the gain of this world, We give him of it, and in the hereafter he has no portion.' (*ash-Shura*: 20)

Nevertheless, the due rights of the disbelievers are maintained. It is not permissible for any one of the believers to wrong or attack them. Jabir ibn `Abdullah said: 'I heard that a narrator of Hadith narrated a Hadith from Messenger Muhammad. So, I asked about him and was told that he had gone to Syria. I purchased a camel, saddled it, and set out for a month until I reached Syria. When I asked about him, I was told that he was 'Abdullah ibn Unays. When I went to see him, his servant told him, "Jabir ibn 'Abdullah is at the door!" Ibn Unays came out, stepping on his own robes in his haste. We embraced. Jabir said, 'I have been informed that you related the following Hadith from Prophet Muhammad: "Verily, Allah will call out on the Day of Resurrection: 'O My angels, I am the Sovereign; I am the Judge. No one of the people of Hellfire should enter Hellfire while anyone destined for paradise has wronged him until I retaliate him. And no one of the people of paradise should enter paradise while anyone destined for Hellfire has wronged him until I retaliate him even if it were but a slap.'"'⁽¹⁾ Thus, take note of the precision of the Scales of Judgement and the equity of Allah. It watches over the due right of a disbeliever and takes his revenge, before admitting him to Hell, on any person even if the person who wronged him was a believer.

The word 'misguidance' occurs in the Noble Quran with numerous usages determined by the context in which it is found. It may occur with the meaning of disbelief, which is the apex of going astray and the summit of disobedience. Regarding this meaning, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Rather you wish to put questions to your Messenger, as Musa (Moses) was questioned before; and whoever adopts disbelief instead of faith, he indeed has lost the right direction of the way.' (*al-Baqara*: 108).

It may occur with the meaning of an act of disobedience even on the part of a believer, as the verse wherein Allah says, 'And it behoves not a believing man and a believing woman that they should have any choice in their matter when Allah and His Messenger have decided a matter; and whoever disobeys Allah and His Messenger, he surely strays off a manifest straying.' (*al-Ahzab*: 36)

(1) Narrated by Ahmad

In addition, it may further indicate the meaning of being lost in the earth as is the case in the verse wherein Allah says, “When we have become lost in the earth, shall we then certainly be in a new creation?” (*as-Sajda*: 10), that is, after being vanished and concealed in it. Moreover, it also expresses the meaning of forgetting as Allah says, ‘so that if one of the two errs, the second of the two may remind the other.’ (*al-Baqara*: 282)

The word ‘misguidance’ also occurs with the meaning of negligence, which assails a person and causes them to slip into a sin unintentionally. This usage is found in the story of Musa (Moses) and the Pharaoh when Musa (Moses) struck a man and killed him. When Pharaoh reminded him of this, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said, ‘He said, “I did it then while I was of those unable to see the right course.”’ (*ash-Shu‘ara*: 20) Musa (Moses) wanted to say that he killed him in a state of negligence and without intention. Who could know that a strike could kill? The truth is that the end of the man came along with the strike but not due to it. It often happens that someone is run over by a car and then the autopsy reveals that he died due to a heart attack occurring at the same time as the automobile accident.

Finally, this word can also be used to give the meaning of having no knowledge of the full details of something, as in the verse where Allah says, ‘And found you lost and guide you.’ (*ad-Duha*: 7) This means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not aware of what his people were doing of disbelief.

Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards:

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ وَلِقَائِهِ فَحَبِطَتْ أَعْمَالُهُمْ
فَلَا تُنْفَعُ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وَزَنًا ﴿١٠٥﴾

It is those who disbelieve in their Lord’s messages and deny that they will meet Him.’ Their deeds come to nothing: on the Day of Resurrection We shall give them no weight [105] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 105)

The messages that come from Allah are of three kinds. They have chosen to deny and refute all of them. First, they denied the signs of the universe,

which prove the power of Allah. They did not meditate upon them or give them consideration. Second, they denied the verses of the Quran and the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Third, they denied the miraculous signs which Allah sent down to support His messengers, and did not believe in them. Thus, it is general and applies to all these cases.

They also denied that they would meet Allah on the Day of Resurrection and rejected it. Some of them even refuted it entirely and said, 'What! When we are dead and become dust and bones, shall we then be raised?' (*al-Mu'minun*: 82) There are those who acknowledge resurrection according to their whim. They said, 'and even if I am returned to my Lord I will most certainly find a returning place better than this.' (*al-Kahf*: 36) There are also those who claimed that the resurrection is for the spirit without the body, and argued about this greatly. Thus, they either disavow the resurrection or else they envisage it in a false manner. Therefore, Allah said that their deeds are in vain and its benefit has disappeared. Furthermore, on the Resurrection Day they shall get no weight.

Orientalists have raised objections to this verse and wondered how to reconcile between it and the verses that confirm the Scales of Judgment. Allah says, 'And We will set up a just balance on the day of resurrection, so no soul shall be dealt with unjustly in the least; and though there be the weight of a grain of mustard seed, [yet] will We bring it, and sufficient are We to take account.' (*al-Anbiya*': 47) Allah says in another verse, 'He shall live a pleasant life. And as for him whose measure of good deeds is light, His abode shall be the abyss. And what will make you know what it is? A burning fire.' (*al-Qari`a*: 7-11) In response to this, scholars reconciled between the verses of the Quran and said about the verse wherein Allah says, 'on the Day of Resurrection We shall give them no weight.' (*al-Kahf*: 105), that it is intended to signify contempt and insignificance. Thus, the meaning is that they have no esteem. We use this meaning now when we say that so and so has no weight with me. This means that it has no value. When you examine and reflect upon this verse, you will find that the verse says, 'We shall give them no weight'. It did not say give against them. Therefore, the Scales of Judgement are there, but not in their favour. Thus, the meaning is that We shall not assess the scales to their advantage, but rather, We shall assess the scales to their detriment.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

ذَٰلِكَ جَزَاؤُهُمْ جَهَنَّمَ بِمَا كَفَرُوا وَاتَّخَذُوا آيَاتِي وَرُسُلِي هُزُوًا ﴿١٠٦﴾

**Their recompense for having disbelieved and made fun
of My messages and My messengers will be Hell [106]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 106)**

That which is happening to them, including the nullification of their works and giving them no weight is not due to injustice or iniquity on our part against them, rather, it is their recompense for their disbelief. In addition, they mocked the messages of Allah. Each time they heard a verse, they said that it was the legends of the former peoples. Allah says, ‘When Our communications are recited to him, he says: Stories of those of yore.’ (*al-Qalam*: 15)

Moreover, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was not even free from their scorn and mockery. The Quran narrates their saying to him in the following verse: ‘And they say, “O you to whom the Reminder has been revealed! you are most surely insane.”’ (*al-Hijr*: 6) They refer to the reminder, which is the Quran, while they still did not believe in it as a kind of derision and mockery.

The Quran mentions what the hypocrites said in the chapter of *al-Munafiqun*: ‘They are the ones who say, “Do not spend upon those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they break up....”’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 7) When they say the Messenger of Allah, they do not mean that they believe in him; however, it is either out of their negligence of the falsehood they practice, or even out of derision and mockery. It is as if you were in a gathering and you saw someone claiming to have knowledge and showing off, so you would say ask this scholar!

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says about their derisive mocking of Prophet Muhammad, ‘And those who disbelieve would almost smite you with their eyes when they hear the reminder, and they say, “Most surely he is mad.”’ (*al-Qalam*: 51)

Then Allah speaks of the opposite of those disbelievers and says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَنَّاتُ الْفِرْدَوْسِ نُزُلًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

**But those who believe and do good deeds will be given
the Gardens of paradise [107] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 107)**

In this verse, Allah refers to those who believe; we have previously said that ‘to believe’ means to rectify the emotional and doctrinal spirit for your deeds to be in conformity to your faith in the One who laid down the sacred laws. From this point, faith became to be a primary condition for the acceptance of deeds. Otherwise, there are those who do the good but their motif is not faith, but rather, other considerations. For this reason, intention is a necessary condition in the acceptability of deeds.

Allah *Glorified is He* punishes the one who performs deeds for the sake of others than Him. He punishes him on the basis that the one for whom he performs denies, forswears, and harbours a grudge against Him instead of acknowledging Him for His favour unto him. In this, why it is said, ‘Beware of the evil of the one who owes you favour’. That is a true proverb because when you show kindness to a person, you embarrass his pride and have the upper hand over him. Thus, as soon as this inferior acquires fortune and attains a position of prestige among people, he will, if his character is not good, hate anyone who coffered favour on him at some time and damaged his pride. Thus, he will loathe the existence of such a person and dislike seeing him. He might devise plots against him to clear the way and have the area for him alone because this person is the only one whose presence vexes him.

Therefore, he who undertakes a deed for the sake of other than Allah, he will be left to obtain recompense from that other one. Frequently, you find the recompense contradicts what you anticipated. You did it for him so that honour you, yet he now holds you in low esteem. You did it for him so that he would respect you, yet now he looks down at you. You did it so that he would support and protect you, yet now he is your enemy. That is why it is said, ‘the rewards of the deeds performed for the sake of Allah are guaranteed, whereas the recompense of the deeds performed for other than Allah is not assured’ since the person you do things for may or may not compensate you.

Subsequently, Allah follows up faith with good deeds because good works must necessarily be initiated and result from faith and it. Allah *Glorified is He*

says, ‘But those who believe and do good deeds.’ (*al-Kahf*: 107): To do good deeds means to observe what is good. In addition, when something is good in itself, leave it in its state of goodness and do not spoil it or else increase its usefulness. Suppose that there is a well which people drink from its water. You either leave it in its state of purity or abstain from throwing anything that could spoil it and remove its good and usefulness or else you augment its good and usability by adding to it what improves its utility and increases its capacity. You could construct a wall around it to protect it or use a cover to preserve it or a device for drawing up its water and making it easier for people to make use of it.

When an individual accomplishes good deeds, the benefits, which he reaps of the good deeds of others, are greater than that of his own good deeds. This is because he is a single individual, who derives benefit from the good of the entire community. On this basis, we should not find the commands of the Lawgiver and His requirements burdensome because He takes from you to give to you and to safeguard your life in the time of need or exigency. When this joint communal responsibility is fulfilled for you, you will face life with gratification in times of ease and with reassurance in times of hardship.


When religious law commands you to assume guardianship over an orphan and treat him generously, it reassures you with regard to your children after you are gone. So, do not be aggrieved if you should be afflicted with an adversity, for you are in a society of mutual assistance where your children shall be taken care of. Yet, in the shade of Islam and its teachings, an orphan might be happier in fortune than in his life under the care of his father. Perhaps, when his father dies, he finds that all the believers are fathers to him as his father was pre-occupied with other things in his life and did not benefit him at all; rather, he may have barred good from him, since people say: his father exists and he is liable for him.

Thus, Ahmad Shawqi says, ‘The orphan is not the one whose parents have concluded with the concern of life and have left him in an abject state. Indeed, the orphan is rather he who is faced with a neglecting mother or a pre-occupied father.’

In the final part of the verse we are studying, Allah says that they will be given Gardens of paradise. They will be given the highest degree in paradise

named *al-firdaws*. It is prepared as a person prepares to receive his guest generously in terms of place of residence, the basic requirements of life and its luxuries. When a person prepares a welcoming reception and residence for his guest, he arranges it with things according to his abilities, means, and knowledge, so how would you envisage this if the preparer of the welcoming residence were Allah?

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:


 خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا لَا يَبْغُونَ عَنْهَا حَوْلًا

**There they will remain, never wishing to leave [108]
(The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 108)**

The eternity of the pleasurable amenities in the Hereafter is distinguished from that of this world no matter how superior the latter may be. The delights of this world are confined to our vision and capacities. Even if we reach the summit of enjoying delightful blessings in this world, we will always be fearful of losing them. For either bounties leave you or you leave them. However, in paradise the blessing is eternal and is neither limited nor forbidden. You are immortal amidst it such that the blessing will not leave you nor will you leave it. Therefore, Allah said that they will not desire to leave it. They will not seek to be transferred from it to anywhere else since no higher state of bliss can be imagined than that.

Naturally, a person has cravings for comfort and luxury. Whenever he attains some favour or benefit, he aspires to that which is better and whenever he obtains some pleasure, he desires more. This is the situation in this world. However, the situation is different in the Hereafter. How could one possibly seek anything higher than the state of bliss of paradise about which Allah says, ‘whenever they shall be given a portion of the fruit thereof, they shall say, “This is what was given to us before; and they shall be given the like of it.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 25)

The above verse tells that every time Allah bestows a fruit upon them, another one comes to them whereupon they would say, ‘we have already been granted the like of it previously’. They believed it to be like that which preceded it, but it is not. Rather, it has a new, different flavour, even if it is the same fruit.

This is because the capacity of causal possibilities is limited, but as for the capacity of the One Who brings possibilities into existence, it is unlimited.

Allah is capable of providing you with a single fruit in a thousand colours and a thousand flavours. This is because the capacity of His Perfection never comes to an end. Thus, they will be given the like of it, i.e. the fruit is one, and similar to others of its kind, but the taste is different.

A man of our time in order to traverse his path in life, learns continually in order to earn a degree or a profession. He does this ceaselessly with toil and hardship for nearly twenty-five years of his life in the hope that he will live the rest of his imagined life in ease and enjoyment. Now, imagine that you will live the rest of your life in comfort, how long will the rest of it be? As for ever-lasting ease and comfort in the Hereafter, it is of a limitless duration and eternal bliss. What should a person desire and aspire afterwards?

Allah then says:

قُلْ لَوْ كَانَ الْبَحْرُ مِدَادًا لِكَلِمَاتِ رَبِّي لَنَفَدَ الْبَحْرُ قَبْلَ أَنْ
 نَنْفَدَ كَلِمَاتُ رَبِّي وَلَوْ جِئْنَا بِمِثْلِهِ مَدَدًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

Say [Prophet], ‘If the whole ocean were ink for writing the words of my Lord, it would run dry before those words were exhausted’– even if We were to add another ocean to it [109] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 109)

The capacity and power of Allah has no limits. Since his capacity and power have no limits, then potentialities also have no limits. Thus, if the ocean were ink used to write the words of Allah that comprise the Divine command ‘Be!’, which brings forth potentialities, then it would not suffice for the words of Allah even if another ocean is added.

For example, we say about good merchandise that the manufacturer cannot produce better than this. However, the work of Allah knows no bounds. This is because the manufacturer processes things, whereas Allah fashions them with the command ‘Be!’. Thus, we find in the finest hotels in this world the ultimate of that which science has attained in terms of serving human beings as you

simply push on a button and what you desire of food or drink comes out. Undoubtedly, these things are prepared and readied in advance and one summons simply all varieties of them with a mere push of a special button. However, does there exist in this world a pleasure or benefit, which appears for you once it passes through your mind? Thus, the enjoyments of this world have limits at which they end.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'until when the earth puts on its golden raiment and it becomes garnished, and its people think that they have power over it, Our command comes to it, by night or by day, so We render it as reaped seed; produce, as though it had not been in existence yesterday; thus do We make clear the communications for a people who reflect.' (*Yunus*: 24) It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is telling us, 'You have used up your means in this world to the full and have attained the maximum possible of its pleasures and beauty. So, now, come to that which I Myself have prepared for you. Leave these means of subsistence of Allah and come live directly through Allah. You were in the world of causative factors, so now come to the Originator of Causes'.

While Allah *Glorified is He* speaks in this verse of the ink which is used to write the words of Allah, He has discussed with more detail the pens by which they are written in another verse. Allah says, 'And were every tree that is in the earth [made into] pens and the sea [to supply it with ink], with seven more seas to increase it, the words of Allah would not come to an end.' (*Luqman*: 27)

The precision of the Quranic expression is realised when we imagine all the trees of the earth to be pens. The trees are distinguished in terms of continuous regeneration and ceaseless multiplication, which make them an unlimited and endless resource. In addition, we notice the precision of the Quranic expression when we imagine the water of the ocean to be ink used for writing, yet the water of the ocean, since Allah created it, is limited and constant, neither increasing nor decreasing. Therefore, since trees regenerate and multiply and the water of the ocean is constant and does not increase, Allah says, 'with seven more seas to increase it.' (*Luqman*: 27) That is to make the augmentation of water corresponds to the augmentation of trees. The intended meaning is seven like the first one and the choice of this exact number is because it was the ultimate number among the Arabs.

Science has clarified the cycle of water in nature for us. We learned that the quantity of water on the earth is constant and does not increase. This is because whatever is consumed of water evaporates and returns to the earth. For example, say a person drank a thousand tons of water during his life. On calculating what comes out of him as urine, sweat and the surplus of excretions, you will find it the same quantity, which he drank. It has evaporated and entered its cycle anew. Thus, it is said that a sip of water has been drunk by millions of men.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُكُمْ يُوحَىٰ إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ وَجِدَّ فَمَن كَانَ
يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ رَبِّهِ فَلْيَعْمَلْ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا وَلَا يُشْرِكْ بِعِبَادَةِ رَبِّهِ أَحَدًا ﴿١١٠﴾

Say, ‘I am only a human being, like you, to whom it has been revealed that your God is One. Anyone who fears to meet his Lord should do good deeds and give no one a share in the worship due to his Lord [110] (The Quran, *al-Kahf*: 110)

Allah orders the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say new words stating that he is but a human. This means that take me as a model, for I am not an angel, but rather, I am a human being like you. I have committed myself to the path that I am exhorting you to follow. I am not commanding you to do anything from which I am spared. Indeed, on the contrary, He was among the people least endowed with the pleasures of life and its embellishments.

For among those who believed in him were the wealthy who enjoyed the finest food and wore the most expensive clothes. On the other hand, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* would go for a month or two without a fire being lit in his house to prepare food and used to wear patched clothing. Moreover, his children did not inherit from him, as other people inherit; nor were charitable alms lawful for them, as they were permitted to others, thus they were deprived of a right which others enjoyed.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the lowest in terms of material comforts. He was the least of those existing concerning the enjoyments of life and its finery. This draws our attention to the fact that the message did not bring Him any worldly benefit and did not

set him apart from others in terms of the opulence of this transient world. Instead, it set him apart in terms of values and virtues.

On this basis, He used to say when revelation comes to him from above that he is not like us. However, when taken from me, he would say I am not but a human being like you. In addition, the verse here does not distinguish him from humankind except in terms of revelation. Thus, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not superior to men except that he was inspired.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says that our God is One. This phrase is prefaced by an Arabic particle of restriction to mean that there is no God other than Him. This is the summit of issues, so do not turn towards any God besides Him. One of the greatest blessings of Allah to man is that he has a sole God. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* has given an example for us to make this matter. He says, 'Allah sets forth an example; there is a slave in who are [several] partners differing with one another, and there is another slave wholly owned by one man. Are the two alike in condition?' (*al-'Ankabut: 29*)

Thus, such a slave who is owned by several masters who contend with each other, disagree with each other, and are mutually quarrelsome as if he gratifies this one, that one will be angry is not to be compared with a slave owned by a single master. Thus, among the things for which Allah is gratefully praised is that He is a single God.

The rest of the verse tells us that people carry out good deeds for some objectives, which Allah has drawn out for them in reward including paradise and its blissful pleasures. However, this verse clarifies an objective which is loftier than paradise and its joys; this is meeting Allah and the sight of His Magnanimous Countenance. Thus, the verse shifts attention from the blessing to the Bestower of Blessings.

Therefore, whoever fears meeting Allah and yet desires the meeting with his Lord not merely His reward in the Hereafter, let him do righteous deeds. That is the means required to the meeting with Allah. This is because righteous deeds are proof that you respected the command of the One Who Commands and trusted in His wisdom and His love for you. Thereby, your soul was set at ease in the shadow of obedience to Him. When you retire to your bed, review the record of your deeds and find only good, you will thereby

make your soul happy and your breast will expand in joyous ease. You have no apprehensions of ill will from anyone and you do not fear the outcome of a matter whose results are not to be gratefully praised. So, who is it that favoured you with all these blessings and granted you such good fortune?

The verse continues and mentions other means to obtain the reward. Allah says, ‘and give no one a share in the worship due to his Lord.’ We have previously said that paradise is a one, in the sense of being something; therefore do not associate anything with the worship of Allah, even if this thing is paradise. You must hold your objective high and make it not to paradise, but rather to the meeting with its Lord, Creator and with the Bestower of Blessings in it upon you.

We have given an example for this in a man who prepares a great banquet consisting of the finest food and drink. He invites the dearest to him. When they enter, they all are pre-occupied with the food except for only one of them who is not interested in the food and drink. He rather asks after the host of the feast in order to greet him and socialize with him intimately.

How true⁽¹⁾ is that which Rabi`a Al-`Adawiyya said regarding this: All of them worship out of fear of hellfire and view salvation as a bountiful fortune or in order to reside in the gardens and thereby attain palaces and drink from paradise. I view no fortune in gardens or hellfire. I do not desire any replacement for the object of my love.

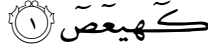
This explains the Qudsi Hadith in which Allah says in the first person, ‘If I had not created paradise and Hellfire, would I not still be worthy of being worshipped?’ Therefore, a servant should not be utilitarian even in worship, as Allah is worthy in and of Himself of being worshipped, not out of fear of His fire nor out of ambitious desire for His paradise. O Allah, grant us this station and render us by Your Mercy of those qualified for it.

(1) From Proofreader: This information is per the knowledge and belief of Sheikh Sha`rawi *may Allah rest his soul*, and it was stated by him to further clarify certain points, but it does not necessarily confirm to the scientific facts and information proven true.

the chapter of

Maryam

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



Kaf Ha Ya 'Ayn Sad [1]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 1)

These are five disjoined letters that are pronounced by saying the name of each letter rather than the sound that the letter indicates. Each letter has a name as well as a corresponding sound. Thus, for example, the group of letters *ka-ta-ba* constitute the word *kataba* (write), whereas their pronunciation based on the names of the letters would be *kaf-ta'-ba'*. Thus, the name of a group of letters combined is a proper noun that was established to indicate them.

In the Noble Quran, there are many chapters beginning with such disjoined letters. These are pronounced according to the name of the letter, not according to their phonemic value. These freestanding letters occur in several numerical combinations. They may be found as single letters, such as *Nun*, *Sad* or *Qaf*. They occur in pairs, as well, such as *Ta Ha* or *Ya Sin*. They may also occur in groups of three letters, such as *Alif Lam Mim* and *Ta Sin Mim* as well as groups of four letters, such as *Alif Lam Mim Ra'*. Moreover, they occur in groups of five letters, such as *Kaf Ha Ya 'Ayn Sad* and *Ha Mim 'Ayn Sin Qaf*.

It is for this reason we believe that the Quran must be learned by hearing it. Otherwise, how could you differentiate between articulating the freestanding letters *Alif Lam Mim* at the beginning of the chapter of *al-Baqara* and the same group of letters constituting a question word *alam* (have We not) as in the verse, 'Have We not expanded for you your breast'? The latter has pronounced them as conjoined letters. Thus, Allah spoke the truth when he says, 'Therefore when We have recited it, follow its recitation.' (*al-Qiyama*: 18) Regarding this, we observe that both the educated and the uneducated can

articulate the letters according to their phonetic sound. However, the name of each letter is not pronounced or known except by the educated person who knows the letters of the alphabet. Since the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was unlettered and had not learned from any teacher as being attested to by his enemies, who then taught him these letters? Thus, when you come across such freestanding letters, be aware that Allah articulated them utilizing the names of the letters. We speak using the phonetic sound of the letters not their names.

Subsequently, Allah says:

ذِكْرُ رَحْمَتِ رَبِّكَ عَبْدَهُ زَكَرِيَّا

**This is an account of your Lord's grace towards
His servant, Zakaryya [2] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 2)**

The Arabic word *adh-dhikr* has numerous meanings. *Dhikr* is the preliminary report of something and discussion of something about which you had no previous knowledge and related to this the Arabic word *at-tadhkir* which is a reminder of something which you were already aware of, but which We wanted to cause you to remember. This sense occurs in the verse where Allah says, 'And continue to remind, for surely the reminder profits the believers.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 55)

The word *dhikr* also refers to the Quran itself. Allah says, 'Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian.' (*al-Hijr*: 9) The Quran comprises the most superior accounts, the most reliable of reports and narrations. Likewise, the word *adh-dhikr* applies to every previous scripture from Allah, as expressed in the verse: 'so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know.' (*an-Nahl*: 43)

The word *adh-dhikr* also signifies glorious renown and nobility. This meaning is clear in Allah's saying, 'And most surely it is a reminder (*dhikr*) for you and your people...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 44); as well as in His saying: 'Certainly We have revealed to you a Book in which is your good remembrance (*dhikr*)...' (*al-Anbiya*': 10). In the last verse, the word *dhikr* denotes good reputation and a dignified station. Likewise, this particular meaning appears when we say, 'So-and-so has dignity among his people.'

In addition, *adh-Dhikr* refers to one's remembrance of his Lord through obedience and worship. On the other hand, Allah's remembrance of His servant denotes the act of recompensing, rewarding, and showering mercy upon him. In this regard, He says, 'Therefore remember Me, I will remember you...' (*al-Baqara*: 152). Thus, in the verse under discussion, Allah's saying: 'This is an account of your Lord's Grace...' (*Maryam*: 2), means that what follows is an account of Zakaryya's (Zechariah's) story and of Allah's Grace upon him.

The Arabic word *ar-rahma* (grace) refers to the divine bestowals of mercy upon its recipient so that his capacity to fulfil his functions is maintained. The merciful person gives to the recipient of mercy a piece of sincere advice which helps them to perform their function in the most perfect possible way. So, if this is the case of mercy in the human context, then what are we to say of the Mercy of the Creator Who created mankind? Moreover, can you envisage His Mercy upon the best of His creatures, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? Surely, it is complete and all-inclusive mercy, for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the noblest and most honoured of the prophets. He is also the final prophet, so there will be no revelation or Divine Messages after him, nor does his Message require any modification to be made. Hence, he is the noblest of all messengers who are themselves the noblest of mankind. Allah's Mercy towards each prophet obtains its measure according to the extent of his mission, and Prophet Muhammad's mission is the most honoured of all prophetic missions.

The word *rahma* (mercy) is a verbal noun which carries the meaning of its verb. In Arabic, the verbal noun, like the verb, needs a subject and an object. An example of this is when we say, 'The man's beating of his child pained me'. Thus, Allah's saying, 'This is an account of your Lord's Grace towards His servant, Zakaryya (Zechariah)' (*Maryam*: 2), means that He has bestowed mercy on His servant Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'your Lord's Grace' (*Maryam*: 2) since this is the highest type of mercy and grace. As He *the Almighty* mentions here His Mercy towards His servant Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* He addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in another

verse with His saying, 'And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 107). Thus, His Mercy towards Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not confined to him; rather, it is a universal one towards all of the worlds. This is indicative of his great, sublime station. Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* says: 'This is an account of your Lord's Grace towards His servant Zakaryya (Zechariah)...' (*Maryam*: 2), this means that what is being recited to you, Messenger Muhammad, is a remembrance and an account of Allah's Mercy, the most sublime kind of it, upon His servant Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*.

We have previously explained that servitude to mankind is contemptible and degrading; it is odious and unacceptable term. By contrast, servitude to Allah *the Almighty* comprises dignity and honour. This is because, on one hand, a human's servitude to a human causes harm and grief to the former; it is the servitude of a slave to a master who takes his good. On the other hand, in the case of servitude to Allah *the Almighty* it is the servant who obtains the good of His Master.

Here arises a question, which is 'What kind of Mercy has Allah *the Almighty* shown towards Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when He related the story of His servant Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* to him'? It is said that such kind of mercy is linked to Allah's Absolute Power over the universe. His Omnipotence manifests itself in that He created causal factors for effects and then said to the causal factors, 'You are not actors in and of yourself, but rather, you are only effective through My Will and My Power; so if I desire for you not to act, I nullify your action; and if you do not promote the good on your own, then I will oblige you to promote it'.

A relevant example of this is evident in the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* whom the disbelievers threw into the fire. Allah's foremost aim of extinguishing the fire for Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* or to make it cold and tranquil was not merely to save him. After all, it would have been possible for Him to prevent the adversaries of Ibrahim (Abraham) from seizing him in the first place, or to send down rain to extinguish the fire which they had set alight. Had this happened, the defiance of his people would not have been effected. That is to say that if Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*

had managed to evade being seized by them, or if rain had fallen and put out the fire, they would have said, ‘If we had only been able to overpower him, we would have done such-and-such to him’, or ‘If the rain had not fallen, we would have done such-and-such to him’.

Hence, Allah *the Almighty* desired to scheme against these people and to manifest for them the absolute nature of His Divine Power. In order to do so, He enabled them to have control over Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* until they actually cast him in the fire. Only then did the Creator’s Supreme Command come to the fire, ordering it to suspend its power to burn: ‘We said, “O fire! Be a comfort and peace to Ibrahim.”’ (*al-Anbiya*: 69)

Likewise, the story of Allah’s Mercy towards His servant Zakaryyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* provides us with evidence of the Absoluteness of Allah’s Divine Power in the matter of creation. This story draws our attention to the fact that the Creator established causal factors for the universe, and that whoever pursues these factors attains to the desired effect. But beware of being distracted or seduced by them; for as the Creator may grant you blessings based upon causal factors, He may also abolish these factors definitively and bring forth effects apart from their causal factors.

Allah’s Unlimited Power was made manifest in the story of the beginning of creation. We are cognisant that the mass of human beings and their reproduction are accomplished by means of marriage between man and woman. However, the unlimited nature of the Divine Power is not restricted to these causal factors. The Creator manages the creation of His human beings by means of every manner of creation. Hence, He brought forth Adam *peace be upon him* without male or female, and He created Eve from a male without a female; also He created `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* from a female without a male. Thus, Allah’s Divine Power is not bound by causal factors, and His Omnipotence to create in any manner will continue until the Day of Judgment. Consequently, we find a man and woman who are married yet no offspring is produced by them, for the causal factors are inoperative as to both. This fact is intended to prevent us from relying upon causal factors and from forgetting the Prime Causer of effects. In this connection, He says, ‘Allah’s is the kingdom of the heavens and the earth; He creates what He pleases; He grants

to whom He pleases daughters and grants to whom He pleases sons. Or He makes them of both sorts, male and female; and He makes whom He pleases barren; surely He is the Knowing, the Powerful.' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50)

Back to the verse in question; Allah's Omnipotence manifests itself in the story of Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* in that He answered his supplication by bestowing a son upon him. He *the Almighty* says, 'This is an account of your Lord's Grace towards His servant, Zakaryya (Zechariah).' (*Maryam*: 2) So, when was Allah's Grace bestowed on Zakaryya (Zechariah)? The answer is provided in the following verse in which Allah says:

إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ نِدَاءً خَفِيًّا ﴿٣﴾

**When he called to his Lord secretly,
saying [3] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 3)**

This verse shows that Allah *the Almighty* answered Zakaryya's invocation when the latter called to Him secretly. In Arabic, *an-nida`* (calling) is one of the various styles of speech. Rhetoricians divide speech into the following two categories: *khabar* (informative discourse) which denotes providing information about a thing that may be truthfulness or falsehood; and *insha`* (creative discourse) which implies asking for something by employing an utterance which conveys neither truthfulness nor falsehood. Calling someone belongs to the latter category, *insha`* because when you call someone, you want to cause something to arise from yourself. Thus, if you say, 'O Mohammad', then you want him to come to you. Hence, calling out is to ask someone to come closer to you. But would it be correct for calling out to Allah *the Almighty* to have this meaning? After all, you do not call out except to someone who is far away from you and whom you wish to bring closer to yourself.

So, how could you call out to your Lord, while He is closer to you, through His Knowledge than your jugular vein? Furthermore, how could you call out to Him even though He hears you even before you speak? Hence, if He is always close to you, what then is the purpose of calling Him out? We say that the purpose of calling Allah *the Almighty* is to invoke Him.

In the verse under discussion, the supplication is described as made ‘...secretly’ (*Maryam*: 3) because it is not like the calling out of one man to another, requiring raising the voice in order to be heard. Rather, it is a calling out to Allah *the Almighty* before Whom the concealed and revealed statements are the same. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says, ‘And conceal your word or manifest it; surely He is Cognisant of what is in the hearts.’ (*al-Mulk*: 13) One of the etiquettes of supplication is that we invoke Allah *the Almighty* as He commands us, saying, ‘Call on your Lord humbly and secretly...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 55) Allah *the Almighty* ‘...knows the secret, and what is yet more hidden.’ (*Ta Ha*: 7). This verse tells us that He is fully Aware of what is more hidden than the secret, namely; the secret before its coming into being.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* made supplication in the secrecy the best kind of supplication, for a person might invoke his Lord about something which, if it were heard by someone else, might cause that person to despise him. Thus, the best kind of supplication is that which is concealed between the servant and his Lord. In this way, the supplicant’s affairs are not exposed among people.

As for Allah *the Almighty* He is *As-Sittir* (The Veiler) Who loves covering up of faults and defects even for those who are disobedient to Him. In the same vein, the concealed supplication allows the servant to ask his Lord for what would be embarrassing to publicly mention before other people. Moreover, it enables the servant to be unrestrained in invoking his Lord for whatever he wishes. After all, he is invoking his Lord and Protector in Whom he can take refuge. While people will be aggrieved and vexed if you ask them for the slightest thing, Allah *the Almighty* is pleased with you when you invoke Him.

Here arises the following question, which is: ‘Why did Zakaryya (*Zechariah*) *peace be upon him* keep his supplication a secret? He invoked his Lord to bless him with a son, but how could this request be realised as he had already reached old age and his wife was barren? It was as if all the causal means available to him were inoperative. For this reason, he turned to Allah *the Almighty* in supplication, ‘O Lord, I have no refuge but You. You alone are Fully Able to rupture the laws of nature’. This request from Zakaryya (*Zechariah*) *peace be upon him* came at the wrong time because he

had aged and his wife was barren. That is one of the reasons why he called his Lord secretly. He also kept his supplication secret because he sought a son despite the existence of his paternal cousins who would shoulder the responsibility of conveying his message after his death. However, he did not entrust them with Allah's way of guidance because their outward actions in life were not in conformity with it. So, how could he entrust them with Allah's way of guidance while they could not even be entrusted with their own souls? So, if he *peace be upon him* publicly prayed to his Lord to give him a son who would inherit prophethood after him, his cousins would be angered and they would turn against him. Therefore, he made his prayer secretly between him and his Lord.

There is another question requiring an answer here, which is: 'Why is Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* asking for a son at this late age and after having become very old and his wife had become barren? Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* clarifies his justification for this in a subsequent verse, saying, 'To be my heir and the heir of the family of Ya`qub (Jacob).' (*Maryam*: 6) Hence, the motive for his asking for a son was purely religious; he did not make this request for any worldly gain. He yearned for a son because he could not entrust the people who would remain after his death with Allah's way of guidance and its protection from corruption.

Therefore, his saying, 'To be my heir...' (*Maryam*: 6) should not be understood in terms of an inheritance of wealth as many may mistakenly think, for the prophets do not have any heirs. In this connection, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'We (prophets) do not have any heirs. What we leave behind is to be given in charity.'⁽¹⁾ In this manner, a prophet departs from this world and his relatives do not derive benefit from his wealth, not even the poor among them.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Muslim. Al-Bukhari narrated a Hadith to that effect on the authority of A`isha Allah be pleased with her. Muslim's narration is as follows, 'When the Messenger of Allah passed away, his wives made up their minds to send `Uthman ibn 'Affan (as their spokesman) to Abu Bakr to demand from him their share from the legacy of the Prophet. At this, A`isha said to them, 'Has the Messenger of Allah not said, "We (prophets) do not have any heirs; what we leave behind is (to be given in) charity?"' See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3092; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1758.*

In fact, the prophets' requests are entirely devoted to the Cause of Allah *the Almighty*. It is for this reason that Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said, '...and the heir of the family of Ya`qub (Jacob).' (*Maryam*: 6) The inheritance of the family of Ya`qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* refers to the prophethood which they passed on to next generations. Thus, we should not understand 'the inheritance' here in the sense of inheriting wealth or objects of this transient world.

In the same connection, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And Sulaiman (Solomon) was (Dawud's) David's heir....' (*an-Naml*: 16) What was it that Sulaiman (Solomon) inherited from (Dawud) David *peace be upon them*? Was he heir to his estate? If so, why did his other siblings not have a share? Obviously, he inherited prophethood and kingship from (Dawud) David. Hence, the issue here is far removed from materialistic inheritance.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says that Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* invoked Him, saying:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي وَهَنَ الْعَظْمُ مِنِّي وَأَشْتَعَلَ الرَّأْسُ شَيْبًا
وَلَمْ أَكُنْ بِدُعَائِكَ رَبِّ شَقِيًّا

**Lord, my bones have weakened and my hair is
ashen grey, but never, Lord, have I ever prayed
to You in vain [4] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 4)**

This is the call or invocation that Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* made, saying, 'Lord, my bones have weakened...' (*Maryam*: 4). Regarding the manner of invocation, we can either say 'O Lord', or 'O Allah'. Here, Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said 'O Lord!' because he was praying for something related to the Allah's Bestowal of Lordship which is conferred on the believer and the disbeliever alike. Zakaryya (Zechariah) is asking for a son, and this matter is related to the physical constitution and its aptness for procreation, which are among the gifts pertinent to Allah's Bestowals of Lordship. This is the case even if the motive behind asking for a son is related to Allah's Divinity, given the fact that the son would be responsible for the divine way of guidance after the death of his father.

It is as if Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* had invoked his Lord saying, 'O Lord, O You Who gives to the one who believes in You and to the one who disbelieves in You! O You Who gives to the one who is obedient and to the one who is disobedient! Far be it from You that You should ever hold back your gifts from one who obeys You and invites other people to obey You'.

As for the invocatory phrase 'O Allah', it is reserved for matters relating to worship and religious obligations.

Afterwards, Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* presents the circumstances of this request: 'Lord, my bones have weakened...' (*Maryam*: 4). The Arabic word *al-wahan* denotes weakness. He said, 'my bones have weakened' (*Maryam*: 4) because everything has a basis in terms of firmness and strength. Water, for example, has a well-known basis, as do fat, flesh, nerves, bones, and all other parts of man's physical formation. Among all these things, bones are the strongest. In the structure of the human body, bones—to use an analogy in the language of the modern age—are like the frame of a vehicle. Upon bones the human body is constructed of flesh, blood, and nerves. Hence, if the bones—which are the strongest of the body's constituent elements—are afflicted by weakness and feebleness, then the other parts are even more likely to be similarly affected.

Hence, when an Arab man complains of drought and famine, what does he say? He says, 'We have undergone difficult years. One year dissolved the fat—that is, from hunger and lack of food—and one year dissolved the flesh—that is, after the fat had been consumed—and one year wiped out the bones'. It is as if bones were the final store of nutrients in the body of a man when he is deprived of food and drink. In this condition, bones direct their nutritional properties to the brain specifically. This is because as long as the brain contains a spark of life, then whatever happens to the body in terms of degradation is capable of being repaired and restored to its natural state. Thus, the well-being of man is connected to the well-being of the brain.

For this reason, we find that doctors faced with critical cases concentrate their concern on the well-being of the brain to determine a person's life or

death. Even if the heart stops, doctors can return it to its naturally functioning state, whereas if the brain stops, this entails death.

So, it is as Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* is saying, ‘O Lord, my bones have become weak, and I have nothing left in me except the final source for sustaining life’.

Since bones are something inward, buried beneath the skin, then it is a hidden condition; hence, Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* wanted to draw attention to another outward and clearly manifested condition, so he mentioned an evident matter, ‘and my hair is ashen grey, but never, Lord, have I ever prayed to You in vain.’ (*Maryam*: 4) In this phrase, he employs the Arabic verb *ishta`la*, whereby the spreading of grey hair on his head is likened to the breaking out of fire, for the white hair which surmounts him is clearly visible like fire.

The one who looks deeply into this analogy will find that fire, too, must feed on firewood and that it remains lit with ascending flames as long as the wood contains vegetal vitality which nourishes the fire. But as soon as this vegetal vitality runs out in the firewood, it, i.e. the fire begins to wane until it becomes embers without flames, and then it goes out.

Whitening of the hair on the head is also evidence of the weakness of the body and the feebleness of its vigour. This is because the hair derives its colour from the coloured substance—be it black, red, or blond—found in the bulb of the hair-root and which supplies the hair follicle with this colour. The weakness of the body gradually weakens this substance, until it disappears all together and, as a result, the hair emerges white. Thus, this whiteness of the hair is resulted from the absence of coloured substance due to the weakening of the body and a weakening of the glands that produce this colour.

Therefore, we find that the well-to-do who are much concerned with their hair put various substances on it as soon as the first signs of greying hair appear on them. This is because after the barber dresses them, the whiskers normally receive the greatest quantity of the caustic substances which affect the bulbs of the hair-roots and the coloured substance within the bulb. The hair is like a pipeline that facilitates the conduction of these substances through it, especially right after shaving when hair is still open after having it cut.

Afterwards, Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* says, ‘Lord, have I ever prayed to You in vain.’ (*Maryam: 4*) This part of Zakaryya’s (Zechariah’s) invocation denotes the following: ‘Never in the past have I been disappointed on account of my prayer to You because You had answered all my prayers. So, just as You have been Benevolent to me previously by answering all my prayers so that I have never been discontented in my supplication to You, but rather, I have always been made happy by Your Answer—may You therefore not refrain from Your customary response to me on this occasion. Make me delightful in answering my prayer, particularly since my request to You is in obedience to You, for I do not want to depart from this world except in a state of reassurance concerning the one who will be entrusted with Your Way of Guidance and undertake this prophetic mission after I am gone’.

In the same connection, you may invoke Allah *the Almighty* for a matter which you desire, and if that which you desire did not come into being and your prayer were not answered, you should not be aggrieved. This sadness or disappointment might be false because you are unaware of the wisdom behind the deprivation and lack of positive response to your prayer. You are not cognisant that Allah *the Almighty* controls your actions. You may pray for something which you viewed as good from your perspective, but according to Allah’s Knowledge, it did not comprise any good for you. Hence, He withheld it from you and rectified your mistake with regard to the assessment of good. In this way, your Lord granted you a favour while you believe that He withheld His Blessings from you; He was kind and generous to you while you believe He deprived you. This is because you requested something good based on your own knowledge, but Allah *the Almighty* refrained from bestowing it on you based on His Knowledge which is most encompassing.

Afterwards, Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* mentions another motive, which is the underlying reason and the essence of the matter; Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَإِنِّي خِفْتُ الْمَوَالِيَ مِنْ وَرَائِي وَكَانَتِ
 امْرَأَتِي عَاقِرًا فَهَبْ لِي مِنْ لَدُنْكَ وَلِيًّا ﴿٥﴾

**I fear [what] my kinsmen [will do] when I am gone,
 for my wife is barren, so grant me a successor — a gift
 from You [5] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 5)**

The Arabic word *al-mawali* (kinsmen) is a reference to Zakaryya's kin from among the sons of his paternal uncles. They thus belong to the second generation which will come after him. He feared that they would not be up to the task of being entrusted with Allah's Religion and way of guidance after he passes away. After all, he has noticed from their conduct and comportment in life that they were not qualified to carry out this mission.

The Arabic phrase '*min wara`i* (when I am gone) comprises the Arabic preposition *wara`* which, as we have previously explained in the chapter of *al-Kahf*, can carry the meaning of 'behind', 'in front of', 'after' or 'beside'. In the passage here, it signifies 'after me'.

Following this, Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* says, 'for my wife is barren' (*Maryam*: 5). A barren woman is one who is not capable of giving birth from the very beginning due to her physical condition. A woman may also become barren because of her reaching the age of menopause, for example. We know that reproduction and begetting offspring in the human species arise from a man and a woman. In this regard, Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* has already described his condition of weakness and old age, and then he related that his wife was barren and could not give birth to children. Hence, all the causal factors of begetting children were inoperative in their case.

Zakaryya's (Zechariah's) saying, 'for my wife is barren' (*Maryam*: 5) implies that she is naturally barren. It is an innate condition attached to her, rather than one which suddenly came upon her, so she has never borne children.

Subsequently, he *peace be upon him* says, 'so grant me a successor...' (*Maryam*: 5). The Arabic word *hiba* signifies a gift granted without anything given or done in exchange. In the case of Zakaryya (Zechariah), the means of attaining his desire are here inoperative, and all signs pointed to the impossibility of procreation. Therefore, he did not say, for example, 'give me'

since giving (*al-`ata`*) may be a compensation for something else. However, in this instance, Allah's gift is granted freely and without pre-conditions. It is as if he had said, 'O Lord, if You were to grant me a son, then it would be an unconditional gift from You for which I do not possess the causal means'. In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* states that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, 'Praise be to Allah, Who has granted me in my old age⁽¹⁾ Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac)...' (*Ibrahim: 39*).

Here, we should ponder and comment upon *Ibrabim's* (Abraham's) saying, '*a`la al-kibar* (in my old age). Concerning this, commentators opined that the preposition *a`la* (in) has the meaning of the preposition *m`a*, which has the general signification of 'with'. They point out that the word *a`la* is made up of three letters, while the word *m`a*, consists of only two. This leads to the question of why Allah *the Almighty* does not use the simpler term instead of the longer one. Behind the word employed here, *a`la*, there must be some novel additional meaning. This lies in the fact that the word *m`a* denotes only the idea of accompaniment or simultaneity, whereas the word *`ala* conveys this meaning as well as the notion of 'rising above' or 'mastering'. It is as if Ibrahim (Abraham) said, 'Surely, old age, O Lord, precludes begetting children; but Your Unrestrained Omnipotence overpowers old age'.

Another relevant example of this is clear in Allah's saying, '...and most surely your Lord is the Lord of forgiveness to people, notwithstanding their injustice...' (*ar-Ra`d: 6*). Here, it is as if injustice necessitates that they be punished; however, Allah's Mercy towards them and His Forgiveness took precedence over the deserved punishment.

Back to the verse in question; '...a gift from You' (*Maryam: 5*) means a gift directly from Allah, not based upon normal causal factors.

As for His saying, '...a successor' (*Maryam: 5*), it signifies that Zakaryya (Zechariah) asked for a righteous son who would follow him in bearing the trusteeship of conveying Allah's way of guidance to people in order that their proceeding in life will be sound and well-founded.

(1) *When Ibrahim (Abraham) peace be upon him was given glad tidings of the coming birth of Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac), he was 117 years old. This opinion is stated by Sa`id ibn Jubayr. See As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur, 5/49.*

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* states that Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* said:

يُرْتِي وَيَرِثُ مِنْ آلِ يَعْقُوبَ ۖ وَاجْعَلْهُ رَبِّ رَضِيًّا ﴿٦﴾

To be my heir and the heir of the family of Ya`qub. Lord, make him well pleasing [to You] [6] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 6)

We have previously made it clear that inheritance here does not mean the inheritance of wealth because prophets do not leave heirs of their estates and whatever they leave behind of wealth is to be given as charity for the common good. Instead, the intended meaning here is the inheritance of knowledge, prophethood, kingship, and the conveyance of Allah's way of guidance to people. It is noteworthy here that Zakaryya (Zechariah) did not only say, 'To be my heir....' (*Maryam*: 6), but rather said in addition: '...and the heir of the family of Ya`qub (Jacob).' (*Maryam*: 6) It is as if he states, 'I do not represent the climax of righteous obedience within the lineage of Jacob, since there is also Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Isaac) and Ya`qub (Jacob) *peace be upon them*'. This is a display of humility on his part and respect for the high-station of these prophets by assigning them their proper status.

Regarding, 'Lord, make him well pleasing [to You]' (*Maryam*: 6), it is a prayer on his part in which he asks Allah *the Almighty* to make the son he is praying for deserving of His Pleasure.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

يُنزَكِرِيَا إِنَّا نَبَشِّرُكَ بِغُلَامٍ اسْمُهُ يَحْيَىٰ لَمْ نَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ قَبْلُ سَمِيًّا ﴿٧﴾

Zakaryya , We bring you good news of a son whose name will be Yahya — We have chosen this name for no one before him [7] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 7)

The one who carefully examines this story will find that this verse has condensed a part of the narrative which can be understood from its context. This is done with full confidence in the intelligence of the listener and his ability to ponder over and properly understand the meaning. Thus, it is as if

the meaning of the verse is as follows: Allah *the Almighty* heard the invocation of Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and the circumstances surrounding his request, and He responded to him saying, 'Zakaryya (Zechariah)...' (*Maryam: 7*). The speech, addressed to Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* in this direct manner is an indication of the speed with which Allah *the Almighty* answered his prayer; hence the response came directly and immediately without preliminary words of introduction.

Let us offer a similar Quranic example to fully illustrate this point; in the story of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and Balqis. Sulaiman (Solomon) said, 'O chiefs! Which of you can bring to me her throne before they come to me in submission? One audacious among the jinn said, "I will bring it to you before you rise up from your place; and most surely I am strong (and) trusty for it." One who had the knowledge of the Book said, "I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye." Then when he saw it settled beside him, he said, "This is of the grace of my Lord that He may try me whether I am grateful or ungrateful..."' (*an-Naml: 38-40*).

We should note that between Allah's saying, '...in the twinkling of an eye.' (*an-Naml: 40*), and His saying, 'Then when he saw it settled beside him...' (*an-Naml: 40*), there are omitted accounts which are required by the narrative sequence of the story. For example, the story may go as follows: 'Then Solomon gave him permission and so he departed and brought the throne'. However, the literary style here moves rapidly to concur with the speed of the event in terms of fetching the throne of Queen of Sheba from its distant location.

Back to the verse under discussion; Allah says, 'We bring you good news...' (*Maryam: 7*); the Arabic verb employed here is derived from the root *al-bishara*. This word denotes the good news which makes you joyful before it occurs and thus prolongs the extent of happiness regarding a delightful thing. When one of your peers brings you glad tidings, he might be lying about it; or the circumstances and events may arise contrary to what he thought. But, how would it be with you if it is Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who gave you the glad tidings Himself? When good news comes from Allah *the Almighty* you can be sure that it is true and will actually happen without any shed of doubt.

As for Allah's saying, 'We bring you good news of a son whose name will be Yahya (John)...' (*Maryam*: 7), it signifies that He also gave the promised son a name. In this regard, we know that human beings have choices in giving names for their newborn babies, and that they have full freedom in doing so. Thus, one woman may name her son Harankash, a name of a bitter orange, and she is free to do so. Another one may name her black-skinned daughter Qamar (Moon), which implies brilliant whiteness, and she, too, is free to do so.

However, when people give names to their offspring, they typically hope that the one named will possess qualities that gladden the soul and are a source of delight. Thus, when we name someone *Sai'd*, meaning happy, this is done with optimism that he will truly be happy, as this name is given with reference to what it connotes. But does this optimist person who gave this name to his son really exercise the power to assure that the named person will actually develop according to what he wants and for what and hopes? Of course, he does not have this power, nor can he guarantee the results. This is because there is a power higher than he is which governs, and the named person may become something quite different from that which his name signifies. However, if the One Who gave the name is Allah *the Almighty*, then the qualities that the name connotes will surely be realised in the character of the named person and will be applicable to him. Inevitably, the qualities imbedded in the name given by Him will be fully realised in the named person. He *the Almighty* named Zakaryya's (Zechariah's) son Yahya (John), which means 'he lives'; so this attribute necessarily applies to him.

The word Yahya (to live) is a verb, the opposite of which is to die. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* is fully Capable of causing Yahya (John) to live. But to what extent will He prolong his life and for how many years? Here, the quality embedded in the name Yahya, that is, to live, is realised even if he only lived until middle age, for example. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* brought Yahya (John) to life and achieved the attribute of life connoted by his name. Therefore, the people of knowledge concluded from his name, Yahya, which he would die a martyr to remain alive just as Allah *the Almighty* named him; this is indeed what occurred.

There follows Allah's saying, 'We have chosen this name for no one before him.' (*Maryam: 7*) This verse contains the Arabic word *samiyya* concerning whose meaning scholars have differing opinions. According to their opinions, it can signify: equal, comparable or similar; alternatively, it denotes that a person's name is like someone else's name.

A relevant example of the word *samiyya* (having the same name or equal to someone else) is found in Allah's saying, 'The Lord of the heavens and the earth and what is between them, so serve Him and be patient in His service. Do you know any one equal (*samiyya*) to Him?' (*Maryam: 65*) In this regard, scholars said that *samiyya* here carries both meanings. According to the first of these two meanings, namely equal, we can interpret the above verse as follows: 'There is nothing equal or comparable to Allah *the Almighty*'. This is because He says, '...there is nothing like Him...' (*ash-Shura: 11*), and He also says, 'No one is comparable to Him.' (*al-Ikhlās: 4*)

We might partly agree with this meaning in the case of Yahya (John) *peace be upon him*, but there is something that renders this meaning unfitting; when we apply the meaning of equal or comparable to the word *samiyya* as used in Allah's saying with regard to Yahya (John); this leads to the notion that never before was there anyone at the same level of righteousness and piety as him. Hence, if this is so, then what about the high religious rank of the father of the prophets, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*? Further, what about Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon them*? Therefore, this meaning which could be valid within the narrative context in another passage, is not correct here since, prior to Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* Allah *the Almighty* established certain men who were better than him, i.e. Yahya (John), or at least comparable to him.

As for the second possible meaning of Allah's saying, 'Do you know any one equal (*samiyya*) to Him?' (*Maryam: 65*), it implies that no one is called by the same Name of Allah. This is the meaning which corresponds correctly to the story of Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* since it is the novel name which Allah *the Almighty* gave to the son of Zakariyya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and no one had ever been called by it before. However, after him this name became so widespread that a poet could say:

I named him Yahya so that he would live, but it was not
Of any avail in warding off Allah's decree of death.

In passing, we should contemplate on Allah's signs regarding the matter of giving His Divine Name to anyone. It is noteworthy that no one has ever dared to name his son 'Allah', not even from among the disbelievers and the atheists who publicly proclaim their atheism and denial of the Creator. Such is the case, despite the guaranteed freedom to choose names for their children. This proves that their disbelief is just stubbornness and disputatiousness and that they are not even sincere in their disbelief. Furthermore, it shows that they know that Allah *the Almighty* exists, and therefore they are too afraid to give His Name to their offspring.

Hence, the word *samiyya* with respect to divinity takes on both meanings, namely; there is no equal to Allah *the Almighty*, and His Name is not given to anyone. With respect to Yahya (John) *peace be upon him*, it carries only the second meaning, namely; his name was not given to anyone before him.

Suppose that Allah *the Almighty* reviewed all names used previously and did not find anyone in the past who was called Allah, so He announced it as a challenge: 'Do you know any one equal (*samiyya*) to Him?' What has prevented the disbelievers and the atheist from meeting this challenge by calling any of their offspring 'Allah'?! They failed to meet this challenge as no one has ever called his child by this name. Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قَالَ رَبِّ أَنَّى يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَكَانَتِ امْرَأَتِي
عَاقِرًا وَقَدْ بَلَغْتُ مِنَ الْكِبَرِ عِتِيًّا

**He said, 'Lord, how can I have a son when my wife is
barren, and I am old and frail?' [8] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 8)**

When Zakaryya (*Zechariah*) *peace be upon him* heard the good news from his Lord and was reassured of attaining his request, this enticed him into seeking to penetrate deeply into an understanding of the means. How will this be effected and the glad tidings realised, given that he had reached the infirmity of old age and his wife was barren?

But, what did Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* mean by the above question, since he knew with certainty that Allah *the Almighty* is fully Aware of his condition and that of his wife? As a matter of fact, he did not deny the fulfilment of this glad tiding, nor was he seeking to emend Allah *the Almighty*—far be it from him to have this in mind.

Rather, the glad tiding emboldened him to seek cognisance of the manner in which it would be realised. This is akin to what occurred in the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when his Lord spoke to him and chose him, singling him out with this distinction. This discourse with Allah *the Almighty* subsequently enticed him into asking to see Him, ‘My Lord! Show me (Yourself), so that I may look upon You.’ (*al-A'raf*: 143)

A similar event occurred in the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when he said to his Lord, ‘My Lord! Show me how You give life to the dead...’ (*al-Baqara*: 260). In the above verse, the father of the prophets, Ibrahim (Abraham), did not doubt Allah’s Capability to revive the dead, but he wanted to find out about the wondrous way of doing so. Thus, his request was not intended to doubt the truth in question, but rather to know the specific manner in which this truth manifests itself. Such discourse concerning the particular circumstances of Allah’s Capability to raise the dead has nothing to do with its actuality.

Allah *the Almighty* thereupon informed Ibrahim (Abraham) that this matter was not something which could be formulated in words, but instead had to be experienced in practice. So, He commanded him according to what we know of this story, that is, to bring four birds on his own and then to clasp them close to himself in order to assure himself of their reality. Then He ordered him to cut them up into pieces and to subsequently scatter these pieces on the summits of mountains. After this, the Creator left it to Ibrahim (Abraham) to call the birds himself. With his command, the pieces would immediately come together and life would pervade them anew. This is among the manifestations of Allah’s Sublime Majesty that He did not undertake this act, but instead caused someone who is not capable of doing this to actually do it.⁽¹⁾

(1) Regarding this, Allah *Glorified is He* says to Ibrahim (Abraham), ‘... take four of the birds, then train them to follow you, then place on every mountain a part of them, then call them, they will come to you flying; and know that Allah is Mighty, Wise.’ (*al-Baqara*: 260)

In fact, powerful human beings may extend the effect of their power to the weak ones in a way that whoever is not able of carrying something will call for someone who can carry it for him. Likewise, whoever is incapable of undertaking some task which will be brought to be carried out by someone? However, the weak remains in the same state, unable to do anything. That is to say that, the powerful human being does not give some of his power to a weak person. By contrast, Allah *the Almighty* transfers some of His Own Power to the weak person who then becomes strong and able to act.

Back to the verse under discussion; Zakaryya's (Zechariah's) saying, 'Lord, how can I have a son...' (*Maryam*: 8) is thus a question about the particular means of having a son. This is similar to the situation of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when his Lord asked him, 'What! And do you not believe?' (*al-Baqara*: 260), that is, He asked him whether or not he believes in Allah's Power and Ability to revive the dead. Ibrahim (Abraham) replied, 'Yes, but that my heart may be at ease.' (*al-Baqara*: 260) This verse shows that he was asking about the manner in which Allah *the Almighty* revives the dead.

Another possible interpretation of Zakaryya's (Zechariah's) question, 'Lord, how can I have a son...' (*Maryam*: 8) is that he wants to confirm and be ascertain of this glad tiding. This is like when you make a promise to your son to buy him a present and he importunes you regarding this matter to be certain of your promise to him. He takes pleasure in ascertaining that this promise will be fulfilled without a doubt.

Thereafter, Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* mentions the specific circumstances of this affair that bewilder him, saying, '...my wife is barren, and I am old and frail?' (*Maryam*: 8) In this statement, the Arabic word *`itiya* (frail) is derived from the verb *`ata*, meaning to be implacably insolent and overpoweringly destructive. The related word *al-`utuww*, connoting haughty and aggressive insolence, is tantamount to disbelief, while the person characterised by these traits, *al-`atiy*, is the strong one who cannot be defeated. It is for this reason that Zakaryya (Zechariah) describes old age—which is a symbol of weakness—as being implacably insolent and overpoweringly destructive. This is because no one is ever able to fight against or to repel the weakness of old age, regardless of the attempts to counter it through medicines, drugs, and vitamins.

It seems that this issue of longing to having a son used to preoccupy Zakaryya's (Zechariah's) mind and to weigh heavily upon him since he frequently invoked Allah *the Almighty* to bestow a son upon him. In another verse of the Quran, Zakaryya (Zechariah) says, '...O my Lord! Leave me not alone; and You are the best of inheritors.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 89). Thus, he wanted a son who would be his heir as he was granted this heir, as Allah *the Almighty* is the best of inheritors.

Therefore, Zakaryya's (Zechariah's) prayer was answered: 'So We responded to him and gave him Yahya (John) and made his wife fit for him....' (*al-Anbiya'*: 90) We should consider that before Allah *the Almighty* says, 'and made his wife fit for him...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 90), He says, '...We gave him Yahya (John)...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 90). Hence, the remedying of the wife was not a condition for the fulfilment of this glad tidings and the occurrence of this gift.

Here, we have a manifestation of the unlimited nature of the divine power that can never ever be resisted, that is, He is fully Capable of making this barren wife fertile since the divine action is not bound by any limit. By contrast, in our daily life, if one of your appliances, for example, becomes dysfunctional, you take it to an electrician to have it repaired. But he may find that it is seriously damaged and advises you to throw it away and to purchase another new one, as there is no way of fixing it.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* remedies Zakaryya's (Zechariah's) spouse for him so that we do not think that Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* came forth in some other way, while the wife remained in her state of barrenness.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبُّكَ هُوَ عَلَيَّ هَيِّنٌ وَقَدْ خَلَقْتُكَ
 مِنْ قَبْلُ وَلَمْ تَكُ شَيْئًا ﴿٩﴾

**He said, 'This is what your Lord has said: "It is easy for Me:
 I created you, though you were nothing before"' [9]
 (The Quran, *Maryam*: 9)**

It is Allah *the Almighty* Who answered the question of Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* saying, 'This is what your Lord has said....' (*Maryam*: 9)

This verse shows that He *the Almighty* announced and decreed that the matter would be in the way He willed. Therefore, Zakaryya (Zechariah) should not have discussed this question further, for Allah *the Almighty* knows best that his wife was barren. Despite that, Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed upon him the gift of a child.

This is followed by His saying, ‘it is easy (*hayyin*) for Me’ (*Maryam*: 9) which is similar to another verse concerning the Resurrection in which Allah says, ‘...and most easy (*ahwan*) is this for Him...’ (*ar-Rum*: 27) However, you should not imagine that there are some things which are easy (*hayyin*), some others which are easier (*ahwan*) and some which are difficult for Him *the Almighty*. The intention behind these expressions is to bring the approximate meaning closer to our minds’ grasp.

Allah *the Almighty* addresses us according to our speech and our logic. Thus, creation from what is existent is easier from our perspective than creation from nothingness. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says, ‘Were We then fatigued with the first creation? Yet are they in doubt with regard to a new creation.’ (*Qaf*: 15)

Hence, the issue of creation with respect to Him does not comprise easy and easier, or hard and harder. Such descriptions apply to someone who undertakes tasks in a manual step-by-step manner, which is the case with our tasks as human beings. On the contrary, Allah *the Almighty* does not concern Himself with such acts, but rather, He says to something, ‘Be’, and it is; He *the Almighty* says, ‘His Command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it: Be, so it is.’ (*Ya Sin*: 82)

Then Allah *the Almighty* provides stronger proof for the easiness of this matter of granting Zakaryya (Zechariah) a son, affirming: ‘I created you, though you were nothing before.’ (*Maryam*: 9) After all, for Him to bring Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* into being out of something is less amazing than to create out of nothing.

Subsequently, He *the Almighty* says:

قَالَ رَبِّ اجْعَلْ لِي آيَةً قَالَ آيَتُكَ أَلَّا تُكَلِّمَ النَّاسَ ثَلَاثَ لَيَالٍ سَوِيًّا ﴿١٠﴾

He said, ‘Give me a sign, Lord.’ He said, ‘Your sign is that you will not [be able to] speak to anyone for three full [days and] nights’ [10] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 10)

The Arabic word *aya* (sign) signifies an indication that his wife had indeed become pregnant with Yahya (John) *peace be upon him*. It is as if Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* wanted to rush the matter and did not have the patience to wait for nine months. Instead, he wanted to live under the auspices of this blessing, as if it was an actuality for which his tongue would not cease to give praise and thanks. This blessing would abide in his mind despite the fact that his son was still a foetus in the womb of his mother.

Thereupon, His Lord responds to him, saying, ‘... “Your sign is that you will not [be able to] speak to anyone for three full [days and] nights.”’ (*Maryam*: 9) This verse shows that his sign is that he will not talk to people for a period of three nights. In this statement, the Arabic phrase *‘alla* (that not) is not meant to be a prohibition of speaking; instead it is a notification of a condition which will come over him without his volition. This is because he will not speak to people although his faculties are in good order and free of any defect, such as muteness or other defect which would prevent him from speaking. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* adds the Arabic adverb *sawiya* which may be interpreted to mean that Zakaryya (Zechariah) will be unable to speak while he is sound and free of illness without any physical malfunction. In this manner, speechlessness is not a flaw, but rather, a sign from Allah *the Almighty*.

There is a difference between a cosmic decree and a religious one. The cosmic decree is that which comes to pass and you have no choice in evading its existence. The religious decree, on the other hand is that in which you do have a choice, for it is possible for you to obey and thus be obedient, or to disobey and thus be sinfully disobedient. What occurred to Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* was a cosmic decree and a sign from Allah *the Almighty* in which he had no choice.

In this way, Allah *the Almighty* gives us proof that He brings things into being without the presence of expected causal factors. The causal factors may

remain sound and in suitable condition, yet their effect does not manifest itself. Thus, the tongue is present here, and the organs of articulation are in good working order, but nonetheless Zakaryya (Zechariah) is not able to speak. So, we should reflect on this unlimited divine power; Allah *the Almighty* willed a son for Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* in the absence of causal conditions, and here he is unable to speak although the causal conditions exist. Hence, both signs are equivalent with respect to Allah's Omnipotence and Will.

Subsequently, He *the Almighty* says:

فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ مِنَ الْمِحْرَابِ فَأَوْحَىٰ إِلَيْهِمْ أَن سَبِّحُوا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا ﴿١١﴾

**He went out of the sanctuary to his people and signalled to them to praise God morning and evening [11]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 11)**

Hence, this incident took place for Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*, while he was in *al-mihrab* (the place of worship and prayer). This is normally situated on an elevated spot raised above that which surrounds it, and constitutes the place of prayer of the prophets and the righteous. It was called a *mihrab* because in it Satan wages war with his schemes and whispers. In the story of Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* *al-mihrab* is also mentioned, 'And has there come to you the story of the litigants, when they made an entry into the private chamber (*al-Mihrab*) by ascending over the walls?' (*Sad*: 21)

The same event of the story of Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* is related in another verse which also indicates that he received the joyous news of the coming of Yahya (John) *peace be upon him*, while he was in his sanctuary; Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Then the angels called to him as he stood praying in the sanctuary: That Allah gives you the good news of Yahya (John) verifying a word from Allah...' (*Al-Imran*: 39)

In the verse in question, Allah's saying, 'signalled to them' (*Maryam*: 11), comprises the Arabic verb *awha* (to signal). As we have said, the word *wahy* (inspiration) has a general linguistic meaning as well as a specifically

religious one. The general linguistic meaning of *al-wahy* is the communication of a message by hidden means. Based upon this meaning, *al-wahy* (inspiration) occurs in numerous ways. For instance, Allah *the Almighty* conveys revelation to the messengers and prophets, and inspires those who are of the elect but not messengers. An example of the latter is clear in His saying, ‘And We revealed to Musa’s (Moses’s) mother saying, “suckle him”’ (*al-Qasas*: 7) which is to say that He *the Almighty* inspired Musa’s (Moses’s) mother through hidden means.

Likewise, He inspires the angels, ‘when your Lord revealed to the angels: I am with you, therefore make firm those who believe...’ (*al-Anfal*: 12); the righteous from among the followers of the messengers: ‘And when I revealed to the disciples, saying, Believe in Me and My apostle...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 111); and the insects which receive messages from Him in a covert manner: ‘And your Lord revealed to the bee saying, “Make hives in the mountains and in the trees and in what they build.”’ (*an-Nahl*: 68)

Moreover, such inspiration is even conveyed to inanimate things, as indicated in Allah’s saying, ‘When the earth is shaken with her (violent) shaking, and the earth brings forth her burdens, and man says, “What has befallen her?” On that day, she shall tell her news, because your Lord had inspired her.’ (*az-Zalzala*: 1-5)

In a slightly different vein, the devils may inspire one another; Allah says, ‘...the devils from among men and jinn, some of them suggesting to others varnished falsehood to deceive.’ (*al-An’am*: 112) The devils also communicate surreptitiously to human beings who have taken them as intimate associates: ‘...the devils suggest to their friends that they should contend with you.’ (*al-An’am*: 121) This is because Satan does not approach man except by stealthy means and by whispering in his thoughts.

On the other hand, inspiration in its authoritative religious connotation is communication from Allah Alone to a prophet who makes a claim of prophethood and is accompanied by a miracle. Thus, in this sense, *al-wahy* is the hidden communication from Allah *the Almighty* to a messenger.

Returning to the verse in question; Allah’s saying, ‘and signalled to them’ (*Maryam*: 11) means that Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* expressed

himself to the people by means of indicative gesturing since he could not speak. The instruction he communicated to them was, ‘...to praise Allah morning and evening.’ (*Maryam*: 11) In this passage, the Arabic adverb *bukratan* (by morning) denotes at the beginning of the day; whereas *’ashiyan* (by evening) means at the end of the day. So, he instructed them to enclose the day with glorification from beginning to end. It is as if he had begun to manifest the signs of joy and delight at the glad tidings, and that he felt that his own expressions of gratitude to Allah *the Almighty* and his glorification of Him were inadequate for this blessing. Therefore, he commanded his people to join him in glorifying and giving thanks to Him for this blessing since it was not restricted to him, but rather was shared collectively.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يٰٓيَحْيٰى خُذِ الْكِتٰبَ بِقُوَّةٍ وَّءَاتَيْنٰهُ الْحِكْمَ صَبِيًّا ﴿١٢﴾

**[We said], ‘Yahya, hold on to the Scripture firmly.’
While he was still a boy, We granted him wisdom [12]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 12)**

Let us take note that this noble verse directs our attention to a later period of Yahya’s (John’s) life which took place many years later. The previous narrative context was speaking about him while he was just a glad tiding to his father and still a foetus in his mother’s womb. Now, suddenly, Allah *the Almighty* addresses him as if he had become an actual person, saying, ‘We said, “Yahya (John), hold on to the Scripture firmly.”’ (*Maryam*: 12) Hence, he had attained the age of maturity, and was now qualified to assume the function of calling others to faith. The issue was thus one to be taken in all seriousness, as it was real and actual.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘...hold on to the Scripture’ (*Maryam*: 12), the Scripture refers to the Torah. It used to be their divine way of guidance which regulated their lives. There follows Allah’s saying, ‘firmly’ (*Maryam*: 12) which means that Yahya (John) should hold the Scripture with faithful dedication to its preservation and earnest endeavour to act in accord with it. This is because heavenly knowledge and the divinely ordered path which

have come to the Israelites in the Torah are not intended to be merely understood, but rather to be acted upon.

If it were otherwise, then one should bear in mind that Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Children of Israel, 'The likeness of those who were charged with the Torah, then they did not observe it, is as the likeness of the mule bearing books....' (*al-Jumu'a*: 5) Allah *the Almighty* had charged them with the Torah, but the Children of Israel had not properly carried out this task and failed to act accordingly.

In the verse in question, the Arabic word *al-quwwa* refers to the active power which controls the motion of life, both its movement and its stillness. For example, consider a spaceship which is launched into outer space and remains moving therein for several years; where does it get the fuel which propels it throughout this period? The reality is that it only requires fuel in a quantity sufficient to allow it to escape from the force of the earth's gravitational attraction. Then, once it gets out of the range of this gravitational force while it is moving, it remains in motion and does not stop except by employing some power. Similarly, that which is motionless remains so until some power comes along to cause it to move.

Hence, power either causes something motionless to move, or causes something moving to stop and become motionless. The braking mechanism of the train tracks which brings trains to a standstill is a case in point. This is because if you want to stop a train, you deprive it of fuel, but its forward momentum causes it to continue moving it forward, and so you need a counter power to stop it. This is what they call the law of inertia. In other words, if something is moving, it requires power to stop it, and if it is motionless, it needs power so that it can move.

You will notice this law of inertia, which we learned in school, when a car moves with you inside it and you find that your body is pushed backwards, as it has moved forward while you are motionless. Likewise, if the movement of the car stops, your body lunges forward because it has halted and you are still moving. Therefore, these things that are in a state of movement or inertia in the universe are the result of power.

In this way, we can understand Allah's saying, 'Yahya (John), hold on to the Scripture firmly' (*Maryam: 12*) because the Scripture contains commands and prohibitions, enjoining good and forbidding evil. So, if it orders you to do good deeds while you are not doing them, you will need a motivating power to push you to the good. It is as if you had been inert and required power to move you. Likewise, if the Scripture forbids you from evil deeds which you are doing, then you will need a power to hinder you and halt your movement towards evil. The divine way of guidance comprises this power which pushes you towards good if you are motionless, and prevent you from evil if you are moving in its direction.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'While he was still a boy, We granted him wisdom' (*Maryam: 12*). The Arabic word *al-hukm* (wisdom) in this passage signifies knowledge and understanding of the Torah; or, alternatively, obedience and worship. As for the Arabic word *sabiya* (child), it means that Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* was granted *al-hukm* at an early age. This was a gift from Allah *the Almighty* which is not dependent upon causal factors. Hence, maturity and intelligence appeared in Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* at an early age, surpassing his peers and his time. It is narrated that when he was quite young, his peers invited him to play, but he said to them, 'Not for play were we created.'⁽¹⁾

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَحَنَانًا مِّن لَّدُنَّا وَزَكَاةً وَكَانَ تَقِيًّا ۝١٣

**Tenderness from Us, and purity.
He was devout [13] (The Quran, *Maryam: 13*)**

Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* had come into the world, while his parents were elderly and weak, so, as a child, he needed someone to encompass him with affection and compassion and compensate him for the tender compassion

(1) This was narrated by Al-Hakim on the authority of Ibn `Abbas who narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace be upon him* said, 'Two boys said to Yahya (John), son of Zakaryya (Zechariah), 'Come with us to play.' But Yahya (John) replied, 'Not to play were we created. Let us go to pray.' See Al-Hakim, *Tarikh; As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/485.

of his parents. He was also in need of someone who would teach him and bring him up. So, Allah *the Almighty* assumed this function, for He is his Creator and the One Who named him. Additionally, He is his Guardian. Hence, Allah gave him tender compassion from Himself, as indicated by His saying, 'from Us' (*Maryam: 13*). Allah *the Almighty* granted him tenderness from Himself because his parent's energy for compassion had already been depleted.

Concerning Allah's saying, 'and purity' (*Maryam: 13*), it denotes Yahya's (John's) purity of sins, clarity of soul and spiritual grace. All of this was the result of bringing him up according to Allah's way of guidance which regulated his proceeding in life: do this; do not do that.

This is followed by Allah's saying, 'He was devout.' (*Maryam: 13*). This part of the verse shows clearly that Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* responded well to the divine compassion and this upbringing influenced him deeply; and hence he was mindful of Allah *Glorified is He* that is, he faithfully executed His commands and refrained from that which He had prohibited. In this way, he protected himself from Allah's majestic attributes of awe-inspiring.

We have previously said that *at-taqwa* (piety) implies that you establish between yourself and that which you fear a defensive hindrance which protects you from its harm. So, we say, 'Be fearfully mindful of Allah', also, 'Be fearfully mindful of Hellfire'. Yet, how could we be mindful of Allah *the Almighty* Whose Protection we are striving after?

When we say, 'Be fearfully mindful of Allah', this means to establish preventive measures between you and His Attributes of Awe-inspiring and Irresistible Might. This will protect you from His Irresistible Might, Implacable Omnipotence, and Overwhelming Power; for you are incapable of bearing the slightest amount of His Chastisement. Hellfire is among Allah's forces and a manifestation of His Overwhelming Control. Hence, being fearfully mindful of Hellfire is a part of being fearfully mindful of Him. Moreover, the protective defence which safeguards you from His Divine Attributes of Irresistible Might and Sublime Rigour is none other than obedience through compliance with His commands and prohibitions.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَيْهِ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ جَبَّارًا عَصِيًّا ﴿١٤﴾

kind to his parents, not domineering or rebellious [14] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 14)

Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* was born when his parents were in a state of old age and weakness, so he did not receive adequate compassion or appropriate upbringing from both. He did not feel complete parenthood in their presence, since their role in his life was secondary and their guardianship over him was feeble and modest. Yet, despite all this, he showed them the full kindness and compassion of filial piety, which is why Allah *the Almighty* says of him: ‘...he was not domineering or rebellious.’ (*Maryam*: 14)

Regarding the traits of haughtiness and rebelliousness, it is unimaginable that they would manifest themselves from a child towards his parents. An exception to this would be when the child felt that his father was neglecting him and turning away from guarding over him, and when he felt that his mother was too preoccupied to concern herself with his upbringing, abandoning him instead of taking care of him as he merits. It is for this reason that we find forms of this haughtiness and rebelliousness, and hear about those who treat their parents with cruelty and harshness. Since they did not receive affection, compassion, and watchful care from them, the bonds between parents and their offspring are severed. It seems that Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* related what happened to his son, and narrated his story to him. The son then came to understand the role of his parents and he disavowed any shortcoming on their part. Hence, he was full of gracious reverence and mercy towards them, conducting himself obediently and humbly in their regard.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَسَلَّمَ عَلَيْهِ يَوْمَ وُلِدَ وَيَوْمَ يَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ يُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ﴿١٥﴾

Peace was on him the day he was born, the day he died, and it will be on him the day he is raised to life again [15] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 15)

This verse mentions three matters which are to be counted as the major landmarks in the life of a man: birth, death, and Resurrection. Allah *the Almighty*

favoured Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* with peace on the day of his birth since he was born contrary to the usual manner of childbirth, given the fact that his mother was barren and old. Despite this, she was not the object of people's malicious talk, and no one raised objections to her giving birth to a child. Even though she was in this state, no one dared to be insolent towards her. This is because what happened to her was a sign of Allah *the Almighty* Who had given glad tidings of it to Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* in order for the glad tiding to be a preparation for and a prelude to this wondrous event.

Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* favoured him with peace on the day of his death, since he would die a martyr. Martyrdom is not comparable to death, for it gives him life extending to eternal, immortal life. Likewise, He favoured him with peace on the Day of Resurrection when he would be raised up alive.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مَرْيَمَ إِذِ انْتَبَذَتْ مِنْ أَهْلِهَا مَكَانًا شَرْقِيًّا ﴿١٦﴾

**Mention in the Quran the story of Maryam. She withdrew from her family to a place to the east [16]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 16)**

In fact, the story of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* occurred before the story of Zakaryya (Zechariah) and Yahya (John) *peace be upon them*. This is because the prayer of Zakaryya (Zechariah) for a son came as a result of what he heard from Maryam (Mary) when he asked her about the food with her and which he had not brought to her. As her guardian and trustee of her affairs, he was astonished to find that she was possessing sustenance that he had not brought to her, while she was devoting herself to worship in her prayer sanctuary. Consequently, he said to her, 'O Maryam (Mary)! Whence comes this to you? She said, "It is from Allah. Surely Allah gives to whom He pleases without measure.'" (*Al-Imran*: 37)

It is as if this question was the initial starting point of a fundamental principle: from where did you get this? However, Allah's bestowals are not dependent upon causal factors, for He grants sustenance to whom He wills, when He wills, without measure.

The Will of Allah *the Almighty* decreed that Maryam (Mary) should utter this statement: ‘Surely Allah gives to whom He pleases without measure.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 37). She meant to make Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* aware of something that she herself would later need when she realised she had become pregnant without a husband. Consequently, Maryam (Mary) will not object to this situation, and she will recognise that it is a gift from Allah *the Almighty*.

Likewise, this miracle of the gift of food reminds Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* about Allah’s Grace and vast Mercy; this matter is never absent from the mind of a prophet of Allah. Nevertheless, the human soul sometimes suffers from problematic issues which cause the awareness of this truth to drift far from the focus of one’s consciousness and from one’s concerns. But, as soon as it is recalled, he turns his attention towards it. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘There did Zakaryya (Zechariah) pray to his Lord...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 38). This verse shows that Zakaryya (Zechariah) thought that since Allah *the Almighty* grants His gifts to whomever He wills without reckoning, why should he not pray to Him for a righteous son, to be in charge of the mission of calling people to faith after him. As long as this provision is beyond all causal factors, then old age or barrenness will not prevent him from receiving this gift.

Hence, it was Maryam (Mary) who inspired Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* to make this supplication, and Allah *the Almighty* responded favourably to him by granting him Yahya (John) *peace be upon him*. This, in turn, was a preamble, paving of the way for Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* so that she would not be vexed by her pregnancy, and would attribute the phenomenon to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* bestows favours upon whom He wills without measure. This was also intended to be a source of comfort and assurance for her soul since otherwise it is possible that she would be plagued by strange thoughts and assailed by doubts, imagining that this pregnancy was a result of an event she was not aware of, or that it occurred, while she was asleep, for example.

So, Allah *the Almighty* prevented all of these doubts from affecting her by providing her with an introductory foretaste to witness and experience through the food which no one had brought to her, as well as in the

pregnancy of the wife of Zakaryya (Zechariah) though she was barren and could not bear children.

As for Allah's saying, 'Mention in the Quran (*kitab*) the story of Maryam (Mary)' (*Maryam*: 16), the Arabic word *kitab* refers to the Noble Quran. This verse is addressed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* commanding him to relate the story of Maryam (Mary) which was revealed to him in the Quran. Discussion of this story had previously occurred in the chapter of *al-'Imran* in which Allah *the Almighty* speaks of the vow of Maryam's (Mary's) mother that the child in her womb would be dedicated to service in the Holy Temple at Jerusalem. However, only males were considered suitable for service in the Holy Temple as they were able to bear the great hardship of this task. So, when she gave birth to a female, the Will of Allah *the Almighty* was not in accordance with her doubtful supposition on the matter. While Maryam (Mary) was not able to serve the actual site of the temple, she devoted herself to serving it in a moral and religious manner with great intensity. Ultimately, she left her family behind and went to this spot which she adopted as a place of spiritual retreat for herself to worship Allah *the Almighty* far from the prying eyes of people.

Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* was the daughter of 'Imran, and the Quran relates that she was addressed as: 'O sister of Harun (Aaron)!' (*Maryam*: 28) For this reason, confusion overcame many people, as they believed her to be the sister of Prophet Musa (Moses) ibn 'Imran and the sister of Harun (Aaron), the brother of Musa (Moses). In reality, this issue came about by happenstance whereby the names coincided. Consequently, when some of the companions went to Yemen, its inhabitants said to them, 'You say that Maryam (Mary) is the sister of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron), despite there being eleven generations between Maryam (Mary) and 'Imran, the father of Musa (Moses)!'

Thereupon, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Why did you not tell them that they were named after their Prophets and righteous people before them.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Muslim and At-Tirmidhi on the authority of Al-Mughira ibn Shu'ba. At-Tirmidhi graded it as authentic, but strange Hadith, for it is only narrated through ibn Idris's chain of narrators. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2135; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3155.*

It is even mentioned that at the funeral of one of their scholars there were in attendance four thousand men with the name of Harun (Aaron). Therefore, the names here just happen to coincide. Maryam (Mary) is indeed the daughter of 'Imran who is not the father of Musa (Moses); and she is indeed the sister of Harun (Aaron), but he is not the brother of Musa (Moses).

The Quran sets apart an entire chapter with the name of Maryam (Mary), and singles her out by identifying her by her name and the name of her father. We have previously explained that the individualised identification in the story of *Maryam* occurred because she was unique among women and stood apart from them by virtue of something that had never happened before and which happened only to her. This is a phenomenon pertaining to a specific person; it would never occur again to any other of the daughters of Eve.

On the other hand, when the Quran mentions an event that can conceivably be repeated, the story is related without specific identification of the personages involved. It is in this way that the narrative of the Quran treats the unnamed wives of Nuh (Noah) and Lut (Lot) as examples of disbelief, though they were the wives of two noble prophets. The same is true for the story of Pharaoh's unnamed wife who was an example of faith that arose in a house of disbelief, indeed within the very house of Pharaoh. The focus of their stories is not on specific personages. Instead, the purpose is to highlight freedom of belief, and to demonstrate that a woman, from the Islamic perspective, has independent personal freedom with regard to matters of belief. Moreover, she is not obliged to follow anyone in matters of religious belief or doctrine, regardless of whether she is the wife of a prophet or the wife of one of the leaders of disbelief.

Back to the verse in question; there follows Allah's saying, 'She withdrew from her family to a place to the east.' (*Maryam*: 16) The initial part of this passage: 'She withdrew from her family...' (*Maryam*: 16) means that Maryam (Mary) distanced herself from them. The verb employed here *nabadha* denotes abandoning and forsaking. It is as if she were on intimate terms not with her family, but rather with the Lord of her family. We should consider that the Quran says, '...from her family...' (*Maryam*: 16); it does not say, 'from her people'. Thus, Maryam (Mary) left behind the people closest to her

and those dearest to her heart, and went to this place to offer acts of worship to Allah *the Almighty*. The verse continues: ‘...to a place to the east.’ (*Maryam: 16*) But the east of what?! Every place may be correctly described as being to the east of one place just as it can be correctly described as being to the west of another. Hence, this word is applicable to every place. However, there is a prominent landmark in her place, namely the Holy Temple. Therefore, the intended meaning is that she withdrew from her family to the eastern side of the Holy Temple to fully devote herself to worship and service this place.

Here, we can pose a question which is: ‘Why did she choose the eastern side of the Holy Temple specifically over any other side?’ It is said that this is because they used to find the rising of the sun propitious.⁽¹⁾ After all, the sun is the zenith of physical light in whose guidance people move about without stumbling. During his proceeding, man has two kinds of light: physical light which comes from the sun, the moon, the stars, or from lamps etc. This is the light which causes things around one to be visible to him, enabling him to avoid bumping into things stronger than him and which could smash him, or into things weaker than him and which he might smash.

Moreover, man has also the light of Allah’s way of guidance which guides him as to issues of morality and values, preventing him from stumbling in the tortuous trails. Relevant to this is Allah’s saying, ‘Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth...’ (*an-Nur: 35*); after which He says, ‘...light upon light...’ (*an-Nur: 35*) Thus, Allah’s way of guidance is the light of Allah which descends by means of revelation to guide humankind to the right path.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

(1) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi says, ‘The place is surely specified as being towards the east because they accorded great significance to the easterly direction and from whence celestial lights arise. Moreover, the eastern sides of everything were regarded as being superior to the other sides. This opinion is stated by At-Tabari. It was also related that Ibn `Abbas had said, “I am the most knowledgeable of people with respect to the fact that why the Christians took the east for their direction of prayer. My knowledge is based upon Allah’s saying, ‘She withdrew from her family to a place to the east.’ (Maryam: 16) They took the birth place of `Isa (Jesus) as their direction of prayer.”’ See Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran, 5/4261.*

فَاتَّخَذَتْ مِنْ دُونِهِمْ حِجَابًا فَأَرْسَلْنَا إِلَيْهَا رُوحَنَا فَتَمَثَّلَ لَهَا بَشَرًا سَوِيًّا ﴿١٧﴾

**And secluded herself away; We sent Our Spirit to
appear before her in the form of a perfected man [17]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 17)**

The Arabic word *al-hijab* is the veil or curtain which conceals a person from other people, and conceals other people from that person. So, what is the benefit of Maryam's (Mary's) setting up a veil between herself and her family after she had already withdrawn away from them? In our opinion, she withdrew from her family to a far-away place, and this is a veil with respect to the place. However, this does not stand in the way of there being another well-protected site which shields her so that no one can look upon her. Hence, there exist both place (*makan*) and well-sheltered site (*makin*). This concealing cover might consist of a single veil, being only a curtain. It might also be a veil covered by another veil, this being the compound veil. This latter is similar to the double-layered curtain employed by well-to-do people today, with one of them covering the other whereby the curtain itself is covered. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And when you recite the Quran, We place between you and those who do not believe in the hereafter a hidden barrier.' (*al-Isra'*: 45) Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'We sent Our Spirit to appear before her...' (*Maryam*: 17).

The Arabic word *ar-rooh* (Spirit) has numerous connotations in the Noble Quran. The first of these is the spirit upon which our physical life is dependent. When Allah *the Almighty* breathes the spirit into physical matter, life, perception and movement pervade it and circulate throughout all the faculties of the body. This is the meaning of spirit in His saying, 'So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My Spirit, fall down making obeisance to him.' (*al-Hijr*: 29)

But, is the life of the body, which is sustained by means of the Spirit of Allah *the Almighty* the true meaning of life which is intended by Allah's creation of humankind?! It has been said that if this is the life which is meant, then how insignificant it is, since a person may pass through it and die after an hour, a day, a year or even several years.

Hence, this is a short, low and negligible life. It is closer to the life of worms and vermin. But, as for man whom Allah *the Almighty* has honoured and for whose sake He created the universe, there must necessarily be another form of life which corresponds to Allah's honouring of him. This is the eternal and ever-lasting life of the Hereafter regarding which the Quran says, 'And this life of the world is nothing but a sport and a play; and as for the next abode, that most surely is the life— did they but know!' (*al-'Ankabut: 64*)

In the latter verse, Allah's saying, '...the next abode, that most surely is the life...' (*al-'Ankabut: 64*) means that the Hereafter is the true life. On the other hand, your life in this world is threatened by death; even if you reach a very old age, you will ultimately and eventually die. So, if you desire the true life which is not threatened by death, you should strive after the life of the Hereafter.

Thus, as the Creator *Glorified is He* has provided you with a spirit in this world- the spirit by which you are animated and which corresponds with your life span in this world, Allah *the Almighty* is fully Able to provide the spirit for you in the Hereafter in such a way which corresponds its enduring existence and its eternal nature.

When the Quran speaks of this Spirit, it says to people, 'O you who believe! Answer (the call of) Allah and His Messenger when he calls you to that which gives you life...' (*al-Anfal: 24*). How is it that Prophet Muhammad calls them to that which will give them life, addressing them while they are already alive?! In fact, they are alive in the life of this world; however, Allah *the Almighty* is inviting them to another life that is unending and permanent. As for those who do not respond to this call and strive for this worldly life, they will not attain to anything except this short, fleeting life which has no permanence.

Just as Allah *the Almighty* uses the word 'spirit' to refer to the secret that He breathed into matter thereby infusing it with movement and life, He, likewise, terms as 'spirit' the values and precepts of conduct by which souls are enlivened with blissful life; He says, 'And thus did We reveal to you an inspired book (*rooh*) by Our command.' (*ash-Shura: 52*) The inspired book

here refers to the Quran. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* refers to the angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* who brings down the revelation, as the Spirit: ‘The Faithful Spirit has descended with it.’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 193)

Consequently, in the verse in question, Allah’s saying: ‘We sent Our Spirit to appear before her...’ (*Maryam*: 17) refers to Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* *peace be upon him*. This is followed by His saying, ‘...to appear before her in the form of a perfected man.’ (*Maryam*: 17) In this phrase, the Arabic word *tamaththala* means that he did not appear in his actual form, but rather that he assumed this appearance. As for his true form, it is luminous with other attributes, having two, three, or four wings.

Here rises a question, which is, ‘Why did the angel come to Maryam (Mary) in human form?’ This is because the two of them were going to encounter one another, and this meeting cannot take place in the realm of the invisible. In addition, it is impossible for an angel in his angelic state to meet with a human in his human state since each one of them is governed by specific regulatory principles which are incompatible with those of the other. In their meeting, it is necessary for the angel to appear in human form, or else for the human being to be raised to the state of possessing the attributes of the angels. The latter is exemplified in the case of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* being elevated to the state of having angelic properties in the incident of the Night Journey and Ascension. The meeting between these two creatures with different natures does not occur without this approximation.

Therefore, when the disbelievers asked for an angel to be sent by Allah *the Almighty* as a messenger, Allah *Glorified is He* replied to them saying, ‘Say, “Had there been on the earth angels walking about as settlers, We would certainly have sent down to them from the heaven an angel as an apostle.”’ (*al-Isra’*: 95) Likewise, Allah says, ‘And if We had made him an angel, We would certainly have made him a man, and We would certainly have made confused to them what they make confused.’ (*al-An’am*: 9) Hence, it is not possible for an angel to meet with human beings except through this approximation.

Thus, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* came to Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* in human form so that she would feel at ease with him and not be frightened if she saw him in his angelic form. Allah’s saying, ‘...to appear

before her in the form of a perfected man.' (*Maryam*: 17), signifies that he manifested himself as one of mankind.

As for the final Arabic word *sawiyya* (a perfected man), it means that he appeared in a perfect physical form, constitution and features. His component parts were in harmony and well ordered in the most beautiful manner that a man could be, not disfigured by an over-sized forehead, nose, or mouth as we find in some people.

All of this was meant for Maryam (Mary) to feel at ease and be reassured, as well as to reaffirm that she was a virtuously modest virgin. For when she saw this handsome, well-proportioned young man, she did not show any admiration for him nor did she display any undue friendliness towards him in speaking. She did not utter a single word that might be construed as attraction towards him, but rather, as the Quran relates, she said:

قَالَتْ إِنِّي أَعُوذُ بِالرَّحْمَنِ مِنْكَ إِنْ كُنْتَ تَقِيًّا ﴿١٨﴾

She said, 'I seek the Lord of Mercy's protection against you: if you have any fear of Him [do not approach]!' [18] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 18)

Hence, she did not give any indication of admiration towards him, nor did she incline desirously towards him with a single word. This is evidence of her chaste virtue, purity, uprightness and her pious steadfastness.

Her saying, 'I seek the Lord of Mercy's Protection...' (*Maryam*: 18) means that she sought recourse and preservation in Allah *the Almighty* from him because she feared that he may assault or violate her while she is weak and has neither power nor strength save with Allah *the Almighty* and so she sought refuge in Allah *Glorified is He*. In fact, it is the believer who honours someone's seeking refuge in Allah *the Almighty* and fully appreciates its value, for if you seek refuge in Him, He will help you, and if you seek His Protection, He will protect you.

In the same connection, there is a relevant story when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* proposed marriage to a woman whose beauty aroused the jealousy of his wives. They feared that she would gain ascendancy

over them in the heart of Messenger Muhammad, so they devised a scheme to rid themselves of her. They told her – and she was gullible and naïve – that the Messenger of Allah liked it when a person came near him to say, ‘I take refuge in Allah from you.’ Subsequently, as soon as he entered her dwelling, she immediately said this to him. Thereupon, he *peace and blessings be upon him* responded to her, ‘You have just sought protection in the ultimate Refuge. Return to your family.’⁽¹⁾

Back to the verse in question; Maryam (Mary) made the following statement, ‘She said, “I seek the Lord of Mercy’s protection against you: if you have any fear of Him [do not approach]!”’ (*Maryam*: 18) because the righteous, heedful believer is the one who fears Allah *the Almighty* and shows due respect for expressions of seeking protection in Him. It is as if she had said, ‘If you are mindful of Allah, then distance yourself from me’. She chose to seek refuge in Allah by using His Name ‘the Lord of Mercy’ due to the hope that if the angel in the form of a man were not a pious believer, he would nonetheless distance himself from her out of mercy for her and her weakness. Thus, she resorted to the Lord of Mercy; the Giver of Mercy Who would protect her and safeguard her from him.

Allah then says:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أَنَا رَسُولُ رَبِّكِ لِأَهَبَ لَكِ غُلَامًا زَكِيًّا ﴿١٩﴾

**But he said, ‘I am but a Messenger from your Lord,
[come] to announce to you the gift of a pure son’ [19]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 19)**

Here, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* said, ‘I am but a messenger from your Lord...’ (*Maryam*: 19), rather than saying ‘a messenger of Allah’. This is because the Lord is the One in charge of the integral upbringing; He is the One Who reforms and preserves it from moral corruption. The bestowals of Lordship are of a material nature, whereas the bestowals of

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari on the authority of Abu Usayd Allah be pleased with him in the Book of Divorce. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 5255.*

divinity are of an immaterial, spiritual nature, being related to worship. Consequently, the above-cited passage implies: 'I am a messenger of your Lord, Who assumes responsibility for you, watches over you and safeguards you, so do not fear'.

Regarding his statement, '[come] to announce to you the gift' (*Maryam: 19*), it is to be understood in the sense that what is going to happen to Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* is a gift from Allah *the Almighty* that is not subject to the laws of nature. The gift in this instance is a veritable, outright gift. We have mentioned before in the story of Zakaryya (Zechariah) and Yahya (John) *peace be upon them* that Allah *the Almighty* bestowed Yahya (John) upon Zakaryya (Zechariah) while he was in a state of old age and his wife was barren, but nevertheless the male and female sexual organs were present. However, in the case of Maryam (Mary), she was a female without a male. Hence, here is a manifestly pure gift and a true miracle.

Finally, Allah's saying, '...a pure son' (*Maryam: 19*) signifies that the boy will be purified, cleansed and of an unadulterated nature.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says of Maryam (Mary):

قَالَتْ أَنَّىٰ يَكُونُ لِي غُلَامٌ وَلَمْ يَمَسِّنِي بَشَرٌ وَلَمْ أَكُ بَغِيًّا ﴿٢٠﴾

**She said, 'How can I have a son when no man has touched me? I have not been unchaste' [20]
(The Quran, *Maryam: 20*)**

The saying of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* begins with the Arabic interrogative particle *anna* (how), aiming to discover the means through which this phenomenon would be effected and implying amazement at how such a thing could possibly occur.

The initial part of the statement includes the Arabic verbal phrase *yamsasni* (touched me) in which the notion of contact (*al-mass*) is an allusion and courteous expression for sexual relations. Maryam (Mary) disavowed any type of intimate encounter between her and any man when she said, 'no man has touched me? I have not been unchaste.' (*Maryam: 20*) Now, conjugal contact of a man with a woman has two basic means. The first means is that

of legal marriage which Allah *the Almighty* ordained for His servants for procreative multiplication and the safeguarding of progeny. It is based upon consent, acceptance, and legal contract and witnessing. This represents sexual contact of a lawful nature. The second way is that when these intimate physical relations come about in an unlawful, forbidden form, either with the woman's consent or against her will. Maryam (Mary) refuted all these means when she said, 'I have not been unchaste.' (*Maryam*: 20) Hence, it is understandable that she asked about how she would have a son.

The Arabic verb *massa* (to touch) occurs in the Quran as a reference to sexual intercourse. An example of this is Allah's saying, 'There is no blame on you if you divorce women when you have not touched them...' (*al-Baqara*: 236) wherein the intended meaning of *al-mass* is sexual intercourse. For this reason, Imam Abu Hanifa *Allah rest his soul* interpreted the verb *lamas* (to touch) in Allah's saying: '...you have touched the women...' (*an-Nisa*': 43) as to have sexual intercourse since the Quran employs the word *al-mass* to signify the consummation of marriage. Moreover, *al-mass* is an act done by one party, whereas the verb *lamasa* conveys the meaning of mutual touching between two parties and, thus, for even more reason connotes copulation.

With respect to her statement, 'I have not been unchaste.' (*Maryam*: 20), the Arabic word *al-baghiy* (unchaste woman) means a woman who desires men. The related word *al-bigha`* implies prostitution, and thus *al-baghiy* is she who offers herself to men and seduces them, perhaps even coercing them into this sinful act.

Maryam's (Mary's) use of the word *baghiy* is a hyperbola form of the word *baghy* meaning transgression or injustice. She chose the intense or exaggerated form *baghiy* instead of saying *baghiya* because the latter—meaning fornicator—is associated to the due rights surrounding honour, whereas the aggressive transgression against honour itself corresponds to excess regarding this deed.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says,

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ قَالَ رَبِّكَ هُوَ عَلَىٰ هَٰئِنٍ وَلِنَجْعَلَهُ
 ءَايَةً لِلنَّاسِ وَرَحْمَةً مِنَّا وَكَانَ أَمْرًا مَّقْضِيًّا ﴿٢١﴾

And he said, ‘This is what your Lord said: “It is easy for Me – We shall make him a sign to all people, a blessing from Us”’ [21] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 21)

This is just like what Allah *the Almighty* said to Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* when he was amazed that he would have a son: ‘He said, “This is what your Lord has said.”’ (*Maryam*: 9) It is as if Allah *the Almighty* was telling him that He was full aware of his condition of old age and that his wife was barren and could not bear children, but the command has come from Him and His decree has been issued. It is He Alone Who has control over the execution of things. So, why, then, should Zakaryya (Zechariah) be surprised?!

Here, we find that some people try to criticise the Quran by arguing that the final vowel in His saying ‘*kadhalika*’ in the story of Zakaryya (Zechariah) is different from *kadhaliki* in the story of Maryam (Mary), although the narrative context and meaning—translated as ‘this is’ in both cases—are one and the same. They ask which of these two usages is more eloquently superior to the other. And if one of them is such, then does the other lack some rhetorical features? This questioning on their part arises from inability to improperly understand the words of Allah *the Almighty* since the expressions *kadhalika* and *kadhaliki* comprise the demonstrative pronoun *dha*, and the particle *kaf* of address for the second person singular which is pronounced as ‘*ka*’ for the masculine and ‘*ki*’ for the feminine.

In the verses in question, Allah’s saying, ‘...Your Lord...’ (*Maryam*: 21) implies the One Who takes charge of your upbringing and your safeguarding. Now, whoever is brought up by his Lord is reared and provided for in a complete manner, enabling him to carry out the mission desired by the One Who instructs and brings him up.

Concerning Allah’s saying, ‘...This is easy for Me...’ (*Maryam*: 21), and what He says regarding the issue of resurrection after death: ‘...and most easy is this for Him...’ (*ar-Rum*: 27), the words *hayyin* (easy) and *ahwan* (easier) are not to be taken in their literal sense regarding Allah *the Almighty*. This is

because the notions of ‘easy’ and ‘easier’ call for the notions of ‘difficult’ and ‘the most difficult’, which are pertinent to the action a human being as to his processing of things according to his power and means. However, regarding the Creator, the notions of ‘easy’ and ‘easier’ do not exist, since He does not undertake actions by processing, nor does He need to apply effort; rather, He does so by His command ‘Be’.

Allah *the Almighty* speaks to us according to the capacities of our intellects. Hence, His saying, ‘...This is easy for Me...’ (*Maryam*: 21) shows that, based on human logic, if He has created us from nothing, then fashioning us again from something which exists is an easy matter for Him.

Then He says, ‘We shall make him a sign to all people, a blessing from Us.’ (*Maryam*: 21) Here, we may pose the following question, ‘Was the purpose of creating `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* in this manner merely for Allah *the Almighty* to manifest His Power over creation and the unrestricted nature of His Omnipotence?’ No, rather, there is another objective, which is clearly mentioned in Allah’s saying, ‘We shall make him a sign to all people...’ (*Maryam*: 21). In this passage, the Arabic word *aya* (sign) means a wondrous phenomenon which runs counter to the familiarity of customary precedent, and from standard causal means. In a similar sense, we say, ‘This person is a prodigy (*aya*) of beauty, a prodigy of intelligence’. Thus, the word *aya* is only said about something which goes far beyond ordinary comprehension.

Just as the Creator created Adam *peace be upon him* without a father or a mother, and just as He created Eve without a mother, the wondrous phenomenon here is that Allah *Glorified is He* created `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* from a mother who did not have recourse to a father. Meanwhile, He creates all human beings from both a father and a mother. Yet, it may be that the father and mother exist, but He does not intend for the two of them to have children, so He renders whomever He wills to be sterile.

Hence, this matter is governed exclusively by the Will of the Creator of the universe *Glorified is He*. The sign here is intended that people recognise the absolutely unrestrained nature of His Power with respect to creation, and that it is not dependent upon causal factors, nor is it a mechanical process. Rather, it is up to the Will of the Creator to do whatever He wants.

But does the sign lie in the creation of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* or in his mother? It was possible to bring forth `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* from a father and a mother, which is why the miracle is proved in his mother. Yet, he *peace be upon him* is the main reason for this miraculous event. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse, ‘And We made the son of Maryam (Mary) and his mother a sign.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 50) Thus, `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and Maryam (Mary) are one sign, not two, since they both cannot be separated.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘A blessing from Us’ (*Maryam*: 21). The creation of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* in such a manner manifests a particular facet of divine mercy. Hereby, Allah *the Almighty* mercifully spares people from having suspicions that His Power is conditional upon causal factors and dependent upon them. Even if this suspicion is merely a passing thought, it is not permissible and is not fitting with respect to the Creator. It is as if He is graciously sparing us from such very notions by means of an actual event confirming that absolute divine power arises regarding creation from extant factors, from partial factors and even from nothing.

There follows Allah’s saying, ‘And so it was ordained’ (*Maryam*: 21) means that it is a settled issue which allows for no disputation; therefore, you should not argue about its particular circumstances. This is because any speech about something in the future from someone who does not possess the means of carrying out what he says may not lead to the desired outcome on account of any of the various reasons. For example, you may say, ‘Tomorrow, I will do such-and-such’. But then tomorrow arrives, and many things—possibly outside of your control—come between you and what you desired. Hence, you do not have mastery over all the elements of the act.

By contrast, if the speech is from Allah *the Almighty* Who has mastery over all of the elements of the act, then be certain that His saying is the truth and reality. Thus, He says, ‘And so it was ordained.’ (*Maryam*: 21)

When we classified the actions as taking place in the past, or that which occurred before the uttering of the speech; the present, which is occurring at that moment; or the future, we stated that the actions regarding Allah *the Almighty* are not described as being in the past, present or future.

Hence, if He says, ‘...Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.’ (*al-Fath*: 14), a verse in which the Arabic verb *kana* (be) is in the form of the past tense, does this mean that He *was* Forgiving and Merciful only in the past, and He is not so in the present or will not be in the future? No, because Allah *Glorified is He* was and remains Forgiving and Merciful, for His Mercy and His Forgiveness are timelessly eternal, having been present even before anyone existed to be forgiven or bestowed mercy upon.

It is for this reason that the verb occurs in the form of the past tense since the attribute is present in Allah *the Almighty* since before the beginning of time. Hence, He is the Creator before He even created the creation, and it was based on the attribute of origination that He created all creatures. This can be likened to the parable we have propounded, as follows: ‘We say that so and so is a poet, but is he a poet because he composed a versified poem? Or did he compose a versified poem because he is a poet? Consequently, then, he is a poet before he composed a poem since he would not have composed it if this trait were not already present in him’.

Therefore, Allah’s attributes are timelessly eternal. So, when you say, ‘...Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.’ (*al-Fath*: 14); though the verb literally denotes ‘was’ (*kana*), this attribute has been unshakeably established for Him for all time. Moreover, since He does not change and no one opposes Him, then this attribute abides in Him. This means that He was and will never cease to be characterised by it.

This issue is clearly evident in the opening verse of the chapter of *an-nahl* in which Allah says, ‘Allah’s commandment has come, therefore do not desire to hasten it; Glory be to Him...’ (*an-Nahl*: 1) Because the initial Arabic verb in this passage is expressed in the form of the past tense, certain orientalist have raised objections to this verse, arguing, ‘How is it that He says, ‘has come’ (*ata*) in the past tense, and then He says, ‘therefore do not desire to hasten it...’ (*an-Nahl*: 1), employing an expression referring to the future’? To this, we reply, ‘Since it is Allah Who says that His command has come, then this matter is concluded without doubt and without dispute, for there exists no other power to resist it or to prevent its occurrence. Therefore, it occurs in the form of the past tense, though, in reality, it refers to a future event’.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَحَمَلَتْهُ فَانْتَبَدَّتْ بِهِءِ مَكَانًا قَاصِيًا ﴿٢٢﴾

And so it was ordained: she conceived him. She withdrew to a distant place [22] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 22)

Here, the opening phrase in Arabic, *fa-hamalat-hu* (she conceived him) literally means that she then grew pregnant with him. This expression comprises temporal ellipsis and sequential continuity, with pregnancy necessarily implying one who carries and one who is carried. Regarding the next statement: ‘She withdrew to a distant place’ (*Maryam*: 22), you should not think that this narrative event of withdrawing is a repeated scene from the story, for the earlier withdrawal was for spiritual retreat and worship of Allah *the Almighty*. Here, His saying, ‘She withdrew...’ (*Maryam*: 22) implies that when she became aware of her pregnancy, she moved away from her people. She feared their prying eyes and curiosity, and therefore departed to a distant place.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

فَاجَاءَهَا الْمَخَاضُ إِلَى جَنْعِ النَّخْلَةِ قَالَتْ يَلَيْتَنِي مِتُّ قَبْلَ هَذَا
وَكَنتُ نَسِيًّا مَنْسِيًّا ﴿٢٣﴾

And, when the pains of childbirth drove her to [cling to] the trunk of a palm tree, she exclaimed, ‘I wish I had been dead and forgotten long before all this!’ [23] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 23)

The opening phrase in Arabic comprises the verb *aja`ha* (to resort to her) which should be distinguished from the basic form of the same verb *ja`a*. The latter means for one ‘to come’ out of choice and pleasure, whereas the former means to ‘bring someone’ by coercion and against his will. Thus, it is as if it was the pains of birthing which caused Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* to seek recourse to the trunk of a palm tree and compelled her to go to that place. In other words, the throes of childbirth brought her as if there was an external force which forcefully pulled her to that place.

The throes of childbirth are the pains which afflict a woman before giving birth, and not the actual labour pains which precede the descent of the foetus. Allah's saying, '...the pains of childbirth drove her to [cling to] the trunk of a palm tree...' (*Maryam*: 23) makes clear for us the motive behind her going to the trunk of the palm tree. As a matter of fact, when the time of giving birth comes, a woman needs something to support herself against and to cling to in order to lighten the pain of birthing for her. Alternatively, she may resort to one of her friends with whom she can share this suffering. Hence, the throes of childbirth compelled her to have recourse to the trunk of the palm tree, which here occurs with the definite article since it is a well-known palm tree.

As for the Arabic expression *jidh` an-nakhla* (the trunk of the palm tree), the first element means the trunk of the tree which extends from the roots to the beginning of the branches. So, will Maryam (Mary), during her birthing, cling to this entire trunk? Of course not, she will only take hold of the part near to her. The word *jidh`* (trunk) is used here for exaggerated emphasis.

A similar example of this usage occurs in Allah's saying, '...they put their fingers into their ears because of the thunder peal, for fear of death...' (*al-Baqara*: 19). It is common knowledge that a person plugs his ear with the tip of the finger, not with the entire finger. Thus, the meaning is expressed using the word 'fingers' by means of exaggerated emphasis about preventing the upsetting noise and the thunderbolts which befall them from reaching their ears.

Hence, Maryam (Mary) found herself faced with a real situation and a visible pregnancy which she could not hide, and had no ability to conceal. She had previously acquiesced when the angel gave her glad tidings of a son endowed with purity, and she consented to become pregnant with him. But, what is her state now after the matter has evolved from words to actual reality, and here is the baby boy inside of her belly, and the time of giving birth to him has arrived? Inevitably, she has been afflicted by turbulent emotions since the situation has gone beyond the bounds of concealment and secrecy; that is why she says, 'I wish I had been dead and forgotten long before all this!' (*Maryam*: 23) She wished she had died before finding herself in these extremely difficult circumstances. Yet, when the angel had

earlier informed her that Allah *the Almighty* would bestow upon her a pure son, she was incredulous, saying, 'How can I have a son when no man has touched me? I have not been unchaste.' (*Maryam*: 20) Here, she only expressed wonderment and calm emotion. However, once the matter of giving birth becomes a reality, this must give rise to a powerfully emotional reaction expressing what she feels in terms of helpless bewilderment. It is for this reason that she wished for death, although Allah *the Almighty* forbids us from wishing for death. This prohibition is found in the Noble Hadith that instructs us not to desire death when life becomes straiten to us, but rather to say, 'O Allah! Give me life so long as the life is good for me, and take away my life if death is good for me.'⁽¹⁾

We have said that it is forbidden for you to wish for death as long as it comprises opposition to the Decree of Allah *the Almighty* and rebelliousness against His Will. This would be tantamount to your hating life when it becomes difficult for you, and therefore you yearn for death. On the other hand, if you should yearn for death based on your knowledge that you will be moving on to something better than that which you leave behind, then this is a different matter.

This issue of wishing for death has been related in the Quran when Allah speaks about the Children of Israel who said, 'We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones'.⁽²⁾ They also said, 'Fire shall not touch us but for a few days'. Moreover, they proclaimed, 'The future abode with Allah is specially for us.' So, how did the Noble Quran answer them in this respect?

If the situation is as you say, and the Hereafter belongs to you: '... then invoke death if you are truthful.' (*al-Baqara*: 94) Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* states what their reaction will actually be, saying, 'And they will never invoke it

(1) *Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased him related that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Let none of you wish for death on account of an affliction that befalls him. if he cannot, but long for death, let him pray: "O Allah! Give me life so long as the life is good for me, and take away my life if death is good for me."' See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6351; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith, no. 2680.*

(2) In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And the Jews and the Christians say, "We are the sons of Allah and His beloved ones." Say, "Why does He then chastise you for your faults? Nay, you are mortals from among those whom He has created..."' (*al-Ma'ida*: 18).

on account of what their hands have sent before...' (*al-Baqara*: 95). In addition, He says about them, 'And you will most certainly find them the greediest of men for life.' (*al-Baqara*: 96). As long as they will not yearn for death and as long as they are the most covetous of people for life, then it must be that their worldly life is superior in their eyes than the life of the Hereafter.

Hence, it is not permissible for the believer to wish for death as an escape from some tribulation which has afflicted him, or as opposition to the decree of Allah *the Almighty*. However, this is permissible for him if he knows that he is proceeding to a place which is better than that in which he currently is.

Back to the verse under discussion; regarding Maryam's (Mary's) saying, '...and forgotten long before all this!' (*Maryam*: 23), the initial Arabic word *an-nasy* (a forgotten thing) refers to something trivial to which no attention is paid. This is typically something which is forgotten due to its insignificance such as a box of matches with only two match sticks which someone forgets, and en route he remembers it and returns to his friend's house to bring it. In this sense, Maryam (Mary) longed to be an insignificant thing which is forgotten so that no one would remember her. She was not satisfied with merely wishing to be a negligible thing (*nasy*) which is easily forgotten in and of itself, since despite its insignificance, there might be someone who remembers and recognises it. For this reason, she emphatically stresses her wish of being totally forgotten by adding the word *mansiyan* (utterly forgotten). Thus, she wishes to be something forgotten which no one will remember or even think about.


Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَنَادَ مِنْ تَحْتِهَا أَلَّا تَحْزَنِي قَدْ جَعَلَ رَبُّكِ تَحْتَكِ سَرِيًّا ﴿٢٤﴾

**But a voice cried to her from below, 'Do not worry:
your Lord has provided a stream at your feet [24]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 24)**

Here, the first word of the Arabic phrases *min tahti-ha* (from below), i.e. *min* is recited according to an alternative recitation as (*man*) with the

meaning of 'who'. It is correct that Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* was still there with her, but he was not beneath her. So, this suggests that the one who called out to her was the newborn infant, saying, 'Do not worry...' (*Maryam: 24*). Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* was aggrieved that her place of birth was cut off from people and that she was in the state of giving birth, with no one with her to support her. Moreover, there is no one with her to bring her the supplies required for this situation, such as food, drink etc. Therefore, her Lord took care of her and provided her with that which would sustain her including food and drink; thus Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...your Lord has provided a stream at your feet.' (*Maryam: 24*) In this passage, the Arabic word *sariya* is a stream which runs with sweet, cool water. After this, Allah *the Almighty* gives her food which suits her condition, as He says:


 وَهَزَىٰ إِلَيْكَ مِجْدَعِ النَّخْلَةِ نَسْفُطُ عَلَيْكَ رُطْبًا جَنِيًّا

**And, if you shake the trunk of the palm tree towards
 you, it will deliver fresh ripe dates for you [25]
 (The Quran, *Maryam: 25*)**

In this manner, Allah *the Almighty* provided Maryam (Mary) with the essential ingredients of life and the elements for its preservation. Based on their relative importance for a human being, these elements fall into the following order: air, drink and food. In fact, a person can do without food for a month, it being possible for him to subsist on the nourishment that his body has stored up. However, he is unable to do without water for more than three to ten days, depending on what his body contains of water, whereas he cannot survive without air for a single moment to the extent that he can die from the suppression of a single breath.

Therefore, it is part of the Wisdom of the Creator *Glorified is He* that He frequently grants ownership over food, and seldom grants ownership over water, but never grants ownership over air to anyone. This is because if you got angry with someone and consequently denied him air, he would die before you once again became pleased with him. Thus, the elements of the preservation of life are allotted according to their importance in the life of man. Allah *the Almighty* had assured provision of them for Maryam (Mary) and

made them easily accessible to her, thereby relieving her of needing someone to serve her. Thus, air is present as she is outside in the open; then as for water, He caused a sweet, cool stream to flow beneath her; then with respect to food, He says, ‘And, if you shake the trunk of the palm tree towards you, it will deliver fresh ripe dates for you.’ (*Maryam: 25*) It is as if Allah *the Almighty* wants to manifest another one of His Miraculous signs to Maryam (Mary). Thus, He commanded her to shake the desiccated trunk of the palm tree which even a strong man could not shake, let alone Maryam (Mary) who was in a weakened state and suffering the pain and hardship of childbirth.

Although Allah *the Almighty* is fully Capable of sending down food to her without any effort on her part or need for her to shake the tree, He wished to bring two matters together for her: the pursuit of causal factors as well as reliance on the Supreme Causer. The former, taking causative action to attain a desired result is embodied in the shaking of the palm tree, despite her being exhausted and enfeebled by pregnancy and childbirth. He brought her to the palm tree so she could lean against it in her solitude in order that we might know that a human being in his striving is required to take the causal factors into consideration, regardless of how weak he may be. Therefore, it was left up to Maryam (Mary) to take the initiative despite lack of strength. Thereafter she depended upon the Supreme Causer Who sent down to her fresh, ripe dates.

So, was Maryam (Mary) able to shake this large, desiccated trunk? Unquestionably, her action was merely a token gesture towards it, indicating compliance to Allah’s Command. It was He Who took charge of causing the food to descend for her. A poet has depicted this situation in the following words:

Are you not aware that Allah said to Maryam (Mary)
Shake the trunk towards you, it will let fresh dates fall
If He had willed, He would have given [them to] her without shaking
But everything has an instigating cause.

Concerning Allah’s saying, ‘...it will deliver...’ (*Maryam: 25*), this signifies that upon her will fall ‘...fresh, ripe dates...’ (*Maryam: 25*) This latter phrase means that the dates were ripen and merited being harvested, not being unripe and prematurely picked. Among the varieties of fresh dates

known are some which fall before having reached maturity, and thus are not fit for eating. Moreover, His saying, ‘...it will deliver...’ (*Maryam: 25*) comprises proof of the responsiveness of inanimate things and their ability to react. If this were not so, then a date would not depart from obedience to its mother tree; hence the tree willingly and responsively casts the dates down when they attain to a state of ripeness.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says,

فَكُلِي وَأَشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا فَإِمَّا تَرِينَنَ مِنَ الْبَشْرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي
 إِنَّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا ﴿٢٦﴾

**So eat, drink, be glad, and say to anyone you may see:
 “I have vowed to the Lord of Mercy to abstain from
 conversation, and I will not talk to anyone today” [26]
 (The Quran, *Maryam: 26*)**

With respect to providing sustenance to Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* we notice that Allah *the Almighty* first provides water, saying, ‘...your Lord has provided a stream at your feet.’ (*Maryam: 24*) Then Allah *the Almighty* provides food, saying, ‘And, if you shake the trunk of the palm tree towards you, it will deliver fresh ripe dates for you.’ (*Maryam: 25*) This is because water is more essential than food in terms of human needs. However, in the context of Allah’s command for her to enjoy the benefit of these gifts, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘So eat, drink...’ (*Maryam: 26*), that is, He started with mentioning the act of eating and followed it by the act of drinking. Here arises the following question which is, ‘Why does Allah *the Almighty* mention the act of eating before that of drinking?’ This is because a human being usually eats first, then drinks. Thus, despite its importance, water normally comes after food, so Glorified is Allah, the One Whose speech is ultimately true.

Allah’s saying, ‘be glad’ (*Maryam: 26*), comes after Allah *the Almighty* has abundantly provisioned Maryam (Mary) with food and drink which are the mainstay of all material existence and by which life is sustained. However, after providing her with food and drink, she was still feeling a deep sadness, pain, and anguished bewilderment due to the situation she underwent. For this

reason, after providing her with what sustained her physical body, Her Lord bestows upon her tranquillity and peace of mind, relieving her of pain of the soul and the anguish of her inner heart. In this verse, the first part of the Arabic expression *qarri `ayna* (be glad) implies being still and calm. In the Arabic language, this expression in question is tantamount to happiness. This is crystal clear in the saying of the wife of Pharaoh related in the following verse in which Allah says, ‘...and Pharaoh’s wife said, “Here is a joy to behold for me and for you!”’ (*al-Qasas*: 9) The Arabs employ the phrase *qurra al-`ayn* (a joy to the eye) to refer to joy or delight. This is because the resting of the eye upon perceiving an object shows plainly that the eye has come across a beautiful sight, from which it derives gladness and becomes happy. Hence, the eye is not distracted from it by any other sight, and does not move away from it.

This expression may also be used in a contradictory sense, that is, in the sense of malevolence and imprecation against a person, wishing him ill. An example of this usage is found in the story of the woman who entered the presence of one of the caliphs, but who rebuffed her and so she said to him, ‘May Allah completely fulfil His blessings upon you, and bring joy to your eye (*aqarra `ayna-ka*).’ Those present in the court of the Caliph understood that she was supplicating to his benefit, but the caliph realised her real intention. He then said to those sitting with him, ‘You have not grasped what she was saying. Most surely, she meant by ‘May Allah completely fulfil His blessings upon you’ that He should take them away. Have you not heard the poet’s say:

When a thing is fully achieved, its shortcoming appears
Watch out for extinction when fulfilment is said.

This is because man is susceptible to variability, unable to remain constant in any state. As soon as he attains to the ultimate peak with regard to actualisation of a blessing upon him, it is inevitable that he will be separated from it, given the fact that he is prone to change in this life.

Furthermore, the caliph interpreted the woman’s saying, ‘May Allah bring joy to your eye’ to signify her wish that Allah *the Almighty* gives rest to the movement of the eye through blindness.

Back to the verse in question, Allah's saying, '...be glad...' (*Maryam: 26*) is a command to Maryam (Mary) to be happy because Allah *the Almighty* has chosen her; and to be joyful because what Allah *the Almighty* has given her. So, she should not be anxious about her son or be aggrieved, for he is the very essence of a blessing which was not conferred on anyone else from among the women of all the worlds.

There follows His saying, '...and say to anyone you may see, "I have vowed to the Lord of Mercy to abstain from conversation, and I will not talk to anyone today."' (*Maryam: 26*) Here, Allah *Glorified is He* takes charge of defending Maryam (Mary) and justifying her situation, which she herself would be unable to justify based on the cultural norms of her people. After all, who would be able to come up with an excuse for a woman who becomes pregnant and gives birth without having a husband? Regardless of what she says, she will not be believed and will not be safe from the tongues of her people and their defamation. Hence, the best response to what one dislikes is silence; and so Allah *the Almighty* commands her to keep silent and not to argue with anyone concerning her situation; Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Say, "I have vowed to the Lord of Mercy to abstain from conversation, and I will not talk to anyone today."' (*Maryam: 26*) Abstinence here is with regard to speaking. This is akin to what occurred in the story of Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* for the two miracles are very similar to one another, given the fact that Allah *the Almighty* had granted a child to Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* though the requisite organs were defective, and He also granted a child to Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* though the means required for procreation were not found. No one can justify these miracles nor defend them except the One Who produced them *Glorified is He*.

Some people who indulge in attempting to find faults in the Quran have raised objections regarding the verse in question, asking, 'How can He command her to refrain from speaking and simultaneously order her to say, 'I have vowed to the Lord of Mercy to abstain from conversation?''⁽¹⁾

(1) In his book, Abu Yahya Zakaryya Al-Ansari says, 'Allah's saying, "Say, 'I have vowed to the Lord of Mercy to abstain from conversation, and I will not talk to anyone today'" (*Maryam: 26*), is subordinate to an implicit factor between this statement and =

It is possible that she made this statement initially to the first human being she saw to declare her abstinence, and that she afterwards abstained from speaking. Another possible interpretation is that what is meant by speech here is gesturing since communicating by gestures is the most effective form of communication and the most widely understood. This point is proved by the fact that although peoples' languages are different from one another since every group shares a common language specific to its members, nevertheless, body language continues to be the universal language upon which all agree. For example, when you nod with your head, it means 'yes' in all languages; and when you gesture with your finger in a certain way, it means 'no'. Hence, body language is a global and commonly shared language.

In another verse, the Noble Quran makes mention of the point in question, saying, 'Until when he reached (a place) between the two mountains, he found on that side of them a people who could hardly understand a word.' (*al-Kahf*: 93) This verse shows that the people referred to here could not come close to understanding, yet they had every possible reason to understand. Despite this, they communicated with Dhu Al-Qarnayn through speech, gesturing, and sign language, and thus they understood each other; Allah says, 'They said, "O Dhu Al-Qarnayn! Surely Gog and Magog make mischief in the land..."' (*al-Kahf*: 94).

Let us take note that Maryam's (Mary's) statement, '...and I will not talk to anyone today' (*Maryam*: 26) indicates that the prohibition from speaking specifically refers to human beings since she did not say generally, 'I will not speak'. It could not be otherwise since Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* was with her speaking to her, and there was mutual understanding between them; for he might find a way out of this difficult situation for her. Maryam (Mary) herself was fully confident and assured that such a way out existed, for though her Lord *Glorified is He* had commanded her to

= *its preceding condition which may be assessed as follows: "And if you should see any human being who then asks you to speak, then say to him 'Behold, abstinence I have vowed.' This explanation nullifies what is said regarding her statement, "Hence, I may not speak today to any mortal" as being contrary to the vow of silence. According to this assessment, her saying is an integral part of the vow, not after it.' See, Al-Ansari, Fath Ar-Rahman Kashf Ma Yaltabis Fi Al-Quran, 255.*

abstain from speaking, He would surely render the baby boy capable of speech, so that he himself would speak and defend his mother from the accusations of her people.

When we previously discussed Allah's saying, '...but a voice cried to her from below, "Do not worry."' (Maryam: 24), we eliminated the possibility that this call might have come from Jibril (Gabriel). We said that it was the call of the newborn infant. It is for this reason that Maryam (Mary) became reassured and she fully recognised that she was in the presence of a tremendous miracle. Moreover, she had the utmost confidence that when she gestured towards the child, he himself would speak and refute any accusation of her people. This is because the words spoken by someone who can speak do not provide justifying evidence which convinces people about a case contrary to normative customs. However, when he speaks while he is still in the cradle, this signifies that he is but a miracle that transcends ordinary phenomena. Moreover, if the infant boy is a miracle, then the miracle reasonably involves his mother as well.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says,

فَأْتَتْ بِهِ قَوْمَهَا تَحْمِلُهُ، قَالُوا لِمَرْيَمُ لَقَدْ جِئْتِ شَيْئًا فَرِيًّا ﴿٢٧﴾

She went back to her people carrying the child, and they said, 'Maryam! You have done something terrible! [27] (The Quran, Maryam: 27)

We are full of wondrous admiration for the act of Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* for instead of being embarrassed by what had happened and seeking to hide with her new-born child from the eyes of people, or even bearing him away to another place in the desolate regions of the earth, she carries him and hastens to her people. She would never have done this, nor even dared to do it, except on account of her confidence in the evidence which was on her side and which would be provided at the hands of her infant son.

This brings to mind an incident involving *Mohammad `Abduh* when some Orientalists in Paris asked him about how 'A'isha *Allah be pleased with her* faced her people after the slanderous lie against her honour began to circulate.

Those people knew it was a lie and falsehood, yet they repeated it as if they were unable to understand. Thereupon, Mohammad 'Abduh replied with concise simplicity that A'isha *Allah be pleased with her* faced them in the same way that Maryam (Mary) faced her people while she was holding her infant boy. That is, with the countenance of the one who is confident of being proven innocent, of the one who is certain of Allah's support and that He would never forsake her. Thus, when the innocence of 'A'isha *Allah be pleased with her* was revealed in the Book of Allah, people told her: 'Give thanks to Prophet Muhammad', whereupon she replied, 'I give thanks to Allah Who exonerated me from above seven heavens.'⁽¹⁾

Back to the verse under discussion; when the people saw Maryam (Mary) in this state, they said harsh words about her, 'O Maryam (Mary)! You have done something terrible!' (*Maryam*: 27) In this statement, the Arabic word *fariyan* (something terrible) refers to unprecedented matter that sunders a customary norm in the eyes of people. Another possible meaning is that this word refers to the intentional lying.

Thereafter, they said to Maryam (Mary) as mentioned in the Quran:

يَتَّخِذَتِ هُنَّ مَكَانَ أَبُولِكِ أَمْراً سَوْءاً وَمَا كَانَتْ أُمُّكَ بَغِيًّا ﴿٢٨﴾

Sister of Aaron! Your father was not an evil man; your mother was not unchaste!' [28] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 28)

Regarding their saying to Maryam (Mary), 'O sister of Harun (Aaron)!' (*Maryam*: 28), this constitutes a scolding and an excessively severe reproach of her on their part. By this statement, they attribute her kinship to Harun

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir records that 'A'isha said, 'Divine revelation descended upon the Messenger of Allah, so we became silent in his presence. I could perceive joy in his face as he wiped the sweat from his brow, saying, "Be of good cheer, O 'A'isha, for Allah has just revealed your innocence." But I was angrier than ever. Then my parents said to me, 'Get up and go to him.' To which I replied, 'No, by Allah, I will not betake myself to him, nor will I laud him in gratitude or either one of you two. Instead I praise Allah Who revealed my innocence. For all of you heard the slander against me, but you did not deny it or do anything about it.' This Hadith was narrated by Al-Bukhari. See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`Adhim*, 3/271.

(Aaron) who was named after Prophet Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him*. It is as if they reproached her, saying, ‘You are descended from a righteous house, and you were raised to be obedient to Allah. So, how could you commit such an act?’ This is like the case when you observe a woman wearing hijab yet committing a misdeed in public that does not correspond to her appearance, and therefore you blame her for this behaviour which one could not imagine coming from someone like her.

With respect to Allah’s saying, ‘Your father was not an evil man’ (*Maryam: 28*), an evil person is the one in whose company you are bound to be afflicted by his evil, and who will cause you harm. There follows Allah’s saying, ‘your mother was not unchaste!’ (*Maryam: 28*) We have said before that the unchaste woman (*al-baghiy*) is the one who covets men and seduces them. It is as if they reproached her saying, ‘Where did you acquire this disgraceful trait, although you are from a good and upright family’?

Here, there is a proof that the position of the family has an impact on children. So, when we establish a believing family and a household adhering to Allah’s law, and when we embrace the children and encompass them with attentive care and safeguarding, then we will produce a generation that is faithful, conscientious, and beneficial to itself and its community.

Consequently, their statement: ‘Your father was not an evil man; your mother was not unchaste!’ (*Maryam: 28*) is a blatant accusation against Maryam (Mary) and an affirmation that she fell into the forbidden act, as if they insisted to accuse her of adultery.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَأَشَارَتْ إِلَيْهِ قَالُوا كَيْفَ نُكَلِّمُ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الْمَهْدِ صَبِيًّا ﴿٢٩﴾

She pointed at him. They said, ‘How can we converse with an infant?’ [29] (The Quran, *Maryam: 29*)

This verse tells that when the people made their statement, Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* gestured towards the infant, being fully confident that he would speak, and calmly certain that she was not carrying a proof of a crime, but rather, a proof of innocence. Thus, when she pointed to him, she was telling

her people, 'Ask him'. Thereupon, they were filled with great astonishment; they said, 'How can we converse with an infant?' (*Maryam: 29*)

We should note that their question does not rule out the possibility that the infant could speak, since they did not say, 'How could one who is an infant boy in the cradle speak'? Rather, they said, 'How can we converse...?' (*Maryam: 29*) Thus, they viewed it as improbable that they could converse with him. It is as if they are discrediting themselves and belittling their own capability of understanding the infant if he spoke to them.

As for the Arabic word *al-mahd* (cradle), it is the place prepared for the sleep of a baby because he is unable to remove harmful or uncomfortable things from himself. On the other hand, an adult is able to prepare a place in which to sleep and to remove from it anything that may disturb him while sleeping and reposing. That is because he has sufficient awareness such that if something were to cause him discomfort during sleep, he would be able to extricate himself from the condition he was in and discover what was causing him discomfort.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

قَالَ إِنِّي عَبْدُ اللَّهِ آتَانِيَ الْكِتَابَ وَجَعَلَنِي نَبِيًّا ﴿٣٠﴾

**[But] he said: 'I am a servant of God.
He has granted me the Scripture; made me
a prophet [30] (The Quran, *Maryam: 30*)**

It is as if `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* told his people 'Do not speak. I am the one who will speak'. Then he proceeds to assail them with speech saying, 'I am a servant of Allah.' (*Maryam: 30*) In this manner, `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* commences his discourse by proclaiming his servitude to Allah *Glorified is He*. This is an indication that people would later claim that he is not a servant, but a god or a partner with Allah. For this reason, the first statement he *peace be upon him* uttered was, 'I am a servant of Allah' (*Maryam: 30*) which definitively proves that the miracle that produced him does not prevent him from being a servant of Allah *the Almighty*. Therefore, if you asked those who believe that `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is a god or even a partner with Allah, 'You believe,

surely, that he spoke in the cradle so what did he say'? They will never recognise his statement because his saying, 'I am a servant of Allah' (*Maryam: 30*) refutes the very foundation of their belief.

But this is not all, for he *peace be upon him* then says, 'He has granted me the Scripture....' (*Maryam: 30*) So, how did Allah *the Almighty* vouchsafe revelation to `Isa (Jesus) while he was still a little boy in his cradle? It is said that this implies that the matter had been already settled and decreed; it is an event about which there is no doubt. It is as if he was saying, 'I am qualified to bear the trust of Allah to the people of the earth'. Although the revealed Scripture had not yet come, his Lord had actually instilled the Scripture in his heart, even if the time in which he would convey this revelation had not yet arrived.

Then `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said, '...and made me a prophet' (*Maryam: 30*) which means that his behaviour is upright, and it is not possible that there should be any blasphemous offense against him. Thus, if there arise some blasphemous transgression, then it is far from him, and he shares no part of the sin that it comprises.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* continues to state what `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said, affirming:

وَجَعَلَنِي مُبَارَكًا أَيْنَ مَا كُنْتُ وَأَوْصَانِي بِالصَّلَاةِ
وَالزَّكَاةِ مَا دُمْتُ حَيًّا ﴿٣١﴾

**He made me blessed wherever I may be.
He commanded me to pray, to give alms as long as
I live [31] (The Quran, *Maryam: 31*)**

This verse shows that Allah *the Almighty* has prescribed the performance of prayer and the giving of alms on `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* as long as he lives. `Isa (Jesus) said these words in the cradle to prove the innocence of his very sincere and righteous mother, as her people made accusations against her with respect to the most cherished thing she possessed. In fact, nothing she might have said would have availed her; so in order to rescue her, Allah *the Almighty* instructed her by means of Jibril (Gabriel) or `Isa (Jesus)

peace be upon them to say, ‘I have vowed to the Lord of Mercy to abstain from conversation, and I will not talk to anyone today.’ (*Maryam: 26*)

Then the Quran mentions that `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said:

وَبَرًّا بِوَالِدَتِي وَلَمْ يَجْعَلْنِي جَبَّارًا شَقِيًّا ﴿٣٢﴾

**To cherish my mother. He did not make
me domineering or graceless [32]
(The Quran, *Maryam: 32*)**

So, why did he mention his mother here and was so keen to affirm his piety towards her? This is because some might imagine that when `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* grows up and comes to know the story of his birth, and that his mother conceived him without a father and without any man touching her, that this issue might raise questions in his soul, leading to the possibility that doubts about his mother might assail him. Hence, `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* wanted to eliminate such ideas; as he himself is the proof and the witness of his mother’s innocence. After all, the source of definitive evidence does not promote any misgivings about what it proves. It is as if he was saying to the people, ‘You should all beware of thinking that I would ever dare to be insolent against my mother, or that any bad thought about her would ever cross my mind’.

Thereafter, he says, ‘He did not make me domineering or graceless.’ (*Maryam: 32*) In this way, he excludes from himself all trace of ostentatious pride, harshness and arrogance. This is because a messenger must be gentle and friendly with his people since he comes to bring them out of what they are accustomed to in terms of immorality towards what will be onerous for them in the way of pious obedience.

By his very nature, man dislikes anyone who seeks to take him from the moral corruption he is familiar and comfortable with. Thus, it is natural for a prophet to encounter the provocation of his people, their stubborn resistance, and insolent haughtiness. If he were not compassionate and gentle in his speech, causing ears to incline to listen, and hearts to pay heed, then he would not be fit for this mission. This is the reason why Allah *the Almighty*

addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with His saying, ‘...and had you been rough, hard hearted, they would certainly have dispersed from around you...’ (*Al-‘Imran: 159*).

In the final passage of the verse in question, the Arabic word *shaqiya* means defiantly disobedient. Indeed, anyone who embodies the traits enumerated by `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* will find that he is far removed from disobedience to Allah, which is the ultimate cause of a man’s being wretched and unhappy.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* states that `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said:

وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ يَوْمَ وُلِدْتُ وَيَوْمَ أَمُوتُ وَيَوْمَ أُبْعَثُ حَيًّا ﴿٣٣﴾

**Peace was on me the day I was born, and will be on me
the day I die and the day I am raised to life again’ [33]
(The Quran, *Maryam: 33*)**

Regarding the story of Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* we have previously said that there are three major milestones in the life of man: the day of his birth, the day of his death and the day that he will be raised again, that is, the Day of Resurrection. So, what is the aspect of peace on these occasions with regard to `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*?

Concerning his statement: ‘Peace was on me the day I was born...’ (*Maryam: 33*), this refers to the fact that the day of his birth passed peacefully in spite of what it contained of unprecedented wonders. No one acted towards him with malicious intent although he was a newborn infant who came forth without a father. It would have been possible for some zealous fanatics to have harmed him and his mother; however, nothing of the sort occurred, and the birth went peacefully for him and for his mother.

As for His saying, ‘...and will be on me the day I die...’ (*Maryam: 33*), it means that the day of his death will comprise peace because the Jews seized him in order to crucify him, but Allah *the Almighty* saved him from their hands by casting his likeness upon another man. Then Allah *Glorified is He* raised `Isa (Jesus) up to heaven.

With regard to His saying, ‘...and the day I am raised to life again’ (*Maryam: 33*), it is noteworthy that there is no other messenger who will be asked the following questions or who will be cross-examined in this world like `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And when Allah will say, “O `Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary)! did you say to men, take me and my mother as two gods besides Allah?” He will say, “Glory be to You, it did not befit me that I should say what I had no right to (say); if I had said it, Thou wouldst indeed have known it; You know what is in my mind, and I do not know what is in Your mind, surely You are the great Knower of the unseen things. I did not say to them aught save what You enjoined me with....”’ (*al-Ma`ida: 116-117*) We should note here that there is no dispraise of the high station of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* for his Lord *Glorified is He* knows fully well that he only said to his people what he was commanded to say. Rather, Allah *the Almighty* intended this as a reprimand of those people who made of him and his mother two gods besides Him. Thus, with respect to the day when he would be resurrected to life, the aspect of peace lies in the fact that `Isa (Jesus) was already questioned in this world and was found to be completely faultless.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

ذَٰلِكَ عِيسَى ابْنُ مَرْيَمَ ۗ قَوْلَ الْحَقِّ الَّذِي فِيهِ يَمْتَرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

Such was `Isa, son of Maryam. [This is] a statement of the Truth about which they are in doubt [34] (The Quran, *Maryam: 34*)

Here, the opening Arabic word *dhalik* (such) refers to what has preceded of the story of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Concerning the passage: ‘...a statement of the Truth...’ it means that what Allah *Glorified is He* states regarding the story of `Isa (Jesus) is the ultimate truth, for Allah *Glorified is He* is the True Lord (*Al-Haqq*). So, the One Who related this narrative to you is Allah, and His Statement is the absolute truth which contains no falsehood. It follows that the word *al-haqq* (Truth) here also signifies pure veracity which is the opposite of baseless falsehood. Thus, the two meanings of *al-haqq* overlap in this verse.

Another possible interpretation is that the intended meaning of the phrase *qawl al-haqq* is the command 'Be', by which the creation of 'Isa (Jesus) and the entire universe is accomplished.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, '...about which they so deeply disagree.' (*Maryam*: 34). In this statement, the Arabic verb *yamtarun* (to doubt) is derived from the same semantic root as the word *al-mira`* meaning baseless dispute and argument. Allah *the Almighty* knows that they will have dubious opinions about 'Isa (Jesus), vainly engaging in groundless disputes, and that they will make various declarations about him. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* was telling them, 'Renounce these vain and worthless declarations concerning the status of 'Isa (Jesus), and adhere to what I have informed you regarding him, for this is the pure truth which is not tainted by falsehood in any manner'.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

مَا كَانَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ مِنْ وَلَدٍ سُبْحٰنَهُ ۚ إِذَا قَضَىٰ
أَمْرًا فَإِنَّمَا يَقُولُ لَهُ كُنْ فَيَكُونُ ﴿٣٥﴾

It would not befit God to have a child. He is far above that: when He decrees something, He says only, 'Be,' and it is [35] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 35)

Here, we should pose the following question, 'Why exactly does Allah *the Almighty* speak here about refutation of His having a son'? It has been said that this is because the issue of Allah having a partner or an associate is nullified by the fundamental rationality, for if every god were capable of action and non-action, then this frequently reiterated form would not befit divinity. Moreover, if one of them were a god for one thing, while the other a god for something else, then whatever one of these two gods possessed would represent a deficiency on part of the other god, a matter which is inconceivable with regard to divinity. If there were another god, then each one of them would assume control over a portion of creation, as Allah *the Almighty* says, '...in that case would each god have certainly taken away what he created, and some of them would certainly have overpowered others...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91). It is for this reason that Allah *Glorified is He*

refutes the notion of having a son, since it has particular relevance in regard to the story of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. This is because the question of having a son can be set apart from any evidence. Why? Because its evidence lies in taking a son to oneself or in desiring a son and a human being desires to have a son and endeavours to have one.

Why is this so? This is because man is the son of this world, and he knows that he will certainly die. Thus, he desires to be remembered when he has passed away. Alas, he is unaware that his repute does not come after him but rather goes ahead of him in the form of good deeds. Thus, the desire for a son here is to assure the prolongation and survival of life, and this is inconceivable in respect to Allah, for He is the Ever-Lasting Who does not cease to exist.

A son may also be sought to be a consolation, support, and helper to his father, a matter which clearly shows weakness on the part of the father while Allah *the Almighty* is the All Powerful Who does not require the assistance of anyone. Therefore, having a son is a notion negated from Him *the Almighty* since it is something incompatible with Divinity.

It is necessary that Allah *Glorified is He* be exalted far above having a son. For this reason, He says after this: ‘...He is far above that...’ (*Maryam*: 35). In this statement of glorification, the Arabic word *subhan* signifies absolute exaltation of Allah *Glorified is He* beyond any comparison with respect to His being, His attributes and His actions, for there is nothing like Him. Should you find a common attribute between you and Allah, such as the fact that He has a Face and Hand, and that you also have a face and hands, then beware of comparing His sublime attributes to yours, thus saying, ‘His Face is like my face’ or ‘His Hand is like my hand’; for you have existence and Allah *Glorified is He* has a different existence. So, is there any similarity between these two cases? Your existence is preceded by non-existence and is overtaken by non-existence, while His Existence was not preceded by non-existence and will not be overtaken by non-existence. Therefore, it is incumbent upon you to say in matters such as these: ‘There is nothing like Him: He is the All Hearing, the All Seeing.’ (*ash-Shura*: 11)

The one who carefully studies the occurrences of the word *sabbaha* (to glorify) in the Noble Quran will find that it appears in all forms. It is found in

the past tense: 'Whatever is in the heavens and the earth declares the glory of Allah...' (*al-Hadid*: 1); in the present tense: 'Whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth declares the glory of Allah...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 1); and in the imperative: 'Glorify the name of your Lord *the Most High*' (*al-A'la*: 1). Inasmuch as the entire universe extolled the Glory of Allah *the Almighty* has never ceased to glorify Him—and, indeed continues to glorify Him, then when He created mankind, He commanded them to glorify Him. This is because they are a part of the glorifying cosmic order, and they are obliged to be in conformity with it, and not to be discordant exceptions in Allah's universe.

As for the verbal noun *subhan* (Glory be), it indicates that the absolute exaltation of Allah *Glorified is He* is affirmed even before He created the creation, as indicated by His saying, 'Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night from the Sacred Mosque to the remote mosque of which We have blessed the precincts....' (*al-Isra*': 1) Because this issue is so wondrous and beyond the ken of your mind, it is introduced by the verbal noun *subhan* (Glory be), signifying the absolute incomparability of Allah *the Almighty*. It is as if He was warning those who assign authority of passing judgment to their own minds rather than the Omnipotence of Allah Who created them out of nothing. In fact, every act is commensurate in strength and capability with the one who does it.

Back to the verse under discussion, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...when He decrees something, He says only, Be, and it is.' (*Maryam*: 35) This is because the miracle of creating `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was contrary to all the laws of nature, and a violation of the norms to which people are accustomed. Therefore, beware of being incredulous at the act of Allah *Glorified is He* with respect to Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* whereby He brought him into being despite his parents' dysfunctional reproductive organs. Similarly, you should not be incredulous at the creation of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* whom Allah *the Almighty* brought into being even though his mother had no intercourse with a man. Likewise, you should take care not to be incredulous at the speaking of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*, while he was but an infant boy in the cradle. These, indeed, are extraordinary phenomena which breach the laws of nature. Therefore, you must accept them in the context of 'Glory be to

Him’, as a confirmation of His incomparability. This is because, when Allah *the Almighty* wants something, He does not process it through work and effort, but rather brings it about by the command ‘Be!’ and thus it is.

In this connection, you should not think that the creation of things is dependent on pronouncing the command ‘*kun*’ (Be!); for though this imperative verb is made up of the letter *kaf* and *nun*, even before you could articulate the second letter *nun*, the thing would already exist. However, the utterance *kun* (‘Be!’) is the briefest thing which can be envisaged by us, as Allah *the Almighty* addresses us by means of what brings this phenomenon closest to our understanding; otherwise accomplishing His Will is not dependent on Saying ‘Be!’ since whatever Allah *the Almighty* wills is brought about once He wants it to come into existence.

Moreover, if you deeply examine His saying, ‘...when He decrees something, He says only to it, Be, and it is’ (*Maryam*: 35), you will find out that it comprises His saying, ‘...He says only to it...’ (*Maryam*: 35) which denotes that the thing which Allah *the Almighty* wills to bring about is actually present and extant since before time. Thus, the command ‘Be!’ is not in order to bring it into existence from non-existence, but instead to make it manifest in the domain of actuality.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ رَبِّي وَرَبُّكُمْ فَأَعْبُدُوهُ هَذَا صِرَاطٌ مُسْتَقِيمٌ ﴿٣٦﴾

**God is my Lord and your Lord, so serve Him:
that is a straight path [36] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 36)**

Linguistically, *ar-rabb* refers to the One Who takes charge of upbringing and safeguarding. This upbringing means that the educator instructs the educated person about what will make him qualified to perform his function. In a similar manner, if we want to have good engineers or doctors, we should give them the necessary training so as to be fully qualified to these jobs. In the same vein, we are confronted with people who have assigned partners to Allah, which is why we need good Muslim callers to direct them away from polytheism to true faith, and away from sinful disobedience to pious obedience.

Thus, the verse in question shows that `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* said to his people, ‘As long as Allah is my Lord and your Lord, and the One Who oversees the upbringing of all of us, then Allah *the Almighty* will inevitably give instruction to someone who will reform you. This is because Allah *the Almighty* does not speak to you directly, but rather will send me as a prophet to convey His message to you. Hence, I call you to worship Him Alone without any partner. Furthermore, inasmuch as Allah *the Almighty* is my Lord and your Lord, then it is imperative that you obey Him’. Allah’s saying, ‘...so serve Him...’ (*Maryam: 36*) refers to *al-`ibada* (acts of worship) which means that the worshipper obeys the One worshipped by following His commands and refraining from His prohibitions, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And they were not enjoined anything except that they should serve Allah...’ (*al-Bayyina: 5*).

There follows His saying, ‘...that is the straight path’ (*Maryam: 36*). This part of the verse shows that the straight path contains neither crookedness nor deviation. It is the path that takes you to your destination through the shortest route, and with the smallest effort. It is well known that a straight line is the shortest path between two points.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَاخْتَلَفَ الْأَحْزَابُ مِنْ بَيْنِهِمْ فَوَيْلٌ لِلَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ مَّشْهَدِ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

But factions have differed among themselves. What suffering will come to those who obscure the truth when a dreadful Day arrives! [37] (The Quran, *Maryam: 37*)

Here, the word ‘factions’ refer to those who had diverging opinions concerning the nature of `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*. Among them are those who believed that he was a god, and those who believed that he was the son of a god. Others believed that he was the third of a trinity. Among them are also those who accused him of sorcery and those who claimed that he was an illegitimate son, born of fornication—we seek forgiveness from Allah for what the wrongdoers and disbelievers said.

The word ‘faction’ refers to the people who agree upon a particular ideology and a specific idea, which they defend and upon which they make the tenet

of their faith, leading their lives in accordance with it and subjugating the proceeding of their lives to its service.

As for Allah's saying, '...among themselves...' (*Maryam: 37*), it refers to some sects within those who believe in `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* and follow him. Hence, those who made these baseless false statements about him are not from among his adversaries, but rather from among those who believed in him.

Thus, the people differed about `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* with each faction of them holding one of the above-mentioned opinions which are incorrect and far from the truth. Therefore, the Creator threatens them with His saying, 'What suffering will come to those who obscure the truth when a dreadful Day arrives!' (*Maryam: 37*). These factions maintained different opinions about `Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* in this world, plunging into discussions about him with whatever notions they fancied. In fact, they could do so because Allah *Glorified is He* made them have control over their faculties and granted them freedom of action and choice. However, they freely directed their faculties towards what invokes Allah's Anger. It is as if chastisement in this world is not commensurate with what they did, and they must necessarily receive a delayed punishment in the Hereafter, corresponding to what issued forth from them in terms of violations against the due right of their Prophet, i.e. `Isa (Jesus) and against the due right of their Lord *Glorified is He*.

Therefore, Allah's saying, 'What suffering will come to those who obscure the truth when a dreadful Day arrives?' (*Maryam: 37*) refers to the Day of Resurrection, the Day when all secrets will be laid bare, and mankind shall stand before the Lord of the worlds. On this Day, no soul shall be of any avail to another and supreme authority will belong to Allah *the Almighty Alone*.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* describes the Day of Resurrection as 'a dreadful Day', for it is a universally attended day which everyone will witness. By contrast, the punishment in this world is only witnessed by those present and contemporaneous to it; it is not witnessed by those who came before it or those who will come after it. However, the punishment of the Hereafter is the terrible spectacle which all of mankind will see.

It may be that a portion of the punishment is easier to bear for a person than to have someone else see him while he is being punished. He might be capable of

enduring the punishment on his own; however, the fact of being punished in plain view of all people, seeing him in this state of humiliation and abasement—though in this world he had been mighty, haughty, wildly insolent or oppressively unjust—will undoubtedly be more injurious and of greater impact. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* says about such people in another verse, ‘And could you see when they are made to stand before the fire, then they shall say, “Would that we were sent back, and we would not reject the communications of our Lord and we would be of the believers.”’ (*al-An‘am: 27*) Yet, this is a mere talk from them: ‘Nay, what they concealed before shall become manifest to them...’ (*al-An‘am: 28*). This last verse shows that the truth that they used to conceal will be made apparent to them, as if they had some cognition of it, but they concealed it. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says about them, ‘And could you but see when the guilty shall hang down their heads before their Lord: “Our Lord! we have seen and we have heard, therefore send us back, we will do good; surely (now) we are certain.”’ (*as-Sajda: 12*) Why have they suddenly seen and heard now? Because they used to hear in this world without heeding, and they saw the wondrous signs of Allah in the universe, but they did not believe in Him. However, in the Hereafter the realities which they continuously denied will be disclosed to them, and there will no longer be room for haughtiness and denial. That is why Allah *the Almighty* then says:

أَسْمِعْ بِهِمْ وَأَبْصِرْ يَوْمَ يَأْتُونَنَا لَكِنِ الظَّالِمُونَ الْيَوْمَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

**How sharp of hearing, how sharp of sight they will
be when they come to Us, although now they are clearly
off course! [38] (The Quran, *Maryam: 38*)**

Regarding Allah’s saying, ‘How sharp of hearing, how sharp of sight they will be...’ (*Maryam: 38*), it is a rhetorical expression of astonishment; so this part of the verse means: how keen is their hearing and how keen is their sight. On the Day of Resurrection, the deniers of the Truth will have such finely-tuned hearing and such sharpened sight that a person would be amazed at their delicate hearing and comprehensive sight, even though they used to put their fingers in their ears so that they would not listen to the

truth, and used to wrap themselves up so that they would not see it. In fact, they were blind to the self-evident miracles of Allah *the Almighty* which confirm the veracity of the messengers, as well as to the verses of revelation which bear decisive commandments, and to the cosmic signs which illustrate the Omnipotence of the Wise Creator of the universe.

As for Allah's saying, '...when they come to Us...' (*Maryam*: 38), it refers to the Day of Resurrection when they will have attentive hearing and sharp sight.

In fact, man, by virtue of being Allah's creation and being appointed vicegerent on the earth, was given control over his faculties; when he commands them, they obey. Hence, man's power and faculties are submissive to his will. For example, you can use your tongue to utter: 'There is no god but Allah', just as you can say: 'There is no god'; or say, 'Allah is the third person of the trinity'. The tongue is subordinate to you; it does not disobey you in this or that. Allah *the Almighty* gives you this freedom and provides you with this choice only because He will call you to account on the Day of Resurrection: Did you strive after the good which I directed you towards, or did you strive after the evil from which I forbade you?

However, on the Day of Resurrection this human will shall be dissolved and its power over the limbs will be abolished when Allah *the Almighty* will proclaim: 'To whom belongs the kingdom this Day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all).' (*Ghafir*: 16) It is on that day that limbs will bear witness against their owner, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'On the day when their tongues and their hands and their feet shall bear witness against them as to what they did.' (*an-Nur*: 24) Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And they shall say to their skins, "Why have you borne witness against us?" They shall say, "Allah Who makes everything speak has made us speak..."' (*Fussilat*: 21) Why should this not happen? After all, the limbs have been freed from the bondage of the human will, and the time has come to lodge their complaints with Allah *the Almighty* and to utter words of truth which they had suppressed beneath the coercion of the will and its subjugation. Earlier, we have drawn a similitude for this by a group of soldiers who march under the command of their immediate commanding officer. They carry out his orders with blind obedience. But, as soon as they have returned to the

highest commander, their tongues let loose with complaints about the overbearing nature of their commanding officer and his arrogance.

Back to the verse under discussion, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...although now these evildoers are clearly off course!’ (*Maryam*: 38) Alas, if only they had understood this matter, they would not do wrong. Ultimately, they only did wrong to themselves, for Allah *the Almighty* is not harmed by the disbelief of disbelievers, nor does this diminish His Sovereignty and Supreme Authority. But how is it that a man wrongs himself? In actuality, this is because man possesses a heedful conscience which perceives things and discerns them. Additionally, man’s soul desires clash with the heedful conscience and the divine way of guidance which commands it to do good and forbids it from doing evil. This soul, with its lustful passions, incites man to satisfy its own desires and causes him to fall into temporal enjoyment and transient pleasure which eventually bring forth punishment, and makes him miss lasting goodness and eternal bliss. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...but men are unjust to themselves.’ (*Yunus*: 44) Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَأَنْذِرْهُمْ يَوْمَ الْحَسْرَةِ إِذْ قُضِيَ الْأَمْرُ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ وَهُمْ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

Warn them [Muhammad] of the Day of Remorse when the matter will be decided, for they are heedless and do not believe [39] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 39)

As for Allah’s saying, ‘Warn them [Muhammad] of the Day of Remorse...’ (*Maryam*: 39), it comprises the imperative form of the Arabic word *al-`indhar* (warning) which means to caution someone about an impending evil.

As for the Arabic word *al-hasra* (remorse), it signifies the intense grieve which afflicts the human soul when some benefits or goodness escape it with no possibility of regaining it, or when it meets with suffering which it cannot ward off. On the other hand, *an-nadam* (regret) is sorrow at a boon or benefit which has passed you over, but which is possible to regain. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; the pupil may fail a monthly exam and then feels regretful, but he still has the possibility of compensating for this failure in the following month. However, if he fails on the end of year exam, then he feels severe remorse, grieving over the past year whose loss

cannot be compensated. It is for this reason that on the Day of Resurrection, the disbelievers will exclaim: ‘O our grief for our neglecting it!’ (*al-An‘am*: 31) In this statement the exclamation is an expression of woeful regret at their situation. It is as if each of them were saying to themselves: ‘Advance, for your time has come, and present yourself, for all opportunities for redress has been missed with no chance of return’. Hence, ‘the Day of Remorse’ is the Day of Resurrection when no one will be able to go back to compensate for what he neglected in terms of doing good in this world.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘...when the matter will be decided...’ (*Maryam*: 39), it means that the matter has come to pass; that is, it has happened and could not be reversed, there is no longer any room for compensating for what has passed. This is because the one who has decreed and imposed this matter is Allah *the Almighty* Whose command cannot be resisted. Thus, all affairs are subject to Allah’s command, the ultimate judgment belongs to Him and there is no god save Him.

In this regard, it is narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘At the time when Allah let the people of Paradise into Paradise and let the people of Hellfire into Hellfire, He will bring forth death in the form of a ram. Then He will ask the believers: “Do you recognise this?” They will respond: “Yes, this is death which has come to us, and we recognise it.” Then He will ask the disbelievers: “Do you recognise this?” They will reply: “We recognise it.” Then Allah will slay death and say to the people of paradise: “Eternity for you and no death”; and to the people of Hellfire: “Eternity for you and no death.”⁽¹⁾

In such a manner, Allah *the Almighty* decrees the matter in order to cut off all hope for the disbelievers who may have thought that death would come to relieve them of their torment in the Hereafter. Thus, by bringing forth death in

(1) *This Hadith is related by both Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Sa‘id Al-Khudari, Allah be pleased with him. In this Hadith, the ram is described as being white with black spots. In his commentary, Ibn Hajar narrated that Al-Qurtubi said, ‘The underlying reason for having a black and white ram is to combine the traits of the people of Paradise and Hellfire, which is whiteness and blackness.’ See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4730; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2849; and Ibn Hajar, Fath Al-Bari, 8/428.*

a personified form and slaughtering it in front of them, Allah *the Almighty* eliminates this hope from them and causes them to despair. From now on, there is no death, for death has died. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* says about them, 'And they shall call out, "O Malik! Let your Lord make an end of us."' He shall say, "Surely you shall remain.'" (*az-Zukhruf: 77*)

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...for they are heedless and do not believe.' (*Maryam: 39*) Here, the Arabic word *al-ghafala* (heedlessness) means that a person's mind is distracted from thinking about something which is clearly proven to be sound and true. This is because Allah *the Almighty* would never punish His human creatures without having provided them with evident proofs which the normative reason can receive and believe in. Consequently, the one who does not believe is either heedlessly negligent of these proofs or is intentionally indifferent to them, or else wilfully rejects them. Concerning the last category, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And they denied them unjustly and proudly while their soul had been convinced of them...' (*an-Naml: 14*). Another aspect of their negligence is their heedlessness of death. It has been said, 'Whoever dies then his Day of Resurrection has arisen'.⁽¹⁾

It is a manifestation of Allah's Wisdom that He has made death obscure; having rendered it obscure with respect to its timing, cause and place of occurrence. Hence, it is as if the ambiguous nature of death serves as its most evident distinguishing characteristic. This is because its obscurity requires man to be ready to encounter it at any time, by any means, and in any place; for it comes unexpectedly, and it is not dependent on time, cause, or place. For example, a child may die while he is still in his mother's belly, or after one day or several days of his birth, or after a hundred years. Further, he may die due to a specific cause, and without cause. We may be astonished when one of us dies without an apparent cause, without any car having hit him, or

(1) *In his book, Al-`Ajluni narrated this Hadith on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. The complete wording of the Hadith begins as follows: 'Be frequent in the remembrance of death! For surely, if you remember it in a state of abundance, this will hinder any false peace of mind; and if you remember it in straitened circumstances, this will ease them for you...' See Al-`Ajluni, Kashf Al-Khafa`, Hadith no. 2618.*

without a wall or rock having fallen on him or without any sickness having come over him. What then is the cause? The cause is death itself, for man will surely die. In other words, someone died because he is predestined to die. As one says, ‘In the case of death without causes, death itself is the cause’.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِنَّا نَحْنُ نَرِثُ الْأَرْضَ وَمَنْ عَلَيْهَا وَإِلَيْنَا يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

**It is We who will inherit the earth and all who are
on it: they will all be returned to Us [40]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 40)**

Here, we may pose the following question, which is: ‘How does Allah *the Almighty* say, ‘It is We who will inherit the earth...’ (*Maryam*: 40), while the earth and the entire universe belong to Him?’ It has been said that this is because Allah, the Supreme Possessor, granted ownership and control to certain human creatures of His in this world; however, no one in the Hereafter will have possession over anything. It is on the Day of Judgment that man will not even have control over his own faculties and limbs, and all power and authority will belong to Allah *Glorified is He*. Thus, authoritative control shall revert to its Supreme Owner, and none shall inherit this dominion except Him *the Almighty*.

For this reason, one finds that those who let themselves be deceived by Allah’s blessings in this world may think that they shall enjoy the likes of them in the Hereafter, as one of them expressed it in the Quran saying, ‘And I do not think the hour will come, and even if I am returned to my Lord I will most certainly find a returning place better than this.’ (*al-Kahf*: 36) To this we respond, ‘No, while it is true that you will be brought back to your Lord, but there shall be nothing for you in His Presence. This is because the One Who gave you mastery and possession in this world, granted you this controlling power out of His Supreme Dominion. Hence, as soon as the Hereafter arises, He shall be the sole Inheritor’.

Regarding Allah’s saying, ‘...they will all be returned to Us’ (*Maryam*: 40), it shows that the issue is not limited to the fact that Allah *the Almighty* will

inherit all that they possessed, and that they will be free to go their way. No, indeed, Allah *the Almighty* will inherit all that they possessed and, then, they will be returned to Him to be held accountable for their deeds. Hence, they will also not elude the grip of divine sovereignty.

Thereafter, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَأَذْكُرْ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٤١﴾

**Mention too, in the Quran, the story of Abraham.
He was a man of truth, a prophet [41]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 41)**

After having spoken, at the beginning of the chapter of *Maryam* about the birth of Yahya (John) to Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon them* and then the birth of the Messiah to Maryam (Mary), Allah *the Almighty* then turns our attention to review a retinue from among the processions of messages which Allah *the Almighty* sent as a light for the guidance of those on earth. Thus, He says, 'Mention too, in the Quran, the story of Ibrahim (Abraham).' (*Maryam*: 41) Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* is considered the forefather of all prophets and their apex since Allah *Glorified is He* praises him with His saying, 'surely Ibrahim (Abraham) was an exemplar...' (*al-An'am*: 120).

There is not one individual who encompasses all the traits of human perfection and gifts of excellence. However, a collective grouping of human beings comprises them: this person is brave and of strong build, that one is intelligent, this one has acute vision, that one is brilliant in medicine and this one in farming. In this manner are talents differentiated among mankind, with none among them combining all such gifts? No one's capacity, life, or effort would suffice to make him gifted in all things since the total perfection is distributed in mankind as a whole. The exception to this is Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* for in the completeness of his gifts was equivalent to an entire community (*ummah*).

There follows Allah's saying, 'He was a man of truth, a prophet.' (*Maryam*: 41) This passage contains the Arabic word *siddiq* (a man of truth) which derives from the morphological root *sadaqa* and means to speak on

the basis of reality. Lying, on the other hand, is to speak on the basis of unreality. The person who speaks truthfully is called *sadiq*, that is, honest and sincere in his own character. As for our usage of the word *siddiq*, it connotes a superlative degree of truthfulness and sincerity.

Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* had attained the utmost degree of confident belief in what comes from Allah *the Almighty*; hence he obeys and submits voluntarily without questioning.

Such was the faith we witnessed on the part of the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when Allah *the Almighty* said to her: ‘when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve...’ (*al-Qasas*: 7). By Allah, how could a mother believe this speech and obey this command? For how would she rescue her son from evil or from presumed death by certain death? Thus, this speech is not credible and beyond the purview of the mind for the generality of people. However, in the procession of divine messages, the situation is different. The moment the mother of Musa (Moses) heard this call, no thought assailed her which was in opposition to the command of Allah, and no doubt about it came to her. This is because that which comes to such people from Allah *the Almighty* never meets resistance from Satan’s whispers. This is the uncontested rule among the messengers.

Hence, *as-siddiq* is the one who reaches the ultimate level of sincere belief in the truth. Allah *the Almighty* imbues him with transparency and illumination to attain truth and be able to distinguish it from falsehood at first glance, without further investigation and close examination of the issue. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* bestows light upon you which saves you from the clouds of doubt, and provides you with the delicate scale by which you weigh things. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘O you who believe! If you are careful of (your duty to) Allah, He will grant you a distinction...’ (*al-Anfal*: 29).

On this basis, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* was called *as-siddiq* not only because he was truthful in and of himself, but also because he had absolutely certain belief in everything that came to him from Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. For this reason, when he was informed of the narration of the Night Journey and Ascension, what did Abu

Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* say? He said, 'If Prophet Muhammad actually said this, then he has spoken the truth.'⁽¹⁾

As far as Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* is concerned, the truth of the matter simply rests upon the statement of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This was his fundamental criterion of assessing the truth: if Prophet Muhammad says something, then he is absolutely truthful. In such a manner, Abu Bakr undoubtedly and unquestionably believed him, even without considering the immediate circumstances of the matter. Therefore, from that day forward he was justly known as *as-siddiq*.

Concerning Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* Allah says, '...and his mother was a truthful woman...' (*al-Ma'ida: 75*). Here, Allah *the Almighty* describes her as 'truthful' because she unquestioningly believed in the glad tidings of having a son once the angel told her: 'I am but a messenger from your Lord, [come] to announce to you the gift of a pure son.' (*Maryam: 19*) She had complete trust in this glad tidings and took it to be an actual truth. Hence, when the child came, she gestured towards him with full confidence and complete certainty that he would speak.

Thus, *as-siddiq* (a firm believer) is not the one who speaks the truth, but rather, the one who believes steadfastly in the truth. In this sense, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was a *siddiq* as well as a prophet. This is because a human being might be a firm believer whom Allah *the Almighty* grants a special transparency, but it is not necessary that he be a prophet. In this way, Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* was a *siddiq* and Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* was a *siddiq*. Hence, having firm belief is an intrinsic matter, luminous quality comes from Allah *the Almighty*, whereas prophecy is a gift and a legislation coming from on high. It is a heavenly guidance whose conveyance is assigned to a prophet.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says,

(1) *This narration is narrated by Al-Qurtubi. The full narration reads 'Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him was asked: "Do you believe him before hearing it from him?" To this he replied, "Where are your minds? I believe him about narrations from heaven, so how could I not believe him about narrations from Jerusalem while heaven is much farther away."' See Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran, 5/4012.*

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ يَا أَبَتِ لِمَ تَعْبُدُ مَا لَا يَسْمَعُ وَلَا يُبْصِرُ وَلَا يُغْنِي عَنْكَ شَيْئًا ﴿٤٢﴾

He said to his father, ‘Father, why do you worship something that can neither hear nor see nor benefit you in any way? [42] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 42)

This verse relates what Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said to his father on the basis of his being a prophet who had come to reform the behaviour of people in accordance with Allah’s way of guidance. The first of these to be set right was his father whom the Quran mentioned in this manner, referring to his paternity of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* without mentioning his name except in one verse in which Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And when *Ibrahim* said to his sire, Azar...’ (*al-An‘am*: 74).

This latter verse has given rise to controversy as some believed that Azar himself was Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) actual, biological father. However, this opinion stands in opposition to the Hadith which elucidates the purity of Prophet Muhammad’s lineage in which he said, ‘I am the choicest of the chosen, having continuously moved from the loins of pure men to the wombs of pure women.’⁽¹⁾ Hence, the origins of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* go back to Adam, ‘the pure man wedded to the pure woman’. So, if we concluded that Azar, about whom Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he declared himself to be clear of him...’ (*at-Tawba*: 114) is the father of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*, this would be in contradiction to the above-mentioned Prophetic Hadith. After all, how could the forefathers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* include the likes of this disbeliever?

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Wa`ila ibn Al-Asqa` who said, ‘I heard Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him say, “Surely, Allah chose the kinana tribe from the descendants of Ismail (Ismail (Ishmael)), and from the kinana He chose the tribe of Quraysh, and from the tribe of Quraysh He chose Banu Hashim, and from Banu Hashim He chose me.” Ibn `Asakir related that Anas said: ‘The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him recited: “Certainly an Apostle has come to you from among yourselves...” (al-An‘am: 128), and said: “I am the best of you by way of ancestral line, by marriage and by glorious accomplishments. None of my forefathers since the time of Adam has been the product of fornication; all of us are the result of marriage.” See Al-Bayhaqi, Dala il An-Nubuwwa, 1/66; Ibn `Asakir, Tahdhib Tarikh Dimashq Al-Kabir, 1/278.*

Yet, if we carefully examined the expressions related to fatherhood in the Noble Quran, we could extricate ourselves from this dilemma. The Quran speaks of direct, biological paternity; it also speaks of indirect paternity with respect to a grandfather or a paternal uncle. So, both the grandfather and the paternal uncle are referred to as fathers, for one's father and paternal uncle share the same father. Hence, my paternal uncle represents a bond by which he is entitled to be called a father. There are two relevant verses in the Quran, one of which calls the grandfather a father, while the second calls the paternal uncle a father.

The first occurs in Allah's saying in the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: 'And two youths entered the prison with him. One of them said, 'I saw myself pressing wine.' And the other said, 'I saw myself carrying bread on my head, of which birds ate.' Inform us of its interpretation; surely we see you to be of the doers of good.' (*Yusuf*: 36) They chose Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* to interpret their dreams because they saw that he was one of the virtuous people. It is as if excellence of character had criteria which were recognisable even by those devoid of it. Thus, when the two youths were confronted with a matter which concerned them, they sought recourse only in this good man. In fact, the criteria for assessing the perfection of character are respected and considered even by those who have fallen away from it. When they said to Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* '...surely we see you to be of the doers of good.' (*Yusuf*: 36), he knew that they had been following his movements, his conduct and the way he behaved with them. He wanted to augment them from the illuminations he possessed, for his state did not comprise merely good behaviour and good reputation. No, indeed he embodied something else: 'He said: There shall not come to you the food with which you are fed, but I will inform you both of its interpretation before it comes to you...' (*Yusuf*: 37).

Then he leaves off responding to their question and commences to speak of that which is particular to him as a prophet and a caller to Allah *the Almighty*. He informs them that the talents he has are a gift bestowed by Allah *the Almighty*; it is not that he is more intelligent than they are. Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* said, as mentioned in the Quran: '...this is of what

my Lord has taught me; surely I have forsaken the religion of a people who do not believe in Allah, and they are deniers of the hereafter. And I follow the religion of my fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham), Ishaq (Issac) and Ya'qub (Jacob)...’ (*Yusuf*: 37-38). Afterwards, he turns the attention of those with him to two falsehoods involved in worshipping multiple deities which do not benefit them in any way. Upon hearing that, they abandoned those deities and put their trust in Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* who has one Lord; Allah says, ‘O my two mates of the prison! Are sundry lords better or Allah the One, the Supreme?’ (*Yusuf*: 39) In this way, Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* was eager to spread his call and guidance to all those around him. Even when he was in prison, he did not forget his mission, nor did he desist calling to his message. When he had finished giving his spiritual counsel, he could then listen to them as much as he wanted. If he had responded to their question from the very beginning, they would have turned away from this spiritual counsel and would not have grasped it with the same interest and engagement.

Only now does he return to their question and the interpretation of their dreams: ‘...as for one of you, he shall give his lord to drink wine; and as for the other, he shall be crucified, so that the birds shall eat from his head, the matter is decreed concerning which you inquired.’ (*Yusuf*: 41) Our key evidence of the issue in question in this story is clear in Allah’s saying, ‘And I follow the religion of my fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham), Ishaq (Issac) and Ya'qub (Jacob)...’ (*Yusuf*: 38). Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* is the son of Ya'qub (Jacob) who is the son of Ishaq (Issac) who is the son of Ibrahim (Abraham), hence the forefathers are referred to as ‘father’.

A paternal uncle may similarly be referred to as ‘father’, as occurs in Allah’s saying, ‘Nay! Were you witnesses when death visited Ya'qub (Jacob), when he said to his sons, ‘What will you serve after me?’ They said, ‘We will serve your God and the God of your fathers, Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Issac), one God only, and to Him do we submit.’’ (*al-Baqara*: 133) Here, Allah *the Almighty* enumerated Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* among the fathers of Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him* although he was his paternal uncle.

Therefore, had the Noble Quran referred to Ibrahim's (Abraham's) father as 'his father' in all its verses, the meaning would have referred to actual, biological fatherhood. However, when it says, even only a single time: '...to his father Azar ...' (*al-An'am: 74*), then this signifies that his paternal uncle is the intended one. This is because a proper name is not brought forth after the mention of fatherhood except when we mean to indicate the paternal uncle. This is just as we say nowadays when we want to refer to the real father, 'Your father came', in this vague way without giving any name. However, in case of fatherhood which is not the biological one, we say, 'Your father, so-and-so, came', in which we mention a specific name.

Based upon the foregoing, it is to be noted that Allah's saying, '...to his father Azar...' (*al-An'am: 74*), occurs just once in the Quran in order to firmly establish for us that Azar is not Ibrahim's (Abraham's) biological father, but rather, he is his paternal uncle. In this manner, the integrity of Prophet Muhammad's lineage and the purity of his ancestral line to Adam *peace be upon him* are preserved.

Back to the verse in question; Ibrahim (Abraham) said, 'O father!' (*Maryam: 42*), is expressed with the phrase '*ya abati*', although the standard Arabic usage would call for him to say '*ya abi*'. The first person possessive pronoun '*i*' of the latter formulation is omitted and replaced by the letter '*t*' in the phrase in question. Why is this so? It is said that *abati* entails a precise significance by which one aims to confirm that the person so addressed, despite being a father, embodies the tender compassion of both parents, that is, father and mother. Thus, it occurs with the letter '*t*' which is indicative of the other feminine aspect. For this reason, we find that *ya abati* is only said in the case of utmost compassion and affection. It is as if the mother had died, for example, and the father assumed the functions of both parents together, seeking to compensate the children for the lost tender compassion of the mother.

There follows Ibrahim's (Abraham's) saying, '...why do you worship something that can neither hear nor see nor benefit you in any way?' (*Maryam: 42*) Here, the manner of expression employed by Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* towards his father manifests the proper etiquette of calling others to religion. This is evident because he presents the admonition in the

form of a question so as not to make his father feel inferior or to make it too obvious that he is more knowledgeable than him.

We should note that in his question: ‘...why do you worship something that can neither hear nor see nor benefit you in any way?’ (*Maryam*: 42), Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* does not say from the beginning, ‘Why do you worship Satan?’ Instead, he delays stating this truth until the end of the discussion. So, rather than saying that his father was worshipping Satan, he analytically breaks down his personality, thereby revealing his constituent elements and unveiling the truth about him: he neither hears nor sees and can be of no avail whatsoever to him, i.e. Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) father. These characteristics, then, should not be found in that which one worships. That is why worshipping anything besides Allah *the Almighty* like trees, rocks and Satan must be avoided. This is especially the case with the environment of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* which was full of graven images and idols.

In the final analysis, what does worship mean? It connotes the obedience of the worshipper to the object of worship in terms of its commandments and prohibitions. So, with respect to those who worship other than Allah *the Almighty* such as idols, or graven images, or the sun or the moon, what have these objects of worship commanded their worshippers to do? And what things have they made forbidden for them? In addition, what have they made ready for those who worship them? Furthermore, what have they prepared for those who disobey them? What is the way of guidance which they have brought forth in order to merit being worshipped? As a matter of fact, they bring about nothing at all. Hence, their worship is baseless and void. Subsequently, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* says:

يَأْتِيَنِي قَدْ جَاءَنِي مِنَ الْعِلْمِ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِكَ فَاتَّبِعْنِي أَهْدِكَ صِرَاطًا سَوِيًّا ﴿٤٣﴾

**Father, knowledge that has not reached you has come to me,
so follow me: I will guide you to an even path [43]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 43)**

Here, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* repeats the affectionate vocative address of ‘*ya abati*’ once again. It is as if he wants to stimulate the natural impulse of compassionate tenderness in his father and arouse in him

the ties of kinship. It is as if he were saying to him, 'My discourse with you is that of a son to his father'. This is just as we ourselves do nowadays when one of us wishes to cause his father's heart to incline towards him in affection; he says: 'O daddy, such-and-such', or 'O father, listen to me'. Likewise, this is the situation of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when he addressed his father with this formula four consecutive times in these verses. He only did so because his eager desire for his father to be guided and to lead him by the hand to the straight path.

As for Ibrahim (Abraham) saying, '...knowledge that has not reached you has come to me, so follow me: I will guide you to an even path.' (*Maryam*: 43), it implies the following, 'Do not think, O my father, that I am trying to show myself to be more erudite than you, or that I am superior to you or more intelligent than you. This discourse does not originate from me, but rather from One higher than me and higher than you. Thus, there is no disgrace in listening and submitting to it. It is a message that I was charged with conveying to you. That which has come to me of knowledge has not come to you yourself'. This is a sensitive plea on the part of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* for the issue is not a personal one between a youth and his paternal uncle, or a youth and his father. It is surely a universal issue which goes beyond the boundaries of paternity and uncle-hood.

Hence, when we discussed the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and Al-Khidr in the chapter of *al-Kahf*, we said that the righteous servant Al-Khidr sought to excuse Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* because he was acting on the basis of the knowledge he possessed, the likes of which Musa *peace be upon him* did not have. Thus, Al-Khidr told him: 'And how can you have patience in that of which you have not got a comprehensive knowledge?' (*al-Kahf*: 68) Likewise, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said something similar to his father so that he would not be overcome with pride and haughtily disdain listening to his son.

Then Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, '...so follow me: I will guide you to an even path.' (*Maryam*: 43) This verse shows that Ibrahim (Abraham) is calling his father to the straight path which is not of his making, but rather comes from the One Who is higher than him and higher

than his father. The Arabic expression ‘*as-sirat as-sawiy*’ refers to the straight path which delivers you to the desired destination with the least effort and hardship, and in the shortest period of time.

Afterwards, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* says:

يَأْتِ لَا تَعْبُدِ الشَّيْطَانَ إِنَّ الشَّيْطَانَ كَانَ لِلرَّحْمَنِ عَصِيًّا ﴿٤٤﴾

Father, do not worship Satan – Satan has rebelled against the Lord of Mercy [44] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 44)

Let us note that at the beginning of his conversation with his father, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, ‘...why do you worship something that can neither hear nor see nor benefit you in any way?’ (*Maryam*: 42) whereas here he says, ‘...do not worship Satan...’ (*Maryam*: 44) even though Satan can hear and see, so how can we understand this point?

It is said that Satan is the one who entices people to worship idols, trees, the sun, or the moon; and that is why this phenomenon can be traced back to him as he is its ultimate cause. Nonetheless, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* resolves the matter immediately, since his father worships an idol which neither hears nor sees and is not of any utility to him. This is by their own admittance which is clear in Allah’s saying, ‘Do they hear you when you call? Or do they benefit you or cause you harm?’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 72-73) In posing such rhetorical questions, Ibrahim (Abraham) is not really seeking any explanatory response from the one he is debating with, since he already knows that the response will necessarily be in his favour and thus has the confidence to ask. Therefore, the worship of anything other than Allah *the Almighty* can always be attributed to the seduction of Satan.

Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* then goes on to say, ‘Satan has rebelled against the Lord of Mercy.’ (*Maryam*: 44) In this statement, the Arabic word ‘*aseya*’ means excessive rebelliousness and disobedience. Thus, Satan is not merely sinfully rebellious, but rather, vehemently recalcitrant, disobeying the commands of Allah *the Almighty* in a hostile and defiantly stubborn manner.

Thereafter, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* says:

يَأْتِيَنِي إِتِيَّ أَخَافُ أَنْ يَمَسَّكَ عَذَابٌ مِّنَ الرَّحْمَنِ فَتَكُونَ لِلشَّيْطَانِ وَلِيًّا ﴿٤٥﴾

Father, I fear that a punishment from the Lord of Mercy may afflict you and that you may become Satan's companion [in Hell] [45] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 45)

Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* continues to be gentle in calling his father to religion, for he said, ‘...a punishment from the Lord of Mercy may touch you...’ (*Maryam*: 45) He does not say, for example, ‘that a punishment will afflict you’ since he does not wish to shock him with this truth. The Arabic word *al-mass* (touching) connotes light contact. It is as if he was telling his father, ‘Your fate concerns me, and I am anxious about you, not wanting even so much as dust to reach you’. Indeed, this is the highest degree of compassion for him and an ardent desire for his salvation. Afterwards, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, ‘...and that you may become Satan's companion [in Hell].’ (*Maryam*: 45) This verse shows us how he fears that his father would be afflicted with punishment similar to that of Satan due to his closeness to him and being one of his followers.

In this way, the conversation comes to an end. It included four compassionate pleas and provides a unique model for calling to Allah *the Almighty* with wisdom and gentle admonition. The discourse respected the sentiments of the father whose son was inviting him to faith, and giving him sincere counsel. It arranged matters in a natural order and linked them together in a gentle, refined sequence which did not provoke a negative reaction from the listener or shock him.

Allah *Glorified is He* has taken the various sides of the human soul into account, and has commanded that the inviting of others to Him should be done with wisdom and good exhortation so that the recipient of the message is not be exposed to the harshness of calling combined with the harshness of leaving behind what he is accustomed for what he is not accustomed to.

In fact, when you call a person to Allah *the Almighty* then you are surely extracting him from the depravity to which he has become accustomed. He did not become accustomed to it except after first having desired it. Then, he became habituated to it through actions and practice. These two misfortunes

of desire and habit have taken control over him, and therefore he stands in greatest need of a gentle manner to incline his sentiments and cause him to be attracted towards you and, thus, respond positively to you.

The one who calls to religion in such a situation most closely resembles someone who strives to extricate a silk garment from thorns. Thus, if you reproached and treated him harshly, he would then turn away from you and avoid your call, thereby persisting in the depravity and inequity in which he was already immersed. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation, and have disputations with them in the best manner...’ (*an-Nahl*: 125). As they say, ‘Counsel is burdensome, so do not send it like a mountain, and do not make it into an argument’. Similarly, it is said, ‘Truths are bitter, so mask them with the lightness of eloquence’.

After Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* concludes his speech, the father replies:

قَالَ أَرَأَيْبُ أَنْتَ عَنِ الْهَيْتِ يَا إِبْرَاهِيمُ لِمَ لَمْ تَنْتَهَ لِأَرْجَمَنَّكَ وَأَهْجُرْنِي مَلِيًّا ﴿٤٦﴾

**His father answered, ‘Abraham, do you reject my gods?
I will stone you if you do not stop this. Keep out
of my way!’ [46] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 46)**

The Arabic verb *raghiba* bears a particular meaning and its opposite depends upon the preposition which follows it. On the one hand, when it is followed by the preposition *fi*, it means to love desire and seek something. On the other hand, when it is followed by the preposition *`an*, it means to dislike, detest and stay away from something. Hence, the question: ‘Ibrahim (Abraham), do you reject (*raghib `an*) my gods?’ (*Maryam*: 46) implies abandoning these gods for the sake of something else. The same usage occurs in Allah’s saying, ‘and who forsakes (*yarghib `an*) the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham) but he who makes himself a fool...’ (*al-Baqara*: 13). Here, *raghib `an* means to leave the creed of Ibrahim (Abraham) for another one.

In this connection, we should note that the verb *raghiba* followed by the preposition *fi* occurs only once in the Quran— even though the preposition

is merely implicit after the verb—and this is found in Allah's saying concerning the marriage to female orphans: '...while you desire (*targhabuna*) to marry them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 127). The desire for something means loving and yearning for it as well as for the way which leads to it. However, it may happen that you are not truly following its way nor pursue the causal factors which lead you to what you desire. This connotation is evident in the story of the proprietors of the garden in the chapter of *al-Qalam* in which Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Surely We will try them as We tried the owners of the garden, when they swore that they would certainly cut off the produce in the morning. And were not willing to set aside a portion (for the poor), Then there encompassed it a visitation from your Lord while they were sleeping.] So it became as black, barren land.' (*al-Qalam*: 17-20)

The owners of the garden had agreed to harvest the fruits of their garden in the morning, but they did not say 'If Allah wills'. So, Allah *the Almighty* demolished and destroyed it while they were sleeping. In the morning, they rushed to their garden and said to each other: 'No poor man shall enter it today upon you.' (*al-Qalam*: 24)

Thus, they cut off the path from themselves when they deprived the poor: 'But when they saw it, they said: Most surely we have gone astray. Nay! We are made to suffer privation.' (*al-Qalam*: 26-27) Then they realised their error, and returned to the right path, saying, 'Maybe, our Lord will give us instead one better than it; surely to our Lord do we make our humble petition.' (*al-Qalam*: 32) Thus, the owners of the garden were yearning for the path which leads to Allah *the Almighty*. So, before saying, 'I love Allah *the Almighty*', you must say, 'I am earnestly turning towards Allah *the Almighty*'. This is because it is not simply a question of loving and desiring, but rather, love and desire at the price of striving and undertaking deeds which lead you to that which you love and desire. Hence, before claiming to love your Lord, first strive for His pleasure earnestly.

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And of them there are those who blame you with respect to the alms; so if they are given from it they are pleased, and if they are not given from it, lo! They are full of rage.' (*at-Tawba*: 58) This verse shows that the hypocrites are critical of the manner of

distribution the alms. They, therefore, do not love Allah *the Almighty* but rather they love receiving gifts and fleeting abundance as evinced by the fact that they become angry if such things are withheld from them. It is then that they turn away from Allah's religion, as is the case of those about whom Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And among men is he who serves Allah (standing) on the verge, so that if good befalls him he is satisfied therewith, but if a trial afflict him he turns back headlong...' (*al-Hajj*: 11).

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* rectifies their conduct for them and guides them to the straight path: 'And if they were content with what Allah and His Apostle gave them, and had said: Allah is sufficient for us; Allah will soon give us (more) out of His grace and His Apostle too; surely to Allah do we make our petition.' (*at-Tawba*: 59) So, they should have pursued the means which lead to Allah *the Almighty*. Thus, the one who yearns for Allah's love is required to ardently seek the path which leads to Him.

Back to the verse in question; Ibrahim's (Abraham's) father then said, '...I will stone you if you do not stop this...' (*Maryam*: 46). This verse shows that he threatened Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* that if he does not stop calling to Allah, he will stone him. The Arabic word *ar-raj*m denotes the act of throwing rocks. It is apparent that the procedure of stoning was a means of severe punishment, as in Allah's saying, 'For surely if they prevail against you they would stone you to death or force you back to their religion...' (*al-Kahf*: 20).

There follows the father's statement: 'Keep out of my way!' (*Maryam*: 46) This passage signifies that Ibrahim's (Abraham's) father ordered him to go away and to leave him. This statement ends with the Arabic word *maliyya* which refers to a long period of time, and the word *al-malawa*, which also means a long period of time, as well as the word *al-malwan* which refers to the two periods of night and day, are derived from it. So, what did Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* say to his uncle after this harshness? He did not depart from his courteous manner, nor did transgress against the etiquette of calling to faith with wisdom and good exhortation, as he said:

قَالَ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكَ سَأَسْتَغْفِرُكَ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ كَانَ بِي حَفِيًّا ﴿٤٧﴾

Abraham said,... ‘Peace be with you: I will beg my Lord to forgive you – He is always gracious to me [47] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 47)

It is as if Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* wants to attract the attention of his paternal uncle, which is referred to as father, and to emphatically confirm to him that he is in grave danger, meriting punishment from Allah *the Almighty*. This situation grieves Ibrahim (Abraham) and does not please him, for how can he abandon his uncle without taking him by the hand? The first thing he said to him was: ‘...Peace be with you!’ (*Maryam*: 47) It is as if he was telling him, ‘Greetings of peace from me personally. With greetings of peace do I confront what was issued from you, for my state with regard to you is only peace. I will not counter you with the likes of what you said, and I will not be rude to you, and you will not suffer any offense from me, nor will I say ‘ugh’ to you in exasperation or contempt. However, peace from me is not sufficient. You must also have peace from Allah *the Almighty*; for you have fallen into a perilous state which is not to be forgiven and which calls for punishment. Alas, I fear that you shall have no peace from Allah *the Almighty*’.

Therefore, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, ‘...I will beg my Lord to forgive you...’ (*Maryam*: 47). It is as if he was excusing himself for saying: ‘...Peace be with you...’ (*Maryam*: 47); for he did not say that except with the intention of asking his Lord to forgive his uncle, so that peace might be fulfilled for him if he renounces his beliefs in the worship of idols. In this manner, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* wished to show him compassion and win over his heart.

Only then did Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* speak of asking for forgiveness in the future. He did not say, ‘I have asked for you to be forgiven’, but rather: ‘...I will beg my Lord to forgive you...’ (*Maryam*: 47). He desires that his asking for his uncle’s forgiveness be freed from all flattering courtesy, hypocrisy, and imposture. So, if he invoked Allah *the Almighty* to forgive his uncle, then he might have felt that he was merely exhibiting amicability towards his uncle. So, he said: ‘...I will beg my Lord to forgive you...’ (*Maryam*: 47) which means that he will do so far away from him so

that it would be a secret supplication which holds out more hope of being accepted by Allah *the Almighty*.

Then Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, ‘He is always gracious to me.’ (*Maryam*: 47), wishing thereby to reassure his paternal uncle that he himself has rank with Allah *the Almighty* such that if he asked his Lord to forgive him, then Allah *the Almighty* would accept his petition. In this statement, the meaning of the Arabic adverb *hafiyya* (gracious) is determined by the preposition which follows it. When you say *hafiyyun bi-hi*, with the preposition *ba`*, it signifies treating someone with great honour and generosity encompassing the exigencies of his happiness. Similarly, one says, ‘*qabalahu bil-hafawa`*’ meaning to receive someone with a warm welcome, with the honour and generosity corresponding to that which achieves happiness for him.

The way of treating guests generously is a relative matter, differing according to the differences among people. There are some for whom a benevolent reception would consist merely of receiving him—even if only on a piece of matting—and serving him something—even if only a cup of tea. There are others who need adornments, luxurious couches, and great feast tables for them to feel being warmly welcomed.

We also use the same word with a different preposition, *hafiyyun `an-hu*, which signifies going to great lengths in investigating someone to discover their news to such an excessive degree that one undergoes hardship and exhausts oneself in doing this. In the Egyptian dialect one says, ‘I finally reached him after having worn myself out (*hafitu*)’. A relevant example of this occurs in Allah’s saying regarding the Final Hour: ‘...They ask you as if you were solicitous about it (*hafiyun `an-hu*). Say, ‘Its knowledge is only with Allah, but most people do not know.’’ (*al-A`raf*: 187) This verse tells us that they were asking Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the Hour as if he was painstakingly interested in it, obsessed with investigating it, and ceaselessly speaking of its circumstances.

Consequently, the meaning of: ‘...He is always gracious to me.’ (*Maryam*: 47), is that His Lord excessively honours Ibrahim (Abraham) with utmost benevolence which brings about his happiness. So, part of his happiness lies in that Allah *the Almighty* forgives his uncle for the major sin on which he is so insistent. It

is as if Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* is highlighting two issues: he inflates the sin into which his paternal uncle has fallen—which is disbelief in Allah *the Almighty*—and magnifies the Lord from whom he will seek forgiveness for his paternal uncle, in the light of: ‘...He is always Gracious to me.’ (*Maryam: 47*)

Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) thoughts in this regard may be paraphrased as follows: ‘Now, since my Lord has always been gracious to me and has never forsaken me—and how could it be otherwise since He has made me a prophet and has always been generous to me. Therefore, rest assured that if you repent and renounce that which you currently adhere to of false beliefs, Allah *the Almighty* will surely forgive you’. It is as if he *peace be upon him* is emphatically confirming to his paternal uncle the station he himself holds with his Lord, and all that his uncle needs to do is to listen to his words and respond affirmatively to his call.

Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* continued to seek forgiveness for his paternal uncle as he had promised him until it was made clear to him that the uncle was an enemy to Allah *the Almighty*. At that point, he ceased doing this and disavowed him, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And Ibrahim (Abraham) asking forgiveness for his sire was only owing to a promise which he had made to him; but when it became clear to him that he was an enemy of Allah, he declared himself to be clear of him; most surely Ibrahim (Abraham) was very tender-hearted forbearing.’ (*at-Tawba: 114*)

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* states that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* told his people:

وَأَعْتَزِلْكُمْ وَمَا تَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَأَدْعُوا رَبِّي عَسَى
 أَلاَّ أَكُونَ بِدُعَاءِ رَبِّي شَقِيًّا ﴿٤٨﴾

**But for now I will leave you, and the idols you all pray to,
 and I will pray to my Lord and trust that my prayer will
 not be in vain[48] (The Quran, *Maryam: 48*)**

The Arabic verb *ʿitazala* (to leave) means to abandon specific companionship for what is more preferable to it, even if this is done based on one’s beliefs.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* draws our attention to the fact that when a person debates about an issue and finds his opponent to be vehemently argumentative and obstinate in clinging to falsehood, he should not prolong dialogue with him. In this way, one prevents stubbornness from becoming more deeply embedded in his opponent, which incites the latter towards the arrogance of gaining the upper hand even on the basis of falsehood.

In the same vein, this is the reason why Allah *Glorified is He* instructed the contemporaries of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that if they wanted to investigate whether he is truthful or liar, they should do this in pairs or individually. They were not to delve into it as a communal discussion with rabble-rousing tumult. This is because the clamorous activity of a gathering is far removed from objectivity, and in such circumstances an individual becomes hidden in the crowd. Moreover, things whose consequences are not praiseworthy and cannot be predicted by anyone may occur.

The vociferous gathering is not governed by reason or logic, and the masses, as one says, have their minds in their ears. We have previously said that when Cleopatra and her allies were defeated, they portrayed this defeat as a victory, as has often happened over the course of history. Concerning this, a poet said:

The most eager listeners of the people are the lowliest
With what thoughts are they inspired
They filled the air with cries and shouts
By my life, they are murderers
False accusation influenced them
And falsehood fooled them
What parrots they are
Their intelligence is in their ears.

Thus, public discussion of a matter does not arrive at a sound opinion, nor does it attain to what is right.

Allah *the Almighty* says to the contemporaries of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Say, ‘I exhort you only to one thing, that rise

up for Allah's sake in twos and singly, then ponder: there is no madness in you fellow-citizen...' (*Saba'*: 46). Critical investigation of a matter such as this requires two individuals who exchange views, thoughts, and evidence, arriving at a conclusion after in-depth study of the question. Consequently, if one of them should get the better of the other, then the affair was between the two of them without a third person to take malicious pleasure at the misfortune of the one defeated. Alternatively, a single person could investigate the issue, debating inwardly with himself. He would then study the personage of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the noble manners and character he embodies. He would ask himself, 'How, despite these traits, can he still be regarded as mad? Have we noticed any symptoms of insanity in him? As for those who called him a sorcerer, why did he not cast magic spells over them as he did with his followers?'

Hence, if a single person ponders over these truths in his mind and carefully weighs the various opinions, he will be guided on his own to the right course. Thus, withdrawal is a requirement if a man finds the ambience unsuited to debating against vain falsehood with the truth. In this way, we can avoid giving firmer roots to disputatiousness and obstinacy in the soul of the opponent.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Surely (as for) those whom the angels cause to die while they are unjust to their souls, they shall say, 'In what state were you?' They shall say, 'We were weak in the earth.' They shall say, 'Was not Allah's Earth spacious, so that you should have migrated therein?'' (*an-Nisa'*: 97) Thus, they had the opportunity to depart from this spot for somewhere else in Allah's vast Earth. So, Allah *Glorified is He* is drawing our attention to the fact that the entire earth is on His Possession. His Earth is of great expanse, not being limited to Egypt or Syria or Germany; rather, the entire earth without barriers is indeed Allah's Earth. So, whoever feels oppressed in a place can go to another with no hindrance preventing him from doing so.

But is this still the case in our day and age? Are you able to penetrate these barriers while they are based upon regulations and laws for which Allah *the Almighty* has revealed no authority? It is for this reason that Allah

the Almighty says, ‘And the earth, He has set it for living creatures.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 10) This verse shows that the earth—all of the earth—is for living creatures—all living creatures. This is among the fundamental principles which the Creator established for mankind. Consequently, when man invented barriers and borders, and set up walls and wires, preventing living creatures from movement throughout Allah’s Earth, this resulted in the growth of great corruption in the universe. Thus, if you find a particular place unbearable, you cannot find any alternative place. If you reside in an environment which is not morally corrupt in its formation, you are destined to be unhappy therein for the rest of your life.

In our opinion, these barriers and boundaries have given rise to an ‘earth’ without men and men; without an earth. If only these potentials complemented one another, this world would be set right. In this connection, this issue of withdrawal or of emigration from the land of falsehood or from an environment in which truth is not triumphant is referred to in many verses of the Quran in relation to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Among these references is Allah’s saying, ‘They said, ‘Burn him and help your gods, if you are going to do (anything). We said, ‘O fire! Be a comfort and peace to Ibrahim (Abraham)’; And they desired a war on him, but We made them the greatest losers. And We delivered him as well as Lut (Lot) (removing them) to the land which We had blessed for all people.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 68-71) Thus, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* left a land which defied the divine way of guidance for another land, and emigrated with his message to *Ash-Sham* which was a well-suited environment for the message.

Back to the verse in question; the withdrawal of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* from his people was not done in quest of material gain and bounteous livelihood, but rather, for the sake of Allah *the Almighty* and in pursuit of a principle rooted in faith which he was calling for: ‘I will leave you, and the idols you all pray to...’ (*Maryam*: 48)

Here, the first thing that we observe is that the act of praying is used instead of worshipping, for the discourse, at the beginning, was about worship, as in Allah’s saying, ‘Why do you worship something that can neither hear nor see...’ (*Maryam*: 42); and in His saying, ‘Father, do not

worship Satan...’ (*Maryam*: 44). Here, the context entails that Ibrahim (Abraham) says, ‘I shall leave you, and the idols you all worship ... and I will call upon my Lord’; that is, ‘I will worship Him’. However, he refrains from speaking of worship here and said, ‘I will leave you, and the idols you all pray to....’ (*Maryam*: 48) What is the reason for this? It is said that this is because man does not turn away from his Lord and away from His Oneness except when he considers himself self-sufficient. But, if events force him to seek shelter and circumstances press down on him, he will not find any refuge except with Allah *the Almighty* whence he invokes Him. Thus, worship will definitely lead you to prayer. So, as long as you will be compelled to call out in supplication, then you should act from the very beginning on the following verse: ‘I will leave you, and the idols you all pray to....’ (*Maryam*: 48). Hence, Allah *the Almighty* employs prayer, instead of worship, as one may worship Allah *the Almighty* in a state of ease, but if a calamity or situation of great calamity should befall him, he has no refuge except in Him. He will return to Him with praying and supplication.

There follows Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) statement: ‘I will pray to my Lord and trust that my prayer will not be in vain.’ (*Maryam*: 48) This verse tells us that Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) prayer to his Lord will not be in vain because Allah *the Almighty* does not cause those who worship Him and invoke Him to be unhappy or distressed. If you wish to indicate the opposite of this, and then say, ‘The wretched and unhappy are those who do not worship Allah *the Almighty* and do not call out to Him in prayer’ Thereafter, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَلَمَّا أَتَتْهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ ط وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا نَبِيًّا ﴿٤٩﴾

**When he left his people and those they served beside God,
We granted him Isaac and Ya’qub and made them both
prophets [49] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 49)**

We should notice that in Allah’s saying, ‘We granted him Ishaq (Issac) and Ya’qub (Jacob) and made them both prophets’ (*Maryam*: 49), He does not mention Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* because it was Ishaq (Issac) *peace be upon him* who came as a reward from Allah *the Almighty* to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* for his patience in the trial of the sacrifice of

Ismail (Ishmael), and for the way the two of them entrusted the entire matter to Allah *the Almighty* with submission to His decree and predestination. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘So when they both submitted and he threw him down upon his forehead; And We called out to him saying, ‘O *Ibrahim!* You have indeed shown the truth of the vision; surely thus do We reward the doers of good. Most surely this is a manifest trial.’ And We ransomed him with a Feat sacrifice.’ (*as-Saffat*: 103-107) But the reward was not limited to providing a ransom sacrifice, but rather: ‘And We gave him the good news of Ishaq (Issac)...’ (*as-Saffat*: 112).

So, when Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* submitted to Allah’s command regarding the first son, Ismail (Ishmael), He bestowed upon him a second son. In another verse Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And We gave him Ishaq (Issac) and Ya’qub (Jacob), a son’s son, and We made (them) all good.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 72) It is as if the grandson were a supplementary augmentation to the gift of offspring, and an exceptionally magnanimous mark of distinction.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* shows them all favour by making them prophets: ‘...and made them both prophets’ (*Maryam*: 49). The favour did not consist of Allah’s granting of Ishaq (Issac) to Ibrahim (Abraham) and after him Ya’qub (Jacob), but rather that He made them all prophets. These glad tidings came to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* while he was promoting the message of Allah, and he hoped ardently that this mission would remain in his progeny after him. This was the same idea which Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* had. All of them keenly desired offspring, not for the sake of prolonging an ancestral lineage, or for multiplication of offspring or out of concern for having heirs for the properties of this world. Rather, this desire was for the descendants to bear the responsibility of conveying Allah’s way of guidance and for the extension of this mission among them, and fulfilling its requirements.

In this regard, you should take a careful look at Allah’s saying about Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: ‘And when his Lord tried Ibrahim (Abraham) with certain words⁽¹⁾, he fulfilled them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 124).

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir states, ‘Scholars have differed in the identification of the commandments by which Allah put Ibrahim (Abraham) to the test. Ibn ‘Abbas said,=

This verse shows that Allah *the Almighty* charged him with certain laws and he upheld them in the most excellent manner and performed them in their correct way. Due to his yearning for religious obligations, Allah *the Almighty* fulfilled them for him: ‘Surely I will make you an Imam of men.’ (*al-Baqara*: 124) The matter of religious leadership stirred up the soul of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and he avidly desired that this mission would continue in his progeny after him, so he asked: ‘And of my offspring?’ (*al-Baqara*: 124) For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* rectified Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) idea of religious leadership, and laid down a general principle for it. It is not something to be inherited, but rather is a religious assignment with certain conditions: ‘My covenant does not include the unjust’, said He.’ (*al-Baqara*: 126)

Hence, evildoers are not fit for this mission. Upon grasping this lesson, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* upheld this principle and sought to take it into account in his subsequent invocation to his Lord. Consequently, when he prayed to his Lord, saying, ‘My Lord, make it a secure town and provide its people with fruits...’ (*al-Baqara*: 126), he took precautions, lest there be evildoers in his land, and therefore added: ‘... such of them as believe in Allah and the Last Day...’ (*al-Baqara*: 126).

However, Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) analogy occurs out of place here, so Allah *the Almighty* sets the issue straight for him. This is because he is speaking of a matter pertinent to Allah’s bestowals of Lordship which

= “Allah tried him with the rites of pilgrimage.” Also according to Ibn `Abbas: “He tried him with the rulings of purification. Five of these pertained to the head and five pertained to the body. Those concerning the head were: trimming the moustache, rinsing the mouth, rinsing the nasal cavity, brushing of the teeth and combing the hair. Those concerning the body were: clipping of the fingernails, shaving of the pubic hair, circumcision, plucking the hairs of the armpits and washing off any remaining feces and urine with water.” Ibn `Abbas also stated a third opinion: “The commandments with which Allah tried Ibrahim (Abraham) and which he fulfilled were as follows: leaving his people for Allah’s sake when he was ordered to do so; his arguing with Nimrod about Allah when he seized him for disagreeing with him which was a gravely dangerous stance, his patience for Allah’s sake at Nimrod’s throwing him into the fire in order to burn him alive despite the terrifying nature of this matter, and after that the emigration for Allah’s sake from his homeland and his country when Allah commanded him to depart from them...”” See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`Azim*, 1/165.

include the believer as well as the disbeliever, the obedient as well as the disobedient. As Allah *the Almighty* has already guaranteed the provision of sustenance to everyone, there is thus no cause for taking precautions regarding His bestowals of Lordship. Therefore, his Lord answers him: ‘And whoever disbelieves, I will grant him enjoyment for a short while, then I will drive him to the chastisement of the fire; and it is an evil destination.’ (*al-Baqara*: 126)

Hence, there is a distinction between bestowal of Lordship, and that of divinity, with the latter embracing religious leadership regarding Allah’s way of guidance. On the one hand, the bestowal of Lordship comprises sustenance which is provided to everyone and subject to causal factors. Thus, whoever pursues these causal factors obtains what he desires of this sustenance. On the other hand, the bestowals of divinity are gained by carrying out the prescribed duties, obedience, and worship. In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Whoever desires the gain of the hereafter, We will give him more of that again; and whoever desires — the gain of this world, We give him of it, and in the hereafter he has no portion.’ (*ash-Shura*: 20)

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُمْ مِّن رَّحْمَتِنَا وَجَعَلْنَا لَهُمْ لِسَانَ صِدْقٍ عَلِيمًا ﴿٥٠﴾

**We granted Our grace to all of them, and gave them
a noble reputation [50] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 50)**

In Allah’s saying, ‘...Our Grace...’ (*Maryam*: 50), the Arabic word *ar-rahma* (grace) has the intended meaning of ‘prophethood’. It is for this reason that when the grandees and dignitaries who were contemporaries of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘and they say: Why was not this Quran revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) as if they deemed Prophet Muhammad too insignificant to have such a distinguished station; the Quran refuted their claim, stating: ‘Will they distribute the grace of your Lord...?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) Hence, the gift of prophethood is a grace which Allah *the Almighty* dispersed among the progeny of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*.

There follows Allah's saying, '...and gave them a noble reputation.' (*Maryam: 50*) These aforementioned prophets, i.e. Ibrahim (Abraham), Ishaq (Issac) and Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon them* only uttered the speech of veracity and indisputable truth corresponding to reality. Here, the Arabic expression *lisan as-sidq* (noble reputation) signifies praise in the right place and veracious eulogy without false flattery. Praising is expressed by the tongue, and here we find ourselves recalling this procession of prophets— Ibrahim (Abraham), Ismail (Ishmael), Ishaq (Issac) and Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon them*—with excellent praise and good comportment, taking them as examples to emulate. All of this is part of their noble reputation. It seems that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* prayed for such reputation when he said: 'My Lord: Grant me wisdom, and join me with the good. And ordain for me a goodly mention among posterity.' (*ash-Shu'ara': 83-84*)

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ مُوسَىٰ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مُخْلَصًا وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَّبِيًّا ﴿٥١﴾

Mention too, in the Quran, the story of Moses.

He was specially chosen, a messenger and a prophet [51]

(The Quran, *Maryam: 51*)

This is also a figure from among the procession of prophets. In fact, the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* takes up a large portion of the Book of Allah, even larger than that taken up by the story of any other prophet. As a consequence, people have been lead to wonder about the reason behind this. Even the children of Israel view themselves as superior to other people based on their being the nation with the greatest number of prophets. But this is due to their folly, since this fact counts against them and not for them, for the multiplicity of prophets among them is proof of their obstinacy and their haughty arrogance towards their Prophets. As a matter of fact, there is no nation which confounded the prophets and caused them harm as did the children of Israel. Was it why their Prophets were so numerous? Prophets are the healers of moral values who cure those who lack them. Hence, the great number of prophets is evidence of the spread of spiritual disease and its chronicity which need a group of healers, rather than one healer, to cure them.

Some people think that the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in the Quran is merely a historical narrative such as when we relate a tale, saying: ‘Once upon a time such-and-such...’. However, if the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in the Quran were merely the narration of historical events, it would have occurred only once. However, this is not the case because the wisdom behind relating it to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And all we relate to you of the accounts of the apostles is to strengthen your heart therewith...’ (*Hud*: 120). Hence, the objective of this narrative is to strengthen Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in conveying the message to his people. This is because he will face many situations and hardships in which he will need support, comforting and consolation. Thus, every time a grave situation arose between him and his people, his Lord would tell him: ‘Remember Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he did such and such. You are the seal of the messengers and the crown of them all; hence it is imperative for you to endure and to persevere patiently’. However, had the story been revealed only once, the reinforcement through it would have occurred only once, even though there are numerous occasions which require strengthening during the prophetic mission.

In this regard, we find that the adversaries of Islam level charges of repetition against the Quran with respect to the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. This is simply a proof of their deficiency in understanding the Quran, since these passages in which they perceive redundant repetition are actually nothing but variegated events of a single theme. Yet behind each event lies a specific situational context and occasion to come forth, so that when its context arises and its appropriate time comes, it is revealed from on high.

Let us offer an example to clarify this point; the adversaries of the Quran thought that the following verse about Musa’s (Moses’s) childhood comprises redundant repetition, though this is not the case: ‘...an enemy to me and enemy to him...’ (*Ta Ha*: 39). We should ask here, ‘When the enmity did break out between the two opponents, namely; Musa (Moses) and Pharaoh? If the enmity had been from one side only, then the other side would encounter it with objectivity and without any vehement hostility until the enmity of the other side calmed down. He would then be an opponent

without enmity. Then, when the one filled with fierce enmity saw him in such a state of virtuous comportment, the enmity in his soul towards the other would be dispelled, as Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Repel (evil) with what is best, when lo! He between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend.' (*Fussilat: 34*)

However, when enmity is between two real antagonists, both being equally hostile, it is here that enmity rages, and its fire grows and conflict flares up between them, leading inevitably to one of them attacking the other. When Allah *Glorified is He* discussed the story Musa (Moses) and Pharaoh, He portrays the enmity of Musa (Moses) in His saying, 'And Pharaoh's family took him up that he might be an enemy and a grief for them...' (*al-Qasas: 8*). Here, the enmity by which Allah *the Almighty* brought the state of Pharaoh into disgrace is on the part of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Nevertheless, at this point we find that Pharaoh took Musa (Moses) in and raised him, not knowing that he is an enemy to him, and that by his hands would come his own end by drowning. So, Pharaoh's criteria of assessment are quite mistaken, though he makes claim to divinity.

In another instance, Allah *the Almighty* confirms enmity on the part of the Pharaoh in His saying, '...there shall take him up one who is an enemy to Me and enemy to him...' (*Ta Ha: 39*). Here the enmity arises from Pharaoh. Thus, the enmity was mutual, and therefore the conflict between them was fierce.

Similarly, among the Quranic verses which certain people viewed as repetitiveness are Allah's saying, 'And We revealed to Musa's (Moses's) mothers, saying, 'Suckle him, then when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve; surely We will bring him back to you and make him one of the apostles.'" (*al-Qasas: 7*) In another verse Allah *the Almighty* says, 'When we revealed to your mother what was revealed; saying, 'Put him into a chest, then cast it down into the river, then the river shall throw him on the shore; there shall take him up one who is an enemy to Me and enemy to him...' (" (*Ta Ha: 38-39*). Orientalists have raised a great clamour about these verses because they do not understand the Quranic style of expression, and they lack the innate disposition for the Arabic language necessary for grasping Allah's Book. In fact, there is a difference between the two

narrative contexts in the above verses. Concerning the first statement: ‘...when you fear for him, cast him into the river...’ (*al-Qasas*: 7), it must be observed that these events had not yet occurred, but that they would take place in the future. These words are simply to prepare Musa’s (Moses’s) mother for events before they occurred.

As for the explanation of the second narrative, it depends upon the events at the time of their occurrence. For this reason, it is expressed in abbreviated formulations, as if they were discontinuous telegraphic messages, corresponding to the occurrence of the events: ‘...Put him into a chest, then cast it down into the river...’ (*Ta Ha*: 39).

The absence of repetition is evident in that the verse of the chapter of *al-Qasas* only mentions: ‘...cast him into the river...’ (*al-Qasas*: 7), but it does not speak of the chest as does the verse of the chapter of *Ta Ha*: ‘...Put him into a chest, then cast it down into the river...’ (*Ta Ha*: 39) Hence, there is no redundant repetitiveness in this case as those who are biased against Islam mistakenly claim, for each verse speaks of a specific condition and phase of the story.

Back to the verse under discussion; Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Mention too, in the Quran, the story of Musa (Moses). He was specially chosen....’ (*Maryam*: 51) Here, the Arabic word *mukhlasan* (specially chosen) is derived from the same semantic root as the verb *khallasa* meaning to purify or refine something by separating it from other things. In other words, it means to extract something from other things with which it was mixed, as we distil perfumes, for example, from flower blossoms. In this way, you take what is good and leave what is base or bad. With regard to man, we say, ‘So-and-so is pure and refined (*mukhlas*)’. This is because man is made up of numerous dispositions and aptitudes which serve every activity of life, with each of his aptitudes and abilities carrying out a certain function; however, certain things may penetrate one of these aptitudes which are not part of its function or which go beyond its intended purposes. It is then that certain flaws can affect it, leading to man’s need to purify himself of these blemishes and defects.

Let us give an example to illustrate this point; Allah *Glorified is He* allows sexual intercourse between the husband and wife for a specific purpose,

namely, the continuance of the species. On the other hand, after the animals, which are driven by instinct and not by reason or free will, perform this function, the female never allows the male to mate with it. Likewise, the male does not come to the female if it realises from its smell that it is pregnant. Hence, this instinct causes animals to be restrained by its function which is the preservation of the species. Man, however, is not restrained by the limits of this instinct, but rather makes it into a personal pleasure first and foremost, which is then followed by the purpose of preserving the species.

The same holds true regarding the instinct of self-nourishment. If man becomes hungry, he is driven by his instinct to eat. The underlying reason for this stems from the sustaining of life, not from filling up on meat and fat. This instinct causes animals to respect their natural limit; thus, if a beast is satiated, you cannot force it to eat a single twig of clover beyond its capacity. On the other hand, in the case of human beings, the matter is entirely different, for man eats until he is fully satiated, to the extent that he might suffer indigestion from over-eating. Even after this, there is nothing to stop him from having sweets, drinks etc. Therefore, the Creator *Glorified is He* establishes for us a way of guidance which regulates the human instinct; Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and eat and drink and be not extravagant...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 31). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘A few morsels that keep his back upright are sufficient for him. If he has to, then he should keep one-third for food, one-third for drink and one-third for his breathing.’⁽¹⁾

Moreover, curiosity is a human instinct; for man desires to be aware of the knowledge that other people have for the necessary advancement to occur in the proceeding of life. Man also desires to understand Allah’s secrets in the universe; this is the acceptable facet in this regard. However, should this curiosity turn into spying and chasing after the shameful aspects of other people, then it is unacceptable and counted among the defects from which we must purify our souls.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Imam Ahmad and At-Tirmidhi on the authority of Al-Miqdam ibn Ma`adi Yakrib. It is related in the following wording, ‘No man fills a container worse than his stomach...’ At-Tirmidhi graded this Hadith as good, authentic one. See Ahmad, Musnad, 4/132; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2380.*

Hence, every instinct has an underlying reason and a function beyond which we should not go. In this connection, the pure and refined one (*al-mukhlas*) is he who restrains his instincts at their proper bounds, not transgressing them. He purifies his instinct of the defects which surround them. This quality is either bestowed by Allah *the Almighty* upon a devoted servant, thus purifying himself from the beginning of these blemishes; or else he exerts himself to purify his own soul of its defects by adhering to the divine way of guidance. This, then, is what is meant by the pure or the chosen one (*al-mukhlas*); that is to say that he is the one who has purified his soul.

In this connection, it is said, ‘Among people are those who attain to Allah’s Grace by means of obedience to Him, and among people are those who attain to obedience to Allah by means of the His Grace’. Allah *the Almighty* made prophets purified from their very origin in order that they would be prepared and ready for guiding people and not waste their time in ridding themselves of the impurities of life and its experiences. Did Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not persist for twenty-three years teaching people how to purify their souls? So, how would it have been if the he himself had been in need of purifying his soul?

On account of the high status of these pure, chosen ones, Satan displayed proper etiquette and showed respect for this high status when he said, ‘Then by Your Might I will surely make them live an evil life, all, except Your servants from among them, the purified ones.’ (*Sad*: 82-83) Satan said these words because he is not capable of beguiling such pure, chosen people.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and was a messenger and a prophet.’ (*Maryam*: 51) Among Allah’s servants are those who are chosen and pure without being prophets or messengers, as is the case with a pious devoted servant. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* announces here that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was granted all these qualities, namely; being chosen, a messenger and a prophet. A messenger is one to whom divine legislation is revealed, he acts in accord with it and is commanded to communicate it to his people. On the other hand, a prophet is one to whom divine legislation is revealed, and he acts in accord with it, but is not commanded to convey it to others. Hence, every messenger is a prophet, but not vice versa, as a prophet

lives according to the divine way of guidance revealed to a messenger who is contemporary with him or who has preceded him.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَنَدَيْنَاهُ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ الْأَيْمَنِ وَقَرَّبْنَاهُ نَجِيًّا

**We called to him from the right-hand side of the mountain
and brought him close to Us in secret communion [52]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 52)**

Regarding Allah's saying, 'We called to him from the right-hand side of the mountain...' (*Maryam*: 52), does this refer to the right side of the mountain, or to the right side of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*? It is not possible to say of a place that it is right or left, but rather to say this in relation to you or someone else. Hence, that which you consider to be to the right, someone else considers it to be to the left. One does not say about a place that it is to the right or to the left unless this is in relation to something fixed such as the direction of the *qibla* (prayer), for example. In this case, you would say, 'To the right of the *qibla*, to the left of the *qibla*, behind it or in front of it.'

Thus, Allah's saying, 'We called to him from the right-hand side of the mountain...' (*Maryam*: 52) signifies that the mountain was on the right of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* while he was heading towards it. This is a condensed account from the story which occurs in a detailed manner in Allah's saying, 'So when Musa (Moses) had fulfilled the term, and he journeyed with his family, he perceived on this side of the mountain a fire...' (*al-Qasas*: 29).

There follows His saying, '...and brought him close to Us in secret communion' (*Maryam*: 52) which means that Allah *the Almighty* drew Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* near to converse secretly with him. The Arabic word *an-najyy* refers to an intimate confidant who confers something in private with his bosom friend. This meaning occurs in the following Hadith: 'When three of you are together, two of you must not converse privately ignoring the third till the number increases, lest the third should be grieved.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Muslim and Ibn Majah on the authority of `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no/ 2184; Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2775.*

Allah *the Almighty* draws Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* close to Him in order to speak in confidence with him, and this was a special privilege for Musa (Moses). Hence, Allah's words are meant for him alone and no one else can hear them. At this point, someone might ask, 'But, how is it that Allah speaks to him with words, and yet it is called a secret conversation?' In response to this, it is said that Allah *the Almighty* caused Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to hear it, but kept it concealed from others. Thus, it became a secret conversation just as two people might whisper to one another in secret. Such is a manifestation of Allah's Absolute Omnipotence that Allah *the Almighty* can enable someone to hear while preventing others.

Some Quranic exegetes opined that the word *al-ayman* (the right-hand) is not related to the Arabic word referring to the right (*al-yamin*), but instead it is derived from the Arabic word *al-yumn* (good fortune) and is thus associated with Allah's Grace and Blessing.

Concerning Allah's saying, '...and brought him close to Us in secret communion.' (*Maryam: 52*), it signifies being close to the presence of Allah *Glorified is He*. Here, we may pose a question, which is, 'Was Allah *the Almighty* the One Who drew closer to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*? Or was it Musa (Moses) who drew closer to the presence of Allah *Glorified is He*? But how can we say that Allah *the Almighty* drew closer to him when He is already closer to him with His Knowledge than his own jugular vein'? The answer is that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is the one who got close to the presence of Allah *the Almighty*. In this way, Allah *the Almighty* combines several traits in Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* inasmuch as Allah *the Almighty* makes him a chosen one, a messenger and a prophet, and further singles him out for conversation in confidence.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* adds another gift to him; Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ مِنْ رَحْمَتِنَا أَخَاهُ هَارُونَ نَبِيًّا ﴿٥٣﴾

**Out of Our grace We granted him his brother
Aaron as a prophet [53] (The Quran, *Maryam: 53*)**

Allah *the Almighty* grants Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* his brother Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* as a special grace for him since Harun

(Aaron) was a helper for his brother and a support for him with regard to the conveyance of the message. Never has it happened with any other prophet that Allah *the Almighty* gives him an assistant to help him carrying out his prophetic mission. In this vein, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said, ‘And my brother, Harun (Aaron), he is more eloquent of tongue than I, therefore send him with me as an aider, verifying me: surely I fear that they would reject me.’ (*al-Qasas*: 34) In this verse, the Arabic word *ar-rid`* refers to the helper. In this manner, Allah *the Almighty* has provided us with a brief account of the procession of prophethood in the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. The detailed account of this condensed overview here occurs in other Quranic verses.

Thereafter, Allah *the Almighty* says,

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِسْمَاعِيلَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صَادِقَ الْوَعْدِ وَكَانَ رَسُولًا نَبِيًّا ﴿٥٤﴾

**Mention too, in the Quran, the story of Ismail.
He was true to his promise, a messenger and a
prophet [54] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 54)**

Here, Allah’s saying, ‘He was true to his promise...’ (*Maryam*: 53) may give rise to the following question, ‘What is so special here for Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*, since all messengers were true to their promise?’ It is said that there is a characteristic which stands out prominently in a person and by which he is distinguished, even if it may exist in someone else. This applies to the one who fulfils his promise which he made regarding a matter over which he has control and to which it is related.

As for Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* he was true to his promise with regard to the matter of life or death, a matter which involved his own soul, when he said to his father: ‘He said, “O my father! Do what you are commanded; if Allah pleases, you will find me of the patient ones.”’ (*as-Saffat*: 102) If only the command had been revealed directly to Ismail (Ishmael), the matter would have been easier to him, but instead it was his father Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. Once again, the trial would have been easier if the boy himself was the one who had seen the dream in this regard, but the matter did not go like this, for it was the father who saw the dream.

At this point, we should note that the legal ruling is not proven by a dream except in the case of prophets. Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* was accurate in his response when his father informed him of the matter; it seems as if Ibrahim (Abraham) was seeking his opinion in this matter: ‘O my son! Surely I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you; consider then what you see.’ (*as-Saffat*: 102) Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was afraid to proceed with the sacrifice of his son without informing him, so that when the moment of sacrifice comes, the boy would not be filled with anger at his father, since he would not know the motive behind his father’s act. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* wanted the surrender of his son who would be sacrificed to be an offering from Ismail (Ishmael) to Allah *the Almighty* for which he would have the reward and recompense. Thereupon, Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* said to his father, ‘O my father! Do what you are commanded...’ (*as-Saffat*: 102).

The promise to which Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* remained true is expressed in his statement: ‘...if Allah pleases, you will find me of the patient ones.’ (*as-Saffat*: 102) He remained true to his promise, and surrendered to the sacrifice. He did not hesitate, nor did he renege on his promise. For this reason, he justly merited to be distinguished by his Lord with these virtues: ‘He was true to his promise...’ (*Maryam*: 53). When Allah *the Almighty* saw the surrender of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them* to His decree, He lifted it and called out to him: ‘And We called out to him saying, “O Ibrahim (Abraham)! You have indeed shown the truth of the vision; surely thus do We reward the doers of good: Most surely this is a manifest trial. And We ransomed him with a Feat sacrifice.”’ (*as-Saffat*: 104-107) As a result of the patience shown in facing this trial, Allah *the Almighty* redeemed the sacrifice and saved Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* from being slaughtered. Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* benevolently granted Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* another son: ‘And we gave to him Ishaq (Isaac)...’ (*al-An’am*: 84).

This Quranic lesson teaches us that if a Muslim submits to Allah’s decree and is content with His predestination, then he will reap the fruits of this surrender. That which prolongs the duration of the divine decree upon

people is their discontentment with it. No one can coerce Allah *the Almighty* to do anything, and His decree is surely executed, whether you are content with it or not. When you surrender to Him and are satisfied with His decree, Allah *the Almighty* relieves you of it or makes its beneficial aspect clear to you. For this reason, it is imperative that you respect predestination and be content with it because it is from your Lord, the Creator, the All-Wise; for His decree is not lifted until mankind are content with it.

How frequently do we see people objecting to Allah's decree, especially in the case of the death of a young child?! We see them weeping and lamenting excessively over him, with one of them saying, 'He, alas, did not have a chance to enjoy his youth'. We are astonished at such displays of ignorance: What youth? What sort of enjoyment might this be? How can they view things in this way while in his infancy he has departed from this vain, fleeting world and from temporary enjoyment to the everlasting abode and permanent bliss? How can this be the case since he has left life among the created things and gone to bounteous vastness of the Creator?

Surely, he is in blissful pleasure which, if you are cognisant of, you would yearn to be in his place. It is sufficient that these children are not questioned about their past deeds and are not taken to account. They have no specific residence in paradise because they wander freely and joyously in it as they please. For this reason, they are called the 'roamers of Paradise.'⁽¹⁾

Another person may object to Allah's decree because his colleague at work has been promoted and becomes his boss; so he resents and despises him, and his soul burns with anger towards him. He should have asked himself before all of this, 'Did his colleague receive anything from Allah's dominion aside from His decree and predestination?' Hence, if you do not

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Imam Ahmed and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayra who narrated that Abu Hassan said to him, 'My two children had died. Would you narrate to me anything from Allah's Messenger's Hadiths which would soothe our hearts in our bereavements?' He said, 'Yes. Small children are the fowls of paradise. If one of them meets his father (or he said his parents), he would take hold of his cloth, or he said with his hand as I take hold of the hem of your cloth (with my hand). And he (the child) would not take off (his hand) from it until Allah causes his father to enter Paradise.' See Ahmad, Musnad, 2/477, 510; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2635.*

respect this colleague, it is obligatory for you to respect Allah's Will with regard to him, for he did not forcefully take anything from Allah *the Almighty*. In a similar vein, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Hear and obey, even if you are made subject to the authority of an Ethiopian slave whose head looks like a raisin.'⁽¹⁾

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says,

وَكَانَ يَأْمُرُ أَهْلَهُ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَالزَّكَاةِ وَكَانَ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ مَرْضِيًّا

**He commanded his household to pray and give alms, and his Lord was well pleased with him [55]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 55)**

This verse shows that among the great qualities of Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* which Allah *the Almighty* attributes to him are: 'He commanded his household to pray and give alms.' (*Maryam*: 55) The Arabic word *ahl* (household) refers to his wife and immediate kin. Allah *the Almighty* is not concerned with a trait, nor does He mention it, except if it is of great significance in His view. In this sense, Ismail's (Ishmael's) commanding of his household to pray and give alms is equal to his being true to his promise and his being a messenger and a prophet. So, whoever desires to be characterised by one of the qualities of prophethood must order his household to pray and give alms.

Here, we may pose a question, which is, 'Why does Ismail (Ishmael) give such precedence to his household specifically?' He focuses his attention on his own family because they comprise the most immediate environment. If someone can reform the latter, then his house and offspring will likewise be reformed. Furthermore, if a person can draw his family's attention to the remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* and the performance of the five daily prayers, then, in this way, he blocks the path against Satan. In fact, Satan has no space in a house whose inhabitants pray the five prayers. Therefore,

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Imam Ahmad, Al-Bukhari and Ibn Majah on the authority of 'Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. Ahmad's narration is as follows, 'Prophet Muhammad said to Abu Dharr, 'Listen and obey (your chief) even if he is an Ethiopian with a head like a raisin.' See Ahmad, Musnad, 2/171; Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 7142; and Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2860.*

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘May Allah have mercy on a man who gets up at night and prays, and wakes his wife, and she prays; and if she refuses he sprinkles water in her face. May Allah have mercy on a woman who gets up at night and prays, and wakes her husband and he prays; and if he refuses, she sprinkles water in his face.’⁽¹⁾

Thus, everyone is able each night to be a messenger to his family and to his environments by carrying out the function of the messenger. This is because Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the last of the prophets and the messengers, for there will be no divine legislation after that revealed to him, and no Scripture will come down after what is sent down to him. Therefore, his community will bear his message after him and every believer among them knows some rulings of Islam is the delegated successor to him *peace and blessings be upon him* in conveying them.

In this connection, Allah *Glorified is He* say, ‘...that you may be the bearers of witness to the people and (that) the Apostle may be a bearer of witness to you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 143). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bears witness that he conveyed the Message to us, and it is incumbent upon us to bear witness that we have conveyed it to mankind. So, if you have conveyed it to people in language and words, then it is also necessary to convey it in practice, for you have an excellent example in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah *the Almighty* always mentions prayer and alms together. Prayer consumes some time, and almsgiving consumes some wealth which is a by-product of someone’s work. So, while almsgiving takes the product of time, prayer takes time. Thus, the charity in prayer is greater than the actual alms giving. Even though the giving of charity represents the augmentation of wealth and its blessings—though it appears to be a decrease—prayer represents the increase of time and its blessings. Therefore, beware of saying, ‘I am too busy and do not have time to pray’. In fact, the minutes during which you pray the obligatory prayers to your Lord infuse blessings into the entirety of your time.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Imam Ahmad, An-Nisa`i and Abu Dawud on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, 2/250, 436; An-Nasa`i, Sunnan, 2/205; and Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1308.*

Likewise, when you stand before your Lord in prayer, you receive a charge of faith and light which helps you to perform your function in life. In doing this, you present your soul for review to your Lord, your Creator and your Maker; and you shall never be deprived of any blessing on account of this encounter with Him. Just imagine a manufactured object being placed five times every day before its maker for review, could any stoppage or malfunction ever affect it? Now, while the industrial engineer deals with material things, since they are sensory and perceptible, the Creator is invisible and reforms you in ways that you could never know.

Obviously, Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* would not command his household to pray and give alms unless he himself was keen on doing so. As for Allah's saying, '...and his Lord was well pleased with him.' (*Maryam: 55*), this means that Allah *the Almighty* was well pleased with him not on account of the traits of goodness which Allah *the Almighty* attributes to him, but rather, from his very origins, for Allah *Glorified is He* was well pleased with him and so chose him as a messenger and a prophet.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says,

وَأَذْكُرُ فِي الْكِتَابِ إِدْرِيسَ إِنَّهُ كَانَ صِدِّيقًا نَبِيًّا

Mention too, in the Quran, the story of Idris. He was a man of truth, a prophet [56] (The Quran, *Maryam: 56*)

The Quran continues to provide us with narratives from the procession of messages and prophets. Idris (Enoch) *peace be upon him* was the first prophet after Adam *peace be upon him*. He is Idris (Enoch), son of Seth, son of Adam. After him came Nuh (Noah), and then Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon them* from whom came a lineage of various prophets.

In Allah's saying, 'He was a man of truth, a prophet' (*Maryam: 55*), we find the Arabic word *siddiq* (a man of truth) which we have already explained while speaking on Ibrahim (Abraham). We have noted that the *siddiq* is the one who attains to the utmost steadfastness of faith in what has come to him of truth. By virtue of this, Allah *the Almighty* gives him discernment and luminosity by which he distinguishes the truth. Consequently, Satan does not clash with him, although Satan may get through to my mind and your mind.

However, with respect to that which comes from Allah *the Almighty* Satan can neither oppose nor penetrate it. Therefore, the one who steadfastly believes—even if he is not a prophet—is adjoined to the prophets and the martyrs, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And whoever obeys Allah and His Prophet, these are with those upon whom Allah has bestowed favours from among the prophets and the truthful and the martyrs and the good, and a goodly company are they.’ (*an-Nisa*: 69)

In addition, Idris (Enoch) *peace be upon him* was ‘a prophet’, but Allah *the Almighty* does not also say that he was a messenger, for between him and Adam *peace be upon him* there were only two generations, and the message of Adam was still in place and operative.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says,

﴿٥٧﴾ وَرَفَعْنَاهُ مَكَانًا عَلِيًّا

**We raised him to a high position [57]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 57)**

Here a high position in heaven may refer to spiritual or physical elevation. You may understand it in whatever way you wish, but beware of contesting it by asking, ‘How did He raise him to a high position’? This is due to the fact that exaltation is from Allah *the Almighty* and the One Who created him is He Who elevated him. Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says,

أُولَئِكَ الَّذِينَ أَنْعَمَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ النَّبِيِّينَ مِن ذُرِّيَةِ آدَمَ وَمِمَّنْ حَمَلْنَا مَعَ نُوحٍ وَمِن ذُرِّيَةِ إِبْرَاهِيمَ
وَإِسْرَائِيلَ وَمِمَّنْ هَدَيْنَا وَاجْتَبَيْنَا إِذَا تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُ الرَّحْمَنِ خَرُّوا سُجَّدًا وَبُكِيًّا ﴿٥٨﴾

**These were the prophets God blessed – from the seed of Adam,
of those We carried in the Ark with Nuh, from the seed of
Abraham and Israel – and those We guided and chose. When
the revelations of the Lord of Mercy were recited to them, they
fell to their knees and wept [58] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 58)**

Allah’s saying, ‘These...’ (*Maryam*: 58) refers to the aforementioned prophets and messengers. As for the phrase: ‘of the seed of Adam’ (*Maryam*: 58), it refers to Adam’s direct lineage such as Idris (Enoch) *peace be upon him*;

whereas the phrase: ‘of those We carried in the Ark with Nuh (Noah)’ (*Maryam: 58*) signifies those who came directly after Idris (Enoch) *peace be upon him*; yet the phrase ‘from the seed of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Israel’ (*Maryam: 58*), denotes those who came after Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*. The progeny of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* are divided into two branches. The first is the branch of Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him* from which comes the bulk of the prophets beginning with Ya`qub (Jacob), then Yusuf (Joseph), then Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron), then Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon), then Zechariah and Yahya (John), then Dhu Al-Kifl, then Ayyub (Job) and then Yunus (Jonah) *peace be upon them*. The other branch is that of Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* from which came the summation of the jewels of prophethood, namely; Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Then comes reference to: ‘and Israel’ (*Maryam: 58*), who is Ya`qub (Jacob), the Prophet of Allah. This is followed by: ‘and those We guided and chose’ (*Maryam: 58*) which is a reference to those whom Allah *the Almighty* has guided and chosen for prophethood. The verse then ends with, ‘When the revelations of the Lord of Mercy were recited to them, they fell to their knees and wept.’ (*Maryam: 58*)

Here, we may ask the following question, which is, ‘Why does Allah *the Almighty* say, ‘...the revelations of the Lord of Mercy...’ (*Maryam: 58*) instead of saying, ‘The revelations of Allah’? The answer is that Allah’s revelations carry a way of guidance and obligations, and this is burdensome for people. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* was telling us: ‘Beware of concluding that Allah *the Almighty* makes hardship obligatory upon you. Rather, He assigns you to do that which brings happiness to the proceeding of your life and upon which you can rely for support. Consequently, He causes you to be joyful in the Hereafter’. It is for this reason that Allah *the Almighty* here gives preference to the Attribute of Mercifulness and Graciousness.

There follows Allah’s saying, ‘When the revelations of the Lord of Mercy were recited to them, they fell to their knees and wept.’ (*Maryam: 58*)

Allah *the Almighty* does not say that they prostrated, but rather, they immediately fell facedown upon the ground. This is a compulsive, natural reaction in which neither reason nor reflection has any role. The one who

prostrates can prostrate calmly and in an orderly manner; however, the one who falls to his knees does so without thinking about it. This is similar to Allah's saying, 'The roof fell down on them' (*an-Nahl*: 26), which signifies that it collapsed upon them suddenly. This reaction is called an impulsive reaction which is the result of emotions which are the result of perception. These are the three manifestations of sentiment: perception, emotion, and impulsive reaction. Man has senses by which he perceives: the eye, the ear, the nose, the tongue etc. These are means for gaining cognisance of perceptible things. When you become aware of something with your sensory organs, you will find that it affects you. This effect on your soul is but the emotions (love or hate, etc.), or attraction or revulsion. Subsequently, this emotion gives rise to an action which is the impulsive reaction.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; if you saw a beautiful rose, this sight would be 'perception'; and if you found it to be attractive and took delight in it, this would be 'emotion'; finally, if you reached out your hand to pick it, then this would be 'impulsive reaction'. Islamic law does not call you to account for perception, nor for emotion; however, when you extend your hand to pick this rose, we would say to you, 'Stop, for this does not belong to you'. The Lawgiver does not forbid you something and then He leaves you to your own desires. Instead, He forbids you and then inspires you with a suitable solution to your impulsive inclination. Hence, you should plant the like of that flower so that it will belong to you, or at the very least you should ask permission of its owner to pick it.

The same situation applies to someone who listens to Allah's words in the Quran; he perceives the Quran with his sense of hearing, and this gives rise to sweetness and strong feelings in him. This is the emotion from which arises the impulsive reaction. Such a person can do nothing but to fall to his knees in prostration to Allah *the Almighty*. The impulsive reaction here is not only an outward inclination, but also an inward one. Thus, their eyes overflowed with tears: '...they fell to their knees and wept.' (*Maryam*: 58)

The same concept has been addressed in several other verses, such as Allah's saying, 'Say, "Whether you believe it or not, those who were given knowledge earlier fall on their faces when it is recited to them."' (*al-Isra*': 107)

The phrase: ‘on their faces’ (*al-Isra’*: 107) is an indicative of utter submission and humility, as well as of full execution of prostration. Prostration begins with the forehead, and then the nose. We should be careful not to make our prostration ‘like the peck of a rooster’, as they say.

The previous verse is talking about the people of the Book who were aware of the prophetic mission of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and that he would come with the Quran after a break in the sequence of messengers. When such people hear the Quran, they exclaim: ‘Glory be to our Lord! Most surely the promise of our Lord was to be fulfilled.’ (*al-Isra’*: 108)

Another example of this impulsive reaction regarding the Quran is clear in Allah’s saying concerning the people of the Book: ‘And when they listen to what has been sent down to the messenger, you will see their eyes overflowing with tears because they recognise the Truth [in it].’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 83)

Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Allah has revealed the best announcement, a book conformable in its various parts, repeating, whereat do shudder the skins of those who fear their Lord, then their skins and their hearts become pliant to the remembrance of Allah...’ (*al-Ankabut*: 23), Here, a question may arise, which is, ‘Why does the Quran affect these senses and organs of the human body?’ It is said that this is due to the fact that the One Who fashioned humans is the One Who composed the Quran. When the Creator *Glorified is He* speaks and when you understand Him and pay heed, He is not addressing your mind only, but rather, Allah *the Almighty* is addressing every atom of your constitution as well. It is for this reason that limbs fall in prostration, eyes shed tears, skins shiver, and hearts soften. How could it be otherwise when the speaker is Allah *the Almighty* Himself?

Thereafter, Allah *the Almighty* says,

فَخَلَفَ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ أَضَاعُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَاتَّبَعُوا الشَّهْوَاتِ فَسُوفَ يَلْقَوْنَ غِيًّا ﴿٥٩﴾

But there came after them generations who neglected prayer and were driven by their own desires. These will come face to face with their evil [59] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 59)

As for Allah’s saying, ‘But there came after them generations...’ (*Maryam*: 59), it means that the circumstances did not remain intact about

Allah's aforementioned statement. Rather, those righteous people were succeeded by following generations. The Arabic word *al-khalf* (generation) which is used here, signifies the people who come after a person or following him.

In this connection, there is a difference between *khalf* and *khalaf*: the first, with no vowel after the 'l' is intended to mean the bad ones from among the offspring of a person and his children; the second, with an 'a' vowel following the consonant 'l', refers to the good ones. Therefore, when a poet⁽¹⁾, wished to express woeful distress over the people of goodness who have passed on, he said:

Gone are those under whose protective wing one lived

And I remained among the debased like unto skin of the scabby one.

What do you expect from these evildoers? After these people are mentioned, their characteristics of wickedness must follow; Allah *the Almighty* says, '...who neglected prayer and were driven by their own desires...' (*Maryam*: 59). Hence, they are a corrupt generation, since the first thing that they neglected was prayer, which is the central support of religion and the most important of its pillars in terms of observance.

While it is true that Islam is built on several pillars, yet some of these pillars may be waived for a Muslim and is thus not required to observe them, such as the prescribed alms, pilgrimage and fasting. There remain two fundamental pillars which are never waived under any circumstances which is the testimony of faith, that is, there is no deity worthy of worship, but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and keeping up prayer.

I was once asked by one of our brothers in Algeria, 'Why do we refer to someone who has performed the obligation of pilgrimage as '*Al-Hajj* so-and-so', yet we do not refer to someone who prays as 'the worshipper so-and-so', nor do we say, 'the alms-giver so-and-so' or 'the Observer of the fast so-and-so'?

(1) Labid ibn Rabi'a ibn Malik Abu 'Aqil Al-'Amiri, one of the poets of pre-Islamic times; he is from among the people inhabiting the high plateau of Nejd. He lived to witness Islam and is counted among the Prophet's Companions; later he took up residence in Kufa, lived a long life and passed away in the year 41 A.H. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-A'lam*, 5/240.

I responded to the questioner, ‘This is because by means of the pilgrimage, Allah *the Almighty* completes His favour upon the servant. When we say ‘*Al-Hajj so-and-so*’, this is an indication and a sign that Allah *the Almighty* has actualised this blessing for him. In other words, he has fulfilled all the pillars of Islam. The fact that he has performed the obligation of pilgrimage signifies that he had this capacity in terms of sufficient wealth and health. As long as he still has wealth, then he gives the obligatory alms; and as long as he is still in good health, then he fasts. Obviously, he does not do so unless he testifies that there is no deity worthy of worship but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, and meanwhile observes the daily prayers. In this manner, all the pillars of Islam are fulfilled and perfected for him.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘These will come face to face with their evil.’ (*Maryam*: 59) This expression is seized upon by the adversaries of Islam who seek to find fault in the Quran. Hence, with reference to the Arabic word *al-ghayy* (evil), they say, ‘The word *al-ghayy* refers to wickedness, misguidance and corrupt beliefs; this is what they were actually guilty of in this world, and that is why they neglected prayer and followed their lusts. So, how is it that He says that they will encounter it in the future?’ We content, ‘The intended meaning of *al-ghayy* here is the recompense for such evildoings and its consequences. It is as if you were to say: ‘The sky rained plants’. Now, the sky does not rain plants, but rather, it is water which causes plants to come forth. Likewise, their self-deception and depravity in this world were the reason why the punishment will befall them in the Hereafter. Thus, the meaning of this passage is that they will be confronted with punishment and ruin in the Hereafter.

Nevertheless, Allah *the Almighty* out of His Mercy for His human creatures has prescribed repentance for them. He has opened its door for them and rejoices if they repent. Therefore, those who are characterised by these bad qualities, having neglected prayer and followed their lusts, should not despair of Allah’s Mercy as long as the door of repentance is still open. The opening of the door of repentance before the disobedient is a grace by which Allah *the Almighty* shows mercy to the entire community of those who pursue vile passions and deviations. If it were not so and the door was shut in their

faces, society would be made miserable by them because they would persist in their rebellious falsehood and delusions since they would have nothing in front of them for the sake of which they might rectify themselves.

Repentance comes from the servant and is accepted by the Lord *Glorified is He*. That is to say that the prescription of repentance and its acceptance are from Allah *the Almighty*, yet its effectuation is from the servant. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'He turned to them in mercy in order for them to return [to Him].' (*at-Tawba*: 118) This verse shows that Allah *the Almighty* prescribed repentance for them so that they might repent and so that He might thereby accept their repentance. Hence, repentance begins and ends with Allah *the Almighty*. Therefore, the following exception was revealed:

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَأُولَئِكَ يَدْخُلُونَ الْجَنَّةَ وَلَا يُظْلَمُونَ شَيْئًا ﴿٦٠﴾

**But those who repent, who believe, who do righteous deeds,
will enter Paradise. They will not be wronged in the least[60]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 60)**

There are conditions for repentance which must be considered. They are as follows: you should leave off engaging in the sin you have fallen into; you should regret what you have done; and you should make the determined intention not to return to it again. This does not mean that if you do it again, your repentance will not be accepted, for you may be exposed to circumstances that cause you to fall into sin once again. Rather, the intended meaning is that you make a sincere resolution when you repent not to do it again. Then, if you were to fall into it another time, this would be unintentional and without wilful insistence. Otherwise, if you planned this matter, and said to yourself: 'I will commit a sin and then I will repent', then how can you possibly know that Allah *the Almighty* will grant you enough time to allow you to repent? Therefore, take initiative to repent sincerely before it is too late.

These, then, are the conditions of repentance if it concerns an issue between the servant and his Lord. However, if it is an issue pertaining to other people, then there is inevitably another condition which should be met, that is, returning what you have wrongfully taken from the people if this is possible; otherwise,

you should donate the equivalent to charitable causes with the intention of giving the reward for such an act to the ones you have wronged.

Following this, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...who believe, who do righteous deeds...’ (*Maryam*: 60). The belief which is mentioned here is that which follows repentance since what he committed of wrongdoing has stained his faith which is why he needs to renew it. This is evident in the following Hadith: ‘The fornicator who fornicates is not a believer so long as he commits it and no thief who steals is a believer as long as he commits theft, and no drunkard who drinks wine is a believer as long as he drinks it.’⁽¹⁾

During these acts of disobedience, the disobedient person’s attribute of faith is rendered null and void because his faith is absent at that time. This is because if he attained faith and was aware of the punishments of this world and the Hereafter which his misdeed incurs, he would not have fallen into these sinful acts of disobedience. It is for this reason that Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘who believe’ (*Maryam*: 60) which means to renew one’s faith and to restore it after making repentance. Then follows the saying of Allah: ‘who do righteous deeds.’ (*Maryam*: 60) It is through such righteous deeds that one amends what he corrupted through committing acts of disobedience.

The result of all this is clear in the saying of Allah: ‘They will enter Paradise. They will not be wronged in the least.’ (*Maryam*: 60) In another verse, the reward for those who repent believe and do righteous deeds is the following: ‘...except him who repents and believes and does a good deed; so these are they of whom Allah changes the evil deeds to good ones....’ (*al-Furqan*: 70) Why does Allah *the Almighty* bestow all these blessings upon the wrongdoers who repent? It is said that this is because whoever has grown familiar with the objects of lustful desire and has become habituated to sinful disobedience, having tasted their pleasure, needs great effort in the struggle against his lower self and its subdual. This is contrary to the person who has never grown accustomed to such things. Therefore, disobedient

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim in the book of Iman on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2475; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 57.*

sinners need an incentive to motivate them to return to showing obedience to their Lord *Glorified is He*. It is for this reason that Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘They will enter Paradise.’ (*Maryam*: 60) without being rebuked for what they have done, for they have been sincere in their repentance to Him *the Almighty*. Furthermore, ‘They will not be wronged in the least.’ (*Maryam*: 60) As a matter of fact, the more your repentance is sincere and your remorse is profound, the more you will be rewarded by Allah *the Almighty* to the extent that your sins, out of the Mercy of Allah, will be transformed into good deeds. All of this is due to Allah’s Grace and Mercy.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says,

جَنَّتٍ عَدْنٍ الَّتِي وَعَدَ الرَّحْمَنُ عِبَادَهُ بِالْغَيْبِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ وَعْدُهُ مَأْتِيًا ﴿٦١﴾

They will enter the Gardens of Lasting Bliss, promised by the Lord of Mercy to His servants – it is not yet seen but truly His promise will be fulfilled [61] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 61)

With respect to Allah’s saying, ‘gardens of lasting bliss’ (*Maryam*: 61), this means that they will have everlasting gardens. This is contrary to the gardens of this world where you may find causal factors of pleasure and enjoyment, yet they are transient, for either you will leave them behind or they will leave you behind. Hence, every blessing in this world is without guarantee of perpetuity.

The gardens of perpetual bliss are not the residences of the inhabitants of paradise, but rather, they are the public gardens which all can enjoy. This is proved by the fact that Allah *the Almighty* conjoins the ‘gardens of lasting bliss’ in another verse with the mention of ‘good dwellings’; He says, ‘Allah has promised to the believing men and the believing women gardens, beneath which rivers flow, to abide in them, and good dwellings in gardens of lasting bliss ...’ (*at-Tawba*: 72).

In the verse in question, there follows Allah’s saying, ‘...promised by the Lord of Mercy to His servants — it is not yet seen...’ (*Maryam*: 61). The promise is the announcement of something good before its time has come so as to encourage the one who is promised to undertake deeds in order to

attain to this good. Its opposite is a warning which is the announcement of something bad before its time so as to make a person cautious and avoid falling into that which brings it about.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* has opted for the name ‘the Lord of Mercy’ to reassure those who have wronged their own souls through acts of disobedience that their Lord is indeed Compassionate and Merciful. If they turn to Him in repentance, He will accept it from them; and if He makes a promise to them, He fulfils it. Now, Allah *the Almighty* has made a promise to us in the Quran, and we believe in His promise even though it is pertinent to the unseen realm: ‘...promised by the Lord of Mercy to His servants — it is not yet seen...’ (*Maryam*: 61). Today’s world offers a conclusive proof for the existence of the unseen. Our universe has been created in such a highly accurate way which can never be imitated. Hence if the One Who created this amazing, harmonious cosmos for us informs us of another perpetual blessing in the Hereafter, then we must have full faith in that; we, must rely on our own experience to attain faith to that which is invisible to us. Thus, having full confidence in Allah’s Omnipotence of which we behold only a small portion in this world, we firmly believe in the existence of the Hereafter.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...truly His promise will be fulfilled.’ (*Maryam*: 61) Because the Lord of Mercy is the One Who has made the promise, then His promise must be invariably fulfilled. The Arabic word employed for this latter phrase is *ma`tiya*, which means that Allah’s promise will be actualised and realised without any doubt, for Allah *the Almighty* never breaks His promise. The word *ma`tiya* (to be fulfilled) means that Allah *the Almighty* will bring His promise about, for it is the passive participle denoting the object of the implied verb. In the opinion of certain scholars, the word *ma`tiya* connotes *atiya* (coming), and thus occurs in the form of the passive participle with the intended meaning of the active participle. However, in our view, the meaning here is clear and does not require such an interpretation. This is because the promise of Allah *the Almighty* will be inevitably fulfilled, and that which has been promised is already firmly established in its place. Therefore, the intelligent one is the one who strives towards it, and pursues its path by means of good deeds to attain to it.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says regarding the people who will reside in Paradise:

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ فِيهَا لَغْوًا إِلَّا سَلَامًا وَلَهُمْ رِزْقُهُمْ فِيهَا بُكْرَةً وَعَشِيًّا ﴿٦٢﴾

**There they will hear only peaceful talk, nothing bad;
there they will be given provision morning and evening [62]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 62)**

The Arabic word *al-laghw* (bad talk) signifies superfluous speech in which there is no benefit, as it squanders time and uselessly dissipates the energy of the speaker and that of the listener. Moreover, there is no benefit behind it and it is meaningless. The discourse here refers to the Hereafter: ‘There they will hear only peaceful talk, nothing bad...’ (*Maryam*: 62); for although the dwellers of paradise have heard a great deal of empty talk in this world, there will be no place for it in the Hereafter. Allah *the Almighty* makes an exception to that which will not be heard: ‘...only peaceful talk...’ (*Maryam*: 62). Obviously, the peaceful talk is not a kind of the empty talk, for it is the greeting of the people of paradise and the salutation of the angels: ‘...and their greeting in it shall be: Peace...’ (*Yunus*: 10).

Another possible interpretation for the word *salama* (peace) here is that it implies the soundness and immunity from all forms of defects which affected them in this world, for in the Hereafter they are free of them. There will suffer no physical disability, illness, fatigue, or hardship. However, we give preference here to the first meaning of salutation or greeting because peaceful talk in this verse is among things that are heard.⁽¹⁾

Here, you might well ask, ‘But how is the word *as-salam* (peaceful talk) is considered an exception from the empty talk?’ To this we would reply, ‘Among the stylistic expressions of language is the affirmation of praise by means of something which resembles disparagement’. An example of this is

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi says, ‘Peace is an all-inclusive name for goodness and well-being. The meaning is that they will hear nothing in [paradise] except that which they desire and love.’ On the other hand, Muqatil and others said, ‘This means greetings of peace between each other, and the greeting of peace of the angel upon them.’ See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4297.

when we say, ‘There is no flaw in so-and-so except that he is brave’. Here, you were expecting us to single out some flaw as an exception to his lack of flaws; however, the meaning here is that if you consider bravery as a flaw, then there is a flaw in this person; for we have examined this person, and could not find flaw in him, unless we committed the unthinkable and counted bravery as a flaw. In this way, we affirm our praise of him with what appears to be criticism. An example of this is found in the following lines of the poet:

And there is no flaw in them except that their swords
Have dents in them from engaging armies in combat.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...there they will be given provision morning and evening.’ (*Maryam*: 62) Here, Allah *the Almighty* does not say: ‘And it is incumbent upon us to give them their sustenance’, but rather: ‘...they will be given provision’ (*Maryam*: 62) which implies that this is an issue which has been determined and designated for them. It is a matter which has already been settled. As for the Arabic word *ar-rizq* (provision), it refers to everything from which benefit is derived. In the Hereafter, the extent of such provision is proportional to what a person did of good deeds in this world.

One of the manifestations of Allah’s Mercy towards His devoted servants of the People of Paradise is that He removes from their breasts whatever they contain of rancour, envy, and contempt. Hence, no one will envy anyone else who has a superior rank than him. Moreover, a person does not crave the pleasures of paradise except according to the extent of his good deeds and degree of merit; thus, if he finds someone higher than him in degree of merit, he feels no rancour or resentment in his soul towards him. The cause of rancour in this world results from seeing someone who is superior to you; however, in the Hereafter you will view this issue from another perspective, from the perspective of the purified soul which knows no rancour or ill will. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And We will root out whatever of rancour is in their breasts— (they shall be) as brethren, on raised couches, face to face.’ (*al-Hijr*: 47) Thus, if you saw someone who was of higher rank than you, you would say that he deserves whatever

he has attained of goodness and enjoyment, for he used to struggle against his lower self and his deviant desires in this world.

In terms of description of what paradise comprises of provision and pleasure, it suffices to cite Allah's saying, '...therein shall be what their souls yearn after and (wherein) the eyes shall delight....' (*az-Zukhruf: 71*) In addition, we should recall Prophet Muhammad's statement: 'There will be bounties which no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart has ever perceived.'⁽¹⁾ Hence, there are things in paradise which do not fall into the realm of our comprehension. Consequently, our language does not comprise words capable of expressing this bliss. This is because, in language, you utilise words whose meaning you can comprehend, but in paradise there are things beyond the scope of your comprehension and experience, and of which you have no knowledge. Therefore, when Allah *Glorified is He* wants to describe the blessings of Paradise to us, He does so in terms of what we know of the blessings of this world: date palms, fruit, pomegranates, the meat of fowl and sweet-smelling herbs. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'A parable of the garden which those guarding (against evil) are promised: Therein are rivers of water that does not alter, and rivers of milk the taste whereof does not change, and rivers of drink delicious to those who drink, and rivers of honey clarified...' (*Muhammad: 15*). Yet, there is a difference between the nature of these things in this world and their nature in the Hereafter. It suffices here that you recognise the difference between wine in this world—and all that it contains of bad qualities in terms of its taste, its smell, and its power to seize the mind—and the wine in the Hereafter from which Allah *the Almighty* has removed all bad traits. Concerning this heavenly wine, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'There shall be no trouble in it, nor shall they be exhausted therewith.' (*as-Saffat: 47*)

Back to the verse under discussion; there follows Allah's saying, '...there they will be given provision morning and evening.' (*Maryam: 62*)

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Muslim, Ahmad and Abu Nu'aym on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. The full text of this Hadith reads: 'I have made ready for my upright, devoted servants that which no eye has ever seen, or ear has ever heard and which never has been imagined by the human heart.' See Muslim, *Sahih, Hadith no. 2824; Ahmad, Musnad, 2/466; Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat Al-Awliya', 2/262.*

Here arises the following question, which is, ‘How is it that their provision will come to them in the morning and in the evening, although there is no time in paradise - no morning and no evening time, no night and no day’? To this we reply that Allah *Glorified is He* is speaking to us according to the capacity of our minds, that is, according to that which we ourselves are cognisant of in terms of the measures of the world. But actually the bliss of Paradise is continuous and not bound to time, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...its food and shades are perpetual...’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 35); and ‘These are they who are the heirs, Who shall inherit the Paradise; they shall abide therein.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 10-11)

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says,

تِلْكَ الْجَنَّةُ الَّتِي نُورِثُ مِنْ عِبَادِنَا مَنْ كَانَ تَقِيًّا ﴿٦٣﴾

**That is the Garden We shall give as their own to
those of Our servants who were devout [63]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 63)**

Here Allah’s saying, ‘That is the Garden...’ (*Maryam*: 63) signifies that which He is providing us with an image of the garden. This depiction is: ‘We shall give as their own to those of Our servants who were devout.’ (*Maryam*: 63) In other words, they will inherit it. Now, this prompts the question, ‘Was there someone in Paradise before these people that they will inherit’? To answer this, we must understand that Allah *Glorified is He* before creating mankind knew who among them would believe by his own free choice, and who would reject faith by his own free choice; He knew who would obey and who would disobey. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* does not compel His servants to do anything, but rather He knows what they would do through the boundless nature of His Knowledge. Yet Allah *the Almighty* readied paradise so that it would be capacious enough for all of humanity if they were heedfully obedient; likewise He prepared Hellfire to accommodate all of humanity if they were wilfully disobedient. In this way, there would be no overcrowding and no housing shortage if all people entered Paradise, or if everyone entered Hellfire. Hence, when the people of Hellfire enter it, what happens to their spaces which were prepared for them in Paradise? They go

to the People of Paradise, and thus they inherit them after the others have been deprived of them.

Subsequently, Allah, the Lord of Might, says:⁽¹⁾

وَمَا نَنْزَلُ إِلَّا بِأَمْرِ رَبِّكَ لَهُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِينَا وَمَا
خَلْفَنَا وَمَا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ نَسِيًّا ﴿٦٤﴾

[Jibril said], ‘We only descend [with revelation] at your Lord’s command — everything before us, everything behind us, everything in between, all belongs to Him — your Lord is never forgetful [64] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 64)

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* turns our attention to another topic. After speaking of paradise and its inhabitants, He relates an incident that happened to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when revelation descended upon him. We have said that the revelation comes down through the mediation of Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* who is an angel, upon Prophet Muhammad, who is a man.

The meeting between Jibril (Gabriel), governed by his angelic nature, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* governed by his human nature, cannot take place except through a rapprochement of these two species and a process of transformation which must occur in one of them. Either the angel must descend in human form, or else human nature of the messenger must ascend to the level of proximity with the angel to receive revelation from him. This is what used to occur to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when revelation would come to him.

He *peace and blessings be upon him* has described this transformation, saying: ‘... Jibril (Gabriel) squeezed me vehemently until I reached the limit

(1) *The cause of revelation for this verse is narrated by Al-Bukhari on the authority of ibn ‘Abbas Allah be pleased with him as follows: ‘The Messenger said to Jibril (Gabriel), “What prevents you from visiting us more frequently?” Thereupon was revealed the verse: ‘[Jibril Gabriel said], “We only descend [with revelation] at your Lord’s command.”’ (Maryam: 64). This Hadith is also narrated by At-Tirmidhi who graded it as good, gharib Hadith. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3218, 4731, 7455; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3158.*

of my endurance...⁽¹⁾. His forehead would drip⁽²⁾ with perspiration because the physical reactions and chemical processes which took place in his body. Then when revelation receded from him, these symptoms would go away. One of the companions, who used to sit close to Messenger Muhammad, related that he *peace and blessings be upon him* would place his knee on his knee, and that when revelation descended upon him, the companion said, 'I felt the knee of the Messenger of Allah, and it was as if it was as heavy as a mountain.'

Moreover, when revelation came to him while he was on a riding beast, it would kneel down from the weight of revelation.⁽³⁾ In this respect, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Behold, We shall bestow upon you a weighty Message.' (*al-Muzzammil*: 5) Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would become fatigued after this encounter and it would be so hard on him that he would go to Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* and say, 'Wrap me up! Wrap me up!' or 'Cover me! Cover me!'⁽⁴⁾, as if he had a fever due to what he encountered in meeting an angel and his first exposure to revelation.

Later, Allah *the Almighty* wished to intermit the revelation for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in order that he might repose from its fatigue and hardship. So, as soon as he had rested and the exhaustion had left him, he retained the sweetness of the revelation and consequently yearned for it anew. This is similar to the case when a person longs for a place he loves in spite of the thorns surrounding it and the difficulties of the route to reach it. In fact, love of something provokes a process like anaesthetisation whereby you feel neither discomfort nor weariness in your pursuit of attaining it.

(1) This is narrated by Al-Bukhari in the context of a longer Hadith on the authority of 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her*. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 3.

(2) In his collection, Al-Bukhari narrated that 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* said, 'I saw him when the revelation came to him on a very cold day, and his forehead was dripping with sweat.' See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 2.

(3) In his collection, Imam Ahmad relates that Asma' bint Yazid said, 'I was holding the halter of al-'Adba, the she-camel of the Messenger, when the chapter of al-Ma'ida was revealed to him in its entirety and the neck of the camel was nearly broken by its weight.' See Ahmad, *Musnad*, 6/455.

(4) This is narrated by Al-Bukhari in the book of revelation on the authority of 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her*. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 3.

We have said that when the revelation intermitted for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the disbelievers gloated over his misfortune, saying, 'Surely, the Lord of Muhammad is displeased with him'; i.e. He has detested and abandoned him. This statement is a proof of their absurdity and foolishness. How could they say this when only yesterday they were calling him a sorcerer and a liar? Then, out of hatred, they recalled that he has a Lord Who has withheld revelation from him; and yet when he called them to believe in this Lord, they said, 'From where did he come up with this speech?' Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'Have We not expanded for you your breast, And taken off from you your burden, Which pressed heavily upon your back, And exalted for you your esteem?' (*ash-Sharh*: 1-4) Hence, the phenomenon of revelation was arduous for Messenger Muhammad.

Allah *the Almighty* wished to give those disbelievers a lesson by means of a perceptible cosmic fact witnessed by the believer and the disbeliever alike. This cosmic phenomenon is 'time', which is divided into night and day. Each of these two has a function for which Allah *the Almighty* brought it into being. In this regard, Allah says, 'I swear by the night when it draws a veil, And the day when it shines in brightness.' (*al-Layl*: 1-2) Therefore, beware of changing the function of the night to that of the day, or the function of the day to that of the night.

Consequently, Allah *the Almighty* refutes the false claim of the disbelievers, saying, 'I swear by the early hours of the day, And the night when it covers with darkness. Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor has He become displeased, And surely what comes after is better for you than that which has gone before.' (*ad-Duha*: 1-4)

This signifies that daytime, which is dedicated for the proceedings of life and sustaining it, and the night, which is dedicated for repose, tranquillity and rest, are two of Allah's signs that are complementary to each other. The coming of the night with its stillness does not imply that the day will not follow it. No, indeed, another day will come and the proceedings of life will continue.

Similarly, this is the situation if revelation intermitted for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, do not think, O disbelievers,

that it has been ceased, never to return. Rather, this is an intermission in order that Messenger Muhammad reposes, like the night in which you yourselves find rest from the toil of work during the day. Herein lies the reason why Allah *the Almighty* commences the chapter of *ad-Duha* with swearing by the morning brightness and the night when it grows still, since this serves as an analogy to His subsequent saying, ‘Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor has He become displeased.’ (*ad-Duha*: 3) In this manner of expression, we notice the inimitable precision of the Quran. When Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Your Lord has not forsaken you (*ma wadda`ka*)’ (*ad-Duha*: 3), the particle of addressing the second person singular (*kaf*) is used to refer to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because ‘*at-tawdi`*’ (forsaking) applies to someone you love as well as someone you dislike. However, in the following verbal phrase: ‘...nor has He become displeased (*wa ma qala*)’ (*ad-Duha*: 3), Allah *the Almighty* does not say ‘*qala-ka*’ with the particle (*kaf*) which refers to the second person singular, since *al-qala* (displeasure) only applies to someone you detest. That is to say that Allah *the Almighty* does not refer directly to Prophet Muhammad with a verb denoting displeasure with the addressee even though the verb is used in the negative form to refute the disbelievers’ claims that Prophet Muhammad’s Lord has forsaken or is displeased with him.

With respect to Allah’s saying, ‘And surely what comes after is better for you than that which has gone before’ (*ad-Duha*: 4), the Arabic word *al-akhira* (what comes after) here signifies the final period of descending of revelation which will be better for Prophet Muhammad than its initial period. This is because it will be more expansive and will come to him without strenuous effort and without hardship. In fact, after the intermission, the bulk of the Quran was revealed to him in an easy manner.⁽¹⁾

(1) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi says, ‘It was related by Salama on the authority of Ibn Ishaq that this part of the verse means: ‘What I have prepared for you, O Muhammad, is better for you than what I have hastened for you of favours in this world.’ On the other hand, Ibn `Abbas Allah be pleased with him said, ‘Prophet Muhammad was shown success and victory which Allah would grant to his ummah after his passing away, and he was gladdened by this. Thereupon, Jibril (Gabriel) brought down Allah’s saying, ‘And surely what comes after is better for you than that which has gone before.’ (ad-Duha: 4) See Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran, 10/7433.*

Such is the case in the verse in question: '[Jibril (Gabriel) said], "We only descend [with revelation] at your Lord's command..."' (*Maryam*: 64). It is said that this verse was revealed when the disbelievers said, 'Surely the Lord of Muhammad is displeased with him'. Another view is that it was revealed after the disbelievers of Mecca asked the three questions which we discussed in the chapter of *al-Kahf*.⁽¹⁾ At that point, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to them, 'I will inform you tomorrow'. But the revelation did not come down to him for fifteen days, which distressed and saddened him. Subsequently, the verse in question came down: '[Jibril (Gabriel) said], "We only descend [with revelation] at your Lord's command..."' (*Maryam*: 64). This verse shows that the angels neither descend nor absent themselves except when they are commanded to do so.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, '...everything before us, everything behind us, everything in between, all belongs to Him....' (*Maryam*: 64) Concerning His saying, '...everything before us...' (*Maryam*: 64), it refers to that which is in front of us. The following phrase: '...everything behind us...' (*Maryam*: 64) means what is in the back of us. As for the final phrase: '...everything in between. ...' (*Maryam*: 64), it signifies that which lies between the front and the back. So, what is it that which lies between them? There is nothing in between the front and the back except for you. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* is the Supreme Sovereign Who possesses dominion and what is dominated; to Him belongs time, place, and what exists in them.

There follows His saying, '...your Lord is never forgetful.' (*Maryam*: 64) Obviously, Allah *Glorified is He* does not send a messenger and then simply forget about him, leaving him without support or assistance. After all, He is Exalted far above any negligence or forgetfulness.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says,

(1) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi relates that this is the opinion of Mujahid, Qatada, 'Ikrima, Ad-Dahhak, Muqatil and Al-Kalbi. He reports that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said to Jibril (Gabriel): 'You delayed in coming to me until my mind was filled with doubts and I yearned for you.' Thereupon, Jibril (Gabriel) replied: 'Surely, I longed [to come], but I am a servant under divine command: if I am sent forth, I descend; and if I am held back, I stay back.' See Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4300.*

رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فَاعْبُدْهُ وَاصْطَبِرْ لِعِبَادَتِهِ هَلْ تَعْلَمُ لَهُ سَمِيًّا ﴿٦٥﴾

**He is Lord of the heavens and earth and everything in
between so worship Him: be steadfast in worshipping Him.
Do you know of anyone equal to Him?’ [65]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 65)**

Here we must first ask, ‘what is the correlation between Allah’s saying, ‘...your Lord is never forgetful.’ (*Maryam*: 64) and His saying in this verse: ‘He is Lord of the heavens and earth...’ (*Maryam*: 65)?’ It is said that this awesome cosmos—with its heaven, earth and all that it comprises of well-designed formulation and marvellous creation—is maintained on account of Allah’s watchfulness over it. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Surely, Allah upholds the heavens and the earth lest they come to naught...’ (*Fatir*: 41) Therefore, do not think that the cosmos is maintained on the basis of some laws which govern it. No, it is maintained on the basis of Allah’s watchfulness over every phenomenon in the universe. Allah *the Almighty* is not overcome by drowsiness or sleep, and He knows everything before us, behind us and in between that. Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* is ever watchful, neither forgetful nor negligent, and He maintains the universe. Accordingly, He merits being worshipped and being obeyed in that which He has commanded. This is further supported by the fact that even before making anything incumbent upon you, Allah *the Almighty* has conferred many blessings on you which you could never bring forth yourself. Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* has left you to enjoy these blessings for about fifteen years without charging you with any acts of worship.

It is for this reason that Allah *the Almighty* says here: ‘He is Lord of the heavens and earth and everything in between so worship Him: be steadfast in worshipping Him.’ (*Maryam*: 65) In many verses, the Noble Quran stresses the topic of Allah’s Oneness, and that He is the only Lord. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘He is Lord of the heavens and earth and everything in between...’ (*Maryam*: 65) Likewise, He says, ‘All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.’ (*al-Fatiha*: 2) And He also says, ‘Your Lord and the Lord of your fathers of old.’ (*ash-Shu‘ara*: 26) This is because that the people of old, such as the ancient Egyptians, for example, used to set up a

god for the sky, and a god for the earth, and a god for the weather, and a god for the dead, and a god for cereal crops etc. Yet Allah *the Almighty* made worshipful servitude the consequence of His Lordship for everything. Worshipful servitude means obedience for the one worshiped in terms of what He has commanded and what He has prohibited. So, how do we not obey Allah *the Almighty*, while we are His creation, and we eat the sustenance provided by Him and lead our lives amidst His blessings? In the countryside of Egypt, a man says to his son who rebels against him, 'Whoever eats of the food I provide shall heed my word'. It is necessary that we know that the attributes of absolute perfection belongs to Allah *the Almighty* even before He created mankind. Actually, by virtue of these attributes of perfection, Allah *the Almighty* created the universe. Hence, neither does obedience benefit Him nor does it harm Him. So, if you asked, 'Why, then, does He charge humanity with commands and prohibitions'? We would reply, 'Allah *the Almighty* made humanity answerable in this way in order that the proceedings of life be maintained, and that endeavours support one another and do not clash. In such a way, progress and advancement will occur in their lives and they will live happily. However, were Allah *the Almighty* to leave them to their vain desires, life would be corrupted, for while you build, someone else would destroy'.

In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'None of you [truly] believes until his desires are subservient to that which I have brought.'⁽¹⁾ Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And should the truth follow their low desires, surely the heavens and the earth and all those who are therein would have perished.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71) Hence, the Divine Laws were established for our own benefit and interest.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* commands us, saying, '...so worship Him: be steadfast in worshipping Him.' (*Maryam*: 65) This is because worship entails difficulty and must be accompanied with perseverant patience in doing it. Worshipful servitude requires you to do things which are burdensome for you to accomplish. Likewise, it requires that you refrain

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Ibn Abi `Asim on the authority on `Abdullah ibn `Amr Allah be pleased with him. In his book, Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali cites this Hadith and grades it as weak. See Ibn Abu `Asim, As-Sunna, 1/12; Ibn Rajab, Jame` Al-`Ulum Wa Al-Hikam, 460.*

from doing certain things which are difficult for you to give up since you have grown accustomed to them.

In the same connection, patience is expected of all of us. Each one of us must show patience towards others because we are all surely prone to changeability. Hence, if you patiently endure offenses committed against you, then other people will show patient forbearance towards you if you do something to offend them. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience.’ (*al-’Asr*: 3) In the same vein, Allah *the Almighty* teaches us that if someone commits a sin against you or treats you badly, then forgive him just as you would like Allah *the Almighty* to forgive your sins and to pardon you for your own misdeeds.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And let not those of you who possess grace and abundance swear against giving to the near of kin and the poor and those who have fled in Allah’s way, and they should pardon and turn away. Do you not love that Allah should forgive you?’⁽¹⁾ And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful.’ (*an-Nur*: 22)

You should not think that your forbearance of the offenses of others or your forgiveness of them is an unrewarded voluntary act on your part. This is because you will not be deprived of its recompense by Allah *the Almighty* and you will be repaid by having one of your own misdeeds forgiven. Even the one who forebears being shamed, for example, or being falsely accused,

(1) *This verse was revealed concerning the story of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq Allah be pleased with him and Mistah ibn Athatha. Mistah was the son of Abu Bakr’s maternal aunt; he was a poor emigrant. He fought in the Battle of Badr. Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him used to support him on account of his poverty and his kinship. But, when the event of calumny occurred and Mistah said what he did about `Aisha, daughter of Abu Bakr and wife of the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him swore that he would no longer provide Mistah with financial support and not to grant him the slightest benefit. Mistah came to him and apologized, saying, ‘I used to visit the gatherings at the house of Hassan, and thus I heard [what was said], but I did not say anything.’ Abu Bakr said to him, ‘You laughed and thus shared in that which was said.’ So, he upheld his oath. Then this verse was revealed and so he restored to Mistah the regular financial support he used to provide him with and said, ‘I will never withdraw it from him again.’ See Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4301.*

Allah *the Almighty* will never fail to recompense him by concealing a disgraceful act which he has already committed. Thus, whoever is disgraced by what he had not done, he will be safeguarded from what he had actually done.

There follows Allah's saying, 'Do you know of anyone equal to Him?' (*Maryam*: 65) We have previously discussed the meaning of the Arabic word *as-samiy*. Scholars have disagreed over its meaning; some opined that it refers to the one who vies for superiority or glory over you. In other words, you try to excel him and he tries to do the same. Another interpretation is that *as-samiy* means someone who is on par with you and your equal.

Allah *the Almighty* has no rival to contend with Him in respect to His attributes of perfection, nor does Allah *the Almighty* have any peer, match, or likeness. This is manifestly evident in Allah's saying, '...there is nothing like Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11); as well as His saying, 'Say, "He, Allah, is One. Allah is He on Whom all depend. He begets not, nor is He begotten. And none is like Him."' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-4)

The Arabic word *as-samiy* has another meaning which we explained in the story of Yahya (John) *peace be upon him* in which Allah *the Almighty* says, 'We have chosen this name for no one before him.' (*Maryam*: 7) This verse means that Prophet Yahya's (John's) name was not given to anyone before him. The same holds true for Allah *the Almighty* for no one has ever called himself by His Name, neither before the revelation of this verse, nor after Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* challenged the disbelievers and the atheists, who were so recklessly insolent towards Allah *the Almighty* to name themselves 'Allah'. So, why was one of them not daring enough to give their son the name 'Allah'? As a matter of fact, these people, though disbelievers and atheists, believed in Allah *the Almighty* in the depths of their souls. They acknowledge His Existence and fear the consequences of naming themselves or someone else 'Allah'. In fact, they do not feel safe from being afflicted by some evil on account of doing that. Hence, this has never happened and no one has ever been so impertinently bold as to attempt it. This is because Allah *the Almighty* proclaims it as a challenge and as He holds sway over the will of mankind; Allah *the Almighty* knows that they will not dare to undertake such an action.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَيَقُولُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَإِذَا مَاتَ لَسَوْفَ أُخْرَجُ حَيًّا

**Man says, ‘What? Once I am dead,
will I be brought back to life?’ [66]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 66)**

Here, we should ask, ‘What is the intended meaning of the Arabic word *al-insan* (man)?’ The word ‘man’ applies to and is used to signify any human being in the general sense. An example of this is found in the following verse: ‘Surely man is created of a hasty temperament.’ (*al-Ma’arij*: 19) In its collective form, *al-insan* may be used to refer to a specific category of people, a meaning which is clear in Allah’s saying, ‘Or do they envy the people for what Allah has given them of His grace?’ (*an-Nisa*: 54) Here, the intended meaning of *an-nas* is Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.⁽¹⁾ A similar example is found in His saying, ‘Those to whom the people (*an-nas*) said, “Surely men (*an-nas*) have gathered against you, therefore fear them”, but this increased their faith, and they said, “Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 173) Here, both usages of *an-nas* designate specific groups of people. The word *al-insan* in the verse in question: ‘Man says...’ (*Maryam*: 66), refers to the disbeliever who does not believe in the Hereafter and views the notion of life after death unlikely, exclaiming: ‘What? Once I am dead, will I be brought back to life?’ (*Maryam*: 66) The interrogative formulation here is employed to express denial, yet the response to this question is easily made, as Allah says,

(1) *In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir says, ‘This means that the disbelievers envied Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him on account of how Allah favoured him with the greatest prophet hood; it was their envy for him which prevented them from having faith in him since he was an Arab and not of the children of Israel.’ In his Tafsir, As-Suyuti relates that ‘Ikrima said, ‘People (An-nas) in this statement refers to Prophet Muhammad specifically.’ See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-‘Azhim, 1/513; As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur, 2/566.*

أَوَلَا يَذْكُرُ الْإِنْسَانُ أَنَّا خَلَقْنَاهُ مِن قَبْلُ وَلَمْ يَكُ شَيْئًا

But does man not remember that We created him when he was nothing before? [67] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 67)

Logically, it is easier that man be restored to life from something than to bring him into being out of nothing. Allah *the Almighty* makes this issue clear, saying, ‘And He it is Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and it is easy to Him...’ (*ar-Rum*: 27) Here, we should note that the actions undertaken by the Creator are not to be described as ‘easy’ and ‘easier’ or ‘difficult’ and ‘more difficult’ for Him; nevertheless, Allah *the Almighty* speaks to us according to what we can grasp and according to what we know from our conventions. Hence, based on our own customary experience, we are aware that to compose something from that which exists is easier than to bring it forth from naught. Moreover, while the action of the servant is based upon processing and application of causal factors, the Action of the Creator, on the other hand, is affected by His saying to anything, ‘Be!’ and it is.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Neither your creation nor your raising is anything but as a single soul...’ (*ar-Rum*: 27) When ‘Ali Allah be pleased with him was asked, ‘How does Allah take all people to account at the same time?’, he answered, ‘In the same way He provides all of them with sustenance at the same time.’

Concerning Allah’s saying, ‘But does man not remember...?’ (*Maryam*: 67) This means that if man recalled this truth, he would not deny the Resurrection. This issue is also discussed in Allah’s saying, ‘And he strikes out a likeness for Us and forgets his own creation. He says, “Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten?”’ (*Ya Sin*: 78) If man called to mind their initial creation, they would not propound such a similitude for Allah *the Almighty*. Then comes the response in logical formulation; Allah says, ‘Say, “He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first, and He is cognisant of all creation.”’ (*Ya Sin*: 79)

In the verse in question, we also have proof: ‘...We created him when he was nothing before’ (*Maryam*: 67).

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَوَرِّكَ لِنَحْشَرَنَّهُمْ وَالشَّيَاطِينَ ثُمَّ لَنُحْضِرَنَّهُمْ حَوْلَ جَهَنَّمَ جِثِيًّا ﴿٦٨﴾

**By your Lord [Prophet] We shall gather them and the devils together and set them on their knees around Hell [68]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 68)**

Regarding Allah's saying, 'By your Lord [Prophet] We shall gather them and the devils...' (*Maryam*: 68), the Arabic word *al-hashar* (to gather) signifies that Allah *the Almighty* will resurrect them from their graves. Then Allah *Glorified is He* will drive them altogether into the fire along with the devils who used to tempt them into disobedience and make it seem favourable to them. There follows His saying, '...and set them on their knees around Hell.' (*Maryam*: 68) Here, their being set on their knees is an indication of submissiveness, dejection, and humiliation which made them unable to stand upright.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

ثُمَّ لَنَنْزَعَنَّ مِنْ كُلِّ شِيعَةٍ أَهْبَهُمْ أَشَدُّ عَلَى الرَّحْمَنِ عَيْنًا ﴿٦٩﴾

**We shall seize out of each group those who were most disobedient towards the Lord of Mercy [69]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 69)**

The Arabic verb *naza`a* (to seize) means to powerfully pull something out of its established root. One does employ this verb except in cases wherein the thing extracted or yanked out is firmly attached to what it was taken from. A relevant example of this is found in Allah's saying, 'Say, "O Allah, Master of the Kingdom! You give the kingdom to whomsoever You please and takes away the kingdom from whomsoever You please..."' (*Al-Imran*: 26). That is to say that the kings from whom the kingdom was taken away were firmly attached to it and covetous of it.

As for Allah's saying, 'out of each group' (*Maryam*: 69), it comprises the Arabic word *shi`a* (group) which means a faction that agrees upon some false opinion, being convinced by it and keeping company with its leaders. There follows the saying of Allah: '...those who were most disobedient towards the Lord of Mercy.' (*Maryam*: 69) In this passage, the Arabic word

al-`iti (disobedient) refers to the person who has reached the ultimate degree of oppression and tyrannical transgression such that no one can stand up against him. We have previously discussed this meaning with respect to the attributes of growing old: ‘... and I am old and frail?’ (*Maryam*: 8) This is because when old age comes, there is no stratagem against it, and no one has thus the power to overcome it.

It is known that when the heavenly messages descended upon the inhabitants of the earth, there were some people who were negatively affected by them. They viewed them as detrimental regarding themselves, their wealth, their social standing and their authority and leadership. Allah’s messages came to confirm the truth, to prove His Oneness and the equality of human beings with respect to the divine way of guidance.

There are tyrants, oppressors, and masters who have slaves. In this world exists the strong and the weak, the rich and the poor and the healthy and the sick. The heavenly messages came to affect unrestricted, free access to worshipful servitude. So, who can negatively impact these messages? In addition, who can become angry and display enmity towards them? Indeed, they are those tyrants and oppressors; those who possess power, wealth and influence. As a matter of fact, those tyrants and oppressors necessarily have subordinates who follow them and support them in their falsehood.

So, when it is the Day of Judgment, whom will firstly be held accountable? They are the tyrants and haughty oppressors. They will be present before their followers so that the latter see them subjugated and humiliated, while in this world they were arrogant tyrants. In this way, Allah *the Almighty* also deprives their followers of any hope of salvation. Perhaps they thought that these oppressive tyrants would intervene and defend them since they were their servants in this world, and were their followers and supportive allies. But, as soon as Allah *the Almighty* seizes them firstly, He consequently cut off all hope of salvation for their followers.

This same idea is also conveyed in Allah’s saying, ‘And on the day when We will gather from every nation a party from among those who rejected Our communications, then they shall be formed into groups.’ (*an-Naml*: 83) This verse tells us that the grandees and tyrants from among them will be

gathered together, so that the followers see the downfall of those they followed, and so that the weak might witness the downfall of the strong. Therefore, they lose all their hope of salvation.

In the Quranic discourse about Pharaoh—who had reached the utmost degree of tyranny and self-aggrandisement when he falsely laid claim to divinity—it says about him: ‘He shall lead his people on the resurrection day, and bring them down to the fire; and evil the place to which they are brought.’ (*Hud*: 98) Pharaoh is their leader and thus will be at their head in the march into Hell, just as he was their leader towards errant deviancy in this world; he was their master and they imitated him. Therefore, he bears two grave burdens: the burden of his own errant deviancy regarding his own soul, and the burden of having misguided his own people. In the same vein, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Woe, then, to those who write the book with their hands and then say: This is from Allah, so that they may take for it a small price....’ (*al-Baqara*: 79). Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

ثُمَّ لَنَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِالَّذِينَ هُمْ أَوْلَىٰ بِهَا صِلِيًّا

**We know best who most deserves to burn in Hell [70]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 70)**

In this verse, the Arabic word *siliya* means to be heated and burned in the Fire. It is derived from the verb *saliya/yasla* signifying to enter the fire and feel its heat. On the other hand, the related verb *istala* refers to the case when someone seeks to warm himself by the fire, as in Allah’s saying, ‘...so that you may warm yourselves (*tastalun*).’ (*an-Naml*: 7) The general meaning of the verse is that Allah *the Almighty* knows who most merits entering the fire first. They have the priority concerning the order of their entry into the fire. This is because they will argue with one another in the Hereafter. They will squabble and cast blame upon each other. An awful and terrifying scene will arise between them, shamelessly exposing all the sins which they had committed. The follower and the one followed, the worshipper and the one worshipped, each one will cast blame upon the other. Just read what they will say, ‘And they shall say, “O our Lord! Surely we obeyed our leaders and our great men, so they led us astray from the path; O our Lord! Give them a

double punishment and curse them with a great curse.’” (*al-Ahzab*: 67-68) And in another verse Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘When those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them), and they see the chastisement and their ties are cut asunder.’ (*al-Baqara*: 166) Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* manifests the truth when He says, ‘The friends shall on that day be enemies one to another, except those who guard (against evil).’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 67)

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِنْ مِنْكُمْ إِلَّا وَارِدُهَا كَانَ عَلَى رَبِّكَ حَتْمًا مَقْضِيًّا ﴿٧١﴾

**But every single one of you will approach it, a
decree from your Lord which must be fulfilled [71]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 71)**

This is a general address to all mankind without exception, as evinced by Allah’s saying which comes after it: ‘We shall save the devout....’ (*Maryam*: 72) Hence, those who will approach the hellfire here include those who are righteous and devout, and those who are not.

But what is the meaning here of the Arabic word *al-wurud*? It basically means to go to a source of water for drinking; that is to say: reaching water without drinking from it. This is reflected in Allah’s saying, ‘And when he came to the water of Madyan, he found on it a group of men watering...’ (*al-Qasas*: 23); that is, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* reached the watering place. Hence, the meaning of: ‘But every single one of you will approach it...’ (*Maryam*: 71), is that all people including the devout and sinners will reach the fire and see it. This is because the path along which all must pass is laid over the centre of Hell.

In this regard, Abu Sa`id Al-Khudri *Allah be pleased with him* narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The *sirat* will be placed across hell on thorns like the thorns of *sa`dan* plant. Then the people will cross it. Some will pass over safe and sound, some will be detained, and some will fall in headfirst.’⁽¹⁾ Thus, as soon as the believer sees the fire from

(1) See Ibn Maja, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 4280; *Al-Hakim, Mustadrak*, 4/585; *Ad-Daylami, Firdaws*, Hadith no. 8836.

which Allah *the Almighty* has saved him, he praises Him and becomes fully cognisant of His blessing and Mercy upon him.

There are some scholars who are of the opinion that *warada* means someone came to the water and drank from it, citing as evidence Allah's saying, 'He shall lead his people on the Day of Resurrection, and bring them down (*awrada*) to the fire...' (*Hud*: 98) meaning that Pharaoh caused them to enter it. However, this violates the pattern of Arabic in which the Quran was revealed, as the poet⁽¹⁾ says:

When they reached the waterhole, its pools so blue
We set up poles like sedentary campers.

That is, when they arrived at the watering place, they pitched their tents beside it. Hence, at the time they reached it and erected their tents beside it, they had not yet drunk from it, nor had they drawn any of its water. Therefore, the meaning of *al-wurud* is arriving at a water source without drinking of its water.

Those who hold the opinion that *warid* means to enter the fire rather than simply to approach it also cite the following saying of Allah in support of their opinion: 'We shall save the devout and leave the evildoers there on their knees.' (*Maryam*: 72) They argue that if *al-wurud* merely signified arrival at the watering place, without drinking from it or entering into it, then Allah *the Almighty* would not have said: '...and leave the evildoers there on their knees.' (*Maryam*: 72) Instead, He would have said: 'Then Allah shall save the devout and cause the evildoers to enter it'. But Allah *the Almighty* actually says, '...and leave the evildoers there....' (*Maryam*: 72) This is a proof that all people, the devout and the evildoers, will enter the fire.

Based on the first opinion, *al-wurud* comprises the meaning of seeing the fire without entering it. The motive behind this is that Allah *the Almighty*

(1) Zuhayr ibn Abu Sulma of the tribe of Mudar, a master poet of the pre-Islamic era. His father, his maternal uncle and his sons, Ka'b and Bujayr, were poets, as well as his sisters Salma and Al-Khansa'. He was born in the territory of the Muzayna tribe, close to Medina. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-A'lam*, 3/52.

is Benevolent to His believing servants for He shows them the fire and its blazing flames in order that they may be cognisant of His favour upon them. They would be fully aware of the reward of their faith in Allah *the Almighty* that is, it saved them from this fire. In this respect, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...then whoever is removed far away from the fire and is made to enter the garden he indeed has attained the object.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 185)

But it is also possible to understand the verse according to the second meaning, that is, with *al-wurud* denoting entry into the fire. This is because the Creator *Glorified is He* created all things in light of laws and natures that govern them. Allah *the Almighty* alone has the Power and Ability to render this nature inoperative and to strip it of its particular characteristics. Just as we saw in the story of Ibrahim (Abraham), the entering of the believers into the fire could be like what happened in the case of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when Allah *the Almighty* made the fire cool and safe for him. Allah *the Almighty* enabled the enemies of Ibrahim (Abraham) to seize him, and then they cast him into the fire, while it was in its natural state of burning. Now, nothing fell upon the fire, such as rain, to extinguish it, in order that they be furnished with all the causal factors of burning. Yet, nevertheless, Allah *the Almighty* saved him from it so that the miracle would be manifest before their eyes.

Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* nullified the nature of water in the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* solidifying it and halting its flow until each part became like a mighty mountain. Hence, He is the All-Powerful and All Capable of altering the nature of things. Therefore, it is possible that the believers enter the fire in the manner which occurred with Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*; Allah says, ‘We said, “O fire! Be a comfort and peace to Ibrahim.”’ (*al-Anbiya*: 69) Then Allah *the Almighty* saves the believers and leaves the disbelievers in the fire, and this is more odious and infuriating for the latter.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...a decree from your Lord which must be fulfilled.’ (*Maryam*: 71) In this passage, the Arabic word *al-hatm* is something that inevitably occurs. The servant is not able to control anything

regarding Pre-ordainment, for he does not have power over that which is definitively determined or over that which is subject to this inevitable determination. For example, you may say to your friend, ‘You must visit me tomorrow’. Nevertheless, you do not have control over any of the causal factors for making this visit happen. What makes you so sure that you will live until tomorrow? Furthermore, what makes you so sure that the circumstances will not change and prevent the visit of this friend? Therefore, you do not have the decisive determination over anything; instead the One Who prescribes decrees is the All-Powerful Who has dominating control over things inasmuch as nothing escapes from what Allah *the Almighty* wills. Now, if you asked, ‘Who prescribes what is necessary for Allah?’ The response is that Allah *the Almighty* prescribes what is necessary on Himself. There is no other power that imposes decrees upon Him, a fact which is clear in Allah’s saying, ‘...your Lord has ordained mercy on Himself....’ (*al-An‘am*: 54)

Then Allah *the Almighty* confirms this inevitability by His saying, ‘...which must be fulfilled.’ (*Maryam*: 71) This signifies that His decree is an irreversible ruling; it cannot be corrected or amended by anyone, it is an absolute ruling. Thus, for example, when the disbelievers of Mecca desired that belief and disbelief coexist, they proposed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘We will worship your God for one year and you worship our god for one year.’

However, Allah *Glorified is He* desired the severance of ties with them in a final, definitive manner which did not give credence to such compromise. Thus, He says, ⁽¹⁾ ‘Say, “O disbelievers! 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. You shall have your religion and I shall have my religion.”’ (*al-Kafirun*: 1-6)

The severance of ties here is not the same as what we may see, for example, between two states. In such a case, each of them cuts its political relations with the other, but conditions may subsequently call for reconciliation between them and the return to normalised relations. Contrary to this, the cutting of ties with the disbelievers is a decisive and irreversible severance. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* was saying to the disbelievers: ‘Beware of imagining that

we might re-establish relations with you once again'. It is for this reason that the negation is repeated in this chapter, to the degree that some think that it is redundant repetition. However, this is because they approach the Quran without careful reflection.

The actual meaning of this chapter is that at the present moment, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and also his followers do not worship that which the disbelievers worship, and they are not worshippers of that which the believers worship. This also applies to the future, for the believers will not be worshippers of that which the disbelievers worship, and they will not be worshippers of that which the believers worship. Hence, no one will oblige the believers against their will to modify this resolution or to return to a state of reconciliation.

Consequently, following the chapter of *al-Kafirun* came the chapter of the *al-Hukm* ⁽¹⁾: 'Say, "He, Allah, is One."' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1) Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* has no other partner to rectify Him. His Speech and His Decree are ultimate and definitively imposed, without revocation or amendment.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says,

ثُمَّ نُنَجِّي الَّذِينَ اتَّقَوْا وَنَذَرُ الظَّالِمِينَ فِيهَا جِثِيًا ﴿٧٢﴾

**We shall save the devout and leave the
evildoers there on their knees [72]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 72)**

The Arabic word *jithiya* (on their knees) is derived from the verb *jatha/ yajthu*, meaning to kneel. It is an indication of shameful humiliation and punishment.

Thereafter, Allah *the Almighty* turns our attention to another narrative scene, saying:

(1) *This is the chapter of al-Ikhlās, concerning which As-Suyuti says: 'It is called al-Asas (The Foundation) because of its comprehensive treatment of the Oneness of Allah which is the foundation of the religion.' See As-Suyuti, Al-Itqan Fi 'Ulum Al-Quran, 1/159.*

وَإِذَا تُلَىٰ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ قَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
 أَيُّ الْفَرِيقَيْنِ خَيْرٌ مَّقَامًا وَأَحْسَنُ نَدِيًّا ﴿٧٣﴾

When Our revelations are recited to them in all their clarity, [all that] the disbelievers say to the believers [is], ‘Which side is better situated? Which side has the better following?’ [73] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 73)

This is a dialogue that took place between the believers and the disbelievers. The believers at the early time of Prophet Muhammad’s mission were usually the weak ones who could not even protect themselves. They had neither high social rank nor supremacy to safeguard themselves. Then Allah’s way of guidance manifested itself in their favour, rendering all people equal: chieftains and slaves, the strong and the weak. So, it was natural that the religion of Islam was met with rejection on the part of the disbelievers of Mecca- the holders of glorious standing, authority, and power who took possession of the good things of the people around them. As for the weak, they believed in Allah’s message at a time when they did not have enough strength to protect themselves.

Hence, when Allah *the Almighty* revealed His saying, ‘Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they shall turn (their) backs’ (*al-Qamar*: 45), ‘Umar Allah be pleased with him asked ‘What host is this? What sort of rout could this be? We are not even capable of protecting ourselves?’⁽¹⁾ During this period, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was instructing the oppressed believers to emigrate to Abyssinia and to Medina. But later when Allah *the Almighty* granted victory to the believers, along with His support for them at the Battle of Badr, ‘Umar Allah be pleased with him said: ‘Allah, has manifested the truth: ‘Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they shall turn (their) backs.’ (*al-Qamar*: 45)

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir cites the following Hadith, attributing it to Ibn Abu Hatim who narrated it on the authority of ‘Ikrima who said, ‘When the statement “Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they shall turn (their) backs” (*al-Qamar*: 45) was revealed, ‘Umar Allah be pleased with him said, “Which hosts shall be routed? Which hosts shall be defeated?” Later, he said: “On the Battle of Badr I saw Messenger Muhammad leap in his armour while he was saying: ‘The hosts shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs in flight!’ On that day, I realised its interpretation.”’ See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-‘Azhim*, 4/266.

Back to the verse in question; in this aforementioned dialogue, the disbelievers revile the believers in Allah, saying: ‘What has your belief in Allah availed you, for here you are in a state of weakness, lowliness, humiliation and constricted means of sustenance? Would a god be content that those who believe in him be in such a state, while his adversaries and those who disbelieve in him are those possessing glorious rank, authority, and ample means of subsistence’?

In this way Allah *the Almighty* subjected some of them to trials at the hands of others, as He says, ‘And thus do We try some of them by others....’ (*al-An‘am: 53*) The believer and the disbeliever, the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick, all of them are a source of trial to one another. This is in order that Allah *the Almighty* scrutinises the faith and tests the certainty in the hearts of the believers. Allah *the Almighty* thereby prepares them to carry His message to the entire world in all times and places. It follows that He must select for this mission those with strong faith from among Muslims, not for any worldly gain but to bear His message and to assume its burdens. This, then, is the believer who is entrusted to bear the responsibility of conveying Allah’s way of guidance. In the same vein, we find those who call to the false paths in this world by bribing those who are called to them. On the contrary, Allah’s way of guidance takes from them to test them and purify them.

So, how could the wealthy man be a source of trial for the poor man and vice versa? The wealthy man is put to the test by the poor man since he enjoys ample means of life while the poor one is in straitened circumstances. The wealthy man eats until he gets indigestion from overeating, while the poor is famished. The wealthy person dresses in fine clothes, while the poor one is almost naked. So, will the rich recognise Allah’s blessings upon him and give out the due obligation of such blessings?

On the other hand, the poor man is put to the test by the wealthy when he sees him in this state of ease. Will the poor person be able to patiently bear such hardship? Or will he remonstrate against that which Allah has predestined for him and harbour feelings of resentment and malice against the wealthy one? If the poor knew that poverty was a training lesson which

is given to the soldiers of the truth who carry forth Allah's way of guidance to human beings in all time and place, he would not rise up in opposition to this apportioning, and would not resent the wealthy people.

Similarly, the healthy are put to the test by the sick and the sick by the healthy. The healthy live with Allah's blessings in a state of well-being. But as for the ill and infirm, they live with the Bestower of Blessings (*Al-Mun'im*) as evinced in the Qudsi Hadith in which Allah *the Almighty* says, 'O son of Adam, I fell ill and you visited Me not. He will say, "O Lord, and how should I visit You when You are the Lord of the worlds?" He will say, "Did you not know that My servant so-and-so had fallen ill and you visited him not? Did you not know that had you visited him you would have found Me with him?"'⁽¹⁾

That is why you find that the visitors of the sick believers feel pained on account of their ailments, while the sick believers themselves are in a state of intimate affection with Allah *the Almighty* distracting them from their illnesses and pains. Who would avoid sharing the company of Allah *the Almighty*? Thus, if a sick person harbours rancour towards the person of sound body, then he fails the test. He should have realised that while the healthy person is in the company of blessing, yet he is in the company of the Bestower of blessings.

The people of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* after having continued to preach them for 950 years, responded to his message, saying, '...and we do not see any have followed you but those who are the meanest of us at first thought...' (*Hud: 27*). In their view, the followers of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* were the scum of the people. Then they tried to incite him to reject them as they were weak and of no rank or authority. But, he said, '...and I am not going to drive away those who believe; surely they shall meet their Lord...' (*Hud: 29*).

In another verse, he said, 'And I do not say to you that I have the treasures of Allah and I do not know the unseen, nor do I say that I am an angel, nor do I say about those whom your eyes hold in mean estimation (that) Allah will

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Muslim and Al-Bukhari on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, Sahih, 4/1990; Al-Bukhari, Al-Adab Al-Mufrad, Hadith no. 517.*

never grant them (any) good—Allah knows best what is in their souls— for then most surely I should be of the unjust.’ (*Hud*: 31)

Over the course of time and the various prophetic messages, the disbelievers looked upon the poor and the weak believers with contempt and disdain, seeking to drive them away and evict them from their houses. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says to Prophet Muhammad, ‘And do not drive away those who call upon their Lord in the morning and the evening, they desire only His favour; neither are you answerable for any reckoning of theirs, nor are they answerable for any reckoning of yours, so that you should drive them away and thus be of the unjust.’ (*al-An‘am*: 52)

In this manner arose the narrative scene which we have in the verse in question: ‘When Our revelations are recited to them in all their clarity, [all that] the disbelievers say to the believers [is], “Which side is better situated? Which side has the better following?”’ (*Maryam*: 73) As for Allah’s saying, ‘Our revelations are recited to them in all their clarity...’ (*Maryam*: 73), the word *al-ayat* (revelations) is the plural of *aya* which is something wondrous and amazing. As we have previously said, this word is used to refer to cosmic signs which serve as proof of the Allah’s Omnipotence and Power and draw our attention to the marvellous nature of His creation, such as the signs of the day, the night, the sun and the moon. The same word *al-ayat*, is also used to designate the miracles that serve to confirm the truthfulness of the messengers. Examples of these are enumerated in Allah’s saying, ‘And they say, “We will by no means believe in you until you cause a fountain to gush forth from the earth for us. Or you should have a garden of palms and grapes in the midst of which you should cause rivers to flow forth, gushing out. Or you should cause the heaven to come down upon us in pieces as you think, or bring Allah and the angels face to face (with us). Or you should have a house of gold, or you should ascend into heaven, and we will not believe in your ascending until you bring down to us a book which we may read.” Say, “Glory be to my Lord; am I aught but a mortal apostle?”’ (*al-Isra’*: 90-93)

Likewise, *Ayat* refers to the verses of the Quran which bear rulings and prescribed laws which is the intended meaning in the verse under discussion because the verses of the Quran include all other *Ayat* (signs).

As for Allah's saying, 'the disbelievers say to the believers [is], "Which side is better situated?"' (*Maryam: 73*) this means that the disbelievers said to the believers, 'We would be pleased [to know] your judgement in the following matter: we, the disbelievers, are in a state of abundance, while you, O people of faith, are in an adverse state of penury, so which of these two groups is superior to other?' By Allah, according to the disbelievers' standards of measure, they are better; however, according to the higher and everlasting standards of measure, the believers are better.

The Arabic word *al-maqam* (position) is a noun signifying the place of your standing; it is derived from the verb *qama*. On the other hand, the word *muqam* with the basic meaning of place of residence is derived from the verb *aqama*. Regarding Allah's saying, 'Which side is better situated?' (*Maryam: 73*) this refers to a place or location in which one is positioned in rivalry over someone else such as a big house with furniture and a sitting room for which one prides oneself over others.

There follows the final phrase of the verse: '...the better following?' (*Maryam: 73*) A person normally has a house which provides shelter for him, and it comprises a sitting room to which he retires, sitting in it with their friends and loved ones. They call this the 'sitting room' or 'parlour' where the chief or grandee of their people sits, surrounded by their family and followers. In colloquial Egyptian Arabic, we say that such a personage: 'Governor of the floor of the seated assembly'. Thus, when he gets up, the entire assembly disburses, since they are their subordinates. As the poet said:

The seated assembly, O Kulayb, broke up after you.

In addition, there is something known as *an-nadi* which is a place where the dignitaries and notables of a community gather in council, instead of each one of them having his own private gathering. Today, we find the word *nadi* applies to clubs, such as the club for athletes, the club for judges and so forth. Hence, the word *an-nadi* (followers) is evidence that the disbelievers were in agreement, united in solidarity, and forming a unified bloc against Islam and against the Truth.

Another example of the connotation of the word *an-nadi* occurs at the end of Allah's saying, 'Then let him summon his council' (*al-'Alaq: 17*). Also, derived from the same semantic root, this word might refer to what

was known even in the pre-Islamic times as *dar an-nadwa* (the abode of convening). It was in this place where the disbelievers used to assemble to devise plots against Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Besides, the word *an-nadi* refers to a place that was utilised for engaging in reprehensible and lewd things—Allah forbid—in which they would gather for everything that was vile, including wine drinking, dancing and prostitution. This is clearly expressed in Allah's saying, '...and you commit evil deeds in your assemblies?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 29) This offers a proof of the widespread nature of fornication and shamelessness among the wealthy people and the open manner of its practice. They did not commit these sinful acts secretly, but rather in a gathering of the patrons of these places.

The word *an-nadi* and *al-muntada*, both signifying a meeting place or clubhouse, are derived from the Arabic word *an-nada* which signifies generosity. Hence, when an Arab woman praised her husband, she would say, 'Lofty in authority, generous for guests and his house near the place of assembly'. This means that his house was the nearest to the council hall, and hence he is the destination for people aiming to fulfil their everyday needs.

Thus, the disbelievers' statements to the believers: 'Which side is better situated? Which side has the better following?' (*Maryam*: 73) were a trial for both groups. The believers said, 'If it had been good, they would not have gone ahead of us therein.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 11) On the other hand, the disbelievers said, 'Inasmuch as Allah has favoured us with gifts in this world, since He is the Provider of Sustenance, He will inevitably favour us with blessings in the Hereafter'. But the verses do not delve into the counter argument on the part of the believers. Instead, the rebuttal against the disbelievers came from another aspect, whence Allah *the Almighty* says:

﴿٧٤﴾ وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ هُمْ أَحْسَنُ أَثْنًا وَرَدًّا يَا

**We have destroyed many a generation before them who
surpassed them in riches and outward glitter! [74]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 74)**

The Arabic word *kam* (many) in this context expresses great quantity or frequency which cannot be enumerated. The phrase which follows it is something

which has occurred many times. This usage is employed, for example, when your friend says to you: ‘You have never shown me a kind favour’, whereupon you enumerate all the acts of kindness which you have conferred upon him, saying: ‘How many times (*kam*) have I done such-and-such for you?’

As for the Arabic word *al-qarn* (generation), it refers to a community of people who live together in a specific time in such a manner that it is comprised of overlapping generations, including grandfathers, fathers, sons and grandsons all together. In this sense, the term *al-qarn* is regarded as the equivalent of one hundred years. In addition, it is used in reference to a community whose members are united together under a single kingdom or divine message, regardless of how long their era extends. The people of Nuh (Noah) are a case in point.

Concerning the Arabic word *al-athath* (riches), it literally means the furnishings of a house, with such things corresponding to the financial means of its proprietor.

Finally, the Arabic term *ar-ri`ya* (outward glitter) is intended to denote the passive participle. The same usage occurs in Allah’s saying, ‘And We ransomed him with a Feast sacrifice.’ (*as-Saffat*: 107) in which the word *dhibh* (sacrifice) carries the meaning of *madhbuh* (object of sacrifice).

In another recitation⁽¹⁾ of this verse, the word *ar-ri`ya* is replaced by the word *az-ziyy*. This latter is not far from the meaning of the former, for *az-ziyy* also refers to that which is displayed or seen except that it consists of the apparel which is worn as clothing. According to this recitation, the intended meaning is the beauty of appearance, the gracefulness of the person and the neatness of their attire. The disbelievers certainly took vain pride in such things, whereas the believers were dishevelled and dusty, wearing clothing that was patched and worn out.

The standard recitations of the Quran differ from each other in some of the Quranic words. This is because when the Noble Quran was first recorded in writing, this was without diacritical dots to distinguish different letters, and without vowel markings. Instead, this initial written version relied on the

(1) *This is the recitation of Ibn `Abbas, Ubayy ibn Ka`, Sa`id ibn Jubayr and Al-A`sam Al-Makki.*

Arab's natural aptitude and their eloquent mastery of the language which enabled them to read the letters correctly based on the meaning appropriate to the context. This situation continued until the Umayyad era when scholars established a system of dots for differentiating between letters. For a word without such dots, the protuberance representing certain letters, for example, might be read in the case of dots missing above it as *nun*, *ta`* or *tha`* . In the case of dots missing beneath it, it might be read as *ba`* or *ya`* . But, the Arabs, due to their knowledge of the contextual arrangement of words are able to determine the intended letter. It is thus that the word *ri`ya* can be read as *ziyya*, as the principal difference between the two being a dot above the first letter of this latter word, yet the meanings of the two words is not far apart.

Other examples of variations based on differences in the placement of diacritical dots include the phrase '*fatabayyanu*' (*an-Nisa'*: 94) which is translated as 'use your discernment'. It is also read as '*fatathabatu*' with the meaning of 'ascertain'. Similarly, the word '*sibgha*' (*al-Baqara*: 138) with the connotation of characteristic or nature, is recited as '*san`a*' with the meaning of workmanship or design. The correctness of usage on the part of such variant readings is proven by the fact that the differences in the articulation of these letters does not result in differences of meaning.

It is for this reason that Arabs in the past used to get angry if they were sent a letter that was provided with vowel diacritics, for this would serve as an accusation of stupidity and lack of knowledge of the Arabic language. It is understandable, therefore, that those scholars who established the rules of language were not Arabs. This is due to the fact that Arabs at that time used to have an aversion to formally laying down rules for language, for their language was based upon an innate aptitude that did not require study or instruction. However, when the non-Arabs embraced Islam, they had no way of learning its primary language except by this study of rules.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'We have destroyed many a generation before them who surpassed them in riches and outward glitter!' (*Maryam*: 74) because the disbelievers said, 'Which side is better situated? Which side has the better following?' (*Maryam*: 73) In this way, Allah *the Almighty* demonstrates their foolishness as they do not reflect on the reality of life and thus are

unaware of the end of those who were mightier than them in terms of importance and rank.

Allah *Glorified is He* refutes the claim of the disbelievers' superiority over the believers, for this superiority in terms of worldly blessings does not arise from themselves. No, rather, it is a gift from Allah *the Almighty* and a source of trial and seduction, so that when Allah *the Almighty* seizes them, He will strip them of power and glory. This will be more odious, distressing, and infuriating for them because if Allah *the Almighty* seized them in a state of subjugation and lowliness, His seizure would not have this effect upon them.

Allah *Glorified is He* causes them to be opulent through His blessings in order that they expect even more benefits and advantages, then Allah *the Almighty* seizes them. This is precisely expressed in the poet's words:⁽¹⁾

As a cloud emits flashes of lightning upon a thirsty people
When they see it, it disperses and vanishes.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* filled them with ambitious desires at the beginning, and then He seized them and dashed their hopes in the end. We have propounded a simile for this in the prisoner of war who is very thirsty and asks for water. The guard brings the water to him until it is at his lips, while he is yearning for having his thirst quenched. Then the guard withholds it from him and deprives him so that his distress will be even more severe and his pain will grow greater. If the guard had not brought the water to the prisoner from the very beginning, his pain would have been easier to endure.

Therefore, O you disbelievers, when you make comparisons between yourselves and the believers and belittle them on account of the luxuries of this world that you possess, then you have compared between the means and paid no attention to the ends. It is foolish for you to be overly concerned with the means and to forget the ends. In order for the comparison to be

(1) Kuthir ibn `Abd Ar-Rahman Abu Sakhr Al-Khuza`i, a well-known poet, a native of Medina, who resided mostly in Egypt. He was excessively short and ugly. He was also haughty and self-praising. He was known as 'Kuthir `Azza', the latter being `Azza bint Jamil Ad-Dumriya, as he was consumed by his love for her. He died in 105 A.H. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-A`lam*, 219/5.

sound, you must compare your condition with that of the believers at the beginning and at the end.

Let us offer an example for this by a hard-working farmer in his grain fields which he tends with care, soiling it himself every day with the dust of his land. By contrast, there is another man who takes delight in clean clothes, in sitting in the café and in loafing around here and there. The latter looks at his friend who is worn out by work and believes himself to be better than him. But, as soon as harvest time comes around, the first one reaps the fruits of his toil and the result of his efforts, while the second sits there grieved and deprived. Thus, it is necessary when making comparisons to take into consideration the means along with the ends.

A poet hits the mark when he said:

Oh, for the one who shows me my objective before my setting out
For by what route do I come if objectives follow departures?

Thus, the disbelievers have separated the means in this world from the end in the Hereafter, so they revel in vainglorious pride and look down upon the believers, saying, ‘Which side is better situated? Which side has the better following?’ (*Maryam: 73*)

We also have an example in the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*; Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘So naught was the answer of his people except that they said: Slay him or burn him...’ (*al-'Ankabut: 24*) In this way, they agreed on burning Ibrahim (Abraham), but Allah *the Almighty* saved His prophet and nullified their endeavour. Ultimately, they met their end in the Hereafter: ‘And he said: You have only taken for yourselves idols besides Allah by way of friendship between you in this world’s life, then on the resurrection day some of you shall deny others, and some of you shall curse others, and your abode is the fire, and you shall not have any helpers.’ (*al-'Ankabut: 25*) They should not have focused on the means away from their ends.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* responds to those deluded by His blessings saying, ‘We have destroyed many a generation before them who surpassed them in riches and outward glitter!’ (*Maryam: 74*) Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says in other verses: ‘Have you not considered how your

Lord dealt with `Ad, (The people of) Aram, 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.’ (*al-Fajr*: 6-10) The annihilation of those peoples and their likes is easy, demanding nothing of Allah *Glorified is He* sending upon them sandstorms, thereby burying their civilisation and turning them into remnants after they had once been flourishing.

So, Allah *the Almighty* calls upon the disbelievers to reflect on history and to contemplate the consequences that befell the disbelievers and the deniers of the Truth, like themselves. Were the same punishment to befall them, their position and rank, in which they take pride, would be of no avail for them. These worldly means will not protect them from the punishment awaiting them in the Hereafter. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* does not refute their claim with hypothetical words, saying, ‘Surely, your recompense will be such-and-such of chastisement’. Instead, Allah *the Almighty* provides them with a tangible example from what has previously occurred to the disbelieving peoples.

In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* addresses Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with His saying, ‘So whether should We make you see part of what We threaten them with....’ (*Ghafir*: 77) This verse refers to the subjugation, defeat, and destruction they will be afflicted with in the Hereafter; ‘...or should We cause you to die, to Us shall they be returned.’ (*Ghafir*: 77) So, whoever escapes from the punishment of this world, he will not escape from that of the Hereafter.

When the Quran invites the disbelievers to reflect on the ultimate end of those who came before them, saying, ‘We have destroyed many a generation before them...’ (*Maryam*: 74), it does so by encouraging them to grasp the moral lesson and admonition from those who preceded them. It cites the occurrence of something tangible as evidence of the truthfulness of something unseen that is yet to come, namely, the punishment in the Hereafter. Thus, the Quran calls them to ponder over what happened to the civilisations that came before them and which had never been equalled on earth. Are you, disbelievers, more powerful than they are? Will you be able to protect yourselves from what befell the deniers of the truth before you?

This is with regard to the present circumstances, but as for unseen reality, the Quran presents it in another verse in which Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Surely they who are guilty used to laugh at those who believe. And when they passed by them, they winked at one another. And when they returned to their own followers they returned exulting. And when they saw them, they said, "Most surely these are in error" and they were not sent to be keepers over them.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-33) The foregoing is the state in this world, but what will be the state in the Hereafter? The verses continue: 'So on the Day of Judgment those who believe shall laugh at the disbelievers; On thrones, they will look.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 34-35) Then Allah *the Almighty* addresses the believers, saying, 'Surely the disbelievers are rewarded as they did.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 36)

It is as if He will address the believers saying, 'After what you have suffered at the hands of the disbelievers, We are fully able to pay them back for what they did to you in terms of derisive mockery in this world. In any case, their mockery of you in the worldly life was limited in time, whereas your laughing at them now is an everlasting situation without end. So, ultimately, which of the two parties is in a better state'?

Therefore, beware of being deceived by the outward appearances of things, or to be duped by the sparkling of pleasures and bounties, rather, you should look towards the ultimate objectives and final ends. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Wealth and children are an adornment of the life of this world; and the ever-abiding, the good works, are better with your Lord in reward, and better in expectation.' (*al-Kahf*: 46)

In the chapter of *al-A'raf*, there is another narrative depiction of the circumstances of the Day of Resurrection. The people on the heights say to the people of the fire: 'Of no avail were to you your great number and your behaving haughtily.' (*al-A'raf*: 48) Then they turn their gaze towards the believers in Paradise and ask the people of the fire: 'Are these they about whom you swore that Allah will not bestow mercy on them?' (*al-A'raf*: 49) How low is the rank of the people of the fire when compared with that of the people of the paradise?

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

قُلْ مَنْ كَانَ فِي الضَّلَالَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ مَدًّا حَتَّىٰ إِذَا رَأَوْا مَا يُوعَدُونَ إِمَّا الْعَذَابَ
 وَإِمَّا السَّاعَةَ فَسَيَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ هُوَ شَرٌّ مَّكَانًا وَأَضْعَفُ جُنْدًا ﴿٧٥﴾

Say [Prophet], ‘The Lord of Mercy lengthens [the lives] of the misguided, until, when they are confronted with what they have been warned about – either the punishment [in this life] or the Hour [of Judgement] – they realize who is worse situated and who has the weakest forces’ [75]

(The Quran, *Maryam*: 75)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say, ‘The Lord of Mercy lengthens [the lives] of the misguided’ (*Maryam*: 75). This means that Allah *the Almighty* grants the misguided people respite and draws them near to destruction. This is because He is the Lord of all, and by virtue of His Lordship, He gives provision to both the believer and the disbeliever alike. Just as Allah *the Almighty* supports the believer with triumph, He helps the disbeliever to attain what he intends. The latter point is clear in Allah’s saying, ‘There is a disease in their hearts, so Allah added to their disease....’ (*al-Baqara*: 10) Thus, Allah *the Almighty* adds to their disease because they are content and satisfied with it and asked for more of it.

With regard to Allah’s saying, ‘The Lord of Mercy lengthens [their lives]...’ (*Maryam*: 75), this means that Allah *the Almighty* gives the misguided person increase in this world and its adornments, a fact which is clear in His saying, ‘Whoever desires the gain of the hereafter, We will give him more of that again; and whoever desires — the gain of this world, We give him of it, and in the Hereafter he has no portion.’ (*ash-Shura*: 20) In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* teaches us: ‘Beware of being filled with admiration for their possessions and their children. This is because this serves as a source of divisive seduction and distraction for them. It is by such things that Allah *the Almighty* torments them in this world, through endeavouring to amass wealth and seeking to educate their children, and, ultimately, through the distress of losing both. Finally, in the Hereafter, He punishes them on account of their wealth and children. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Let not then

their property and their children excite your admiration; Allah only wishes to chastise them with these in this world's life and (that) their souls may depart while they are unbelievers.' (*at-Tawba*: 55)

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...When they are confronted with what they have been warned about – either the punishment [in this life] or the Hour [of Judgement] ...' (*Maryam*: 75). Here, the Arabic word *al-'adhab* refers to the punishment that will afflict the disbelievers in this world by being defeated by the believers. In addition, they will suffer humiliation and debasement at the hands of the believers. Concerning Allah's saying, '...or the Hour [of Judgement] ...' (*Maryam*: 75), it signifies the punishment which awaits them in the Hereafter. At that moment, '...they will realise who is worse situated and who has the weakest forces.' (*Maryam*: 75) However, this knowledge will be of no avail, for its time has already passed, as they are in the Hereafter and so they cannot return to the worldly life to believe. Hence, in this manner, the grief is greater and the distress is more severe.

Here, we may pose the following question, which is, 'What is the reason for mentioning the "forces" in this context which speaks of the Hereafter; after all, the disbelievers' forces will be of no avail on that Day'? In fact, this is an expression of derision against them, as in Allah's saying, 'Gather together those who were unjust and their associates, and what they used to worship besides Allah, then lead them to the way to Hell.' (*as-Saffat*: 22-23) The verb 'lead' also has the meaning of 'guide' in Arabic, and thus one might ask, 'Is leading them to the fire an act of guidance'?

The narrative continues, as Allah *the Almighty* turns to them, saying, 'What is the matter with you that you do not help each other? Nay! On that day, they shall be submissive. And some of them shall advance towards others, questioning each other. They shall say, "Surely you used to come to us from the right side." They shall say, "Nay, you (yourselves) were not believers; and we had no authority over you, but you were an inordinate people.'" (*as-Saffat*: 25-30) This verse shows that the leaders of the disbelievers will say that they did not force their followers to do anything. They merely made suggestions to them and thereupon the latter obeyed

them. For this reason, the disbelievers, as quoted in another verse, will say, ‘Our Lord! Show us those who led us astray from among the jinn and the men that we may trample them under our feet so that they may be of the lowest.’ (*Fussilat: 29*)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَيَزِيدُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ اهْتَدَوْا هُدًى وَالْبَاقِيَاتُ الصَّالِحَاتُ خَيْرٌ عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ ثَوَابًا وَخَيْرٌ مَرَدًّا ﴿٧٦﴾

But God gives more guidance to those who are guided, and good deeds of lasting merit are best and most rewarding in your Lord’s sight [76] (The Quran, *Maryam: 76*)

The Arabic word *hidaya* (guidance) in the Islamic context has two meanings. On the one hand, it has the meaning of leading to good and the elucidation of its path. On the other hand, it refers to Allah’s support to the guided one to attain to faith. Whoever manifests a firm belief in the former, Allah *the Almighty* will help him with the second. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And (as for) those who follow the right direction, He increases them in guidance and gives them their guarding (against evil).’ (*Muhammad: 17*)

Regarding His saying, ‘...and good deeds of lasting merit are best and most rewarding in your Lord’s sight.’ (*Maryam: 76*) the Arabic phrase *al-baqiyat as-salihat* (the good deeds of lasting merit) signifies the good actions which you undertook solely for Allah’s sake. These good deeds are: ‘...best and most rewarding in your Lord’s sight.’ (*Maryam: 76*) Such are the ultimate ends that we, Muslims, await and for which we strive. Whenever you draw parallels in respect to the hard paths, you should think of them in terms of their felicitous ends, for this will make the burden of worship and the difficulty of observing obligatory acts seem easier for you. Allah’s saying, ‘...and most rewarding in your Lord’s sight.’ (*Maryam: 76*) comprises the Arabic word *marada* which refers to what you will be returned to.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:⁽¹⁾

(1) *As for the cause of the revelation of this verse, it is related that Khabab ibn Al-Arat said, ‘I was owed a debt on the part of Al-`As ibn Wa`il, and I went to see him to settle its repayment. But, he said, “No, by Allah, I will not repay you until you disown your=*

أَفَرَأَيْتَ الَّذِي كَفَرَ بِآيَاتِنَا وَقَالَ لَأُوتِيَنَّ مَالًا وَوَلَدًا ﴿٧٧﴾

**Have you considered the man who rejects Our revelation,
who says, ‘I will certainly be given wealth and children’? [77]
(The Quran, *Maryam: 77*)**

Let us take note here that the Quran does not mention or identify the person who made this statement, even if this person was known to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is addressed in this verse. This is because this statement might be uttered in our day and age, or at any point of time. Hence, what is important here is not the person him, but rather, the statement itself? It has been related that this person was Umayya ibn Khalaf or Al-‘A’s ibn Wa’il As-Sahmi.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘Have you considered...?’ (*Maryam: 77*), it means ‘have you not seen this’? It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is alluding to what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* witnessed with respect to this case. The verse goes on to mention, ‘...the man who rejects Our Revelation, who says, “I will certainly be given wealth and children”’ (*Maryam: 77*) stating that this disbeliever said, ‘If there is indeed a resurrection then in the Hereafter, I will be just as I was in this world, the possessor of wealth and children’. This parallels what the owner of the garden said to his brother: ‘And I do not think the hour will come, and even if I am returned to my Lord I will most certainly find a returning place better than this.’ (*al-Kahf: 36*)

As a matter of fact, the human being should not take pride in any blessing unless it is self-produced and he is able to maintain it. Yet, he possesses nothing that arises from his own self, nor is he incapable of maintaining any blessing, as no one can sustain them except the Bestower and the Giver of blessings. So, why is there such self-delusion about these blessings?

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Say, “Have you considered if your water should go down, who is it then that will bring you flowing

= *belief in Muhammad.*” To this, I replied, “No, by Allah, I will not disbelieve in Muhammad until you die and are resurrected.” Then, he said, “In that case, when I die and am resurrected, then come to me for I will have children and wealth in that place, and will repay you at that time.” Thereupon Allah *the Almighty* revealed this verse.’ See *Al-Wahidi, Asbab An-Nuzul*, p.173; *Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2795.*

water?”’ (*al-Mulk*: 30). Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Say, “Have you considered if Allah should destroy me and those with me— rather He will have mercy on us”; yet who will protect the disbelievers from a painful punishment?’ (*al-Mulk*: 28)

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* responds to this groundless claim and says:

أَطَّلَعَ الْغَيْبَ أَمْ آتَاكَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا ﴿٧٨﴾

**Has he penetrated the unknown or received a
pledge to that effect from the Lord of Mercy? [78]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 78)**

It is as if Allah is addressing this disbeliever saying, ‘Have you made this statement according to your own knowledge? Or have you penetrated the unseen thereby gaining knowledge of what you will obtain in the Hereafter?’ The verse goes on to ask ‘...or have he received a pledge to that effect from the Lord of Mercy?’ (*Maryam*: 78) Did Allah *the Almighty* give him a pledge that he will have in the Hereafter the same as that which he had in this world? Thus, to make such a statement, he should have either penetrated the unseen or received a pledge from Allah *the Almighty*. So, which of these two was available for him such that he might make this statement with such certainty?

This meaning is evident in Allah’s saying, ‘What! Shall We then make (i.e. treat) those who submit as the guilty? What has happened to you? How do you judge? Or have you a book wherein you read, that you have surely therein what you choose? Or have you received from Us an agreement confirmed by an oath extending to the Day of Resurrection that you shall surely have what you demand?’ (*al-Qalam*: 35-39) Here, the intended meaning is that: who guarantees for them what they lay claim to?! Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has informed us, ‘Whoever brings happiness to a believer, he has then received a pledge from Allah.’⁽¹⁾ Furthermore,

(1) In his book, *Ibn Al-Jawzi narrated the Hadith of Ibn `Abbas in which he relates that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, ‘Whoever brings happiness to a believer, he makes me happy, and whoever makes me happy receives a pledge with Allah, and whoever has received a pledge from Allah, the fire will not touch him.’ Ibn Al-Jawzi then says, ‘It is narrated through Ad-Daraqutni’s chain of narrators. In =*

he said, 'Whoever prays the obligatory prayers in their appointed time, he has received a pledge from Allah.'⁽¹⁾ So, who are those who have received a pledge from Allah *the Almighty* that He will not cause them to enter the fire?

The Arabic word *al-`ahd* (pledge) refers to something agreed upon between two parties. If a pledge is between people, then it is an unreliable one. It can be honoured or not, for man is prone to changeability, and the circumstances may prevent him from fulfilling his pledge. However, if the pledge is from Allah *the Almighty* the Master of all things, there is no power that can nullify His Will. His pledge, therefore, is a true and a reliable one, which will never fail to be honoured.

When you make a solemn promise to your Lord with respect to faith, you are not in a position to be sure of what changes you might undergo. However, when your Lord pledges to reward you, then you can be certain that He will fulfil His pledge and will not renege on His promise.

Therefore, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to give counsel to `Ali Allah *be pleased with him* he said, 'Supplicate to Allah that he establishes for you a covenant in the hearts of the believers,'⁽²⁾ this is to say, love and affection in their hearts, and as long as Allah *the Almighty* grants him this covenant, Allah *the Almighty* fulfils it and it would come to pass.

= *Mizan Al-`I'tidal, Adh-Dhahabi grades this narration as false in meaning.* See Ibn Al-Jawzi, *Al-`Ilal Al-Mutanahiya*, 2/514; *Adh-Dhahabi, Mizan Al-`I'tidal*. 2/293.

- (1) In his book, Imam Ahmad narrates on the authority of Ka`b ibn A`jra that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Surely, your Lord says: "Whoever prays the prayers at their appropriate times and preserves them and does not let them go by through neglecting their due right, he has My Pledge that I will cause him to enter Paradise. In addition, whoever does not pray them at their appropriate times and does not preserve them and lets them go by through negligence of their due right, he has no pledge; if I will, I will punish him, and if I will, I will forgive him."' See Ahmad, *Musnad*, 4/244.
- (2) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti narrates that Al-Bara` ibn `Azib related that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to `Ali Allah *be pleased with him* 'Say, "O Allah, establish a covenant for me with you, and make me beloved in Your Sight, and instill affection for me in the hearts of the believers."' Thereupon, Allah revealed His saying, 'But the Lord of Mercy will give love to those who believe and do righteous deeds.' (Maryam: 96) Al-Bara` said, 'It was revealed in reference to `Ali.' In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi says, 'According to Ibn `Abbas this verse was revealed in reference to `Abd Ar-Rahman Ibn `Awf. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/544; *Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4333.

The Name ‘the Lord of Mercy’ is chosen here for the characteristic of all-encompassing Mercy that lies in it and it also corresponds to His help with fulfilling one’s pledge.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

كَلَّا سَنَكْتُبُ مَا يَقُولُ وَنَمُدُّ لَهُ مِنَ الْعَذَابِ مَدًّا ﴿٧٩﴾

No! We shall certainly record what he says and prolong his punishment [79] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 79)

Here, the Arabic word *kalla* (no) is a particle for negating and nullifying that which was said before it. In this case, it negates the disbeliever’s statement in the previous two verses: ‘I will certainly be given wealth and children?’ Has he penetrated the unknown or received a pledge to that effect from the Lord of Mercy?’ (*Maryam*: 77-78) Then, the word *kalla* is followed by an explanation and reasoning for this negation.

This particle also occurs in Allah’s saying, ‘And as for man, when his Lord tries him, then treats him with honour and makes him lead an easy life, he says, “My Lord honours me”. But when He tries him (differently), then straitens to him his means of subsistence, he says, “My Lord has disgraced me”. No! ...’ (*al-Fajr*: 15-17)

In the last verse, Allah *the Almighty* refutes the statement which comes before *kalla* (no) because pleasurable things and plentiful means of sustenance are not a proof of being honoured by Allah *the Almighty*. Similarly, poverty and lack of sustenance are not a proof of being disgraced by Him. On the contrary, both states constitute tribulations and trials, as the verse makes clear. The presence of blessings does not mean that you are blessed, but rather the real blessing is succeeding in the test of both conditions.

Allah *the Almighty* may bestow wealth upon you, but then you do not spend it on what Allah *the Almighty* has permitted. Thus, it comprises a temptation for you whereby you fail the examination. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* did not honour you by means of wealth, but rather, Allah *the Almighty* made it a means of seduction and deception. Thus, it is by your hand that wealth is

transformed into either a blessing or a curse, or a mark of honour or a disgraceful abuse.

Back to the verse under discussion; Allah *Glorified is He* then says,⁽¹⁾ ‘We shall certainly record what he says and prolong his punishment.’ (*Maryam: 79*) Allah’s saying, ‘We shall certainly record...’ (*Maryam: 79*) clarifies that Allah *the Almighty* will not hold this disbeliever accountable on the Day of Judgment for what he says that he has done. Rather, he will be held accountable for what was recorded against him and he will read it. It is as if the recording is not restricted to what we imagine it to be, but rather, it is a recording of the voice and the breaths. When the Day of Judgment comes, every human being will find the record of what he has done.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Read your book; your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this Day.’ (*al-Isra’: 14*) This saying indicates that when the person sees what was written in the book, he will know that it consists of what he has done. Nowadays the human beings can record the breaths and words of their adversaries. So, how can you consider it unlikely that Allah *the Almighty* records the breaths, voices, and movements in such a manner that when a person reads them and sees them recorded in his book, he would not be able to deny them?

As for Allah’s saying, ‘...and prolong his punishment’ (*Maryam: 79*), it means that this disbeliever’s punishment will be increased. The Arabic word *al-madd* (to prolong) signifies that you increase something. However, at times you increase something from its own substance, while other times you increase it by adding something else to it. For example, you might bring a string and extend it to its limit, or you might attach another string to it, and thereby you have lengthened it with another thing. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* increases the punishment of the disbelievers.

(1) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi says, ‘Allah’s saying, “We shall certainly record what he says and prolong his punishment.” (Maryam: 79), signifies that He will record this disbeliever’s statement as counting against him, and He will recompense him for it in the Hereafter. Furthermore, He will “...prolong his punishment” (Maryam: 79), that is, Allah the Almighty will grant him increased punishment above and beyond standard punishment.’ Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4319.*

He says:

وَنَرْتُهُ، مَا يَقُولُ وَيَأْتِينَا فَرْدًا ﴿٨٠﴾

We shall inherit from him all that he speaks of and he will come to Us all alone [80] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 80)

This verse tells us that while this disbeliever is expecting Allah *the Almighty* to bestow upon him more blessings, Allah *the Almighty* will take all the blessings from him. So, His saying, ‘We shall inherit from him...’ (*Maryam*: 80) means that Allah *the Almighty* will take from him what he possesses. This meaning is clear in His saying, ‘It is We who will inherit the earth and all who are on it: they will all be returned to Us.’ (*Maryam*: 40) Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and We are the inheritors.’ (*al-Qasas*: 58)

Thus, the fact that Allah *the Almighty* ‘shall inherit from him’ (*Maryam*: 80), is contrary to the disbeliever’s expectation to ‘be given wealth’ (*Maryam*: 77). Likewise, His saying, ‘and he will come to Us all alone’ (*Maryam*: 80) is a rebuttal of his expectation to be given: ‘...children’ (*Maryam*: 77) since he will appear before Allah *the Almighty* on the Day of Judgment alone with none of his children alongside him to defend him.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ آلِهَةً لِيَكُونُوا لَهُمْ عِزًّا ﴿٨١﴾

They have taken other gods beside God to give them strength [81] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 81)

The Arabic word *aliha* (gods) is the plural of *ilah* which refers to the one who is worshipped, that is, the Lord Who brought you out of nothing and assumes the responsibility of raising you. Allah’s bestowal of divinity comprises prescribed obligations and worship, while the bestowal of lordship consists of blessings and gifts. Therefore, who is worthier of your worshipful servitude and obedience?

Some people have taken other gods beside Allah, such as the sun, the moon, a stone, or a tree. We ask such people, ‘Why do you think that these

gods are worthy of your worship? What have they commanded you to do? What things have they forbidden you? What favours have they bestowed upon you? Where were they when you were a foetus in your mothers' wombs'?

Let us compare this topic with obedience to one's parents. Surely, your father who provided for you when you were young and took care of all your needs, also your mother who carried you in her womb and vigilantly looked after your comfort are more deserving of your obedience than anyone else. You should not give preference to a command other than theirs. Allowing others to gain mastery over you and giving them your obedience and loyalty apart from your parents are not permissible while you are in the prime of your youth and the peak of your strength.

For this reason, among the basic principles of upbringing is that parents should instruct their children to heed and obey them. We should warn these children against obeying others, especially those who are not to be trusted with upbringing, including the laymen and the depraved friends who attract children towards the blameworthy acts.

Nowadays we warn our children against going around with strangers or accepting food or drink from them. We witness this in our daily life and that is why it is unnecessary to elaborate at length on this issue. Hence, this is a kind of immunity which you must give to children, precisely like immunity against illnesses.

Such is the condition of those who had taken gods beside Allah *Glorified is He*. They find ease in a god which lays down no obligations upon them nor demands any difficult acts worship from them. That is to say that each of these gods lets its worshippers worship it according to the worshippers' caprice and whim.


Clearly, these polytheists have accepted the bestowals of lordship and enjoyed the blessings of Allah *the Almighty*, but they rejected the bestowals of divinity by abstaining from worshipping Him.

As the human being is religious by his very nature, these people have chosen a religion in accordance with their deviant inclinations and passionate desires. They have taken gods that neither command nor impose obligations.

This also applies to many educated people who follow Allah's religion according to their whims. They obey His enemies in matters which are far away from His religion. Although they are people of culture and mature minds, they convince themselves that they adhere to the religion and the truth.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...to give them strength.' (*Maryam*: 81) The Arabic word *al-`izz* (strength) means dominance and ability to hold back others, whereby no one can cause you any harm. One says, 'So-and-son is strong (*`aziz*)'; this is to say that he is undefeatable.

We have the right to ask here, 'Wherein lies the strength in worshipping these gods? In addition, what is the benefit that will come to you from worshipping them?' For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* refutes their claim saying:


 كَلَّا سَيَكْفُرُونَ بِعِبَادَتِهِمْ وَيَكُونُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ ضِدًّا

**But these gods will reject their worship and will even
turn against them [82] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 82)**

Here, the Arabic word *kalla* (no) rules out that there is any strength in worshipping anything besides Allah *the Almighty*. Rather, on the Day of Judgment, '... these gods will reject their worship....' (*Maryam*: 82) This verse shows that these gods will disavow having been worshipped by them, and they will deny that they themselves are gods alongside Allah *the Almighty*. Moreover, these gods '...will even turn against them.' (*Maryam*: 82) Thus, while the disbelievers adopted them as gods other than Allah *the Almighty* and sought to have strength through worshipping them, these gods will turn against them and become their adversaries and opponents.

The Arabic word *ad-didd* means your antagonistic enemy and the one who tries to maltreat you. In the Noble Quran, there are many discussions between these gods and those who worshipped them. An example of this is found in the case of those who worshipped the angels and adopted them as gods beside Allah *the Almighty*. When Allah *the Almighty* asks the angels: 'Did these worship you?' (*Saba*': 40), they reply: 'Glory be to You! You are our Guardian, not they; nay! They worshipped the jinn; most of them were believers in them.' (*Saba*': 41) Elsewhere, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'When

those who were followed shall renounce those who followed (them)...’ (*al-Baqara*: 166) Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* says about the worshippers of false gods: ‘And who is in greater error than he who calls besides Allah upon those that will not answer him till the day of resurrection and they are heedless of their call?’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 5)

Hence, the disbelievers imagined that their gods are a source of strength and protection, but they turned out against them and became their enemies. This is similar to the case of the young woman who said to her father: ‘O father, what made you consent to my marriage to the son of so-and-so?’ That is, what is it that pleased you with him? He said, ‘O my dear daughter, they are a family of strength, rank, nobility, power and protection’. She said, ‘O father, you assumed that there would be love between me and him, but you did not predict that there would be enmity between us. Therefore, if enmity arises, what you have said will turn against you, and you will be miserable by their strength and rank’.

Some people have set up wealth as a god, as a poet said:

To wealth belongs a folk, when it appeared saying
I am wealth, the folk said, you alone do we worship.

Those who worship wealth, seeing strength in it and being arrogantly boastful about it, are unaware that it will be a curse and torture for them on the Day of Resurrection; Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘On the Day when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it; this is what you hoarded up for yourselves, therefore taste what you hoarded.’ (*at-Tawba*: 35)

In such a manner, the more their greed for wealth increases, the more its fiery branding intensifies. You will note in the last verse that the natural sequential order akin to the request when a poor beggar stands before an ignoble wealthy man. As soon as the beggar appears, the features of the man’s face change, and then he turns his face away from him. Afterwards he turns his side towards the beggar and gives his back to him. In this same order does punishment take place and branding occur—may Allah *the Almighty* protect us from such punishment. Thus, wealth which was believed to comprise strength changes into torture and calamity.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And when men are gathered together they shall be their enemies, and shall be deniers of their worshipping (them).’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 6) Even the limbs and organs by which you enjoyed your disobedience in this world will testify against you; Allah says, ‘On the Day when their tongues and their hands and their feet shall bear witness against them as to what they did.’ (*an-Nur*: 24) That is because you were heedless of Him Whom you should have been heedful of, and you kept in mind what you were not supposed to have called to it. So, on the Day of Judgment, the true Lord Whom you were heedless of will call you out and take you to account. On the other hand, the false gods to whom you devoted yourself will abandon you and deliver you to perilous ruin.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّا أَرْسَلْنَا الشَّيَاطِينَ عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ تَوَهُمَ آثًا

Have you [Prophet] not seen how We send devils to incite the disbelievers to sin? [83] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 83)

The Arabic word *al-azz* literally means the powerful convulsion or agitation marked by force. In other words, the devils stir them up and inflame them. The word *al-azz* is similar in meaning to the word *an-nazgh* which occurs in Allah’s saying, ‘If Satan should prompt you to do something, seek refuge with Allah – He is all hearing, all knowing.’ (*al-A’raf*: 200)

Satanic incitement takes place by means of evil whisperings and enticements in order to provoke the person into disobedience and wickedness. The same meaning is also expressed by the word *at-ta’if*, as in Allah’s saying, ‘Those who are aware of Allah think of Him when Satan prompts them to do something and immediately they can see [straight].’ (*al-A’raf*: 201)

The verse under discussion ‘Have you [Prophet] not seen how We send devils ...’ (*Maryam*: 83) prompts a question which is, ‘If Allah *the Almighty* hates that which the devils do to man, whether a believer or a disbeliever, why, then, does He send them to the disbelievers?’ Allah *the Almighty* sends the devils to human beings for a certain mission, that is, to serve as tribulation and trial for them. In the same vein, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Do men think that

they will be left alone on saying, “We believe”, and not be tried?” (*al-’Ankabut*: 2) Hence, they perform the function for which they were created, namely, standing in the way of the believer in order to divert him away from faith. Allah *the Almighty* thereby purifies the believers and brings out the firm belief of those who stand firm in the face of the satanic wiles.

We have said, ‘Satan has a long history with man, starting with Adam *peace be upon him* when he refused to obey Allah’s command to prostrate before Adam. Thereupon, Allah *the Almighty* cast him out and banished him from His Mercy. Consequently, Satan wanted to get revenge on Adam’s progeny due to what had befallen him because of Adam. In this regard, ‘He said: Then by Your Might I will surely make them live an evil life, all.’ (*Sad*: 82); and He also said, ‘As You has caused me to remain disappointed I will certainly lie in wait for them in Your Straight Path.’ (*al-A’raf*: 16) In such a manner, he announced his method and his way, affirming that he will lie in wait for those who are upright, whereas those on the crooked path have no need of his misguidance and seductive deceptions. For this reason, we find him threatening the believers, saying, ‘Then I will certainly come to them from before them and from behind them, and from their right-hand side and from their left-hand side....’ (*al-A’raf*: 17) It is well known that there are six directions, and Satan comes from all of them except for two, that is, the above and the below direction. This is because these two directions are respectively linked to divine mightiness from above and the humility of worshipful servitude from below, as embodied in the act of the servant when he raises his hands to Allah *the Almighty* in supplication and when he falls down before Him in prostration. Consequently, these two directions are closed to Satan since they are the two sides of obedience and devout servitude, and he is not active except in a state of a heedless negligence of which he takes advantage in man.

If we reflect upon the matter of Satan, we will find that his conflict is not with his Lord *Glorified is He* but rather with man. This is because when Satan says to his Lord *Glorified is He* ‘He said, “Then by Your Might I will surely make them live an evil life, all.”’ (*Sad*: 82) He observes respectful etiquette with Allah *the Almighty*. It is as if he was saying, ‘Temptation is not skilfulness on my part, but instead I deceive them into sin by means of Your

Might which is Exalted above your human creations, and by means of giving them free choice, allowing (by means of which) the believer to believe and the disbeliever to disbelieve. This is the means of access by which I get through to them. This is proven by the fact that I have no authoritative power over Your faithful adherents or Your devout servants whom you chose and purified'. For this reason, Satan said, 'Except Your servants from among them, the purified ones.' (*Sad*: 83)

Here, another question also arises, which is, 'If Satan only lies in wait along the straight path of the righteous in order to cause its followers to wander astray, then why does he lie in wait for the disbelievers'? We reply, 'This is because the disbeliever by his nature and innate disposition is inclined towards faith and towards the straight path, for he may ponder over the cosmos with all its marvellous signs before him. So, perhaps reflecting upon Allah's universe will lead him to believe in Him. That is why Satan lies in ambush for him in the path of reflection and contemplation in order to prevent him from believing in the Creator *Glorified is He*.'

Satan stirs you up either to arouse carnal appetites or to make you forget about obedience, as the Quran relates: '...and nothing made me forget to speak of it but the Satan.' (*al-Kahf*: 63) Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and if the Satan causes you to forget, then do not sit after recollection with the unjust people.' (*al-An'am*: 68)

Many of our Muslim brethren ask, 'Why is it that during the daily prayer precisely we are assailed by thoughts about the problems of life and concerns of this world'? To this, we reply that this is a healthy symptom of faith. This is because if Satan were not aware of the importance of the daily prayer—that when it is accepted from you, your sins are forgiven—he would not attempt to ruin it for you. But, our real problem is that if we give Satan the full rein, we will end up following him and become forgetful of the saying of our Lord: 'And if an interference of Satan should cause you mischief, seek refuge in Allah; surely, He is the Hearing, the Knowing.' (*Fussilat*: 36)

Hence, as soon as you sense that you are straying from prayer and the attitude of standing before Allah *the Almighty* all you have to do is say, 'I take refuge in Allah from Satan, the accursed'. Even if you were in the middle of

reciting the Quran, you have the right to interrupt the recitation in order to seek refuge in Allah from Satan. The moment he realises your recurrent awareness of his stratagems, he will leave you and despair of influencing you.

Previously, we drew an analogy for this with a thief who does not hover around a house which is abandoned and ruined, but rather hovers around a house which is flourishing and populated. Then as soon as he approaches it, the proprietor of the house notices and drives him away by shouting, and so the thief takes recourse in escaping. Now, perhaps the thief says to himself, 'Maybe the owner of the house merely shouted by coincidence' and then he goes back again. But, the owner of the house remains vigilant and so the thief flees and never comes back.

We must be cognisant that among the stratagems and sly tricks of Satan is that when he finds difficulty in seducing you from one way, he will then approach you from another one. This is because he is well aware that people have multiple means of penetration, and that each of us has a weak point by which access is gained. There are among men, for example, those whom you cannot win over with mounds of gold, yet you can incline them favourably with words of praise and flattery. Now, this cursed one, Satan, has varied ruses corresponding to the varieties of personalities.

Therefore, it is easy for you to distinguish between an act of sinful disobedience which arises from the soul and that which comes from Satan. The soul entices you to do a single object of carnal passion which it desires and it will accept nothing other than it. If you tried to budge it to some other object of lustful desire, it refuses everything except what it wants. On the other hand, if Satan has a hard time urging you to undertake one such act of disobedience, he then invites you to indulge in another one. The important thing for him is to make you fall into a sin.

Allah *the Almighty* warns us against Satan because he fights against human's innate disposition towards faith- this disposition which urges him to believe that the universe has an All-Powerful Creator. The proof of the Existence of Allah *the Almighty* is an innate natural one which is no need of philosophical explanations. As the Arabs of old said, 'Camel droppings provide clear evidence of a camel and a footprint offers a proof of someone walking. The

heaven with its constellations, the earth with its natural pathways, the sea with its waves; does this all not prove the Existence of the Subtle, the Aware’?

Similarly, every craftsman is well versed in his craft and expert in its fine details. So then, what do you think of the Creator: ‘Does He not know, Who created? And He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware.’ (*al-Mulk*: 14) Hence, the proofs of faith are inborn, natural ones which the philosopher shares in common with the shepherd; no, indeed it might be that philosophy came and complicated the proofs.

Back to the verse in question; let us ponder over Allah’s saying, ‘Have you [Prophet] not seen how We send devils...’ (*Maryam*: 83). Now, it is well known that the proceedings of Satan are concealed, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...he surely sees you, he as well as his host, from whence you cannot see them...’ (*al-A’raf*: 27). Here, we should ask, ‘How is it that Allah *the Almighty* addresses Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in regard to this issue with His saying, ‘Have you [Prophet] not seen’ (*Maryam*: 83), although it is a phenomenon which is not visible to man’?

In our opinion, Allah’s saying, ‘Have you [Prophet] not seen...’ (*Maryam*: 83) carries the meaning of ‘do you not know?’, whereby ‘knowing’ is tantamount to ‘seeing’. The same usage occurs in His saying, ‘Have you not seen how your Lord dealt with the possessors of the elephant?’ (*al-Fil*: 1) Obviously, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not see this event, so how can his Lord address him by asking ‘have you not seen’? This is in order to indicate to you, O Messenger Muhammad, that Allah’s conveyance of information to you is more reliable than the information that your eyes convey to you. This is because the vision of the eye might deceive you, whereas the communication of Allah *the Almighty* is truthful and will never deceive you. Hence, the knowledge conveyed to you by Allah *the Almighty* has greater priority and is more trustworthy than the knowledge you gain through your own senses.

The Arabic word *ash-shayatin* (devils) is the plural of *shaytan* which refers to Satan who was the rebellious one from among the jinn. The jinn are creatures similar to mankind, and Allah *the Almighty* says about them: ‘And that some of us are good and others of us are below that: we are sects

following different ways.’⁽¹⁾ (*al-Jinn*: 11) Hence, there are among the jinn those who are far below righteousness and these are the devils or demons.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَا تَعْجَلْ عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّمَا نَعُدُّ لَهُمْ عَدًّا ﴿٨٤﴾

**There is no need for you to be impatient concerning them:
We are counting down their [allotted] time [84]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 84)**

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* hoped that Allah *the Almighty* would relieve him from the leading figures among the disbelievers and the enemies of the Islamic call, so Allah *the Almighty* says to him: ‘There is no need for you to be impatient concerning them; we are counting down their [allotted] time.’ (*Maryam*: 84) This is because Allah *the Almighty* wants their lives to be prolonged, and their deeds to become even worse, and their sins to multiply, for the angelic scribes maintain a close watch over them and keep a careful record of their sins.

As for His saying, ‘We are counting down their [allotted] time’ (*Maryam*: 84), it means that the matter is settled since everything that can be counted comes to an end. On the other hand, the thing which cannot be reckoned and cannot be counted does not come to an end, a fact which is clear in Allah’s saying, ‘...and if you count Allah’s favours, you will not be able to number them....’ (*Ibrahim*: 34) This is because Allah’s blessings cannot be computed, nor counted, nor come to an end. For this reason, the passage above begins with the Arabic particle *in* (if) which suggests doubt, as this is a matter which no one dares to undertake; a fact which is supported by Allah’s saying, ‘...What is with you passes away and what is with Allah is enduring....’ (*an-Nahl*: 96)

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir says, ‘The phrase “different ways” here refers to the paths, which are multiple and varied, and refers also to the opinions which are divergent. In the view of Ibn `Abbas, Mujahid and others, the verse signifies that among them are those who believe and those who do not believe.’ See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`Azhim*, 4/430.

Nowadays we are witnessing the science of statistics and all the advancements that it has achieved to the point that there are now universities dedicated to it, with specialised scientists introducing statistics into everything. Yet, not one of them has ever thought of quantitatively enumerating Allah's blessings in His universe. What is the reason for that? This is because applying oneself to count something means believing that you will be able to complete the process, and all of these scientists know perfectly well that however much they counted, they would never be able to count Allah's blessings. Hence, the phrase: 'We are counting down their [allotted] time.' (*Maryam*: 84), signifies that Allah *the Almighty* reckons their misdeeds and counts their sins before the end of their lives. The more their lives are prolonged, the greater the number of their sins will be. All that ends in numerical quantity likewise ends in duration.

Then Allah says:

يَوْمَ نَحْشُرُ الْمُتَّقِينَ إِلَى الرَّحْمَنِ وَفَدًا ﴿٨٥﴾

**On the Day We gather the righteous as an
honoured company before the Lord of Mercy [85]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 85)**

Allah *the Almighty* has provided us with multiple images and diverse scenes of the Day of Resurrection. He has depicted for us the image of false gods and their worshippers as well as what occurs between the two parties in terms of argument and disputation. He has given us an image of those who collaborated in evil, and of those who collaborated in goodness. This verse is part of another image which portrays the righteous believers on one side and the evildoers on the other one. So, what is the image of the righteous people?

Here, the Arabic word *nahshur* (to gather) means that Allah *the Almighty* will assemble the righteous people. As for the Arabic word *al-wafd*, it literally refers to a delegation which goes to a king to receive his gifts. This is the condition of the righteous people when Allah *the Almighty* brings them together on the Day of Resurrection as an honoured delegation in order to receive His favours and blessings. But you should not imagine that they are assembled walking, for example. No, rather, every righteous believer will be

riding a she-camel the likes of its beauty has never been seen. Its saddle is made of gold, and its bridle is made of green chrysotile gems.⁽¹⁾

This is the condition of the righteous believers. By contrast, the condition of the evildoers will be the opposite, as Allah says:

وَسَوْقُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ وَرِدًا ۝٨٦

**And drive the sinful like a thirsty herd into Hell [86]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 86)**

As-sa`iq (the one who drives) is positioned at the rear, chasing them, (the disbelievers) with angry words and driving them with reprimands. Such is the depiction in His saying, ‘The Day on which they shall be driven away to the fire of Hell with violence.’ (*at-Tur*: 13) Thus, Allah *the Almighty* does not say, for example, ‘We will lead them’, for the one who leads is situated in the front, and it is possible that one of those led might elude the leader’s attention and escape from him.

Regarding the Arabic word *al-wird*, rendered here as ‘a thirsty herd into Hell’, it literally means to go to a watering place to seek the quenching of thirst. However, the fire is the place of blazing, intense heat, flames and boiling water. So, we should ask here, ‘Why is coming to the fire with its heat called going to a watering-place?’ This is said in scornful mockery of them, as is the case with the saying of Allah: ‘...and if they cry for water, they shall be given water like molten brass which will scald their faces.’ (*al-Kahf*: 29) Now, when you hear the Arabic word *yughathu* (they will be given help), you anticipate some benefit and expect mercy. But, they will be given water like molten brass, which will scald their faces.

(1) In his *Tafsir*, *Al-Qurtubi* narrates that Ibn `Abbas said, ‘The believers will be provided with she-camels from paradise. These will have saddles of gold upon them, and their bridles and reins will be of green chrysotile gems. The believers will be assembled while mounted on them.’ In another narration, `Ali said, ‘Allah does not gather them together on foot, but [mounted] upon she-camels whose saddles are made of gold, pure-bred camels whose bridles are adorned with sapphires. If they merely give thought to them, they march ahead, and if they spur them, they fly.’ See *Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4324.

Another example of this derisive mockery is clear in His saying, ‘Taste; for sure you are the mighty, the honourable’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 49), which serves as a reproach to the arrogantly oppressive disbelievers and wrongdoers. A further example yet occurs in His saying, ‘...Therefore announce (*bashshir*) to him a painful chastisement’ (*Luqman*: 7), in which the Arabic verb *bashshir* normally means to give glad tidings, while here Allah *the Almighty* is given the glad tiding of a painful chastisement.

Hence, Allah’s saying, ‘On the Day We gather the righteous as an honoured company before the Lord of Mercy.’ (*Maryam*: 85) is scathing sarcasm such as when you say to the negligent boy who flunks an exam, ‘Congratulations on your failure’.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَا يَمْلِكُونَ الشَّفْعَةَ إِلَّا مَنِ اتَّخَذَ عِنْدَ الرَّحْمَنِ عَهْدًا

**No one will have power to intercede except for those
who have permission from the Lord of Mercy[87]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 87)**

When the disbeliever comes into direct contact with the punishment, the first thing he hopes is that the object of his worship intercedes on his behalf and saves him from the situation in which he is. But this is very far-reaching, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And who is in greater error than he who calls besides Allah upon those that will not answer him till the day of resurrection and they are heedless of their call? And when men are gathered together they shall be their enemies, and shall be deniers of their worshipping (them).’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 5-6)

For this reason, these people will have no power to intercede on the Day of Judgment, as the intercession is only given by Allah’s permission, a fact which is clear in His saying, ‘No one will have the power to intercede except for those who have Permission from the Lord of Mercy.’ (*Maryam*: 87)

In order to have Allah’s permission to intercede on behalf of someone, you should do enough good deeds to fulfil your obligations. Then you should increase these good deeds to meet the qualification of intercession for other

people. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* never renders your good deeds in vain. So, whatever good deeds you do beyond the prescribed obligations will be in your account balance in a record book which does not overlook small or large things, and does not leave out so much as an atom's weight.

Whenever a believer—regardless of how immoderate he is—notices a person devoting himself to Allah *the Almighty* and striving to increase his acts of obedience, he should ask Allah *the Almighty* to make this person more obedient, and he should be happy for him. This is because the superabundance of good deeds done by this devout believer may be of benefit to you, for one day you may need his intercession. But as for those who take pleasure in ridiculing and scorning people for pious devotion, they fall under the category of those oppressors about whom Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Surely they who are guilty used to laugh at those who believe. And when they passed by them, they winked at one another. And when they returned to their own followers they returned exulting. And when they saw them, they said: Most surely these are in error.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-32)

How will you face the devout people and hope for their intercession after all that you have done? If you are not faithfully observant yourself, then at the very least you should love those who are filled with pious devotion. You should also consider that this love constitutes a good deed whose fruit you hope to reap on the Day of Resurrection.

There is a similarity between intercession in the Hereafter and that which takes place between us in this world. For example, if you want to have a difficult issue settled for you, people may tell you, 'Go to so-and-so and he will get it done for you'! Then this person goes with you and fulfils your need. So, why was it achieved by the hands of this person? He must have done some favours to the person who had the ability to satisfy this need and so the latter was not able to refuse a request coming from him.

Therefore, it is necessary for the one who intercedes to have a balance of devotional acts which permitted him to do that. If you reflected carefully on this matter, you would find that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the first to have a balance of faith which encompassed his prescribed obligations and also that of his *ummah*. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty*

says about him: ‘...he believes in Allah, trusts⁽¹⁾ the believers...’ (*at-Tawba*: 61) Therefore, he was granted the right to intercede as a privilege for him.

Allah *the Almighty* is never unmindful of the balance of His human creatures. Thus, all man’s recommended acts of worship will be stored up for him. Even if a man is wrongly accused and punished for a deed he did not commit, Allah *the Almighty* will preserve this for him and conceal that which he has actually committed without punishing him for it.

Thus, the permission to intercession which is referred to in Allah’s saying, ‘...except for those who have permission from the Lord of Mercy.’ (*Maryam*: 87) entails that you attain to the lofty rank of *ihсан* which can only be attained by dedicating yourself to doing the prescribed obligations. If you did not do so, then how could you attain to this rank, while you fall short in the rank of faith, which is lower than that of *ihسان*?

In this connection, you should heed Allah’s saying, ‘Surely those who guard (against evil) shall be in gardens and fountains taking what their Lord gives them...’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16) So, what is the reason for getting these blessings? The answer is provided in the following verses: ‘...surely they were before that, the doers of good. They used to sleep but little in the night. And in the morning they asked forgiveness. And in their property was a portion due to him who begs and to him who is denied (good).’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 16-19)

Al-muhsin is the one who engages in acts of worship more than what Allah *the Almighty* has made obligatory for him. Such acts should be of the same type as those which are prescribed. Let us offer an example of this point; Allah *the Almighty* did not oblige us to offer *qiyam al-layl* (the night prayer) or to ask for forgiveness at dawn. Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* did not oblige us to give voluntary charity to the beggar and the destitute. It is imperative here that we differentiate in terms of giving charity between what is a ‘duty’ and what is a ‘fixed duty’. In the final verse above, there is

(1) In his *Tafsir*, *As-Suyuti* relates that Ibn `Abbas said, ‘This means that he believes firmly in Allah and is truthful to the believers.’ *Ad-Dahhak* said, ‘He believes firmly in Allah regarding what He revealed to him, and he trusts the believers, including their testimonies and solemn oaths concerning their due rights, their sexual organs and their possessions.’ See *As-Suyuti*, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 4/227.

a reference to the 'duty' because the verse refers to the voluntary charity. On the other hand, the 'fixed duty' refers to *zakat* (obligatory charity).

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالُوا اتَّخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا

The disbelievers say, 'The Lord of Mercy has offspring' [88] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 88)

This statement they utter is nonsense and falsehood, for when did Allah *the Almighty* take a 'son'?! In which century after the birth of the Messiah *peace be upon him*, did this occur? This Christian article of faith did not arise except after three hundred years of the birth of the Messiah. So, what was the situation before this? Moreover, how did Allah's dominion increase after this alleged 'son' came? Nothing increased in His dominion, for the sun, the stars and air, for example, remained the same.

Hence, objectively speaking, this notion of Allah taking a son is outrageous and groundless foolishness, because nothing was added to His dominion on account of this alleged 'son'. Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* possesses no defective attribute which was perfected by the coming of the alleged 'son', since His attributes of perfection were extant before He created anything. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator before He creates; He is the Provider before He provides; He is the One Who Grants life before He gives life; and He is the One Who Causes death before He causes anything to die. Moreover, it was by means of these attributes that Allah *the Almighty* brought the creation into existence. Thus, His attributes of perfection were present in Him before the existence came into being.

We have propounded a parable for this in a poet who utters a poem of his own composition. We said that he composed the poem because he is a poet from the very beginning, and that he would not have composed it if he had not been a poet.

For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* refutes this falsehood with His saying, '... a grievous word it is that comes out of their mouths; they speak nothing but a lie.' (*al-Kahf*: 5)

Here, Allah *the Almighty* responds to them with His saying,

لَقَدْ جِئْتُمْ شَيْئًا إِذَا ﴿٨٩﴾

**How terrible is this thing you assert [89]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 89)**

The Arabic word *al-`idd* (terrible) signifies the extreme limit of abomination and odiousness; it is an offensively repugnant phenomenon. It is used as a verb as in the following expression ‘a terrible matter befell him’, which is to say that it was oppressively burdensome for him and he could not cope with it. An example of this meaning is clear in Allah’s saying in the verse of Al-Kursi: ‘...and the preservation of them both tires Him not...’ (*al-Baqara*: 255) This means that the preservation of the heavens and the earth does not weigh heavily upon Him.

Here, we may ask, ‘Why does Allah *the Almighty* deem this phenomenon so offensively repugnant and abominable?’ It is said that this is because taking a son is bound to certain aims. A son is sired to provide you with a kindred ally and strength, or for you to have a lineage extending after your death. But Allah is *the Almighty* Who is in no need of anyone, and He is the Ever-Abiding, the Everlasting, Who does not stand in need of prolongation in duration. Therefore, taking a son with respect to Allah *the Almighty* has no purpose. Moreover, His taking a son controverts the exclusive worshipful servitude due to Him. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

تَكَادُ السَّمَوَاتُ يَنْفَطِرْنَ مِنْهُ وَتَنْشَقُّ الْأَرْضُ وَتَخِرُّ الْجِبَالُ هَدًّا ﴿٩٠﴾

**It almost causes the heavens to be torn apart, the earth to
split asunder, the mountains to crumble to pieces [90]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 90)**

This verse shows that not only Allah *the Almighty* finds this issue objectionable but also the inanimate things with no prescribed obligations find it utterly abominable. Thus, the heavens with all their power and mightiness are nearly ripped asunder at the horror of what was said. The heavens come close to being torn apart, but why does this not actually happen? This is because Allah *the Almighty* upholds them, a fact which is clear in His saying, ‘Surely, Allah upholds the heavens and the earth lest they come to naught...’ (*Fatir*: 41).

In a Qudsi Hadith, we read: ‘The sky said, “O Lord, give me permission to fall to pieces upon the sons of Adam for they have eaten Your favours and have abstained from expressing gratitude to You.” The earth said, “O Lord, give me permission to swallow up the sons of Adam, for they have eaten Your favours and have abstained from expressing gratitude to You.” Moreover, the mountains said, “O Lord, give us permission to fall down upon the sons of Adam, for they have eaten Your favours and have abstained from expressing gratitude to You.” The seas also said, “O Lord, give us permission to drown the sons of Adam, for they have eaten Your favours and have abstained from expressing gratitude to You.” But Allah *the Almighty* replied to them, “Leave Me and My human creations, for if you had created them, you would have shown mercy to them. Hence, if they turn to me in repentance, then I am their beloved; and if they do not repent, then I am their Healer.”’

So, what is the cause behind the sky coming close to being rent into fragments, and for the earth to nearly split open, and for the mountains to come close to falling down? The answer is given in the following verse in which Allah says:

أَنْ دَعَا لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَلَدًا ﴿٩١﴾

**That they attribute offspring to the Lord of Mercy [91]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 91)**

This is the main cause why the entire universe verges on quaking and raging in anger; it is due to this abominable statement.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* continues, saying:

وَمَا يَنْبَغِي لِلرَّحْمَنِ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ وَلَدًا ﴿٩٢﴾

**It does not befit the Lord of Mercy [to have offspring] [92]
(The Quran, *Maryam*: 92)**

Here, we must distinguish between the refutation of a phenomenon and the refutation of its suitability; the latter is what is referred to in this verse under discussion. An example of this is found in Allah’s saying about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘And We have not taught him poetry,

nor is it meet for him...’ (*Ya Sin*: 69). In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* disavows that Prophet Muhammad recites poetry and rejects the suitability of his doing this. Now, a person might think that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was incapable of composing poetry, or that he did not have at his disposal the linguistic means or refinement of sentiment to make poetry. However, he was perfectly capable of versifying if he wanted; hence, he had the ability to do it, but it was not an activity that was appropriate for him.

The same holds true for Allah’s saying, ‘Not befit the Lord of Mercy [to have offspring]’ (*Maryam*: 92), for if Allah *the Almighty* had willed that He should have a son, it would have been so. This concurs with His saying, ‘Say, “If the Beneficent has a son, I am the foremost of those who serve.”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 81)

It is as if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was saying, ‘If Allah *the Almighty* had actually had a son, then I would have submitted to this most gladly. However, this phenomenon was not willed by Allah *Glorified is He* and it would not behove Him. So, how can I claim that Allah *the Almighty* has a son based on my own opinion?’

Allah *the Almighty* does not need a son. He says:

إِنَّ كُلُّ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا آتَى الرَّحْمَنِ عَبْدًا ﴿١٣﴾

There is no one in the heavens or earth who will not come to the Lord of Mercy as a servant [93] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 93)

This is because the Creator *Glorified is He* created the human beings and provided them with free choice, to believe or not to believe. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* forcefully imposed some things upon them in which their will has nothing at all to do with. Hence, the disbeliever who accustoms himself comfortably to disbelief and habituates himself to it, rebelling against obedience and faith, is not able to rebel against illness, death, or poverty, for example.

Therefore, you are free to choose in some aspects, but an obedient slave in others. While the sphere of choice is yours in this world, it will not be yours in the Hereafter. Previously, we drew a distinction between *al-`ibad* (servants) and *al-`abeed* (slaves). While both the believers and the disbelievers

are the slaves of Allah *the Almighty*, the servants are those who submit their freedom of choice and their own will to the Will of their Lord. Thus, all their actions arise in accord with what Allah *the Almighty* wants. These are the ones about whom Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And the servants of the Beneficent are they who walk on the earth in humbleness...’ (*al-Furqan*: 63).

As for Allah’s saying, ‘There is no one...who will not come to the Lord of Mercy as a servant’ (*Maryam*: 93), it means that when it is the Hereafter, the sphere of choice is eliminated and no one will be able to deviate from Allah’s Will, and thus Allah *the Almighty* will say, ‘To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all).’ (*Ghafir*: 16) Allah *the Almighty* is the fully Capable of bestowing and taking away, this is proven by His saying, ‘...You give the kingdom to whomsoever You please and take away the kingdom from whomsoever You please, and You exalt whom You please and abase whom You please...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 26).

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَقَدْ أَحْصَاهُمْ وَعَدَّهُمْ عَدًّا ٩٤

He has counted them all: He has numbered them exactly [94] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 94)

The Arabic word *al-`ihsa`* signifies counting. In times of old, they used to use pebbles or date stones to count things. But date stones are linked to the ownership of date palms and may not be abundantly available to everyone. For this reason, they would make use of pebbles (*hasa*), giving rise to the word for numerical reckoning *al-`ihasa`*.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَكُلُّهُمْ آتِيهِ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ فَرْدًا ٩٥

And they will each return to Him on the Day of Resurrection all alone [95] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 95)

This means that everyone will return to Allah *the Almighty* alone —without family or children or kindred allies—as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘The Day on

which a man shall flee from his brother, And his mother and his father, and his spouse and his son— Every man of them shall on that day have an affair which will occupy him.’ (*Abasa: 34-37*) This is because each one will be preoccupied with his own state, thus oblivious of those who are closest to him: ‘On the day when you shall see it, every woman suckling her infant shall quit in confusion what she suckled....’ (*al-Hajj: 2*)

If you reflect upon His saying, ‘will return to Him’ (*Maryam: 95*), you will find that it is the slave who returns to Him with his free will, without being forced to return. It is as if everyone’s return was regulated according to a determined time; and when this time arrives, everyone rushes willingly to Him *the Almighty*.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ سَيَجْعَلُ لَهُمُ الرَّحْمَنُ وُدًّا ﴿٩٦﴾

But the Lord of Mercy will give love to those who believe and do righteous deeds [96] (The Quran, *Maryam: 96*)

The Arabic word *wuddan* signifies affection and love rooted in faith and leading to strong attachment. Allah *the Almighty* has established causal factors in His universe for the love and warm friendship. For example, when you are aware of a person who loves you and shows affection for you, as soon as you see him coming towards you, you stand up to receive him with a friendly smile, and you make room for him at the seated gathering. Furthermore, you ask about him when he is absent, and visit him when he is sick. You share joyous occasions with him, you comfort him in times of grief and lend him support in times of hardship. These ties of affection arise from love and pre-existing friendship.

Ties of affection may arise because kinship or mutual interests or friendship. These are the causal factors for the ties of affection in this world between all mankind, those who believe and those who disbelieve. However, Allah *the Almighty* says here, ‘The Lord of Mercy will give love to those who believe and do righteous deeds.’ (*Maryam: 96*) The bond of love in this verse is achieved without any reference to any motive or cause from among these

causal factors. These ties of affection between those who believe exist, for example, when you see a person for the first time and you feel at ease with him as if you know him, and you say to him: 'I love you for Allah's sake'. This is the love which Allah *the Almighty* has established between believers, as a gracious favour from Him, not on account of the causal factors of affection as we commonly know it.

Therefore, Hirm Ibn Hayyan⁽¹⁾ *Allah rest his soul* said, 'Surely, when Allah *the Almighty* sees His believing servant devoting himself to Him and loving Him wholeheartedly and expelling doubt from his heart; Allah *the Almighty* will surely open the hearts of all of the believers to him when such person's heart—which is the most elevated source of beliefs and the well-spring of good deeds—is sound and presents it to Him.'⁽²⁾

This is similar to the Qudsi Hadith wherein Allah *the Almighty* says, 'No servant devotes himself to coming close to Me except that I instil the love of him in the hearts of all of the believers.'⁽³⁾ This means that the believers show love and mercy towards him for no worldly cause. In another Qudsi Hadith, we read: 'When Allah loves a slave, He calls out Jibril (Gabriel) and says, "I love so-and-so; so love him." Then Jibril (Gabriel) loves him. After that Jibril (Gabriel) announces to the inhabitants of heavens that Allah loves

(1) *Hirm ibn Hayyan A-`Abdi was a worker for `Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him. He died on a very hot day, and when they had dusted off their hands from burying him, a cloud came and rained on his grave, with herbs having spouted and grown there since that day.*

(2) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi said, 'Hirm ibn Hayyan used to say, 'No one devotes himself to drawing near to Allah the Almighty with his heart, except that He devotes Himself to drawing near to him by means of the hearts of the people of faith until he is sustained by their affection and their mercy.' See Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran 6/4333.*

(3) *This Hadith is related by Al-Haythami on the authority of Abu Ad-Darda` who said that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'Empty yourselves of worldly concerns as much as you are able; for, surely, the one for whom this world is his greatest concern, Allah will enlarge his means of subsistence and establish his poverty between His two eyes... and no servant devotes himself with his heart to Allah except that He causes the hearts of the believers to come to him with affection and mercy, and Allah hastens towards him with every benefit and favour.' This Hadith is also narrated by At-Tabarani. One of its narrators is Mohammed ibn Sa`id Al-Maslub who was a liar. See Al-Haythami, Majma` Az-Zawa'id, 10/247; At-Tabarani, Al-Mu`jam Al-Kabir and Al-Awsat.*

so- and-so; so love him; and the inhabitants of the heavens (the angels) also love him and then make people on Earth love him.’⁽¹⁾ Hence, it is a gift and a bounty from Allah *the Almighty* that the believer is loved by anyone who sees him, without any causal factors of affection. If you have donated to Him *the Almighty* what you hold sway over, this for sure benefits your heart—which is the storage space of beliefs and the well-spring of all pious deeds—then, Allah *the Almighty* will grant you what He holds sway over in terms of the hearts of all people, as Allah *the Almighty* controls their hearts and directs them however He wills.

In His saying, ‘And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet with a better (greeting) than it or return it...’ (*an-Nisa’*: 86), our Lord *Glorified is He* instructs us to respond to an act of courteous favour with something more excellent than it, and if we are not able to respond with something better, then at the very least the response should be equivalent. So, if this applies to the bestowal of the servant, then what are we to say of the bestowal of the Lord?

Also, relevant to this issue is what we find in the following Hadith: ‘If anyone makes it easy for the one who is indebted to him (while finding it difficult to repay), Allah will make it easy for him in this worldly life and in the Hereafter, and if anyone conceals the faults of a Muslim, Allah will conceal his faults in this world and in the Hereafter. Allah helps His slave as long as he helps his brother.’⁽²⁾

In the above Hadith, the Arabic word *al-`awn* (help) entails the presence of someone who helps and someone who is helped. It is necessary that the one who helps be stronger than the one who is helped, for he gives to other people from the superabundant attribute which he possesses, such as health, ability, wealth, or knowledge. Now, one’s help offered to his brother is limited by his own capacities and means; however, Allah’s help to His servant is unlimited because it corresponds to His Absolute Capable Power.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Muslim and Ahmad on the authority of Abu Hurayra peace be upon him. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2637; Ahmad, Musnad, 2/413.*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated by Muslim and Ahmad on the authority of Abu Hurayra peace be upon him. See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2699; Ahmad, Musnad, 2/252, 296.*

In this manner, Allah *the Almighty* grants us assurance that when we sacrifice a little, He gives us in abundance without limits, as a manifestation of His favour and generosity. Are you not aware that a good deed in His view is rewarded tenfold, and is even augmented up to 700 times its worth?! Is not this trade with Allah *the Almighty* a profitable one? In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘O you who believe! Shall I lead you to merchandise which may deliver you from a painful chastisement?’ (*as-Saff*: 10) Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says about this trade: ‘...a gain which will not perish.’ (*Fatir*: 29)


It is as if Allah *the Almighty* wants the believers to have reciprocal love in a manner that would bind their hearts together and bring about amicable relations between them. Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* will grant us the reward for this. Therefore, you should not think that the matter of faith is selfless altruism; rather, faith is tantamount to coveting self-interest. This is because when you give something in charity, you are actually aspiring to Allah’s augmented compensation.

Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to give others the surplus of what we have at our disposal, a fact which is expressed in the following Hadith: ‘Whoever possesses a superabundance of wealth, let him return it upon those who have no wealth...’⁽¹⁾ You should know that Allah *the Almighty* will compensate you with what is better than what you have given.

Let us offer a similitude for this fact; imagine that you have two sons, and you give each of them his pocket money. The first buys sweets with it, by which he eats and gives to his companions. The second wastes his pocket money on useless things, such as games and so on. So, to which of the two would you give after that? Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* treats us in this way.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

(1) *It was related that Abu Sa`id Al-Khudri said, ‘Once we were on a journey with Messenger of Allah when a rider came and began looking right and left. The Messenger of Allah said, “Whoever has an extra mount should offer it to him who is without it, and whoever has surplus food should give it to him who has nothing;” and he continued mentioning other properties until we thought that none of us had any right to surplus of his own property. See Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1663; Ahmad, Musnad, 3/34.*

فَإِنَّمَا يَسَّرْنَاهُ بِلِسَانِكَ لِتُبَشِّرَ بِهِ الْمُتَّقِينَ وَتُنذِرَ بِهِ قَوْمًا لَّدَا 

We have made it easy, in your own language [Prophet], so that you may bring glad news to the righteous and warnings to a stubborn people[97] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 97)

The initial Arabic particle *fa* here indicates the arrangement of one thing upon another, so you must carefully examine the following sentence to know about this arrangement. So, Allah *the Almighty* commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to give glad tidings to the righteous believers and to warn those who are stubborn because Allah *the Almighty* has made the Quran easy for Prophet Muhammad. Allah's saying, 'We have made it easy...' (*Maryam*: 97) means that Allah *the Almighty* has facilitated it for him *peace and blessings be upon him* in terms of memorisation, recitation and elucidation of its meanings such that he can employ it in the mission for the sake of which it was revealed.

The fact of facilitating the Quran for people to read is proved by many verses, such as Allah's saying in the chapter of *al-Qamar*: 'And certainly We have made the Quran easy for remembrance, but is there anyone who will mind?' (*al-Qamar*: 17) The one who investigates the phenomenon of facilitating the Quran will discover amazing wonders. For example, you find that a verse occurs in a particular chapter with a certain manner of expression, and then appears within the same thematic context in another chapter with a different expression. Hence, the Quranic manner of expression is not one of rigid clichés or even the product of some mechanical process, but it is surely the Speech of the Lord.

Let us offer an example to clarify this point; Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Nay! It is surely an admonition. So whoever pleases may mind it.' (*al-Muddaththir*: 54-55) If you compare this with the manner of expression found in the following saying of Allah: 'Surely this is a reminder, so whoever pleases takes to his Lord a way' (*al-Insan*: 29), you will easily notice the different styles. The same applies to the following sayings of Allah *the Almighty* 'Surely, this is a reminder (*tadhkira*) ...' (*al-Insan*: 29), and 'Nay! Surely it is an admonishment (*tadhkira*).' (*Abasa*: 11)

At this point, let us examine a subtle observation in the chapter of *Ar-Rahman* in which Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And for him who fears to stand before his Lord are two gardens.' (*ar-Rahman*: 46) Subsequently, there follows a discussion about these two gardens and what they contain until one reaches the mention of: 'In them shall be those who restrained their eyes....' (*ar-Rahman*: 56) Even the latter verse refers to the two gardens in the feminine sense; the verse before it refers to them in the masculine sense.

The same applies to His saying, 'And besides these two are two (other) gardens. (*ar-Rahman*: 62) which is followed by descriptions of what these two additional Gardens contain until one reaches mention of the beautiful maidens: 'In them are goodly things, beautiful ones.' (*ar-Rahman*: 56) In this latter verse, the relative pronoun refers to the feminine sense which is contrary to the verses before it.

Now, you are justified in asking yourself, 'The discussion here concerns the two gardens, so why does the manner of expression change from *fi-him*, which refers to the garden in the masculine sense, to *fi-hinna*, which refers to them in the feminine sense when it comes to this particular blessing specifically'? It is said that the bliss of paradise is shared in common, and thus all believers should share it. As for the blessing of the beautiful maidens of paradise, not all people will enjoy the same maidens, for each will have his own. Allah *the Almighty* is considerate of the feelings of jealousy in men, and, consequently, each one of us will have his special beautiful maidens that no one else shares in common with him.

It is for this reason that when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw paradise, he saw a palace therein and stayed away from it. When he was asked about the reason for staying away, he said, 'It belonged to `Umar, and I am well-aware of the jealousy of `Umar.'⁽¹⁾

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Ibn Majah on the authority of Abu Hurayra who related, 'When we were sitting with Allah's Messenger he said, "While I was sleeping, I saw myself in Paradise, and behold, a woman was performing ablution by the side of a palace. I asked, 'For whom is this palace?' They replied, 'For `Umar'. Then I remembered the jealousy of `Umar and returned immediately.' `Umar wept (on hearing that) and said, 'Let my father and mother be sacrificed for you, O Allah's Messenger! How dare I think of my jealousy being offended by you.' See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 3242; Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 107.

Now, had Allah *the Almighty* not revealed the Quran and made it easy, no one would have memorised it. The verses of the Quran used to descent upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and when the revelation receded from him, he would dictate them to the companions, continuing to recite them as they originally had come to him. So, if Allah *the Almighty* had not said to him: ‘We will make you recite so you shall not forget.’ (*al-A`la: 6*), this would not have been easy for him.

When it comes to our memorisation of the Book of Allah, we also encounter wondrous marvels. Hence, a seven-year-old child, for example, is able to memorise the Quran according to its rules of proper recitation. But if he neglects its memorisation until later in life, the Quran escapes away from his memory. In contrast to this, if he had memorised any other passage at this young age, it remains imprinted in his mind.

Hence, the question of memorising the Quran is not merely a matter of having retentive memory, but rather a matter of Allah’s succour granted to the memoriser. Thus, if you are in a state of endearment and harmony with the Book of Allah, it remains with you. On the other hand, if you leave it aside and shun it disrespectfully, it will slip away from you. This fact is expressed in the following Hadith: ‘Read the Quran regularly. By the One in Whose Hand Muhammad’s soul is, it escapes from memory faster than a camel does from its tying ropes.’⁽¹⁾

This is because the letters of the Quran are of different nature; they are like arrayed angels which make up a word and a verse. Thus, if you pay attention to the letter, the word and the verse, then the angels will pay attention to you and will be well pleased with your recitation.⁽²⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash`ari. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 5033; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 791.*

(2) It is related that Usayd ibn Hudayr said: ‘One night while he was reciting the chapter of *al-Baqara*, with his horse tied up close by to him, the horse suddenly began bolting around. So, he fell silent, and the horse calmed down. Then he began to recite again, and the horse started bolting around. So, again he fell silent and the horse again calmed down. Then I raised my head to the heavens and there was something like a shadow in which there were the likes of lanterns. Thereupon, I went away so that I would not see them. Prophet Muhammad asked, “Do you have any notion of what that was?” He replied: “No.” Prophet Muhammad then said, “Those were angels who had come close [to listen] to =

Among the wondrous aspects in the facilitation of the memorisation of the Quran is that if you engage your mind in recitation, you will stumble about and make mistakes; however, if you undertake the recitation instinctively just as you memorised it, the verses follow one another in uninterrupted succession.

As for His saying, ‘...in your own language [Prophet....’ (*Maryam*: 97), it means that Allah *the Almighty* has revealed the Quran in Arabic to an Arabic-speaking people in order that they understand His Message regarding the glad tiding of paradise and the warning of eternal punishment. If it had come to them in another language, they would have said, as the Quran relates about them, ‘And if We had made it a Quran in a foreign tongue, they would certainly have said, “Why have not its communications been made clear? What! A foreign (tongue) and an Arabian!”’ (*Fussilat*: 44)

There follows Allah’s saying, ‘...so that you may bring...warnings to a stubborn people.’ (*Maryam*: 97) The Arabic word *al-indhar* (warning) denotes cautioning against a calamitous evil that will occur in the future. In the same passage, the Arabic word *al-ladad* (stubbornness) means vehement antagonism and fierce enmity. We say: ‘So-and-so is full of recalcitrant contentiousness’ meaning he is excessive in his animosity and does not yield to proof or persuasion, and however much you try to convince him, he is adamant in his antagonistic opposition.

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the chapter of *Maryam* with His saying:

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْنٍ هَلْ يُحِصُّ مِنْهُمْ مِّنْ أَحَدٍ أَوْ تَسْمَعُ لَهُمْ رِكْزًا

**How many generations We have destroyed before them!
Do you perceive a single one of them now, or hear as much
as a whisper? [98] (The Quran, *Maryam*: 98)**

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* relieves Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of the distress and vexation he encounters in the path of calling others to Islam. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* was telling him, ‘Beware of being afflicted by the aversion of your people to you and their hatred

= your voice. Had you continued reciting until the morning, people would have been able to gaze at them, as they would not have concealed themselves from them.”

of Allah's way of guidance. Beware of shrinking before their stubborn oppressiveness to you, for these people are not mightier than the deniers of the truth who came before them and whom Allah *the Almighty* brought to perdition. Surely, I am sparing them only because they have a mission to fulfil with you'.

We have previously explained that the disbelievers who escaped being killed in certain battles — causing the Muslims to grieve over their survival—later included 'The Unsheathed Sword of Allah', Khalid ibn Al-Walid.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'How many generations We have destroyed before them! Do you perceive a single one of them now, or hear as much as a whisper?' (*Maryam: 98*) Here, the Arabic word *kam* (many) indicates great quantity. As for the Arabic word *qarn* (a generation), it signifies a people or a nation. This is followed by Allah's saying, 'Do you perceive a single one of them now, or hear as much as a whisper?' (*Maryam: 98*), which means that Allah *the Almighty* seized them and left no perceptible trace of them. The means of sensory perception, as we know, consist of the eye for seeing, the ear for hearing, the nose for smelling, the tongue for tasting, and the hand for feeling. Hence, whatever faculty of perception we employ, we cannot detect any trace of them.

Regarding His saying, '...or hear as much as a whisper?' (*Maryam: 98*), this contains the Arabic word *ar-rikz* (whisper), which is a low voice that can be barely heard.

Such, then, is the practice of Allah *the Almighty* with respect to the deniers of truth from among earlier peoples as Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Are they better or the people of Tubba⁽¹⁾ and those before them? We destroyed them, for surely they were guilty.' (*ad-Dukhan: 37*) Where are the people of 'Ad, Thamud and Iram, the possessors of lofty buildings, the likes of which has not been created in all the earth? Where is Pharaoh, lord of the hosts? Thus,

(1) The word Tubba is an honorific title of the kings of ancient Yemen, who were the people of Sheba. Each time a man became king over them, they called him Tubba. Similarly, the word Khosrau was applied to the king of Persia, Caesar for the king of Byzantium, Pharaoh for the king of Egypt and the Negus for the king of Abyssinia. See *Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran, Al-'Azhim, 4/143*.

every tyrant, no matter how advanced his civilisation was, was not able to make it endure because Allah *the Almighty* wanted to efface it. Were the disbelievers of Mecca more powerful than all of them? For this reason, when you hear this question: 'Do you perceive a single one of them now, or hear as much as a whisper?' (*Maryam: 98*) You can only reply, 'No, I do not perceive any one of them now, nor do I hear any whisper of them'.

the chapter of

Ta Ha

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

A the beginning of the chapter of *Ta Ha*⁽¹⁾, Allah *Glorified is He* says:



Ta Ha [1] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 1)

We have discussed the discrete letters at the beginning of Quranic chapters, but there is no hindrance here for us to point out the explanation of the word *Ta Ha*. Some scholars view this word as being conjoined, thus being written and read ‘*taha*’. According to this opinion, it is one of the names of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, there are others who regard them as independent letters, *Ta Ha*, such as *Alif Lam Mim* and *Ya Sin*, which are discrete letters at the opening of other chapters. Yet, it happens that these letters coincide with one of the names as occurs in *Nun*, which is a letter and also a name of the whale: ‘...the man

(1) *Ta Ha* is the 20th chapter in the arrangement of the Noble Quran. It contains 135 verses. Scholars unanimously agree that it was revealed in Mecca before `Umar's embracing of Islam. In the chronological order of revelation, it is the forty-fourth chapter having been revealed after chapter Maryam and prior to that of the chapter of al-Waqi`a. According to As-Suyuti, the only two verses which have not been revealed in Mecca are Allah's saying, 'O [Prophet] be patient with what they say—celebrate the praise of your Lord, before the rising and setting of the sun, celebrate His praise during the night, and at the beginning and end of the day, so that you may find contentment and do not gaze longingly at what We have given some of them to enjoy, the finery of this present life: We test them through this, but the provision of your Lord is better and more lasting.' (*Ta Ha*: 131-132), which were revealed in Medina. See As-Suyuti, *Al-`Itqan Fi `Ulum Al-Quran*, 1/42.

with the whale (*Nun*)....' (*al-Anbiya*: 87) Likewise, *Qaf* is a letter and at the same time the name of a mountain called Mount *Qaf*.

Hence, there is nothing to prevent these letters from signifying a proper noun called, *Taha* so that it could be one of Messenger Muhammad's names⁽¹⁾. This is especially likely since it is followed by: 'It was not to distress you [Prophet] that We sent down the Quran to you.' (*Ta Ha*: 2) However, you will note a difference here, since the letters *ta* and *ha* are pronounced without the final glottal stop, *al-hamza*. So, although they are discrete letters like *Alif Lam Mim*, the two letters are not fully articulated. This is because the Arabs found the glottal stops burdensome and awkward and therefore lightened the pronunciation of the letters without them. Similarly, instead of saying *dhi`b* (wolf), one says *dhib*, and in the place of *bi`r* (well), one says *bir*. It is this pronunciation which makes it more likely that the letters in question are one of Prophet Muhammad's names.

We have previously explained that the chapter openings comprising such discrete letters differ from other verses of the Quran. For all the verses of the Quran, from beginning to end, are founded upon continuation even if you have the right to pause. For this reason, all copies of the Quran are based upon connectivity with respect to verses as well as to chapters. Thus, you articulate the end of a chapter in linkage with the opening verse of the succeeding chapter: 'In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, and the Giver of Mercy'.

For example, the final question of the chapter of *Maryam*: 'Do you perceive a single one of them now, or hear as much as a whisper?' (*Maryam*: 98) is linked to the verse: 'In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy' at the beginning of the next chapter. Even with the final word of the last chapters of the Quran, you would recite the verse: 'From among the jinn and the men' (*an-Nas*: 6) and link it to 'In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy' of the next chapter. This is the case even in the

(1) In his *Tafsir*, *Al-Qurtubi* says, 'Ibn `Abbas said that the meaning of *Taha* is 'O you man'; this opinion is cited by *Al-Bayhaqi*. *Al-Mahdi* mentioned that *Al-Hasan* and *Ikrima* had the opinion that the Syriac language had this meaning. According to *At-Tabari*, it means 'O you man', and this is also the opinion of *As-Sudi* and *Sa`id ibn Jubayr*. See *Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4337.

final word of the Quran. The last word of the Quran, *an-nasi*, also occurs in a state of connectivity with the final vowel being indicated in the text. This is an indication that the beginning of the Quran is linked to its ending; no part of it is detached from any other part. So, beware of closing it after reaching the last verse, believing that you have finished it, as its ending is connected to its beginning. Thus, when you to read the last verse of the Quran: ‘From among the jinn and the men’ (*an-Nas*: 6), you can continue by reading: ‘In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy’ (*al-Fatiha*: 1) of the chapter of *al-Fatiha*.

Hence, the entire Quran, every sentence, verse and chapter of it, is based on linkage except for the openings of chapters with discrete letters which are founded upon pause or stopping, such as *Alif Lam Mim*. This is one aspect of inimitability, for the Quran is not a mechanical speech; rather, it is the inimitable Speech of the Lord of the worlds.

For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* precisely clarified the independence of these letters, saying, ‘Learn this Quran, for surely you are rewarded for reciting it; each letter recited is worth ten good deeds. I do not say that *Alif Lam Mim* is a letter, but *Alif* is a letter, *Lam* is a letter and *Mim* is a letter. Each letter recited is worth ten good deeds.’⁽¹⁾

Allah then Allah says:

مَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لِتَشْقَىٰ

‘It was not to distress you [Prophet] that We sent down the Quran to you’ [2] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 2)

The Arabic word *ash-shaqa`* (distress) means hardship, strain and toil. So, Allah *Glorified is He* excludes hardship from Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on account of the revelation of the Quran to him. Then, what is the contrary of this? The contrary is that Allah *the Almighty* bestowed the Quran on him to make him happy. He is happy first of all, that

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Ad-Darimi in the *Book of the Virtues of the Quran* on the authority of `Abdullah ibn Mas`ud Allah be pleased with him. See Ad-Darimi, *Sunnan*, 2/429.

Allah *the Almighty* selected him to be qualified for receiving the Quran, and that he applied the divine way of guidance and carried out all the good deeds. Then why does the expression: ‘...to distress you [Prophet]...’ (*Ta Ha: 1*) occur in this verse? This part of the verse refers to the claim of the disbelievers such as Abu Jahl, Mut`im ibn `Adi, An-Nadru ibn Al-Harith and Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira who went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said to him, ‘You have given yourself much trouble with this Message.’ Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Surely, Allah has sent me as a mercy to the worlds.’⁽¹⁾ He was indeed sent in order that he be happy, and that his people and all people would be happy, not in order to distress himself or other people. But from where did the disbelievers come up with this question of hardship and distress? If the believer examines Allah’s way of guidance which is revealed in the Quran, he will find that it intervenes in his desires and choices, and bars his lustful passions from exceeding their limits. It commands him to do what he dislikes and what is burdensome for himself, and forbids him from what he habitually enjoys and desires. Hence, Allah’s way of guidance apparently runs contrary to the desires of free choice, which vexes and distresses the soul. But you should take into account that you would only deduce this result if you set apart the means from the end and viewed this world and religious obligations as detached from the Hereafter and the recompense.

The believer connects the means with the end, and exerts himself strenuously in this world in the hope of the reward in the Hereafter. Thus, he is happy with Allah’s way of guidance and never felt distressed by it. He is like a pupil who endures the strain of study and learning because he is readying himself for the joy of success at the end of the year. On this basis, those disbelievers see distress and vexation in Allah’s way of guidance since they set the means apart from the end. For this reason, they felt hardship and distress, while the believers felt the bliss of worship and the enjoyment of undertaking the obligations. This is the issue which caused the disbelievers to worship some gods that do not put any demands upon them, nor laid down any prescribed

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad on the authority of Abu Umamas Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, 5/257.*

path or obligations upon them, gods which they could worship as they pleased, proceeding under their auspices on the basis of their unbound sentiments and moods. Therefore, the Quran makes it clear that they are heedless in this domain, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘It was not to distress you [Prophet] that We sent down the Quran to you.’ (*Ta Ha*: 2)

Another way of understanding the implications of ‘distress’ is that the revelation of the Quran exposed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to the mockery and the offenses of the chiefs and the leaders of Quraysh. In fact, they set their fools and young boys upon him in order to revile him and throw rocks at him.

Allah *the Almighty* also excludes unhappiness and distress in this sense: ‘It was not to distress you [Prophet] that We sent down the Quran to you.’ (*Ta Ha*: 2) This signifies that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should not trouble himself with them, for indeed Allah *the Almighty* revealed the Quran in order that he only would convey it to them.⁽¹⁾ This meaning is repeated frequently in the Quran. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Then maybe you will kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement.’ (*al-Kahf*: 6) And elsewhere He says, ‘If We please, We should send down upon them a sign from the heaven so that their necks should stoop to it.’ (*ash-Shu‘ara*: 4)

We have previously coined a similitude for this with a man who has two slaves, one of whom has been fastened with a rope, while the other has been left unfettered. So, when he summons them and they respond to his command, which one of them will be more subservient to him and more respectful of his command? Without a doubt, it will be the one who is free and unfettered because he comes of his own choice, while he would have been capable of disobedience. Similarly, your Lord *Glorified is He* desires that you come to

(1) A relevant Hadith is related by At-Tirmidhi on the authority of Ibn `Abbas in the context of a lengthy Hadith in which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Indeed, Allah sent me but as a conveyor of His Message, and did not send me as a harassing enforcer.’ At-Tirmidhi grades this Hadith as good, authentic one. See At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan, Hadith no. 3318*.

Him freely believing in Him out of your own volition, while you have the ability to disbelief.

There are some who take pleasure in criticising Islam and accusing Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'The Messenger of Allah commits mistakes and Allah corrects him'. Taken by surprise, we say, 'In what way does this harm you? After all, it is his Lord Who corrected him. Are you the ones who corrected the Messenger of Allah?! Furthermore, who informed you of his mistakes? Is he *peace and blessings be upon him* not the one who informed you? Is this not an indication of his trustworthiness in conveying the Message, and something for which he should be praised'?

Hence, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has no disdain for being educated by his Lord. It is for this reason that he said, 'Indeed, I am but a human being and divine inspiration comes to me—that is from Allah—so I say, 'I am not like anyone of you. Then shortcomings are found in me, so I say, 'I am naught but a human being like you.'

Those critics of Islam contentiously cited the story of 'Abdullah ibn Umm Maktum, when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was too pre-occupied with the grandees of Quraysh trying to make them pay attention to him. The one who contemplates this story finds that ibn Umm Maktum was a believer who came to ask Messenger Muhammad about something, that is, he could ask him *peace and blessings be upon him* at any other time. On the other hand, the grandees of Quraysh were the leaders of disbelief and the notables of the people. Moreover, they were possessed of vehement recalcitrance in their animosity to Islam. Yet, he *peace and blessings be upon him* was ardently desirous of guiding them and exhausted himself in arguing with them in the hope that Allah *the Almighty* would guide through them those beneath them in social status. Thus, in this situation, he *peace and blessings be upon him* chose for himself that which was more difficult, and his Lord admonished him for this. But it was admonishment in his interest, for him and not against him.⁽¹⁾

(1) Concerning this incident Allah *the Almighty* says, 'He frowned and turned (his) back because there came to him the blind man. And what would make you know that he would purify himself, Or become reminded so that the reminder should profit him? As=

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِلَّا نَذْكِرَةً لِّمَن يَخْشَى ﴿٣﴾

**‘But as a reminder for those who hold God in awe’ [3]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 3)**

This verse shows that Allah *the Almighty* did not reveal the Quran to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to distress him, but rather, He revealed it as ‘an exhortation’, that is, as a reminder for those who hold Allah *Glorified is He* in awe. As for the Arabic word *al-khashya*, it denotes fear and awe, for fear may not be accompanied with awe, whereas fear of Allah *the Almighty* must gather together both fear and awe at the same time.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

تَنْزِيلًا مِّمَّنْ خَلَقَ الْأَرْضَ وَالسَّمَوَاتِ الْعُلَىٰ ﴿٤﴾

**A revelation from the One who created the earth and
the high heaven [4] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 4)**

Here, the opening Arabic word *tanzil* is a verbal noun derived from the verb *nazzala* which means that Allah *the Almighty* caused the Quran to descend in revelation. Several forms of the root *n-z-l* are used to refer to the revelation of the Quran, including: *anzalna* (to reveal), *nazzalna* (we sent it down) and *nazala* (to descend). For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Surely We revealed it on the grand night. And what will make you comprehend what the grand night? The grand night is better than a thousand months. The angels and Jibril (Gabriel) descend in it...’ (*al-Qadr*: 1-4). This is because the Quran was revealed in multiple phases. Initially, it had been kept on the Preserved Tablet. When Allah *the Almighty* willed that the Quran carry out its mission in existence, He revealed it all at once to the lower heaven of this world. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* caused it to descend. It then came down from the lower

= *for him who considers himself free from need (of you). To him do you address yourself. And no blame is on you if he would not purify himself. And as to him who comes to you striving hard. And he fears, from him will you divert yourself. Nay! Surely, it is an admonishment. So, let him who pleases mind it.’ (‘Abasa: 1-2)*

heaven in portions upon the heart of Messenger Muhammad according to the circumstances and events. The one who came down with it was Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* a fact which is clear in Allah's saying, 'The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 193).

Then, the verse in question continues with Allah's saying, '...from the One who created the earth and the high heavens.' (*Ta Ha*: 4) Here, Allah *the Almighty* singles out the heavens and the earth because they are among the mightiest of His creation. He has prepared the two of them to serve man. Therefore, the moment he viewed this universe arranged to serve him with its earth and its heaven—without having any power to control anything of it—he should have used his intelligence to lead him to believe in the One Who brought this universe into existence. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying to you, 'If the Creator has prepared the universe for you with all that is needed to sustain your physical life, would He then leave your spiritual life without His gift?'

The Creator *Glorified is He* created this universe on the basis of a regulated, self-sustaining, equitable, and wise plan. It provides His vicegerent on the earth with the means to survive in his life, and gives him all that he requires in precise measure. The continuity of life calls for food, drink and air, and Allah *the Almighty* has certainly bestowed these upon man with great wisdom. Man needs food, but he can survive without it for a month. He also requires water, but he cannot survive without it for more than ten days. In addition, he needs air, but he cannot do without it for a period longer than several breaths.

It is a manifestation of Allah's Wisdom that Allah *the Almighty* created your body to take in the elements for the sustenance of life for a period of time sufficient for coming up with a stratagem or attracting the sympathy of someone else. When you eat, the body takes what it needs according to the exerted energy, and whatever is in excess of this it stored in your body in the form of fat which nourishes the body when food is not available. Among the marvels of Allah's Omnipotence is that this fatty matter automatically transforms itself into any other substance needed by the body. Thus, if you need iron, it transforms itself chemically into iron; and if you need arsenic, it transforms itself chemically into arsenic. Yet in reality, it is a single substance. So, who would have the ability to undertake this process aside from Him? After

having provided you with what sustains your life in terms of food, drink and air, Allah *the Almighty* provides you with that which sustains your species through marriage and procreation.

As for His saying, ‘...the high heavens’ (*Ta Ha*: 4), the Arabic word *al-`ula* (high) is the plural of *`ulya*. This is similar to *kubar*, the plural of *kubr*, meaning ‘mighty, grave, great’ as found in Allah’s saying, ‘Surely it (Hell) is one of the gravest (misfortunes).’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 35)

In this manner are the sublime constituent elements of the constitution of Allah’s vicegerent on the earth perfected. For just as Allah *the Almighty* has given him that which sustains his life and his species in the creation of the heavens and the earth, Allah *the Almighty* has, also provided him with what sustains his immaterial, spiritual aspects with the revelation of the Quran which guards our actions from the wickedness of carnal desires. This is because the One Who revealed the Quran is The One Who created the earth and the high heavens.

The outstanding quality in this sublime constitution of man is the quality of mercifulness. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* then says:

الرَّحْمَنُ عَلَى الْعَرْشِ اسْتَوَى

**‘The Lord of Mercy, established on the throne’ [5]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 5)**

The previous verse provided us with a manifestation of compassion and mercy and this verse provides us with a manifestation overpowering compulsion and vanquishing force. Here, the establishment of the All Merciful on the throne is to be understood in the context of: ‘...there is nothing like Him....’ (*ash-Shura*: 11)

We have previously discussed the attributes shared in common between Allah *Glorified is He* and His human creatures, for you have hearing and sight, and Allah *the Almighty* has Hearing and Sight. But beware of thinking that Allah’s Hearing or Sight is like your hearing or your sight. Similarly, in the matter of being established on the Throne, since Allah *Glorified is He* has a

manner of settling Himself on His Throne, but it is not like your own settling yourself on a chair for example.⁽¹⁾

The Arabic word *al-`arsh* (throne) in the customary usage of Arabs is the elevated seat of a king. Now, does a king sit upon his dais to deal with the matters of his kingdom and direct its affairs except after he is well established in his command?

Likewise, the Creator *Glorified is He* created the universe with its earth and heaven, and created mankind, and caused the Quran to descend to set their lives in order. So, after His command was well established, He did not leave the universe to function mechanistically, for Allah *the Almighty* did not withdraw from His universe and His human creatures because they were in need of His preserving watchfulness over His creation.

Did Allah *Glorified is He* not say in a Qudsi Hadith: ‘O My slaves, sleep to your eyelids content, for I am the ever Watchful, and I do not sleep’?

Thus, Allah’s universe is not an automatic machine, rather it is maintained by virtue of Allah’s Watchfulness over it. That is why the miracles which violated the natural laws are considered a proof of His Watchfulness.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا وَمَا تَحْتَ الثَّرَىٰ ﴿٦﴾

Everything in the heavens and on earth, everything between them, everything beneath the soil, belongs to Him [6]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha: 6*)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* shows that He holds sovereignty over what is in the heavens and the earth and that which is under the soil. Allah the

(1) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi says, ‘That which Sheikh Abu Al-Hasan and others believed was that Allah is established on His Throne without bounds nor specific form, as is the establishment of created being.’ Ibn `Abbas said, ‘He purposely directs the creation in what has been and what will be until the Day of Resurrection and after the Resurrection.’ In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir says, ‘The soundest way of understanding this is the way of the righteous predecessors: to adhere to what is found concerning this in the Quran and the Sunnan of Prophet Muhammad without descriptive designation, distortion of meaning, anthropomorphism, negation or comparison.’ See Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4341’ Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`Azhim, 3/142*

Almighty only shows His Ownership of valuable things which are of benefit. It is as if He is drawing the attention of His human creatures to what the universe comprises of elements of sustenance for their physical life so that they might seek them out, and to extract what He has stored for them of secrets and treasures in the heavens and the earth. The one who examines the civilisations of peoples will find that they result either from excavations into the earth or from the secrets of outer space in the space age.

If Muslims had understood this verse since it has been revealed, they would have been aware that in the earth and beneath the soil, there are treasures and resources which they did not know about until the modern age, following explorations and excavations. In fact, we have found petroleum and minerals and precious stones, all of them beneath the surface of the soil, just waiting for someone to search for them and derive benefit from them.

Scientists have explained that these resources are distributed in Allah's Earth in equal measures. So, one part of the earth might have water while another might have crops; a third might yet have minerals, whilst a fourth might have petroleum and so forth. It is like a watermelon when you divide it up into equal pieces from the outer surface to the centre. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And there is not a thing but with Us are the treasures of it, and We do not send it down but in a known measure.' (*al-Hijr*: 21) Hence, the blessings are already found, yet just waiting for Allah's divine decree to manifest themselves to us and allow us to utilise them to our advantage.

Allah then says:

وَإِنْ تَجَهَّرَ بِالْقَوْلِ فَإِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ وَأَخْفَى ﴿٧﴾

**Whatever you may say aloud, He knows what you
keep secret and what is even more hidden [7]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 7)**

Hence, Allah the Almighty tells Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him that Allah Glorified is He watches over his innermost secret just as He watches over what he says aloud; and what is stated aloud is the same for Him as that which is kept secret. Indeed, Allah the Almighty knows what is even more hidden than a secret.

Allah *the Almighty* tells him so even Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is entrusted with the Message. Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* says to his *ummah*, ‘Beware of uttering speech which apparently comprises mercy, while it is not actually insincere because just as Allah *the Almighty* knows what is spoken aloud, He also knows the secret and that which is even more concealed than a secret’.

Previously, we have discussed the Arabic word *al-jahr* (aloud) saying that it denotes making yourself audible to the person who wishes to listen. As for the Arabic word *as-sirr* (secret), it means to confide to someone what you would not like to be circulated among other people. So, you tell him that this speech is confidential while you are psychologically at ease that you share your secret with someone you trust not to reveal the secret. Our life is mostly full of matters which distress the heart, and it is necessary that you allow your heart to have a sense of relief. At this point, we can quote the following poet:

Of necessity is a complaint to one of manly virtue

He will console you or cheer you or feel compassion.

Thus, you need someone who listens to you in order to give you relief, and cheer you up, but he should not expose that which you have told him in confidence.


As for Allah’s saying, ‘what is even more hidden’ (*Ta Ha: 7*), it signifies that which is more concealed than a secret. Hence, even if your secret has come out of your mouth into the ear of your listener, there is what is more hidden than this secret, that is, what you have kept to yourself and did not share with anyone.

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And conceal your word or manifest it; surely He is Cognisant of what is in the hearts.’ (*al-Mulk: 13*) This verse shows that, Allah *the Almighty* knows their most hidden contents before they become speech.

In addition, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and We know what his mind suggests to him...’ (*Qaf: 16*) The innermost whispering of the soul and what is buried deep in hearts are what is more hidden than a secret. Hence, there are the public statement, the secret statement, and that which is more concealed than a

secret. But some knowledgeable people say, ‘There is in Allah’s Knowledge, that which is even more hidden than the more hidden’. So, what is it? They say, ‘Surely, He knows what will be in the soul before it exists’.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* clearly states the statement which all the messengers were sent to communicate:


 اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ ۚ لَهُ الْأَسْمَاءُ الْحُسْنَىٰ

**God—— there is no god but Him — the most excellent
names belong to Him [8] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 8)**

The statement ‘There is no god but Allah’ is the apex of the doctrine of faith about which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The best of what I and the prophets before me have said is: None has the right to be worshipped but Allah.’⁽¹⁾

So, as long as there is no god except Allah *the Almighty* He is entrusted with you, for there is no other god to challenge Him. Therefore, perform good deeds for His sake and Allah *the Almighty* will suffice you in all respects, and you will thereby relieve your soul from the contending and divergent powers, and He will make you independent of every need.

In the same vein, once an Arab Bedouin entered upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while he was speaking with Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and the Arab Bedouin could not comprehend anything of what the two of them were saying. So, he said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, I do not understand your sound and the sound of Abu Bakr. The only thing I know is that there is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ Whereupon, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘It is that about which we are murmuring O brother of the Arabs.’⁽²⁾ It is the foundation and the pivotal axis around which Islam revolves.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by At-Tirmidhi on the authority of `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn Al-`As Allah be pleased with him. See At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3585.*

(2) *It is narrated that some companions of the Prophet said, ‘The Prophet said to a person, “What do you say in prayer?” He replied, “I first recite tashahhud (supplication recited in sitting position in prayer), and then I say, ‘O Allah, I ask You for paradise, and I=*

The Arabic word 'Allah' is the name of the necessarily Existent Creator with all the Attributes of perfection He possesses. So, Allah *the Almighty* is Allah, the Existent, the Omnipotent, the Omniscient, the Ever-Living, the One Who Grants Life, and the Inflictor of Harm. All these attributes belong to Him. But inasmuch as these attributes attain the degree of perfection in Him, they become names for Him such that if the name 'Creator' or the 'All-Provider' is uttered, it applies only to Him.

Mankind may share some of these attributes with the Creator, as indicated in His saying, 'And when there are present at the division the relatives and the orphans and the needy, give them (*yarzuq*)....' (*an-Nisa'*: 8) For a human being also provides sustenance (*yarzuq*); however, his provision is derived of Allah's Provision, for Allah *the Almighty* is the sublime All-Provider, and from the ocean of His bounties everyone takes a handful.

Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...so blessed be Allah, the best of the creators.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14); and He also says, '...and you create to a lie!...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 17) This means that there are creators other than Him. Now, the meaning of creation is bringing forth something out of nothing. Thus, the one who brings sand and manufactures a drinking glass is the creator of the glass. So, you brought something into being from non-existence, and Allah *the Almighty* brought something into being from non-existence. However, you created something out of something else whose existence preceded yours. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* is the best of creators. Yet, your Lord does not begrudge being just to you and calling you a creator. This makes it obligatory upon you that you be just to Him by saying that He is: '...the best of creators.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14)

Moreover, if Allah *the Almighty* respects your creating and thus calls you a creator on this basis, and does not begrudge granting you one of His attributes, yet He has informed you that He is the best of creators. This is because you create a non-existent thing which remains in a fixed state; however, the Creator *Glorified is He* creates a non-existent thing and grants it life, and causes

= seek refuge in You from Hell-Fire', but I do not understand your sound and the sound of Mu`adh (what you say or he says in prayer)." The Prophet said, "We too go around it (Paradise and Hell-fire)." See Ahmad, Musnad, 3/474; Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3847; and Abu Dawud, Sunnan, Hadith no. 792.

it to conjoin with its like and produce offspring. So, is the person who creates a drinking glass able to make of it male and female so as to produce drinking glasses?! Or can a small drinking glass become large, or feel pain if it is broken, for example?! Thus, Allah *the Almighty* is the best of creators, and likewise He is the best of providers, inheritors and schemers.

As for Allah's saying, 'the most excellent names belong to Him' (*Ta Ha*: 8), the Arabic word *al-husna* (excellent) is the feminine superlative—like *al-kubra* (the greatest, the largest)—as opposed to *ahsan* which is used for the masculine superlative. Hence, there are good names (*hasana*) which are names pertaining to creation, but as for Allah's names they are the excellent (*al-husna*) because they have attained the highest level of perfection. This is also because the names and the qualities to which they refer exist in the Exalted Creator. So, when in reference to Allah's names you say, 'The Provider', then it is the best quality of providing, not a good quality.

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'For those who do good is good (*husna*) reward (*al-husna*) and more (than this) ...' (*Yunus*: 26); He does not say *hasana* because they did exceptional good and thus they deserve *al-husna* and what is more than that.

In reality, Allah's names are attributes, but when they are used to refer to Him, they become names. You have the right to name a black youth '*Qamar*' (radiant like the moon), and a dwarf '*At-Tawil*' (the tall one) since when a name is applied in the sense of a proper name to something else, its link to its original meaning is dissolved, and only its function as a proper name remains in force. However, Allah's names maintain their original, excellent meaning even after they become His names. Hence, they are the excellent names.

After Allah *the Almighty* speaks about Prophet Muhammad who is the final messenger and the bearer of the divine way of guidance—for there is no prophet after him, and after his way of guidance there is no other way—Allah *the Almighty* wishes to comfort him with consolation and to illustrate his station in the procession of the messages. In doing so, Allah *the Almighty* wanted to provide him with a model example of the messengers before him, and to portray how every messenger endured hardship commensurate with his Message. While previous messages were limited in time and place, those charged with conveying them

wore themselves out in their cause. So just imagine a messenger who comes with a message for all time and all places. It is inevitable that he will encounter difficulties equivalent to all other messengers combined. Hence, it is as if Allah *the Almighty* was saying to him, 'Prepare yourself mentally, O Muhammad, that you will encounter strain and difficulty corresponding to the greatness of your Message; you are the final Prophet; and the expanse of your Message in time, which extends to the Final Hour, and in space to all the earth'.

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* selected for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the story of a prophet who possessed a steadfast determination, for he came as a messenger to the Children of Israel and to Pharaoh. As for the Children of Israel, they were a materialistic people, and as for Pharaoh, he had claimed divinity. Allah *the Almighty* chose to narrate the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to Messenger Muhammad and to thereby console him in all that he faced of hardship in conveying the Message. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And all we relate to you of the accounts of the apostles is to strengthen your heart therewith; and in this has come to you the truth and an admonition, and a reminder to the believers.' (*Hud*: 120) Allah *the Almighty* also says, 'Say, "I am not the first of the apostles..."' (*al-Ahqaf*: 9)

So, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is like other messengers who certainly encountered trouble and hardship commensurate with the scope of their messages. He will also find trouble and hardship in proportion to the scope of his Message. This is analogous to the case of the student who is satisfied with completing middle school, while another is not satisfied but with getting his secondary or university certificate; a third person might yet strive for a doctorate. There is no doubt that each of them expends effort corresponding to his mission.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَهَلْ أَتَاكَ حَدِيثُ مُوسَى

**Has the story of Moses come to you
[Prophet]? [9] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 9)**

When a question comes from Allah *the Almighty* you can be sure that it is not a real question. It is not intended to be an inquiry here because Prophet

Muhammad's *peace and blessings be upon him* information comes to him from his Lord *Glorified is He* so how could Allah *the Almighty* ask him about anything? The intention of the interrogative here is to make one eager for what follows. It is like when you say to your companion, 'Have you heard what happened yesterday'? In this way, you rouse his longing to hear what happened.

The Arabic word *al-hadith* (story) in the verse in question means an informative narration about Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* whether it comes to Prophet Muhammad through Divine inspiration or in another way, that is, someone may have related it to him. So, has this story reached you? Listen to it now from me:

إِذْ رَأَىٰ نَارًا فَقَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّي
 آئِنِكُمْ مِنْهَا بِقَبَسٍ أَوْ أَجْدٌ عَلَىٰ النَّارِ هُدًى ﴿١٠﴾

**He saw a fire and said to his people, 'Stay here —
 I can see a fire. Maybe I can bring you a flaming
 brand from it or find some guidance there' [10]
 (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 10)**

Let us note here that the context does not mention the story of Musa (Moses) from its beginning which starts by the event mentioned in Allah's saying, 'And We inspired to Musa's (Moses's) mothers, saying, suckle him...' (*al-Qasas*: 7). Then follows his departure from the city in fear and his journeying to Shu'aib (Jethro), etc. Rather, Allah *the Almighty* goes directly to the core of the matter, namely; the prophetic mission.

Concerning His saying, '...I can see a fire. Maybe I can bring you a flaming brand from it or find some guidance there.' (*Ta Ha*: 10), the Arabic word *anast* (I can see) means that he saw and sensed something which invites intimate acquaintance, something to be glad about and to find appeasement in. Its opposite, the *tawjast*, means to have premonition, apprehensions about something bad or evil which one should be afraid of, as found in His saying, 'Musa (Moses) was inwardly alarmed.' (*Ta Ha*: 67)

As for the Arabic expression *la'alli* (maybe I can), it signifies that hopefully he will find in the fire a *qabas* (flaming brand), which is taken from

the fire. You then take from it a piece of burning wood like a candle. In another context, Allah *the Almighty* utilised the word *jadhwa* which refers to the fire when its flames had gone out but there remain its embers from which you can ignite a fire. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...Surely, I see fire; I will bring to you from it some news, or I will bring to you there from a burning firebrand....’ (*an-Naml: 7*)

These are all multiple forms and states of fire, but there is no contradiction in them as some take pleasure in saying. This is because when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said, ‘Maybe I can’ (*Ta Ha: 10*), he was hoping to find a burning brand, but he did not know what state the fire would be when he reached it; would it be a burning brand (*qabas*) or an ember (*jadhwa*)? Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had sought a burning brand for his family because they found themselves in a rainy and very cold night. In addition, they were foreigners, not knowing anything about the place, for they had not travelled previously through this way and thus they were travelling without knowing which direction to take. So, what should Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* do being accompanied by his wife, young son and his servant? They were in dire need of fire for warmth in this bitterly cold climate, or to seek direction in the route. For this reason, he said, ‘...or find some guidance there’ (*Ta Ha: 10*), that is to say, a guide who can indicate the way to us, in another verse, he said, ‘...Wait, I have seen a fire, maybe I will bring to you from it some news....’ (*al-Qasas: 29*) Therefore, when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* caught sight of fire, he hastened to it after reassuring his family: ‘Stay here—I can see a fire.’ (*Ta Ha: 10*)

This issue of the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was subjected to doubt on the part of the adversaries of Islam since they found different contexts in a single story. This is because at one time he said, ‘Stay here—I can see a fire. Maybe I can bring you...’ (*Ta Ha: 10*); and in another verse, he said, ‘...maybe I will bring to you from it some news....’ (*al-Qasas: 29*) Moreover, on one occasion he said ‘a brand’ (*qabas*), and on another ‘a burning brand’ (*shihab qabas*), and elsewhere ‘an ember’ (*jadhwa*). In addition, in one place, he said, ‘...or find some guidance there’ (*Ta Ha: 10*); and in another he says, ‘...maybe I will bring to you from it some news....’ (*al-Qasas: 29*)

The one who carefully examines the situation which Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* his young son and his servant found themselves in at that isolated place, with the weather being gloomy and overcast, will find that the differences of the story details is normal. This is because each of them received the report from Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in a particular way. So, when he saw the fire and informed them about it, he wished to reassure them, hence he said, ‘...I will bring to you from it....’ (*an-Naml: 7*) Then, when he saw them clinging to him and saying, ‘Do not leave us in this place’, he said, ‘Stay here....’ (*Ta Ha: 10*) Perhaps he said one of these statements to his wife and son, and said the other to his servant. They must have necessarily questioned him, and thus the statements differed concerning a single situation. This also is true regarding his saying ‘brand’ (*qabas*) or ‘ember’ (*jadhwa*), for when he said, ‘...maybe I will bring to you from it’ (*al-Qasas: 29*), he hoped to find a brand there because he may go and find the fire in a state of glowing embers. On another occasion, he firmly said, ‘...I will bring to you from it....’ (*an-Naml: 7*) Hence, they are differing scenes constituting the fabric of the complete story. The expressions are multiple because the situation in that event is susceptible to revision, and it does not terminate with a single expression.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَمَّا أَنهَا تُودَىٰ يَمُوسَىٰ ﴿١١﴾

**When he came to the fire, he was summoned,
“Moses!” [11] (The Quran, *Ta Ha: 11*)**

It is said that when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had reached the fire, he found light glittering in a tree, yet neither did the greenery of the tree affect the glittering light, nor did the light cover the tree hindering its greenery. Hence, it was a marvellous phenomenon, which none would be capable of producing except Allah *the Almighty*. This fire was the first welcoming, appeasing thing that manifested itself for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in this wild, desolate place. As if this amazing sight which he saw was a divine preparation for him so that he might receive the message from His Lord. So, the issue is not merely one of normal sight.

While he was in this state of amazement, ‘...he was summoned, “Musa (Moses)!”’ (*Ta Ha*: 10) Allah’s saying, ‘...he was summoned...’ (*Ta Ha*: 10), indicates that the One Who called out to him knew exactly who he was and for this reason he was called by his name: ‘Musa (Moses)!’ (*Ta Ha*: 10) Inasmuch as this was the case, the expectation of good was present in him and he began to feel assured with regard to the source of calling, and to desire intimate association with it. So, he searched for the origin of the voice, not knowing from whence it came. He therefore considered it a wondrous phenomenon like the sight of the tree from which light shone forth.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنِّي أَنَا رَبُّكَ فَاحْلَعْ نَعْلَيْكَ إِنَّكَ بِالْوَادِ الْمُقَدَّسِ طُوًى

I am your Lord. Take off your shoes: you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa [12] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 12)

As soon as his Lord said to him ‘I am your Lord.’ (*Ta Ha*: 12), whatever was in Musa’s (Moses’s) heart of wonderment and astonishment for what he saw and heard was removed. After all, he knew that it all this is from Allah *the Almighty* and he was therefore relieved and gladdened in the hope of seeing other marvels. In Allah’s saying, ‘I am your Lord’ (*Ta Ha*: 12), we should consider that when Allah *the Almighty* speaks about Himself, He uses the first person singular: ‘I am your Lord.’ (*Ta Ha*: 12) But when Allah *the Almighty* speaks of His actions, He employs the plural form, as in His saying, ‘Surely We revealed it on the grand night’ (*al-Qadr*: 1), in His saying, ‘Surely We have revealed the Reminder...’ (*al-Hijr*: 9), and also in His saying, ‘Surely We inherit the earth and all those who are on it...’ (*Maryam*: 40)

Here, we may pose a question which is, ‘Why does Allah speak about His actions in the plural form, while He calls us to affirm His Oneness and not to ascribe partners to Him?’ It is said that when Allah *the Almighty* speaks about Himself, He must necessarily reflect His Divine Oneness, a fact which is clear in His saying, ‘I am Allah; there is no god but Me, so worship Me and keep up the prayer so that you remember Me.’ (*Ta Ha*: 14)

As for His action, Allah *the Almighty* speaks in the plural form since His actions need a multiple of His attributes and diverse capacities. It requires His Divine Will, Power, Knowledge, and Wisdom. Hence, Allah's attributes support one another in undertaking an action. For this reason, expressions about this occur in the plural form. The Arabic letter *nun* referring to the first person plural subject, is used to manifest Allah's Greatness in His saying, 'We have revealed the Reminder...' (*al-Hijr*: 9) and in His saying, 'We inherit the earth....' (*Maryam*: 40)

The address to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* came in the expression of Lordship: 'I am your Lord' (*Ta Ha*: 12) in order to show intimacy with him. This is because the attribute 'Lordship' denotes the One Who assumes responsibility for your protection and your education. Allah *the Almighty* created and provided you out of nothing. Here, Allah *the Almighty* does not say 'Surely, I am Allah' because Divinity gives rise to the requirements of prescribed duties, worship and regulating the actions by do this and don't do this.

Regarding His saying, 'I am your Lord' (*Ta Ha*: 12), it means that Allah *the Almighty* conferred a special Grace on him, because the messengers are different from the rest of mankind, for they get a special education. This fact is clear in Allah's saying, '...that you should be reared under My watchful eye' (*Ta Ha*: 39) and similarly He says, 'I have chosen you for Myself.' (*Ta Ha*: 41) Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* brings up and instructs the messengers with an upbringing that conforms to the mission they will undertake.

As for His saying, '...Take off your shoes...' (*Ta Ha*: 12), this is the first command for Musa (Moses). The removal of shoes is meant to be a mark of humility and a demonstration of awe. In addition, the place is sacred and this is also a reason for such reverent behaviour: '...you are in the sacred valley of Tuwa.' (*Ta Ha*: 12) It is as if Allah *the Almighty* was commanding him, saying, 'So, remove your shoes so that your body is not separated from the soil of this sacrosanct, pure place, and do not allow your shoes to come between you and having direct skin-contact with the grains of this soil'. This makes one think of some people's opinion of walking with bare feet in Medina. Someone who followed this practice said, 'Perchance my foot step might coincide with a spot where Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stepped'.

About the Arabic name *Tuwa*, it refers to the valley where Allah's encounter with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* took place⁽¹⁾. This is a general description of the location, the identification of which occurs in another verse in which Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And when he came to it, a voice was uttered from the right side of the valley in the blessed spot of the tree....' (*al-Qasas*: 30)

There are some who think that there is a repetition in the verse above, but this is not the case. Rather, it is the foundation of new speech, clarifying and localising where the sacred valley of *Tuwa* is. Thus, if you asked, 'Where is *Tuwa*? You would be told, 'On the right-side of the valley'. But you may then say, 'The right-hand side of the valley itself is lengthy, so where is this place precisely'? You would be told, 'At the blessed spot of the tree'.

Hence, the latter verse specifies the place for you with greater precision. It is as when you say, 'I live in such-and-such a quarter, on such-and-such a street, at such-and-such a number'.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

وَأَنَا اخْتَرْتُكَ فَاسْتَمِعْ لِمَا يُوحَىٰ ﴿١٣﴾

I have chosen you, so listen to what is being revealed [13] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 13)

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* was saying to Musa (Moses), 'Though I have been your Lord and Lord of the disbelievers, I shall augment you with a privilege for you only'. This privilege is that: 'I have chosen you...' (*Ta Ha*: 13),

(1) In his *Tafsir*, *Al-Qurtubi* says that these opinions concur with the statements of *Ibn 'Abbas*, *Mujahid* and others. On the other hand, *Ad-Dahhak* said, 'It is a deep circular valley similar to a long rolled up thing (*At-Tuwa*)'; while *Al-Hasan* said, 'The valley was doubly blessed and sanctified on two occasions. *Al-Mahdawi* related from *Ibn 'Abbas* that it was called *Tuwa* because *Musa (Moses)* traversed it at night, as he went along it and ascended to the highest part of the valley. So it is as if He said: 'Behold you are in the hallowed valley', which you crossed and enwrapping it, that is to say, you passed by it and hence enfolded it with your walking. In his *Tafsir*, *Ibn Kathir* says, 'The first interpretation is the soundest as it concurs with Allah's saying, 'When his Lord called upon him in the holy valley, twice.' (*an-Nazi*'at: 16) See *Al-Qurtubi*, *Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4347; *Ibn Kathir*, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim*, 3/144.

that is, for bearing the Message, and Allah *the Almighty* is most Cognisant of to whom he entrusts His Message.

Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* revealed the Quran to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the disbelievers of Mecca did not find objection in the Quran. They did not find in it any flaw regarding what it calls for in terms of virtuous traits of character and ideals. Furthermore, they did not find any shortcomings in its literary style, given the fact that they were well versed in excellent style with ears that passionately loved eloquence of speech. Thus, they directed their criticism of Messenger Muhammad, saying: ‘Why was not this Quran revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?’⁽¹⁾ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) Hence, their entire opposition was against the fact that the Quran was revealed to ‘Muhammad’ specifically. For this reason, the Quran rebukes them and exposes their foolishness in this matter, saying, ‘Will they distribute the mercy of your Lord?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) How could this be possible while Allah *the Almighty* has distributed between them their means of temporal livelihood? This fact is provided in His saying, ‘We distribute among them their livelihood in the life of this world....’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) Despite that, they wish to distribute Allah’s Mercy, saying, ‘This should have been bestowed upon this one, and that should have been bestowed upon that one.’

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘...so listen to what is being revealed....’ (*Ta Ha*: 13) The Arabic root comprising *s-m-`a* gives rise to the following derivations: *sami`a* (to hear), *`istama`a* (to listen) and *tasamma`a* (to give ear intently). When we say *sami`a*, it means to hear something coincidentally, such as when you are walking along the road, you hear a lot of speech, some of which concerns you and some of which does not concern you. This is due to the fact that the ears do not have coverings which prevent hearing, like the lids of eyes, for example; when you see a sight which

(1) *In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir says that the two cities here refer to Mecca and Ta`if, but the scholars have disagreed as to the identification of the man intended from each city unto whom the Quran should have been revealed. Several scholars like Qatada who says that they meant by this was Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira and `Urwa ibn Mas`ud Ath-Thaqafi. Mujahid, on the other hand, said that they specifically meant `Utba ibn Rabi`a. Ibn Kathir adds, ‘It seems evident that they meant a man of great standing of wither of the two cities.’ See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-`Azhim, 4/128.*

is disagreeable to you, you can close your eyes. Thus, you hear everything that reaches your ear, and you have no choice in the matter.

However, the Arabic word *`istama`a* implies that you consciously take it upon yourself to hear, and the speaker is free either to speak or not to speak. As for the Arabic word *tasamma`a*, it is to make the utmost effort to hear.

Therefore, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was informed that the tribulation of song would become common and that the devices for broadcasting this affliction would become wide-spread, pouring into every ear in spite of itself, he said, 'Whoever listens intently to the songstress slave-girl, molten copper will be poured into his two ears.' This Hadith refers to the one who takes it upon himself to hear, and intentionally turns the radio or television to this singing. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say *sami`a* (to hear) because everyone would be the recipient of this evil in spite of himself.

Here, in the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...so listen (*`istami`*) to' (*Ta Ha*: 13); He does not say, *tasamma`* since one cannot demand Allah *the Almighty* to speak. Commanding Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to listen means that he should summon all his faculties, and prepare all his senses in order to hear; for if the ear is for hearing, there are nevertheless other senses which you can employ in giving attention, as the eye sees, the nose smells and the tongue speaks. Thus, he is obliged to summon all his senses to hear, and to ready his heart to heed that which he hears, and to carry out that which is demanded of him. It is for this reason that when you are speaking to your companion and you find him distracted apart from you, you say, 'It is as if you were not with me'. What is the reason for this? It is because one of his faculties has wandered and distracted him from listening.⁽¹⁾

Regarding His saying, 'what is being revealed...?' (*Ta Ha*: 13), the Arabic word *al-wahy* (inspiration) generally means information about the unseen from

(1) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi relates, 'Sufyan ibn `Uyayna said, "The beginning of knowledge is listening, then understanding, then memorisation, then acting upon what you have learned, then propagation through teaching or writing. This is because when the slave listens to the Book of Allah and to the Sunnan of His Prophet with a sincere intention according to that which Allah wants, He will cause him to understand what He wants, and He will place light in his heart."' See Al-Qurtubi, Jame` Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4348.*

any source to any person regarding anything, whether good or bad. But as for revelation from legal perspective, it is a communication from Allah *the Almighty* to a messenger who has been sent with a way of guidance for the benefit of His slaves. Thus, if the Revelation of Allah *the Almighty* to the mother of Musa (Moses), or to the disciples of `Isa (Jesus) does not constitute revelation in the strict theological and juridical sense in such a manner, revelation has been defined in terms of from whom it comes, to whom it is conveyed and about what it is.

It is good to ask here, ‘How does revelation descend from Allah *the Almighty* to the Messenger?’ How does divinity in its sublime lofty meet with mankind in its nether depth? Hence, there is an imperative need for an intermediary. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Allah chooses messengers from among the angels and from among the men...’ (*al-Hajj: 75*)

Thence, the chosen one of the angels receives from Allah *the Almighty* and gives to the chosen one of mankind, for the highest cannot meet with the lowest directly: ‘It is not granted to any mortal that Allah should speak to him except through revelation or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger to reveal by His command what He wills: He is Exalted and Wise.’ (*ash-Shura: 51*) Thus, the disposition of man and his nature do not qualify him for this encounter with Allah *the Almighty*. How could this be possible since when Allah *Glorified is He* revealed Himself to the mountain, he demolished it? It is a manifestation of His Exaltedness that we do not see Him or speak with Him directly, nor do we sense Him with any of our senses. Moreover, if Allah *the Almighty* could be sensed with any faculty of perception, He would not merit being the true God.

Now, how could Allah *the Almighty* be perceived, while there are things in His creation which cannot be perceived such as the spirit, for example? After all, we have no awareness of its true nature, nor where it is, and we cannot sense it with any of our faculties of perception. So, if the spirit is created yet we are incapable of perceiving it, then how could we possibly perceive its Creator?

In the same vein, can you perceive the ‘truth’ which people ascribe to themselves and claim to uphold, with each of them priding himself that he speaks the word of truth—and, likewise justice and other immaterial

qualities? Are you aware of their form? So, how can you aspire to perceive the Creator *Glorified is He*?

Hence, an aspect of Allah's Majesty is that faculties of perception do not discern Him, and Allah *the Almighty* does not meet with men in a direct encounter. Thus, the chosen one of the angels receives from Him and conveys to the chosen one of mankind. Then the chosen one of mankind conveys this revelation to mankind. Notwithstanding, concerning the matter of receiving the revelation, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to strain himself to the limit, and his forehead would pour forth sweat at the commencement of revelation to him. This is the reason why Allah *Glorified is He* willed to withhold revelation from Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for some period so that he might take rest from the encounter with the angel sent to him. So, when the periodic interruption of divine inspiration took place, this preserved for him the sweetness of what had been revealed to him and caused him to yearn for divine inspiration anew. Hence, all that he encountered of hardship and duress while receiving the revelation seemed insignificant to him, due to the pre-occupation of his heart with something that caused him to forget his difficulties.

It has been narrated that when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was in a state of receiving the revelation, he would hear around him reverberations like the buzzing of bees. Moreover, if it happened that he placed his foot on one of his companions when revelation was descending upon him, and the companion felt as if it was a mountain. If revelation came upon him while he was mounted upon a riding beast, it would kneel down and groan from his weight.

We have drawn a comparison for the intermediary between the divine nature and human nature with an electric current. When we connect it to a small lamp, it cannot support the power of the current, so we install a device which regulates the current for it, and provides the lamp with the power corresponding to its requirements, otherwise it will burn out.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says,

إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدْنِي وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ لِذِكْرِي ﴿١٤﴾

**I am God; there is no god but Me. So worship Me and
keep up the prayer so that you remember Me [14]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 14)**

In the verse before previous one, Allah *the Almighty* says to Musa (Moses), ‘I am your Lord’ (*Ta Ha*: 12), in order to reassure him and to put him at ease that He is the Compassionate Provider, providing even for the disbeliever who disobeys Him. But here, He addresses him with His saying, ‘I am Allah...’ (*Ta Ha*: 14), which means that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who lays down obligations and the One to be worshipped and obeyed in His commands or prohibitions. Now, the first of these obligations, and their summit and the wellspring from which all pious behaviour issues is: ‘I am Allah; there is no god but Me.’ (*Ta Ha*: 14) For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said concerning this: ‘The best which I and the prophets before me have said is: There is no god but Allah.’⁽¹⁾

Hence, as long as there is no god save Him, it is not acceptable to take commands or prohibitions except from Him. We should put our trust in Him and our hearts should not be pre-occupied with anyone else, since He wants us to put our trust in Him, a fact which is clear in Allah’s saying, ‘And rely on the Ever-living Who dies not....’ (*al-Furqan*: 58)

The sincere and sagacious one does not place his trust in anyone but Allah *the Almighty*. So, perhaps you place your trust and reliance on someone besides Him, and then a day comes and you do not find him. How true are the words of the poet who said?

Place all of your might and glory in your Lord

Thus, it will be durable and well established

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by on the authority of `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn Al-`As Allah be pleased with him. In its complete form, it reads: ‘The best of supplication is the supplication of the day of `Arafah, and the best of what I and the Prophets before me have said is, “None has the right to be worshipped but Allah, Alone, without partner, to Him belongs all that exists, and to Him belongs the Praise, and He is powerful over all things.”’ See At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3585.*

But if you derive your strength and honour from one who dies

Then, surely, your might and glory are dead.

Hence, when Allah *Glorified is He* states, '...there is no god but Me' (*Ta Ha*: 14), He reassures Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to have no fear, for he will receive no orders from other than Him. In a similar sense, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Say, "If there were with Him gods as they say, then certainly they would have been able to seek a way to the Lord of power."' (*al-Isra*': 42) This verse shows that if there were any gods with Him, those who lay claim to divinity would go to Him, disputing with Him, or trying to gain favour with Him. However, this will not happen because there are no other gods besides Him.

It is a prerequisite for the true God that He derives no benefit from issuing commands and laying down regulations and laws, and that His Commands and Interdictions be for the welfare of those commanded. On this basis arises a differentiation between the law of Allah, and the law of men. The latter is infused with desires and mixed with interests and selfish motivations. Thus, for example, if the one laying down regulations and making laws is of the working class, he will be partial to them and raise them above capitalists, but if he was of the latter, he would place the capitalists above the workers.

Likewise, another prerequisite for laying down regulations is that there be nothing he is unaware of which might necessitate correction at some later time. Now, these prerequisite conditions exist only in divine legislation, for Allah *the Almighty* possesses the attributes of perfection before He created the creation.

Hence, Allah *the Almighty* says after this: 'So worship Me...' (*Ta Ha*: 14). This is to be done by obedience to His commands and avoidance of His prohibitions, for He has no affective inclination in that which He commands you to do, rather, it is in your interest and for your good.

Some people believe that worship refers only to prayer, prescribed alms, fasting, and pilgrimage. However, it has a much broader meaning than this, for every action in life amounts to worship according to the following maxim: everything which the fulfilment of an obligation necessitates is obligatory.

Thus, for example, prayer is not fulfilled except by the covering of what is indecent to expose (*al-`awra*). You should think about this piece of cloth by

which you cover your private parts: how many hands have contributed to it from the time it was a seed in the earth until it became fine cloth veiling your nakedness. Each one of these was engaged in worship while they were executing their task is this matter.

Similarly, with the loaf of bread which you eat and the water taps from which you perform your ritual ablution: how many hands, workers, factories, scientists and resources were mustered to serve you in order that you might be able to perform your actions in life?

Hence, when Allah *the Almighty* speaks to us about the Friday congregational prayer, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘O you who believe! when the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know. But when the prayer has ended, then disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah’s Grace, and remember Allah much, that you may be successful.’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 9-10) In this manner, He takes us from work to prayer, and after prayer He commands us to work and endeavour, to disperse in the earth and seek His Bounty. Thus, disobeying His command to: ‘...hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you, if you know’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 9) is similar to disobeying His command to: ‘...disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah’s Grace, and remember Allah much, that you may be successful.’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 10) Here, Allah *the Almighty* specifies worldly commerce because the merchant is more covetous about his selling than the buyer is about his purchasing, and it might be that it was in the best interest of the buyer not to make the purchase.

Hence, Islam does not tolerate laziness, nor does it sanction lethargy or sitting around idly. He, who desires laziness, let him not derive benefit from the activity of those who are active. In this regard, there is an incident in which `Umar *Allah be pleased with him* saw a man staying in the mosque and not leaving it. Thereupon he asked, ‘Who provides for his sustenance?’ They said, ‘His brother’ to which he responded, ‘His brother is superior in worship than he is.’ This is because his brother participates in the activity of life and expands the benefit to people.

Thus, all useful work is an act of worship on the condition that it is accompanied by the correct intention. The believer or the disbeliever each

works with the intention of providing oneself for a living; but what is the difference between the two of them? The believer works, it is true, to sustain himself, but also to facilitate for other people their own subsistence and the activities of their lives. Thus, if a taxi driver, for example, works to earn an amount that suffices him and then repairs to his home and parks his car, then who will be there for the sick person who needs someone to take him to the doctor? Likewise, if a merchant earns his provision and then shuts his shop, who will sell to the people?

Therefore, you should work for your sake, but also keep in mind the interests of others and their needs. If you do this, then you are in a state of worship. Hence, you should work to the extent of your energy and strength, not to the extent of your needs. Then take what you need from the product of your energy, and what remains is to be returned to the people, either in the form of voluntary alms giving, or at a price. After all, it is enough for you that you facilitated other people's affairs. Hence, we say, 'Worship denotes every activity which performs a service provided that you do you for Allah's sake'.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and keep up the prayer so that you remember Me.' (*Ta Ha*: 14) Now, why did He single out prayer from among all other acts of worship? This is because prayer is abiding worship which cannot be separated from the believer as long as there is breath in him. On the other hand, obligatory alms-giving, *zakat*, for example, is waived for one who is impoverished, and fasting is waived for the sick and pilgrimage is not obligatory for those who are unable to undertake it. However, as for prayer, there is never any excuse that justifies abandoning it. You can pray standing or sitting or even lying down, and if you cannot pray in this manner, then pray with movements of the head or the eyelids. If you are even incapable of this, then it is sufficient that you envisage it in your heart as long as you are conscious, for the obligation of prayer is not waived for you under any circumstances. In addition, prayer is repetitive worship: five times during a twenty-four-hour period. This is to keep you continuously mindful of the Lord of life if the pre-occupations of life cause you to forget Him. You present yourself for review to your Lord and your Creator five times every day. Just imagine a mechanical device that was presented for review to its

maker in such a manner, would it be possible that some defect or malfunction occur in it?

As for obligatory alms giving, this occurs annually, or at every harvest. Fasting is for one month of the year and pilgrimage is required once in a lifetime. For this reason, when some matter distressed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he used to get up and pray⁽¹⁾ in order to present himself for review to his Lord and His Creator, We do this in physical manufacturing when we present a machine for review to its maker and engineer who knows the rules of its maintenance. In a Hadith, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘My comfort has been provided in prayer.’⁽²⁾

We have previously mentioned that prayer has its importance because it reminds you about your Lord five times every day. It also reminds you about yourself and about Allah’s Power over others when you see the president and those presided over side by side in the lines of prayer. If you should happen to arrive before your president, you would seat yourself in the first row, and he would seat himself behind you. Then you would see him humbled before Allah *the Almighty* and he would know that you see him in this state. This is then a stimulus for his humility towards you and not presuming superiority over you in the future.

How many a man of high rank and leadership have we seen weeping at the Great Sanctuary in Mecca clinging to the curtains of the *Ka`ba*, and at *Al-Multazam* while he is the great one who people hold in awe. Hence in prayer, there is unrestricted access to worshipful servitude to Allah *the Almighty*.

(1) *A Hadith to this effect was narrated by Imam Ahmad in and by Abu Dawud on the authority of Hudhayfa Allah be pleased with him, ‘When anything distressed the Prophet he prayed.’ See Ahmad, Musnad, 5/388; Abu Dawud, Sunnan, 1319.*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated by Imam Ahmad, An-Nasa’i and by Al-Hakim on the authority of Anas ibn Malik. In his book, Al-Hakim says, ‘This Hadith is authentic according to the conditions stipulated by Muslim, but neither Al-Bukhari nor Muslim narrated it.’ Adh-Dhahabi agreed with Al-Hakim on that issue. The complete form of this Hadith is as follows: ‘Women and perfume have been made dear to me, but my comfort has been provided in prayer.’ See Ahmad, Musnad, 3/127, 199, 285; An-Nasa’i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 7/61; Al-Hakim, Mustadrak, 2/160.*

For this reason, among the most dangerous things to affect Muslims is the provision of special places in the mosque for specific kinds of people for whom space is set aside, and they are accompanied by bodyguards even in Allah's house of worship. Then they come at the last minute and sit in the first row. Moreover, among other people is one who spreads out his prayer carpet to reserve a place so that when he arrives, he finds the place empty.

All the Muslims must reject this behaviour. You must push his prayer carpet to the side, and sit there yourself because priority of seating corresponds to priority of being present; and Allah *the Almighty* has indeed arranged this in the mosque in terms of arrival in it. This bad customary practice brings upon its doer many forbidden things, since he makes his way over the necks of people, and unrightfully distinguishes himself from them, and causes a lessening of the spirit of pious servitude in Allah's house of worship.

Due to the importance of prayer and its status among acts of worship, it is distinguished in the manner of its prescription in accordance with its importance. This is because all acts of worship were made obligatory by means of divine inspiration except prayer. Allah *Glorified is He* summoned His truthful Messenger unto Him to convey it to him directly in the light of its importance.

We have propounded a simile for this in the president who, if he wishes to communicate some matter to one of his subordinates, he writes to him. But if the matter is important, he contacts him by phone. However, if it is even more important, he summons him to convey it to him in person. Now, just as Allah *the Almighty* brought Prophet Muhammad close to Him to prescribe prayer, He made prayer a means of proximity for His slaves to Him. Concerning His saying, '...and keep up the prayer so that you remember Me' (*Ta Ha*: 14), the Arabic verb *aqama* means to make something established on firm foundations. Hence, the establishment of prayer is to observe it meticulously and completely in terms of its basic pillars without any shortcoming.

As for Allah's saying, '...so that you remember Me' (*Ta Ha*: 14), it means that prayer reminds us about Allah *the Almighty* for the passage of time and the monotony of blessing may make you forget the Bestower of blessings. So, when you hear the call 'Allah is the Greatest' (*Allahu Akbar*) and you see people

hastening to Allah's house of worship, not being distracted by anything, you will remember if you have forgotten, and your heart will pay heed if you have been negligent.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ أَكَادُ أُخْفِيهَا لِتُجْزَىٰ كُلُّ نَفْسٍ بِمَا تَسْعَىٰ ﴿١٥﴾

**The Hour is coming — though I choose to keep it hidden —
for each soul to be rewarded for its labour [15]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 15)**

Thus, along with what has preceded, you should take heed of to the fact that the Hour is inevitably coming. Here, the Hour is the life span of the entire universe. As for the life spans of those living in it, they are variable; each according to his predetermined time of death. Thus, whoever dies, his last hour has arisen, and the issue is settled regarding him. Hence, we say that there are two kinds of 'hours': the last Hour of each one of us, and this is his life span and his predestined fate which he is not aware of when it will be; and, then there is the Last Hour of the entire universe, and this is the 'Great Hour'. Thus, 'The Hour is coming...' (*Ta Ha*: 15) signifies that you should keep this in mind at all times. Inasmuch as death will transport you to it quickly, beware of saying, 'I will die soon, but I will only be resurrected after thousands or millions of years' because time is suspended after death. How is this?

Time is not regulated by anything aside from events, thus if events cease to occur, then time also ceases. This is like what happens in sleep; are you able to determine the time that you have slept? Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'On the day that they see it, it will be as though they had not tarried but the latter part of a day or the early part of it.' (*an-Nazi'at*: 46)

Similarly, relevant in this context is the slave⁽¹⁾ whom Allah *the Almighty* caused to die for a hundred years, and when He revived him, he said

(1) *This is a reference to Uzayr about whom Allah the Almighty says, 'Or the like of him ('Uzayr) who passed by a town, and it had fallen down upon its roofs; he said, "When will Allah give it life after its death?" So Allah caused him to die for a hundred years, then raised him to life. He said, "How long have you tarried?" He said, "I have tarried a day, or a part of a day..."'* (*al-Baqara*: 259).

concerning the length of his sleep, 'I have slept a day or part of a day.' The People of the Cave said the same after three hundred and nine years of sleep⁽¹⁾ because a day or part of a day is the maximum period of time that a sleeping person can imagine that he slept. It is for this reason that we say, 'Whoever dies, his final hour of resurrection has arisen'.⁽²⁾

It is a part of Allah's Wisdom to conceal the Last Hour. He has hidden it from everyone. Perhaps if a person knew when his last hour was, he would say, 'I will do what I please, then repent before death'. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* has concealed it so that we might be on our guard to avoid encountering Allah *the Almighty* in a state of rebellious disobedience.

Likewise, He has hidden the Great Hour so that you do appropriate other people's properties, making use of it unjustly and in hostile transgression. This is because you know that if you steal, you will return to Allah *the Almighty* and He will hold you accountable and that is why you should be upright and correct your behaviour.

Regarding Allah's saying, 'The Hour is coming...' (*Ta Ha*: 15), it indicates that it will not be brought, rather, it is coming. Though it is Allah *the Almighty* Who will bring it about, it is as if it was scheduled to occur automatically, so when its time comes, it takes place.

As for His saying, '...though I choose to keep it hidden...' (*Ta Ha*: 15), it contains the Arabic verb *kada* which is not translated explicitly here, signifying to 'come near'. An example of its usage is when you say, 'Zayd is about (*kada*) to come'; in other words, he has approached, but has not yet come. Hence, the intended meaning in the verse is that Allah *the Almighty* has come close to conceal it, so no one is aware of its appointed time. But when it

-
- (1) *In this is regard, Allah the Almighty says, 'And thus did We rouse them that they might question each other. A speaker among them said, "How long have you tarried?" They said, "We have tarried for a day or a part of a day..."'* (*al-Kahf*: 19).
- (2) *A Hadith to this effect was realated by Al-'Ajluni on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him with its complete version as follows: 'Be frequent in the remembrance of death. For, surely, if you remember it in a time of abundance, it will disturb your [false] peace of mind; and if you remember it in a time of penury and constriction, it will make it [seem] bountiful. Death is tantamount to the arising of one's Final Hour.'* See *Al-'Ajluni, Kashf Al-Khafa'*, Hadith no. 2618.

occurs, they we will surely recognise it. As Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Say, “The knowledge of it is only with my Lord; none but He shall manifest it at its time....”’ (*al-A‘raf*: 187)

But there may be another interpretation as His saying, ‘...to keep it hidden (*ukhfih*)....’ (*Ta Ha*: 15) There are some tri-literal verbs which signify the opposite meanings when the middle letter is doubled. An example of this is in the Arabic verb *marada* meaning to be stricken with illness as opposed to: the doctor treated (*marrada*) him, i.e. he cured him and removed the malady. Similarly, we say, ‘I encased (*qashartu*) something, i.e. I provided it with an outer peel or shell; but then we say, ‘I peeled (*qashshartu*) the orange’ meaning I removed its outer layer.

An example of this is found in Allah’s saying, ‘By Allah! you will not cease to remember Yusuf (Joseph) until you are a prey to constant disease (*harrad*)....’ (*Yusuf*: 85) *Al-harrad* refers to mortal exhaustion, and the verb *harida* means to become fatigued by great strain and hardship. This is to be compared with His saying, ‘O Prophet! Urge (*harrid*) the believers to war...’ (*al-Anfal*: 65), in which the initial imperative Arabic verb is (*harrid*). The meaning of *harrid* in the verse is to urge and incite them to fight. It is this which removes mortal exhaustion from them in the face of the disbelievers because if they do not wage war, they will perish. Thus, *harida* means to perish, and *harrada* is the elimination of imperilling fatigue and certain death.

The opposite meaning of a verb may also come by pre-fixing it with the glottal stop *hamza*. A sample of the resulting opposite meanings is found in the following two verses. In the first: ‘And as to the deviators (*al-qasitun*), they are fuel of hell’ (*al-Jinn*: 15), we find the plural form of the active participle *al-qasit* is derived from the verb *qasata*, and thus means the one who is unjust and deviant through disbelief.

But in the second example, in His saying, ‘...surely Allah loves those who judge equitably (*al-muqsitin*)’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 42), we find the plural form of active participle *al-muqsit* which is derived from the verb *aqsata* and signifies the one who is equitable and does away with injustice. So, while basic tri-literal verb is one and the same, *qasata*, yet the verbal nouns associated with

it differ. When we say *qasata qistan*, it means to be just; whereas, *qasata*, *qastan* or *qusutan* means to be unfair. This glottal stop *hamza* in the verb *aqsata* is called the glottal stop of removal or elimination.

Among the expressions deriving from the tri-literal verb *qasata* is: justice and impartiality. Now, the difference between *qasata* and *aqsata* is that *qasata*, in its positive sense, means to be equitable from the very beginning, whereas *aqsata* means that, if someone encounters inequity and wrongdoing, he abolishes it, and removes it. Thus, it adds to justice the elimination of injustice.

Likewise, the verb *'ajama* as in the expression he made the matter unintelligible *'ajama* which means he obscured it; whereas *a'jama*, with a prefixed *hamza* means to rid something of its obscurity or unintelligibility. We have the word *al-mu'jam* (dictionary) which removes the obscurity of words and explains them.

Similarly, in Allah's saying, '...though I choose to keep it hidden...' (*Ta Ha: 15*), the Arabic word *khafiya* means to veil or conceal, whereas *akhfa* as used in the verse means to remove its obscurity or concealed nature. The hidden aspect of a thing will endure except by its enunciation.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'for each soul to be rewarded for its labour.' (*Ta Ha: 15*) In fact, if there were no reckoning and recompense in the Hereafter, then those who wronged their own souls and cause mischief in this world would be more fortunate than the believers who adhered to Allah's Way of Guidance. Hence, in our discussions with communists, we told them, 'You have killed whomever you have caught of your enemies, the capitalists, but what about those who die before you catch them? How would you punish those who managed to elude you? It would have been more suitable for you to believe in a place from which they could not escape, and where they would receive their requital. Indeed, this place is the Hereafter in which every soul is rewarded for its labour.'

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَا يُصِدَّنَكَ عَنْهَا مَنْ لَا يُؤْمِنُ بِهَا وَاتَّبَعَ هَوَاهُ فَتَرْدَى ﴿١٦﴾

**Do not let anyone who does not believe in it and follows his own desires distract you from it, and so bring you to ruin[16]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 16)**

In this verse, it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* was granting Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* immunity from what the disbelievers – who cast doubts about the Hereafter and fear that it is true – will say to him. They wish that the Hereafter would be a lie, since it is not in their interest; in other words, it is to their advantage to deny it. So, you should beware of listening to these disbelievers when they seek to divert you from the Hereafter by saying: ‘What! When we are dead and have become dust and bones, shall we then certainly be raised, or our fathers of yore?’ (*as-Saffat*: 16-17)

We should ask here, ‘Why do they believe that the Hereafter is so far-fetched? Is not Allah *the Almighty* not He Who created them out of nothing, capable of refashioning them after they have turned to bones?’ In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: ‘And He it is Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and it is most easy to Him.’ (*ar-Rum*: 27)

In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* uses the adjective ‘easier’/‘most easy’ in the comparative form in order to show us how it is easy for Him to bring the creation back to life. This analogy is in accordance with our understanding, as we know for sure that there is something easy and something easier. However, regarding Allah *the Almighty* there is neither easy nor easier in this sense because His Command is fulfilled even before saying the imperative command ‘Be’.

Here arises a question, which is, ‘Why do the disbelievers reject the Hereafter and refuse to believe in it?’ In fact, they know that if there is a life to come, they will be requited for what they have done. Since this issue is difficult for them, they thought that it is in their interest to believe that the Hereafter is a falsehood.

How truthful was Abu Al-‘Ala’ Al-Ma’arri when he said:

The astrologer and the shaman both claim

Bodies are not resurrected, [so] I told them

If your words are correct, then I am no loser

Or [if] my words are correct, then the loss is upon the two of you

In other words, if a believer in the Resurrection did not gain by this belief, then he would not lose. However, as for those who deny it, they are truly the losers.

As for Allah's saying: '... and so bring you to ruin' (*Ta Ha*: 16), it means that if you followed those who do not believe in the Hereafter, you would be inflicted with eternal damnation.

In this manner, Allah's Discourse comes to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*; firstly, He *the Most High* mentions the foremost of the Pillars of Faith, that is, to believe in Him Alone without any partners ascribed to Him. Then He *the Almighty* mentions the last of these Pillars which is to believe in the Resurrection. Hence, the matter comes from Him in the beginning and returns to Him in the end, as He *the Almighty* says: 'I am Allah; there is no god but Me' (*Ta Ha*: 14), until He says: 'The Hour is coming—though I choose to keep it hidden....' (*Ta Ha*: 15)

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* depicts for us the beginning of His Revelation to Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*:

وَمَا تِلْكَ بِيَمِينِكَ يَا مُوسَى

Moses, what is that in your right hand? [17]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 17)

In this verse, the word 'what' is an interrogative particle, and the demonstrative pronoun 'that' refers to something grammatically feminine, namely that which Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is grasping in his hand. It is as if Allah *the Exalted* asks him, 'What is this thing with you?' In fact, the response to this question could be delivered by a single word: a staff. As for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* he surely knows that Allah, Who is asking this question, is fully aware of what is in his hand, but this is a kind of reassuring talk since the situation is difficult for him, and his Lord wants to make him feel at ease and to establish familiarity with him. Now, if the friendliness comes from Allah *the Almighty*, then the slave should make full use of the opportunity and

prolong the period of sociability with Him, not cutting short the domain of conversation by responding with a single word. Therefore, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* replies:

قَالَ هِيَ عَصَايَ أَتَوَكَّؤُا عَلَيْهَا وَأَهْضِمُ بِهَا عَلَى غَنَمِي وَلِي فِيهَا مَنَاصِبُ أُخْرَى ﴿١٨﴾

‘It is my staff,’ he said, ‘I lean on it; restrain my sheep with it; I also have other uses for it’ [18] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 18)

After Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said, ‘It is my staff ...’ (*Ta Ha*: 18), He opened up for himself another area for further discourse by adding: ‘I lean on it and restrain my sheep with it. I also have other uses.’ (*Ta Ha*: 18) At this point, he felt that he expatiated on this matter, so he tried to be brief by saying: ‘I also have other uses.’ (*Ta Ha*: 18)

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was expecting another question to be asked such as ‘What are these other uses?’ He expected such a question to prolong his friendliness with his Lord. After all, no one ends a conversation with Allah *the Almighty* except he who is indifferent to Him.

The staff has a long history with mankind, for it is one of the necessities of training, exercise and travelling. In addition, it has great importance in shepherding, etc. In this verse, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* mentions some of its uses by saying: ‘... I lean on it...’ (*Ta Ha*: 18) which signifies that he supports himself with it while walking. A person needs to support himself with a staff in marching and in fatigue because he is in need of two kinds of strength: strength for movement and walking and another to support the body. A staff helps the person to support the weight of his body, especially if he is tired and his two feet are not strong enough to carry him.

Thus, his statement, ‘... I lean on it...’ (*Ta Ha*: 18) means that he relies on it while walking, and when he stops to pasture sheep, he props himself on it. Supporting oneself by leaning in this manner allows a person to alternate between his two feet, resting the foot that is tired, and shifting from one side to the other.

If a person remains in one posture resting up one part of his body for a long time, the pores of the body become blocked in that area, not allowing for

the secretion of sweat. This causes severe damage, which we observe in patients who are confined to their beds for a long time, damages which appear in the form of sores known as 'bed sores'. It is for this reason that doctors recommend these patients to alter their position, by not sleeping on one side.

This is why Allah *the Almighty* willed to turn the People of the Cave over in their sleep from one side to another, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'We turned them about to the right and to the left' (*al-Kahf*: 18)

Therefore, if a person stands or sits for a long time without anything to lean upon, he will be agitated and unsettled. Based on this, the restful couch is one of the manifestations of blessing and luxury in this world and in the Hereafter. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says about the governor's wife, i.e. Zulaikha: '... and prepared for them a restful couch' (*Yusuf*: 31)

Concerning the blessings of the Hereafter, He *the Most High* says: 'Reclining on thrones set in lines, and We will unite them to large-eyed beautiful ones.' (*at-Tur*: 20) He also says: 'Reclining on beds, the inner coverings of which are of silk brocade ...' (*ar-Rahman*: 54). Likewise, He *the Almighty* says: 'Reclining on green cushions and beautiful carpets.' (*ar-Rahman*: 76) Hence, reclining is a means of rest, but a person should alter his position of recline from one side to the other so that he is not exposed to what is called 'bed sores'.

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* then mentions another use of his staff, namely '... restrain my sheep with it...' (*Ta Ha*: 18) and strike the leaves of trees so that they fall down so that sheep and other livestock can eat them. This is because the herder moves with the livestock in the desert, and they eat of the naturally growing plant which is not cultivated by anyone, only being watered by rain. When this herb is no longer available, the herder needs a staff to strike the leaves of the tall trees so that the sheep can eat them. Hence, his statement, '... I lean on it...' (*Ta Ha*: 18), implies that the staff is for his own repose; on the other hand, his statement, '... restrain my sheep with it...' (*Ta Ha*: 18), indicates that he *peace be upon him* uses it in serving the needs of his flock. This is a kind of training for him how to manage the provisions of both livestock and men, for the herding of sheep trains the person (the shepherd) how to run the affairs of the entire Ummah, followers of the religion.

It is for this reason that Allah *the Almighty* sent no prophet except that he herded sheep, so that they would be patient while calling people to the Divine Way of Guidance. This fact is proven by the following Hadith in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Every prophet has tended sheep.’ He was asked, ‘And did you?’ He replied, ‘Yes, I tended them for a few carats for the people of Mecca.’⁽¹⁾

Back to the verse in question: when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* sensed that he had spoken too long to his Lord, he summarised his statement and said, ‘... I also have other uses’ (*Ta Ha*: 18) which denotes that he derives other benefits from the staff.

Scholars may Allah reward them have made attempts to look into the other uses which Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did not mention about the staff. So, they examined the condition of the herder and the function of the staff in their lives, and they found other uses besides those mentioned.

Amongst these benefits are the following: the primitive herder puts his staff on his shoulder and hangs his provisions of food and water on it. In addition, some herders make use of their time in hunting, a process which requires certain equipment such as a bow, an arrow, and a woven bag in which they gather what they catch. Hence, you see one of them placing the staff on his shoulders lengthwise and he hangs these pieces of equipment from both ends upon it.

Furthermore, if the intense heat of the sun harms him, and he does not find any shelter of shade, he can plant his staff in the earth and throw his robes over it, making it into a kind of tent or umbrella by means of which he protects himself from the heat of the weather. When he needs water and finds that the water of the well is at a very deep level which the bucket cannot reach, he can use the staff to prolong the rope in order to reach the water. These are among the multiple uses of the staff.

Some scholars say that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was surely anticipating that his Lord would ask him about these uses, in order to prolong

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Ibn Majah on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2262; Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2149.*

the conversation with Him. However, Allah *Glorified is He* did not ask him about this since He was going to move on to something more important than the subject of the staff. It is as if He *the Almighty* was saying, ‘What you have mentioned, O, Musa (Moses), concerns the function of the staff with regard to you, but I wish to inform you of its function with regard to Me.’

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ أَلْقَهَا يَمُوسَى ﴿١٩﴾

**God said, Throw it down, Moses [19]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 19)**

This command to throw the staff to the ground is a form of training and practice for Musa (Moses) in order to prepare him for his encounter with Pharaoh. At this point, the staff deviates from its regular state which he is familiar with; that is to say, it becomes no longer eligible for leaning upon or restraining sheep. Instead, it transformed from the species of wood to the species of animal and became a snake. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَلْقَاهَا فَإِذَا هِيَ حَيَّةٌ تَسْعَى ﴿٢٠﴾

**He threw it down and – lo and behold! – it became
a fast-moving snake [20] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 20)**

This is a drastic transformation in the matter of the staff. It would certainly have been possible to demonstrate a miracle by transmuting the staff, a dry stick, from wood into a green tree, but Allah *the Almighty* performs this miracle for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* because he will need it later. Moreover, if the staff had been transformed into a living tree, it would have established itself in its place. Hence, it changes into a snake, an animal object slithering here and there; this is what he will need in his coming battle.

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* threw down his staff, ‘... and–lo and behold!–it became ...’ (*Ta Ha*: 20); this expression denotes suddenness and surprise. It is like when you say, ‘I went out, and all of a sudden there was a lion at the door.’ When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* cast his staff, which

was dry, it instantly turned into a snake which moved at great speed, and it was no longer stiff and dead. Is this not a sudden surprise? It was only natural for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to be frightened at what he saw; so his Lord reassures him by saying:

قَالَ خُذْهَا وَلَا تَخَفْ ۗ سَنُعِيدُهَا سِيرَتَهَا الْأُولَىٰ ﴿٢١﴾

He said, ‘Pick it up without fear: We shall turn it back into its former state [21] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 21)

So, Allah *the Almighty* commands him to pick it up, as He *the Almighty* shall turn it back immediately: ‘... into its former state’ (*Ta Ha*: 21), that is, a dry staff. In view of the symptoms of fright which appeared on Musa (Moses), He *the Almighty* tells him: ‘Pick it up without fear’ (*Ta Ha*: 21) In another verse, He *the Most High* relates Musa's (Moses') fear by saying: ‘Musa (Moses) was inwardly alarmed.’ (*Ta Ha*: 67)

This phenomenon was a form of training and a means of trial for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* since the staff has a vital function in his Message. It will itself be his miracle in his confrontation with Pharaoh when he strikes the sea with it⁽¹⁾ and in his Call to the children of Israel when he strikes the rock with it whereupon water gushes forth therefrom.⁽²⁾

The Quran discusses this part of Musa's (Moses') story in different manners: it sometimes speaks of the staff as if it was a ‘serpent’; other times it mentions that it turned into a ‘snake’; on a third occasion, it refers to it as a *jan* which is a kind of snake that moves rapidly. Due to this, some raise objections about these differences by saying, ‘Then which of these forms did the staff take?’ The reality is that the staff had these diverse forms when it was transformed. In terms of its deadliness and ability to kill, it was a snake; in terms of its massive size, it was a serpent, while in terms of the rapidity and subtlety of its movement, it was like a *jan*. All of these traits were in the staff.

(1) This is in reference to the following verse: ‘Then We revealed to Musa: Strike the sea with your staff. So it had cloven asunder, and each part was like a huge mound.’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 63)

(2) This is in reference to Allah's saying: ‘And when Musa prayed for drink for his people, We said: Strike the rock with your staff So there gushed from it twelve springs...’ (*al-Baqara*: 60).

When you bring together all of these scenes, they provide you with a complete picture of the staff after it had become a snake. Hence, the verses of the Quran complete one another in order to depict the image intended by Allah *the Almighty*.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَضْمُ يَدَكَ إِلَى جَنَاحِكَ تَخْرُجَ بَيْضًا مِّنْ غَيْرِ سَوْءٍ ؕ آيَةٌ أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٢٢﴾

**Now place your hand under your armpit and it will come out white, though unharmed: that is another sign [22]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 22)**

The word ‘hand’ is well understood. The Arabic word *Al-Janah*, translated as ‘armpit’ here, literally refers to the wing of a bird, which corresponds to the arm of the human, starting from the upper arm. The same word is used by Allah *Glorified is He* when He commands us to treat our parents well by saying: ‘And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion ...’ (*al-Isra*: 24). In this verse, He *the Almighty* commands us to be humble with our parents and not to look down upon them superciliously.

In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Put your hand inside your shirt, and it will come out white but ...’ (*al-Qasas*: 32). In this verse, Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is commanded to put his hand in the pocket of his shirt. This is because people in the past used to position the pocket inside the garment in order to place money and other things into it so that it would be far from the hand of the thief. Then, when a person needed something from his pocket, he would insert his hand into the collar of his shirt in order to reach it. This is among the manifestations of the complementarity nature of the Quranic verses.

In the verse under study, Allah *the Almighty* commands Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to contract his right hand and to put it from the collar of his shirt under his upper left arm. The verse continues: ‘... it will come out white, though unharmed ...’ (*Ta Ha*: 22); this means that the moment he *peace be upon him* removes his hand, he will find it white, possessing light, brilliance and radiance.

Now, it is well known that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was of brownish colour, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* described him when he was asked to depict the messengers whom he met during his Night Journey and Ascension. He said, ‘Musa (Moses) was a man of high stature as if he was of the people of the *Shanu’a* (tribe) ...’⁽¹⁾ That is to say, he was brown-skinned and exceptionally tall.

Based on this, the whiteness of the hand and its luminous quality was among Allah’s miraculous signs. If Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had been fair-skinned, the whiteness of his hand would not have been evident.

As for His saying, ‘... though unharmed...’ (*Ta Ha: 22*), it means that the whiteness of Musa's (Moses') hand was not due to any kind of illness, for the whiteness in contrast to the brownness might have been a disease—from which we seek Allah’s protection—such as leprosy, for example, and Allah *the Almighty* excluded this possibility from him.

In Allah’s saying, ‘...That is another sign’ (*Ta Ha: 22*), the word ‘sign’ means a miracle. Yet He *the Almighty* does not say anything about the first miraculous sign here, i.e. the transformation of the staff.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لِذُرِّيَّتِكَ مِنْ عَيْنِنَا الْكُبْرَىٰ


**We do this to show you some of Our greatest signs [23]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha: 23*)**

In so doing, Allah *the Exalted* discloses to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* some of the wondrous signs to serve as miracles for him. Thus, when He *the Almighty* commands him to do something of this nature in the future, he will be certain that his Lord will neither deceive nor abandon him. Rather, He will support him and grant him victory. This is why he should not be alarmed or afraid nor should he retreat. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* was preparing His

(1) *This Hadith was narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. In his the commentary on Al-Bukhari, Ibn Hajar states, ‘The word Shanu’a refers to a tribal grouping from the Yemen.’ See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no.3394; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no.165; and Ibn Hajar, Fath Al-Bari, 6/429.*

Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* for the impending encounter with his enemy, Pharaoh, who pretentiously ascribes divinity to himself.

Then, after this fortifying charge and practical experiment, He *the Almighty* says to Prophet Musa (Moses):


 أَذْهَبَ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ

**Go to Pharaoh, for he has truly become a tyrant [24]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 24)**

In this verse, we may ask, ‘Why did He send him to Pharaoh initially and did not send him to his people?’ This is because Pharaoh had done an abominable action when he falsely claimed to be divine, and this is the summit of transgression. Moreover, he had enslaved the children of Israel; hence, it was imperative to settle affairs with Pharaoh in the beginning.

This is why the miracle of the staff occurred in three situations: The first was to provide Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* with experience and training. This actually happened between Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his Lord by means of practice so that when the time came to unveil it before Pharaoh, Musa (Moses) would not be over-awed by it or withdraw in hesitation; rather, he would perform this miracle with a steadfast, confident heart. The second occasion was with Pharaoh alone as a means of frightening him. As for the third, it was with all the sorcerers.

Hence, each of these situations comprised its own underlying wisdom and role. Thus, we strongly stress that there is no repetition in the events of the story as some falsely claim.

As for His saying in reference to Pharaoh, ‘... he has truly become a tyrant’ (*Ta Ha*: 24), it means that he went beyond the limits of equity. This happens when someone excessively appropriate what is not his. If only Pharaoh had claimed one of the human attributes, he would not have been blamed, but instead he attributed to himself one of Allah’s Attributes.

When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* heard the name of Pharaoh, he recalled what had happened in Egypt and that he had been brought up in the

house of this Pharaoh who pretentiously ascribed divinity to himself. So, how would he face him? He also called to mind the incident of the man he had killed,⁽¹⁾ after which he departed from Egypt in fear and apprehension of being caught. So, when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* realised that the burden of his mission was weighty, he said:

قَالَ رَبِّ اشْرَحْ لِي صَدْرِي ﴿٢٥﴾

Moses said, Lord, lift up my heart [25]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 25)

It is as if Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said, ‘O Lord, I shall execute Your Commands, but I do not wish to face this mission while my heart is constricted in regard to it. This is due to the constriction of the heart undermining strength and dissipating it. This also helps to defeat a man.’ Therefore, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* supplicated with this prayer: ‘Lord, lift up my heart’ (*Ta Ha*: 25); he did this in order that his strength would be adequate to the undertaking of this difficult mission which requires great effort corresponding to its difficulty. This signifies that his heart was constricted by the prospect of meeting Pharaoh for the above-mentioned reasons.

Then Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said:

وَيَسِّرْ لِي أَمْرِي ﴿٢٦﴾

And ease my task for me [26]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 26)

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* made this supplication because lifting up the heart in this matter was not sufficient, as it concerns the doer, but he might find in his opponent vehement recalcitrance and obstinacy. Therefore, he invoked Allah *the Almighty* by saying: ‘And ease my task for me’ (*Ta Ha*: 26), so that he would not face violent dispute and transgression from Pharaoh,

(1) This is in reference to Allah’s saying: ‘He entered the city, unnoticed by its people, and found two men fighting: one from his own people, the other an enemy. The one from his own people cried out to him for help against the enemy. Moses struck him with his fist and killed him.’ (*al-Qasas*: 15)

Hereby, the matter would be facilitated on the part of the opponent with regard to receiving the Message, after lifting up the heart of the caller. Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* then said:

وَاحْلُلْ عُقْدَةً مِّن لِّسَانِي

And loosen the knot from my tongue [27]
(The Quran, Ta Ha: 27)

This is because speech and conveying the Message need clear articulation and a flowing tongue which is unhindered with words. Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had a speech impediment in his tongue, so he was not fluent in speech.

The same speech defect also affected the tongue of Al-Hussayn ibn ‘Ali *Allah be pleased with them* so that when Prophet Muhammad would hear him, he would laugh and say, ‘He inherited it from his paternal uncle Musa (Moses).’

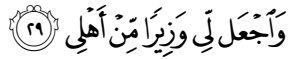
The precision of expression is to be noted in Allah’s saying: ‘... from my tongue’ (*Ta Ha: 27*); He does not say, ‘Untie my tongue’. This is because if he had said the latter, it might have been understood as a rebellion against Allah’s Decree concerning the speech defect in his tongue. However, he is not raising objections, but merely asking for a part of his tongue to be untied in order to enable him to undertake his mission of conveying a verbal Message.

Afterwards, Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said:

يَفْقَهُوا قَوْلِي

So that they may understand my words [28]
(The Quran, Ta Ha: 28)

This is the motive behind his request, that is, he wants the people to understand his words; were it not for this motive, he would not have requested for removing his tongue’s impediment. Therefore, the real purpose of his request is to allow the people to comprehend his speech and discourse. Then, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* continues in requesting that which he believes will assist him in executing his mission; Allah *Glorified is He* says:



**And give me a helper from my family [29]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 29)**

The helper here refers to the one who assists and supports. The same root of the original Arabic word is used when Allah *Glorified is He* wishes to frighten people about the Hereafter; He says: ‘Truly, there is no refuge. They will all return to your Lord on that Day.’ (*al-Qiyama*: 11-12) This means that on the Day of Judgment there is no shelter or helper to turn towards except Allah *the Almighty*. So, the helper is the one who takes burdens and responsibilities upon himself. When someone is charged with a great task and he is unable to do it alone, he asks for such a helper, for he needs someone to assist him in this task. Someone is to be considered a true helper if he is a good counsellor, trustworthy and aids his companion with sincere honesty. However, if he is cheating and blameworthy, working only for his own interest, then he is not a true helper; no indeed he is a burden. Deriving from the same semantic root, we have Allah’s saying: ‘And a burdened soul cannot bear the burden of another...’ (*Fatir*: 18) In the same connection, we read in a Noble Hadith, ‘The best of kings is a king whom Allah has provided with a minister. If he forgets, he will remind him, and if he has the intention—merely the intention— of going good, he assists him. Likewise, if he intends evil, he hinders him...’⁽¹⁾

These are the signs of a helper who gives good counsel in the interests of the subjects as elucidated by the Divine Way; for every ruler has two entourages: one of them commanding the good and another commanding that which is reprehensible and vile, as is clear in a Noble Hadith.⁽²⁾ So, if this is the Divine Way, what is wrong with the policy of man?

-
- (1) ‘Aisha Allah be pleased with her narrated that Messenger Muhammad Allah’s Peace and Blessings be upon him said: ‘Whoever among you is appointed to a position of authority; if Allah wills good for him, He will give him a righteous minister who will remind him if he forgets and help him if he remembers.’ See *An-Nasa’i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 7/159*.
- (2) The wording of this Hadith is as follows: ‘Allah neither raised up any Prophet nor did He authorize any person with ruling power but for whom there were two types of entourage: one enjoins upon him to do good and incites him to carry it out, and the other enjoins evil and goads him; and the protected (from the bad entourage) is the one whom Allah protects.’ This Hadith is narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Ahmad* on the authority of *Abu Sa’id Al-Khudari* Allah be pleased with him. See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 7198; Ahmad, Musnad, 3/39*.

The ancient Persian monarch Anoushirwan once said, 'Beware of thinking that anyone of us can dispense with anyone else, for each of us has a function to do. Hence, if you are superior in something, then you are deficient in other things which Allah has placed in people other than you so as to make up for your deficiency. Co-existence is shared, but this sharing is imposed by necessity and is not a question of condescending courtesy. Otherwise, if others were disposed to favour you with grace, what then would you do?'

We have previously propounded a parable for people's need of one another by saying, 'What would happen if sewer workers or street-sweepers were to stop working for several days? Yet if the ministers were absent for several days, nothing would happen.' Hence, do not think you are superior to others because each one of them has a function which they fulfil. So, if you are better than someone in a particular thing, then he is better than you in another, as the totality of somebody's talents is equal to that of another. However, if you were to ask, 'Then why such disparities exist between people' you would be answered that this is in order that we are in need of one another. After all, if all people had the same talents, and we said to a group of us, 'Please be so kind and sweep the streets on such-and-such a day', they would not condescend to do it. However, if need compelled them to do such work, they would rush to it. Just as we see nowadays concerning the most strenuous professions and the most arduous of tasks—which people flee from, and even look down upon with contempt—you find their practitioners accepting them willingly and even zealous in accomplishing them, despite the hardship they entail. Indeed, they get angry if they find no opportunity to do that work because it is the source of their subsistence and that of their dependents. With this perspective, no one should deem himself superior to others so that balance would be achieved in the society.

Back to the verse in question; Musa's (Moses') saying, '...from my family' (*Ta Ha: 29*), means that he would be trustworthy for him *peace be upon him*. This request on the part of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* indicates the elevated manners of the comportment of prophethood. Allah *the Almighty* had chosen him to convey the Divine Message, so why does he partner his brother with him in this mission? That is because Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* does not wish to take pride in the Message, to deem himself above others because of it or even to transgress any limits. Rather, he desires to accomplish

it in the most perfect way. Therefore, he seeks to compensate for his deficiency through seeking the help of his brother in communicating the Message. If Prophet Musa (Moses) had desired to have exclusive monopoly on the Message, he would not have made this request.

This is a model which should be imitated. Hence, if you are charged with a matter beyond your strength and capability, there is no shame on you to seek someone else's assistance in it. This is evidence of your sincere devotion to the duty with which you have been entrusted.

Afterwards, Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* specifies which one of his family he needs by saying:

هَرُونَ أَخِي ﴿٣٠﴾

My brother Aaron [30]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 30)

He has selected his brother Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* to help him in the mission of conveying the Message. He clarifies the reason for this request in another verse by saying: 'And my brother, Harun (Aaron), he is more eloquent of tongue than I' (*al-Qasas*: 34) In this manner, Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* complete each other, and each of them makes up for the deficiency in his brother. It is said that Harun (Aaron) excelled over him in other aspects. He possessed the attributes of gentleness and forbearance while Musa (Moses) was harsh and of quick anger. So, the former was suitable for clemency, and the latter was suitable for severity. This is evident in the case when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* returned to his people, having left them in the company of his brother, and they had meanwhile begun to worship the golden calf. His anger became vehement as stated in Allah's saying: 'And when Musa (Moses) returned to his people, wrathful (and) in violent grief ...' (*al-A'raf*: 150). He then became furious with his brother and dragged him by his beard, manifesting his toughness and harshness. Thereupon, Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* said, 'Son of my mother!' (*al-A'raf*: 150) in order to stimulate Musa's (Moses') compassion by reminding him about the kindness of the mother and her tenderness; in another verse, Harun (Aaron) pleads, '... let go of my beard and my hair!' (*Ta Ha*: 94) It is as if he is

saying to his brother, 'Strike me as you wish, but do not attack me unfairly by my beard and my head.'

Hence, the eloquence of Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* balances out the knot in the tongue of Musa (Moses), and his clemency relieves the severity and vehemence of the latter. In addition, Musa (Moses) was brown-skinned, with curly hair and of hooked nose, while Harun (Aaron) was fair-skinned with straight hair. In addition, he was graceful in his proportions and features, comforting to behold. So, whoever was not comfortable with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*, would be comfortable with Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him*.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to like it when Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* descended upon him in the image of Dihya Al-Kalbi⁽¹⁾ who was very good-looking. So, Jibril (Gabriel) used to sometimes descend in this image in order to make Prophet Muhammad feel at ease.

Despite being excelled by his brother in certain attributes, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did not harbour feeling of resentment against his brother and did not consider that he was better than he was. Rather, he rendered the qualities of his brother complementary to his own, and all of them were for the sake of carrying out the mission and conveying the Message in its most perfect way. Thus, he did not look towards himself and his own success, but rather towards the success of the mission with which Allah *the Almighty* had charged him.

It is imperative to make this virtuous comportment common amongst people. Hence, if you notice a good trait or one aspect of perfection in someone else, then you should give thankful praise to Allah *the Exalted* for that. You should also be aware that the benefit of this good trait will return to you, and it you will make up for what is lacking in you. So, do not resent the one who possesses it, for he will compensate for your shortcomings, and you yourself will derive benefit from his blessing.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* stated:

(1) *In his book, Ibn Hajar states, '[Dihya Al-Kalbi] was a famous Companion; his first military engagement was the battle of the Trench; his handsome appearance was proverbial and Gabriel used to descend in his image. He settled in Damascus and lived in Al-Mizza. He lived until the Caliphate of Mu'awiya.' See Ibn Hajar, Al-Isaba Fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba, 2/162.*

أَشْدِّدْ بِهِ أَزْرِي (٣١)

Augment my strength through him [31]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 31)

It is as if Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* recognises that carrying the Message to Pharaoh and to his people later is going to be a strenuous undertaking, so he invokes Allah *the Almighty* to provide him with his brother to help him with this difficult mission. Afterwards, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* continues to pray to His Lord by saying:

وَأَشْرِكُهُ فِي أَمْرِي (٣٢)

Let him share my task [32]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 32)

In this verse, his supplication ‘Let him share my task’ (*Ta Ha*: 32) signifies that he asks Allah *the Exalted* to allow Harun (Aaron) to participate with him in the Message as a Favour from Him, not from Musa (Moses). Hence, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* desired that both the favour and the charging with obligation be from Allah *the Almighty* so that Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* would not rise in opposition nor become annoyed by the mission he is assigned to undertake.

Therefore, when they went to Pharaoh, the two of them said: ‘We are your Lord’s messengers ...’ (*Ta Ha*: 47). Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did not say that Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* was a servile follower of his; rather, he is just like him, sent by Allah *the Almighty*. When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* spoke, he spoke on behalf of himself and on behalf of Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him*. This is why when Musa (Moses) imprecated against Pharaoh and his people saying: ‘... Our Lord, destroy their riches and harden their hearts so that they believe not until they see the painful punishment’ (*Yunus*: 88), Allah *the Almighty* answered his prayer by saying: ‘The prayer of you both has indeed been accepted....’ (*Yunus*: 89) Thus, while the supplication was made by Musa (Moses) alone, Harun (Aaron) confirmed it by saying Amen, and the one who says Amen is included among those who have supplicated to Allah *the Almighty*.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says that Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* stated:

كَيْ نُسَبِّحَكَ كَثِيرًا ۖ وَنُذَكِّرُكَ كَثِيرًا ﴿٣٤﴾

**So that we can glorify You much [33]
and remember You often [34]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 33 - 34)**

This is the reason why Musa (Moses) wanted to share the undertaking of the mission with his brother, not in quest of his own ease; but rather to combine their efforts in pious obedience to Allah *the Almighty* along with glorification and remembrance of Him. The glorification of Allah means to celebrate His Praise and extol His Holiness with regard to His Essence, Attributes and Actions. Evidently, there is no essence comparable to His Essence, as He Himself says: ‘... there is nothing like Him ...’ (*ash-Shura*: 11). Therefore, there is nothing similar to Him in His Essence, Attributes, and Actions. So, you should beware of saying that Allah’s Hearing is like your hearing, that His Sight is like your sight, or that His Action is like your action. The meaning of extolling Allah’s limitless glory and glorifying His Holiness is that He is exalted to the level of His proven Divinity, and thus we add nothing to His Glory from ourselves.

Regarding His saying, ‘So that we can glorify You much’ (*Ta Ha*: 33), it means to do that continuously, as if the glorification brings joy down upon the soul of the extoller. Likewise, obedience on the part of the obedient brings bliss to his soul. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘My comfort has been provided in prayer.’⁽¹⁾ Moreover, it is narrated, ‘When anything distressed the Prophet, he prayed.’⁽²⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Imam Ahmad, An-Nasa’i and Al-Hakim on the authority of Anas Ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. In his book, Al-Hakim says, ‘This Hadith is authentic according to the conditions stipulated by Muslim, but neither Al-Bukhari nor Muslim narrated it.’ Adh-Dhahabi agreed with Al-Hakim in this regard. The complete form of this Hadith is as follows: ‘Women and perfume have been made dear to me, but my comfort has been provided in prayer.’ See Ahmad, Musnad, 3/127, 199, 285; An-Nasa’i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 7/61; Al-Hakim, Mustadrak, 2/160.*

(2) *A Hadith to this effect was narrated by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad and by Abu Dawud on the authority of Hudhayfa Allah be pleased with him who said: ‘When anything distressed the Prophet, he prayed.’ See Ahmad, Musnad, 5/388; Abu Dawud, Sunnan, 1319.*

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

إِنَّكَ كُنْتَ بِنَا بَصِيرًا ﴿٣٥﴾

You are always watching over us [35]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 35)

This verse shows that Allah *the Exalted* is always watchful over Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) observing their actions to ascertain whether or not they performed them in the most perfect way.

For this reason Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ قَدْ أُوتِيتَ سُؤْلَكَ يَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٣٦﴾

God said, Moses, your request is granted [36]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 36)

The verse tells us that Allah *the Almighty* has given Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* what he asked for. Indeed, He has bestowed His Favour on him before he asked, rather even before he knew how to ask.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَلَقَدْ مَنَّا عَلَيْكَ مَرَّةً أُخْرَىٰ ﴿٣٧﴾

Indeed We showed you favour before [37]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 37)

To show someone a favour means to grant him something without anything in exchange, as opposed to recompense, which is a reward provided in exchange for deeds. As for Allah's saying: '...before' (*Ta Ha*: 37), it indicates that there was a first instance of such free favour. However, here the intended meaning of the freely bestowed favour is the inspiration which came upon the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he was very young. In reality, this is the first gift; nevertheless, He *the Almighty* says in this verse, '...before' (*Ta Ha*: 37), literally translated as 'at another time' to take the sequence of relating the events into consideration.

So, when was this first gift bestowed? The answer is provided in Allah's saying:

إِذْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ مَا يُوحَىٰ ﴿٣٨﴾

**We inspired your mother, saying [38]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 38)**

This verse means that Allah *the Exalted* had conferred His Favour on Musa (Moses) when He inspired his mother to do some actions. Thus, this was the first gift to Musa (Moses) when he was born in the year in which Pharaoh was killing all males. At that time, Allah *the Almighty* inspired Musa's (Moses') mother by saying: '... when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear nor grieve. Surely We will bring him back to you and make him one of the prophets.' (*al-Qasas*: 7)

In the verse under study, Allah's saying, '...what was inspired' (*Ta Ha*: 38) implies that this inspiration is a tremendous phenomenon which you, Musa (Moses), should give due assessment to and exert yourself based on it to the utmost. The structure of this verse is similar in its emphatic repetition to the verb as occurs in His saying: '... so there came upon them of the sea that which came upon them.' (*Ta Ha*: 78)

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* provides details of this inspiration to the mother of Musa (Moses) by saying:

أَنْ أَقْدِفِيهِ فِي التَّابُوتِ فَأَقْدِفِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ فَلْيَلْقِهِ الْيَمُّ بِالسَّاحِلِ يَأْخُذْهُ
عَدُوُّ لِي وَعَدُوُّ لَكَ، وَالْقَيْتُ عَلَيْكَ مَحَبَّةً مِنِّي وَلِنُصْنَعَ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِي ﴿٣٩﴾

**“Put your child into the chest, then place him in the river.
Let the river wash him on to its bank, and he will be taken
in by an enemy of Mine and his.” I showered you with My
love and planned that you should be reared under My
watchful eye [39] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 39)**

This is what Allah *the Almighty*, inspired to the mother of Musa (Moses). The Arabic word *Al-Yamm* (river) refers to a large body of water, whether it is salty or fresh. In this regard, when Allah *Glorified is He* speaks of Pharaoh's

drowning, He says: ‘...and drowned them in the sea (*Al-Yamm*)...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 136). In this verse, the intended meaning is the Red Sea. However, with respect to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* he was born in Egypt and his chest was cast into the Nile, as the palace of Pharaoh was on the Nile.

By Allah! What sort of mother is this who would believe such words, 'If you are afraid for your son, then throw him into the river?!' How could she possibly save him from presumed death at the hands of Pharaoh and cast him into certain death by throwing him into the river?! Yet, in spite of this, the mother of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did not hesitate for a moment in executing Allah’s Command, nor did she hold back. This is the difference between that which comes from the All-Merciful and that which comes from Satan. The soul puts up no resistance to that which comes from the All-Merciful; rather, it receives it as an incontestable issue. As for what comes from Satan, it does not dare to vie with that which comes from the All-Merciful. Hence, the mother of Musa (Moses) took her baby and threw him into the river as her Lord inspired her to do.

It is noteworthy that a similar verse in the chapter of *al-Qasas* does not mention anything about the chest; it only mentions throwing him directly into the river: ‘Then when you fear for him, cast him into the river ...’ (*al-Qasas*: 7) So, what is the reason for this? It is said that Allah *Glorified is He* speaks in the above verse about the ultimate reason of fear which is throwing her baby into the river. It is natural for a mother to strive to ensure the safety of her baby. This is why she fashioned a chest for him and prepared it in a way which allows it to float on the surface of the water.

The discourse here is meant to prepare the mother before the event. Before the execution of the Divine Order, the mother will have arrangements and means which help her child to survive. Thus, she fashioned a chest for him, putting a sort cradle in it and took the necessary precautions for the event. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* reassured her about her son by saying: ‘...and do not fear nor grieve.’ (*al-Qasas*: 7) This is because He *the Almighty* will save him, as he has a mission to undertake: ‘... surely, We will bring him back to you and make him one of the prophets.’ (*al-Qasas*: 7)

Then, as soon as the time of implementation arrived, the command came in rapid successive expression: 'Put your child into the chest, then place him in the river. Let the river wash him on to its bank...' (*Ta Ha: 39*). It is for this reason that you find the context of the first verse calm and slow, corresponding to the phase of preparation. However, when it is the stage of execution, the context is quick and successive, corresponding to the rapidity of implementation. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* was inspiring her, 'Hurry up with the command which I previously inspired to you.' These words are in the final phase of this matter.

As for Allah's saying, 'Let the river wash him on to its bank...' (*Ta Ha: 39*), it means the waves will carry him and transport him, as they had orders to take him to the palace of Pharaoh.

Hence, we have here three throws for the benefit of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: the casting of mercy and compassion into the chest, the throwing of the chest into the river in execution of Allah's Command and the river's casting the chest to the palace of Pharaoh.

Allah's saying, '... and he will be taken in by an enemy of Mine and his.' (*Ta Ha: 39*) shows that Pharaoh is an enemy of Allah because he falsely ascribed divinity to himself, and he is also an enemy of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* because the latter will stand in his way and obstruct him at his limits.

The verse comprises an indication of the inevitable fulfilment of Allah's Will, for when He decrees a thing, He accomplishes it, even at the hands of His enemies while they are unaware. After all, who could imagine or believe that Pharaoh— in his tyranny and unruly rage, killing the newborn males of the Children of Israel — would be the one to embrace Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and bring him up in his household? Who could imagine that he would love Musa (Moses) and find a place of warm acceptance for him in his heart?

Did Pharaoh find and take Musa (Moses) at the beginning so that he would be an enemy to him? Or did he find and take him in so that he would be like a son? The response is clear in the statement of Asiya, Pharaoh's wife: '... "Refreshment of the eye to me and to you, Do not slay him. Maybe he will be useful to us, or we may take him for a son." They did not perceive.' (*al-Qasas: 9*)

Thus, there was love on the part of Pharaoh, although it later turned to enmity. It is for this reason that Pharaoh will say, ‘Did we not bring you up as a child among us, and you tarried among us for (many) years of your life?’ (*ash-Shu‘ara’*: 18)

Those who cast doubts about the Quran levelled charges of repetitiveness against the issue of enmity in His saying, ‘...and he will be taken in by an enemy of Mine and his’ (*Ta Ha*: 39), and in His saying in another verse, ‘Pharaoh’s family took him up that he might be an enemy and a grief for them...’ (*al-Qasas*: 8).

However, the one who carefully examines the two verses will find that the enmity in the first verse is on the part of Pharaoh towards Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his Lord, whereas the enmity in the second verse is on the part of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* towards Pharaoh. In this way, the enmity is mutual, and this insures its ferocity and continuity. This is the intended meaning in this story.

However, if the enmity had been one-sided, then perhaps the other party might have forgiven his enemy, and so his enemy might have felt ashamed and inclined to reconciliation. However, the enmity between Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and Pharaoh had to be implacable since it was over the supreme issue of Allah’s Oneness.

Here, we should ask, ‘Why did the arrival of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in this condition not arouse the alarm of Pharaoh so that he would ask about his story and look into his case?’ Indeed, this was Allah’s Will nothing can evade, and thus the wife of Pharaoh loved Musa (Moses) and so she said: ‘...Refreshment of the eye to me and to you...’ (*al-Qasas*: 9) Hence, following this, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘I showered you with My love and planned that you should be reared under My watchful Eye.’ (*Ta Ha*: 39)

So, both of Asiya and Pharaoh loved Musa (Moses) when they saw him, and this love is from Allah *the Almighty* without any reason for it. In fact, love between people is based upon reasons; hence you love a person because you are fond of him because he is a relative or a friend of yours or he has done you a favour. However, you may love someone while there is no reason for this except that it is Allah’s Will.

Thus, Allah's saying, 'I showered you with My love...' (*Ta Ha*: 39), means that even though Musa (Moses) does not have anything to necessitate or cause love, Allah *the Almighty* showered him with His love. This is especially true as Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was brown-skinned, frizzy-haired, hook-nosed and possessed of ungainly contracted shoulders. It is as if this physical form occurred to pave the way for this love, and as a confirmation of Allah's Will which compelled Pharaoh to love Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart' (*al-Anfal*: 24).

In this manner, Allah *the Almighty* changed the heart of Pharaoh and caused love of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to enter into it. This is meant to let this matter pass by this hugely inattentive one and cause him to adopt his enemy and to raise him in his household, despite the fact that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* did not have grace and beauty which would attract hearts to him.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: '... that you should be reared under My watchful Eye.' (*Ta Ha*: 39) This shows that Musa (Moses) would be brought up and educated under Allah's Watchful Eye and Protective Care. Despite the fact that Musa (Moses) was actually brought up in Pharaoh's house, Allah *the Most High* guarded over him. Thus, if he were exposed to something objectionable in his upbringing, his Lord would intervene in order to teach him and raise him correctly.

Among these situations is that Pharaoh and his wife Asiya would sit with the little Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* as he played, when suddenly he grabbed Pharaoh's beard and jerked it with such force that he became angry and ordered that he be killed. However, his wife intervened by saying, 'He is still young and does not understand anything. He cannot distinguish a date from a hot ember.' So, they brought him a date and a hot ember in order to test him, then Allah *the Almighty* drew his hand away from the date and directed it towards the hot ember in order to let the issue pass for this hugely inattentive one. Moreover, indeed, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* took the ember in spite of its heat and put it into his mouth, burning his tongue. This is what caused him this speech impediment which afflicted him later.

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is reassuring His Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* by saying: ‘Do not be afraid, for you are under My Watchful Eye and under My Protective Care. If they do something to you, I shall intervene.’ In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: ‘I have chosen you for Myself.’ (*Ta Ha*: 41) This verse shows that Allah *the Almighty* watches over and protects him since he has a mission to fulfil for Him.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِذْ تَمْشِي أُخْتُكَ فَاقُولِ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ مَن يَكْفُلُهُ ۗ فَرَجَعْنَاكَ إِلَىٰ أُمِّكَ
كَيْ تَقْرَ عَيْنَهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۗ وَقَتَلْتَ نَفْسًا فَنَجَّيْنَاكَ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَفَتَنَّاكَ فُتُونًا
فَلْيَلْتَمَسْ سِنِينَ فِي أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ ثُمَّ جِئْتَ عَلَىٰ قَدَرٍ يَمْوَسَىٰ ﴿٤٠﴾

Your sister went out, saying, “I will tell you someone who will nurse him,” then We returned you to your mother so that she could rejoice and not grieve. Later you killed a man, but We saved you from distress and tried you with other tests. You stayed among the people of Midian for years, then you came here as I ordained [40] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 40)

Thus, the sister of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had a role to play in his story. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse: ‘And she said to his sister, "Follow him." So she watched him from a distance while they did not perceive.’ (*al-Qasas*: 11)

In this verse in question, Musa's (Moses') mother tells his sister to follow him once she knows of his rescue from the river. So, she followed him and became aware that he was in Pharaoh's house. Then Allah *the Almighty* caused him to refuse and reject all the wet-nurses. At this point, his sister intervened by saying: ‘I will tell you someone who will nurse him.’ (*Ta Ha*: 40) Indeed, only Allah *the Almighty* is Capable of bringing about this sequence of events.

Then He *the Most High* says: ‘... We returned you to your mother...’ (*Ta Ha*: 40). When we examine the semantic root of *Raja* ‘(to return)’ in the Quran, we find that it sometimes occurs as an intransitive verb as in Allah's saying: ‘And when Musa returned to his people ...’ (*al-A'raf*: 150). It also occurs as a

transitive verb, as is clear in His saying: ‘...We returned you to your mother...’ (*Ta Ha*: 40) and ‘Therefore if Allah brings you back to a party of them...’ (*at-Tawba*: 83).

The difference between an intransitive and transitive verb has to do with the act of returning itself; as for the transitive verb, it means he returned with himself, but as for the intransitive, it means that he caused someone else to return. Thus, returning is to revert to the state in which you were after having left it, and if you return on your own without any external forces, then the verb is intransitive. However, if there were factors which compelled you to return, then the verb is transitive.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘So that her eye might be cooled ...’ (*Ta Ha*: 40), it means that Musa (Moses) was returned to his mother in order that she rejoices at this matter.

Aspirations can be either abstract or tangible to the senses. Thus, if a person has hopes whose realisation he aspires to, as soon as they are realised, we say, ‘He no longer aspires to anything.’ The same is true with regard to a perceptible physical thing. The Arabs say that a beautiful thing captivates the gaze of beholders; that is to say, it binds the eye so that it does not look away from it. In fact, the person will not turn away from that which is beautiful unless he sees something more beautiful which cools the eye. In other words, it is an attractive thing at which the eye fixes itself and does not seek over it any augmentation of beauty.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Later you killed a man, but We saved you from distress and tried you with other tests...’ (*Ta Ha*: 40). This is another Gift of Allah *the Almighty* bestowed upon Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. In fact, Allah’s Gifts upon him were many, as He *the Almighty* says: ‘Indeed We showed you favour before.’ (*Ta Ha*: 37) So, this refers to one particular time, but there were multiple times.

The issue of Musa's (Moses') killing was narrated in Allah’s saying: ‘He entered the city, unnoticed by its people, and found two men fighting: one from his own people, the other an enemy. The one from his own people cried out to him for help against the enemy. Musa (Moses) struck him with his fist

and killed him...’ (*al-Qasas*: 15). Musa (Moses) departed from the city,⁽¹⁾ frightened and watching out cautiously for people lest they catch him and kill him. This is the meaning of His saying, ‘...but We saved you from distress...’ (*Ta Ha*: 40) It means Allah saved him from being killed or being captured.

Regarding Allah’s saying, ‘...and tried you with other tests...’ (*Ta Ha*: 40), it signifies that He *the Almighty* exposed him to many tribulations, but He then rescued him. The first of these trials is that you were born in the year that newborn children were being slain. This is followed by the trial of being cast into the river, and then what occurred to him with Pharaoh when he pulled his beard.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘You stayed among the people of Midyan for years, then you came here as I ordained.’ (*Ta Ha*: 40) In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the period of his stay amongst the people of *Midyan* as being one of His Favours on Musa (Moses), although he was a wage-earning labourer there. In this respect, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said, ‘My Lord! Surely I stand in need of whatever good you may send down to me.’ (*al-Qasas*: 24)

In *Midyan* Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* became acquainted with Shu‘aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* and married his daughter and fathered a son through her. Throughout this period, he was far from his homeland and his mother. So, when Allah *the Almighty* willed to charge him with the Message, He made him yearn for his country and for the sight of his mother. Therefore, He *Glorified is He* ordained his return, a point which is quite clear in His saying: ‘then you came here as I ordained.’ (*Ta Ha*: 40) Thus, this verse shows that Musa’s (Moses’) return was by a Divine Decree from Allah *the Exalted* Who chose him to deliver the Message. He stirred his heart with the longing to return to his homeland and to see his mother, thus caused him to walk on an unknown route, enduring the hardships of cold and the duress of travel. Now, on the return route and in the valley of Tuwa, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had an appointment to be chosen to bear the Message.

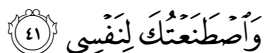
(1) This is the city of Memphis which today lies 28 kilometres south of Cairo.

In this respect, a poet who eulogised the caliph said to him:

The caliphate has appeared and it was preordained

Just as Musa (Moses) came unto his Lord as preordained

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:



**I have chosen you for Myself [41]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 41)**

This verse signifies that Allah *the Almighty* had rescued and protected Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* because He has prepared him for a mission, that is, to be sent as a messenger with the Divine Way of Guidance to Pharaoh and to his people.

Scholars have endeavoured to enumerate the requests which Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and asked of his Lord, which they found to be eight in number: 'Moses said, "Lord, lift up my heart. And ease my task for me. And loosen the knot from my tongue, so that they may understand my words, and give me a helper from my family, my brother Harun (Aaron). Augment my strength through him. Let him share my task so that we can glorify You much and remember You often."' (*Ta Ha*: 25-34)

Then, they found that Allah *the Exalted* bestowed upon him eight others without a request from him, a point which is clear in the saying of Allah: 'When We inspired your mother what was inspired. "Put your child into the chest, then place him in the river. Let the river wash him on to its bank, and he will be taken in by an enemy of Mine and his. I showered you with My love and planned that you should be reared under My watchful Eye." Your sister went out, saying, "I will tell you someone who will nurse him." Then We returned you to your mother so that she could rejoice and not grieve. Later you killed a man, but We saved you from distress and tried you with other tests. You stayed among the people of *Midyan* for years, then you came here as I ordained.' (*Ta Ha*: 38-40)

Thus, if Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* asked his Lord for eight requests, he had been granted eight others, without even asking for them. This is due to the fact that if Allah *the Almighty* gives you your request, this indicates His Ability to respond to it. However, if He gives you without request, this indicates His Love for you.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَذْهَبْ أَنْتَ وَأَخُوكَ بِآيَاتِي وَلَا تَنِيَا فِي ذِكْرِي ﴿٤٢﴾

**Go, you and your brother, with My signs,
and make sure that you remember Me [42]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 42)**

In this verse, the word ‘signs’ signifies the dazzling miracles which will overwhelm Pharaoh, So, Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* will not go empty-handed; rather, they have the proof of the veracity of the Message which they carry to Pharaoh.

The verse then continues: ‘... and make sure that you remember Me.’ (*Ta Ha*: 42) In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* commands them not to fall short or be lax in remembering Him. This is because He had prepared both of them in a manner corresponding to the difficulty of their mission. So, He warned them against being lax in undertaking it, for if they manifested any shortcoming, then this would be viewed as a shortcoming in their execution of the mission, not in Allah’s Preparation for them.

Regarding His saying, ‘... that you remember Me’ (*Ta Ha*: 42), it is a command for Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) that they should always remember Allah *the Almighty* for He is the One Who sent them and supported them with miracles. Moreover, it is He Who guards and watches over them all the time. In addition, He is the One Who will recompense them, and thereby they should not be heedless of this fact.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَذْهَبَا إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّهُ طَغَىٰ ﴿٤٣﴾

**Go, both of you, to Pharaoh, for he has exceeded
all bounds [43] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 43)**

In fact, there is no transgression which is worse than Pharaoh's false claim to be a divine lord. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...Pharaoh was lofty in the land, and most surely he was of the extravagant.' (*Yunus*: 83) In this verse, 'the extravagant' is the one who oversteps the limits, and Pharaoh had indeed exceeded the bounds by his transgression and ascription of divinity to himself. He had dominated the earth with the supremacy of a tyrant over other weaker people.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَقُولَا لَهُ، قَوْلًا لِّئِنَّا لَعَلَّهُ يَتَذَكَّرُ أَوْ يَخْشَىٰ ﴿٤٤﴾

**Speak to him gently so that he may take heed,
or show respect [44] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 44)**

This is a command to Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* to speak to Pharaoh gently even after he became a tyrannical transgressor. In this verse, it is Allah *the Almighty* Who judges that Pharaoh is a tyrannical transgressor. When you pronounce against him this charge, this judgment corresponds to your power and means as a human being. However, when Allah *the Exalted* says that he '... exceeded all bounds ...' (*Ta Ha*: 43), this signifies that he has overstepped all limits and reached the apex of tyrannical transgression, for it is our Lord Who makes this judgment.

As for His saying, 'Speak to him gently...' (*Ta Ha*: 44), it stresses that Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* must give Pharaoh the space he needs to witness their proof and miracles, not to treat him with aggressiveness or harshness. It is said that the admonition is weighty, so you should not deliver it as weighty as a mountain. In this respect, it is important for the caller not turn the admonition into an argument. Furthermore, you should not combine two hardships against the admonished person by taking him from what he is used to, which is the first hardship, through a way which

he dislikes, which is the second one. Rather, you should take him from what he is used to by means of what he likes.

This is a clear and a well-founded way of calling to faith which is established in Allah's saying: 'Call to the way of your Lord with wisdom and goodly exhortation ...' (*an-Nahl*: 125). This is the approach to be followed in calling to Islam since you are extracting the admonished one from what he is used to and familiar with; in other words, you are taking him out of what he enjoys of freedom and licentiousness in passionate desires and pleasures. By so doing, you can bind him with the Divine Way of Guidance, and this should also be done gently and benevolently.

It is this manner which man uses today in the domain of medication; even though the medicine used to be bitter, they have nowadays managed to coat it with a layer of sweet taste so that the procedure of swallowing it can be accomplished. Likewise, the same holds true for the bitterness of accepting truth and admonition, which is why you should coat it with mild and friendly words.

Now, employing the model verb 'may' in Allah's saying, '... so that he may take heed or show respect' (*Ta Ha*: 44) signifies the hope that Pharaoh may respond positively to the Message. This raises a question, which is, 'How could Allah *the Almighty* say, "...so that he may take heed or show respect" (*Ta Ha*: 44), while His Knowledge encompasses the fact that Pharaoh will not take heed nor show respect and that he will die as a disbeliever by drowning?' The answer is that Allah *the Exalted* wants Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to approach Pharaoh with confidence that he would be guided, not despairing of his guidance. This would give Musa (Moses) sufficient power to discuss the matter with him and to display proof to him. On the other hand, if Musa (Moses) went to Pharaoh while knowing the ultimate result, he would be frustrated, not seeing any value to his words.

Hence, Allah *the Almighty* knows for certain what will happen regarding Pharaoh, yet He wishes to establish the evidence against him, a fact which is clear in His saying: '... so that people should not have a plea against Allah after the (coming of) prophets ...' (*an-Nisa*': 165).

As for His saying, '... he may take heed or show respect' (*Ta Ha*: 44), it indicates that if any person puts aside his wicked thoughts and carnal desires,

he will inevitably be guided by his primordial nature to believe in Allah's Existence. Moreover, he will recall the covenant taken by Allah from all souls in pre-eternity, when He says: '... "Am I not your Lord?" They said, "Yes! We bear witness.... "' (*al-A'raf*: 172)

Also, relevant to this context is what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Every child is born with a true faith of Islam (i.e. to worship none but Allah Alone), and it is his parents who convert him to Judaism, Christianity or Magianism.'⁽¹⁾

In fact, if a person were to remember and refrain from his capricious inclination, he would inevitably be guided to believe in Allah's Existence. However, Allah *the Almighty* has provided space for forgetfulness, which is why He has sent messengers to remind people. For this reason, He says: '...(We sent) messengers as the givers of good news and as warners...'^(an-Nisa': 165), but He does not say that they were sent to initiate something new; rather, they were sent to give good news and to warn the people against what they should not have been forgetful of.

As far as the issue of belief in Allah is concerned, it should have been clear and familiar to people that there is an Omnipotent Creator. Afterwards, they should have only waited for messengers to inform them about His Commands and the way they should worship Him, or in other words, what they should do and from what they should abstain.

In the same respect, we have previously propounded a parable of a man who was lost in the vast desert and who could find neither water nor food until he was on the point of perishing. He was then overcome with sleep and when he awaked, there was suddenly a table spread with various types of food and drink. By Allah, before he reached his hand out to the food, would he not wonder about the one who brought this to him? This also applies to the human being who had come into an already-fashioned universe to receive him: the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, crops, water and air, etc. So, would it not be fitting for him to ask, 'Who created this marvellous creation?' Thus,

(1) Magianism is a sect which believes in the eternal nature of light and darkness, claiming that good is the act of light and evil is the act of darkness. See *Ibn Mandhur, Lisan Al-'Arab, the root Majasa*.

if you recollected all blessings you come upon in this world, you would end up with faith.

Back to the verse being examined; the meaning of Allah's saying, '... so that he may take heed...' (*Ta Ha*: 44) is that by taking gently to Pharaoh, he might recall the aforementioned blessings and thus have faith in their Bestower. As for His saying, '...or show respect' (*Ta Ha*: 44), it means that if he did not take heed, he at least should be afraid of the coming punishment and thus believe in Allah *the Almighty* to whom all things shall return in the Hereafter.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says about the two of them:

قَالَا رَبَّنَا إِنَّا نَخَافُ أَنْ يُفْرِطَ عَلَيْنَا أَوْ أَنْ يَطْغَىٰ

They said, 'Lord, we fear he will do us great harm or exceed all bounds' [45] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 45)

Fear is a sentiment in the soul which arouses awe and dread of something. Now, what do Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) fear? They are afraid that '... he (i.e. Pharaoh) will do us great harm...' (*Ta Ha*: 45) which means that they feared he would overstep the bounds against them. The opposite of overstepping the limits in a matter is to fall short in it. This is why one says, 'The middle way is that of virtue between excess and lax negligence.' Concerning the use of this term in question, i.e.: 'overstepping the limits', one says that a horse exceeds the limits when it outstrips in a race course. The horse also exceeds the limits when it does not only outdistance other horses but also goes beyond that. For this reason, when the Quran tells us about the Limits of Allah, it says on one occasion. 'These are the Limits of Allah, so do not exceed them...' (*al-Baqara*: 229) which signifies that we should beware of going beyond those limits established for us by Allah *the Almighty*. On another occasion, it says: '... These are the Limits of Allah, so do not go near them ...' (*al-Baqara*: 187).

Thus, as for legally permissible things, it says: '...so do not exceed them...' (*al-Baqara*: 229) which means to stop at the limit and to not go beyond it. However, as for the legally forbidden things, it says: '... so do not go near them ...' (*al-Baqara*: 187). This is because if you approach them, you will fall into them.

Back to the verse under study; the meaning, then, of ‘...he will do us great harm...’ (*Ta Ha*: 45) is that Pharaoh may go beyond the bounds and rush to kill the messengers before they say anything. Regarding Allah’s saying, ‘...or exceed all bounds’ (*Ta Ha*: 45), it suggests that he will not be satisfied with killing the messengers, but he will also plunge into abusing the due Right of Allah or say something blasphemous about Him as he previously ascribed divinity to himself.

Now, the callers to Islam must not reach the stage in which those who are called might abuse the due Right of Allah *the Almighty*. In this respect, He educates those who believe in Him about the proper etiquette of calling such people by saying: ‘And do not abuse those whom they call upon besides Allah, lest exceeding the limits they should abuse Allah out of ignorance...’ (*al-An‘am*: 108).

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ لَا تَخَافَا إِنَّنِي مَعَكُمَا أَسْمَعُ وَأَرَىٰ ﴿٤٦﴾

He said, ‘Do not be afraid, I am with you both, hearing and seeing everything [46] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 46)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* reassures Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* that He will not forsake or abandon them, for He is with them both all the time, hearing and seeing. As the action is an utterance which is heard or a deed which is seen, then they should rest assured, for Allah *the Exalted* shall protect them. Elsewhere, He says: ‘And certainly Our Word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the prophets. Most surely they shall be the assisted ones, and most surely Our host alone shall be the victorious ones.’ (*as-Saffat*: 171-173)

This is one of the established Laws of Allah *the Almighty*. Hence, if you see the so-called soldiers of Allah defeated, then you can be certain that they are not His true soldiers. Otherwise, Allah’s Promise of victory to His Armies can never be broken.

We can offer evidence to substantiate this fact by what happened to the Muslims at the battle of Uhud. It is correct that the Muslims were routed in

this military campaign because they diverged from Prophet Muhammad’s directives and disobeyed him when he told the archers, ‘Do not leave your positions under any given circumstance.’⁽¹⁾ However, as soon as they noticed the first signs of victory, they abandoned their positions and descended to gather booty. Then Khalid ibn Al-Walid circled behind them, and they suffered a defeat. Even if the Muslims were defeated, Islam, nevertheless, was victorious, for when they went against Prophet Muhammad’s orders, they were routed. By Allah, had they been victorious despite this contravention, would the position of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* have been set firmly aright amongst them after this?

Thus, in the verse in question, Allah *Glorified is He* reassures them that His Omnipotence shall protect the two of them, and it will intervene if the situation requires it, just as what happened in the incident of the date and the ember, while Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was a young child in Pharaoh’s house.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says to the two of them:

فَأَنبَاهُ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولَا رَبِّكَ فَأَرْسِلْ مَعَنَا بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَا تَعَدُّهُمْ
 قَدْ جِئْنَاكَ بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّكَ وَالسَّلَامُ عَلَيَّ مَنِ اتَّبَعَ الْهُدَىٰ ﴿٤٧﴾

Go and tell him, “We are your Lord’s messengers, so send the Children of Israel with us and do not oppress them. We have brought you a sign from your Lord. Peace be upon whoever follows the right guidance [47] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 47)

Let us note here that the two of them did not directly confront Pharaoh with what he falsely claimed of divinity. Rather, they referred to Allah’s Lordship by saying, ‘We are your Lord’s messengers...’ (*Ta Ha*: 47) which

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Musa ibn ‘Uqba. In this Hadith we find: ‘Messenger Muhammad positioned fifty men from among the archers near the cavalry of the enemy. He gave command over them to ‘Abdullah Ibn Jubayr, the brother of Khawwat ibn Jubayr, and he told them, ‘O you archers, once we have assumed our positions for the battle, do not abandon your positions even if you see that we are granted victory. I command that no man among you leave his place, and keep the cavalry away from us!’ So he enjoined them to do this, and it came to pass. As a result of the archers’ disobedience to the orders of Prophet Muhammad, he was badly hurt during this battle.’ See Al-Bayhaqi, Dala’il An-Nubuwa, 3/209.*

constitutes a great shock for Pharaoh. Thereafter, they moved on to another issue, namely the case of the children of Israel whom Pharaoh had made subservient in his service, punishing and oppressing them. Hence, they said, '... so send the Children of Israel with us and do not oppress them...' (*Ta Ha: 47*). It is as if they were sent to take the children of Israel with them to rescue them from Pharaoh's oppression. The verse then continues: '... We have brought you a sign...' (*Ta Ha: 47*). This means that they have brought him a miracle which was '... from your Lord.' (*Ta Ha: 47*) In this verse, we notice that they repeated the word 'Lord' for the second time.

Allah *the Exalted* had taught them how to enter into the presence of Pharaoh and how to converse with him in a matter which has nothing to do with his arrogant pride and purported divinity, namely the case of the children of Israel.

As for the children of Israel, they are the remaining descendants of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* and his brothers who came to Egypt in the era of Al-'Aziz⁽¹⁾ who brought Yusuf (Joseph) into his inner circle and placed him in charge over the grain stores of the land. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says about the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: 'The king said, "Bring him to me. I will have him serve me personally." Then, once he had spoken with him, "From now on, you will have our trust and favour." Yusuf (Joseph) said, "Put me in charge of the nation's storehouses. I shall manage them prudently and carefully."' (*Yusuf: 54-55*)

Concerning Allah's saying: '... Peace be upon whoever follows the right guidance' (*Ta Ha: 47*), this is not meant to be a greeting to Pharaoh, as this greeting is only offered to a follower of guidance, but if the addressee does not fit this description, then this greeting indicates the end of the discussion.

For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to write this same expression in his missives to Al-Muqawqis, the great one of the Copts, and to Heraclius, the Emperor of Byzantium, by saying: 'I call you

(1) *In his Tafsiir, Ibn Kathir says that Al-'Aziz is the title of the governor of Egypt in the time of Joseph, and he was the chief minister. Mohamed ibn Ishaq said that his name was Ifir ibn Ruhayb who was in charge of the Egyptian treasury. At that time, the king was Ar-Rayan ibn Al-Walid, a man from Al-'Amaliq. See Ibn Kathir, Tafsiir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim, 2/473.*

to Islam. If you become Muslim, you will be safe, and Allah will double your reward. If you turn away, then you incur the wrong action of your subjects. Peace be upon the one who follows guidance.⁽¹⁾

Thereafter, Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* said to Pharaoh:

إِنَّا قَدْ أُوحِيَ إِلَيْنَا أَنَّ الْعَذَابَ عَلَىٰ مَنْ كَذَّبَ وَتَوَلَّىٰ ﴿٤٨﴾

It has been revealed to us that punishment falls on whoever rejects the truth and turns his back on it [48] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 48)

Hence, they provided him here with the ultimate issue: it has come to us by Divine revelation that whoever denies and turns his back on the truth shall be inflicted with chastisement. Their saying, ‘...it has been revealed to us...’ (*Ta Ha*: 48) means that it is their Lord Who has revealed the Message to them. Now, when Pharaoh heard this discourse, he desired to enter into specific details in order to preoccupy and prolong the argument with them. By so doing, Pharaoh would compose his thoughts and think about what to say. Afterwards,

قَالَ فَمَنْ رَبُّكُمْ يَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٤٩﴾

[Pharaoh] said, ‘Moses, who is this Lord of yours?’ [49] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 49)

In this verse, Pharaoh directs his speech to the main leader of this mission, namely Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Consequently:

قَالَ رَبُّنَا الَّذِي أَعْطَىٰ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَلْقَهُ ثُمَّ هَدَىٰ ﴿٥٠﴾

Moses said, ‘Our Lord is He who gave everything its form, then gave it guidance’ [50] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 50)

In this verse, the meaning of Allah’s saying, ‘... He Who gave everything its form, then gave it guidance’ (*Ta Ha*: 48) is that He created everything in

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim in the context of a long Hadith on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 7; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1773.

the existence for a specific purpose. Thus, His creation is fashioned in accord with the purpose for which it was created. The verse continues: ‘... then gave it guidance.’ (*Ta Ha*: 50) This means that He directed everything to fulfil its function and made it easy for it to do so.

Allah *the Almighty* granted everything its form. Now, a created being is something which must have materiality, a form, and shape; it has a colour, a smell, and component elements to perform its function. As a matter of fact, when Allah *the Most High* creates something, He ordains for it all the aforementioned things by means of which this created being shall properly do its due role. Thus, He provides it with an eye to see, with a nose to smell and with a tongue to taste. Then He guides all things to what He wills in order to accomplish their function. All of this is done without any intervention on the part of anyone.

A man, being preordained by the Exalted, fully Capable One is able to make, for example, a time bomb and to regulate the time of its explosion so that it performs its function automatically afterwards without its maker’s communication with it. If this is so, then it is understandable that Allah *the Almighty* created everything and provided it with the capability of performing its function in the most perfect way, with a spontaneous instinctual execution. Thus, the animals which we accuse of stupidity, calling them unintelligible beasts, are not, in reality, as such. Allah *Glorified is He* has given us a depiction of them in the story of the raven which He sent to teach the son of Adam how to bury the corpse of his brother. This story is related in His saying: ‘Then Allah sent a raven digging up the earth so that it might show him how he should cover the dead body of his brother. He said, "Woe me! Do I lack the strength that I should be like this raven and cover the dead body of my brother?" So he became of those who regret.’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 31) How did the raven undertake this deed? It did this by means of the instinct which Allah *the Exalted* placed in it.

Let us take another example to illustrate this point. When you want a donkey – which some people see as a symbol of stupidity– to go over a ditch, you will notice that it looks at it and estimates its width, and if it is able to get across it, it jumps without hesitation. However, if it is beyond its capacity, it hesitates, draws back, and refuses to advance, no matter how severe you beat it or compel it to do this. This is actually done by the innate instinct placed in it by Allah *the Almighty*.

For this reason, you find that created beings are not endowed with free will, and so they do not err because they are governed by instinct. Additionally, they do not have a mind to incite them to follow whims, nor do they have a choice between options. They are similar to the artificial intelligence which provides you with that which you have programmed into it, no more or less. The human being, on the other hand, is able to alter reality and to hide that which he wants from it. This is because he has intellectual capacities by which he can compare between things, thus determines preferences—say this, but do not say that. This is the blessing by which Allah *the Almighty* distinguished them from other created beings.

Likewise, you find that when an animal has eaten its fill, it refrains from food, and it is not possible to force it to eat a single sprig of clover however much you may try. The human being who possesses a mind and passionate inclinations, on the other hand, will say to you, ‘Provide me with varieties of food. You will be shown where they can be accommodated.’ Hence, there is nothing to hinder him after having eaten like a horse, from tasting numerous kinds of sweets, fruit, etc.

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says that He: ‘... gave everything its form, then gave it guidance.’ (*Ta Ha*: 50) Let us offer an example of the ears which are judiciously put together, perfectly suited to receive sounds. On the outside, an ear has wrinkles and curves which capture sounds of high frequency, mollifying their intensity. Hence, they reach the delicate eardrum in an abated form; otherwise these sounds would rupture it and render it deaf. Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* provided the external form of the ear to block winds such that, if they blow strongly, they will not harm it.

Likewise, how many are the Signs of Allah in the eye! Allah *the Exalted* had created it with precise measure. Let us offer an example of its signs; if its temperature exceeds 12 degrees, it is ruined. On the other hand, if the tip of the temperature of the nose exceeds 9 degrees, it cannot carry out its function. Yet there is an organ within the body the temperature of which is 40 degrees, namely the liver. The overall temperature of a person is 37 degrees, remaining constant in cold regions where it is freezing, just as it remains constant in hot regions. It neither increases nor decreases except in the case of illness or defect in the body.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* created everything in the existence with precise measure, wisdom and capacity to carry out its function, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'Who creates, then makes complete and Who makes (things) according to a measure, then guides (them to their goal).' (*al-A'la: 2-3*)

Let us give another example namely, the tongue; Allah *the Exalted* provided it with protuberances each one of which tastes a specific flavour. One is for sweetness, one is for bitterness, one is for acidity and so on. All of them are placed in this narrow area, next to one another, with an apportionment that is precise and inimitable.⁽¹⁾

You should reflect also on the nose and the mucus it contains and which does not drip from you. It also has delicate little hairs which enable the inhaled air to go through a process of filtration and conditioning before it reaches your lungs. For this reason, we should not cut the small hairs which are inside the nose, as they have a function.

Furthermore, the muscle of the heart—and all that which it comprises of the atrium, ventricles and entry and exit points for the blood—is finely regulated and mechanically functioning. It does not stop or malfunction for a period of 120 or 140 years. It works spontaneously even when you are asleep. So, what machine could possibly perform this function?

Back to the verse under discussion; when Allah *the Exalted* sent Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* to Pharaoh with miracles proving their veracity, their primary mission was to rescue the Children of Israel from his tyrannical transgression. Thus, the question of faith was incidental, whereas the fundamental mission of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was to '... send the Children of Israel with us and do not oppress them.' (*Ta Ha: 47*)

When Allah *the Almighty* presents the issue of faith, He substantiates it by the proof of the beginning of creation, a point which is clear in His saying: 'Our Lord is He Who gave everything its form, then gave it guidance.' (*Ta Ha: 50*) So, it was suitable to present such proof to Pharaoh because he claimed

(1) From Linguist: This information is according to the knowledge and belief of Sheikh Sha'rawi *may Allah rest his soul* it was stated by him to further clarify certain points, but it does not necessarily conform to the scientific facts and information proven true.

divinity, and some people must have deified him, even though they were mankind like him. Moreover, he boasted proudly of his dominion and his wealth of the land of Egypt, its Nile and bountiful blessings by saying, ‘...My people! Is the kingdom of Egypt not mine? And these rivers flow beneath me...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 51). This is why Allah *the Exalted* wished to refute his claim of divinity by saying, ‘Have you created any of your subjects who deify you?’

The proof offered in the case of Pharaoh is similar to that offered to Nimrod when Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said to him: “My Lord is He Who gives life and causes to die.” He said, “I give life and cause death.” (*al-Baqara*: 258) Hence, Nimrod came up with nothing but argumentation and sophistry, taking refuge in the stratagem of those who have no sound argument. So, he brought two men and said, ‘I sentence this one to death and grant pardon to this one.’ In this way, he claimed to be a Lord like Allah *the Almighty* Who gives life and causes death. Therefore, when Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* sensed that he was resorting to tricky manoeuvring and disputation, he moved him to an issue that he could not argue about. Ibrahim's (Abraham's) argument is presented in Allah's saying: ‘... Ibrahim (Abraham) said, "So, surely, Allah causes the sun to rise from the east, then make it rise from the west." Thus, he who disbelieved was confounded, and Allah does not guide aright the unjust people.’ (*al-Baqara*: 258)

Thus, returning to the case of original creation is a proof which no one can refute; even Pharaoh himself did not claim that he created anything. Instead, he haughtily demonstrated his power, was pretentiously arrogant, and claimed divinity only over those who deified him, but whom he did not create. Moreover, he created neither himself nor the dominion in which he was taking pride.

Inasmuch as the proof of the original creation was a convincing one, Pharaoh had no rebuttal against it. For this reason, when he heard Musa's (Moses') statement: ‘Our Lord is He Who gave everything its form, then gave it guidance’ (*Ta Ha*: 50), he was unable to refute this evidence. Consequently, he sought to shift the dialogue from discussing this irrefutable proof to a secondary, valueless issue to which he fled. He said to Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron):

قَالَ فَمَا بَالُ الْقُرُونِ الْأُولَى ﴿٥١﴾

**He said, ‘What about former generations?’ [51]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 51)**

Thus, Pharaoh asked about the bygone peoples. However, what is the relevance of the former generations about which they were talking? As a matter of fact, the moment Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* sensed the tricky manoeuvring of Pharaoh and the attempt to escape from the fundamental topic, he closed the door upon him by saying:

قَالَ عِلْمُهَا عِنْدَ رَبِّي فِي كِتَابٍ لَا يَضِلُّ رَبِّي وَلَا يَنْسَى ﴿٥٢﴾

**Moses said, ‘My Lord alone has knowledge of
them, all in a record; my Lord does not err or
forget’ [52] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 52)**

Hence, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* answered Pharaoh by saying, ‘I have nothing to do with this issue since the One to be asked about the past generations is the One Who will recompense them. It is Allah Who certainly knows their condition, especially in terms of their belief and disbelief because He will hold them accountable for that.’ Thus, this question is out of place; it is merely a kind of light talk and abusive drivel. This is because no one knows the state of the past generations except Allah *the Almighty* as it is He Who will reward or punish them.

Regarding Allah’s saying, ‘... all in a record...’ (*Ta Ha*: 52), it means that He recorded all what concerns the former generations in a Book. The angels who regulate affairs according to the Divine Decree review this Book in order to carry out their mission with which He entrusted them. The word ‘Book’ does not mean that Allah *the Almighty* reviews it to know what is in it, a point which is ever so clear in the Saying of Allah: ‘... My Lord does not err or forget.’ (*Ta Ha*: 52) Then Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* brings Pharaoh back to the primary issue which is the subject of creation, but with a detailed depiction by saying:

الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ الْأَرْضَ مَهْدًا وَسَلَكَ لَكُمْ فِيهَا سُبُلًا وَأَنْزَلَ مِنَ
السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِّن نَّبَاتٍ شَتَّى

**It was He who spread out the earth for you and traced
routes in it. He sent down water from the sky. With that
water We bring forth every kind of plant[53]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 53)**

To spread out something is to prepare it in a way suitable for its function. This is like what you do with your bed before you go to sleep. It also looks like what you do when you prepare the bed for the baby and smooth it out, removing what might upset or disturb him from it so that he can settle in it and rest. You will necessarily undertake this task for him because he lives by your own natural instinct until his own natural instinct impels him to such matters and so he does it by himself. This is why it is imperative for you during this period to watch over him to provide for his needs and to take good care of him. Thus, the meaning of Allah's saying, 'It was He Who spread out the earth for you...' (*Ta Ha*: 53), is that He has smoothed it out and prepared it for human beings so that it would be fitting for their lives and livelihood on it.

Now preparing the earth does not mean making it flat; rather, arranging it for its function, since the earth has mountains, elevations and valleys, without which life would not be possible on it. Hence, arranging it implies making it suitable for living on it, whether it be on land that is level, curved, elevated or sunken. As for the land which is level, we find roads which are flat and straight. However, as for mountainous regions, they are curved and twisted since they can only be in this form. These roads have an advantage in their curves, as you do not have to face the sun for a long period; rather, you alter between facing the sun at times and the shade at other.

We have previously drawn analogy with the hook which we make of iron; if we made it straight, it would not serve its purpose. Hence, its correctness lies in its being crooked. So, you prepare it in this way to fulfil its function, and if it were straight, it would not pull the intended thing. Therefore; we say that the orderly correct arrangement is to make something suitable for its

function, regardless of whether it is with straightness or crookedness, or whether it is with an uneven surface or with even regularity.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... and traced routes in it.’ (*Ta Ha: 53*) This means that He traced routes for the people to help them reach their destinations with ease. The Arabic word for the verb ‘to trace’ has many connotations. This verb can be transitive, thus meaning entering or penetrating. It also occurs as a transitive verb as when you say, ‘So-and-so travelled the road.’ Also relevant here is Allah’s saying: ‘What has brought you into Hell?’ The addressees in this verse are casted into hellfire which means that they entered it. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Enter your hand into the opening of your shirt ...’ (*al-Qasas: 32*), or in other words, place it into it.

When you travel along desert routes, you will find that they vary from one to another. Amongst them are those which are so narrow that one can barely put his single foot, and amongst them are the broad routes upon which a loaded camel or a car can travel. This is due to the fact that Allah *the Exalted* has traced out for us different, varied ways according to the task which we are undertaking.

Then He says: ‘He sent down water from the sky. With that water We bring forth species of various herbs.’ (*Ta Ha: 53*) This is also relevant to the issue of creation, which no one claims a role in since it would be an easily refuted claim. So, it is as if Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was saying to Pharaoh, ‘O, you who ascribe divinity to yourself, show us a manifestation of your Divine Power. Show us, for example, the plants that you have created.’ However, he was unable to do so, and thereby he was obligated to accept the validity of the argument.

In a similar manner, no one has any active role in causing water to descend from the sky. However, once plants emerge, we may have some work to do such as ploughing, sowing, irrigating and so on. Yet this work is based on the causal factors which Allah *the Almighty* created for you. Therefore, when He speaks of water, He says ‘... He sent down ...’ (*Ta Ha: 53*) This clearly means that no one has any part in it. However, when He speaks of plants, He says, ‘...We brought them forth...’ (*Ta Ha: 53*), since this process entails the cooperation of many efforts which assists in the process of bringing them forth. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* respects and values your work.

In the same connection, let us read His saying: ‘Have you considered what you sow? Is it you that cause it to grow, or are We the causers of growth?’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 63-64) In these verses, He says that He respects the efforts made by people in sowing the land. However, when you plough, from where did you get the seeds? Then as soon as you trace back the chain of the original seeds, it leads you to plants which have no precedent. Likewise, if you traced back the chain of humanity, you will find that it ends up at a father who has no father, as he was created by Allah *the Almighty*.

Now after you have sowed the ground and watered it, do you have a stratagem for making them spout and grow daily? Did you grab hold of it and pull it so that it might grow? It is indeed the Power of the All-Capable, ‘Who creates, then makes complete and Who makes (things) according to a measure, then guides (them to their goal).’ (*al-A‘la*: 2-3) For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* emphatically says, following the verses cited in the previous paragraph: ‘If We pleased, We should have certainly made it broken down into pieces ...’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 65). So, if this is your handiwork, O, mankind, then preserve it and protect it yourselves.

This is similar to what occurred in the case of Qarun when he said regarding Allah’s Blessings conferred on him: ‘... I have been given this only on account of the knowledge I have.’ (*al-‘Ankabut*: 49) If this had been true, he should have sustained and protected these blessings with what he possessed of knowledge. So, when Allah *the Most High* caused the earth to swallow him and his house, this illustrated the falsehood of his statement.

Let us take into account that Allah *the Almighty* stresses the fact: ‘If We pleased, We should have certainly made it broken down into pieces....’ So, what is the reason for this emphasis? It is because you have an active participation in the issue of cultivation, a point which might deceive you and make you hesitant in accepting this possibility. By contrast, when Allah *the Almighty* speaks about water, He says: ‘Have you considered the water which you drink? Is it you who sends it down from the clouds, or are We the senders? If We pleased, We would have made it salty ...’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 68-70). The latter verse is expressed without any emphasis because it is a matter which no one makes claim to.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'We bring forth species of various herbs.' (*Ta Ha: 53*) In this verse, the plants are referred to as being in pairs. This is because Allah *the Exalted* wants all the species to multiply and proliferate, which necessarily requires pairs of opposite genders: male and female. Just like mankind, all other creatures proliferate. In this respect, Allah *Glorified is He* created the earth and measured its sustenance in a way which must be sufficient for everything that lives on it.

However, when the land is constrained and no longer produces sustenance enough for us, and people starve, then we certainly should know that we have failed to reclaim and cultivate it. Therefore, when shortages of food are inflicted us, we went out to the desert to make it arable. Now we know that we were undoubtedly negligent for a long period in the past. We proliferated in population, but we did not augment what was around us of cultivable land.

In the same respect, we should note that male and female do not exist only in plants, but rather, they exist in all that which Allah *the Almighty* created, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'Glory be to Him Who created pairs of all things, of what the earth grows, and of their kind and of what they do not know.' (*Ya Sin: 36*) Hence, the phenomenon of complementary pairs exists in everything, whether or not you are aware of it, even in inanimate things. There are positive and negative charges, electrons, and ions in the atom. In this manner, the more mankind proliferates, the more Allah's Bestowal increases.

As for His saying, '... species of various herbs' (*Ta Ha: 53*), it means that Allah *the Almighty* brought forth many different and diverse plants by the water; this difference might yet be found amongst plants of the same species.

So, if you were to go, for example, to the date market in Medina, the city of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, you would find many types of dates, differing in their shape, taste, and size. All of them fall under the single category of what is termed 'dates'. This is also the case if you examined all the other species of cultivated crops.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the reason for bringing forth plants by saying:

كُلُوا وَارْعَوْا أَنْعَمَكُمُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي النُّهَى ﴿٥٤﴾

So eat, and graze your cattle. There are truly signs in all this for people of understanding [54] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 54)

The imperative verb ‘eat’ shows that the Creator *Glorified is He* created life and created the constituent elements for sustaining it; the first of these is nourishment including food and drink. As for these elements of subsistence, there is a correspondence between ownership and importance, as shown in the following order: food, water, and air.

You require food but can go without it for a month until the amount of fat you store in your body is over. The body will nourish itself from this when food is absent because when you eat, you burn up some of this food in your movement and then store the rest in the form of fat which is the storehouse of nourishment in the body. Then, as soon as the fatty substance is used up, the body derives its nourishment from flesh, and then from bone which is the last of the storage places of nourishment in a person’s body.

Thus, when Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* wanted to describe his weakness, he said, ‘...My Lord! Surely, my bones are weakened...’ (*Maryam*: 4)

Hence, you find that nourishment is possessed by many. Since you are able to survive a long time without it, this enables you to devise ways of acquiring it or enables others to provided assistance to you when they realise that you are of limited means and hungry.

As for water, you cannot go without it for three to ten days. Therefore, it is rare for water to be possessed by someone. However, as regards air, you are incapable of surviving without it for more than a single breath. Hence, it is a manifestation of Allah’s Mercy towards His slaves that air is owned by no one. Otherwise, if the proprietor of air became angry at you and withheld it from you, you would die before he is pleased with you. There is not time for you to devise a stratagem for getting it.

Afterwards Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and let your cattle graze’ (*Ta Ha*: 54); this is due to them also having a need of nourishment. In another verse, He *the Most High* says: ‘A provision for you and for your cattle.’ (*an-Nazi‘at*: 33)

Subsequently, everything is ultimately beneficial to mankind for whom Allah *the Almighty* made this entire universe subservient.

There follows His saying: 'There are truly signs in all this for people of understanding.' (*Ta Ha: 54*) The word 'signs' in this verse refers to the wonderful phenomena. As for the expression 'people of understanding', it refers to those who employ their intellect in the process of reflecting and deciding upon various choices. In Arabic, the root of the word 'mind' refers to the cord used for restraining and controlling a riding beast so that it does not run away from you. Likewise, the mind was not created for you so that you might roam astray however you like. Rather, it was created to restrain your natural impulses and to govern them in accordance with their function in your life. The natural impulse to eat, for example, is to sustain life in accordance with the energy of the body. Hence, when you exceed this limit, this amounts to corrupting gluttony.

In the same respect, curiosity was provided for studying the universe and uncovering its secrets and Allah's wondrous signs inherent in it. However, you should not go beyond this by spying on other human beings.

The discerning minds also forbid the like of these deviant escapades. Therefore, human beings must necessarily possess a discerning mind which restrains their natural impulses in order that they do not transgress against the function ordained for them. A person must stop such impulses at their limits, otherwise they break free and run riot in the universe. Hence a human being must have a mind which restrains him and says to him, 'Do not follow the carnal inclinations of the soul and its whimsical tendencies.' If this is not done, then how can you give free rein to your lustful desires while you are not alone in the universe? What would the situation be like if others gave free rein to their lustful desires as well?

In Arabic, the discerning mind is also termed *Lubb* (kernel or innermost core) which calls your attention to the deep truths of things, not to their outer shape, and that you would be of greater foresight and deeper thinking in matters. Thus, when Allah *the Almighty* commands you to give something of the surplus of your wealth to the poor, people with superficial thinking say, 'No, how could it be that I weary myself and toil at accumulating it, and then

give it to a poor man while he has not done anything?’ However, when you deepen your comprehension of the wisdom of this command, you find that Allah *Glorified is He* says to you, ‘Give to the needy now while you are able so that if at some time you are in need, you will find someone who gives you.’ As a matter of fact, life is ever changing; the rich may become impoverished; the healthy may become sick; the strong may become weak. This is an established law among mankind, prevailing over them.

When you examine how the Divine Law sets bounds on your lustful passions, you should not forget that it imposes the same bounds on others as well. Therefore, as Allah *the Most High* commands you as an individual by saying, ‘Do not look at the inviolable things of other people’, He also commands all people not to look at your inviolable things.

In this way, the Creator *Glorified is He* has not provided us with the intellectual capacities in order to run riot in the universe; rather, they are used to regulate our natural instinct and behaviour, along with guarding them from the baseness of our passionate desires. Consequently, this will set the society aright and protect its members. Otherwise, if you permit yourself to steal, this means that you permit others to steal from you! Hence, it is in your own interest to find legislation that hinders you and a procedural method to regulate your life and the life of others.

Allah says:

مِنْهَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ وَفِيهَا نُعِيدُكُمْ وَمِنْهَا نُخْرِجُكُمْ تَارَةً أُخْرَى ﴿٥٥﴾

**From the earth We created you, into it We shall return
you, and from it We shall raise you a second time [55]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 55)**

Let us take into account here that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is presenting issues to Pharaoh which do not concern him alone, issues which help prevent giving rise to another Pharaoh.

The verse begins with a prepositional phrase which signifies that Allah *the Almighty* created mankind out of the earth, about which He previously says: ‘It was He Who spread out the earth for you...’ (*Ta Ha*: 53). Allah *the Almighty*

mentions in the verse that we have three phases in relation to the earth: 'From the earth We created you, into it We shall return you, and from it We shall raise you a second time.' (*Ta Ha*: 55) In another verse, He *the Most High* mentions a fourth phase by saying: 'Therein shall you live, and therein shall you die and from it shall you be raised.' (*al-A'raf*: 25) So, there are four phases: being created out of the earth, living upon it, returning to it by death and being brought forth by means of resurrection.

Concerning Allah's saying, 'From the earth We created you...' (*Ta Ha*: 55), one should note that the creation is of two parts: the primary creation and the secondary creation. The primary creation was with Adam, and he was created out of clay, or in other words, out of the earth. Then there is the second creation, which occurred through procreation. Now if the primary creation was out of clay, then all that descend from it are considered likewise since he was the first origin.

We might express the fact that mankind came from earth in a different way and say, 'Procreation is generated by male sperm and female eggs; these are two elements which are originally brought forth by food and drink and originally come forth from the earth. Hence, you, mankind, are created from the earth, with an intermediary or without an intermediary.' If this issue of creation is relating to the unseen world, nevertheless, the Creator has left in His universe discerning minds which research and examine the universe. They have provided us with evidence of the veracity of this issue. When scientists analysed the soil of the earth, they found it to consist of sixteen elements beginning with oxygen and ending with magnesium. So, when they analysed the elements of man, they found them to be the same sixteen elements. By this analytical research, they confirmed the veracity of the issue of the creation about which the Creator had informed us.

Concerning His saying, '... into it We shall return you...' (*Ta Ha*: 55), this is a visible phase, for we bury our dead in the earth. Hence, a poet said:

If you have become fed up with life, then return to
 The earth and sleep peacefully from the torments
 She is a mother more compassionate than the mother
 Who left you behind to be troubled?

So after the structure of a human being is razed by death, only his relatives hasten to bury him. You should reflect on the case of a woman whose only child has died, and he was the dearest of all people for her and whom she would not bear being parted from for a single night. Now she cannot bear his presence. Instead, she rushes to send him to his original mother, the earth.

This is because after the soul leaves the body, it rapidly turns into putrid corpse which cannot be endured even on the part of his mother and those closest to him. However, the earth embraces him and absorbs everything that is noxious in him.

Amongst the amazing marvels in the destruction of the physique of the human being by death is that it happens contrary to his construction. Thus, when the Creator speaks of the original creation of man, He says that he was created out of dust, out of clay, out of dark slime transmuted and out of sounding clay, like pottery. We have said that all of these are stages of a single substance. Then the Creator breathes the spirit into him, and life streams into him.

However, when we examine death, we find it to be the opposite of this sequence. It is as if you constructed a building consisting of numerous floors, then the last floor to be built is the first to be demolished. Similarly, death as it occurs to a person begins with taking away the spirit which was blown in him at the very end. Then, the body stiffens with rigor mortis like pottery makers sounding clay. Then, it decays and becomes putrid like dark slime transmuted. Then, the water in it evaporates, and the remaining elements dissolve; thus, it ultimately turns into earth.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... and from it We shall raise you a second time.’ (*Ta Ha: 55*) This means that human beings will be raised anew by means of revivification on the Day of Resurrection. This revivification has a particular order which differs from the initial creation; Allah *the Exalted* will begin by restoring the spirit, and then He consummates the body for it.

All of these are cosmological matters laid before Pharaoh, so they might turn him away from his condition of claiming divinity. Now, divinity requires the existence of those who deify, for a god must have those who worship him. So, how can Pharaoh ascribe divinity to himself, while he possesses nothing

of the attributes of Lordship? In fact, none merit divinity and worship except He Who possess the attribute of Lordship to begin with. One proverb goes: 'He who eats my food must heed my words.'

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ آرَيْنَاهُ آيَاتِنَا كُلَّهَا فَكَذَّبَ وَأَبَىٰ ﴿٥٦﴾

**We showed Pharaoh all Our signs, but he denied them
and refused [to change] [56] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 56)**

The word 'signs' in this verse means stupendously amazing phenomena, as we say, 'So-and-so is a prodigy or paragon of intelligence, a prodigy of beauty and a prodigy of generosity.' We have previously categorised Allah's Signs as follows: firstly, the cosmic signs, like the sun and the moon; secondly, the signs which confirm the veracity of messengers which are the miracles; and thirdly, the verses of the Noble Quran which are called the bearers of rulings.

However, Allah's signs are numerous and cannot be enumerated. So, does the verse in question mean that Pharaoh saw all of these signs? The answer is 'No', since the intended meaning refers to some specific signs, namely, the nine miraculous signs which Allah *the Almighty* provided as a proof to the veracity and truthfulness of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them*. This fact is ever so clear in Allah's saying: 'and certainly We gave Musa (Moses) nine clear signs ...' (*al-Isra*: 101). These clear signs were the following: the staff, the hand, the flood, the locusts, the lice, the frogs, the blood, the drought, and the shortage of crops. Therefore, these are the miraculous signs with which Allah *the Exalted* supported Musa (Moses).

It is important to note here that the totality expressed in Allah's saying, '... all Our Signs ...' (*Ta Ha*: 56) is a relative one; in other words, He showed Pharaoh all the signs that were meant specifically to him. It is like when you say to your son, 'I have provided you with everything.' Here, you do not mean that you brought him everything that exists; rather, your speech indicates a relative totality which signifies that you have brought this son everything he needs.

Yet, in spite of this, the result was that ‘... he denied them and refused [to change].’ (*Ta Ha*: 56) Hence, Pharaoh attributed falsehood to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and dismissed the signs as having no basis in reality. Accusing Musa (Moses) of lying was Pharaoh’s pretext for his rejection of the signs, and so he ‘... refused [to change].’ (*Ta Ha*: 56) Thus, he refused to believe in the Message that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had brought to him.

If we were to argue with Pharaoh regarding his ascription of falsehood to Musa (Moses) when the latter said to him: ‘Our Lord is He Who gave everything its form, then gave it guidance’ (*Ta Ha*: 50), we would say, ‘Why do you lie, Pharaoh? Allah *the Almighty* said, "I created this universe and all that is in it." No one has ever opposed this statement or ascribed it to himself, even you, Pharaoh. Although you have ascribed divinity to yourself, you have never claimed any role in creation. Hence, the matter of creation indisputably belongs to Allah *Glorified is He*. No one has ever contested Him over it. Thus you, Pharaoh, are the liar in your ascription of falsehood to Musa (Moses) and in your refusal to believe in him.’

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ أَجِئْتَنَا لِتُخْرِجَنَا مِنْ أَرْضِنَا بِسِحْرِكَ يَا مُوسَىٰ

He said, ‘Have you come to drive us from our land with your sorcery, Moses? [57] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 57)

The Egyptians of earlier days lived along the banks of the Nile, which is why a historian called Herodotus once said, ‘Egypt is the gift of the Nile.’ As soon as the water receded, they would plant seeds and wait throughout the year for them to grow and bear crops. They had no other work with which they were busied, and this monotonous life accustomed them to being somewhat lazy. Nevertheless, they loved this place, and if you were to have said to one of them, ‘Leave this land for a day or two’, he would rage against you and become angry. For this reason, Pharaoh exploited the attachment of his people to the land of Egypt and tried to rouse the animosity of these Egyptians, who believed in him as a god, against Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron). In seeking to provoke his people’s enmity against them, he made the following

statement which the Quran relates: ‘He said, ‘Have you come to drive us from our land with your sorcery, Musa (Moses)?’ (*Ta Ha: 57*)

At this point, the people were stirred up, but not for the threatened divinity of Pharaoh. Rather, this was in defence of their economic interests and all the benefits they derived from living along this blessed Nile, which was never stingy towards them in its flooding or it in receding. The people used to call it ‘Auspicious in Coming and Going’; it flowed when there is much water in it and even when its water is little—like the moving of the sun and the moon—on a predictable seasonal basis.’

In this manner, Pharaoh shifted the domain of dispute with Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* to his subjects, for he was frightened by the consequences of Musa's (Moses's) words. Pharaoh feared that if his people understood the matters presented by Musa (Moses), they would discover his falseness. Moreover, they would become furious with him, revolt against his rule and reject his claimed divine status.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَنَأْتِيَنَّكَ بِسِحْرٍ مِّثْلِهِ فَاجْعَلْ بَيْنَنَا وَبَيْنَكَ
مَوْعِدًا لَا نُخْلَفُهُ نَحْنُ وَلَا أَنْتَ مَكَانًا سَوِيًّا

We will confront you with sorcery to match your own: make an appointment between us which neither of us will fail to keep, in a mutually agreeable place [58] (The Quran, *Ta Ha: 58*)

Thus, Pharaoh called the miracles brought by Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* sorcery, which is why he said, ‘We will confront you with sorcery to match your own....’ (*Ta Ha: 58*) However, this label is erroneous regarding the due right of Musa (Moses), even though it was correct in context of Pharaoh's people. So, what is the difference then between what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* produced and the sorcery that the people of Pharaoh produced?

As a matter of fact, sorcery does not alter the reality of the thing; rather, the thing remains as it was in reality, in other words, in its original case. Sorcery only affects the beholder such that he sees things not as they really

are, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying: '... they deceived the people's eyes' (*al-A'raf*: 116) So, when the sorcerers threw down their ropes, even though these ropes did not change from their original, natural state, a given spectator saw them as snakes and serpents moving rapidly. On the other hand, as for the staff of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* it, upon being thrown down by Musa (Moses), changed into a real snake. This is proven by the fact that when Musa (Moses) himself saw it in this form for the first time, he was afraid of it.

Concerning Allah's saying, '...Make an appointment between us which neither of us will fail to keep...' (*Ta Ha*: 58), it means that Pharaoh and Musa (Moses) agreed upon an appointed time and place which not one of them would miss. Thereupon follows the phrase: '...in a mutually agreeable place.' (*Ta Ha*: 58)

In Arabic, the word translated in this verse as 'mutually agreeable' could refer to a place which is smooth and level. This is because the meeting will be a spectacle for all the people, thus the field of vision must be evened out such that no one's view is blocked. Another possible interpretation is that the place where they would meet should be mutually agreeable by both of the two parties. This is like when we say, 'Let us meet in the middle of the route so that neither I become weary nor you.'

Allah says:

قَالَ مَوْعِدُكُمْ يَوْمَ الزَّيْنَةِ وَأَنْ يُحْشَرَ النَّاسُ ضُحًى ﴿٥٩﴾

He said, 'Your meeting will be on the day of the feast, so let the people be assembled when the sun has risen high' [59]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 59)

Naturally, there should be a reason behind holding any event. Furthermore, the place and the time at which it shall occur should be defined. Now, we are fully aware of the cause of this encounter and that Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* would challenge Pharaoh and his sorcerers.

Pharaoh has specified the place by saying, '... in a mutually agreeable place' (*Ta Ha*: 58), so there remains only the appointed time to accomplish the event. Therefore, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* specified it by saying,

‘Your meeting will be on the day of the feast...’ (*Ta Ha: 59*). It is as we have said: Every event must take place at a certain time and place. This is why we must not ask, ‘When did Allah come into existence? Or where is He?’ This is due to the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* is not created; rather, He is the Creator of everything, including the time and place. So, how can He *the Almighty* be restricted by them?

Back to the verse in question; Musa (Moses) did not say that the meeting would be on Monday or Tuesday, for example. Rather, he said, ‘Your meeting will be on the day of the feast...’ (*Ta Ha: 59*). It is the day on which all the inhabitants of Egypt gather, and it seems that this was the Day of the Nile Inundation. On this day, they used to go out in their finery, joyous about the flood of the Nile and the abundance of its benefit and blessings. In passing, we should note that Egypt still continues to celebrate this day.

The chief judge used to delay pronouncing the order for the prescribed land tax until after he had viewed the Nilometer; then, if he deemed it sufficient to irrigate the land, he would determine the amount of the land tax, otherwise he would not. This raises a good question which is, ‘Why did Musa (Moses) specifically choose this day? Why did he not specify any other day?’ This is because he was absolutely confident of Allah’s Support for him, thus he desired that the disgrace of Pharaoh would be brought before this great throng and in the middle of this massed assembly. Furthermore, the like of this gathering was an opportunity which Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* would not miss, for the Egyptians on this Day are joyous and cheerful. In this state of happiness, the people are closer to accepting the truth than at any other time or condition.

Concerning Allah’s saying, ‘... so let the people be assembled when the sun has risen high.’ (*Ta Ha: 59*) It means that the people should be there in broad daylight. The day of the feast might have been in the early morning or at the end of the day, but Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* for being well prepared and confident of victory, wanted this encounter to occur in the full clarity of day so that everyone would witness it.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

﴿١٠﴾ فَتَوَلَّىٰ فِرْعَوْنُ فَجَمَعَ كَيْدَهُ ثُمَّ أَتَىٰ

**Pharaoh withdrew and gathered his resources,
then he returned [60] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 60)**

So, Pharaoh left Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in order to arrange his affairs. This is followed by Allah's saying: '...and settled his plan...' (*Ta Ha*: 60). This means that he schemed against his enemy, Musa (Moses). Clandestine planning or plotting, however, is not a sign of strength; rather, it is an indication of weakness, for it clearly indicates that one has no strength for open confrontation. This is similar to the one who surreptitiously administers poison to his opponent due to his lack of capacity to confront him head on.

Hence, clandestine planning is evidence of weakness. In the light of this fact, we understand that Allah's saying regarding women, '...surely your guile is great' (*Yusuf*: 28) is not an indication of their strength; rather, it is evidence of their weakness. So, just as their guile is great, likewise is their weakness.

Regarding Allah's saying, '...and settled his plan...' (*Ta Ha*: 60), it means that Pharaoh started thinking about different kinds of cunning schemes in order to select from among them the most harmful to his opponent. This is similar to the case of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* when he said to his people: '... resolve upon your affair and (gather) your associates' (*Yunus*: 71)

Pharaoh's problematic situation requires multiple points of view. This is why he is pondering over what he should do and what he should not do. Then he finishes with this consultation, resulting in an opinion which takes all possibilities into account, so that nothing will catch him by surprise after having taken precautions for all eventualities. So, it is as if he had said, 'Agree upon a clear plan which unifies your suggestions in the light of realising the objective.'

A similar instance is found in Allah's saying in the context of the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* when He *the Most High* says: '...and agreed that they should put him down at the bottom of the pit...' (*Yusuf*: 15) This means that Yusuf's (Joseph's) brothers agreed upon this proposal and unanimously accepted it. However, this was only after one of them had said, 'Slay Yusuf (Joseph) or cast him (forth) into some land...' (*Yusuf*: 9). However, the final proposal was that they would put him in the dark depths of a well.

In any case, the brothers of Yusuf (Joseph) were of the lineage of prophethood, and evil was not deeply rooted in their natures. For this reason, their scheme against Yusuf (Joseph) diminished from murder to abandoning him in some distant land, and then to the least odious of these ideas, which is to cast him into a well. This is the attribute of good people. As for the bad people in whose hearts evil has become deeply rooted, their evil increases and grows. Hence, one of them may say, 'I want to meet so-and-so and spit in his face hit him or cut him. No, I would rather fire a bullet to kill him.' Thus, his evil mounts ever higher.

Afterwards, the brothers of Yusuf (Joseph) even hoped for Yusuf's (Joseph's) rescue by saying: '...so that some of the travellers may pick him up.' (*Yusuf*: 10)

Back to the verse under study; Allah *the Almighty* then says concerning Pharaoh: '... then he returned.' (*Ta Ha*: 60) This signifies that he came to the appointed meeting place, which had been previously set, with respect to place and time.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks to us of the realities of that day by saying:

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ وَيْلَكُمْ لَا تَفْتَرُوا عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا
فَيَسْحَبَكُم بِعَذَابٍ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ افْتَرَىٰ ﴿٦١﴾

Moses said to them, 'Beware, do not invent lies against God or He will destroy you with His punishment. Whoever invents lies will fail' [61] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 61)

When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* saw the sorcerers, he wanted to warn them about what they were about to do and to give them some warnings to deter them. So, he reminded them that they had a Lord Who would hold them accountable. It is like when you say to a person whom you see intending to commit a crime, 'If you do such-and-such, I will call the police, and you will be punished with such-and-such.' In this way, you remind him of the consequences of his transgression.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...do not invent lies against Allah...' (*Ta Ha*: 61). In this verse, to invent a lie means to produce a falsehood which stands for an intentional lie. The verse then continues: '... or He will destroy you with His

punishment.’ (*Ta Ha*: 61) Likewise, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* warns the sorcerers that if they invent lies against Allah *the Almighty* He shall exterminate them by means of chastisement in this world, leaving aside the punishment they would be afflicted with in the Hereafter. Thereupon follows His saying: ‘Whoever invents lies will fail.’ (*Ta Ha*: 61)

This verse shows that the one who invents lies against Allah *the Exalted* is the true loser.

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَنَنْزَعُوا أَمْرَهُمْ بَيْنَهُمْ وَأَسْرُوا النَّجْوَى ﴿٦٢﴾

**So, they discussed their plan among themselves,
talking secretly [62] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 62)**

It appears that the warning given by Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to the sorcerers when he said to them, ‘Beware, do not invent lies against Allah, or He will destroy you with His punishment’ (*Ta Ha*: 61), had affected them, causing them to be afraid. Hence, they ‘...discussed their plan among themselves...’ (*Ta Ha*: 62), which implies that they started to argue about what had been said to them and to exchange views in this regard. Then, follows Allah’s saying, ‘...talking secretly’ (*Ta Ha*: 62), which signifies that they conversed in secret. This is evidence of their being scared of Musa's (Moses’) warnings. It also serves as a proof of their readiness to act upon what is right and proper. Ultimately, however, they were determined to continue with the contest to its end.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالُوا إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا لَسِحْرَانِ لَسَجْرَانِ يُرِيدَانِ أَنْ يُخْرِجَاكُمْ مِنْ أَرْضِكُمْ
بِسِحْرِهِمَا وَيَذْهَبَا بِطَرِيقَتِكُمُ الْمُثَلَّى ﴿٦٣﴾

**Saying, ‘These two men are sorcerers. Their purpose is to drive
you out of your land with their sorcery and put an end to your
time-honoured way of life [63] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 63)**

Scholars have wavered over this verse since it has two alternative recitations, as it can be recited as *In Hadhani* or *Inna Hadhani*.

In the recitation of *Hafs* adopted by the Egyptians, it is recited as *In Hadhani La-Sahirani*, translated as 'these two men are (two) sorcerers.' When the Arabic word '*In*' precedes a clause beginning with a verb, it is then used as a conditional conjunction, meaning 'if', such as when we say, 'If Zayd comes, I will treat him with generosity.' On the other hand, the same word is used as a negating particle when it precedes a noun followed by the particle of exception, such as Allah's saying: '(As for) those of you who put away their wives by likening their backs to the backs of their mothers, they are not their mothers; their mothers are no others than those who gave birth to them' (*al-Mujadala*: 2)

In this verse, the meaning is that none are their mothers except those who have given birth to them or bore them. The same is true for the phrase in the verse under study whose meaning, therefore, is that these two men are nothing but sorcerers.

By contrast, in the second alternative recitation, namely '*Inna Hadhan La-Sahiran*', the first element has a doubled final letter. This word, *Inna*, is a particle which comes before a nominal clause wherein the subject is in the accusative case, marked normally by the '*a*' or '*an*' ending. The predicate which follows this subject should be in the nominative case, normally signalled by the '*u*' or '*un*' ending. Hence, according to the grammatical rules, one should say, '*Inna Zaydan Mujtahidun* (Indeed, Zayd is industrious)'. However, in this recitation, we have the subject noun of the clause in the nominative case, whereas the grammatical rule would require it to be the accusative case. So, how can we address this issue?

It is said that this usage is a dialect of *Kinana*, one of the Arab tribes. In fact, each tribe has its specific dialect and colloquial usages for which it was well known. The Quran was revealed in the tongue of the tribe of the Quraysh since all of the dialectical variants of the Arabs flowed into the dialect of the Quraysh at the seasonal gatherings for pilgrimage, poetry contests, trade fairs and similar events.

The dialect of the Quraysh was dominant among the dialects of all these tribes, and this is why the Quran was revealed in it. However, Allah *the Exalted* wanted other tribes to have some share in that. Thus, a certain number of

Quranic words and expressions were revealed according to various dialects of the Arabs to prove that it was not revealed specifically for the tribe of Quraysh. Rather, it was revealed for all people.

Amongst the dialects of the tribes which the revelation of the Quran incorporates is that of *Kinana*, which requires that the dual take the long ‘a’ sound in all its cases, be it nominative, accusative or genitive. In support of this opinion, we can quote the following verses of poetry⁽¹⁾:

How exquisite Salma is, again how fine, how fine
 If only her two eyes belonged to us and her two orifices
 She is a lucky find if only we gained her
 And the place of anklets on her two feet
 Indeed, her two parents and the two parents of her two parents
 Have attained in glory by her two utmost limits

Here, at the beginning of the penultimate stanza, the poet says *Inna Abaha* in the nominative case although he was supposed to say ‘*Inna Abiha*’ in the genitive case, because this dialect maintains the nominative case, marked by long (a) in the dual, regardless of its grammatical case.

Hence, the Quran was not revealed in the tongue of the Quraysh on the basis of it being the language of dominance; rather, it was so because it encompasses the cream of eloquent expression of all the dialects of the Arabian Peninsula. This language of the Quraysh was refined at the seasonal gatherings of poetry and literature at ‘*Ukazh, Dhu Al-Majanna*, etc.

Let us return back to Allah’s saying: ‘They said, "These two men are sorcerers. Their purpose is to drive you out of your land with their sorcery..."’ (*Ta Ha*: 63). This verse shows that Pharaoh’s attempt to rouse his people’s enmity against Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* has seemingly produced results, and his scheme has affected the sorcerers. For this reason, they repeated the same words of the great teacher, Pharaoh,

(1) *This quotation serves as linguistic evidence is attributed to Ru’ba Ibn Al-‘Ujjaj, while some have attributed it to Abu An-Najm Al-Fadl ibn Qudama Al-‘Ajali; it has also been said to be ascribed to some people of Yemen.*

accusing Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* of sorcery. In their statement, ‘... and put an end to your time-honoured way of life’ (*Ta Ha: 63*), the ‘time-honoured way of life’ refers to that which the people were content to live by, along with the beliefs and path which they followed. As far as the sorcerers were concerned, the ‘time-honoured way of life’ refers to the fact that they took Pharaoh as a god, worshipping and obeying him. This is what they call the exemplary way of life!

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* relates what the sorcerers said:

فَأَجْمَعُوا كَيْدَكُمْ ثُمَّ أَتَوُوا صَفًّا وَقَدْ أَفْلَحَ الْيَوْمَ مَنِ اسْتَعْلَىٰ ﴿٦٤﴾

**So, gather your resources and line up for the contest.
Whoever wins today is sure to prosper [64]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha: 64*)**

It is as if the sorcerers said to themselves, ‘Pay attention and focus all your minds, all your arts and movements in sorcery in order that Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) do not succeed in expelling you from your land and destroying your exemplary way of life.’

They said to one another: ‘So, gather your resources...’ (*Ta Ha: 64*). It means that they advised one another not to keep hidden any art of sorcery and to exhibit what they could do. This is because there is normally mutual envy between the practitioners of a craft or profession, so one of them may refrain from displaying all that he is capable of at a given time. Or he will try to conceal what he can do so that other sorcerers would not observe that. However, in such a situation, they were obligated to make maximum efforts, for the situation is critical and the dire consequences will affect them all if they fail in this appointed task.

As for their saying, ‘...and line up for the contest’ (*Ta Ha: 64*), it means that they united as if they were one person, for this would make them more awesomely frightening; thus, they would be more likely to cause terror to enter the hearts of their adversary. Moreover, if they advanced together, no one would be able to hold back, as they would keep an eye on each other.

There follows their statement: ‘Whoever wins today is sure to prosper.’ (*Ta Ha*: 64) In this verse, the verb ‘to prosper’ means to be successful, as in Allah’s saying: ‘Successful indeed are the believers.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 1) In Arabic, this verb is etymologically derived from ploughing the earth, which gives rise to agriculture, because when the farmer cleaves or tills the earth and tends to it, it provides him with its bounty. So, his activity in it is auspicious and blessed.

This is why when Allah *the Almighty* wishes to make clear for us the augmentation of recompense and reward for voluntary alms-giving and for performing good deeds, He draws an analogy for us with cereal crops by saying; ‘The parable of those who spend their property in the Way of Allah is as the parable of a grain growing seven ears (with) a hundred grains in every ear; and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases; and Allah is Ample-giving, All Knowing.’ (*al-Baqara*: 261)

So, if the earth, which is merely one of Allah’s creations, bestows all of these gifts, then just imagine the gifts of the Creator of this earth. For this reason, the parable is followed by His saying: ‘...and Allah multiplies for whom He pleases...’ (*al-Baqara*: 261). Ultimately, the Arabic word used to refer to being successful in agriculture was taken to signify every success, even if it has nothing to do with cultivating the land. This is due to the ultimate objective of all activities of life to be assuring human’s survival through food, and the earth is the origin of all of this, and so it is the origin of success.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘Whoever wins today is sure to prosper’ (*Ta Ha*: 64), it means that the sorcerers said to each other, ‘The one who seeks to overwhelm his opponent is sure to prosper. Success, however, does not belong to the one who seeks to overwhelm, for it belongs to the one who actually overwhelms. Hence, the one who actually overwhelms must concentrate on overcoming his rival so that however much his rival seeks to overwhelm him, he maintains the upper hand over him. Therefore, overwhelming only comes after seeking to overwhelm.’

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says about the sorcerers:

قَالُوا يَا مُوسَى إِمَّا أَنْ تُلْقِيَ وَإِمَّا أَنْ نَكُونَ أَوْلَ مَنْ أَلْقَى ﴿٦٥﴾

They said, ‘Moses, will you throw first or shall we?’ [65] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 65)

Thus, they asked Musa (Moses) whether to throw first or should they be the first to cast what they have prepared of sorcery. Then, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* opted that they be the first to cast.

Consequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ بَلْ أَلْقُوا فَإِذَا حِبَالُهُمْ وَعِصِيُّهُمْ يُخَيَّلُ إِلَيْهِ مِنْ سِحْرِهِمْ أَنَّهَا تَسْعَى ﴿٦٦﴾

‘You throw,’ said Moses, and — lo and behold! — through their sorcery, their ropes and staffs seemed to him to be moving [66] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 66)

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* told them to throw first because if they cast their magic spells, the staff would consequently have its due mission when he threw it. So, he wanted the staff to have an effect after changing into a serpent, snake or *jan*, a fast-moving snake. Otherwise, if he threw first, what would its task be?

Allah *the Almighty* surely inspired the sorcerers of Pharaoh to adopt this courtesy in their contest with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* so they gave him a choice between making the first throw himself or having them make the first one. Surely, He intervenes between a person and his heart, so He inspired them to do this although they were His opponents. He caused them to give voice to what would assist the one entrusted with the glorious miracle, thus they said: ‘Musa (Moses), will you throw first or shall we?’ (*Ta Ha*: 65) Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* based on the experience he underwent at Tuwa with his Lord *Glorified is He* when He told him: ‘Throw it down, Musa (Moses)’, chose to throw last. Then, when he threw his staff, it changed into a fast-moving snake, and he saw its movement. However, in this trial experiment, there was nothing for the staff to seize up. So, if he were to throw first and the staff turned into a snake or serpent, what would be the difference between it and the ropes of the sorcerers which changed before them into

snakes and serpents? Hence, it was imperative that there be something to distinguish Musa's (Moses') staff as a miracle from the magic of the sorcerers and their charlatanism. For this reason, he chose to be the last to throw according to a revelation from Allah *the Exalted* so that his staff would swallow up that which the sorcerers falsely contrived. Evidently, what is swallowed up must necessarily come before that which swallows up.

Now, in terms of the action in front of the onlookers, there was no difference between the staff of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and the ropes of the sorcerers and their staffs, for all of them moved. However, Musa's (Moses') staff manifested its superiority by seizing up that which they performed of magic, chasing after their ropes and staffs, jumping here and there. Thus, the snake of Musa (Moses) had an eye by which it perceived, thus swallowed up their sorcery into its belly. Yet it remained as it was, without its belly becoming puffed up, for example. Thus, this is the miraculous aspect in Musa's (Moses') staff.⁽¹⁾

Allah's saying, '...and—lo and behold!—through their sorcery, their ropes and staffs seemed to him to be moving' (*Ta Ha*: 66), indicates, therefore, that the movement of their ropes and staffs was not a real one; rather, it was the result of delusion. This is evident in the expression: '...seemed to him...' (*Ta Ha*: 66), for Musa (Moses) saw them moving rapidly, yet they were not really doing so.

Concerning the sorcerers, Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse: '... they deceived the people's eyes ...' (*al-A'raf*: 116). Hence, the sorcerers produced imaginary deceptive acts through any possible means. Some say, for example, that they put quicksilver into their staffs and ropes, and when it was heated by the sun, it extended, and so their staffs and ropes began to twist and move. However, whatever means employed, it was merely delusion. As for the sorcerers themselves, they saw them as ropes, i.e. in their original state, which is the difference between the magic of the sorcerers and the miracle of Musa's (Moses') staff.

(1) In his *Tafsir*, *Ibn Kathir* says, 'Mohamed ibn Ishaq said, 'The staff set about pursuing those ropes and staffs one by one, until one could see neither a little or a lot of what they had thrown. Then Moses picked it up and it turned again into staff in his hand as it was before.' See *Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim*, 2/237.

Now, sorcery differs from cunning tricks which rely on sleight of hand, artifices, and deception. In this regard, Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘And they followed what the devils chanted of sorcery in the reign of Sulaiman (Solomon), and Sulaiman (Solomon) was not a disbeliever, but the devils disbelieved, they taught men sorcery ...’ (*al-Baqara*: 102). Hence, sorcery is an art which is learnt, and it deludes by means of utilising jinns, so it is they who undertake all of these movements. Therefore, it is not cunning tricks of sleight of hand, but rather a procedure that has its principles and rules which are taught and learnt.

When Allah *Glorified is He* presents us with the issue of sorcery, we are to understand that it is tantamount to making the devils submissive to the service of the sorcerer. He *the Almighty* provides each of them with the capability to harm others; the sorcerer harms with his sorcery, and the devils harm with their abilities of assuming various forms and penetrating the barriers. This is because jinns were created of fire which is characterised with transparency; thus, they are capable of piercing walls, for example.

On the other hand, the human being was created of clay that is characterised with denseness. We have made analogy in order to make this phenomenon more intelligible by saying, ‘Imagine you are sitting behind a wall built of solid earthly substance and on the other side of which is an apple, for example. Will anything of the apple become accessible to you? On the other hand, if there was a fire on the other side of the wall, you would feel its heat through the wall. This unique trait, namely penetrating the barriers, is one of the traits which Allah *the Exalted* granted devils, not to mention that they see the people from whence they do not see them.’

Nevertheless, the Mercy of Allah, the All-Capable towards us is manifested in providing us with that which protects us from the devils. So, He has made jinns governed by the form they assumed. This is to say that if the Satan were to appear to you in the form of a man, then this form would truly govern him, and if you were to shoot a bullet at him at that moment, you would actually kill him.

Therefore, Satan is more frightened of you than you are of him. He does not appear to us in flesh except for a fleeting moment out of fear that the one perceiving him will grab hold of him, and so he will not be able to escape.

In the same respect, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings upon him* once caught hold of a devil and said,⁽¹⁾ ‘I intended to tie him to one of the pillars of the mosque so that the boys of Medina could play by him, but I remembered the invocation of my brother Sulaiman (Solomon): ‘And grant me a kingdom such as shall not belong to any other after me.’ (*Sad*: 35)

Hence, Allah *the Almighty* bestowed upon the devils the unique ability to take on forms as they desire, but He bound them by the forms they assume. It is as if He said to Satan, ‘If you leave your innate nature and assume another form, then accept the fact that this form governs you and that those who are weaker than you shall have power over you.’ If this were not the case, they would strike fear into people and terrify them, and no one would be safe from their evil. The case is similar with the sorcerer himself, for he, by virtue of sorcery and talismans, possesses the ability to make jinns subservient to him, doing for him whatever he desires. This peculiarity makes his power superior to others. So, due to this sorcery, he has an advantage which is not available to the generality of people. Hence, there are no equal opportunities between him and other people.

Allah *the Exalted* wants these opportunities in the activity of life to be based on equality. Thus, it is as if He *the Almighty* says to the sorcerer, ‘Beware of thinking that what I made easy for you, that is, using what is more powerful than you to accomplish what is beyond other people’s ability, will benefit you in any way. You should not also believe that you have gained through sorcery an advantage over others. No, rather the opposite is true, for you will not gain anything from your sorcery except harm and unhappiness, as sorcery is a trial for people, just as it is a trial for jinns.’ Therefore, He *the Almighty* says: ‘... yet these two taught no man until they had said, "Surely we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever..."’ (*al-Baqara*: 102).

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayra *Peace be upon him*. The complete version reads: ‘A strong demon from the Jinn came to me yesterday suddenly so as to spoil my prayer, but Allah enabled me to overpower him, and so I caught him and intended to tie him to one of the pillars of the mosque so that all of you might see him, but I remembered the invocation of my brother Sulaiman (Solomon): ‘And grant me a kingdom such as shall not belong to any other after me.’ (*Sad*: 35) See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 3423; Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 541.

The word 'trial' in this verse signifies that Allah *the Almighty* puts someone who learnt sorcery to the test, for as long as He provides it to them, this means that He examines whether he will employ it for good or for evil purposes. Then, if you were to say, 'I am learning sorcery in order to utilise it for good', we would say to you, 'This is your discourse at the moment of receiving this knowledge, but you should not be so certain of yourself at the moment of enactment.' This is similar to the case of taking on the burden of trust. You may take it with good intention, firmly believing that you are confident of your ability to deliver it to its owner at its proper time. However, at the time of implementation, you may undergo a situation which alters your intention, and thus you dishonour the trust. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Surely, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared from it, and man has turned unfaithful to it; surely he is unjust, ignorant.' (*al-Ahzab*: 72) Thus, the heavens, the earth and the mountains chose submission over free choice and over bearing the burden of trust since they could not guarantee their upholding of it.

Allah *the Almighty* warns the sorcerers when He says: '...yet these two taught no man until they had said, "Surely, we are only a trial, therefore do not be a disbeliever..."' (*al-Baqara*: 102). It is as if a sorcerer's will ultimately incline to disbelief because he is innately prone to follow his whims. He is incapable of keeping his soul in check in order to dominate the power of sorcery for good. When Allah *the Almighty* wills to make strength subservient to the good, He employs the services of obedient ones. Now obedient *jinn* would never accept to be used in undertaking evil actions. Therefore, the sorcerer will only be able to make use of disobedient *jinn*, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying: '...and most surely the devils suggest to their friends...' (*al-An'am*: 121).

For this reason, you notice that all those who are involved in sorcery are characterised by anger and that their features bear the traces of sins and evil omen. Whoever sees them flees from them, and they live in the most constrained images of life. You find the sorcerer taking from this one and that, pilfering people and deceiving them. In spite of this, you find him begging, living in destitution. Moreover, he dies as a disbeliever, banished from Allah's Mercy; even his children are not free from his evil omen. Allah *the Almighty* clearly manifests the truth when He says: 'And those persons from

among men used to seek refuge⁽¹⁾ with persons from among jinn, so they increased them in wrongdoing.’ (*al-Jinn*: 6)

There is another noteworthy aspect of the life of sorcerers to which we should turn our attention. From where do sorcerers earn their livelihood? They earn it from the normal masses of people who understand nothing of sorcery. If one were truly successful by sorcery, he would spare himself from asking people for remuneration. He may also ask someone to bring strange things, deluding him into thinking that his problem will not be solved except in such a manner.

So, we should ask here, ‘Why does the sorcerer not utilise his sorcery to rob a safe, for example, thereby relieving himself of this wearisome effort?’ Were he to argue, ‘How could I do that when it is other people’s property and appropriating it is thievery?’ Then, let him seek out the precious minerals and treasures of the earth, for these belong to no one.

Let us return to the sorcerers of Pharaoh. What sort of sorcery did they practise? Was it a type of cunning tricks, sleight of hand, and deceiving onlookers? Or was it sorcery which the devils taught in the time of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*? All of these will not stand up against the dazzling miracle which was produced at the hands of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in order to prove his veracity.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَوْجَسَ فِي نَفْسِهِ خِيفَةً مُوسَى ﴿٦٧﴾

Moses was inwardly alarmed [67]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 67)

In this verse, to be ‘alarmed’ denotes frightening in the heart, which does not go beyond it to the limbs. However, if it extends to the limbs, it changes

(1) As-Suddi said, ‘A man used to depart with his family and when he came to a certain terrain, he would settle there and say, ‘I seek refuge with the master of this valley from among the jinn, lest I come to be harmed in it or my possessions, or my offspring or my livestock.’ In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir says, ‘So when the jinn saw that man took refuge in them out of fear of them, they increased them in fear, terror and fright until the people became even more intensely scared of them, and even more frequent in seeking refuge in them’. See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-‘Azhim, 4/428.

into an impulsive act such as fleeing or running. Hence, the impulsive act comes after an emotional sensation. This is why Allah *the Almighty* adds: '...inwardly ...' (*Ta Ha*: 67).

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* felt fear when he saw the ropes and staffs of the sorcerers change in front of the beholders into snakes and serpents. This is because the onlookers may be satisfied with what they saw, and the situation would end at this point before Musa (Moses) would be enabled to do anything. Now, if you asked, 'Why did he not just throw his staff and be done with the issue?' We would say, 'Because his orders comes from Allah *the Exalted* step by step, and He watches over him with His Hearing and Sight, such that the new revelation comes to him immediately.'

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْنَا لَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ أَنْتَ الْأَعْلَىٰ ﴿٦٨﴾

But we said, 'Do not be afraid, you have the upper hand [68] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 68)

This is Allah's Decree, coming to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*, in a form like that of a condensed telegraph, '...you have the upper hand' (*Ta Ha*: 68) which means that he should rest assured because he would be the victor and the winner. However, the humanity of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* stimulated him to ask, 'How would I be victorious?'

At that moment, the practical executive command comes to him, following Allah's theoretical promise that he would be victorious. It is as if He is following up every movement of Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* not leaving him to confront this matter alone; rather, He was with him all the time, hearing and seeing. Then He responds to what is heard of words and what is seen of actions with what corresponds to them. Prophet Musa's (Moses') hearing and heart were always sharply focused on that which was sent to him of Divine revelation, as his Lord addressed him by saying: 'I am with you both, hearing and seeing everything.' (*Ta Ha*: 46)

So, the suitable reaction will come to Musa (Moses) at its proper time. In fact, Allah *the Almighty* did not inform Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* of his

mission with Pharaoh, nor did He *the Almighty* abandon him *peace be upon him* to undertake it by himself. Instead, this matter was accomplished by means of Allah's Direct Instructions.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَلْقَ مَا فِي يَمِينِكَ نَلَقَفَ مَا صَنَعُوا إِنَّمَا صَنَعُوا كَيْدٌ سِحْرٍ وَلَا يُفْلِحُ السَّاحِرُ حَيْثُ أَتَى ﴿٦٩﴾

Throw down what is in your right hand: it will swallow up what they have produced. They have only produced the tricks of a sorcerer, and a sorcerer will not prosper, wherever he goes [69] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 69)

This was the core of the miracle of Musa's (Moses') staff which was to seize and swallow up that which the sorcerers falsely conjured by sorcery. The expression 'to seize' used in this verse provides you with the rapidly animated image which looks like a quick glance of the eye. When you say, 'I seized it', this means that you took it rapidly and with force. Therefore, the purpose of the staff was to seize up what was produced by sorcery.

There follows Allah's saying: '... They have only produced the scheme of a sorcerer' (*Ta Ha*: 69). In this verse, the 'scheme' refers to the secretive planning devised in order to defeat an adversary. However, what can the plotting stratagem, tricks and fabrications of a sorcerer do in the face of Allah's Power and Omnipotence? Then He *the Almighty* says: '... and a sorcerer will not prosper, wherever he goes.' (*Ta Ha*: 69) We have previously spoken about the matter of a sorcerer's success, noting that regardless of what he has been granted of power through the use of jinns, this will never give him distinction over other, and he will not have the ability to harm anyone.

Therefore, beware of thinking that Allah *the Almighty* has given charge of your interests to such people. While it is true that the sorcerer has some special abilities, yet he does not harm anyone except by Allah's Permission, a fact which is stated clearly in His saying: 'And they cannot hurt with it anyone except with Allah's permission ...' (*al-Baqara*: 102). Moreover, this matter does not apply to the sorcerer only; rather, it applies to the entirety of existence until the Last Hour.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأُلْقِيَ السَّحَرَةُ سُجَّدًا قَالُوا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّ هَارُونَ وَمُوسَى ﴿٧٠﴾

[So it was, and] the sorcerers threw themselves down in submission. ‘We believe,’ they said, ‘in the Lord of Aaron and Moses [70] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 70)

Regarding this situation, Az-Zajaj⁽¹⁾ said, ‘The case of these sorcerers is amazingly wondrous. They had cast their ropes and staffs for the sake of disbelief and rejection of the truth. Yet, then suddenly they threw themselves down for the sake of gratitude and worshipful prostration to Allah.’

It is true that they did indeed enter this contest as disbelieving transgressors, but they departed as truly reverent believers⁽²⁾; they came with all that they had of deceitful plots, assembling the most refined sorcery and its teachers who knew it well. That is to say that they would not be fooled by tricks of sorcerers or their ruses, so when they saw the staff and what it did to their sorcery, they had not the slightest doubt that it was a miracle far beyond what they could contrive of sorcery. Therefore, they rushed without hesitation to publicly announce their faith in Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them*. This demonstrates to us that the innate faith in the soul may be blotted out by one’s whims, but as soon as it awakens and the veil is removed from it, the soul hastens to believe and is affected by it.

Thus, the sorcerers hastened to believe in Allah. This is proved by the fact that they will later say to Pharaoh: ‘...and the sorcery that you forced us to practise...’ (*Ta Ha*: 73). Hence, they were coerced to practise it. They were also in Pharaoh’s service as evinced by their statement: ‘We must surely have

(1) He is Ibrahim ibn As-Surri ibn Sahl Abu Ishaq Al-Zajaj, a scholar of grammar and linguistics. He was born in 241 A.H. and died in Baghdad in 311 A.H. In his youth, he used to be a glass maker, and then inclined towards the science of syntax. He was the teacher of Al-Qasim, the son of ‘Ubayd Allah ibn Sulayman, the vizier of the ‘Abbasid caliph *Al-Mu’tadid*. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-A‘lam*, 1/40.

(2) *In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir relates that ibn ‘Abbas and ‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr said, ‘At the beginning of the day, they were sorcerers, yet pious martyrs at its end.’ See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-‘Azhim*, 3/158.

a reward if we are the prevailing ones.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 113) It is as if they did not earn wages for sorcery, so when this difficult mission arose, they requested compensation for it since it was a struggle upon which rested the status of Pharaoh amongst his people. On the other hand, their practice of sorcery to terrorise people and to frighten those who might be seduced to revolt against Pharaoh was a forced labour for which they were not paid.

For this reason, Pharaoh did not oppose his sorcerers regarding their request. Instead, he even promised to bestow on them an additional favour by saying: ‘... and you shall certainly be of those who are near (to me).’ (*al-A‘raf*: 114) It means that they will join his retinue; He wanted to boost their zeal and to strengthen their determination so that they would spare no effort in the art of sorcery in this decisive contest.

Hence, their inclinations and innate dispositions rejected this activity, for they knew for certain that it was falsehood and fabrication. However, what could they do when their chief was ordering them to do it, even forcing them to do it, and obliging them to teach others?⁽¹⁾ What is the reason for this? It is because sorcery, magic arts, and falsification constituted Pharaoh’s capital and his goods, which he was striving to distribute. Upon these, his dominion was based and his deification was built.

We should take into account that the verb ‘to throw’ in Allah’s saying: ‘... the sorcerers threw themselves down in submission’ (*Ta Ha*: 70) has a different meaning from that in Allah’s saying: ‘Thereupon they threw their [magic] ropes and their staffs ...’ (*ash-Shu‘ara*: 44). In the latter case, the verb is in the active voice, signifying a voluntary act on their part. However, as for the saying of Allah, ‘... the sorcerers threw themselves down in submission’ (*Ta Ha*: 70), the verb is in the passive voice, denoting that it was not a voluntary act on their part; it was against their own volition. It is as if the forceful power of the truth unexpectedly roused their innate nature, and they

(1) *In his Tafsir, As-Suyuti narrates that Ibn Abu Hatim narrated regarding Allah’s saying: ‘...and the sorcery that you forced us to practise...’ (Ta Ha: 73) that Ibn ‘Abbas said, ‘Pharaoh took forty young men of the children of Israel and commanded that they learn sorcery with annual wages. He then added, ‘They perfectly taught them such that no one on the earth could defeat them.’ See As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur, 5/587.*

were unable to do anything but to fall down in prostration to Allah *the Almighty*. In this verse, the act of throwing on the part of the sorcerers was spontaneous, which means it was without any premeditation or awareness on their part. Thus, the evident truth and the dazzling miracle in the staff of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* took them by surprise because they knew for certain that it was not an act of sorcery, given the fact that they were the most knowledgeable people in matters of sorcery.

Let us take notice in this verse that it occurs in the plural form: 'the sorcerers threw themselves down in submission', 'they exclaimed', 'they said' and 'we believed', so why does Allah use this style? This is in order to show that they were unanimous, and there was no dispute amongst them, which indicates that they were coerced to practise sorcery.

It is also noteworthy that the enunciation of their faith manifested itself in a visible act which is witnessed by everyone; Allah *the Almighty* says: '... the sorcerers threw themselves down in submission' (*Ta Ha: 70*), and then with an audible statement, 'We believe,' they said, 'in the Lord of Harun (Aaron) and Musa (Moses).' (*Ta Ha: 70*) Similarly, in another verse, they said: 'We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)!' (*ash-Shu'ara': 47-48*)

Now, we know that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was the main messenger, and his brother Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* was sent with him. So, when the Quran depicts the situation of the sorcerers with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* it relates their saying: 'We believe,' they said, 'in the Lord of Harun (Aaron) and Musa (Moses).' (*Ta Ha: 70*) and their saying: 'We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)!' (*ash-Shu'ara': 47-48*)

For this reason, this issue has provoked contention on the part of the enemies of Islam who say, 'What did the sorcerers exactly say? Did they say the first one or the second one?'

We contend, 'You should try to imagine the mass of sorcerers who participated in this decisive contest. Their leaders and elite alone numbered seventy sorcerers, so what about all the subordinate ones? Hence, they were very numerous. Thus, in view of this multitude and this mass, is it reasonable to

imagine that they all united in action and speech or that each one of them had his own particular reaction based on his own discerning faculties of faith?

There is no doubt that they did not come to an accord about one utterance. Amongst them were those who said, ‘We believe in the Lord of Harun (Aaron) and Musa (Moses).’ (*Ta Ha: 70*) There were also others amongst them who said, ‘We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)!’ (*ash-Shu’ara’: 47-48*) Likewise, there were amongst them those who were superficial in their manner of expression and said: ‘We believe in the Lord of the worlds, the Lord of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)!’ (*ash-Shu’ara’: 47-48*) These were not discerning enough to realise that due to Pharaoh’s having laid claim to divinity and having stated, ‘I am your exalted lord’ might cause their own saying: ‘the Lord of Musa and Harun!’ (*ash-Shu’ara’: 48*) to be understood as referring to Pharaoh himself since he was the one who brought up Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he was young.

Another one amongst them became aware of this issue, and being more precise in expression, he distanced Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* from this specious reasoning by saying, ‘We believe in the Lord of Harun (Aaron) and Musa (Moses).’ (*Ta Ha: 70*) In this verse, Harun (Aaron) occurs first, as his upbringing had nothing to do with Pharaoh, and was not beholden to him for any favour, and then after him Musa (Moses) was mentioned.

Hence, these multiple utterances and differing scenes belong to a multitudinous group whose actions were unorganised and whose manners of expression were not in agreement. The Quran relates it as it was, so no one has the right to say, ‘If the first utterance is correct, then the other utterance is erroneous or vice versa.’

How similar is this situation to a sports match about which thousands of people watch and make comments. Do you imagine that their expressions describing this match would be in agreement? We say, therefore, that the Quran related many scenes and utterances for a single story to communicate to us everything that happened.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* relates the reaction of Pharaoh to what occurred by saying:

قَالَ ءَامَنْتُمْ لَهُ، قَبْلَ أَنْ ءَاذَنَ لَكُمْ إِنَّهُ، لَكَبِيرُكُمُ الَّذِي عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَا قَطْعَ بِيَدِيكُمْ
وَأَرْجُلِكُمْ مِّنْ خَلْفٍ وَلَا صَلْبَتِكُمْ فِي جُدُوعِ النَّخْلِ وَلَنَعْلَمَنَّ أَيُّنَا أَشَدُّ عَذَابًا وَأَبْقَى ﴿٧١﴾

Pharaoh said, ‘How dare you believe in him before I have given you permission? This must be your master, the man who taught you witchcraft. I shall certainly cut off your alternate hands and feet, then crucify you on the trunks of palm trees. You will know for certain which of us has the fiercer and more lasting punishment’ [71] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 71)

It is natural that Pharaoh should fly into a rage after what he heard from his sorcerers, for he had assembled them in order to support him and then suddenly they forsook him. No, indeed, they tore down the foundations of his throne and believed in a god other than him. Alas, if only they had remained silent when they abandoned him, but instead they proclaimed it publicly and loudly: ‘We believe in the Lord of Harun (Aaron) and Musa (Moses).’ (*Ta Ha*: 71)

In the opening part of the verse under study, we notice in Allah’s saying, ‘Pharaoh said, "How dare you believe in him before I have given you permission!"’ (*Ta Ha*: 71) Pharaoh, despite the disappointment he was smitten with, still clings tightly to his tyrannical state and to his divinity. Thus, he wanted to make the abasement and humiliation which had overcome him to disappear, for he had wished to give the people the impression of a tenacious person on whom these events had no effect. Thus, he said: ‘Pharaoh said, "How dare you believe in him before I have given you permission!"’ (*Ta Ha*: 71) It is as if he was saying to the sorcerers, ‘I am your chief who taught you sorcery, and you should have shown due respect for my station as your educator as I was going to give you permission.’

The verb ‘to believe’ is mentioned many times in the Noble Quran. In Arabic, its original connotation refers to being safe and secure and to be assured that there is nothing that can frighten you. This verb can be transitive, thus takes a direct object, as in Allah’s saying: ‘So let them serve the Lord of this House Who feeds them against hunger and gives them security against fear.’ This last verse means that Allah *the Almighty* safeguarded the populace of Mecca from fear.

The same verb can also be transitive when it is followed by the preposition *fi* (in); Arabs say, '*Amantu bi Allah*' ('I believe in Allah'). It can also be transitive when it is followed by the preposition *lam* (for), a meaning which is clear in the saying of Allah: 'But none believed in Musa (Moses) except the offspring of his people ...' (*Yunus*: 83). In this case, the verb means to have actively trusting belief in what he brought. Hence, in Arabic, the connotations of the verb to believe include to grant some protective security, to believe firmly in something and to have sincere trust in someone's truthfulness.

Moreover, so many forms of the Arabic root of this verb can occur as synonyms such as in Prophet Ya'qub's (Jacob's) saying: 'I cannot trust in you with respect to him, except as I trusted in you with respect to his brother before?' (*Yusuf*: 64) This is because his, '... as I trusted in you with respect to his brother before?' (*Yusuf*: 64) refers to the first experience of entrusting Yusuf (Joseph) with them; so the verb appears in its basic form, as opposed to the circumstances of the second time. It was then that he required a kind of precaution for the matter; so he said, 'I cannot trust in you with respect to him...' (*Yusuf*: 64).

Back to the verse under discussion; in Pharaoh's statement: 'How dare you believe in him ...' (*Ta Ha*: 71), the verb 'to believe', therefore, means to have sincere trust in Musa's (Moses') truthfulness.

Let us reflect on the eloquence of the Quran in the following expression: '... before I have given you permission!' (*Ta Ha*: 70) Who uttered these words? It is Pharaoh, the dispenser of commands and prohibitions amongst his people, now speaking of permission! There is a significant difference between issuing orders and granting permission. To command something to be done means that Pharaoh favourably inclines to it, and the commanded one is obligated to execute it. On the other hand, granting permission may be regarding a matter which he does not like and does not desire. Yet, here he is giving permission since he does not have the capacity to issue orders.

To paraphrase Pharaoh's words here, we put it like, 'Inasmuch as you have believed in him before I gave you permission, then he must be your eminent leader who taught you sorcery. Thus, your loyalty was to him, and you showed reverence for this eminence and helped him to triumph.'

This is a poor explanation on the part of Pharaoh for the reality of faith. In his view, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was superior to them not because he excels at the art of sorcery more than them. Rather, he overcame them because they were courteous to him and acted in collusion with him since he was their eminent leader and their teacher. For this reason, Pharaoh threatens them by saying: ‘I shall certainly cut off your alternate hands and feet, then crucify you on the trunks of palm trees.’ (*Ta Ha: 71*) This threat and menacing promise is made because—in his view—they caused his defeat and forsook him in his decisive battle with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Thus, the discussion is about hands and feet, so the intended connotation is that Pharaoh threatens the sorcerers with severing their right hand along with the left foot, or the left hand along with the right foot.

In Pharaoh’s saying, ‘...then crucify you in the trunks of palm trees’ (*Ta Ha: 71*), we should pay attention to the fact that the normal crucifixion is undertaken on tree trunks, whereas the verse employs the literal expression ‘in the trunks of palm trees’. For this reason, some commentators have attempted to get out of this ambiguity, saying that here the proposition ‘in’ has the meaning of ‘on’. However, this interpretation does not do justice to the elevated style of Quranic expression. We must first agree upon the meaning of crucifying. It is to provide the object upon which the crucifying takes place, which is made of wood or iron, for example; then, you bring the person who is meant to be crucified, and you bind him onto this upright object in a firm manner, and then you tighten the binds upon him with intense force.

You can try out this matter by fastening a matchstick, for example, to your finger and then tightening the bind with great force. You will find that the matchstick penetrates into the flesh, and at that moment you would say that the matchstick is ‘in’ your finger, not ‘on’ it.

Hence, in Allah’s saying, ‘...then crucify you in the trunks of palm trees...’ (*Ta Ha: 71*), the action of ‘crucifying them in the trunks’ is to be understood literally, that is, the preposition ‘in’ retains its basic meaning. This is meant to indicate the excessively rigorous manner of crucifixion such that the object upon which the act of crucifying takes place penetrates the one crucified upon it. It is as if he is not crucified ‘on’ the trunk, rather, he is crucified ‘in’ it.

Then Pharaoh said, ‘You will know for certain which of us...’ (*Ta Ha*: 71). In this part of the verse, the phrase ‘which of us’ refers to Pharaoh and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* or to Pharaoh and the Lord of Musa (Moses) Who sent him. There follows His saying: ‘...has the fiercer and more lasting punishment.’ (*Ta Ha*: 71) In this verse, Pharaoh indicates the severity of the punishment in terms of manner, continuation, and duration. It is worth noting that the Quran does not mention anything further about Pharaoh’s threat, whether he carried it out or not. However, it is more likely that he implemented that with which he threatened them.

The threat of Pharaoh should have filled the hearts of the sorcerers with awe and terrorised them so that, at the very least, they would have tried to make excuses for what happened, but nothing like this occurred. Indeed, they instead gave voice to what would infuriate Pharaoh even more, affirming as mentioned in the following verse:

قَالُوا لَنْ نُؤْتِرَكَ عَلَىٰ مَا جَاءَنَا مِنَ الْبَيِّنَاتِ وَالَّذِي فَطَرَنَا
فَاقْضِ مَا أَنْتَ قَاضٍ إِنَّمَا تَقْضِي هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ﴿٧٢﴾

They said, ‘We shall never prefer you to the clear sign that has come to us, nor to Him who created us. So decide whatever you will: you can only decide matters of this present life [72] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 72)

To prefer someone to someone else means to give the former the precedence over the latter while they are equal in the aspect of preference. So, you say, ‘I prefer so-and-so over so-and-so’, while the two of them are of the same status. However, the same verb can also be used in situations where you have something and give it to a poor person. By so doing, you have given him preference over yourself. A relevant example occurs in Allah’s saying: ‘...and prefer (them) before themselves though poverty may afflict them...’ (*al-Hashr*: 9).

Thus, their statement, ‘We shall never prefer you to the clear sign that has come to us, nor to Him Who created us...’ (*Ta Ha*: 72), serves as a response to Pharaoh’s saying: ‘... You will know for certain which of us has the fiercer and more lasting punishment.’ (*Ta Ha*: 71) From the perspective of Pharaoh,

the battle is with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Hence, the sorcerers wanted to confront Pharaoh with the truth which has become evident to all of them. In reality, the conflict is not with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*, but rather, it is with the manifest signs of Allah *the Almighty* with which Musa (Moses) was sent. They are declaring to Pharaoh, 'We shall not prefer you over the signs of Allah which have come to us clearly and indisputably.'

When the sorcerers witnessed the miracle of the staff, it was they who had the deepest belief in Allah *the Almighty* a point which is clearly evident when they said, 'We believe in the Lord of Harun (Aaron) and Musa (Moses).' (*Ta Ha*: 70) Here, they did not say, 'We believe in Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron).' This indicates plainly that their faith is sound and truthful from the first instant.

We have previously come across this issue in the story of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) with the Queen of Sheba, *Balqis*, when she said, '... and I submit with Sulaiman (Solomon) to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.' (*an-Naml*: 44) Thus, she declared her submission solely to Allah *the Exalted*; she did not say, 'I have surrendered myself to Sulaiman (Solomon)' because there is a supreme Lord to Whom all submit.

Therefore, the sorcerers' statement, 'We shall never prefer you to the clear sign that has come to us, nor to Him Who created us...' (*Ta Ha*: 72) is a precise expression full of awareness and wisdom. You will not find in it the persona of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*; instead, you find evidence of the truth which he brought from Allah *the Almighty*. In this respect, He *the Most High* says: 'those who disbelieved from amongst the followers of the Book and the polytheists could not have separated (from the faithful) until there had come to them the clear evidence.' (*al-Bayyina*: 1) Then He *Glorified is He* makes it clear to whom the evidence of the truth came: 'A messenger from Allah, reading out pages [blessed with] purity.' (*al-Bayyina*: 2)

So, there are three stages of attaining to faith which start with believing in the messenger and then believing in the evidence of truth and lastly believing in Allah *the Almighty*.

In the verse under study, the ‘clear signs’ refer to the manifestly clear matters which settle all contention surrounding them. They do not allow for argument or a disputation as their proof is obvious and manifestly apparent.

As for the sorcerers’ saying, ‘to Him Who created us’ (*Ta Ha: 72*), it means that they will not also give preference to Pharaoh over Allah *Glorified is He* Who created us. There is another possible interpretation for this part of the verse; it can serve as an oath attesting to what they just stated; you say, ‘I will not do such-and-such, I swear by Him Who created you.’ Hereby you take an oath that you will not do this thing. In this sense, the sorcerers’ statement expresses the standpoint of not going back on what they said; in other words, their belief in the Lord of Harun (Aaron) and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them* is steadfast and unshakable.

Subsequently, they do not miss the opportunity of referring to the threats of the Pharaoh which is the following: ‘...I shall certainly cut off your alternate hands and feet, then crucify you on the trunks of palm trees.’ (*Ta Ha: 71*) Therefore, they say: ‘So decide whatever you will...’ (*Ta Ha: 72*). It is as if they were saying to him, ‘Execute the sentence you pronounced concerning the severing of hands and feet or carry out that which you have decided concerning other matters. Do whatever you want, for these threats no longer frighten us.’ There follows their saying: ‘You can only decide matters of this present life.’ (*Ta Ha: 72*)

So, they continue to say to him, ‘You are a man, and you might die at any time, and so you will pronounce rulings only for the period of your life. Perhaps there will come after you he who is better than you are, not falsely claiming what you have ascribed to yourself of divinity. Now, should it happen that the one who comes after you will follow in your footsteps, and then his life also will come to an end. Even if the customary practice you established for your people in terms of presuming deification remains until the Day of Resurrection, the issue will be settled, even if it is delayed until the arising of the Last Hour.’

As we have previously said, the pleasures and delights of this world, regardless of the level they reach, are threatened by two factors: either you lose them or they leave you. However, the pleasures and delights of the Hereafter are enduring and continuous. You never lose them, and they never leave you.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* relates that the sorcerers said:

إِنَّا آمَنَّا بِرَبِّنَا لِيَغْفِرَ لَنَا خَطِيئَتَنَا وَمَا أَكْرَهْتَنَا عَلَيْهِ مِنَ السِّحْرِ وَاللَّهُ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى ﴿٧٣﴾

We believe in our Lord, [hoping] He may forgive us our sins and the sorcery that you forced us to practise – God is better and more lasting [73] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 73)

Inasmuch as the sorcerers have reverted from faith in a human being to faith in the Creator of all the human beings, this is a wise thinking for which they should not be blamed. Hence, they explain the motive behind their faith by saying, '[hoping] He may forgive us our sins and the sorcery that you forced us to practise...' (*Ta Ha*: 73).

Thus, the motive behind their belief in Allah *the Exalted* is that it will be beneficial for them, for He will forgive their numerous sins, including what Pharaoh obligated them to do regarding the matter of sorcery for them. After all, they performed sorcery under coercion, and they practised it under compulsion. Thus, it was an activity which did not follow in accordance with their natural inclination nor with their fundamental constitution and innate disposition.

How often are people forced to do things which they are not content with, executing orders which they are not convinced of, especially during the eras of haughty transgressors and tyrants. For example, we have frequently heard of prison wardens in detention centres; one of them would receive orders to torture one of the prisoners. So, what would he do while he knows that the person is innocent? He would not be able to make his heart submit to torturing him, so he would enter the prisoner's cell and tell him, 'scream out as loudly as you can.' Then, he would pretend that he was beating him.

Then the sorcerers say: 'Allah is better and more lasting.' (*Ta Ha*: 73) In fact, Allah *the Almighty* is the Ever-Lasting, while Pharaoh and other cruel tyrants, who would come after him and even the whole world, will come to an end. He *the Most High* provided the human beings with causal means in this world, but in the Hereafter they will not live by these causal means; rather, they will live by the Causer Himself. For this reason, if something crosses your mind, you find it in front of you; this is the bliss of the Hereafter. As for

the civilisations of this world, they will never attain to it regardless of the level of development they reach.

Regarding this, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...until when the earth puts on its golden raiment and it becomes garnished, and its people think that they have power over it, Our command comes to it, by night or by day...’ (*Yunus*: 24). Therefore, however strongly human beings believe that they are capable of doing everything in their world, in reality they are weak, unable to preserve even what they have attained.

Hence, you should always keep Allah *Glorified is He* in your mind, and this will be compensation for every good thing that you pass by. You should be ashamed lest He observe you while you are disobeying Him. It was related in a Qudsi Hadith, ‘If you believe that I do not see you, then there is a deficiency in your faith, and if you believe that I see you, then why have you ranked Me as the most insignificant of those who behold you?!’⁽¹⁾

In this respect, once a pious sage was asked, ‘What have you wholeheartedly dedicated your life to?’ He replied, ‘To four things: I know I am never free from the gaze of Allah for even the blink of an eye, so I have been ashamed of disobeying Him. I know that I have apportioned sustenance which will not pass me by, for Allah has guaranteed it for me, so I am content with it. I know that there is a debt I owe which no one else can repay for me, so I preoccupied myself with it. Finally, I know that I have an ordained time of death which is advancing towards me, so I am consciously advancing towards it.’

Another one of the upright wise men commented on these four principles by saying: ‘Be heedful of the One from Whose gaze you are never freed and render your thanks to the One Whose Favour never ceases to come to you, render your obedience to the One Whom you cannot dispense with and render your submissiveness to the One from Whose Dominion and Authority you cannot escape.’

In this manner, these eight sayings encompass all the religion.

(1) Research in the books of Hadith has revealed the absence of authoritative support for a Hadith with this wording.

Subsequently, the sorcerers who proclaimed their faith put forward the reasons for this faith by saying:

إِنَّهُ مَنْ يَأْتِ رَبَّهُ مُجْرِمًا فَإِنَّ لَهُ جَهَنَّمَ لَا يَمُوتُ فِيهَا وَلَا يَحْيَىٰ ﴿٧٤﴾

**Hell will be the reward of those who return to their Lord as evildoers: there they will stay, neither living nor dying [74]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 74)**

In Allah's saying, 'Hell will be the reward of those who return to their Lord as evildoers...' (*Ta Ha*: 74), the evildoer basically means the one who committed a crime. In this verse, the crime is to break one of Allah's Laws, just as human beings do regarding their own laws. They impose a punishment on whoever goes against these laws. However, it is necessary that the crime be specified and known to people; so, as soon as someone falls into it, he deserves the punishment. Hence, no one should be punishing except on the basis of a crime, and there is no crime except on the basis of a written text.

Allah's saying, '... those who return to their Lord as evildoers...' (*Ta Ha*: 74) signifies that it is the evildoer who shall return to Allah *the Almighty* in spite of his culpability and the punishment he anticipates. However, why did the sorcerers address Pharaoh using the term 'evildoing'? This is because he said, '... I shall certainly cut off your alternate hands and feet, then crucify you on the trunks of palm trees.' (*Ta Ha*: 71) He said so while they did nothing more than uttering the word of truth, so which one, then, is the evildoer?

Allah *the Exalted* then says: '... there they will stay [in Hell], neither living nor dying.' (*Ta Ha*: 74) The evildoers will not die in the Hell because death would relieve them of chastisement. Therefore, they shall wish for death while they are punished in the hell, a fact which is ever so clear in Allah's saying: 'O, Malik, let your Lord make an end of us.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 77) Then comes his reply: 'Surely, you shall tarry.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 77)

Evidently, there is a difference between punishment and death, for death is the termination of life which is not followed by any pain. As for punishment, it only arises with life, as it means to hurt a living being. For this reason, in the story of Sulaiman (Solomon) and the Hoopoe bird, Sulaiman

(Solomon) *peace be upon him* said: ‘I will most certainly punish it with a severe punishment or kill it...’ (*an-Naml*: 21). Hence, punishing is different from killing, as the latter entails the termination of life.

Now, the meaning of ‘... neither living nor dying’ (*Ta Ha*: 74) is that there is a stage between death and life, whereby a person does not die and thus finds relief, nor does he live a life free of suffering.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَمَنْ يَأْتِهِ مُؤْمِنًا قَدْ عَمِلَ الصَّالِحَاتِ فَأُولَئِكَ لَهُمُ الدَّرَجَاتُ الْعُلَى

But those who return to their Lord as believers with righteous deeds will be rewarded with the highest of ranks [75]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 75)

It is as if the sorcerers were referring in their earlier statement, ‘Hell will be the reward of those who return to their Lord as evildoers...’ (*Ta Ha*: 74), to Pharaoh. In the verse in question, however, they are referring to themselves and to the path of faith which they followed: ‘But those who return to their Lord as believers with righteous deeds...’ (*Ta Ha*: 75).

Here, they combine faith and good deeds since faith is the spiritual source from which the impulsive actions are issued forth in accordance with the Divine Way of Guidance that they believe in. Otherwise, what is the benefit of you believing in something without acting upon it? Concerning this connection, we should note that the Quran frequently combines between belief and righteous deeds.

Regarding Allah’s saying, ‘... will be rewarded with the highest of ranks’ (*Ta Ha*: 75), the word ‘ranks’ refers to the degrees of eminence in Paradise, for it comprises ascending degrees, one of them above the other. On the other hand, Hellfire comprises descending levels, one of them below the other.

Allah *the Most High* provided paradise with ascending degrees because those who dwell in it vary between each other in their good deeds,⁽¹⁾ just as they

(1) *Ibn Al-Mubarak and Abu Nu‘aym narrated that ‘Awn Ibn ‘Abdullah said, ‘Surely, Allah grants a people entry into paradise and gives them until they have had enough. Above them are people in higher ranks, and when they look at them, they recognise them, so they say, ‘O our Lord, those are our brothers and we were with them, so on=*

varied from one another in a single good deed due to their different levels of sincerity. Hence, we find in a Hadith, 'People are in danger save those who are cognisant of the truth, and those who are cognisant of the truth are in danger save those who perform good deeds, and those who perform good deeds are in danger save those who are sincere, and those who are sincere are in tremendous danger.'

So, what are the highest ranks referred to in this verse? The answer is provided in the following saying of Allah *Glorified is He*:

جَنَّتٌ عَدْنٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا وَذَلِكَ جَزَاءُ مَنْ تَزَكَّى ﴿٧٦﴾

Gardens of lasting bliss graced with flowing streams, and there they will stay. Such is the reward of those who purify themselves [76] (The Quran, Ta Ha: 76)

The intended meaning in this verse is that the Gardens of lasting bliss have been prepared for the residence of those who believe and do righteous deeds. Now, there is a difference between a place prepared for residence and a place prepared for transitory use. Likewise, a place differs in its luxury according to the one who prepares it. Therefore, how would you envisage a place prepared for you by Allah *the Almighty* with His Divine Power and Ability?

There follows Allah's saying: '...beneath which rivers flow, and there they will stay.' (*Ta Ha: 76*) We know that water is amongst the most important constituent elements of life in this world, for it is integral to growing crops and the nutritive elements are dissolved in it. Without water, life would be impossible on the face of the earth. In passing, we should note that when Allah *the Almighty* sends rain from the sky, the one upon whom rain falls may not derive benefit from it, as it might fall on a mountain, for example. Let us consider the Nile, for instance, upon whose water the Egyptian people live; it comes from Abyssinia and other places.

= what basis have you given them preference over us?' Then it will be said, 'How far you are from them, surely they used to go hungry while you were satiated, they would go thirsty while your thirst was well-quenched, they would be standing in worship while you were sleeping, and they would ascend higher while you sank down.' See Ibn Al-Mubarak, *Az-Zuhd*, p. 23, Hadith no. 99; Abu Nu'aym, *Hilyat Al-Awliya*, 4/247.

Therefore, the Creator *Glorified is He* has rendered the expression, ‘...beneath which rivers flow...’ (*Ta Ha: 76*), a symbol for greenery, freshness, abundance and blissful life. In fact, every human being—though he may not be in need of food, for example, since he is satiated—finds delight in the sight of the green nature with its crops and flowers. After all, a person does not only delight in eating the fruits of the crops, but he also delights in viewing them. So, if you eat three meals per day, you still can take pleasure in a beautiful view, for lovely scenery constitutes a delight to the spirit and happiness for the soul.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* commands us not to confine our deriving of benefit to the blessings that we possess. So, even if you are forbidden to eat the fruits that do not belong to you, you can take delight in viewing them as this is also a pleasure and continuous nourishment. This point is quite clear in Allah’s saying: ‘... behold the fruit of it when it yields the fruit and the ripening of it.’ (*al-An‘am: 99*)

Back to the verse under discussion; Allah *the Most High* says: ‘... beneath which rivers flow...’ (*Ta Ha: 76*). This is because the flowing of rivers in this world is a means to verdure and fertility. Concerning His saying: ‘... beneath which...’ (*Ta Ha: 76*), it indicates that the water is an integral part of the Gardens. It is not flowing towards you from some other place, so it will not be withheld from you, nor will you be deprived of it.

Thus, in another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘... beneath which rivers flow...’ (*at-Tawba: 100*). That is to say that below the Gardens there are flowing rivers, but their origin is from another place. He ascribes flowing to the river, not to the water. This serves as an emphasis, since the river is the conduit in which the water flows.

Allah *the Exalted* then says: ‘...and there they will stay.’ (*Ta Ha: 76*) In this verse, He guarantees the eternity of the blessings in the Hereafter. In fact, the defect of any worldly blessing stems from the fact that it ends, either by you losing it yourself when you die or else it goes away itself. By contrast, Allah *the Almighty* has rendered the blessing of paradise free of this defect, for it is everlasting and enduring. It does not disappear, nor are you removed from it.

Afterwards Allah *the Almighty* concludes this verse with His saying: 'Such is the reward of those who purify themselves.' (*Ta Ha: 76*) In Arabic, purity refers to something intrinsically pure and growing; it augments beyond the state in which you see it.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; you may go to a garden and view artificial roses and natural roses. In the latter, there is moisture, freshness, pleasant fragrance, and growth; all of these are inherent qualities of a rose. This is in contrast to an artificial rose which remains in a single state.

This is the difference between what the human creates and the creation of his Creator. Therefore, that which Allah *the Almighty* fashions is more abiding and more enduring, a fact which is clearly manifested in His saying: '... So, blessed be Allah, the best of the creators.' (*al-Mu'minun: 14*)

It should be noted here that He does not begrudge you the attribute of creation since you utilised causal factors and employed your intellectual ability, so you have some aspects of the creative power. However, your Lord is the best of creators since when you create something; you do it out of the already existed beings which are originally created by Allah *the Exalted*. On the contrary, He creates out of nothing. Moreover, while you create something inanimate, He creates alive and growing beings, multiplying by themselves.

Back to the verse in question; the word *az-zakat* (the prescribed alms) which you give to the poor comes from the same root of purity because it purifies the remainder of the property and causes it to increase. It is worth noting that Allah *the Almighty* describes that which you give of wealth in charity as augmentation while He describes the increase earned through usury as obliteration.

Hence, the meaning of His saying, 'Such is the reward of those who purify themselves' (*Ta Ha: 76*) is that the Gardens of lasting bliss are prepared as a reward for believers who have purified themselves of sins and then ascended progressively in attaining to the truth. Although they have already believed, their faith increases and grows daily. The more their faith increases, the greater their nearness to their Lord; as a matter of fact, the purity of things comes before their growth as the warding off of a cause of evil takes precedence over the attainment of benefit.

Therefore, a believer should first purify his belief and then work on increasing it. This is similar to someone who wishes to engage in commerce; he must first provide pure, lawful capital, and then he shall work on growing it. So, beware of using impure, unlawful capital which you then try to increase. Therefore, the more a believer causes his faith to grow, the higher he ascends in his rank. That is why he shall have a lofty rank in the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَلَقَدْ أَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي فَاصْرَبْ لَهُمْ
 طَرِيقًا فِي الْبَحْرِ يَبَسًا لَا تَخَفُ دَرَكًا وَلَا تَخْشَىٰ

**We revealed to Moses, ‘Go out at night with My servants and strike a dry path for them across the sea. Have no fear of being overtaken and do not be dismayed’ [77]
 (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 77)**

This revelation to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* occurred after the end of the contest in which the forces of faith had triumphed. As for Pharaoh, he had lost one of his most important weapons and a large part of his authority and tyrannical power.

In this verse, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* has assembled the Children of Israel of the remaining descendants of the family of Jacob in order to take them to the Promised Land. However, Pharaoh rapidly readied his army and gathered together his forces and marched in pursuit of them to the coast of the sea. Thereupon Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his people were besieged, with the sea in front of them and Pharaoh and his army behind them. They had no way of escape from this dilemma.

This is the judgment of the human mind, but from the perspective of true believers, there is a solution. This is because a believer’s affairs are not isolated from his Lord and Creator. So, when a calamity or a tribulation befalls him, he considers the fact that his Lord is safeguarding him. Then he takes refuge in Him and finds comfort in His Protection. Thus, it is said, ‘There is no disaster while You are Lord.’ So as long as I have a Lord in whom I can find refuge,

then there is no calamity, for it only befalls the one who has no Lord in Whom to seek refuge.

We have coined a simile for this point; if someone had only a single Egyptian pound in his pocket, and it drops from him on the road, he will be aggrieved. However if he possesses other money, it will compensate him for his lost. Likewise, your belief in Allah *the Almighty* compensates you for any calamity that befalls you.

In order to save Musa (Moses) and his people from this dilemmatic situation, Allah *the Almighty* commanded him by saying: 'Go out at night with My servants and strike a dry path for them across the sea.' (*Ta Ha: 77*) Thus, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was ordered to go out by night because the night is best for concealing a traveller.

In Allah's saying, '...with My servants...' (*Ta Ha: 77*), the word 'servants' basically has a general and a specific connotation. Generally, it refers to all created beings in the universe since they are Allah's subservient slaves. Even if the human beings have free choice in some matters, they are under compulsion in other things. Thus, even the one who is accustomed to using his freedom of choice to act in contravention of Allah's Way of Guidance faces compelling forces such as illness and death.

On the other hand, the term 'Allah's servants' specifically refers to the elite which have preferred what He wills over what they desire, and they willingly opted for this. So, when Allah *Glorified is He* gave them the choice by saying, '... let him who please believe, and let him who please disbelieve' (*al-Kahf: 29*), they chose what pleases Him.

It is for this reason that Allah *the Almighty* ascribes them to Himself by saying: 'As regards My servants, you have no authority over them...' (*al-Hijr: 42*). He also describes them in His saying, '... honoured servants' (*al-Anbiya': 26*), and in His saying: 'And the servants of the Beneficent are they who walk on the earth in humbleness.' (*al-Furqan: 63*)

Back to the verse under study; Allah *the Almighty* commands Musa (Moses), by saying: '... and strike a dry path for them across the sea.' (*Ta Ha: 77*) By so doing, they will have a dry path in the middle of the water.

In Arabic, the verb ‘to strike’ means to hit something by an instrument. A related usage of this is to strike coinage, or in other words, to mint it and mark it with a seal. Thus, after being a piece of metal, it becomes circulating money. So, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* struck the sea with his staff, and the sea split apart, and the water pulled away into a dry path suitable for passing over with feet. This phenomenon cannot be envisaged by the human mind. Therefore, his Lord reassures Musa (Moses) by saying: ‘Have no fear of being overtaken and do not be dismayed.’ (*Ta Ha: 77*) This means that he should have no fear of being caught up by Pharaoh or being drowned in the sea, for the path is prepared, levelled, and suitable for this function.

This is another miracle of Musa's (Moses') staff which he previously cast and it became a fast-moving snake. Here, he also struck the sea with it, and so what was beneath it became a dry path surrounded by mountains, a point which is clear in Allah's saying: ‘... and each part was like a huge mound.’ (*al-An'am: 63*) These staffs are also the one with which he struck the stone, thus causing water to gush forth from it.

The narrative in these verses did not mention anything about the exchange of words between Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his people when they found themselves in this predicament. This conversation, however, is related in other verses of Quran. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘so when the two hosts saw each other, the companions of Musa (Moses) cried out, "Most surely we are being overtaken." He said, "By no means, surely, my Lord is with me. He will show me a way out."' (*ash-Shu'ara': 61-62*)

Through the multiplicity of narrative segments in the Quran, the wider and comprehensive picture of the story is rendered complete, and thus there is no redundant repetition as some are deluded into thinking.

Hence, before the following saying of Allah, ‘... and strike a dry path for them across the sea...’ (*Ta Ha: 77*), was revealed to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* the children of Israel said, ‘Most surely we are being overtaken.’ (*ash-Shu'ara': 61*) Thereupon, he said, ‘By no means, ...’ (*ash-Shu'ara': 62*). But how could he say this with such confidence, while what they feared was likely to happen within a moment?

To this, we reply, ‘This is due to the fact that he did not say this based upon his own opinion or the laws of men; rather, he said as such based on the laws of the Creator of men.’ Thus, he said, "By no means, surely my Lord is with me. He will show me a way out." (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) Therefore, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was not deceiving his people as he was not cut off from heaven and the Commands of His Lord.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَتْبَعَهُمْ فِرْعَوْنُ بِجُنُودِهِ فَغَشِيَهُمْ مِنَ الْيَمِّ مَا غَشِيَهُمْ ﴿٧٨﴾

Pharaoh pursued them with his armies and was overwhelmed by the sea [78] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 78)

With respect to Allah’s saying, ‘... and was overwhelmed by the sea’ (*Ta Ha*: 78), it means that the water covered them. This incident is left vague to indicate its terrifying nature and horror as it is beyond description.

In another narrative segment of this event, Allah *the Almighty* explains that, after crossing over with his people safely, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* on the basis of his own judgment and faith-based deductions, wanted to strike the sea a second time. By so doing, it would return to its unbroken flow and thus prevent Pharaoh from overtaking him. However, Allah *the Almighty* commanded him by saying: ‘and leave the sea intervening; surely they are a host who shall be drowned.’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 24) Thus, He ordered him to leave the sea as it is and not to revert it to its unrestricted flow, for just as He rescued him by means of water, He will annihilate his enemy by means of water as well. Hence, Exalted is the One Who saves and destroys with the same thing.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَضَلَّ فِرْعَوْنَ قَوْمَهُ، وَمَا هَدَىٰ ﴿٧٩﴾

Pharaoh truly led his people astray; he did not guide them [79] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 79)

Pharaoh had previously said to his people: ‘... and I do not make you follow any but the right way.’ (*Ghafir*: 29) So, where is the right way about

which he spoke after Allah *the Almighty* covered them up with the sea? Indeed, he led his people to annihilation, not providing them with salvation and upright guidance. Hence, he was a liar in laying claim to the right way of guidance since he led them astray instead of guiding them and destroyed them instead of saving them.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يٰۤاِبْنَۤاِسْرٰٓءِيۡلَ قَدْ اٰمَنَّا بِكَ مِنْۢ بَدۡئِكُمْ ۚ وَوَعَدْنَاكَ مِجۡرٰٓتَ الْجَبۡلِ
الطُّورِ الْاَيْمَنِ وَنَزَّلْنَا عَلَيْكُمُ الْمَنَّٰ وَالسَّلٰوٰى ﴿٨٠﴾

**O, Children of Israel, We rescued you from your enemies.
We made a pledge with you on the right-hand side of the
mountain. We sent down manna and quails for you [80]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 80)**

Allah *the Exalted* has bestowed countless gifts and blessings on the children of Israel. The pious servitude, which He ascribed to them in saying, ‘... Go out at night with My servants...’ (*Ta Ha*: 77), required that they implement His Way of Guidance. Moreover it required that they always remember His blessings such that every time their souls veered towards a forbidden act, they would recall one of these blessings. This would remind them that they are not free volunteers in their faith in Allah; rather, they are just repaying the blessings and favours of Allah.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* reminds them about some of His blessings and addresses them with the fondest of terms, ‘O, children of Israel’ (*Ta Ha*: 80); the name ‘Israel’ means the sincerely devoted servant of Allah. This is similar to when to say to your companion, ‘O, son of the good man or pious man.’ Hence, Allah *the Most High* is reminding them about their noble origins, attributing them one of His prophets, Ya'qub (Jacob) *peace be upon him*. It is as if He is drawing their attention to the fact that committing acts of transgression is not appropriate for them, nor is deviating from Allah’s Way of Guidance since they are the descendants of this righteous man.

The word ‘enemy’ in Allah’s saying, ‘We rescued you from your enemies...’ (*Ta Ha*: 80) refers to Pharaoh who held them in contempt, killed their sons,

spared their womenfolk, exploited their labour without recompense and committed despicable deeds against them.

There follows Allah's saying: 'We made a pledge with you on the right-hand side of the mountain.' (*Ta Ha*: 80) This pledge was in order that they adhere to the sound path in the activities of life. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* freed them from harm and bestowed His blessings on them. The word 'pledge' necessarily implies a mutual act between two parties. So, was the pledge taken by both Allah and the children of Israel? No, the promise was only from Allah *the Almighty*; however, the Quranic expression includes the Children of Israel in the promise. This draws our attention to the fact that if a person promises you something and you agree, then it is as if you have entered into a promise.

As for Allah's saying, '...on the right-hand side of the mountain' (*Ta Ha*: 80), it refers to the place where they received the Divine Way of Guidance. It is a place far away in the desert, bereft of crops and water. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* assures them of what will nourish them by saying: 'We sent down manna and quails for you.' (*Ta Ha*: 80)

The 'manna' is a white liquid similar to honey. It dribbles like crystallised drops resembling dew on the leaves of trees. In the morning, the children of Israel used to gather this sweet food. This blessed phenomenon still exists; in Iraq, for example, a significant industry is based upon the manufacture of honeydew. The 'quail' which was bestowed on them is a kind of birds. In this manner, Allah *the Almighty* provided them plentifully with the basic necessities of life: this sugary substance whose delicious flavour was a blend of cream and bee honey, as well as appetising birds without any tiresome effort on their part to the extent that they would find it in front of them prepared and ready to eat. Thus, they should have been expected to be grateful for Allah's blessings upon them, but they objected to that, saying: '..."We cannot bear with one food. Therefore, pray our Lord on our behalf to bring forth for us out of what the earth grows, of its herbs and its cucumbers and its garlic and its lentils and its onions." He said, "Will you exchange that which is better for that which is worse?"' (*al-Baqara*: 61)

In the chapter of *al-Baqara*, alongside this Blessing which accompanied them in the aridity of the desert, Allah *the Almighty* mentions another blessing

by saying: ‘And We made the clouds to give shade over you, and We sent to you manna and quails.’ (*al-Baqara: 57*) Thus, He protected the children of Israel from the heat of the sun while they were travelling in the desert.

We should take note of the difference of wording between the two verses concerning manna and quails. In the verse under study, the Arabic verb used to refer to sending down of manna and a quail is transitive indicating that the action may happen only once. On the other hand, the verb used in the chapter of *al-Baqara* signifies the continuous nature of sending down. This is because Allah *the Almighty* addresses the topic from all aspects through different narrative segments.

Country folk in Egypt employ the word 'manna' to refer to a dark reddish substance which then turns black and drips onto plants, but it is not a blessing; instead, it is considered a harmful disease to plants.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ وَلَا تَطْغَوْا فِيهِ فَيَحِلَّ
 عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبِي ۗ وَمَنْ يَحِلَّ عَلَيْهِ غَضَبِي فَقَدْ هَوَىٰ ﴿٨١﴾

Eat from the good things We have provided for you, but do not overstep the bounds, or My wrath will descend on you. Anyone on whom My wrath descends has truly fallen [81] (The Quran, *Ta Ha: 81*)

Food, drink, and air are basic constituents of life, which Allah *the Almighty* has guaranteed for us. In this verse, the command to eat signifies permissibility. It is not obligatory for you to eat unless you intended to refrain from food in the manner of a hunger strike which endangers your life. In this case, you are obligated to eat.

In Allah’s saying, ‘Eat from the good things We have provided for you...’ (*Ta Ha: 81*), the ‘good things’ are specified because the provision includes both good and bad. The provision connotes everything that you derive benefit from, even if it is unlawful. This is to say that whatever you obtain of the unlawful is also part of your provision, but you expedited it by unlawful

means. Now if you desist from it and restrained your soul from it, you would obtain multiples of it from what is lawful.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...but do not overstep the bounds...’ (*Ta Ha*: 81). In a similar verse of the chapter of *an-Nahl*, He *the Most High* says: ‘... and We did them no injustice, but they were unjust to themselves.’ (*an-Nahl*: 118) Hence, it is as if the reason for doing injustice to the soul lies in their having transgressed the proper bounds in eating of sustenance. Overstepping the bounds of something means to exceed its normal limit within which it is beneficial. A related usage is flooding of water when it goes beyond the bound of alleviating the dryness of the land and thirst and reaches the bounds of inundation. In this respect, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely, We bore you up in the ship when the water rose high.’ (*al-Haqqa*: 11) This verse refers to the case when the water surpassed the limit within which it is beneficial and became ruinous and destructive.

The same is true with regard to any limit, but how do you overstep the limit regarding food and means of subsistence? When Allah *the Almighty* created the earth, He apportioned its ordained nourishment until the Day of Resurrection, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘He ... blessed it, measured out its varied provisions for all who seek them—all in four Days.’ (*Fussilat*: 10) So rest assured, mankind, in regard to this matter. So, if you should see that the earth does not produce, then do not blame it. Rather, blame yourselves for your falling short and indolence with respect to cultivating and farming it, as Allah *the Almighty* commanded us by saying: ‘... He brought you into being from the earth, and made you dwell in it.’ (*Hud*: 61)

Thus, we should not overstep the bounds after the Creator brought forth our sustenance and the constituent elements of our life and rendered them suitable for human beings upon whom He bestowed honour, making them His Vicegerent on the earth. He established clearly defined limits for the lawful things from amongst this sustenance and these constituent elements. Therefore, you must not overstep these bounds by being excessive in your consumption of your food and drink.

We even see that amongst man-made machines each has its own special fuel and that if you give it something else, it will not perform its function. For

example, if you fuelled an aeroplane with diesel fuel, it will not move because such fuel does not accord with its nature.

Hence, you should not go beyond the sustenance which is lawful. In fact, if we analyse what Allah *the Almighty* has permitted and what He has made forbidden, we would find that permissibility is the basis of things. The great majority of things are lawfully permitted for you. As for that which is legally forbidden, they are few and limited, and you could even delineate them.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Say: "Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you ..."' (al-An‘am: 105); however, He does not say in another verse, for example: ‘Say: Come I will recite what your Lord has made lawful for you.’ This is because the lawful matters are so extensive and cannot be enumerated.

Hence, when Allah *the Almighty* bestows substance on you, He tells you, ‘This is your lawful and personal provision. It includes your nutrition and the essential elements of your life. They are integral to your survival and to the vivacity of your movements. So, do not transgress beyond what is lawful, in all its abundance, to what is forbidden, in all its scarceness and limitation to a number of categories which have been made clear to you and against which you have been warned.’

In the body, nourishment allows it to maintain metabolism which is the process of destruction and construction. This is a continuous process that occurs at every moment. So, beware of building an atom of your atoms with what is unlawful, for this atom will persevere in inciting you to fall into what is unlawful.

In the same respect, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Allah *the Almighty* is Good and accepts only that which is good. Indeed, Allah has commanded the believers to do that which He has commanded the messengers. So *the Almighty* has said, "O, (you) messengers! Eat of the good things and perform righteous deeds.’ (al-Mu‘minun: 51) and *the Almighty* has said: ‘O you who believe! Eat of the lawful things that We have provided you.’ (al-Baqara: 172) Then he mentioned [the case] of a man who, having journeyed far, is dishevelled and dusty, and who spreads out his hands to the sky and says, ‘O, Lord! O, Lord!’ while his food is unlawful, his drink is

unlawful, his clothing is unlawful, and he has been nourished with unlawful, so how can [his supplication] be answered?⁽¹⁾ This is because the atoms of his physical frame are not in harmony since they grew on nourishment which Allah did not make lawful for him.

Hence, you hear certain disputatious people say, 'In the light of the fact that Allah created swine, then why did He make it unlawful?' To this, we reply, 'You have understood that every created thing was created to be eaten, and this is not correct. Now, Allah *the Exalted* created petroleum by which machines run on, but can you consume it like a car? Thus, there are certain created beings which were created for a specific function, but human beings directed them to a different function. This is a transfer of a thing to other than what it was made for, which constitutes, in the case of swine, a transgression in foodstuff, for you have shifted the unlawful to the lawful.'

However, transgression may appear in another form, such as when you eat what Allah *the Almighty* has made lawful of good things, but you obtained it in an unlawful way. You accustom yourself to laziness as regards lawful earning and take possession of the efforts of someone else, living dependently on him. Besides the fact that you nourish yourself on what is unlawful, you are also depriving someone else of activity, productivity, and ownership. So, what, then, is the benefit that the one who is wearing himself out derives when someone else takes the fruit of his toil?

Transgression in this sense takes multiple forms in our society, amongst which we could enumerate: extortion or robbery, snatching, theft, embezzlement, bribery, breach of trust and duping someone who hires you. There are many other examples of taking the possessions of people by deception and without any right. Every act amongst these transgressions has its special form. Thus, amongst the forms of appropriating people's wealth is snatching. It is the crime committed when you grab someone else's money without the person being able to stop you, and then you run away with it. However, if he is able to catch you, but you take it by force, then this is violent robbery. By contrast,

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad, Muslim and At-Tirmidhi on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, 2/328, Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1015; and At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2989.*

if the act of appropriating the wealth is done surreptitiously, while it is in a secured place, then this is theft. On the other hand, if you are entrusted with money under your control and then you take from it covertly, then this is embezzlement, and so on and so forth.

Hence, Allah *the Almighty* has made certain things lawful for you, and other things forbidden for you. So, if the thing is lawful, then do not take it except with due right so that each of us respects the work of others and their activities in life as well as their rightful ownership. In this way, the proceedings of life will be rectified, and everyone will be happy. We will thereby help the one who is charitable and assist the forlorn beggar.

Islam has a sound method for doing away with the problem of unemployment, which some modern systems of government are adopting today. The law of Islam encourages the eradication of unemployment is similar to the case when you have a well dug and then have it filled in, after which you give the worker his wages for this work. How is this possible? What is the benefit of this? Why should we not just give the worker his wages without digging and without filling in?

This is in order that a person does not become habituated to lassitude and laziness, and so that he does not eat except by the sweat of his brow and effort, otherwise the society would become corrupt.

Furthermore, transgression regarding sustenance has another form. It is to use what Allah *the Almighty* has provided you to be energy in the endeavours of a useful life in an unlawful way by expending this energy in disobeying Him.

In this sense, the transgression of the children of Israel was the causal factor for Allah's punishment, a fact which is clear in His saying: '...and We did them no injustice...' (*an-Nahl*: 118); what this means is that by punishing them '...they were unjust to themselves' (*an-Nahl*: 118), or in other words, transgressing.

Returning to the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* then says: '... or My Wrath will descend on you...' (*Ta Ha*: 81). In Arabic, the verb translated as 'to descend' has two possible meanings. It can signify that something becomes permissible or lawful. It is in this sense that one says that imprisonment is legitimate for a thief. The same verb occurs with the meaning of descending

or settling down in a place. Hence, the meaning of ‘...or My Wrath will descend on you...’ (*Ta Ha*: 81) is either that it ‘became legitimate and prescribed for you’, or else it means that it ‘descended upon you’. However, it is possible that the meaning is more general than anyone of the above.

The word ‘wrath’ refers to emotional excitation of anger which causes changes in the chemistry of the body. Hence, you notice in an angry person that his jugular veins swell up, his face reddens, and his facial features become altered. These are the modifications which accompany this emotional disturbance. So, is the Wrath of Allah of this type? Of course, it is not, for He *Glorified is He* is not subject to changeability. Now if an angry person’s punishment corresponds to the degree of his anger, then what would you think if the anger were from Allah *the Almighty*? In Allah’s words: ‘Anyone on whom My Wrath descends has truly fallen’ (*Ta Ha*: 81) the verb ‘to fall’ has two meanings. It can signify one’s falling from a high place without having any will or power to prevent that as if he falls suddenly from a rooftop, for example. In this sense, we have the poetic hemistich:

* Into the abyss fell the well bucket as it was betrayed by the rope?

That is to say the rope for drawing up the bucket is cut off.

The other usage of this verb connotes to love something.

Hence, the meaning of Allah’s saying, ‘... has truly fallen’ (*Ta Ha*: 81) is that the one upon whom Allah’s Wrath descend has fallen into the depths that retain none of his value in life. It may also mean that he has fallen down in this world and will fall down in the Hereafter as occurs in Allah’s saying: ‘His abode shall be the abyss.’ (*al-Qari`a*: 9) Thus, his abode will be such a chasm. So, what will he do if he falls into such an abyss?

All of this comprises moral lessons and admonitions for a believer which Allah *the Almighty* makes clear for him in order that he construct the enterprise of his life based on their light and guidance.

Man is susceptible to variability; he does not remain constant in any state, fluctuating between health and sickness and between wealth and poverty. Everything he enjoys is granted to him, it is not self-produced. Therefore, you should beware of grieving when a blessing passes you by because no blessing

will be abiding. Suppose that you have attained the peak of blessings, then what would you possibly anticipate except that they will vanish? As a poet once said:

When a thing is fully achieved, its shortcoming appears

Watch out for extinction when fulfilment is said.

Hence, if something is fulfilled for you and you have a fickle nature with no condition enduring for you, you will inevitably sink to the other side. It is as if the shortcoming of a human being regarding his hopes in life is like an amulet of protection for blessings, that is, his defect or fault will protect him from envy. As a poet once said in a eulogy:

Mankind stares are your perfection

So seek refuge from the evil of their eyes in a single defect.

In other words, envious eyes are gazing towards you, so divert them from you even if it be with but one flaw which people will speak of and with which they become preoccupied.

In the same respect, a woman once entered the presence of the caliph and said to him, 'May Allah completely fulfil His blessings upon you and bring joy to your eye.' Those present understood that she was supplicating to his benefit. When she left the caliph asked, 'Are you aware of what the woman said?' They replied, 'She was praying for you.' Whereupon, he said, 'No; rather, she was uttering an imprecation against me, for when she said, "May Allah completely fulfil His blessings upon you", she certainly intended to mean that they should be taken away. After all, when a blessing is completely fulfilled, nothing remains except its removal. As for her utterance, "May Allah bring joy to your eye," she meant to still it from movement.'

Therefore, do not become angry if people say that you are flawed in such-and-such, for this flaw is the amulet of perfection. Allah *the Almighty* wishes this for your own interest.

Now, inasmuch as a human being is susceptible to variability, he inescapably neglects Allah's Way of Guidance by committing mistakes and lapses which call for forgiveness. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَا لِعَفَّارٍ لِّمَن تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا ثُمَّ اهْتَدَىٰ

**Yet, I am most forgiving towards those who repent,
believe, do righteous deeds, and stay on the right path [82]**

(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 82)

In this verse, the attribute ‘most Forgiving’ is meant to express hyperbola. Hence, if the intensified or exaggerated ascription is affirmed, then by the logic of language the lesser or non-intensified ascription, forgiving, is likewise affirmed. This is regarding the affirmation case. The same hold true in negation as in Allah’s saying: ‘... and your Lord is not in the least unjust to the servants.’ (*Fussilat*: 46) In this verse, the intensification or exaggeration in being unjust is negated. However, does this imply that He might be unjust? Of course, it does not.

A thing can be exaggerated or done to excess in two ways. The first of these is that you are excessive in the same act, such as when you eat one or two flat loaves of bread at a meal, and someone else eats five loaves. This would be exaggeration or excess on his part in the same activity, which in this case is eating. The second way is that exaggeration or excess may be in the repetitive nature of the act. For example, it is normal for us to eat three times a day, but there are those who eat six meals. Such a person we call a glutton; that is to say, he is eating like a horse and having excessive number of meals per day.

The meaning of Allah’s Name ‘the Most Forgiving’ is that He is Forgiving towards me, Forgiving towards you and Forgiving towards everyone; that is, He repetitively forgives all mankind.

In passing, we should note that Allah *the Almighty* has prescribed forgiveness and repentance to protect societies from their evil members. In fact, if a bad person commits a crime but finds no chance of forgiveness and repentance, then he will relish crime, and even exaggerate in committing it. However, if the door of repentance and forgiveness is opened for wrongdoers, this shields society from their ferocity.

Allah *the Exalted* does not only forgive sins, but He also pardons sinners repetitively for these sins. So, every time you transgress against Him, He forgives you. You should, nevertheless, reconcile yourself to the principle that

if you commit a sin and repent of it, you will not do it again. Furthermore, you should not regulate and map out your disobedience based on the hope that you will be able to repent, for what makes you think that you will live long enough to repent!

The verse in question shows us that Allah *the Almighty* forgives those: ‘...who repent, believe...’ (*Ta Ha*: 82). Hence, inasmuch as He *the Almighty* says: ‘...repent, believe...’ (*Ta Ha*: 82), then it is imperative that repentance in this verse comprises turning away from disbelief and then having faith in Allah *the Exalted* and His Messenger. In fact, faith is the fountainhead from which human conduct issues forth. This requires that you heed Allah’s Orders by carrying out His Commands and avoiding His Prohibitions. This is what is meant by His saying: ‘... do righteous deeds...’ (*Ta Ha*: 82).

However, is doing righteous deeds not already the sign of being rightly guided? So, why does Allah *the Almighty* then say: ‘... and stay on the right path?’ (*Ta Ha*: 82) It is said⁽¹⁾ that right guidance signifies your perseverance in doing the righteous deeds and your seeking to augment them. In this respect, He *the Most High* says: ‘and (as for) those who follow the right direction, He increases them in guidance ...’ (*Muhammad*: 17).

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا أَعْجَلَكَ عَنْ قَوْمِكَ يَمُوسَىٰ

[God said], Moses, what has made you come ahead of your people in such haste? [83] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 83)

Here, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is asked, ‘What prompted you to be in such a hurry? Why did you come before your appointed time?’ He had a designated meeting with his Lord in order to receive His Divine Way of Guidance. In this meeting, it was expected that he be accompanied by a group of the select elite of his people and their leaders, but he rushed ahead to

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi attributes this opinion to Sufyan Ath-Thawri, Qatada and other scholars. In addition, he says that, according to Ibn ‘Abbas, this part of the verse means that the person has no doubts about his faith. This opinion is mentioned also by Al-Mawardi and Al-Mahdawi. See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame’ Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4404.

the appointed meeting without them. Hence, He *the Almighty* says to him: 'Musa (Moses), what has made you come ahead of your people in such haste?' (*Ta Ha: 83*)

Whereupon Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ هُمْ أُولَاءِ عَلَىٰ أَثَرِي وَعَجِلْتُ إِلَيْكَ رَبِّ لِتَرْضَىٰ

And he said, 'They are following in my footsteps. I rushed to You, Lord, to please You' [84] (The Quran, *Ta Ha: 84*)

It is as if Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was saying, 'As for my people, they are coming behind me, but I have '...rushed to You, Lord, to please You.' (*Ta Ha: 84*) This means that he has hastily come to the meeting with his Lord in order to please Him.

He had hurried to the meeting place of His Lord and had gone ahead of his people based on wisdom. When a human being commands others to do something which entails hardship for their soul and the restraining of their sensual inclinations, he must take the initiative by saying, 'I am not free of this command, and I will be the first to carry out what I am ordering you. Therefore, I will apply it before the rest of you.'

This is why the victorious general Tariq ibn Ziyad⁽¹⁾ said to his troops, 'Know that when the two forces join battle, surely I will face the trespassing tyrant of the people, Luzriq, myself, and if I kill him, you will have been spared the threat he represents.' In this way, leadership sets the example and becomes a model. This is expressed in a proverbial saying, 'Do such-and-such and my hand is in your hand', but on this occasion Tariq ibn Ziyad states, 'My hand will act before your hand.'

Thus, Musa's (Moses') saying, '... rushed to You, Lord, to please You' (*Ta Ha: 84*) means that he rushed to his Lord so that he accepted that His Way of Guidance be applied on Musa's (Moses') part, as a prophet entrusted

(1) Tariq ibn Ziyad, Al-Laythi by tribal allegiance, the conqueror of Andalusia, was Berber by origin. He embraced Islam at the hand of Musa ibn Nusayr, and was among his most vigorous and powerful men. He was born around 50 AH, penetrated the territory of Andalusia, and died in 102 AH. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-A'lam*, 3/217.

with it and on the part of his people. This is due to that if they see him hastening to that meeting at the appointed place, they will be convinced that applying Allah's Way of Guidance is good for them. Otherwise, he would not have reached the appointed place before them. In this manner, the Divine Way of Guidance dominates and becomes well established in the earth which would make Allah *the Almighty* pleased with His vicegerent on the earth.

Afterwards, Allah *the Exalted* informs Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* about what his people did after he left them, namely worshipping the golden calf.

قَالَ فَإِنَّا قَدْ فَتَنَّا قَوْمَكَ مِنْ بَعْدِكَ وَأَضَلَّهُمُ السَّامِرِيُّ ﴿٨٥﴾

**But God said, 'We have tested your people in your absence:
As-Samiri has led them astray'[85] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 85)**

As a matter of fact, being put to a test is not something inherently objectionable or reprehensible. This is because the result of this test could be either praiseworthy or blameworthy. This is similar to the case of a pupil who sat for an examination; if he succeeds, then this is good for him, but if he fails, then this is good for other people. How is this beneficial to them? This is due to there being matters in which an individual's interests may be realised while the interests of the community are destroyed. Hence, if a negligent, lazy pupil manages to succeed without studying or exerting an effort, he has attained a personal benefit—even if it be a fatuous benefit. At the same time, however, he sends a message to others, inspiring them to neglect their responsibilities. In this manner, frustration and apathy prevails in society, and this is enough to entail its destruction.

The word 'trial' occurs with this meaning in Allah's saying: 'Do men think that they will be left alone on saying, We believe, and not be tried?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 2) Hence, it is necessary that there be examination so that every person receives his recompense according to his results. Now, if someone were to ask, 'Does Allah *the Almighty* test His servants in order to become aware of their condition?' We would say, 'No; rather, in order for people to be aware of their condition and for their true natures to be revealed. Consequently, they will be dealt with accordingly: this one is a hypocrite, this one is sincere, and this one is a liar.

Then, you will be enabled to take precautions in your dealing with them. Thus, testing the people is not meant to enable Allah *the Exalted* to know about their conditions, but instead to enable other people to become aware of them.'

Another explanation is that Allah's test is meant to deprive the one being tested of any pretext. For example, someone may say, 'If Allah *the Almighty* were to bestow wealth upon me, I would do such-and-such in the manner of charitable deeds.' However, as soon as he is put to a real test and is granted wealth, he withholds it and becomes stingy. Now, if Allah *the Most High* had left him without wealth, he would have said, 'If I had had some, I would have done such-and-such.'

Thus, the test reveals to the people the true nature of the one being tested. Then, if he is good and charitable, they will follow his example and admire him. Moreover, they will love him and heed what he says. However, if he is not good, then they will avoid him. Hence, the purpose of testing is to achieve the interest of society and its well-being.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* terms the children of Israel's worship of the golden calf in the absence of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* a 'test'. Then He *the Almighty* ascribes it to Himself by saying: 'We have tested your people...' (*Ta Ha*: 85).

Afterwards, He *the Almighty* says: '...As-Samiri has led them astray.' (*Ta Ha*: 85) This means that As-Samiri caused the children of Israel to follow other than the path of truth. As a matter of fact, deviation from the path of truth can be merely on a personal, individual level whereby a person bears the burden solely by himself. It can also go beyond this by leading others astray, whereby the person shoulders his burden and the burden of others whom he has led astray.

In this respect, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'That they may bear their burdens entirely on the Day of Resurrection and also of the burdens of those whom they lead ...' (*an-Nahl*: 25). Yet, in another verse, He *the Most High* says: 'And a burdened soul cannot bear the burden of another ...' (*Fatir*: 18).

These are amongst the issues which some orientalist discussed, attempting to accuse the Quran and its style of contradiction. This arises from them only

because of their lack of comprehension of the language of the Quran, as they did not naturally grasp it. If they comprehended the Quran, they would recognise the difference between a person going astray by himself and being the cause of leading others astray.

The name ‘As-Samiri’⁽¹⁾ mentioned in the verse under study refers to Musa As-Samiri. It is related that his mother gave birth to him in the lifeless desert, and then died where she bore him. The boy remained without a mother to look after him, so Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* took charge of him and brought him up until he grew up to be a young man.⁽²⁾

A poet has given expression to this segment of the narrative and that which it comprises of differentiation between Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and Musa As-Samiri by saying:

If you do not encounter your sons with careful attention,
 The hopeful one may be false and the promising one may disappoint,
 For Musa who was raised by Jibril (Gabriel) became a disbeliever,
 And Musa (Moses) who was raised by the Pharaoh became a Messenger.
 Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi relates that Ibn ‘Abbas said, ‘As-Samiri was from a people who worshipped cows. He then ended up in Egypt where he outwardly adopted the religion of the children of Israel, while in his heart he was still attached to the worship of cows. It is also said that he was a man of the Copts and was a neighbour of Moses, believed in him and departed with him. It is also said that he was one of the great men of the children of Israel from a tribe known as the Samaritans, who are known in the Levant.’ See Al-Qurtubi, Jame‘ Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4408.*

(2) *With regard to Allah’s saying about As-Samiri: ‘I saw something they did not; I took in some of the teachings of the Messenger...’ (Ta Ha:96), Ibn ‘Abbas said: ‘As-Samiri recognised Gabriel because when his mother feared he would be slaughtered, she left him in a cave and piled up its entrance with rocks, so Jibril (Gabriel) used to come to him and feed him with his fingers. On one of them was milk, on another was honey and on another was butter fat. He continued to nourish him until he grew up. Thus, when he sighted Jibril (Gabriel) in the sea, he recognised him.’*

فَرَجَعَ مُوسَىٰ إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ غَضْبَانَ أَسِفًا قَالَ يَقْتُوِرَ أَلَمْ يَوعِدْكُمْ رَبُّكُمْ وَعَدًّا حَسَنًا أَفَطَالَ
عَلَيْكُمْ الْعَهْدُ أَمْ أَرَدْتُمْ أَن يَحِلَّ عَلَيْكُمْ غَضَبٌ مِّن رَّبِّكُمْ فَأَخْلَفْتُم مَّوْعِدِي ﴿٨٦﴾

Moses returned to his people, angry and aggrieved. He said, 'My people, did your Lord not make you a gracious promise? Was my absence too long for you? Did you want anger to fall on you from your Lord and so broke your word to me?' [86] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 86)

In this verse, the Arabic verb translated as 'to return' can be used intransitively as when you say, 'So-and-so returned to the truth.' It can also be used transitively, taking a direct object as in Allah's saying: 'Therefore if Allah brings you back to a party of them and then they ask your permission to go forth ...' (*at-Tawba*: 83). However, the meaning differs between the two.

Here, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* returned to his people when he heard what happened to them due to the temptation of As-Samiri. He was '...angry and aggrieved...' (*Ta Ha*: 86) because of their worship of the golden calf. He then said, 'My people, did your Lord not make you a gracious promise?' (*Ta Ha*: 86) The 'gracious promise' in this verse refers to Allah's bestowal of the Torah upon them. It included the principles regulating their activities of life, and by means of it, their life in this world would be good as well as their reward in the Hereafter.

Then follows Allah's saying: 'Was my absence too long for you?' (*Ta Ha*: 86) It is as if Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was saying to them, 'Was my promise delayed in coming and became so distant that you forgot it even though I was not absent from you for a long period?' Actually, this period was not too long, a fact which is quite clear in Allah's saying: 'And We appointed with Musa (Moses) a time of thirty nights and completed them with ten (more) ...' (*al-A'raf*: 142).

Then Allah *the Almighty* relates that Musa (Moses) said, 'Did you want anger to fall on you from your Lord and so broke your word to me?' (*Ta Ha*: 86) Now, inasmuch as Musa's (Moses') promise to them was near in time, their forgetfulness should not have occurred. Therefore, it must be that they were wilfully inclined to disobedience and that they wanted the wrath of Allah *the Almighty*

to fall on them. Otherwise, they would not have fallen victim to such a relapse during the absence of their messenger. So, if this was the condition of the children of Israel while their messenger was still alive, then what would their state be after his death?

In the same respect, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say, ‘Is this what occurs while I am still alive among you?’⁽¹⁾ It is as if he was saying to the companions, ‘How could you do this while I am still present amongst you?’

As for Allah’s saying, ‘...and so broke your word to me?’ (*Ta Ha*: 86) it is akin to another verse in which He *the Almighty* says ‘...Evil is it that you have done after me ...’ (*al-A’raf*: 150). These verses show that there had been a promise and discussion between Musa (Moses) and his people. Before he departed from them, he had enjoined them to follow Harun's (Aaron’s) path, and to obey his commands until he came back to them. So, it was Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* that was to take his place in directing the affairs of his people while he was absent. He was Musa's (Moses') partner in conveying the Message, and he possessed the dignified status of a messenger and so obedience to him was mandatory. This is the promise which they broke with Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* relates the response of the children of Israel:

قَالُوا مَا أَخْلَفْنَا مَوْعِدَكَ بِمَلِكِنَا وَلَكِنَّا حَمَلْنَا أَوْزَارًا مِّن
زِينَةِ الْقَوْمِ فَقَذَفْنَاهَا فَكَذَلِكَ أَلْقَى السَّامِرِيُّ

They said, ‘We did not break our word to you deliberately. We were burdened with the weight of people’s jewellery, so we threw it [into the fire], and As-Samiri did the same’ [87] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 87)

In Arabic, the tri-literal semantic root (*m-l-k*) has three forms, each of which has its own meaning contrary to the claim of some that they have a

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by An-Nasa’i on the authority of Mahmoud ibn Labid Allah be Pleased with him who said, ‘The Messenger of Allah was told about a man who had divorced his wife with three simultaneous divorces. He stood up angrily and said: Is the Book of Allah being toyed with while I am still among you? Then a man stood up and said: ‘O Messenger of Allah, shall I kill him?’ See An-Nasa’i, Sunnan, Hadith no. 6/142.*

single meaning. The three forms revolve around the idea of possession or dominating control, but with the following differences: The word *Malk* means a person's control over himself and his volition without his possessing anything else of that which surrounds him. The word *Milk* refers to that which is possessed aside from your own self. Finally, the word *Mulk* means that you dominate and control something as well as the person who owns it. Hence, these three words are not synonyms with a single meaning.

Thus, Allah's saying, 'They said, "We did not break our word to you deliberately"' (*Ta Ha: 87*) means that they did not break their word out of their volition; rather, other factors outside their free will induced them to go against the promise.

So, what were these other factors apart from their own volition? They said, 'We were burdened with the weight of people's jewellery...' (*Ta Ha: 87*). The word 'burden' means something which is burdensomely heavy on the soul. It is used to refer to the sin because it is heavy on the soul, and its heaviness will also extend to the Hereafter, since the pain of bearing it will not end there. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...What a terrible burden to carry on that Day.' (*Ta Ha: 101*) These burdens here consisted of the jewellery of the people of Pharaoh. It is said that the children of Israel used to borrow jewellery from their neighbours and acquaintances from amongst Pharaoh's people for their feast-days in order to embellish themselves with it. Thus, we may ask here, 'Why did they not return these entrusted items to their owners before the time that Musa (Moses) appointed for departure?' It is said that they did so because they wanted to keep their departure a secret so that their enemies would not be able to prepare themselves and prevent them from departing, so there was not enough time to return them.

Other people say that these ornaments and pieces of jewellery were amongst the things expelled by the sea after Pharaoh and his people were drowned. However, this opinion is to be rejected since if they took them after the sea spewed them out, then they would have been items of booty, not burdens.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '... so we threw it [into the fire], and *As-Samiri* did the same.' (*Ta Ha: 87*) The expression jewellery normally refers to gold. As for the verb to throw, it means to cast something with force,

as if the one throwing is fed up with carrying it. In this there is evidence that the children of Israel still bore the basics of faith, as they were pained and saddened because they had not returned the entrusted items to their rightful owners.

Therefore, As-Samiri gained access to them by this angle, explaining to them, ‘Surely, you will not be absolved of this transgression unless you cast these ornaments into the fire.’⁽¹⁾ However, he had something else in mind, which was to melt down the gold and remove what it contained of impurities. Hence, Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘... As-Samiri did the same.’ (*Ta Ha*: 87) This means that he also cast what he had of jewellery. However, there is a difference between their action of forceful throwing and his action of casting, as the latter denoting subtlety and unhurried deliberation, for he was their chief and their teacher.

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَخْرَجَ لَهُمْ عِجْلًا جَسَدًا لَهُ خُورٌ فَقَالُوا هَذَا إِلَهُكُمْ وَإِلَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَنَسِيَ

But he [used the molten jewellery to] produce an image of a calf which made a lowing sound, and they said, ‘This is your god and Moses’ god, but he has forgotten’ [88]

(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 88)

This verse signifies that As-Samiri fashioned for them from this melted gold: ‘...an image of a calf, a (mere) body...’ (*Ta Ha*: 88). In this verse, the word translated as ‘a mere body’ also occurs in the Quran in the story of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* in which Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘And certainly We tried Sulaiman (Solomon), and We put on his throne a (mere) body, so he turned (to Allah).’ (*Sad*: 34) Allah *the Almighty* had bestowed upon Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* a mighty dominion which no one after

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi, relates a similar narration from Qatada, which is as follows: ‘When the people of Moses had fallen behind, As-Samiri told them, ‘The only reason that you have been slowed down is because of what you have of jewelry.’ So they gathered it and presented it to As-Samiri, and then he cast it into the fire and crafted a calf out of it for them. Then he threw upon it a handful of the trail-dust of the horse of the Messenger, that is, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him*. See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame’ Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4408.

him should have in which He rendered birds, jinns, men and the wind all subservient to his command. It seems he was possessed by something of vanity or self-deception, so Allah *the Most High* wished to draw his attention to the One Who granted him this dominion and to remind him that this dominion does not exist on its own. Rather, it exists by the command of Allah Who has the Power to settle him on his throne in the form of a motionless body, without any control even over his own limbs and soul.

This is similar to the case of someone who is stricken with total paralysis and sits on a chair as a motionless body, with no control over his limbs. So, if Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* lacks wilful power over a single one of his limbs, would he then possess the volitional control over that which is external to him of birds or man or jinns? It is if Allah *the Almighty* was saying to him, 'So do not let yourself be deceived that Allah granted you authority over all species because He has the Power to take all of this away from you.'

In the same respect, it is related that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* rode a flying carpet which carried him wherever he desired. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and (We made) the wind (subservient) to Sulaiman (Solomon) who made a month's journey in the morning and a month's journey in the evening...' (*Saba*: 12). Thus, a bit of pride and vanity penetrated him, then he heard from beneath himself someone saying, 'O, Sulaiman (Solomon)—just like this, without distinguishing titles—we have been commanded to obey you as long as you have obeyed Allah.' Then the flying carpet returned him to the place where he was. This is why Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* asked for forgiveness and repented.

Similarly, we see that when someone dies, the first thing that is forgotten about him is his name, since people refer to him as a body, saying, for example, 'The body is here. What you have done with the body?' Then, this is also forgotten as soon as he is put on the bier, at which point people speak of him as the wooden plank by saying, 'Where is the wooden plank now. Just look at the wooden plank.' Hence, the moment that the Creator *Glorified is He* takes His spirit from the servant, he becomes a corpse, and then a wooden plank. Thus, what is the value of this world that has an end that comes in this manner?

Back to the verse in question; Allah's saying, '... an image of a calf, a (mere) body which made a lowing sound...' (*Ta Ha*: 88), signifies that there was no movement in that calf as it was merely a statue. It was made in a particular form such that when wind blew on it, it emitted a whistling sound similar to the lowing of a cow. What arises is a question which is, 'Why did *As-Samiri* dream up this idea and choose this image of a calf?'

It is said that this is because he exploited the yearning of the children of Israel and their inclination towards idolatry and paganism which was deeply rooted in them. This is evident in what they said to their prophet, Musa (Moses), while their feet were still wet from the sea after Allah *the Exalted* had saved them from Pharaoh. They should have been grateful to Allah *the Almighty*. However, once they encountered a people who were bowing in worship to idols, they said, 'O, Musa (Moses), make for us a god as they have (their) gods.' (*al-A'raf*: 138) Hence, *As-Samiri* produced this calf for them, but he had advanced beyond worshipping graven images in fashioning it, rendering it an effigy with a lowing sound that could be heard.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* relates that the children of Israel said, '... This is your god and Musa's (Moses') god, but he has forgotten.' (*Ta Ha*: 88) This verse shows that *As-Samiri* forgot the basis of faith in his own soul; he forgot that this deed entails leaving the fold of faith to disbelief. If only he had just merely disbelieved, but instead he disbelieved and caused the people to fall into disbelief as well. He certainly must have forgotten that, for if he had the slightest recollection of faith and the dire consequences of his deed, he would not have done this.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ أَلَّا يَرْجِعُ إِلَيْهِمْ قَوْلًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُ لَهُمْ ضَرًّا وَلَا نَفْعًا ﴿٨٩﴾

Did they not see that [the calf] gave them no answer, that it had no power to harm or benefit them? [89] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 89)

So, how could they worship this calf while it does not respond to them nor have power over them? In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And recite

to them the story of Ibrahim (Abraham). When he said to his father and his people, "What do you worship?" They said, "We worship idols, so we shall be their votaries." He said, "Do they hear you when you call? Or do they profit you or cause you harm?" (ash-Shu'ara': 69-73)

Thus, even the person of low intelligence will not venture upon this act. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* questions such people by saying: 'How do you deny Allah?...?' (al-Baqara: 28) In this verse, He *the Most High* asks them about the cause of their disbelief as if it were an astonishing phenomenon which the mind cannot accept or confirm. Did it ever cross the minds of these who worshipped the calf that it did not answer them if they prayed to it and that it possessed no power to harm them if they disbelieved in it or to benefit them if they believed in it?

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ قَالَ لَهُمْ هَارُونُ مِنْ قَبْلُ يَنْقَوْمِ إِنَّمَا فُتِنْتُمْ بِهِ
وَإِنَّ رَبَّكُمْ الرَّحْمَنُ فَأَنْبِعُونِي وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرِي ﴿٩٠﴾

**Aaron did say to them, 'My people, this calf is a test for you.
Your true Lord is the Lord of Mercy, so follow me and obey
my orders' [90] (The Quran, Ta Ha: 90)**

Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* took the place of his brother when he was absent, a point which is ever so apparent in Allah's saying: '... and Musa (Moses) said to his brother Harun (Aaron), "Take my place among my people, act well and do not follow the way of the mischief-makers.'" (al-A'raf: 142) Thus Musa (Moses) asked his brother to replace him and to act righteously. This was an authorisation from him to his brother to govern the people as he saw fit and to determine the interests of the community as he perceived. This authorisation was mentioned in Harun's (Aaron's) favour before his brother after this.

So, Allah's saying, 'Harun (Aaron) did say to them, "My people, this calf is a test for you"' (Ta Ha: 90) shows how Harun (Aaron) admonished them to the best of his ability, clarifying for them that the matter of the calf was a test from Allah *the Almighty*. According to his assessment of this situation, he did

not want to enter into an armed conflict with these people. This is because altogether they numbered three hundred thousand, of whom only twelve thousand worshipped the calf. If Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* had engaged them in battle, he would have wiped out this entire number. For this reason, he was content with admonishment by saying: ‘My people, this calf is a test for you. Your true lord is the Lord of Mercy, so follow me and obey my orders.’ (*Ta Ha*: 90) Here, Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* reminded them about being obedient to him because this is the promise they made to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*.

قَالُوا لَنْ نَبْرَحَ عَلَيْهِ عَنكِفِينَ حَتَّىٰ يَرْجِعَ إِلَيْنَا مُوسَىٰ ﴿٩١﴾

**But they replied, ‘We shall not give up our devotion to it until Moses returns to us’[91]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 91)**

So, those who worshipped the calf from amongst the children of Israel said, ‘We shall remain in this state.’ There are some who think that the Arabic verb used in this verse to indicate their continuation in worshipping the calf refers only to remaining in place; however, its meaning depends upon the context. Thus, you say, ‘I will not stop travelling until I reach my destination.’ However, it may also refer to a place as when you say, ‘I will not leave this place.’ It can also refer to a specific condition. Both of these possible usages occur in the Quran. With respect to a place and residence, we have Allah’s saying, ‘...Therefore, I will by no means depart from this land until my father permits me...’ (*Yusuf*: 80), and with respect to a condition or state, He *the Almighty* says: ‘and when Musa (Moses) said to his servant, "I will not cease until I reach the junction of the two rivers ..."' (*al-Kahf*: 60). The last verse means that he will not give up walking until he reaches his destination.

Hence, in the verse under study, Allah’s saying, ‘We shall not give up our devotion to it until Musa (Moses) returns to us’ (*Ta Ha*: 91) means that they shall continue to worship it until Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* returns, for they will not remain without a god during this period.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ يَهُودُ مَا مَنَعَكَ إِذْ رَأَيْتَهُمْ ضَلُّوا ۖ أَأَلَّا تَتَّبِعُنَّ أَفَعَصَيْتَ أَمْرِي ﴿٩٣﴾

**Moses said, ‘When you realized they had gone astray,
what prevented you, Aaron [92] from coming after me?
How could you disobey my orders? [93]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 92-93)**

This conversation was between Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his brother Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him*. The phrase, ‘...what prevented you...’ (*Ta Ha*: 92), occurs in the Quran in two modes of expression. The first is found in Allah’s saying: ‘...what prevented you that you should do...’ (*Sad*: 75). This is a question about what has hindered Satan from prostration.

The second formula is found in Allah’s saying ‘... What hindered you so that you did not make obeisance ...’ (*al-A‘raf*: 12). This is a question about what has held Satan back that he does not prostrate. This is because a hindrance might be a coercive impulse on your part since you do not want to do it. Then someone else may come along and convince you to do it. So, at times you are forced against your will; in other words, you do not want to prostrate, but you are ordered to do so. Hence, the first formula indicates that the preventive force comes from you, but should someone convince you to prostrate yourself by your own choice, then you have been hindered from prostrating. Thus, sometimes the hindrance comes from oneself and sometimes from someone or something else. In this manner, the two formulations can occur together.

Thus Allah’s saying, ‘Musa (Moses) said, "When you realised they had gone astray, what prevented you, Harun (Aaron), from coming after me? How could you disobey my orders?"’ (*Ta Ha*: 92-93) This signifies that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* asked his brother about the one who prevented him from coming after him. However, is he really asking a question in this instance? In reality, he is not asking a question, for you might speak to a person about a sin, while you do not know what his transgression is; however, you speak in this way in order to hear his response. The response will then be against the one who opposed him.

A relevant instance of this is what ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said when he kissed the Black Stone, ‘I know that you are just a stone and that you

can neither do any harm nor give benefit. Had I not seen the Messenger of Allah kissing you, I would not have kissed you.’⁽¹⁾ Hence, ‘Umar kissed it because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* kissed it, but he made this remark to provide us with an abiding response through history to everyone who might ask about kissing the stone.

Similarly, in the verse in question, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* brought up a misconception so that we would hear the reply. In this way, we would take heed of the abiding and resounding response of the concerned person, Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him*.

قَالَ يَبْنَؤُمْ لَا تَأْخُذْ بِلِحْيَتِي وَلَا بِرَأْسِي إِنِّي خَشِيتُ أَنْ
تَقُولَ فَرَّقْتَ بَيْنَ بَنِي إِسْرَائِيلَ وَلَمْ تَرْقُبْ قَوْلِي ﴿٩٤﴾

He said, ‘Son of my mother – let go of my beard and my hair! – I was afraid you would say, “You have caused division among the children of Israel and have not heeded what I said”’ [94] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 94)

Here, the statement of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to his brother was accompanied by an impulsive act and movement which we understand from Harun’s (Aaron)’s saying: ‘...let go of my beard and my hair!...’ (*Ta Ha*: 94). Then, he mentions his excuse, saying: ‘... I was afraid you would say, "You have caused division among the children of Israel and have not heeded what I said."'’ (*Ta Ha*: 94) In this verse, he is referring to Musa's (Moses') saying: ‘Take my place among my people and act well and do not follow the way of the mischief-makers.’ (*al-A’raf*: 142)

So, Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* reminded him about the authorisation which he had given him. He, i.e. Harun (Aaron), had made the judgment on the basis of his view of the situation and had kept his people from armed

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Muslim. In his commentary on this Hadith, An-Nawawi says: ‘Umar only said, ‘You can neither do any harm nor give benefit’, in order to forestall any delusion on the part of some of the recent converts to Islam who had been accustomed to the worship of stones, and to attaching great importance to them and hoping for benefit from them.’ See Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1270.*

conflict with one another which might have resulted in the annihilation of the believing people of the children of Israel. His judgement was made in line with Musa's (Moses') order: '... and act well...' (*al-A'raf*: 142).

Hence, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* raised this issue with his brother, not in order that he himself hear the response, rather so that it would be heard by the entire world throughout history.

Then Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* shifts the conversation to the leading source of this trying discordance, namely As-Samiri:

قَالَ فَمَا خَطْبُكَ يَسْمِيرِيُّ ﴿٩٥﴾

Moses said, 'And what was the matter with you, Samiri?' [95] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 95)

Thus, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* asked him, 'What do you have to say about your involvement in this affair? What is your story?' The question 'what is/was the matter' refers to a significant incident which people call a momentous event; it is not a fleeting event to which no one pays attention.

A relevant example of this is found in Allah's saying: 'How was your affair when you sought Yusuf (Joseph) to yield himself (to you)?' (*Yusuf*: 51) It is also found when the Quran relates of Musa's (Moses') saying to the two daughters of Shu'aib (Jethro): 'What is the matter with you?' (*al-Qasas*: 23)

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* relates that As-Samiri said:

قَالَ بَصُرْتُ بِمَا لَمْ يَبْصُرُوا بِهِ، فَقَبَضْتُ قَبْضَةً مِّنْ أَثَرِ
الرَّسُولِ فَنَبَذْتُهَا وَكَذَلِكَ سَوَّلَتْ لِي نَفْسِي ﴿٩٦﴾

He replied, 'I saw something they did not; I took in some of the teachings of the Messenger but tossed them aside: my soul prompted me to do what I did' [96] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 96)

The verb to see refers to what is perceived sensuously by the sight and abstractly by the mind, with the latter means to know something. Hence, As-Samiri's saying, 'I saw something they did not...' (*Ta Ha*: 96) signifies that he was convinced of a matter that they were not convinced of; then, he

proceeded to act and they imitated him in what he did regarding the calf. His judgment led him to the making of the calf since he noticed that his people were fond of idols as they had previously asked Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to provide them with a god when they saw another people worshipping idols. So, As-Samiri took advantage of the absence of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and told them, ‘I will make for you that which Musa (Moses) was not able to make. No; rather, I will do more for you, for you merely requested an idol of stone, whereas I will provide you with the effigy of a calf made of gold which makes an audible lowing sound.’

There follows Allah’s saying: ‘...so I took a handful (of the dust) from the footsteps of the Messenger, and then I threw it in the casting...’ (*Ta Ha: 96*). Concerning Allah’s saying, ‘...from the footsteps of the Messenger...’ (*Ta Ha: 96*), scholars have related numerous accounts dealing with it. Amongst them is that when Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* used to look after As-Samiri during his childhood, he used to come on a horse. Hence, As-Samiri noticed that when the horse passed by a place, everything touched by its hooves would turn green and life would pervade it. For this reason, those who adhered to this point of view were of the opinion that the calf was real and that it had a natural sound which was not merely due to wind passing through it.

According to another opinion, the word 'Messenger' in Allah’s saying, ‘...from the footsteps of the Messenger...’ (*Ta Ha: 96*), generally refers to the direct conveyor of Allah’s Legislations to those meant to receive them. On the other hand, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* is the messenger sent by Allah *the Almighty* to the direct messenger, and no one could see him. Hence, the word ‘messenger’ was applied to the bearer of the Divine Way of Guidance to those addressed by it. However, the word may be uttered with intentional mockery as occurs in Allah’s saying: ‘They it is who say, "Do not spend upon those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they break up..."’ (*al-Munafiqun: 7*). Here, the hypocrites said, ‘The Messenger of Allah’, out of sarcasm, not out of belief. Similarly, Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘And they say, "What is the matter with this Messenger that he eats food and goes about in the markets..."’ (*al-Furqan: 7*). Thus, this word may be used in a derisive sense.

The Messenger came to convey the rulings of Allah *the Almighty* and this is his teachings which remain after him. Thus, the verse connotes that thought about one of the rulings conveyed by the Messenger, namely Allah's Oneness, Uniqueness and Divinity and that He is not an idol. Regarding Allah's saying, '... and then I threw it in the casting...' (*Ta Ha: 96*), it means that As-Samiri did away with it and expelled it from his thoughts; then he gave free rein to think beyond that. This is proven by the fact that he then said, '... My soul prompted me to do what I did.' (*Ta Ha: 96*) This means that his soul incited him to disbelieve and compelled him towards sinful disobedience. The incitement of the soul is not used with regard to obedience: rather, it is used in the context of disobedience. Hence, the broader meaning is that he took something of the traditions of the Messenger and of the revelation which he brought from Allah *the Almighty* and then removed it from his course of action and banished it from his thought. After this he proceeded merely on the basis of his own free choice.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ فَاذْهَبْ فَإِنَّ لَكَ فِي الْحَيَاةِ أَنْ تَقُولَ لَا مِسَاسَ وَإِنَّ لَكَ
مَوْعِدًا لَنْ نُحْجِلَّهُ، وَأَنْظِرْ إِلَىٰ إِلَهِكَ الَّذِي ظَلْتَ عَلَيْهِ عَاكِفًا
لَنْ نَحْرِقَ تَهْ، ثُمَّ لَنَنْسِفَنَّهُ فِي الْيَمِّ نَسْفًا ﴿١٧﴾

Moses said, 'Get away from here! Your lot in this life is to say, "Do not touch me," but you have an appointment from which there is no escape. Look at your god which you have kept on worshipping – we shall grind it down and scatter it into the sea [97] (The Quran, *Ta Ha: 97*)

The reaction of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to this act of As-Samiri was to command him to depart as a punishment for him, and the utterance which would bound to him shall be, 'Do not touch me.' (*Ta Ha: 97*) This implies that no one shall have contact with him, nor shall he have contact with anyone.

This is due to the fact that those who fabricate falsehood and claim that they have a message and the function of prophets will only have temporal and spatial power in the heart of the people. They will have an ideology with

followers and supporters. Hence, in the path to their objective, you will always find them trying to deviate from Allah's Way of Guidance, aiming to replace it with methods and procedures according to their capricious inclinations. They wrongfully tend towards making the path facile and simple, granting their followers freedom for which Allah *the Exalted* has revealed no authority, like the one who permitted the mingling between men and women.

Surprisingly, you find that those who believe in such ideas and apply them are not from the common masses of people: rather, they are from the educated classes and people of high rank. They argue, 'How can a woman cover herself from us while women represent half of society?'

Thus, how attractive their religion is and how easy it is for people, for it has manifested itself in accord with their desires and lustful appetites and has lifted the restrictions for them. As a matter of fact, the soul inclines by its natural disposition to religiosity because it is innately constituted for it, but it desires that this religion be easy without any hardship in it, even if this contravenes Allah's Way of Guidance.

For this reason, Musaylama, Sajah and other false prophets lifted the obligations of prayer and fasting for their followers. Moreover, in their opinion, the obligatory alms giving is burdensome on the soul, so there is no need for it. If they did not do this, then what would be the appealing distinction which they brought in order for people to follow them? What would be the means of encouragement for followers of a new religion?

In this way, these false prophets gain temporal and geographic sway, as well as followers and adherents. Hence, one who corrupts his life by seeking power and status through people's submission to him and their subordination to his ideas will be punished by Allah *the Almighty* by them. He will suffer his humiliation at their hands, for it is they who have assisted him in his wrongdoing. As for As-Samiri, he despised and disavowed his followers to the degree that he said, 'Do not touch me.' (*Ta Ha: 97*) It is as if As-Samiri was fleeing from them by saying, 'Do not you dare come near me or have contact with me.' Thus, intimacy and love turn into remoteness and enmity. He now runs away from the people who were around him and upon whom his

dignity and power was based. It was they who caused his downfall and supported him in rebellious disobedience to Allah *the Most High*.

In such a manner, was the end of As-Samiri; he was detached from his community to wander about aimlessly in the land, fleeing from people. No one would have contact with him after the truth confronted and overwhelmed him.

What a resemblance this situation bears to what happens to an upright young man when the followers of falsehood tempt him and attract him to their ways. After he has integrated himself into their path and has tasted the pleasure of their falsehood and their misguided ideas and conduct, he suddenly regains clarity of mind through the jolt of the truth which brings him to his senses. However, this is only after he has lost a great deal. Thereafter, you find him fleeing this companionship, keeping himself far away from merely coming near them.

Therefore, amongst those who choose their religion in accord with their whimsical inclinations are idolaters. Inasmuch as worship implies the worshippers' obedience to the object of worship, then how easy the worship of idols is since they are gods without prescribed obligations. It is worship without hardship that does not constrain your actions, nor does it restrain you from satisfying your sensual desires. If this were not the case, then what have idols prepared as reward to one who worships them? What have they prepared of punishment to one who rejects them?

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* had said to As-Samiri, 'You shall be punished by the same society from which you sought dignity, authority, and control and long-lasting fame. Now, you will disassociate yourself from them and flee from their proximity, and you will not endure that any one of them touches you, for they are the cause of your tribulation and the source of your seditious temptation.' Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Friends shall on that day be enemies one to another, except those who guard (against evil).' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67) Thus, let the bosom friends of vain delusion and the companions of evil who come together on the basis of disobedience during forbidden nightly gatherings be warned against such meetings. On the Day of Judgment, honest friendship is for pious believers who convene together on the basis of the truth and encourage one another to obedience to Allah *the Exalted*.

There is a difference between someone who shares a glass of wine with you and one who breaks it and spills it before you taste it. There is a difference between someone who distracts you from prayer and one who encourages you to observe it. In addition, there is a difference between someone who makes you happy at this moment with disobedience and one who compels you to bear the difficulty of obedience. So, observe and think deeply.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...but you have an appointment from which there is no escape...’ (*Ta Ha*: 97). The appointment in this verse refers to what awaits *As-Samiri* of punishment in the Hereafter.

There follows this final passage: ‘...Look at your god which you have kept on worshipping—we shall grind it down and scatter it into the sea.’ (*Ta Ha*: 97) In this verse, the Arabic word *I’tikaf*, describing *As-Samiri*’s devoted worship of idols, is used in the Islamic context to signify residing in the mosque and separation from the outside community.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘...we shall grind it down...’ (*Ta Ha*: 97), it means that the calf will be like a burned object by filing it down with a file until it becomes pieces and scattered particles to be thrown into the air. Regarding Allah’s saying, ‘...and scatter it into the sea’ (*Ta Ha*: 97), this means that *Musa* (*Moses*) will scatter it in the way that farmers do when they winnow grain in order to separate the chaff from it with an instrument like a sieve. These simple instruments have now been replaced by modern mechanical ones which serve the same purpose.

This is because *As-Samiri*’s god was this calf which was made of gold, for which burning in a fire is not suitable. Instead, it requires of different process which will get rid of it for good such that not a trace remains. This here is your god, O, *Samiri*, which you worshipped, for if it were a true god, it would have defended itself.

After Allah *the Most High* demonstrated the vain falseness of the deed committed by *As-Samiri* and those who followed him, He once again reminds them about the true guidance and the correct path. Furthermore, He informs them that everything they did was nonsense; hence, He says:

إِنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِي لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَسِعَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا ﴿١٨﴾

**[People], your true god is the One God – there is no god
but Him – whose knowledge embraces everything [98]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 98)**

When Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘... there is no god but He...’ (*Ta Ha*: 98), we testify to this statement, for we learnt it from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who heard it from his Lord and conveyed it to us. It is the testimony of the absolutely true Divine Unity. Above all, it is the testimony from Allah *the Almighty* to Himself, as He says: ‘Allah bears witness that there is no god but He and (so do) the angels and those who possess knowledge ...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18).

Hence, this is a testimony of Allah *Glorified is He* to Himself even before He created a testifier to attest to it. Then, the angels testified to this; it is the testimony of the witness that there is no god besides Him. Then, those who possess knowledge testified to this with a testimony based on a proof substantiated by reflecting on the creation which they perceive to be based upon the most marvellous and amazing order. All these created beings can only be fashioned by an All-Powerful God. Allah’s Oneness has been unquestionably proven because it is a veracious proposition which He acknowledged about Himself, and to which the angels and those endowed with knowledge bore witness. Furthermore, no opponent has ever risen to claim it for himself.

Otherwise, where is the god from whom Allah *the Almighty* took divinity? Either this alleged god is not aware, or he is aware but did not object. In either of these two cases, he does not merit being a god. Now, if a claim is not met with an objection, it is conceded to its claimant until a contradicter comes forward. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* said, ‘There is no god but I, and I am the Creator of the entire universe and the manager of its affairs.’ No one has come and claimed anything like this, not even from disbelievers. We have coined a similitude for this phenomenon as follows: Imagine that a group of guests and visitors stays with you, and after their departure, you find a wallet and so you ask about its owner. However, no one claims it until one of them says, ‘It is mine.’ Hence, then he is its owner and is entitled to it since no contradicter has arisen.

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Say: If there were with Him gods as they say, then certainly they would have been able to seek a way to the Lord of power.’ (*al-Isra*: 42) This verse shows that if there were other gods, they would necessarily have to go to the Lord of the Throne. They would need to do this either in order to submit to Him and try to obtain from Him the power to do things, or else to call Him to account for His claim of Divinity while they are also gods. However, nothing like this has ever occurred, and no one has provided proof that he is a god. So, if a claim is not supported by proof, then it is null and void.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* refutes the existence of other gods by saying: ‘Never did Allah take to Himself a son, and never was there with him any (other) god— in that case would each god have certainly taken away what he created, and some of them would certainly have overpowered others...’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 91). If we imagined that there is a god for the sky, a god for the earth, a god for jinns, a god for mankind and so forth, then the advantage of one of them would be a disadvantage for the other, and the power of one of them would be a weakness in the other. None of this is in accordance with the Attributes of Divinity.

What we observe in Allah’s saying, ‘...your true god is Allah...’ (*Ta Ha*: 98) is that the word ‘god’ is not synonymous with the Name ‘Allah’. Were this to be the case, the meaning of the phrase would be ‘Your only Allah is Allah.’ Thus, there is a difference between the two words. The Divine Name Allah is the proper Name for the necessarily Existent Supreme Being. On the other hand, the word ‘god’ refers to the one who is worshipped and obeyed in what he commands. Therefore, the general meaning of the passage in question is that the one who is worshipped and obeyed in what He commands is Allah *the Almighty* the Creator of this universe and the Lord of Supreme Existence.

Allah *the Almighty* is the truly worshipped and Obeyed One since there are other falsely worshipped ones. For example, there are those who worship the sun, the moon, trees and rocks, and they call them gods. So, if worship denotes obeying the commands and proscriptions of the one worshipped, then what have these gods ordered them to do? What things have they forbidden them to do? What have they prepared for the one who worships them or for

the one who rejects them? Hence, they are worshipped, but in vain because they are gods without a prescribed way of guidance.

Thus, this verse aims at refuting the claim that there are other gods beside Allah *the Almighty*. Therefore Allah's saying, '... your true god is Allah—there is no god but He—whose knowledge embraces everything' (*Ta Ha: 98*) must be a rebuttal to a claim that there is another god. The formula of this verse refutes this claim and then affirms the truth of the matter.

In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* says: '... your true god is Allah...' (*Ta Ha: 98*) because when As-Samiri fashioned the calf for them, he said, 'This is your god and Musa's (Moses') god, but he has forgotten.' (*Ta Ha: 88*) Hence, Allah *the Almighty* refutes his claim and corrects the false with the truth by saying: '...your true god is Allah—there is no god but Him—whose knowledge embraces everything.' (*Ta Ha: 98*)

Then Allah *the Almighty* adds that which differentiates between the true God and the false ones, saying, '...whose knowledge embraces everything' (*Ta Ha: 98*), for He is the True God, and thus, His Knowledge encompasses everything. This is also a rebuttal against As-Samiri and what he adopted as a god besides Allah *the Almighty* since the calf which he deified possessed no knowledge. Likewise, if As-Samiri who instructed them to worship the calf, possessed such knowledge, he would have known that his calf would be destroyed and scattered by the winds. He would have also known the consequences which he would arrive to with his saying to the people 'touch me not' and that chastisement in this world would descend upon him before the punishment of the Hereafter. Now, had he been aware of these realities, he would not have had the audacity to undertake this act.

Allah's All-Encompassing Knowledge includes all what concerns the obedient and the disobedient servant, but out of His Mercy towards us, He does not take us to task for what He knows about us. Rather, He teaches us to say when we supplicate to Him: 'Our Lord! You embraced all things in mercy and knowledge...' (*Ghafir: 7*). Thus, His Mercy comes before our misdeeds and sins and precedes His punishment and vengeance. In another verse, He *the Most High* says: '...and My mercy encompasses all things...' (*al-A'raf: 156*).

If we stopped at the following phrase, ‘...whose knowledge embraces everything’ (*Ta Ha*: 98), this matter would be burdensome for us, for then He would requite us for our misdeeds and our good deeds, and surely, no one can endure that.

Then Allah *the Almighty* elucidates the wisdom of the Quranic stories. In fact, stories are a kind of historical accounts, but they are not history in a narrow sense, for they are the history of something witnessed, the knowledge of which concerns and benefits a person. Otherwise, history entails our relating: in such-and-such a place, a man sold such-and-such, and he did such-and-such or this and that. Hence, the story narrative is about a prominent event which has an impact on the one who hears it. From these stories, the admonitions are deduced and the moral lessons are derived.

History, on the other hand, is the linking of events to their time of occurrence, and so when you link any event to its time, you have established its history. If it was a distinctive event, we call it a tale, but if it was a famous tale which rises above all other tales, we call it biography. This is why the historical accounts of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were set apart as a biography. While the narrative tale is special, the biography is even more special. As the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the seal of prophets, we term his history ‘biography’, and we do not say ‘story’. This is because he led his life in accordance with Allah’s Way of Guidance and shaped his character in line with the Quran which was revealed to him.

The story narrative occurs, at times, with a focus on the event, and then come the personages which revolve around it. At other times, it occurs with a focus on a single personage around which events mainly revolve. So, if you wanted to establish a history of ‘Urabi Revolution, for example, you would first concentrate on the event, and then you would mention the personages who were involved in it. However, if you intended to tell the history of the personage of ‘Urabi, you would focus on his personage first and then depict the events which occurred around him.

The narrative story of the Quran differs from other man-made stories which we hear and relate. The latter are invented stories built upon a plot and

resolution. Hence, a storyteller takes an event and weaves incidents from his own imagination around it.

In this manner, storytellers have just taken the term ‘story narrative’ and have diverged from its exigencies, calling this fabricated set of events a ‘story’, whereas it is not so. This is due to the fact that the word ‘story’ is derived from the notion of following the track of something without straying from it or deviating here or there. That is to say that one should narrate the event as it is, without adding or omitting anything.

Hence, narrating a story entails a strict adherence to events, which does not allow for creative composition or falsification. This is the difference between the narratives of the Quran which Allah *the Almighty* calls, ‘...the truth of the matter...’ (*Al-Imran*: 62) and ‘...the best of narratives...’ (*Yusuf*: 3) on one hand, and the narratives and compositions made by the human beings on the other.

Thus, the Quranic narrative is termed ‘the true narrative’ and ‘the best narrative’ because it sticks to the truth and does not go beyond it. Moreover, it has an elevated objective which is more sublime than normal stories. The objective and the purpose of storytelling of this world—if it is successful—is to shield you from the events of this worldly life, whereas the Quranic narrative offers a broader protection as it shields you in the world and in the Hereafter.

If you notice repetition in the stories of the Quran, then be aware that it has an objective and purpose and that they are segmented narratives for the various aspects of a single event. Thus, if you were to assemble all the segmented narratives, they would provide you with a complete picture of the event.

In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

كذَلِكَ نَقُصُّ عَلَيْكَ مِنْ أَنْبَاءِ مَا قَدْ سَبَقَ وَقَدْ آتَيْنَاكَ مِنْ لَدُنَّا ذِكْرًا ﴿٩٩﴾

In this way We relate to you [Prophet] stories of what happened before. We have given you a Quran from Us[99] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 99)

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And all We relate to you of the accounts of the Messengers is to strengthen your heart therewith.’ (*Hud*: 120) It is as if Prophet Muhammad’s heart was in need of being strengthened since

it would take in all the occurrences of life and would encounter many calamities whose terror would turn the hair of heads white. In this regard, Allah *the Exalted* says about the Messengers before him: ‘... they were shaken violently, so that the Prophet and those who believed with him said, "When will the help of Allah come?"’ (*al-Baqara*: 214)

In the same way, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers were oppressed, boycotted and besieged in the ravine without shelter or food, until they ate leather and the leaves of trees.⁽¹⁾

These calamities and stressful hardships distress the human soul when it encounters them, so it needs Allah’s support to remain steadfast in faith. For this reason, He *the Almighty* relates to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the narratives of those who preceded him in the procession of Messages to show him that he *peace and blessings be upon him* is not novel amongst Messengers, for they also endured severe trials. So, as their leader, he should bear the tribulations and hardships corresponding to his status and accustom himself accordingly.

Hence, in Allah’s saying, ‘In this way We relate to you [Prophet] stories of what happened before...’ (*Ta Ha*: 99), the expression ‘in this way’ signifies that just as He *the Most High* has related to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the story of Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Pharaoh and As-Samiri, He will relate to him other stories about previous messengers.

(1) In his book, *Al-Bayhaqi* relates this report. It is narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took up residence in the ravine of Banu ‘Abd Al-Muttalib due to the fear of his paternal uncle Abu Taleb for him that the polytheists would kill him openly. Then the polytheists met and agreed not to associate with them, or engage in commerce with them, or enter their dwellings until they had handed over the Messenger of Allah to be killed. They wrote a pact and swore oaths to this effect. So the clan of Banu Hashim remained there for three years, and the tribulation and hardship became very intense until Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed his paternal uncle that Allah had told him that the binding document has been decomposed by the moisture of the earth. All that which was written in it has been eaten away with the exception of the Name of Allah the Almighty. When Allah had spoiled the document upon which their evil scheme was recorded, Prophet Muhammad and his Companions and kinfolk came out and co-existed and mixed with other people. See *Al-Bayhaqi, Dala’il An-Nubuwwa*, 2/311-314.

The Arabic word for the word 'story' refers to a report of great importance; it does not apply to the matters of trivial importance. For example, Allah *the Almighty* says concerning the Day of Resurrection: 'Of what do they ask one another? About the great event' (*an-Naba'*: 1-2). On the other hand, the word 'news' or 'report' is used to refer to normal events.

Then Allah *the Exalted* says: 'We have given you a Quran from Us.' (*Ta Ha*: 99) In this verse, He confirms that the bestowal of the Quran is from Him, affirming this meaning by His saying: '... from Us.' (*Ta Ha*: 99) He *the Most High* does not say, for example, 'We have given you a reminder.' This has a significant meaning since all the Scriptures of the previous messengers were revealed and conveyed only in meaning. Afterwards, their followers formulated them with their own expressions. By contrast, the Quran is the only Scripture which was revealed whose wording and meaning were both revealed by Allah. This is why Allah *the Almighty* says: '... from Us.' (*Ta Ha*: 99) This means that He revealed the Quran directly to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Whoever carefully examines Prophet Muhammad's transmission of the Quran and how he received it from his Lord will find that he safeguards the words of the Quran verbatim; not a single letter is missing from it. Let us offer an example to illustrate this fact; He *the Almighty* says: 'Say: "He, Allah, is One."' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1) It would have been sufficient for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to communicate this message by saying, 'He, Allah, is One'; however, he *peace and blessings be upon him* has said literally what came to him directly from his Lord. In your view, if you said to your son, 'Go to your paternal uncle and tell him, 'My father will visit you tomorrow', would it not be adequate that the boy should say, 'My father will visit you tomorrow'?

Hence, the Quran, which we have before us, is itself the very Words of Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Not a single letter has been altered in it, by either additions or omissions as it is the text of miraculous inimitability, which is why it must remain as Allah *the Almighty* revealed it.

In His saying, '...a reminder...' (*Ta Ha*: 99), the word 'reminder' has multiple meanings. In this verse, it refers to the Quran as in His saying: 'Surely, We have revealed the Reminder, and We will most surely be its guardian.' (*al-Hijr*: 9)

It is also used with the meaning of repute, dignity, and glory in this world as in His saying: ‘Certainly, We have revealed to you a Book in which is your good remembrance...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 10). In essence, the word 'reminder' refers to noble status and high rank amongst people. Likewise, Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘And most surely it is a reminder for you and your people...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 44).

Now, someone may ask, ‘How can the Quran be a source of eminence and dignity for the Arabs, while it has made evident their weakness and exposed their impotence to imitate it? Does the defeated one possess renown and dignity?’ To this question, we answer, ‘The fact that they have been vanquished by the truth is evidence that they are strong. After all, it was the Quran that made evident the incapacity of the Arabs while they were the people of eloquence, rhetoric, and articulate communication.’ When Allah *the Almighty* challenges, He does not challenge the weak; instead, He challenges the strong. It is a cause of pride for you to say, ‘I defeated the champion so-and-so, but where is the pride in your saying, ‘I defeated a normal person’?

The word ‘reminder’ is also used in reference to every Scripture which Allah *the Almighty* revealed. In this regard, He commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying: ‘...so ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know...’ (*an-Nahl*: 43). Here, the term ‘followers of the Reminder’ refers to followers of the Torah and the followers of the Gospel.

In addition, the word ‘reminder’ is expressed as a verb with the intended meaning of doing good deeds and the reward prepared for them by Allah, as He says: ‘So remember Me, and I will remember you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 152). This means that if we remember Him *Glorified is He* with obedience; He will remember us by bestowing His Favour on us.

Moreover, the word ‘reminder’ occurs with the meaning of exalting and praising Allah *the Almighty* and with the meaning of recollection and reflection. Hence, it has numerous meanings which are determined by context.

Now, we may ask, ‘Why does Allah *the Almighty* choose the word "reminder", instead of the word "book", for example?’ It is said that the word ‘reminder’ connotes that you keep in mind or recall something from the very beginning since it is an important matter not to be forgotten. Moreover, the Quran is a

reminder because one turns to it for inspiration or advice. The word ‘reminder’ also comprises the ideas of reflection and remembrance as one does not recollect something unless it is important. This importance corresponds to the duration of the matter and the level of its significance. In fact, the outcome of recollecting something in this world is limited to providing you with the benefits of this worldly life. However, the Quran is the reminder which furnishes you with the best of this world and the Hereafter. Therefore, it is the most important recollection to keep in your mind; it should not be forgotten. Hence, a Muslim must firmly adhere to the teachings of the Quran at all times, for it achieves happiness in both this world and the Hereafter.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* portrays this Reminder, by saying:

مَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَنْهُ فَإِنَّهُ يَحْمِلُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ وِزْرًا

Whoever turns away from it will bear on the Day of Resurrection a heavy burden [100] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 100)

Regarding the verb ‘turns away’, we know that the length of something is the furthest measureable distance while the width is its shortest measureable distance. Therefore, when the Allah *Glorified is He* wants to depict for us the extent of His Dominion, He says: ‘...a Garden, the extensiveness of which is (as) the heavens and the earth.’ (*Al-Imran*: 133) He thereby expresses the greater with the lesser; in other words, if the width of paradise is like that of the heavens and the earth, what would you imagine its length to be like? It must absolutely be infinite.

Every one of us has a length and a width, and the width is only demarcated by the two shoulders which are always best viewed from behind rather than from the front. Thus, we find that when a tailor wants to take measurements of you for a garment, he takes them from behind. Hence, the width of a person is the upper part of his back.

On this basis, the verbal phrase ‘to turn away from something’ means to leave it and go far away from it or to give your back to it and depart from it.

Another example of a similar usage is to say to someone, ‘Give me the breadth of your shoulders’, which is a colloquial saying which means to turn

your face and depart from me. If this person is sitting, you say, ‘Get up and show me your full height’, which is a colloquial saying which means that you ask him to show you the breadth of his shoulders and depart from you.

Allah *the Almighty* gives us an image of the consequences of the ‘turning away’ of those who hoard gold and silver and do not spend it in His Way by saying: ‘On the day when it shall be heated in the fire of hell, then their foreheads and their sides and their backs shall be branded with it; this is what you hoarded up for yourselves. Therefore, taste what you hoarded.’ (*at-Tawba*: 35) Hence, you find that punishment is in accordance with the manner of turning away in rejection. The first thing that happens when a beggar asks the one who hoards wealth is that the latter knits his brows together in a scowl and the features of anger and anguish appear on him. Then he turns his side to the beggar, and then gives his back to him and turns away.

The word ‘burden’ in the verse in question means a weighty load. If only a burden were in this world where one can get rid of it, either by having it unloaded, or by leaving it behind through death, however, it applies to the Hereafter. That is to say that it is a heavy burden which will not be removed from anyone who turns away in rejection, nor will he evade it by death. After all, it is a load which has no end, and there is no hope of getting rid of it. Indeed, it is a burdensome load that causes ceaseless pain. Now, a burden might be heavy, but it is at the same time desirable to the soul, as in the case of someone who carries something beneficial to himself. However, the burden in the Hereafter is heavy and detestable. After this, the burdened one is given over to chastisement; thus, it is said about the one who commits sins that he brought a burden upon himself.

Allah says:


خَالِدِينَ فِيهِ وَسَاءَ لَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ حِمْلًا ﴿١٠١﴾

**And will remain under it. What a terrible burden
to carry on that Day! [101] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 101)**

In this verse, the word ‘terrible’ indicates that this burden will be vile on the Day of Resurrection because a carried load might not be foul or repugnant if it comprises good. If it is bad, its owner might bear it for a short period in

this world and then throw it off. However, a burden in the Hereafter is a vile, foul load since it is in the domain of eternity which has no end.

So, when will this happen? The answer is provided in the following verse in which Allah says:



 يَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ وَنَحْشُرُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ يَوْمَئِذٍ زُرْقًا

When the trumpet is sounded and We gather the sinful, sightless [102] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 102)

This will take place on the Day of Resurrection. The trumpet in this verse refers to the horn with which the first and the second blow are blown, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying: 'And the trumpet shall be blown, so all those that are in the heavens and all those that are in the earth shall swoon, except such as Allah pleases; then it shall be blown again. Then lo! They shall stand up awaiting.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 68)

There follows Allah's saying: '...and We gather the sinful, sightless.' (*Ta Ha*: 102) This means that He *the Most High* will gather them together and drive them in a blued state. The Arabic word translated as 'sightless' can signify the blueness of their colour as when you see a person whose face has become flushed and his hue turns blue due to something which has afflicted him. This blueness is the result of the lack of health and harmony in the chemistry of a body. This is an internal reaction whose effect manifests itself on his outward skin. It is as if the terror of the Resurrection and its events produce this blueness in them. Some scholars interpret this verse to mean that they will be gathered in a state of sightlessness, for certain kinds of blueness can cause blindness like blue waters which afflict the eye and may cause blindness.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:


 يَتَخَفَتُونَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا عَشْرًا

They will murmur to one another, 'You stayed only ten days [on earth]' [103] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 103)

This means that while they were assembled in a state of blueness or blindness, 'They will murmur to one another...' (*Ta Ha*: 103), which means

that they are talking in secret and speaking to one another in hushed voices, with none of them, out of terror of what he sees, daring to speak in a loud voice. When the terrified person encounters his enemy, he lowers his voice so that his hiding place will not be noticed. Another possible explanation is that the situation on the Day of Judgment will be terrifying to such a degree of horror that a person cannot speak, thus become incapable of anything more than whispering. Thus, what is the aspect of hushed conversation and about what will they be whispering to each other?

They secretly converse with one another by saying: ‘You stayed only ten days [on earth]’ (*Ta Ha*: 103). This means that they tell each other, ‘You have only spent ten days on the earth.’ Subsequently, the Quran makes it clear that they did not correctly estimate the real period of their staying in the earth, for it is not really a period of ten days as evinced by Allah’s saying in the following verse: ‘...but the more perceptive of them will say, "Your stay [on earth] was only a single day."' (*Ta Ha*: 104)

So, the ‘ten days’ period ends up being one, and then the one day ends up being an hour, a fact which is clear in His saying concerning them: ‘And at the time when the hour shall come, the guilty shall swear (that) they did not tarry but an hour...’ (*ar-Rum*: 55). All what ultimately ends is considered short in terms of its period of time. Hence, we have contrasting statements which tend towards diminution. It is as if the life span of this world was but an hour, a fact which is clear in Allah’s saying: ‘On the day that they shall see what they are promised. They shall be as if they had not tarried save an hour of the day.’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 35) This decrease in their residing in this world is only to indicate their total failure and the insignificant quantity of good which they sent ahead of themselves for the Hereafter. They were heedless and negligent in this life and thus departed from it fruitlessly. This is why they make excuses for themselves by claiming the shortness of time as if they did not have enough time to perform good deeds!

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

تَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا يَقُولُونَ إِذْ يَقُولُ أَمْثَلُهُمْ طَرِيقَةً إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا يَوْمًا ﴿١٠٤﴾

We know best what they say – but the more perceptive of them will say, ‘Your stay [on earth] was only a single day’ [104] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 104)

Allah *the Almighty* is relating to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* what the fate of these evildoers will be in the Hereafter. Thus, as soon as Day of the Resurrection comes, Allah’s Description of them will occur just as it was foretold, for His Knowledge is All Encompassing. This discourse which the Quran relates about them is a matter within the domain of their choice, since they heard this from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It would have been within their capacity not to end up making these statements, but when the Day of Resurrection comes, they will utter them in just this manner, not changing anything of it. In Allah’s saying, ‘...the most perceptive of them...’ (*Ta Ha*: 104), the word ‘perceptive’ refers to the most superior of them in judgement.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَسْأَلُونَكَ عَنِ الْجِبَالِ فَقُلْ يَنْسِفُهَا رَبِّي نَسْفًا ﴿١٠٥﴾

They ask you [Prophet] about the mountains: say, ‘[On that Day] my Lord will blast them into dust [105] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 105)

We have already discussed the phrase ‘they ask you’ in the context of Allah’s saying: ‘They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance...’ (*al-Baqara*: 219). Now, a question is an inquiry which calls for a response. It can be posed by an ignorant to someone who knows, like the pupil who asks his teacher in order to know the answer. Otherwise, it can be posed by someone who knows to someone ignorant, like the teacher who asks his pupil in order to know his level of knowledge and the firmness of what he has understood.

This point serves as a rebuttal for one of the misconception which the orientalisists have gone into intensively by saying, ‘Allah says: "So, on that day neither man nor jinn shall be asked about his sin" (*ar-Rahman*: 39), while in

another verse He says: "And stop them, for they shall be questioned" (*as-Saffat*: 24), so how is it possible that the first verse denies questioning while the second affirms it?' Therefore, they accuse the Quran of containing contradictory verses.

These orientalist do not possess a natural disposition for Arabic; thus, they are unable to comprehend the Quranic style. The explanation of this misconception is that a question is meant either for you to become cognisant of what you were ignorant about, or else to assess the responder in terms of what you know yourself and thereby using his response as evidence against him.

So, when the Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And stop them, for they shall be questioned.' (*as-Saffat*: 24) The question here is that of confirmation rather than a question of actually seeking to know. When the question is negated, then the seeking after knowledge on the part of the speaker is likewise negated; however, when the question is affirmed, then it is a question of confirmation.

In the same respect, an act can sometimes be denied or negated and sometimes affirmed, but the aspect of negation is clearly separated from the aspect of affirmation. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...and you did not smite when you smote (the enemy), but it was Allah Who smote...' (*al-Anfal*: 17). In this verse, the act of casting is at first negated and then affirmed although it was a single action and the one whose action is both affirmed and negated is a single person, namely Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, how can we get out of this ambiguity? Did he cast or did he not cast?

In order to explain this issue, we propose an analogy of a father who is seated near his son in order that the latter study his lessons. The boy then set about studying, turning the pages of a book. However, when the father wished to examine the extent of what his son has acquired of information, he found that he has not learnt anything. So, he said to the boy, 'You have studied, but you have not studied.' His statement 'you have studied' means that the son has performed the act of studying, whereas his statement, 'You have not studied' means that the son has not learnt anything.

Therefore, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* cast, would it have been possible that this casting would reach to all the eyes of the enemy's army? Thus, he only took a handful of earth and threw it towards the

army, but it was the Power of Allah *the Almighty* which caused this scoop of earth and its fragments to reach all of the enemies' eyes.

Let us offer another example which is found in Allah's saying: '...but most people do not know.' (*al-Jathiya*: 26) In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* denies their having knowledge. In another verse, He *the Almighty* says: 'They know the outward of this world's life' (*ar-Rum*: 7) This confirms that they have knowledge.

Let us return to Allah's saying in the verse in question: 'They ask you [Prophet] about the mountains...' (*Ta Ha*: 105); when we come across the phrase 'They ask you' in the Noble Quran, we find that the response to it is preceded by the imperative verb 'say', such as in His saying: 'They ask you about intoxicants and games of chance. Say: "In both of them there is a great sin and means of profit for men..."' (*al-Baqara*: 219). Similarly, He *the Almighty* says: 'They ask you concerning the new moon. Say: "They are times appointed for (the benefit of) men and (for) the pilgrimage."' (*al-Baqara*: 189)

Likewise in all such verses except for His saying here: 'They ask you [Prophet] about the mountains: say, "[On that Day] my Lord will blast them into dust."' (*Ta Ha*: 105) In this verse, the imperative verb 'say' is conjoined with the particle *Fa'* (then). So, what is the reason for this?

It is said that the question in all of these other verses is about something which has occurred or exists in reality, hence the response is prefaced by the word 'say'. Another example of this is Allah's saying: 'And they ask you about menstruation...' (*al-Baqara*: 222). However, in case of His saying, 'They ask you [Prophet] about the mountains...' (*Ta Ha*: 105), He *the Almighty* says in the response: '...say, "[On that Day] my Lord will blast them into dust"' (*Ta Ha*: 105) because this is an event which has not yet occurred.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* informs Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he will be asked this question. Hence, it is as if the particle *Fa'* (then) here indicates an anticipated conditional sentence, that is, 'If they actually ask you, then say such-and such.'

Thus, the question about the mountains was not posed at the time of the revelation of this verse, whereas the other questions were actually offered to

him *peace and blessings be upon him* that is, before the revelation of the verses concerning them.

The response to a question may also occur without being preceded by the word ‘say’ such as in Allah’s saying: ‘And when My servants ask you concerning Me, then surely I am very near...’ (*al-Baqara*: 186). In this verse, He does not command Prophet Muhammad, to say, ‘Say’ or ‘then say’ because this would suggest an intermediary between Allah *the Almighty* and His servants. It is as if He is making it evident that He is near to His servants, a point which is clear by eliminating the word ‘say’ from the response.

Now, you might be amazed and say, ‘How can all of these questions to Prophet Muhammad occur in the Quran, while the Quran is the Book of Divine Guidance? It has already brought obligations that may already be burdensome for people since it compels them to observe things which run contrary to what they desire. Thus, it would have been expected that they would not ask about matters concerning which no rulings have been revealed.’ To this, we say, ‘These questions of the companions demonstrate their longing for the revelation of Allah’s Rulings and Prescriptions. Thus, regarding their customs in the pre-Islamic period, they, after becoming Muslims, wished to do them from an Islamic perspective based on the notion that they constitute part of worship and are not merely habitual pre-Islamic customs.’

This is in spite of the fact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* forbade them from asking questions by saying: ‘Leave me as I leave you, for the people who were before you were ruined because of their questions and their differences over their prophets.’⁽¹⁾

Nevertheless, they asked questions and wanted to construct their lives on the basis of the Divine Way of Guidance revealed in the Quran, rather than on the basis of the familiar customs which they had in pre-Islamic times. Hence, these questions were intended to allow their affairs to be governed in the light of the Divine Way of Guidance.

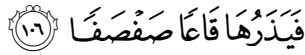
(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari, Ad-Daradqutni, Ahmad and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayra peace be upon him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 7288; Ad-Daradqutni, Sunnan 2/281; Ahmad, Musnad 2/313, 482, 495; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1337.*

Concerning His saying, ‘...say, “[On that Day] my Lord will blast them into dust.”’ (*Ta Ha*: 105), we have already discussed this meaning of blasting something into dust in His saying: ‘...we shall grind it down and scatter it into the sea.’ (*Ta Ha*: 97) The intended meaning is that Allah *the Almighty* will pulverise the mountains and scatter them in the air. In the verse, He emphasises the act of blasting by using the verb ‘to blast’ and repeating it again in the verbal noun formula at the end of the verse. In this manner, He *the Almighty* reaffirms that the mountains will be fragmented into tiny atoms scattered by the wind.

Now, some people might imagine that the mountains will be crushed into chunks of stone in the way we split rocks today into large pieces. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* reaffirms the act of wiping out the mountains and that they will be like particles in the air. Therefore, in another verse, He says: ‘And the mountains shall be as loosened wool.’ (*al-Qari`a*: 5) This means that the mountains will be like carded wool. Here, we may ask, ‘Why does Allah *the Almighty* specifically mention mountains?’ This is because the human being views himself as eminently susceptible to variability, a thing which totally applies to the animals and plants; he sees that animals die and are slaughtered and that plants dry out and are broken into pieces. In fact, even the human being himself dies and comes to an end. Hence, everything he sees around him signifies change and extinction, except for the mountains which he views as firmly rooted and consistently stable. They are not apparently affected by change with the passing of ages.

This is why they are used as proverbial comparisons in terms of solidity and stability, a point which is quite clear in Allah’s saying: ‘And they have indeed planned their plan, but their plan is with Allah, though their plan was such that the mountains should pass away thereby.’ (*Ibrahim*: 46) Mountains, then, are a manifestation of solidity. So, it is not surprising that people would ask about this solid, firmly grounded creation, saying, ‘What will Allah do with them?’

Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:



**And leave it a flat plain [106]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 106)**

As for Allah's saying, 'And leave it a flat plain' (*Ta Ha*: 106), it means that He leaves the earth smooth, flat and void of any vegetation or structure. In this verse, the object pronoun 'it' refers to the earth, not to the mountains since these will not be a flat plain. However, it is the earth upon which the mountains are located which will become smooth and even, barren of any mountains or buildings. Hence, the earth is one thing, whereas mountains upon it are another.

Another relevant verse in this respect is His saying: 'Say: "What! Do you indeed disbelieve in Him Who created the earth in two periods, and do you set up equals with Him? This is the Lord of the Worlds. And He made in it mountains above its surface, and He blessed therein and made therein its foods, in four periods, alike for seekers.'" (*Fussilat*: 9-10)

Concerning the second verse above, the object pronoun in the passage, '...and He blessed therein and made therein its foods, in four periods, alike for seekers' (*Fussilat*: 10) does not refer to the earth; rather, it refers to the mountains. This is because the mountains are in reality the storehouses of sustenance and the sources of fertility for the earth. The human being is made of the earth, and so is his provision; we know for certain that plants are eaten by mankind and animals, while plants and animals are both nourishment for mankind.

Hence, the earth requires fertility to support it and provide it with nutritive elements. If the Creator had furnished it with a single layer of fertile soil, this layer would be used up after a few years, and the earth would have become sterile and barren after this. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* wisely created the mountains and made them a source of fertility to provide the earth with enduring and continuous provision for as long as life remains on the earth. In this way, Allah's Wisdom becomes clear in that the mountains are composed of solid stone, but when they are exposed to factors of erosion with the passing of the years, the outer layer is broken down due to climactic conditions of heat and cold. Then comes rain, acting upon the rock like a file, thus forming what is called topsoil. These particles are then borne to valleys and the courses of

rivers and are distributed over the surface of the earth, gradually increasing its fertility every year. If this was not the case and the mountains were crumbly and not solid, they would collapse within years and no longer perform this function. Therefore, we say that mountains are the sources of subsistence, and not the earth.

In the same respect the fertility of the Nile Valley and the Delta comes from the alluvial mud of the Nile and the topsoil which the water carries from the heights of Africa. This topsoil which is brought down from the mountains is that which causes the increase in dry lands. You can notice this phenomenon in cities which face the sea, since after having been along the coast, they have now become deep within dry land.

We have previously depicted the mountain as being triangular with its base at the bottom and the river valley as being triangular with its base at the top. Every paring lost by a mountain represents an augmentation of the river valley. It is as if the Creator *Glorified is He* established this phenomenon in order to correspond to the increase of population on the earth.

Grammatically analysis of the verse under study indicates that the referent to the object of the verb in the phrase 'and leave it' has been omitted, relying on the intellect of the listener and his alert discernment that it could only be a reference to the earth. This is similar to His saying, 'Say: "He, Allah, is One"' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1), in which the referent of the subject pronoun 'He' is not mentioned. This is because it is understood that it could only refer back to Allah *Glorified is He* even if His Name 'Allah' did not come before it. Another instance of this is found in His saying: '...until it disappeared from sight.' (*Sād*: 32) In this verse, the intended reference is to the sun which had set and so Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* missed the prayer. The verse, however, does not mention anything about the sun. A final example of this is in Allah's saying: 'He would not leave on the back of it any creature...' (*Fatir*: 45); what He means by this is upon the surface of the earth, even if it is not mentioned in the verse. The same is true in the case of Allah's saying in the verse being examined: 'And leave it...' (*Ta Ha*: 106). Thus, in this verse, the object pronoun 'it' refers to the earth.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَا تَرَى فِيهَا عِوَجًا وَلَا أَمْتًا ﴿١٠٧﴾

**With no peak or trough to be seen [107]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 107)**

It is as if it was flattened and evened out with a ‘spirit level’ tool such that you do perceive in it any curvature or crookedness. In this verse, the word ‘unevenness’ denotes depression and elevation. Thus, the earth will be levelled with perfect evenness as we ourselves do with walls in order to ensure their levelness.

Hence, we find that when an engineer wishes to take over a building from a construction contractor, he relies on rays of light since they are straight and reveal to him the slightest defect in a wall. Alternatively, he relies on particles of soil since they fall in a straight line, and after several days, you can notice from the particles of soil what curvatures or protuberances the wall comprises.

Subsequently, the Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَوْمَئِذٍ يَتَّبِعُونَ الدَّاعِيَ لَا عِوَجَ لَهُ، وَخَشَعَتِ الْأَصْوَاتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ فَلَا تَسْمَعُ إِلَّا هَمْسًا ﴿١٠٨﴾

**On that Day, people will follow the summoner from whom there
is no escape; every voice will be hushed for the Lord of Mercy;
only whispers will be heard [108] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 108)**

The word ‘summoner’ means the crier, like the mueddhin who so frequently summons people to the Presence of Allah *Glorified is He* in prayer. Now, some people in this world answer the call of prayer, while others decline and reject it. However, as for the crier in the Hereafter, namely the angel who blows the Trumpet, no one will disobey him or refrain from responding to him.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...there is no crookedness in him...’ (*Ta Ha*: 108). This is because we see that when the crier in this world calls out to a mass of people, he turns right and left and goes in a circle so that he will be heard in all directions. However, if his voice does not reach all ears in an audible manner, he utilises a microphone, for example, but as for the crier in the Hereafter, he is not faced with any crookedness here and there, since he causes all to hear him, and his voice reaches all ears, without deviation or deflection.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...Every voice will be hushed for the Lord of Mercy; only whispers will be heard.’ (*Ta Ha*: 108) We have actually shed light on these whispers when speaking about Allah’s saying: ‘They will murmur to one another...’ (*Ta Ha*: 103).

Now, we know that any large gathering cannot be calmed down easily, so just imagine what it would be like on the Day of Resurrection when people from the time of Adam *peace be upon him* until the rising of the Last Hour will be gathered together in one arena; they all will be in total silence. Allah says: ‘...Every voice will be hushed for the Lord of Mercy; only whispers will be heard.’ (*Ta Ha*: 108) So, why are all these voices—which have always been vociferous about what they want, and have always been characterised by noisy tumult and din—hushed? This is due to the situation on the Day of Judgment being different and the terror being tremendous. Out of terror and that fact that each and every human being will be preoccupied with his own state, thinking about what he is heading towards, no one dares to raise his voice. If one should talk, he would do so in secret and in whispers by asking, ‘What has happened? What is going on?’

As a matter of fact, we, human beings, are unable to speak in an audible voice at times of hardships. For example, when Sa‘d Zaghlul⁽¹⁾ died *may Allah have Mercy upon him*, Ahmad Shawqi⁽²⁾ was in Lebanon at the time, and he heard people speaking in a hushed voice, whispering to one another that Sa‘d had died. No one dared to speak of it aloud because of the horrifying nature of this event. Shawqi then said:

-
- (1) He is Sa‘d Pasha Ibn Ibrahim Zaghlul, leader of the Egyptian political awakening movement. He was born in Ibyana of the villages of Gharbia governorate in 1857 CE, and entered Al-Azhar University in 1874 CE where he had contact with Jamal Ad-Din Al-Afghani. He assumed the office of the Minister of Education and then of Justice. In 1919 CE, he was elected president of the Egyptian delegation seeking independence, and was exiled by the British to Malta. He died in 1927 CE at the age of 70. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-A‘lam*, 3/83.
- (2) Ahmad Shawqi, known as ‘the Prince of Poets’, is the most famous Arab poet of the modern age. He was born in Cairo in 1868 CE and grew up in the royal house in Egypt. He later studied Law in France. He cultivated most of the genres of poetry, including panegyric poetry, love poetry, elegiac poetry and descriptive poetry. Later he became involved in political events. He died in 1932 CE. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-A‘lam*, 1/137.

Ears were trampled by whispers and lip movements
 I said: O people marshal together your discernment
 In its two veins every soul contains its ultimate decline.
 Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَوْمَئِذٍ لَا تَنْفَعُ الشَّفَعَةُ إِلَّا مَنْ أِذِنَ لَهُ الرَّحْمَنُ وَرَضِيَ لَهُ قَوْلًا ﴿١٠٩﴾

On that Day, intercession will be useless except from those to whom the Lord of Mercy has granted permission and whose words He approves [109] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 109)

Intercession requires three elements: someone who is interceded for, and in this case it is man; an intercessor who has a higher station; and the one before whom intercession is sought. Now, the one before whom intercession is sought does not randomly allow for the intercession improvised on your part. Instead, you must be granted formal permission for it, and you must be placed in the station and rank of intercession. This is a basic requirement of being an intercessor.

Regarding Allah’s saying, ‘...and whose words He approves’ (*Ta Ha*: 109), this concerns the one for whom intercession is sought; he must utter words which Allah *the Almighty* accepts and is well-pleased with—even if he falls short in other domains. In fact, the best thing a slave can utter to please Allah *the Almighty* is to say, ‘There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.’ This statement pleases Allah *the Almighty* and constitutes the hope to which the slave clings. Furthermore, it is glad tidings for those who are guilty of disobedience because it ensures their inclusion in the intercession of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Thus, if you suffer a bad trait of character or a moral defect which you view as an impassable obstacle, you should not despair. Instead, you should focus on another side of your soul which is stronger. On its basis, you should increase your good deeds, for they wipe out misdeeds.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يُحِيطُونَ بِهِ عِلْمًا ﴿١١٠﴾

He knows what is before and behind them, though they do not comprehend Him [110] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 110)

Concerning Allah's saying, '...what is before and behind them...' (*Ta Ha*: 110), it means that He knows what is in front of them and what is behind them. On the other hand, a human being's knowledge does not encompass Him. In fact, a human being is cognisant only of that which he has been informed of, unless there are certain premises from which he makes deductions. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* has hidden many things in existence, including what He had provided with preliminary indications. The one who is fully aware of these preliminary signs attains to the knowledge they veil.

Despite that, we do not say that the one who reached these conclusions has knowledge of the unseen; rather, we say that he has discovered the unseen by preliminary signs which Allah *Glorified is He* has given him. This is similar to the case of the student who is given geometry exercises. We remind him of the given premises, and then he is led by the provided elements to arrive at the conclusion.

The universe is full of phenomena in which we can find many secrets if we examine and study them profoundly. After all, it was by studying the phenomena of the universe that people discovered the age of steam, which thus facilitated certain activities for people. By so doing, the scientists discovered the law of floating objects, penicillin, and so forth.

All of these phenomena are existent in the universe of Allah *Glorified is He* and they were simply waiting to be explored and discovered. Therefore, He reproaches us by saying: 'and how many a sign in the heavens and the earth which they pass by, yet they turn aside from it.' (*Yusuf*: 105) Indeed, if human beings only took notice of these phenomena with full attention, they would derive benefit from them.

However, there are certain matters which Allah *the Almighty* has claimed of which He has exclusive knowledge. While He may give the knowledge of these matters to His beloved servants, they may also remain exclusively in Allah's Knowledge, with no one else to be cognisant of them.

Subsequently, the Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَعَنْتِ الْوُجُوهُ لِلْحَيِّ الْقَيُّومِ وَقَدْ خَابَ مَنْ حَمَلَ ظُلْمًا

**And [all] faces will be humbled before the Living, Ever Watchful One. Those burdened with evil deeds will despair [111]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 111)**

As a matter of fact, the face is the most eminent and noble organ in the body of a man. It is what gives a person his distinguishing outward characteristic. This is why a person protects and preserves it. This is clear in the fact that if dust or soil, for example, hits your face, you wipe it with your hand. You have done nothing more than putting what was on your face onto your hand. Why is this? This is so due to the face being the most eminent thing you possess.

Therefore, prostration to Allah *the Almighty* in prayer is a sign of submission, humility, and servitude to Him. By so doing it, you accept to put the noblest part of your body on the ground, putting it into direct contact with the soil. A person does not prostrate except to the One Whom he absolutely believes that He merits this prostration. He is totally convinced that prostrating to Him Alone preserves him from having to prostrate to anyone else. As a poet once said:

And the prostration which you so dislike

In becoming devoted to prostration there is salvation

Thus, you must solely prostrate to Allah *the Almighty* as this will save you from prostrating to anything besides Him, and you must carry out good deeds only for His Sake so that He will satisfy all your needs.

Then, follows Allah's saying: 'Those burdened with evil deeds will despair.' (*Ta Ha*: 111) The verb 'to bear' means to take up a load which is very heavy. As for the word 'evildoing', it originally means that you take a good thing that does not belong to you in order to make use of it and increase what you possess. Apparently, you enjoy augmentation, but in reality, you are loading yourself with a vile burden and a heavy encumbrance. Thus, you will not be able to bear it as you have increased in sin, not in good.

Inequity has levels and degrees. The lowest of these is to take what is not yours even if it is contemptible and valueless. The same goes true for wronging

someone else by defaming him. Then inequity moves higher until it reaches its peak with the act of associating others in worship with Allah *the Exalted*. This fact is clear in His saying: ‘...most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity.’ (*Luqman*: 13) It is a horrible inequity because you have taken a due right of Allah *Glorified is He* and given it to someone or something else. Therefore, make every effort to be free of this major sin, as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely, Allah does not forgive that anything should be associated with Him, and He forgives what is besides that to whomsoever He pleases’ (*an-Nisa*’: 48).

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِنَ الصَّالِحَاتِ وَهُوَ مُؤْمِنٌ فَلَا يَخَافُ ظُلْمًا وَلَا هَضْمًا ﴿١١٢﴾

**But whoever has done righteous deeds and believed
need have no fear of injustice or deprivation [112]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 112)**

The ‘righteous deeds’ refer to actions whose result is good for you and for others. The minimum expression of faith with regard to righteous action is to leave that which is good and beneficial in its state of goodness or usefulness and not to corrupt or ruin it. Let us give an example to illustrate this point; if you find a well from which people drink, you should not plug it up or pollute it. Then you can advance in righteous action and augment its usefulness by building a wall around it so as to protect it or furnishing it with a cover, etc.

One of the manifestations of Allah’s Mercy towards us is that when He recommends us to engage in righteous action, He says: ‘...righteous deeds...’ (*Ta Ha*: 112). So, it is sufficient that you do some righteous deeds since a human being’s energy does not allow for undertaking all righteous deeds, nor does he have the strength for this. Thus, it is adequate to take a portion of them upon yourself, and some else take a portion. Then, when all of these portions of good deeds done by mankind are gathered together, they constitute complete righteousness and goodness.

As we have previously mentioned, a single one of us does not have the capacity or means to have the perfection of Prophet Muhammad’s moral conduct. He said: ‘Beneficence is in me—in truth—and in my Ummah (followers of

Islam) until the Day of Resurrection.’⁽¹⁾ Hence, in every individual of the members of the Islamic Ummah (followers of Islam) there is a trait of goodness in such a manner that if you brought together their traits of perfection, this would provide us with the perfection of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Concerning Allah’s saying, ‘...and believed...’ (*Ta Ha*: 112), this is stipulated because faith is a condition of the acceptance of good deeds. However, if a good deed is carried out by a disbeliever, he obtains his compensation in this world through renown and fame as well as the perpetuation of his memory. This is due to the fact that he has acted in this manner in order that good things be said about him, a point which has actually been done by people who praised their acts.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...need have no fear of injustice or deprivation.’ (*Ta Ha*: 112) In this verse, the word ‘injustice’ is different from the word ‘evildoing’ which is found in His saying: ‘Those burdened with evil deeds will despair.’ (*Ta Ha*: 111) In this latter passage, ‘evildoing’ is on the part of a man towards himself or to others. However, in the verse under study, ‘...need have no fear of injustice or deprivation’ (*Ta Ha*: 112), the reference is to injustice falling upon him by not being recompensed for his good deed. In other words, Allah *the Almighty* shall not punish him for a misdeed he did not commit, nor shall He fail to reward him for a good deed he has done because He does not wrong people by so much as the weight of an atom.

As for Allah’s saying at the end of the verse, ‘...or deprivation’ (*Ta Ha*: 112), it means diminution. This means that He *the Almighty* will not diminish his recompense and his reward. In passing, we should note that the same word is found in the expression of ‘digestion of food’ whereby a quantity of food is digested and then absorbed, changing into a liquid in the blood, and thus decreases in extent. Yet another usage of this word is when we say, ‘So-and-so has been denied his due right’; what this means is that he had a proper right but did not obtain it.

(1) In his book, *Al-‘Ajluni* says, ‘It was said in *Al-Maqasid* that our sheikh said, ‘I am not aware of [any such Hadith], but its meaning is sound, that is to say: ‘There will never cease to be a group from my Ummah manifest upon the truth...’ See *Al-‘Ajluni, Kashf Al-Khafa*’, 1/476.

Here arises a question, which is, 'What is the point of conjoining the word "deprivation" to the word "injustice", for the negation of injustice entails the negation of deprivation?' To this, we respond, 'This is because at times the reward is nullified totally while at others the compensation of reward is diminished.'

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنْزَلْنَاهُ قُرْآنًا عَرَبِيًّا وَصَرَّفْنَا فِيهِ مِنَ الْوَعِيدِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَّقُونَ أَوْ يُحَدِّثُ لَهُمْ ذِكْرًا

We have sent the Quran down in the Arabic tongue and given all kinds of warnings in it, so that they may beware or take heed [113] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 113)

This verse opens with the Arabic phrase 'and thus' which here signifies that just as Allah *the Almighty* revealed Books to previous peoples, He also revealed the Quran to Prophet Muhammad. Furthermore, just as He sent messengers to the previous peoples, He has also sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to contemporary people. However, the previous Divine Messages differ in that they were sent for a limited period of time and for a particular people, whereas Prophet Muhammad was sent to all people and for all times until the Last Hour.

We grasp from Allah's saying, 'And thus We have sent the Quran down...' (*Ta Ha*: 113), that the one sending down is higher than the one to whom something is sent down. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* were drawing our attention and uplifting our fervent aspirations by saying: 'Do not descend to the level of earthly legislation because it takes into account the present moment and disregards the future. It is also governed by vain inclinations, and this is why there are certain matters which are missing from it and thus in need of rectification.'

Therefore, when He *the Almighty* summons us to His Sublime Way of Guidance, He says: 'Say: "Come..."' (*al-An'am*: 151). Here, the second imperative verb means to ascend—as well as merely 'come'—and obtain the Divine Way of Guidance from above, not from the earth.

There follows, in the verse under study, the word 'Quran' which refers to something read or recited. Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* refers to the Quran as:

‘...a Scripture...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 10). This means that the Quran is also written and recorded so as to be preserved in hearts by memorisation and in transcribed lines. He *the Almighty* then says: ‘...in the Arabic tongue...’ (*Ta Ha*: 113) although Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to all people across the expanses of time and place, thus, the Quran was revealed as a miracle to everyone. This is because he *peace and blessings be upon him* was the direct caller for the Arab people who were the first to receive his Message, so it was necessary that the miracle appears in his language. Furthermore, the miracle of the Quran was not meant only for Arabs: rather, it is a challenge for all mankind and jinns across the extent of time and space. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Say: "If men and jinns should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it ..."' (*al-Isra*: 88). Hence, the Quran is a challenge for all nationalities: Russian, American, Japanese, and the entire world, including jinns. However, why are jinns also included in the domain of this challenge? It is said that the ancient Arabs used to believe that every poet or great orator was made eloquent by a devil that provided him with inspiration. This is why jinns are also included in this domain.

Thus, one might say, ‘How can the Quran challenge other than the Arabs to produce something like it while it is in Arabic? Thus, it only serves as evidence against Arabs.’ To this, we reply, ‘Is the inimitability of the Quran found only in its Arabic style and manner of expression? No, since the aspects of inimitability of the Quran are numerous, including some aspects shared by all languages. For example, do languages differ in laying down legislation for the good of the society? Did the Quran not bring a Divine Way of Guidance to an illiterate nomadic people by means of which they conquered the two greatest civilisations which were contemporaneous to them, namely the civilisation of Persia in the east and Byzantium in the west? Was this phenomenon not worthy of investigation and research? Moreover, you have the universal principles which the Quran speaks of more than fourteen centuries ago, while modern science is still discovering them today.’

Hence, it is only natural that the Quran should have appeared in Arabic because it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who was an Arab and lived in the midst of a community made up of Arabs. In

this respect, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And We did not send any messenger but with the language of his people, so that he might explain to them clearly...’ (*Ibrahim*: 4). This is due to the fact that a messenger’s people are the ones who receive the Message, react to it and are convinced by it. Subsequently, they spread it throughout diverse regions of the earth. It is amazing that, with the Message of the Quran, they won over this world which does not have knowledge of Arabic. They convinced it with principles and methods which the Quran brought because languages do not differ over such principles and methods.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and given all kinds of warnings in it...’ (*Ta Ha*: 113). This shows that when the Quran warns about something, it issues this warning in differing modes, repeating it in a different manner in order to remind those who are heedless.

In other words, Allah *the Almighty* has varied the warning with every expression of promise and threat. Each formulation counters a sensual or deviant impulse of the soul of an individual; thus, He has addressed all of these capricious inclinations at every level. Hence the scholar, the ignorant, and the person of average intellect all find in the Quran what corresponds to them since it establishes ruling for everyone, including the philosopher and the layman. It is therefore inescapable that the Quran comprises diverse formulations for all types of natural disposition in order to convince everyone.

In fact, the Quran employs both promises and threats, for each of them addresses those who specifically need them. The one who is not attracted by the promise of good responds to being uprooted strongly and powerfully. As a poet once said:

Great patience and if it avails naught he follows it with threat

If it is of no use his decisive decisions suffice

In a traditional saying we find: ‘Indeed, some people may be deterred by someone’s worldly authority while they are not influenced or deterred by the Quran.’

Warnings and frightening are blessings from Allah, as related in the chapter of *ar-Rahman* when Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘He has made the two

seas to flow freely (so that) they meet together. Between them is a barrier which they cannot pass. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?' (*ar-Rahman*: 19-21) These are blessings from Allah *the Almighty*. However, in His saying: 'The flames of fire and smoke will be sent on you two, and then you will not be able to defend yourselves. Which then of the bounties of your Lord will you deny?' (*ar-Rahman*: 35-36) However, what is the blessing in the fire and fiery flashes?

Here, the aspect of blessing stems from the fact that Allah *the Almighty* warns you against what makes you fall into them. He admonishes you while you still have time to make amends. Hence, He does not seize you while you are inattentive, nor does He abandon you in your state of heedless negligence. This is similar to when a father forewarns his son by saying, 'If you neglect your studies, you will fail in the examination. Your classmates will disdain you, and this and that will happen to you.' Thus, he does not abandon his son to his heedlessness so that the examination does not take him unawares, and failure does not overcome him by surprise. Is this not a favour and useful advice?

Thus, the Quran employs diverse manners of expression in order to correspond to the receptivity of different temperaments and frames of mind. In this way, the people might receive the Quran with awareness and due consideration, as Allah *the Almighty* says: '...so that they may beware or take heed.' (*Ta Ha*: 113)

Concerning His saying, 'so that they may beware...' (*Ta Ha*: 113), the word 'beware' normally refers to protecting yourself from evil, disobedience and destruction. As for His saying, '...take heed' (*Ta Ha*: 113), it could mean that if the people heed the warnings of the Quran, they will have renown, dignity and high rank due to their good deeds. These are the elevated status which they attain by virtue of pious obedience.

This is because ordained obligations consist of two sections: one proscribes disobedience, and another prescribes obedience. For example, you are prohibited from drinking wine and are meanwhile commanded to pray. Hence, pious people guard themselves against the former, and they take heed of doing the latter. Now, inasmuch as the Quran descended from above, it must necessarily state after this:

فَنَعَلَى اللَّهِ الْمَلِكِ الْحَقُّ وَلَا تَعْجَلْ بِالْقُرْآنِ مِنْ قَبْلِ أَنْ
 يُفَضَّلَ إِلَيْكَ وَحْيُهُ، وَقُلْ رَبِّ زِدْنِي عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

**Exalted be God, the one who is truly in control. [Prophet],
 do not rush to recite before the revelation is fully complete
 but say, 'Lord, increase me in knowledge!' [114]
 (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 114)**

In this verse, the expression 'Exalted be Allah' means that He is far beyond all and elevated above all that might resemble any created being. He is sublimely exalted in Himself, for there is nothing like Him *Glorified is He*. He is sublimely exalted in terms of His Attributes, for there is no attribute similar to His. So, if you find an attribute in creation which bears a resemblance to an Attribute of the Creator, and then you should view it in the light of His saying: '...there is nothing like Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11).

Allah *Glorified is He* does not begrudge call His servant a creator if he produces something, but when He speaks of His Creation, He says: '...So blessed be Allah the best of creators!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14) Hence, you are a creator, but your Lord is the best of creators. This is because you created out of what exists whereas your Lord *Glorified is He* creates out of nothing. In addition, you have created something solid in a single condition, while Allah *the Almighty* has created a living, growing creation which feels moves and multiplies. We have previously cited, as an analogy for this, the case of the one who makes glass vessels out of sand, and we have elucidated the difference between the two kinds of creation.

Allah's saying, 'Exalted be Allah, the One Who is truly in control' (*Ta Ha*: 114) draws our attention to the necessity of looking upwards in matters of legislation, for what compels you to adopt legislation from a servant who is the same as you? Why should he not adopt your legislation? Hence, it is necessary that the lawmaker be higher than the one for whom the laws are made or laid down.

Amongst the words of exaltation which are not uttered except for Allah *the Almighty* is the expression 'Exalted be Allah'. We have never heard a man say it to another man. Although there are disbelievers, atheists and deists, no

one has ever said this expression in praise of anyone else. The same is true for the expression ‘sublimely exalted and blessed’. Thus, we praise Him, saying: ‘Blessed are You, O, Lord, and exalted’, which means that He is One God with no partner or associate.

So, Allah’s saying, ‘Exalted be Allah...’ (*Ta Ha*: 114) signifies that His Position is surpassingly high and that His Exaltation rises to a level that cannot be reached. As for presumptions of superiority between mankind, it is an odious, detested phenomenon. On the other hand, the sublime superiority of Allah *Glorified is He* is in the best interest of mankind. Regarding this observation, the people of the countryside give expression to it by saying, ‘He who does not have a chief let seek to have one.’ This is because the chief is the one who will assist the weak and demolish the tyrannical inequity of the strong; hence, if we had no chief, we would quarrel and be ruined.

Therefore, it is in the best interest of the entire universe that Allah *the Almighty* be sublimely exalted and infinitely superior, for He does not look down upon us; rather, He is sublimely exalted for our sake and in our interest. Thus, when an elevated person or tyrant becomes conscious that Allah *the Exalted* is higher than him, his tyranny and superciliousness will surely come to an end. Moreover, when the weak person knows that he has a higher supporter whom no one can defeat, he feels reassured and lives in security. In this manner, social harmony between people prevails.

In fact, we love our worshipful servitude to Allah *the Almighty* although the word ‘servitude’ itself is detestable and disliked when it is pertinent to the slavery of men to men, with the master taking the good of his slave. On the other hand, servitude to Allah *the Almighty* comprises nobility and dignity because it is the slave who takes the good of his Master. Hence, I am a slave of Allah *the Almighty* and my servitude to Him is for my own benefit as I will not augment His Dominion in any way, and He will not derive any benefit from me. This is due to the fact that He *Glorified is He* had Mastery over His Dominion and exercised His Supreme Authority in the universe even before He created both living and non-living beings. Before you, O, iniquitous and rebellious man, came into existence, He had brought forth for you the entire universe, and all that it contains.

Hence, your belief in Allah *the Almighty* will not add anything to His Dominion, a fact which is clear in the following Qudsi Hadith: 'O, My servants, you will not attain harming Me so as to harm Me, and you will not attain benefiting Me so as to benefit Me...' ⁽¹⁾ So, when He *the Almighty* manages our affairs, this is for our benefit and nothing of this benefit returns to Him.

Concerning Allah's saying, '...the One Who is truly in control' (*Ta Ha*: 114), this is explained by the fact that there are numerous kings for whom Allah *the Almighty* has confirmed dominion and referred to them as kings. In this regard, He *the Most High* says: 'and the king said, "Bring him to me."' (*Yusuf*: 50) He also says: 'Have you not considered him who disputed with Ibrahim (Abraham) about his Lord because Allah had given him the kingdom?' (*al-Baqara*: 258)

Thus, there are kings in this world, but they are not true kings, for the True King is Allah *the Almighty*. After all, it is He Who conferred the dominion on the kings of this world. Thus, it is possible that any one of them will leave behind his dominion or that his dominion will be taken away from him. Now, what sort of sovereignty is this over which its possessor cannot reign? What kind of dominion is that which can be stripped from you through a military coup or the shot of a bullet? Hence, Allah *the Almighty* is the True King Who establishes some of mankind as kings over the affairs of others for their benefit. Furthermore, as He *the Almighty* grants sovereignty, He is Fully Able to remove it if He wishes, a fact which is ever so clear in His saying: '...You give the kingdom to whomsoever You please and take away the kingdom from whomsoever You please...' (*Al-'Imran*: 26). Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* possesses the Absolute Dominion and bestows therefrom on whom He wishes. Furthermore, He *the Almighty* dominates the kings and all what they have control over, as He is Ever Watchful over His creation; thus, no one can escape from His Dominion.

We hear of those who revile kings and presidents and those who speak ill of their due right, not realising that their dominion was granted by Allah *the Exalted*. It is He Who has established them as kings and delegated powers to them, for

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad, Muslim and Ibn Majah on the authority of Abu Dharr Allah be pleased upon him. See Ahmad, Musnad, 5/154; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2577; and Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 4257.*

no one of them had seized his dominion against Allah's Will. So, you should not oppose Allah's Choice; rather, you should respect anyone to whom He *the Almighty* has delegated authority over your affairs. You should also know that this is in the interest of the country and its people. Ultimately, the iniquitous tyrant amongst them may become one of the subject populace.

Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* gives sovereignty to some people over the affairs of others—this one manages that, and this one owns that—in order for the proceeding of the universe to move. However, when the Day of Resurrection comes, He *the Almighty* will say: 'To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer (of all).' (*Ghafir*: 16) Indeed, this is the true Dominion. Allah's saying, '...Who is truly in control' (*Ta Ha*: 114) also means that His Dominion is constant and does not change. As a matter of fact, every manifestation of power in the universe changes except for Allah's Power. Therefore, He *the Most High* issues His Orders with full confidence that they will be executed because He is the True King Who controls all matters. If this were not the case, then how could He say to a thing 'Be!', and behold it is? Thus, nothing in His creation can resist or rebel against Him by disobeying His Command 'Be!'

Allah *the Almighty* revealed the Quran in Arabic and provided it with various warnings so that people might protect themselves and/or be heedful. He *the Almighty* has the full right to do so because He is the True King, and there is no capriciousness in what He legislates and that is why you are obligated to accept His Legislation. The defect of the human legislations is that they are affected by vain desires and deviant inclinations. So, if a capitalist establishes laws, he gives preference to capitalists, and if a poor man establishes laws, he gives preference to the poor. By contrast, Allah *the Almighty* is not partial to anyone at the expense of anyone else.

Moreover, the lawmaker must be knowledgeable about the new developments of the future, so that no one will seek to rectify a law and change it as is the case today with man-made laws. Events have compelled us to change the law because at the time of its establishment we were not aware of the future developments and made no precautions for them. Therefore, as Allah's Knowledge is All Encompassing, there is no rectification ever for His Law.

Now, as long as Allah *Glorified is He* is the True Sovereign, He must assure mankind that the Quran, the Divine Way of Guidance, reaches them in the form He uttered, without any alteration. For this reason, He *the Almighty* says: 'Surely, We have revealed the Reminder, and We will most surely be its guardian.' (*al-Hijr: 9*) He *the Almighty* has taken it upon Himself to preserve the Quran since mankind (the Jews and Christians) had already been put to the test by being entrusted with preserving the Divine Way of Guidance, but they dishonoured this trust. They distorted the Torah, the Gospel and other sacred Books by either concealing some of that which Allah *the Exalted* revealed or by forgetting part of it. Even those who remembered it did not leave it in its original state, but they distorted and falsified it. If all of this were accepted from them, it would be unacceptable that they ascribe falsehood to Allah *the Almighty* and compose a Scripture on their own by saying: 'It is from Allah, while it is not from Allah...' (*Al- 'Imran: 78*).

This is because the preservation of the Divine Way of Guidance was delegated to mankind as an ordained obligation which is susceptible to being obeyed or disobeyed. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* 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 accordance with that part of Allah's Scripture which they were entrusted to preserve...' (*al-Ma 'ida: 44*). Thus, Allah *the Almighty* commanded them to preserve the Book as an obligation upon them, but they disobeyed it by forgetting, concealing, and falsifying their Books.

For this reason, He *the Almighty* assumed responsibility for preserving the Quran since it is the final Scripture which allows for no rectification or emendation. He *the Almighty* guaranteed that it would not be falsified or distorted in any way. Therefore, we must be confident that the Quran, the Book of Allah, is His Word which was revealed with His All-Encompassing Knowledge from the Guarded Tablet; He *the Almighty* says: 'In a book that is protected. None shall touch it except the purified ones.' (*al-Waqi 'a: 78-79*) Subsequently, it was brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit who was entrusted with it and did not make any change in it. Then it descended upon the heart of the best messenger, namely Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about whom Allah *the Almighty* says:

‘And if he had fabricated against Us some of the sayings, We would certainly have seized him by the right hand.’ (*al-Haqqa*: 44- 45)

Hence, the Quran was preserved as knowledge in the Guarded Tablet and was preserved by the secure trust of the one who brought it down from heaven, namely Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* and by the one who received it, namely Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, we have no excuse (to claim that the Quran has been distorted) after Allah *Glorified is He* brought together for it every type of preservation.

Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* caused the Quran to descend upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it was necessary that He says to him: ‘Exalted be Allah, the One Who is truly in control...’ (*Ta Ha*: 114). Indeed, this is the absolute truth that will remain forever, for everything is prone to change except for Allah *the Most High*. Afterwards, He *the Almighty* says: ‘...[Prophet], do not rush to recite before the revelation is fully complete...’ (*Ta Ha*: 114). These preliminary statements are to reassure Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with respect to the memorisation of the Quran. This is because when the revelation descended upon him, he used to attempt to repeat it word for word. For example, if the divine inspiration said, ‘Say: "It has been revealed to me ..."' (*al-Jinn*: 1), he would set about repeating it in his innermost being, reciting it after Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* in fear that he might forget. This indicates his great carefulness about the Quran.⁽¹⁾ So, Allah *the Almighty* forbade him *peace and blessings be upon him* this hastiness by affirming: ‘[Prophet], do not rush to recite before the revelation is fully complete...’ (*Ta Ha*: 114). Hence, He *the Almighty* ordered him not to be in a hurry or preoccupied with repeating the Quran, for it will be granted to him in its matured state when it is perfected.

Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* ordered him *peace and blessings be upon him* not to fear that anything of the Quran will escape him as long as it is He Who is entrusted with its preservation. Therefore, He *the Almighty* says in another

(1) *This is narrated by Ibn Abu Hatim who heard it from As-Suddi, as stated by As-Suyuti. A narration to this effect is also cited by Al-Qurtubi and Ibn Kathir. See As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur, 5/602; Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4425; and Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim, 3/167.*

verse: 'We will make you recite so you shall not forget...' (*al-A'la*: 6). It is as if He *Glorified is He* was telling him, 'So, rest assured, O, Prophet Muhammad, and do not be anxious about this matter because your preoccupation with memorising a word might cause another word to slip away from you.'

Hastiness is that you produce an event before its maturity, such as when you pick a fruit before it is ripe and before its due time of harvest. When you eat it, you get surprised that it has not matured properly yet. Or else you prematurely pick it while it is small and is not sufficient for a single person, but if you had left it until its proper season, it would have been enough for several people.

The Quran is a speech ranked at a high level of rhetorical eloquence. It is not comprised of common speech which is easy for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to memorise. This is why he was so eager to memorise and verify it. In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies this issue by saying: 'Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it. Surely, on Us (devolves) the collecting of it and the reciting of it. Therefore, when We have recited it, follow its recitation.' (*al-Qiyama*: 16-18) Thus, when the verses are completed, then Prophet Muhammad can recite them as he likes.

This phenomenon is among the miracles of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; when several sections of the Quran or an entire chapter would be revealed at one time, and the revelation departed from him, he would repeat them as they were revealed to him. Now, were you to bring the person with the greatest capacity of memorisation and read to him for ten minutes from any book or any discourse, he would not be able to repeat it for you.

As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he would order the scribes to record the Quran and dictate it to them as he heard it, without changing a single letter of it. Moreover, he would dictate the verses in their specific locations in different chapters of the Quran by saying: 'Put this in chapter Such-and-Such, and that in such-and-such chapter.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by At-Tirmidhi, Al-Hakim and Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of 'Uthman ibn 'Affan Allah be pleased with him who said: 'A long time might pass upon the Messenger of Allah without anything being revealed to him, and then sometimes a chapter with numerous verses might be revealed. So when something was revealed, he=*

Had each chapter been revealed at one time, the matter of its memorisation would have been somewhat easier. However, the verses of a single chapter were revealed on diverse occasions. Hence, although he *peace and blessings be upon him* would recite a single chapter in prayer, for example, its verses would have been revealed on disparate occasions, this one having been revealed today, this one yesterday, and so forth. Despite this, he would recite the verses in their proper order.

Relevant to this is Allah's saying after the above-cited supporting verses: 'Again on Us (devolves) the explaining of it.' (*al-Qiyama*: 19) Similarly, He *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in another chapter by saying: '...and We have revealed to you the Reminder that you may make clear to men what has been revealed to them...' (*an-Nahl*: 44). Thus, the explanation of the Quran is on the part of Allah *the Exalted* and its clarification is on the part of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Back to the verse in question; as for Allah's saying, '...before the revelation is fully complete...' (*Ta Ha*: 114), it means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should wait until the state of the Divine inspiration leaves him. However, how would he know that? The Companions described the Prophet Muhammad's state at the time when Divine Revelation would descend upon him by saying, 'We used to hear around his head something like the buzzing of bees, and his forehead would drip with perspiration,⁽¹⁾ and the duress of it would reach an intense degree.' Furthermore, if revelation descended upon him while he was mounted on a riding beast, it would kneel down with him, for Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Surely, We will make to light upon you a weighty Word.' (*al-Muzzammil*: 5)

Hence, there were physical signs which would manifest themselves on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when the revelation descended upon him. This is because the Divine inspiration was from an angel

= would call for someone who could write, and say: "Put these verses in the chapter which mentions this and that in it." See *At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan*, 5/272; *Al-Hakim, Mustadrak*, 2/221, 330; and *Al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*, 7/153.

(1) 'A'isha *Allah be pleased with her* said: 'I saw it coming down on him on an intensely cold day, and when it had left him, his forehead was dripping with sweat.' See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, Hadith no. 2; and *Ahmad, Musnad*, 6/257.

who had a particular natural constitution which differed from the natural human constitution of Prophet Muhammad. So, in order to ensure the direct meeting between them, it was necessary that a sort of mutual approximation in natural constitution should occur between them. Thus, either the angel would transform from his angelic form into a human form, or even Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would transform from his human condition to an elevated angelic condition, so that he could receive messages from the angel.

For this reason, he *peace and blessings be upon him* would undergo chemical changes in his natural physical constitution; it was these transformations which would cause him to perspire so profusely that he would say, 'Wrap me! Wrap me!' or 'Cover me! Cover me!'⁽¹⁾

In fact, the descending of revelation upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a difficult process, especially at its commencement. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* wished to ease this hardship for him and to relieve him from the descent of revelation for a period of time. This was meant to grant him a respite, on the one hand, and to make him long for the Divine inspiration, on the other hand. Regarding this, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Have We not expanded for you your breast. And taken off from you your burden, which pressed heavily upon your back.' (*ash-Sharh*: 1-3) In this verse, the word 'burden' is the heavy load which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would bear during the descent of revelation upon him.

However, when the revelation intermitted for him *peace and blessings be upon him* his enemies rejoiced at this, saying, 'Indeed, the Lord of Muhammad has abandoned him.'⁽²⁾ Exalted is Allah! Is it in dissention that you mention that Prophet Muhammad has a Lord? Were you not, O, disbelievers, who called him a liar and a sorcerer? Now he suddenly has a Lord because He has abandoned him! The disbelievers did not comprehend that the intermission of

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari on the authority of 'A'isha Allah be pleased with her. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2.*

(2) *In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir relates that Jundub Ibn 'Abd Allah Al-Bajli Allah be pleased with him, said, 'Jibril (Gabriel) was slow in coming to Prophet Muhammad so the polytheists said, 'Muhammad has been abandoned by his Lord.' See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim, 4/522.*

the revelation was based on sublime wisdom and ordained by the Lord of Muhammad. This was in order that he could rest psychologically from the duress of these chemical changes in his physical constitution and to restore his energy and increase his yearning to encounter Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* again. The yearning for something makes the difficulties in getting to it seem insignificant, just like the lover who travels to his beloved, not being hindered by the hardship of the road.

Allah *the Almighty* then rebutted the disbelievers' claim by saying: 'I swear by the early hours of the day and the night when it covers with darkness. Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor has He become displeased. And surely what comes after is better for you than that which has gone before. And soon will your Lord give you so that you shall be well pleased.' (*ad-Duha*: 1-5)

Thus, He *the Almighty* refuted the disbelievers' claim that Muhammad's Lord has forsaken him and rectified their statement by saying: 'Your Lord has not forsaken you...' (*ad-Duha*: 3). In this verse, the pronoun of direct address 'you' is employed since 'forsaking' may be used even with the person whom you may love. By contrast, Allah's saying, '...nor has He become displeased' (*ad-Duha*: 3), does not include the pronoun of direct address even in negation. This is because the negation here with the second person singular pronoun would impart the possibility of dislike towards Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Let us give an example to clarify the last point; when you say, 'I have not seen Sheikh of Al-Azhar drinking wine', have you lauded him with this statement, or have you criticised him? In reality, you have criticised him because you have placed him under the suspicion that he could commit such a misdeed.

Hence, this Quranic expression indicates clearly the high status of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the sight of his Lord. Here, we may ask, 'What is the wisdom that Allah *the Almighty* swears to this issue by the bright morning hours and by the night when it grows still and dark? What is their relationship with the absence of revelation from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*?' In Allah's saying, 'I swear by the early hours of the day and the night when it covers with darkness' (*ad-Duha*: 1-2), He *the Almighty* wishes to turn the attention of these disbelievers to a cosmic phenomenon

witnessed and recognised by everyone. It is that He *the Most High* created the day and dedicated it to working, making efforts and pursuing the means of sustenance. He also created the night and rendered it a domain to rest and tranquillity, whereby the human being reposes at night and his energy is restored once again in the morning.

The same holds true for the Divine inspiration in the case of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for when he is exhausted by revelation, he needed some time to rest. Hence, the matter of the intermission did not entail terminating the revelation without resuming it again; rather, it was in order for Prophet Muhammad's vigour to be renewed and for his yearning for the divine inspiration to be roused. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* gave him glad tidings in His saying: 'And surely what comes after is better for you than that which has gone before.' (*ad-Duha*: 4) This means that much good would come to him, i.e. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah *Glorified is He* directs disbelievers' attention to the signs of the universe and the nature upon which their lives are dependent. Now, they take repose from the toils of the day during the still of night, so why do they criticise Prophet Muhammad for resting from the painstaking effort of the revelation and its hardship? Does their resting in the tranquillity of night signify the perpetuity of night and that the day will not return?

Back to the verse under discussion; Allah's saying, '...but say, "Lord, increase me in knowledge!"' (*Ta Ha*: 114) It is a directive to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for seeking augmentation in knowledge. So, as long as Allah *the Almighty* is the Guardian and the Preserver of the Book, Prophet Muhammad asks Him to bestow of its knowledge on him. This is due to the fact that he will have need of knowledge which embraces all times and places and upon which the proceedings of life will be based until the Last Hour. Hence, he *peace and blessings be upon him* definitely must make the necessary preparations for this mission.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ عَاهَدْنَا إِلَىٰ آدَمَ مِن قَبْلُ فَنَسِيَ وَلَمْ نَجِدْ لَهُ عَزْمًا ﴿١١٥﴾

**We also commanded Adam before you, but he forgot
and We found him lacking in constancy [115]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 115)**

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is consoling Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and relieving him of his grief for people's disbelief and obstinate resistance by saying, 'Accept them with all their shortcomings, for they are the descendants of Adam, thus rebellious disobedience is something innate in them. We had previously entrusted their forefather with a charge, but he forgot, so if they forget. Then, accept it from them with forbearance, as they are the offspring of 'a forgetful man'. Therefore, if you request someone to do something, but he fails to carry it out, you should not become angry, but rather, you should view the matter from the perspective of this principle and excuse him.'

With respect to Allah's saying, 'We also commanded Adam...' (*Ta Ha*: 115), it implies that He ordered, enjoined and admonished him *peace be upon him*. As for His saying, '...before you...' (*Ta Ha*: 115), it has a significant role in the Quran and has settled numerous situations for us, including this very situation of Adam *peace be upon him*. Hence, the intended meaning is that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should consider the case of their forefather, Adam, whom Allah *the Almighty* charged with an obligation directly without the mediation of a messenger. He *the Most High* charged him with just a single Command and a single Prohibition; He commanded him to eat from all of the paradise except for a certain tree. This was the only prescribed obligation, but Adam *peace be upon him* forgot with what he had been commanded.

Hence, when the prescribed obligations of numerous matters come through the intermediary of a messenger, we should excuse and accept the excuses of the one who forgets from among the descendants of Adam. Due to the frequency of forgetfulness amongst them, He *the Almighty* says: 'I am most forgiving...' (*Ta Ha*: 82). As everyone is susceptible to forgetfulness and error, this, therefore, calls for much forgiveness.

Likewise, the word 'before' occurs in Allah's saying: 'Why then did you kill Allah's prophets before...?' (*al-Baqara*: 91) In this verse, it is of important

significance, for if Allah *Glorified is He* had simply said, 'Why, then, do you kill Allah's prophets?', then perhaps this might have incited the Jews to kill Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Or else he might have understood that he was liable to be killed like his predecessors from amongst the prophets and messengers. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* restricts the phenomenon of killing prophets and renders it a historical incident which will not happen again. In other words, this is something which previously occurred, or in other words, it will not be repeated in the present time.

Concerning Allah's saying, '...but he forgot and We found him lacking in constancy' (*Ta Ha: 115*), it means that Adam *peace be upon him* forgot the decree and did not have a strong resolution to support him in fulfilling the command and remaining steadfast in it. In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* wishes to tell you that when He commands you to do something beneficial for yourself, you hasten to do it. However, if He issues a command which restricts your carnal desires, you tend to refuse and contravene it. On this basis, the prescribed obligation requires a strong determination to enable you to implement and persevere it. If you accept a command which goes against your lustful desires, this entails that you have pondered over it and examined it carefully. You may have found out that even though violating this command might provide you only with fleeting and transient carnal desire, it will lead to later perpetual humiliation. Hence, having strong determination here means that you are not seduced by carnal desire.

Surely, you are aware that Allah *the Almighty* describes the messengers, the bearers of the most important Divine Messages in the history of mankind, as: '...the Messengers endowed with constancy...' (*al-Ahqaf: 35*). This is because they endured hardships and difficult tasks requiring steadfastness and patience regarding prescribed obligations. Another relevant verse is Allah's saying: 'Take hold of the law We have given you with firmness...' (*al-Baqara: 63*). This firm resolution impels you to do the acts of obedience yet meanwhile restrains you from committing the acts of disobedience.

The issue of the servant's forgetfulness of prescribed obligations which leads to chastisement and punishment has provoked amongst people a problem with the Divine Predestination and Decree. Thus, we heard some people say,

‘Inasmuch as Allah has predestined me to do this thing, then why does He punish me for it?’ We are astonished by this statement. Why do such people not also say, ‘Why does He reward me for such an act inasmuch as He has predestined me to do it?’ Why do they raise an objection about the former and not the latter? This is simply because the former is not to their advantage. Therefore, you must deal with your Lord in a consistent manner and assess matters with a single measure.

The covenant which Allah *the Almighty* made with Adam *peace be upon him* was that he could eat opulently from all the blessings of paradise as he desired, with the exception of one tree which He cautioned him and his wife of even coming near to, saying: ‘...and do not approach this tree, for then you will be of the unjust.’ (*al-Baqara*: 35)

This issue draws our attention to the fact that permissible things are numerous and cannot be counted or circumscribed, whereas forbidden things are few in number, being limited and confined. Therefore, when Allah *Glorified is He* speaks to us about the obligations, He says: ‘Say: "Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you..."’ (*al-An‘am*: 151). So, only the proscribed things can be delimited, while permissible things are beyond the domain of delimitation.

We should take note that when Allah *the Almighty* warns us against forbidden things, He does not only warn us against committing them, but also against approaching them by saying: ‘...and do not approach this tree...’ (*al-Baqara*: 35). In this instance, He did not say, ‘Do not eat from it.’ By obeying this command, the human being stays far away from the danger zone and the possibility of committing misdeeds.

In the same respect, when our Lord speaks to us about the limits which He has determined for us, He says with regard to those limits of what is permissible: ‘These are the Limits of Allah, so do not exceed them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 229). On the other hand, with regard to those limits of that which is forbidden, He says: ‘These are the Limits of Allah, so do not go near them.’ (*Ta Ha*: 187) This is due to the possibility that the one who hovers around a restricted area is liable to fall into it.

Scholars have engaged in extensive debate regarding what it was that Adam *peace be upon him* forgot. Amongst them are those who believe that he forgot Allah's Command to 'eat of this but not to approach that.' Based on this opinion, Adam *peace be upon him* did not forget the command since he carried it out and ate of what Allah *the Almighty* made permissible for him. As for his having eaten of the tree which He forbade him, this is also not a question of forgetting since Satan reminded him about this proscription by saying: 'Your Lord has not forbidden you this tree except that you may not both become two angels or that you may (not) become of the immortals.' (*al-A'raf*: 20) Hence, when he *peace be upon him* ate of the forbidden tree, he was not forgetful of what Allah *the Almighty* had forbidden him from.

Thus, this raises a question which is, 'What is the intended meaning of forgetfulness here?' The intended meaning is that Adam *peace be upon him* forgot what Allah *the Almighty* had informed him regarding the enmity of Satan—may Allah curse him—which is clear in the saying of Allah: '...this is your enemy, yours and your wife's. Do not let him drive you out of the garden and make you miserable.' (*Ta Ha*: 117)

It is inevitable that certain issues will slip from human thought, and if man possessed alertness and caution, he would not have been fooled by the deceptions of Satan. Thus, you see the latter reminds Adam *peace be upon him* of the prohibition and does not leave him in his state of heedlessness, then he tries to convince him by saying, 'If the two of you eat of this tree, you will become angels, or you will be among the immortals.'

Now, as long as you, O, Satan, are so clever, then why do you not yourself eat of the tree and become an angel or one of the immortals? Why had you previously appeared so feeble by saying: 'Respite me until the day when they are raised up?' (*al-A'raf*: 14) Hence, this is an example of how Satan deceived Adam *peace be upon him* and his offspring. Allah *the Exalted* draws our attention to this point, saying, 'Remain vigilant and be cautious, for Satan's enmity towards you is pre-existing ever since all the angels prostrated in deference to Adam *peace be upon him* but he himself, namely Satan, refused to prostrate.' Thus, Adam *peace be upon him* should have been cautious about his enemy and fortified himself against him by having a negative opinion of

him, carefully examining his discourse, thinking about his words and thoroughly inspecting his proposal.

There are some who say that the sin of Adam *peace be upon him* was the result of forgetfulness, and so it is an unintentional mistake for which there is no punishment, as indicated in the Noble Hadith: ‘Allah has pardoned for me my *Ummah* (followers of Islam) their mistakes, their forgetfulness and that which they have been forced to do under duress.’⁽¹⁾

So, was forgetfulness not forgiven in the past but was made so for this *Ummah* (followers of Islam) as a favour to it? The adherents of this opinion seek an excuse for Adam *peace be upon him*, but how is this possible while His Lord had charged him with this single command directly? The matter, then, is unlikely to be that of forgetfulness, for if he forgot just a single command directly ordained by Allah *the Almighty* then this would, in any case, be a grave sin.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* narrates to us the story of Adam *peace be upon him* and Satan:

وَإِذْ قُلْنَا لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ اسْجُدُوا لِآدَمَ فَسَجَدُوا إِلَّا إِبْلِيسَ أَبَى

When We said to the angels, ‘Bow down before Adam,’ they did. But Iblis refused [116] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 116)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* relates to us the story of Adam *peace be upon him* but we notice that He provides us with a summary of the story and its condensed version by saying: ‘We also commanded Adam before you, but he forgot; We found him lacking in constancy.’ (*Ta Ha*: 115) The basis of the story and its natural sequence is that He *the Almighty* said, ‘I created Adam *peace be upon him* with My Hand and fashioned him, and so forth. Then I commanded the angels to prostrate to him. Therefore, I told him such-and-such...’.

Presenting the story in this way is a literary style which is meant to raise the reader’s excitement. Nowadays, authors and writers employ it in their

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Ibn Majah, Ad-Daraqutni and Al-Hakim on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas Allah be pleased with him. Al-Hakim judges it to be sound according to the criteria of Al-Bukhari and Muslim. See Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2045; Ad-Daraqutni, Sunnan, 4/170; Al-Hakim, Al-Mustadrak, 2/198.

stories, giving us at the beginning of the story a segmented episode of its ending in order to provoke a desire to pursue its narrative events. Then, an author returns and presents you the story from the beginning in full detail. Thus, this is a way of raising excitement, yearning, and attentiveness.

An example of this is the style of the Quran in relating the story of the People of the Cave, whereby it mentions the story in abbreviated form, saying: 'Or, do you think that the Fellows of the Cave and the Inscription were of Our wonderful signs? When the youths sought refuge in the cave, they said: "Our Lord! Grant us mercy from Your, and provide for us a right course in our affair." So, We prevented them from hearing in the cave for a number of years. Then, We raised them up that We might know which of the two parties was best able to compute the time for which they remained.' (*al-Kahf*: 9-12) Thereafter, it set about telling the story in detail: 'We relate to you their story with the truth...' (*al-Kahf*: 13).

This style occurs frequently in the stories of the Quran as in the story of Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* which begins with the conclusion of the story regarding punishment that afflicted the disbelievers from amongst his people: 'The people of Lut (Lot) treated the warning as a lie. Surely, We sent upon them a stone storm, except Lut's (Lot's) followers; We saved them a little before daybreak.' (*al-Qamar*: 33-34) Then, the Quran mentions the details of the events as follows: 'And certainly he warned them of Our violent seizure, but they obstinately disputed the warning. And certainly they endeavoured to turn him from his guests, but We blinded their eyes; so taste My Chastisement and My Warning.' (*al-Qamar*: 36-37) Amongst the most prominent of these instances is Allah's saying in the story of Prophet Musa (Moses) and Pharaoh: 'Then we raised after them Musa (Moses) with Our communications to Pharaoh and his chiefs, but they disbelieved in them; consider then what was the end of the mischief makers.' (*al-A'raf*: 103) This verse shows that after a procession of Messages, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was sent to Pharaoh and his notables, but they disbelieved in the Messages; so, you should look at the ultimate consequence of these corrupting people. This is the summary of the story. Then He *the Almighty* commences narrating the events in detail: 'and Musa (Moses) said, "O, Pharaoh! Surely, I am a

prophet from the Lord of the worlds." (al-A'raf: 104) Likewise, such is the narrative style of the Quran in the story of Adam *peace be upon him* as previously mentioned. It provides us with the summary of the story and then proceeds to supply a detailed account: 'When We said to the angels, "Bow down before Adam..." (Ta Ha: 116). This means 'Remember, O, Prophet Muhammad, when we said to the angels: "Bow down before Adam..." (Ta Ha: 116). Now, before we delve into the story of our forefather Adam *peace be upon him* we must indicate that it is frequently repeated in the Quran. However, this repetition is intentional for wisdom and does not imply mere retelling of the events. Instead, these are narrative segments of different sides of a single incident which come together in the end to provide you with a complete story from all its perspectives.

Moreover, the objective of the Quranic stories is to strengthen Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because he will undergo many hard calamities and severe trials, which require strengthening his heart. This objective would not be realised if we cited a story for a single time as is the case with the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* for example.

Concerning Allah's saying, 'When We said to the angels, "Bow down before Adam." They did,...' (Ta Ha: 116), some people raise objections to this by saying, 'How could angels prostrate to a man?' Yes, they actually prostrated to Adam *peace be upon him*, but they did not prostrate of their own accord, but rather, at Allah's Command to them. Thus, it is not a question of prostrating to Adam *peace be upon him* as much as it is a question of obedience to Allah's Command. To the one who raised this objection, I say, 'Are you more royal than the king? That is to say, are you more careful about Allah's Rights more than Him?'

What does prostrating mean? Prostrating signifies submissive humility, a meaning which is clear in Allah's saying: 'And he raised his parents upon the throne and they fell down in prostration before him...' (Yusuf: 100). In this verse, the prostration before Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* was that of reverence and submissiveness, not that of worship.

As for Adam *peace be upon him* he was the vicegerent of Allah *the Almighty* on the earth, but he was not the only created being living on it, for there are

other created things, including perceptible things like the sun, the moon, the stars, the air, the water, the soil and the mountains—and all that it contained for the benefit of this vicegerent. These created beings also included imperceptible things, like the angels who covertly manage this universe. Amongst them are guardians and scribes, and others who are charged with the wind, rain and so on and so forth of the factors which serve humankind. Hence, it was imperative that all of these submit themselves to serve human beings.

There are those who find it agreeable to say that Adam *peace be upon him* wronged us when he disobeyed his Lord, for he caused us to descend from Paradise to the earth. To this, we respond, ‘We must comprehend that Allah *the Almighty* did not create Adam *peace be upon him* for Paradise which is the abode of immortality; rather, He created him to be His vicegerent on the earth, a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘And when your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to place in the earth a vicegerent ..."' (*al-Baqara*: 30).

Thus, the first communication from Allah *the Exalted* about Adam *peace be upon him* is that He was creating him for the earth, not for paradise. Although the word paradise or garden is used in reference to the abode of immortality and otherworldly bliss, it is also employed in reference to gardens and orchards of this world. This latter usage occurs in Allah’s saying: ‘Surely, We will try them as We tried the owners of the garden when they swore that they would certainly cut off the produce in the morning.’ (*al-Qalam*: 17) It occurs as well as in His saying: ‘And set forth to them a parable of two men, for one of them We made two gardens of grape vines...’ (*al-Kahf*: 32). Hence, the word ‘garden’ is expressed in reference to something in the earth which encompasses all that the soul desires because it suffices the person and relieves him of being in need of anything else.

So, do not wrong Adam by saying that he caused you to be expelled from paradise because he was not in the eternal Garden. Rather, he was in a place which Allah *the Almighty* had prepared to teach him a lesson and train him for carrying out his mission in life and his vicegerency on the earth.

Surely, you have seen what is done now in terms of setting up camps for training in a diverse range of domains of life. In these we assure the provision of the sustenance of the trainee and his lodging and oversight. These are

places which are set up for training in various fields of endeavour, such as athletics, academia, or science, military and so forth.

Similarly, the Garden of Adam *peace be upon him* was a place for receiving training prior to undertaking his function as the vicegerent of Allah *the Almighty* on the earth. He *the Most High* put him through this practical test and gave him a sample of shouldering the responsibility of carrying out a command and refraining from a prohibition. Moreover, He warned him against his enemy, namely Satan, who would be lying in wait for him and for his offspring afterwards. In this way, Allah *the Almighty* disclosed to him some of his enemy's tactics of leading astray and deception.

This is the quintessence of the Divine Way of Guidance on the earth with which all the messengers came. It comprises commandment and prohibition, obligation and warning about Satan and his whisperings, which seek to incite us to violate Allah's Commandments and Proscriptions.

After this training course in the Garden, Adam *peace be upon him* knew by a practical application that Satan was his enemy and that he would seduce and deceive him. Following this trial, Allah *the Exalted* caused him to get down to the earth in order to undertake his function in a state of awareness and to exercise caution towards his enemy.

There are some who pause long in examining the question of the disobedience of Adam *peace be upon him* by asking, 'How could he disobey Allah *the Almighty*, while he was a prophet?' They cite Allah's saying: 'Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray.' (*Ta Ha*: 121) To this, we say, 'Inasmuch as Adam *peace be upon him* is the vicegerent on earth and from him issued forth the progeny of all people until the Last Hour—with his descendants comprising prophets and non-prophets, messengers and those to whom messengers were sent—he represents all of the coming mankind in all its types, the infallible and the fallible alike.'

Moreover, we point out that Adam *peace be upon him* passed through this trial before he was made a prophet and also after he was made a prophet. This is evinced by Allah's saying: 'Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray—later his Lord brought him close, accepted his repentance, and guided him.' (*Ta Ha*: 121-122)

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* had brought Adam *peace be upon him* close to Him and made him infallible after putting him to a test. Then when he *peace be upon him* and his enemy were sent down upon the earth, his Lord addressed him as follows: ‘...so surely there will come to you a guidance from Me, then whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve.’ (*al-Baqara*: 38)

In this way, a new phase in the life of Adam *peace be upon him* began and he assumed two roles: the role of infallibility and prophethood after being chosen by his Lord and the role of a normal man, fallible and susceptible to forgetfulness and contravention as any person from amongst human beings.

It is necessary, then, that we understand that Adam *peace be upon him* was created for peopling and cultivating the earth as Allah *the Almighty* prepared it for him along with his descendants after him. He *Glorified is He* furnished it with all the necessary elements of life and the necessary elements for the survival of the species. Thus, whoever desires the opulence of life then let him exercise his intelligence regarding these necessary elements and let him derive from them whatever he wishes.

We have mentioned that the universe comprises tangible dominion and the invisible realm. As for the tangible dominion, it is the outward manifestation which we perceive and witness, whilst the invisible one lies beyond that; it includes things which perform their function in our life without us perceiving them. For example, the phenomenon of gravity—which intervenes in many aspects of our life—was at one time veiled in the invisible realm. We did not see it or know anything about it. Then, the minds were led to discovering it, and we became aware that there was something called gravity.

The invisible realm includes angels who are charged with specific tasks, a point which is quite clear in Allah’s saying: ‘For his sake there are angels following one another, before him and behind him, who guard him by Allah’s commandment...’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 11). In addition, amongst these angels are the recording scribes: ‘He utters not a word but there is by him a watcher at hand.’ (*Qaf*: 18)

Thus, when Allah *the Almighty* created Adam *peace be upon him* and the angels charged with overseeing his interests in the earth, He commanded them

to prostrate to him, since they would be at his service. Hence, prostration here is an act of obedience to the Command of Allah *the Almighty* and submissiveness to the vicegerent who would populate the earth and make it prosper.

Returning to the verse under study there follows Allah's saying: 'but Iblis refused.' (*Ta Ha*: 116) In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'but not Iblis; he was proud...' (*Sad*: 74). He *Glorified is He* has clarified the reason for Satan's refusal to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him* in His saying: '...Are you proud or are you of the exalted ones?' (*Sad*: 75) This means that there is no reason for Satan's refusal except being too arrogant to prostrate, or else he was amongst the exalted ones. This latter category is comprised of the angels who were not included in the command to prostrate. Hence, it is as if the command was for specific angels, those who were charged with serving Adam *peace be upon him*. As for the exalted ones, these are the angels who dedicated themselves to worshipping Allah *the Almighty* and have nothing to do with Adam *peace be upon him* and perhaps are not even aware of him.

One of the stylistic characteristics which has provoked argument surrounding the rhetoric of the Quran amongst orientalisists is Allah's saying: '...What prevented you that you should submit to him...' (*Sad*: 75)? Also, it includes His saying in another verse: 'What hindered you so that you did not submit...?' (*al-A'raf*: 12) They asked, 'Which of these two expressions is most eloquent, for if it be one of them, then the other is not eloquent?' All of this is the result of shortcomings in understanding the language of the Quran and the lack of an innate sensitivity for Arabic amongst such people. In fact, there is a difference between the case when you want to prostrate and then someone orders you not to do so, on one hand, and the case when someone convinces you not to prostrate, on the other. Thus, in the case of Allah's saying, 'What hindered you so that you did not submit...' (*al-A'raf*: 12), you wanted to prostrate, but someone hindered you from doing so. On the other hand, His saying 'What prevented you that you should submit to him' (*Sad*: 75) means that someone commanded you not to prostrate, and he convinced you.

Amongst the questions which have arisen around this story is the following, 'Was Satan one of the angels, and thus included in the command to prostrate? How could he be one of the angels, while they do not disobey Allah *the Almighty*

in what He commands them? If he was not an angel, then what brought him into the situation?’

In order to clarify this issue, we say, ‘Allah *the Almighty* created the two classes of the jinns and the humans. He granted them free choice in many matters and rendered them to compel in certain matters in order to affirm His Absolute Power regarding His creation. Thus, while you have free choice in matters of religious obligations, being capable of obeying or disobeying, nevertheless it is not within your scope of choice that you are healthy or sick, tall or short, poor or rich, nor is it up to you that you live or die.

Allah *the Exalted* does not obligate you to do this or not do that unless your physical constitution is adequately sound to do or not do the divinely prescribed obligations. Besides, they are compulsory matters in which you have no choice, and these are preordained matters. Hence, we say to those who are accustomed to rebelliousness and have gotten used to contravening the Rulings of Allah *the Almighty* in matters of religious obligations, ‘Why do you not also rebel against the preordained matters as long as you have grown accustomed to contravention?’ Thus, you are compelled to be a slave despite yourself.

Therefore, if the one with free will is obedient, he forces his soul to adhere to Allah’s Way of Guidance. Indeed, he gives preference to Allah’s Choice over his, and thus, he holds a great position with Allah *the Almighty*. Thus, his obedient servant is better than an angel because an angel obeys while he is compelled. On this basis, there arises the difference between servants and slaves. All the people under compulsion are slaves, but servants are those who have left their free choice to the choice of Allah *the Most High*.

On this basis, we say that Satan was one of the jinns and does not belong to the angels, for he was commanded but refused and was punished, even if the command was originally for the angels. The Quran settles this issue when it says: ‘...but Iblis (did it not). He was of the jinns, so he transgressed the commandment of his Lord.’ (*al-Kahf*: 50) This is an unambiguous text about which there can be no disputation.⁽¹⁾

(1) In his *Tafsir*, *Ibn Kathir* narrates that Al-Hassan Al-Basri said: ‘Satan was not one of the angels for even the blinking of an eye. He is the origin of the jinns, just as Adam is the origin of mankind.’ See *Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-‘Azhim*, 1/77.

However, if you said, ‘Then why was Satan included in the command of prostrating as he was not an angel?’ We would reply, ‘The reason for this is that before this situation Satan was obedient, and he had witnessed the process of the creation of Adam *peace be upon him*. He used to be called ‘the peacock of the angels’ because he compelled himself to obedience in matters of free choice, and so he excelled the angels and used to sit in their gatherings. So, when the command came to the angels to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him* he was included in it and obligated to do it for two reasons: Firstly, if he was superior to the angels in station, being their peacock who had obligated himself to obedience in spite of his free will, then it behoves him to be more obedient to the command more than them. So, why did he disobey this specific command? Secondly, if he was inferior to them, then the command to the superior must necessarily encompass the inferior. This is similar to the case when you order the ministers, for example, to rise for the president of the republic. If there are delegates and directors amongst them, they would naturally be included in the order.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

﴿فَقُلْنَا يَا آدَمُ إِنَّ هَذَا عَدُوٌّ لَكَ وَلِزَوْجِكَ فَلَا يُخْرِجَنَّكَ مِنَ الْجَنَّةِ فَتَشْقَى﴾

So, We said, ‘Adam, this is your enemy, yours and your wife’s: do not let him drive you out of the garden and make you miserable [117] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 117)

In Allah’s saying, ‘...and your wife's...’ (*Ta Ha*: 117), the Arabic word translated as ‘wife’ does not originally mean a pair as some people believe. Rather, it linguistically means a single individual in the company of his counterpart. Similarly, it is not correct that we speak of two individuals as a twin; instead, we should say ‘two twins’, for each of them is the twin of the other. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And of everything We have created pairs...’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49).

It is also noteworthy in Allah’s saying, ‘...Do not let him drive you out of the garden...’ (*Ta Ha*: 117) that the discourse is addressed to both Adam *peace be upon him* and his wife, warning the two of them against the deception of Satan and his sly scheming. However, when He *the Almighty* says: ‘...and

make you miserable' (*Ta Ha*: 117), He only addresses Adam; in other words, He did not say, 'and make the two of you miserable.' So, what is the reason for this? This is because the responsibility of striving and toiling pertains to the man, whereas the woman is a source of calm and tranquillity, encouraging the man to strive and work. This is contrary to what we see in our society of keenness for the employment of women on the pretext of assisting in the responsibilities of life. Allah says:

إِنَّ لَكَ أَلَّا تَجُوعَ فِيهَا وَلَا تَعْرَىٰ ﴿١١٨﴾

**In the garden you will never go hungry, feel
naked [118] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 118)**

Allah *the Almighty* has prepared the garden for Adam and furnished for him everything that he needed. He *the Most High* has made all its delights permissible for him except for one thing.⁽¹⁾ In this verse, Adam has Allah's assurance: '...you will never go hungry or feel naked.' (*Ta Ha*: 118) This means that he *peace be upon him* would not go hungry in it because it contains every kind of fruit, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying: '...and eat from it a plenteous (food) wherever you wish...' (*al-Baqara*: 35). We observe here that He has provided the two of them with what satisfies the outward natural disposition, namely clothing and covering, as well as what satisfies the inward natural impulse, namely food.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَنَّكَ لَا تَظْمَأُ فِيهَا وَلَا تَصْحَىٰ ﴿١١٩﴾

**Be thirsty, or suffer the heat of the sun [119]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 119)**

In the garden, Adam and Hawwa (Eve) would not be thirsty or be exposed to the scorching heat of the sun. Hence, their Lord has also assumed liability to spare the two of them the inward natural impulse of thirst and the outward natural impulse of not letting the sun scorch them.

(1) This is the tree about which Allah *the Almighty* says: '... and do not approach this tree, for then you will be of the unjust.' (*al-Baqara*: 35) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir cites several opinions regarding this tree and its identification: it is the grape vine, it is wheat, it is the ear of grain, it is the date palm, it is the fig tree. See, Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim*, 1/79.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَوَسْوَسَ إِلَيْهِ الشَّيْطَانُ قَالَ يَا آدَمُ هَلْ
أَدُلُّكَ عَلَى شَجَرَةٍ الْخَالِدِ وَمُلْكٍ لَا يَبْلَى ﴿١٢٠﴾

But Satan whispered to Adam, saying, ‘Adam, shall I show you the tree of immortality and power that never decays?’ [120] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 120)

We note that Allah *Glorified is He* chooses ‘whispering’ as a term for the act of Satan, which corresponds to the temptation to do something. Originally, this word in question refers to the sound of jewellery, like gold with which women adorn themselves. Now, sounds are known by names of created beings emitting them. As we say, ‘The croaking of frogs, the neighing of horses, the lowing of cows, the braying of donkeys, the bleating of sheep, the gurgling of water and the rustling of trees.’ Likewise, whispering is the term for the sound of precious adornment which attracts listeners and seduces them to look towards it. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is warning us that Satan will seek access to us by way of seduction and beautification.

So, with what did he whispered to Adam *peace be upon him*? He whispered to him by saying: ‘Adam, shall I show you the tree of immortality and power that never decays?’ (*Ta Ha*: 120) We are astonished by Satan; given that he is aware of the tree of immortality and power that never decays, why does he not eat from it himself to obtain this advantage?

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَكَلَا مِنْهَا فَبَدَتَ لَهُمَا سَوْءُ تَهُمَا وَطَفِقَا يَخْصِفَانِ
عَلَيْهِمَا مِنْ وُرْقِ الْجَنَّةِ وَعَصَى آدَمُ رَبَّهُ فَغَوَى ﴿١٢١﴾

And they both ate from it. They became conscious of their nakedness and began to cover themselves with leaves from the garden. Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray [121] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 121)

So, after the two of them had eaten of this tree, their private parts became exposed to them. The private parts are the area of a person’s body that he is

ashamed to reveal. This includes the backside and the front side of men and women, both of which have their function. It is by means of these parts that the body rids itself of waste. From the front issues forth water through the two kidneys, the ureter and the bladder, and from the rear are expelled the remnants and excrement of food resulting from the process of digestion and metabolism.

However, when did Adam *peace be upon him* and his wife become conscious of their private parts? Was it after eating in general from the trees of the garden or after eating from the forbidden tree specifically? Allah *the Exalted* arranged the timing for the appearance of their private parts to coincide with eating from the tree which He had forbidden to the two of them, a point which is clear in His saying: 'And they both ate from it. They became conscious of their private parts...' (*Ta Ha*: 121). Hence, before eating from this tree, they were not aware of their private parts, and they had no cognisance of this process of excretion. This is because the nourishment was divinely prepared, and thus it provided strength and life without leaving any waste in the body.

However, once they had transgressed and eaten from the tree, food began to ferment, and thus, they experienced the process of digestion as we know it. So, this was the first time that Adam *peace be upon him* and his wife noticed the issue of bodily waste, their private parts and what comes out of them.

Therefore, there is a symbolic matter which requires paying attention to; when you see nakedness in society, then know that its members had broken the Divine Way of Guidance.

Hence, Adam *peace be upon him* and his wife had no knowledge of the excreted waste of food and all that results from it in terms of odour and disgusting, foul things, except after their transgression. At this moment, they were bewildered, not knowing what they should do. There was nothing in front of them except the leaves of trees, so they '...began to cover themselves with leaves from the garden.' (*Ta Ha*: 121) This means that they instinctively set about sticking the leaves upon their private parts in order to cover them. Otherwise, what is it that makes these two orifices shameful as distinguished from the other orifices of the body like the nose and mouth, for example?

It is said that this is due to the fact that the orifices of the front and the rear discharge something foul and disagreeable, which a person is keen on

concealing. Amazingly, when a human being—the speaking animal which Allah *the Almighty* has favoured—eats, he does so out of choice, whereas an animal eats due to its natural impulse and instinct. Despite that, a human being goes beyond the limit in eating and drinking, consuming an extensive variety of food, and eating more than what he needs. He eats even after he is satiated. All this is contrary to the animal which is governed by instinct.

Hence, you find human waste disgusting and repulsive, without any use to be made of it. On the other hand, the waste of animals barely has any smell and can be utilised as fuel and natural fertiliser. We, nevertheless, disregard animals and call them beasts, and so on and so forth.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘Adam disobeyed his Lord and was led astray.’ (*Ta Ha*: 121) In fact, Adam’s disobedience was confined to the period before the beginning of his prophethood; to be specific; it was during the phase of training. A person in this latter phase is prone to do right or wrong, and if he makes a mistake during this period, a trainer should not punish him; rather, he should correct his mistake. As in the case of a pupil during his school years, if he errs, the teacher corrects him. In an examination, however, the teacher holds him accountable. The meaning of Allah’s saying, ‘...and was led astray’ (*Ta Ha*: 121) is that Adam did not attain to the truth. Similarly, one says about the one who becomes lost in the desert that he has strayed from the right path. As for Adam *peace be upon him* there followed the next phase of infallibility after being fallible.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

ثُمَّ أَجْبَبْنَاهُ رَبُّهُ، فَتَابَ عَلَيْهِ وَهَدَىٰ ﴿١٢٢﴾

Later his Lord brought him close, accepted his repentance, and guided him [122] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 122)

Thus, Adam *peace be upon him* acted the role of a normal man who obeys and disobeys and who is prone to listen to the words of Satan. However, his Lord ordained repentance for him, a fact which is ever so clear in His saying: ‘Then Adam received (some) words from his Lord, so He turned to him mercifully...’ (*al-Baqara*: 37). Hence, Adam *peace be upon him* was disobedient,

while he was a normal man and not when he was a prophet as some people mistakenly believe.

As for Allah's saying, 'Later, his Lord brought him close...' (*Ta Ha*: 122), this took place at the beginning of the phase of prophethood in the life of Adam *peace be upon him*. Thus, after the phase in which he disobeyed his Lord, the latter brought him close and selected him as a prophet. However, Allah *Glorified is He* does not say, 'Then Allah brought him close', rather, he says that his 'Lord' did so. This is because the Lord is the One Who assumes responsibility for educating and care. Now, the perfect education entails preparation for one's function, and part of the preparation of Adam *peace be upon him* for his function was that he should pass through both this test and training in the garden. Finally, Allah's saying, '...and guided him' (*Ta Ha*: 122) points to this guidance in His saying:

قَالَ أَهْبِطَا مِنْهَا جَمِيعًا بَعْضُكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ عَدُوٌّ فَإِمَّا يَأْتِيَنَّكُمْ
مِنِّي هُدًى فَمَنِ اتَّبَعَ هُدَايَ فَلَا يَضِلُّ وَلَا يَشْقَى ﴿١٢٣﴾

**God said, 'Get out of the garden as each other's enemy.'
Whoever follows My guidance, when it comes to you
[people], will not go astray nor fall into misery [123]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 123)**

It is as if Allah the Almighty said to them, 'Descend the two of you to the earth and proceed in it in the light of the past trial and be aware that there are commands and prohibitions and that there is an enemy who whispers, embellishes and leads astray to the point that your private parts appear.' In this way, He is providing Adam with sufficient immunity for him and his descendants in order that the proceedings of life are rendered sound and upright in the light of the prescribed obligations. These obligations comprise the commandments and prohibitions which the Satan incites us to violate.

Nevertheless, we must not forget another factor which is the soul that incites to evil, impelling you towards disobedience and transgression. Hence, Satan is not your sole enemy that you might use as a scapegoat to which you attribute all of your disobedient acts. This is because there are disobedient

acts which Satan does not cause you to fall into except by means of the soul. Otherwise, why did Satan go astray? Who caused him to go astray and whispered to him?

In Allah's saying, 'Get out of the garden...' (*Ta Ha*: 123), the verb to 'get down' is expressed in Arabic in the dual form. The two persons thereby commanded here are Adam *peace be upon him* in whom his descendants are embodied, and Satan, in whom his descendants are also embodied. Hence, the dual imperative verb pertains to the origin of both species. On the other hand, Allah's saying in another verse, 'Get out of this (state) all...' (*al-Baqara*: 38) is expressed in the plural form of the verb. In this case, this is a reference to all the resulting offspring of Adam and Satan.

As for Allah's saying, '...as each other's enemy' (*Ta Ha*: 123), it signifies that one is the foe of the other. The Arabic word translated in this verse as 'each' has a significant role in the Quran. The intended meaning of this verse is that there is a mutual enmity between the obedient human being and Satan, but if the former is disobedient, then there is no enmity since Satan wants you to be disobedient. When the enmity is affirmed without clarifying whether it is mutual or one-sided, then it is mutual.

An example of this use of the word translated here as 'each', but it originally means 'some' as found in Allah's saying: 'Will they distribute the Mercy of your Lord? We distribute amongst them their livelihood in the life of this world, and We have exalted some of them above others in degrees...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32). So who are those who are raised above others and who are those above whom others are raised? The followers of a superficial perspective comprehend from this verse that the rich are raised above the poor. However, the actual meaning is much broader than this, for all human beings are equal before Allah *the Almighty*.

As a matter of fact, the functions of life require many diverse abilities and numerous talents. This is why one does not find all talents combined in a single person, entailing the deprivation of others. Instead, the Creator *Glorified is He* distributes talents amongst His human creation. Thus, one finds a person skilful in a particular field, while another is skilful in another and so on. In this manner, people have need of one another, the ties between individuals of

society are thereby established, and there occurs between them the necessary harmony for the proceeding of life.

Hence, every individual in existence is raised above others in something and has others raised above him in something else. Therefore, a human being should be courteous in the activities of his life and should not deem himself above another on account of his extraordinary qualities in something. Let him look to that in which others excel and are distinguished, so that no one looks down upon another, for the latter may be better than him. It may even be that he possesses certain talents which are not fulfilled in the one who ridiculed him.

Returning to the subject of verse under study; inasmuch as Adam and his offspring will be the enemy of Satan and his offspring, then what will judge between them? It is Allah's Way of Guidance, a point which is clear in His saying: 'Whoever follows My Guidance, when it comes to you...' (*Ta Ha*: 123). Hence, you should beware of furnishing the guidance from yourselves, for this will not be beneficial to you and will not lead you to success.

There follows Allah's saying: 'Whoever follows My guidance, when it comes to you [people], will not go astray nor fall into misery.' (*Ta Ha*: 123) Allah's Guidance and Prescribed Path could be considered a manual for the soundness and well-being of a human being. Surely, we notice that a manufacturer provides his manufactured device with a manual which includes instructions on how to operate and maintain it. If you follow these instructions, this device will be at your service and perform its function for you without breaking down.

Now, just as this manual is not prepared except by the manufacturer of the device, likewise, none lays down laws for human beings or establishes guidance for them except their Creator *Glorified is He*. However, if someone else does this, it would be an offensive usurpation of Allah's Right. It would be as if you went to the butcher and asked him to lay down the necessary instructions for the maintenance of a microphone!

Thus, corruption in the universe occurs whenever we depart from Allah's Prescribed Path and transgress against His Law and Legislation, being satisfied with guidance aside from His Guidance. Therefore, He *the Almighty* says: 'Whoever follows My Guidance, when it comes to you [people], will not go astray nor

fall into misery.’ (*Ta Ha*: 123) So, if this is the result for the one who follows Allah’s Guidance and the ultimate consequence of proceeding on the basis of His Prescribed Path, then what are the consequences for the one who rejects it?

Allah says:

وَمَنْ أَعْرَضَ عَن ذِكْرِي فَإِنَّ لَهُ مَعِيشَةً ضَنْكًا وَنَحْشُرُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ أَعْمَى ﴿١٢٤﴾

But whoever turns away from it will have a life of great hardship. We shall bring him blind to the Assembly on the Day of Resurrection [124] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 124)

In this verse, the Saying of Allah, ‘turn away from’ signifies going away from in aversion and turning the breadth of your shoulders towards someone as we mentioned above. Regarding Allah’s saying, ‘...a life of great hardship...’ (*Ta Ha*: 124), the word ‘hardship’ means a severe constriction which you try to escape from here and there but cannot. This life of hardship befalls the one who wilfully turns away from Allah the Almighty. This is because the life of the one who believes in Him is never constrained even when his means of sustenance are limited, for he believes that his Lord will find a way out for him from this situation.

However, when the means of subsistence of a disbeliever are constrained and render him helpless, he finds no one to seek refuge in and therefore commits suicide. By contrast, a believer has a Lord Who provides for him and Who relieves his distress, as He *the Almighty* says: ‘Those who believe and whose hearts are set at rest by the remembrance of Allah; now surely by Allah’s remembrance are the hearts set at rest.’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 28) This is why it is said, ‘There is no worry while You are (My) Lord.’ Let us give an example to illustrate this point. A child bears no worries due to the existence of his father who spares him the toils of life and its hardships. So, he is not aware of the shortages or the increases in prices and thus endures nothing of anxiety. If this is the case with a child who has a father, then how would you envisage the one who has a Lord?

We have previously coined a relevant simile by saying, ‘Imagine that you have an Egyptian pound which falls from your pocket, or which you lose, you would grieve over it if you did not have other money. However, if you have

another sum of money, you will not be aggrieved about losing the pound. Likewise, if you have a bank account, it would be as if nothing happened. Likewise, by having faith in his Lord, a believer possesses a higher reserve which compensates him for everything.'

Allah *Glorified is He* has provided us with a parable for this reserve of faith in the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and Pharaoh when Musa (Moses) and his people were trapped between the sea before them and Pharaoh and his army behind them. While the people were certain of being overcome, what did Prophet Musa (Moses) say? He said, 'By no means, surely, my Lord is with me. He will show me a way out.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) In such a way, he *peace be upon him* uttered this statement with deep conviction and full confidence, despite the fact that the statement might be shown to be false in a moment. However, it arises from the faith by which hearts are reassured and from the account reserve which every believer places his trust.

Hence, whoever believes in Allah *the Almighty* and follows His Guidance will never find himself in constrained circumstances or unbearable hardships. If some tribulation should befall him, it will not cause him to lose contentment, nor hinder him from seeking refuge in his Lord.

Amongst the miraculous verses of the Quran concerning the issue of *Diq As-Sadr* (constriction of the chest) is Allah's saying: 'Therefore (for) whomsoever Allah intends that He would guide him aright, He expands his breast for Islam, and (for) whomsoever He intends that He should cause him to err, He makes his breast straight and narrow as though he were ascending upwards...' (*al-An'am*: 125).

Now, from where did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* know that someone who ascends into the sky will be afflicted by a constricted chest? Did anyone go up into the sky at that time and experience this phenomenon? The meaning of constricted chest is that the capacity of the lung—which is the organ of breathing—becomes constricted by illness or excessive effort, etc. Surely, you notice that when you go up a tall ladder, for you become out of breath. This signifies that the lung—which is the storage container for air—does not get sufficient air corresponding to the activity undertaken, and it is then that the action of breathing increases in order to make up for the shortage of air.

Now, after the conquest of space, we are aware of the phenomenon of constricted breathing in the higher layers of the atmosphere which compel us to take oxygen tanks and other equipment for artificial breathing.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ رَبِّ لِمَ حَشَرْتَنِيْ اَعْمٰى وَقَدْ كُنْتُ بَصِيْرًا ﴿١٢٥﴾

**And he will say, ‘Lord, why did You bring me here blind?
I was sighted before!’ [125] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 125)**

The word ‘blind’ also occurs in Allah’s saying: ‘And whoever is blind in this, he shall (also) be blind in the Hereafter and more erring from the way.’ (*al-Isra*: 72) The word ‘blindness’ signifies that you do not perceive visible things. However, there may also be visible things which you do not pay attention to with your sight as if you were blind and did not see. Similarly, the one who turns away from the signs and does not meditate upon them is blind, for he does not see them.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says regarding the Hereafter: ‘...and We will gather them together on the Day of Resurrection on their faces, blind and dumb and deaf...’ (*al-Isra*: 97). Now, when disbelievers are resurrected, they will be terrified by the Resurrection which they used to deny, and they will be deeply troubled and anxious. Each one of them will try to find an exit and a means of escape. Alas, Allah *the Exalted* has stripped them of all the means of perception and has closed in their faces all routes to salvation. A person can be guided to his path by himself when he has a sight. However, if he is blind, he can call for someone to take him by the hand. Even if he is blind and dumb, then perhaps he hears someone calling, warning, and guiding him. However, if he is blind, dumb, and deaf, can he be guided? All means of salvation are closed before him, for he is blind and cannot perceive the path on his own; he is dumb and thus unable to seek help from anyone who might save him, and he is also deaf and unable to hear anyone who volunteers to guide or warn him.

Many of those who cast doubts about the Quran found something superficial in this verse with which they assail the style of the Quran, inasmuch as Allah

the Almighty says: ‘And he will say, "Lord, why did You bring me here blind? I had sight before!"’ (*Ta Ha*: 125) However, in another verse He says: ‘And the guilty shall see the fire, then they shall know that they are going to fall into it...’ (*al-Kahf*: 53). Thus, in one verse, He *the Almighty* negates their sight, whilst in another He affirms it. It escapes these disputatious ones that a person, after the Resurrection, passes through several stages. At the moment they are gathered together from their graves, they are blind so that they do not guide themselves to the path of escape, but after this, Allah *the Almighty* restores their sight to show them another painful punishment, which is the Hellfire in which they will be chastised.

Thus, what befalls them in the Hereafter is just recompense for what they did, for they had presented themselves as being blind, deaf, and dumb in this world since when the messenger summoned upon them to Allah *the Almighty* they deafened their ears and covered themselves with their clothing.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ كَذَلِكَ أَنْتَ آيَاتُنَا فَنَسِينَهَا وَكَذَلِكَ الْيَوْمَ نُنسِي

God will say, ‘This is how it is: You ignored Our revelations when they came to you, so today you will be ignored’ [126] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 126)

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* will treat them as they treated Him; He will ignore them as they had ignored His Revelations. The word ‘signs’, translated in this verse as ‘revelations’, has many meanings. Basically, it refers to a marvellous or amazing phenomenon. It also applies to cosmic signs which draw attention to the Creator of the cosmos, and it is further used to refer to the miracles which support the messengers and confirm the veracity of their communication on behalf of Allah *the Almighty*. While cosmic signs attract attention to the Creator’s Omnipotence and Wisdom, the messenger is the one who guides the people to the Master of this Omnipotence and Wisdom for which they are searching. It is as if the messenger is saying, ‘O, you believer! The Master of the Power that you are looking for is Allah. He wants such-and-such from you. If you obey Him, then your reward will be such-and-such, but if you disobey Him, then your punishment will be such-and-such.’ Then Allah *the Exalted*

backs up the messenger with miracles which provide evidence of his truthfulness in conveying Message coming from his Lord.

The word ‘signs’ also applies to the verses of the Scripture which bear legal rulings and the Divine Way of Guidance. The one referred to in the verse under discussion denied all these signs and did not turn his attention to them. So, inasmuch as he ignored the Revelations of Allah *the Almighty* then his just recompense is to be ignored and abandoned. This punishment is for those who ignore the revelations, not for those who unintentionally forget them, the case under which they will be forgiven and excused.

Regarding Allah’s saying, ‘...so today you will be ignored’ (*Ta Ha*: 126), it connotes that this guilty person will not be included in those who will enjoy the eternal delight of the paradise, but he will not be forgotten or neglected in terms of requital and punishment.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي مَنْ أَسْرَفَ وَلَمْ يُؤْمِنْ بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِ ۗ وَلَعَذَابُ الْآخِرَةِ أَشَدُّ وَأَبْقَىٰ ﴿١٢٧﴾

**This is how We reward those who go too far, and who do not believe in their Lord’s revelations. The greatest and most enduring punishment is in the Hereafter [127]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 127)**

Concerning Allah’s saying, ‘This is how...’ (*Ta Ha*: 127), it means that We punish whosoever goes astray in accordance with His saying: ‘We reward those who go too far...’ (*Ta Ha*: 127) In this verse, ‘to go too far’ means to exceed the reasonable limit of something. Thus, eating, for example, was established by Allah *the Almighty* for the preservation of life, but if you go beyond this limit, then it is wasteful excess.

Also, your income provided for you by Allah must be spent within certain bounds, which is why you should save the some of it in order to advance in life. However if you disburse it all, then you are guilty of excess and will not be able to live a decent life. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Surely, the squanderers are the fellows of the devils...’ (*al-Isra*: 27).

Islam possesses a wise vision as regards economics, for Allah *Glorified is He* wants you to spend, but does not want you to squander; between these two

limits the rudder of society navigates, and the gears of life turn. Thus, if you go beyond the boundary of each of them, the proceeding of life is impaired, society becomes confused, and merchandise becomes unsalable. Allah *Glorified is He* has clarified this vision in His saying: 'and they who when they spend are neither extravagant nor parsimonious and (keep) between these the just mean.' (*al-Furqan*: 67) Hence, your Lord wants you to conduct your affairs between these two limits because miserliness and avarice obstruct the movement of life and squandering stiffens life and deprives you of advancement and pursuing the causal factors of opulence. For this reason, He *the Almighty* says: '...lest you should (afterwards) sit down blamed, stripped off.' (*al-Isra*': 29)

Now, immoderation may also arise from another side. In fact, your Lord has created you and has created for you the means of subsistence for your life. In addition, He *the Most High* had determined for you the permissible and the forbidden. So, if you tried yourself to augment that which is lawful with that which Allah *the Almighty* had made forbidden for you, then this is transgression on your part of the limit which your Lord set for you. You have thereby gone beyond the limit of what He made lawful for you and from which He prohibited you.

Immoderation may also take another form when the thing may be lawful in itself, but you take it in an unlawful manner. Now, if we shift the issue to prescribed obligations, we find that Allah *the Almighty* has made some things lawful and others unlawful. Therefore, you should not make what is prohibited lawful, nor should you prohibit what is lawful, as He *the Almighty* says: 'Say: "Who has prohibited the embellishment of Allah which He has brought forth for His servants and the good provisions?"' (*al-A'raf*: 32)

In a similar respect, Allah *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying: 'O, Prophet! Why do you forbid (yourself) that which Allah has made lawful for you...' (*at-Tahrim*: 1)? Hence, your Lord does not place undue restrictions upon you, and He also forbids you from placing undue restrictions upon your own soul by depriving it of what He made lawful. Similarly, He censures you for making what He prohibited for you lawful because this is all in your interest.

As immoderation can be in food, and drink which are the means of subsistence for the continuation of life, it can also occur in other domains such

as the preservation of the species through marriage and procreation. With respect to sexual activity, Allah *Glorified is He* has established bounds to assure the bringing forth of offspring in the light of lawful pleasure, but whoever transgresses these bounds is immoderate.

It is a manifestation of Allah's Mercy that He forgives a believer who transgresses against his own soul, a fact which is clearly manifested in His saying: 'Say: "O, My servants, who have acted extravagantly against their own souls, do not despair of the Mercy of Allah ..."' (*al-'Ankabut: 53*).

Back to the verse in question; Allah's saying, 'This is how We reward those who go too far...' (*Ta Ha: 127*), places immoderation as a degree next to disbelief, for He says afterwards: '...and who do not believe in their Lord's revelations...' (*Ta Ha: 127*). This is due to that when such a person prohibits what is lawful or makes lawful what is prohibited, he suspends Allah's Revelations.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: 'The greatest and most enduring punishment is in the Hereafter.' (*Ta Ha: 127*) Hence, the aforementioned punishment will afflict them in this worldly life, not in the Hereafter. So, you should not think that Allah *the Almighty* delays every punishment for a disbeliever, for there are punishments which are hastened for him in this worldly life, not put off until the Hereafter.

The first kind of punishment which the Almighty Allah does not delay and which He hastens in this worldly life is the punishment for iniquity. The iniquitous person cannot die before the one he treated unjustly sees what He has done to this wrongdoer. Otherwise, those who do not believe in the Resurrection or in otherworldly recompense would transgress against mankind and cause mischief on earth. Thus, it is out of Allah's Wisdom that we see the ruin of unjust tyrants so that the proceeding of life sets itself aright, even if a person who has been wronged is not a believer.

When Allah *Glorified is He* wishes to punish, His Chastisement corresponds to His Power as is the case with the blow of a child; it is certainly not the same as the blow of a strong young man. Thus, whatever comes to an unjust person of punishment in this worldly life is trifling since it comes from people; however, the punishment of the Hereafter is an entirely different thing because it is Allah's Punishment which corresponds to His Omnipotence.

Allah's saying, 'The greatest and most enduring punishment is in the Hereafter' (*Ta Ha: 127*) affirms that the punishment of the Hereafter is everlasting. By contrast, the punishment of this worldly life ends with death, or when your punisher becomes content with you and is merciful to you. It might also happen that someone intercedes for you and has the punishment removed from you. However, in the Hereafter, there will be nothing of this kind, for there will be no escape from the punishment nor any refuge to which to resort.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَفَلَمْ يَهْدِ لَهُمْ كَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا قَبْلَهُمْ مِنَ الْقُرُونِ يَمْشُونَ فِي مَسْجِدِهِمْ
 إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّأُولِي التَّوْحِيدِ

Do they not draw a lesson from the many generations We destroyed before them, through whose dwelling places they now walk? There truly are signs in this for anyone with understanding! [128] (The Quran, *Ta Ha: 128*)

In the opening phrase of this verse, the verb translated as 'draw a lesson' means having guidance and illustrative explanation. Thus when you guide a person, it means that you show him the way of righteousness. Allah's saying, 'Do they not draw a lesson from...?' (*Ta Ha: 128*) is a question which is generally put either in order to find out what you are ignorant about or to confirm what you have done. It thus gives the meaning of the following question, 'have they not seen the previous people and what befell them when they rejected the messengers of Allah?!' In this regard, He says: 'And most surely you pass by them in the morning.' (*as-Saffat: 137*)

In a similar respect, He *Glorified is He* says: 'I swear by the daybreak, and the ten nights, and the even and the odd, and the night when it departs. Truly, in that there is an oath for those who possess understanding. Have you not considered how your Lord dealt with Ad, (the people of) Aram, 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,' (*al-Fajr: 1-10*). So, do you not see all of these lessons and admonitions with regard to those who rejected the Divine Way of Guidance? Do you not see that Allah *the Almighty* grants triumph to His messengers? He

never abandoned and forsook them as He says: ‘And most surely Our Host alone shall be the victorious ones.’ (*as-Saffat*: 173) In addition, He says: ‘...and surely Allah will help him who helps His cause...’ (*al-Hajj*: 40). After all of this, the deniers of the Truth still turn away in rejection as if they have not seen anything of these signs.

When you come across the Arabic word translated in this verse as ‘many’, then you should be aware that it is used in reference to something very numerous which is beyond delimitation. It is like when you tell your companion, ‘How much have I given you!’, or ‘How much have I helped you!’ These two expressions mean that you have given him so many times and that you have helped him so many times. It is as if you are urging him to respond by himself, and you do not ask such a question unless you are sure the answer is in your absolute favour.

Hence, Allah’s saying, ‘Do they not draw a lesson from...’ (*Ta Ha*: 128) means that He elucidated for them and directed them to consider the numerous peoples who rejected their messengers and to think of the punishment that happened that afflicted them. Those being addressed here should have been called to their senses and taken a moral lesson from these incidents, instead of turning away from them.

Allah’s saying, ‘...through whose dwelling places they now walk?...’ (*Ta Ha*: 128) It is similar to His saying: ‘And most surely you pass by them in the morning.’ (*as-Saffat*: 137) Thus, this is not history being related, but rather, it is an exemplary reality which they see with their own eyes and travel through its ruins. There follows Allah’s saying: ‘There truly are signs in this for anyone with understanding!’ (*Ta Ha*: 128) This means that there are wondrous signs in what happened to the previous generations for anyone who possesses intelligence and sound intellect.

The Arabic expression translated in this verse as ‘anyone with understanding’ comprises the word *Nuha* which means ‘mind’ or ‘intellect’. The mind solves many problematic aspects of thought; for there are those who believe that Allah *the Almighty* created the mind for us so that we might employ it in the realms of thought as we please and run free of all restrictions. However, the Arabic word for mind is derived from the same semantic root as ‘hobble cord’ by which one hobbles a camel so that it does not run away. In a similar way, your mind restrains you and organises your actions, so that you do not conduct

yourself in the universe based on your capricious desires and inclinations. It restrains you in order for you to employ it in grasping matters by saying, 'This is right, and this is wrong' before you venture towards them.

Hence, if the thief truly grasped what he was doing, he would not dare to engage in stealing from people, for how would he feel if we permitted all people to steal from him, given the fact that he is a single individual while they are a massive group?

When Allah *Glorified is He* restricts your gaze from extending to that which He has forbidden you from, you should not say, 'He has unduly constrained me', for He has commanded others to lower their gaze from things which are private to you, and these others are more numerous than you are. Hence, the Divine Law is in your interest in the first place. However, if you want to transgress against the honour of people, then permit them to do the same to you!

In the same connection, once a young man came to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and complained of his inability to endure his sexual impulse and wanted permission for himself to fornicate—in Allah do we seek refuge from such an act. Prophet Muhammad wished to teach him a lesson that would turn him away from this offense. So what did he tell him? He said: 'O brother of the Arabs! Would you wish this for your mother? Would you wish this for your sister? Would you wish this for your wife?' Each time the young man responded, 'No, O, Messenger of Allah, may I be sacrificed for you.' Now, you can imagine what would afflict any one of us if he heard a mention of his mother, his sister, or his wife in such a context. Then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to the young man after shaking him up with this rigorous jolt, 'Likewise, people would not wish this for their mothers, wives, sisters or daughters.' Thereupon the young man said, 'By Allah, my soul has never thought of doing anything of this sort except that I called to mind my mother, my wife, my sister and my daughter.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad and At-Tabarani on the authority of Abu Umama Allah be pleased with him. The same Hadith mentions that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him made a supplication for him, saying, 'O Allah, forgive for him his sin and purify his heart and safeguard his sexual organ. Thereafter, the youth never again glanced at anything.'* See Ahmad, *Musnad*, 5/256, 257; At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir*, 8/190, 215.

Hence, the mind or intellect is the measuring scale, and it is that which affects equilibrium and makes judgemental comparisons between things. The same is true when it occurs in the usage of the Arabic word *An-Nuha* and *Al-Lub*, which also refer to the mind. The first word relates to the act of forbidding from doing something, whereas the second signifies the inner truth of something and its core. All of these connote not being superficial in thought, letting it run away from you hither and thither.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

﴿١٢٩﴾ وَلَوْلَا كَلِمَةٌ سَبَقَتْ مِنْ رَبِّكَ لَكَانَ لِزَامًا وَأَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى

**If it were not for a preordained Word from your Lord
[Prophet], they would already have been destroyed.
Their time has been set [129] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 129)**

In spite of all this discourse about the signs of Allah *the Almighty* regarding those who rejected messengers and the harsh punishment that befell them, the disbelievers of Mecca passed by them without taking an example from them, being deterred or even fearing that their end might be like that of those who came before them. Perhaps they said, ‘Here we are. We see no chastisement befalling upon us: no thunderbolt, no metamorphosis, and no raging wind. So, what are you, Muhammad, threatening us with?’

Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* clarifies this issue for them, saying, ‘Nothing prevents Us from doing to you what We did to the rejecters of the messengers before you and nothing hinders Us from subduing you and destroying you, except for one thing, which is the preordained Word issued by Allah.’ In this regard, He *the Most High* says: ‘If it were not for a preordained Word from your Lord [O, Prophet], they would already have been destroyed. Their time has been set,’ (*Ta Ha*: 129).

Thus, what is this Decree or the Word that has already gone forth from Allah and which has held punishment back from them? The intended meaning of this Word is quite clear in Allah’s saying to Prophet Muhammad: ‘But Allah was not going to chastise them while you were amongst them, nor is Allah going to chastise them while yet they ask for forgiveness.’ (*al-Anfal*: 33) Hence, this Ordinance which has been previously decreed by Allah *the Almighty* is

what withheld His punishment from disbelievers. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* elucidates this issue further by saying: ‘No, but I hope that Allah will let them beget children who will solely worship Him *the Almighty* and will worship none besides Him.’⁽¹⁾

Now, someone may say, ‘Allah threatens those who reject Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with sending down upon them what befell the deniers from among the earlier peoples, and yet, the disbelievers of Mecca rejected Prophet Muhammad without anything happening to them.’ To this, we reply: ‘This is because they have two guarantees of safety from punishment: the Decree which went forth and the preordained term for death set by Allah *the Almighty*. Every one of us has his stated term for death.’

As for Allah’s saying, ‘...they would already have been destroyed...’ (*Ta Ha*: 129), it means that if it were not for Allah’s preordained Word, it would have been necessarily incumbent that they be overcome with what overcame the previous peoples.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَصْبِرْ عَلَىٰ مَا يَقُولُونَ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِ رَبِّكَ قَبْلَ طُلُوعِ الشَّمْسِ وَقَبْلَ
عُرُوبِهَا وَمِنَ اللَّيْلِ فَسَبِّحْ وَأَطْرَافَ النَّهَارِ لَعَلَّكَ تَرْضَىٰ ﴿١٣٠﴾

**So [Prophet] be patient with what they say – celebrate the
praise of your Lord, before the rising and setting of the sun,
celebrate His praise during the night, and at the beginning
and end of the day, so that you may find contentment [130]
(The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 130)**

As long as the people of Mecca are rejecting Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon them* while they are secure from the Divine punishment in this world, then they will necessarily intensify their denial and persist in their contentious obstinacy towards him. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* turns to another aspect and grants Prophet Muhammad the required immunity to confront this situation by saying: ‘So, [O, Prophet] be patient with what they

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of 'A'isha Allah be pleased with her. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith No. 3231, 7389; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1795.*

say...’ (*Ta Ha*: 130). This is because he will receive a reward corresponding to what he endures with patience.

Patience may be easy and facile in some situations, and it may be oppressive and difficult, necessitating strenuous effort in others. Thus, at times Allah *the Almighty* says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Bear with patience’, and at other times, He says, ‘Persevere in patience.’

Thus, what are the statements which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* must bear with patience? They are their calling him a sorcerer, a poet, possessed by the jinns or by madness and a soothsayer. Likewise, he must bear their calling the Quran ‘confused dreams’ and the ‘fables of earlier peoples’. So, bear all of this with patience, O, Prophet Muhammad, for every statement they utter is self-refuted.

As regards their calling Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a sorcerer, who are the ones upon whom he works his sorcery? Did he enchant the believers with it? If this were the case, then why did he not also enchant the disbelievers and thereby conclude the matter? Hence, their abiding in headstrong obstinacy and disbelief in him is a proof of his innocence of this charge.

As for their calling him a poet, how is this possible while they are a people whose main productive activity lies in words, the arts of oratory, poetry, and prose? How, then, could they be unaware of the style of the Quran? Is the Quran like poetry which is metred and rhymed? If this accusation had been made by another people, it would have been acceptable. However, that it should come from you, O, people who establish marketplaces and exhibitions for speech—like exhibitions for industries today—this is not acceptable.

We have previously said that when you read an article, for example, and you come across a verse of poetry; you feel it, and your ears sense that you have shifted from prose to poetry, or from poetry to prose. Take, for example, the words of Ibn Zaydun⁽¹⁾: ‘This is reproach whose consequences are

(1) This is Ahmad Ibn ‘Abdullah ibn Ghalib ibn Zaydun Al-Makhzumi Al-Andalusi, Abu Al-Walid. He was a minister, writer, and poet of the inhabitants of Cordoba. He was born in 394 AH. He devoted himself to the service of Ibn Jahwar (one of the kings in Andalusia) and became an ambassador between him and Andalusia kingdoms, and all were much impressed with him. He has recorded correspondence and a collection of poetry. He died in 463 AH at the age of 69. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-A‘lam*, 1/158.

praiseworthy, and this repugnant offense is an adverse inundation which then clears up. It shall not cause me to have doubts about my liege lord if his flow is delayed. So, although the overflowing of the well buckets is slowed, I will fill them, and although the clouds be lumbering in their movement, I will cause them to gather. With today there is a tomorrow, and for every period of postponement, there is a preordained decree. There is blame in seeking to ensnare it, but no blame in being heedless of it.

For if the deed which caused offense was only one

Then his deeds which brought delight numbered in the thousands.'

Your ears immediately sense that you have shifted from prose to poetry.

However, this is not the case with the Quran. Let us offer an example of Allah's saying: 'And women in the city said, "The chief's wife seeks her slave to yield himself (to her). Surely, he has affected her deeply with (his) love. Most certainly, we see her in manifest error." So, when she heard of their sly talk she sent for them and prepared for them a repast gave each of them a knife and said [to Yusuf (Joseph)], "Come forth to them." So, when they saw him, they deemed him great cut their hands (in amazement) and said, "Remote is Allah (from imperfection). This is not a mortal. This is but a noble angel." She said, "This is he with respect to whom you blamed me, and certainly, I sought his yielding himself (to me), but he abstained' (*Yusuf*: 30-32).

Did you sense a shift in style from prose to poetry, or from poetry to prose? Yet, if you analysed the metre of the Arabic origin translated in this verse as 'This is he with respect to whom you blamed me...' (*Yusuf*: 32), you would discover that it comprises poetic metre.

Similar is the case in Allah's saying: 'Inform My servants that I am the Forgiving, the Merciful.' (*al-Hijr*: 49) If you wanted to turn it into a poetic couplet, it would say:

Tell My servants that I — I alone

Am truly forgiving and a true dispenser of mercy

Nevertheless, you read this verse in its context and do not feel that it is poetry because the style is in a category of its own. This is a manifestation of the magnificence of the Quran; it is a unique speech not produced by human beings.

As for accusing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of being ‘possessed by madness’, a mad person does not know what he is doing and is not held accountable for his actions. We cannot accuse him of anything, nor call him ‘liar’ or ‘shameless’, for example, because his means of discernment is out of order. There is no order or harmony in his comportment, for he might laugh in your face and then strike you at the same time, and he may give you something and then spit in your face.

The mad person has no moral character. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as follows: ‘Noon. I swear by the pen and what the angels write. By the grace of your Lord, you are not mad. And most certainly, you shall have a reward never to be cut off. And most certainly, you conform (yourself) to sublime morality.’ (*al-Qalam*: 1-4)

The moral character is the deeply ingrained, natural disposition to righteousness. So, how could Prophet Muhammad be insane when he possesses a sublime moral character? Moreover, have you witnessed on his part anything which madmen are prone to do? With respect to their statement that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* fabricated this Quran, how is this conceivable when before the beginning of his prophetic mission you never heard poetry or oration from him, nor did he previously utter anything similar to the Quran? How could he invent the like of this inimitable style when he does not possess the craft of artful speech? Furthermore, if Prophet Muhammad had indeed fabricated the Quran, then why do you not fabricate the like of it in order to refute his claim? In this respect, Allah *the Almighty* challenges them by saying: ‘...Say: "Then, bring a chapter like this..."’ (*Yunus*: 38). In such a manner, their very own statements stand as evidence of their lying and their pretentious accusations with regarding Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...Celebrate the praise of your Lord before the rising and setting of the sun.’ (*Ta Ha*: 130) Glorification of Allah *the Almighty* signifies exalting Him. This is an Attribute of Allah that existed even before He created anyone to glorify and exalt Him. Hence, He says at the beginning of the chapter of *al-Isra*: ‘Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night...’ (*al-Isra*: 1). This is due to the Night Journey going against physical laws. Thus, it is as if said, ‘Allah’s

Actions are infinitely exalted above your actions.’ Therefore, glorifying Allah *the Almighty* means that exaltation is firmly and permanently established for Him, even if there is no one who exalts Him. Then, when Allah *the Almighty* created the universe, the heavens, the earth and all that they contain glorified Him. So, if glorification was firmly established for Allah *the Almighty* even before there existed any one to glorify Him, and then His initial creation glorified Him—and continue to glorify Him—then, you, too, should glorify the Name of your Supreme Lord. That is to say, Exalt Him in His Essence, His Attributes, His Actions, and His Words far above anything you perceive in the created beings.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...the praise of your Lord...’ (*Ta Ha*: 130). Amongst the inevitable aspects of mankind is that they are different in inclinations, objectives and interests. They dispute with one another and wage war on one another over fleeting things. Amongst them are the wrongdoer and the wronged person, the strong and the weak. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary that there is One in Whom nothing of these attributes is present in order to establish the law and the perfectly straight measuring standard which regulate the life of mankind. This exalted Attribute of bearing no resemblance to created beings and not having any defects is a blessing which we should thank and praise Allah *the Almighty* for its existence in Him. We should praise Him that there is nothing like Him, for this is what renders the entire universe willingly obedient. However, if there were anything like Him, then perhaps it would refuse to obey the command ‘Be!’ Thus, it is.

Moreover, glorification and exaltation mean that the criteria which regulate the world are not the criteria of the world itself; rather, they are more suitable and stronger, and this is your own advantage. Thus, when you glorify Allah *the Exalted* you should remember that glorification is a blessing. So, you should praise Allah *the Almighty* that there is nothing like Him and glorify Him with a glorification accompanied by praise to Him because His Exaltation only results in blessed favour upon those He created. Therefore, this blessing merits that you praise Allah *the Most High* for it.

An example for this is lord of a family, the wise elder man who is true to his word, and equitable in his dealings with its members, along with being held

in high esteem by all of them. You find that they all praise Allah *the Exalted* for his existence amongst them since he preserves the equilibrium of the family and maintains order between its members. Do we not say from proverbs, ‘The one who has no chief let him purchase one’? This is true even if this dominant chief is haughty because his superciliousness is in the interest of the members of his family inasmuch as each one of them will restrict himself to his bounds.

For this reason, we find among Allah’s Names the Most High and the Sublime. This Attribute—while it is detested between men because it is unjustifiable—is desirable for Allah *the Almighty* because it renders everyone as an inferior slave to Him. Thus, Allah’s Sublimeness and Highness are based on reality, for He says: ‘His command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it: "Be", so it is.’ (*Ya Sin*: 82) In summary, nothing can maintain harmony in the universe except a Power different from that of mankind.

There follows Allah’s saying: ‘...before the rising and setting of the sun. Celebrate His praise during the night and at the beginning and end of the day, so that you may find contentment.’ (*Ta Ha*: 130) This means that you, O, Prophet Muhammad, should glorify Allah *the Almighty* continuously and incessantly, just as His Blessings upon you are incessant and do not come to an end. In fact, every movement you make is a blessing; so sleeping, awakening, eating, drinking, seeing, hearing and all your motions are blessings meriting grateful praise. Each of these blessings embodies additional blessings.

Take for example the movement of the hand that you strike with and examine just how lithely compliant and responsive it is, doing as you wish without any thinking on your part. Your fingers contract and grasp things without your sensing of the movement of the muscles and their harmony. A person may not take notice of Allah’s Power in the movement of his hand until when it is stricken with paralysis—may Allah preserve us from this. At such a moment, he realises that its movements are based on complex procedures which no one has the power to facilitate except the Creator *Glorified is He*. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* informs us about the time of glorification, rendering it at all times: ‘...before the rising and setting of the sun. Celebrate His praise during the night and at the beginning and end of the day...’ (*Ta Ha*: 130). One should celebrate Allah’s Praise to the best of his ability.

Glorifying Allah *the Almighty* during the night means continuing to do so throughout the parts of the entire night. However, does this mean that a person should persist in doing nothing but glorifying Allah?

Regarding a period of time, dialecticians say that is not positively defined. Thus, you can divide the night into hours and glorify Allah *the Exalted* every hour, or you can ascend higher and glorify Him every minute, or you can ascend even higher and glorify Him every second. This depends on the stations of the one who is glorifying and praising as well as his spiritual state. Amongst the servants of Allah are those who never stop glorifying Him for a single moment. You will find such a worshipper glorifying Allah *the Almighty* in all his movements because he knows that he is not carrying out this act of worship by his own self as proven by the fact that the ability to undertake it can be taken away from him at any time.

Hence, the periods of time vary with the differences of spiritual stations and states. Surely, you can see that in the framework of a single system of measurement people measure in metres, then by centimetres and then by millimetres. In the measurement of time, the Japanese have developed instruments which can determine a fraction of seven thousandth parts of a second.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'and at the beginning and end of the day' (*Ta Ha*: 130). This is in order to encompass all of time, its night and its day, and all spiritual stations and states. For this reason, some masters of spiritual knowledge say in their words of counsel, in order to safeguard the well-being of the proceeding of life, 'Render your mindfulness to One Who never ceases to see you', for this is the One Who merits your mindfulness. A person should pay heed to this matter and not allow his mindfulness to be rendered to someone who neglects and abandons him or becomes heedless of him during sleep.

The words of counsel continue, 'Likewise, render your thanks to One Whose blessings are unceasingly bestowed upon you.' So, when you drink a glass of water, then you should say, 'Praise be to Allah that He quenched my thirst.' Then, as soon as you feel its invigorating effect in yourself, you should say, 'Praise be to Allah.' Then, when you discharge it as sweat or urine, you should say, 'Praise be to Allah.' This is how you ceaselessly praise Allah *the Exalted* and express your gratitude to Him.

The words of counsel continue as follows, ‘Plus, render your obedience to the One Whom you cannot do without’, for as long as you cannot dispense with Him, then He is most worthy of your obedience. Finally, ‘And render your humble submissiveness to One from Whose dominion and authority you cannot escape’, for otherwise, where could you go?

Back to the verse in question; we may ask here, ‘Why does Allah *the Almighty* render the time of glorification at night unrestricted, whereas He defines it during the day, saying: "and at the beginning and end of the day"? (*Ta Ha*: 130) It is said that the day is normally the domain of work and endeavour; thus, your glorification may preoccupy you to the detriment of your work. Moreover, our Lord commanded us to seek the means of sustenance in the earth and to participate in the activities of life. In fact, work assists you in glorification and obedience and helps you to respond to the call to prayer.

Surely, you can find this evident by reading Allah’s saying in the chapter of *al-Jumu’a*: ‘O, you who believe, when the call is made for prayer on Friday, then hasten to the remembrance of Allah and leave off trading; that is better for you if you only knew. But when the prayer has ended, then disperse abroad in the land and seek of Allah’s grace and remember Allah much, so that you may be successful.’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 9-10)

The reason for this is that activities of life help you in accomplishing the obligations that Allah *the Exalted* has prescribed for you. Let us offer an example to clarify this point. In order to pray, you need something to cover your nakedness. So, consider the cloth with which you veil your private parts; how many hands have contributed to its making? How many activities of life have combined together to produce it in this form?

However, at night, when you are at rest, it is possible for you to devote yourself wholly to the glorification of Allah *the Almighty* to the extent of any time. Allah’s saying, ‘...before the rising and setting of the sun. Celebrate His praise during the night and at the beginning and end of the day...’ (*Ta Ha*: 130) calls for our attention, for which rising and which setting is meant? Which day and to which night is being referred? Is it for Egypt, Algeria, India, or Japan? In fact, it constitutes phenomena which are multiple and extensive across the extent of time and space with no end. This is because the sun is at all times both rising

and setting. Now, this is an indication of the fact that the invocation and the glorification of Allah *the Almighty* are continual and never cease.

Afterwards, Allah *the Most High* mentions the objective of glorification by saying: '...so that you may find contentment.' (*Ta Ha*: 130) We should take note that Allah *Glorified is He* encourages us to do devotional deeds by stressing their beneficial nature for us. Hence, He does not say, 'So that I might be content.' Instead, He says: '...so that you may find contentment.' (*Ta Ha*: 130) Thus, it is as if the matter is beneficial to you and in your interest.

To find contentment means that you attain to what you hope for from amongst what you love or desire. Now, a person is not happy or content except if he reaches that which he desires and realises that for which he hopes.

Let us give an example to further illustrate this point. When you ask your companion if he is happy now and he responds in an ambiguous way, this implies that he has not yet reached the stage of contentment. However, if what he desires is realised, then he will respond to the same question by saying, 'Yes, I am happy. Praise be to Allah.' Furthermore, if you granted him a favour which exceeds what he expected of you, he embraces you and says, 'May our Lord prolong your life. May Allah reward you benevolently?'

Hence, achieving happiness and contentment of a human being has stages. It is for this reason that Allah *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith, 'Allah will say to the people of paradise, "O, Dwellers of Paradise," and they would say in response, "At thy service and pleasure, our Lord. Goodness is in Your Hand." He (the Lord) would say, "Are you well pleased now?" They would say, "Why should we not be pleased, O, Lord, when you have given us what You has not given to any of Your created beings?" He would, however, say, "May I not give you (something) even more excellent than that?" Then, they would say, "O, Lord, what thing can be more excellent than this?" Thus, He would say, "I shall cause My pleasure to alight upon you, and I shall never be displeased with you afterwards."⁽¹⁾

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Sa'd Al-Khudri Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 7518; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 302.*

Thus, this is contentment at its highest levels. The goal of glorification which your Lord charged you with is, hence, that you find contentment yourself and that it results to be beneficial for you. Yet, in any case, Allah *Glorified is He* is glorified before He created anything of the entire universe. Therefore, our glorification does not augment His Dominion in the slightest way. However, Allah *the Almighty* causes you to find the perfect contentment when you please Him.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says⁽¹⁾:

وَلَا تُمَدَّنْ عَيْنَيْكَ إِلَىٰ مَا مَتَّعْنَا بِهِ أَزْوَاجًا مِنْهُمْ زَهْرَةَ الْحَيَاةِ
الدُّنْيَا لِنَفْتِنَهُمْ فِيهِ وَرِزْقُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَىٰ

And do not gaze longingly at what We have given some of them to enjoy, the finery of this present life: We test them through this, but the provision of your Lord is better and more lasting [131] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 131)

After Allah *Glorified is He* commands Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying, ‘So, [O, Prophet] be patient with what they say...’ (*Ta Ha*: 130), He puts him on his guard against seeing what the haughty oppressors and obstinate opponents have as blessings towards which he may turn his eyes. Gazing longingly implies that you do not restrict yourself to

(1) In His book, *Al-Wahidi* narrates a Hadith on the authority of Abu Rafi‘, the bondsman Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that a guest took up residence with Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so he summoned me and sent me to a man of the Jews who sold foodstuffs. I told him, ‘Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says to you: A guest has settled with us, but we lack some of what is suitable for him, so sell me such-and-such an amount of flour, or lend it to me until the new moon of the month of Rajab.’ To which the Jew responded, ‘I will not sell or lend to him except on the basis of a collateral deposit.’ Abu Rafi‘ continued, ‘So I returned to [The Prophet] and informed him, whereupon he said: ‘By Allah, I am trustworthy with regard to heaven and trustworthy with regard to the earth, and if he agreed to sell to me or lend to me, I would fulfill my obligation to him. Take this armour to him [as a collateral deposit].’ This verse was then revealed consoling him for [what he was lacking in] this world. As-Suyuti also cites this narration attributing it to Ibn Abu Shayba, Al-Bazar, Ibn Abu Hatim, Ibn Mardawayh and Ibn Jarir. However, in his book, *Al-Qurtubi* says, ‘Ibn ‘Atiya said: This is objectionable as a causal context for the revelation of the verse in question because the chapter itself was revealed in Mecca, and the story mentioned occurred in Medina towards the very end of the life of Prophet Muhammad since he died while his armour was still being held as a collateral deposit with the Jew in this story which was mentioned.’ See *Al-Wahidi*, *Asbab An-Nuzul*, p. 174; *As-Suyuti*, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/612; and *Al-Qurtubi*, *Jame‘ Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4438.

merely looking with the extent of the eye's normal capacity; rather, you direct it in an expanded way in order for you to see more than what is appropriate. In this sense, gazing longingly always follows the preoccupation of the soul with a blessing leading to the eye's yearning to stare at it. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying to Prophet Muhammad, 'Do not let your soul be engrossed with that which they enjoy of blessings because these are part of the splendour of this world which rapidly perishes.'

Concerning Allah's saying: '...what We have given some of them to enjoy...' (*Ta Ha*: 131), it contains an Arabic word that literally means pairs or couples, but in this verse, it does not refer to a man and a woman. Instead, it refers to the categories of things that are paired together. Relevant to this is Allah's saying: '...And We have appointed for them comrades so they have made fair-seeming to them what is before them and what is behind them...' (*Fussilat*: 25).

Thus, everyone has a devil that accompanies him constantly and does not part from him, and this is the intended comradeship which is meant in the verse in question. Similarly, pertinent to this issue is Allah's saying: 'a speaker from amongst them shall say, "Surely, I had a comrade of mine."' (*as-Saffat*: 51)

The word 'finery' is an indication of its rapid ending and a short life. Here, it refers to the blooming radiance of this worldly life which is called the 'lowest life'. What description could reflect its insignificance better than the latter term? Allah *the Almighty* has given them of the enjoyments of this transient worldly life, but they set about being boastful about it. Yet it is only a temptation and a test, a fact which is clear in His saying: 'We test them through this...' (*Ta Ha*: 131).

Thus, we must take into account that testing can be by means of good just as it can be by means of bad, a point which is clearly manifested in Allah's saying: '...and We try you by evil and good by way of probation...' (*al-Anbiya*': 35). This is also evident in the following two verses in which He *the Almighty* says: 'And as for man, when his Lord tries him, then treats him with honour and makes him lead an easy life; he says, "My Lord honours me."' (*al-Fajr*: 15) Hence, the person expresses thanks for this grace as coming from Allah *the Exalted*. Then, there follows: 'But when He tries him (differently), then straitens for him his means of subsistence, he says, "My Lord has disgraced me."' (*al-Fajr*: 16) At this point, Allah *Glorified is He*

corrects this idea for them by saying, ‘Both of you are liars in this manner of discourse, for being the beneficiary of His Favour is not evidence of His honouring, nor is its removal evidence of His disgracing. Hence, afterwards, He says: ‘Nay, but you do not honour the orphan, nor do you urge one another to feed the poor. And you eat away the heritage, devouring (everything).’ (*al-Fajr*: 17-19) So imagine that Allah *the Almighty* has given you blessing, and you do not give thanks for it or observe its due right in terms of charity, then where is the honouring aspect of it?

Back to the verse under study; Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...but the provision of your Lord is better and more lasting.’ (*Ta Ha*: 131) This means that you, O, Prophet Muhammad, should not preoccupy your mind with what Allah *the Almighty* has granted them since He will grant you something greater than that. The blessing of your Lord is superior to this fleeting favour and is more enduring and eternal. This is because it is continual and ceaseless where you do not lose it, nor does it leave you. However, as for these people, the favour they enjoy is temporary and will pass them by through poverty, or they will pass it by themselves through death.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأْمُرْ أَهْلَكَ بِالصَّلَاةِ وَاصْطَبِرْ عَلَيْهَا لَا نَسْأَلُكَ رِزْقًا
نَحْنُ نَرْزُقُكَ وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلتَّقْوَى ﴿١٣٢﴾

**Order your people to pray, and pray steadfastly
yourself. We are not asking you to give Us provision;
We provide for you, and the rewards of the Hereafter
belong to the devout [132] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 132)**

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* provides us with the Way of Guidance for reforming society and assuring its harmony. It begins with the first unit of the society, which is the head of the family. It is incumbent upon him to rectify himself first and before anything or anyone else. Then he should pay attention to the second unit which is the group immediately around him and the closest people to him, namely his kinfolk and family. He is the pivotal axis of the family, so when he rectifies himself, then he is obligated to rectify the people who have intimate contact with him.

As for Allah's saying, 'Order your people to pray...' (*Ta Ha*: 132), it is meant to set upright the foremost unit in the structure of the universe, namely the head of the family. Thus, if he is firmly established in righteous piety and orders his immediate kin to observe prayer, the entire universe becomes upright, and the well-being of all people is achieved.

The issue here is not limited to simply issuing an order, for the responsibility does not end there. Rather, he should '...pray steadfastly...' (*Ta Ha*: 132) because prayer comprises strenuous effort requiring patient perseverance. This is due to the fact that prayer takes time from the proceeding of life which is the cause of achieving good and being beneficial for you. Hence, it is necessary to persevere in observing it.

There is a difference between the imperative verbs 'be patient' and 'be steadfast' which is employed in the verse in question. The former is a normal action, whereas the second implies exaggeration or intensity; in other words, you should deliberately exaggerate in being patient.

One of the manifestations of this perseverance is that you strive to observe prayer in front of your children in order to imbue their minds with the importance of prayer. For instance, you might enter your house and find food has been prepared, so you tell your children, 'Wait for me for a few minutes so that I can pray.' Thus, your children's attention will be drawn to the fact that prayer is even more important than eating, thereby implanting in their souls the reverential awe for the prescribed religious duties and respect for the obligatory nature of prayer. Furthermore, you should also strive to give preference to prayer over any other activity, no matter what it may be.

In the same respect, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* used to pray at night what He willed for him to pray until the call for the dawn prayer was cried out. Then, he would wake up his family, and if they refused, he would sprinkle water on their faces⁽¹⁾ since prayer is better than sleep. While sleep at such a time comprises rest for the body, yet prayer is superior and

(1) *Ibn Majah narrates on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him, that Prophet Muhammad said: 'May Allah show mercy to a man who gets up during the night and offers prayer, awakens his wife to pray, and if she refuses, he sprinkles water on her face (to make her get up). May Allah show mercy to a woman who gets up during the night and offers prayer, awakens her husband for the same purpose, and if he refuses, she sprinkles water on his face.'* See *Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 1336.*

greater, for it suffices that you become in the presence of Allah *the Almighty* when you offer it.

Imagine that the head of a household is absent from it for a month or a year, and then suddenly they cry out, ‘Your father has come!’ At that time, you would see everyone rushing towards him. Likewise, when Allah *the Most High* summons you, then you should not fail to accept His Invitation. Rather, you should rush towards Him and hasten to respond to His Call. Imagine that your companion is calling you, but you do not respond to him. I believe this would be something unacceptable and would not be met with your companion’s contentment.

Hence, it is imperative that you accustom your children to respect the call to prayer. As soon as they hear its first phrase, they should respond to the summons, not giving preference to anything over it. After all Allah *the Almighty* does not bless the activity which diverts you from the call ‘Allah is the Greatest’, for in this case, you have been distracted by blessings from the Bestower of Blessings.

Therefore, if you wish to become aware of the best elements of society, then watch for their precedence in responding to the call of prayer. Further, if you wish to know who is the highest in society in terms of the spiritual station, then you should observe who is the last to exit the mosque, Contrary to this is the one who arrives at the end of prayer and as soon as the formal prayer has ended, he rushes to leave.

It is related that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* criticised one of his companions for his haste in leaving the mosque after the final greeting of the prayer. He, therefore, made a point of calling him on one of these occasions, saying to him, ‘Are you aiming to abstain from our company?’ Now, is there anyone who would intentionally abstain from seeing Prophet Muhammad and sitting with him? Whereupon the man said, ‘No, Messenger of Allah, I have a wife at home who is waiting for this robe of mine in order to pray in it.’ So, Prophet Muhammad prayed for him, and the man left to go to his wife. When he got to her, she said to him, ‘You have delayed by such-and-such a number of glorifications.’ Thereupon, he told her, ‘I was stopped by the Messenger of Allah and such-and-such happened.’ Whereupon she told him, ‘Are you complaining about your Lord to Muhammad?’

Returning to the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘We are not asking you to give Us provision; We provide for you...’ (*Ta Ha*: 132). Hence, is it the provision that is distracting you from the presence of your Lord? If this were the case, then He *the Almighty* says: ‘We are not asking you to give Us provision...’ (*Ta Ha*: 132). Regarding the one who is not able to work, it is Allah Who directs towards him a wealthy person to knock on his door and give to him. This is because a rich person’s faith stipulates his charity to the poor, but the faith of a poor person stipulates no condition regarding the wealthy.

It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is giving us an indication of the necessity of looking for poor people and knocking on their doors in order to give them their due right from the wealth of the rich. Hence, you should not wait until the poor humbly asks for his due right in the society of faith.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘We provide for you...’ (*Ta Ha*: 132), it means that He does not ask you to furnish Him with sustenance and then abandon you; rather, He does not ask anything of you and then provides for you. So, you should rest assured regarding this issue.

The verse concludes with Allah’s saying: ‘...and the rewards of the Hereafter belong to the devout.’ (*Ta Ha*: 132) This is because if the circumstances of life become straitened for you, you can take refuge in Allah *the Almighty*. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to do get up and pray when something distressed him. The critical development of matters comes when we ourselves are bereft of the causal factors bestowed by Allah *the Almighty*. Hence, when you are deprived of means and the situation gets straitened, there remains nothing for you to do but to have recourse to the Prime Causer *Glorified is He* a fact which is clear in His saying: ‘...and whoever is careful of (his duty to) Allah, He will make for him an outlet, and give him sustenance from whence he thinks not...’ (*at-Talaq*: 2-3).

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا يَأْتِينَا بِآيَةٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِ ؕ أَوَلَمْ تَأْتِهِم بَيِّنَةٌ مَّا فِي الصُّحُفِ الْأُولَىٰ ﴿١٣٣﴾

The disbelievers say, ‘Why does he not bring us a sign from his Lord?’ Have they not been given clear proof confirming what was in the earlier scriptures? [133] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 133)

We have previously discussed the meaning of the Arabic word translated as ‘it were not for’ in Allah’s saying, ‘If it were not for a preordained Word...’ (*Yunus*: 19), which signifies the restraining of punishment due to the existence of the preordained Word. However, in Allah’s saying here, ‘Why does he not bring us a sign from his Lord?’ (*Ta Ha*: 133) The same Arabic word bears the implication of urging or requesting. The same usage is found in His saying: ‘And wherefore did you not say when you entered your garden, "It is as Allah has pleased ..."' (*al-Kahf*: 39).

It is as if the Quran does not impress or appeal to the disbelievers of Mecca, although they are a people of refined rhetoric, eloquence, and purity of speech. Indeed, the Quran puts them to shame with its eloquence and clarity of expression. So what miraculous sign do they want above and beyond this Quran? Yet, they say, ‘Why does he not bring us a sign from his Lord?’ (*Ta Ha*: 133) asking for a tangible miracle, like that of previous messengers, to serve as proof of Prophet Muhammad’s truthfulness in conveying the Message given to him from Allah *the Almighty*. In this same sense, He says: ‘and they say, "We will by no means believe in you until you cause a fountain to gush forth from the earth for us. Or you should have a garden of palms and grapes in the midst of which you should cause rivers to flow forth, gushing out. Or you should cause the heaven to come down upon us in pieces as you think, or bring Allah and the angels face to face (with us). Or you should have a house of gold, or you should ascend into heaven, and we will not believe in your ascending until you bring down to us a book which we may read." Say: "Glory be to my Lord. Am I aught but a mortal apostle?"' (*al-Isra*’: 90-93) Thus, it is as if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was saying, ‘I have no role in the miraculous signs of Allah *the Almighty* nor do I choose them, but here is the Quran in front of you providing you with reports of what happened with regard to previous people. Therefore, "... ask the followers of the Reminder if you do not know." (*an-Nahl*: 43)

Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'He indeed shall be successful who purifies himself, and magnifies the name of his Lord and prays. Nay! You prefer the life of this world, while the Hereafter is better and more lasting. Most surely, this is in the earlier scriptures, the scriptures of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses).' (*al-A'la*: 14-19) In addition, He says: 'Surely, We have revealed to you as We revealed to Nuh (Noah)...' (*an-Nisa*': 163). For this reason, in the verse under study, He *the Almighty* then says: 'Have they not been given clear proof confirming what was in the earlier scriptures?' (*Ta Ha*: 133) Thus, the Quran came as a comprehensive and a guardian over previous Scriptures. It mentioned all the tangible miracles cited in these Books. However, did these disbelievers witness the miracle of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* curing the blind and lepers? Did they witness the staff of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* or the she-camel of Saleh (Shelah) *peace be upon him*? They only came to realise these miracles when the Quran related them. Afterwards, these miracles became narrative reports of significant events, not witnessed by the eyes. This is because the tangible miracles happen at one time. If someone sees them, then he believes in them, but as for the one who does not see them, they are narrative reports. If the Quran had not narrated them, no one would have believed in them.

However, these people want a tangible miracle to accompany the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which is a universal Message for all time and every place. On the other hand, if his miracle had been of a sensory nature, then it would have been for those who witnessed it only. However, Allah *Glorified is He* willed that his miracle be a permanent one for the extent of time and space. Hence, to the one who believes in the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* we say, 'This is his permanent and everlasting miracle until the Last Hour.'

Therefore, the Quran is a miracle for all generations, and if the miraculous aspects of the Quran had run out during the first generation that witnessed its revelation, then the succeeding generations would have received it without its miraculous inimitability. However, Allah *the Exalted* willed that the miraculous inimitability of the Quran be a secret embodied in it. Every generation discovers its secrets to the extent of their careful reflection and study of it. In this way, the Message remains safeguarded through the miracle.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ أَنَّا أَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ بِعَذَابٍ مِّن قَبْلِهِ لَقَالُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا أَرْسَلْتَ
إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ مِن قَبْلِ أَنْ نَّذَلَ وَنُخْزَىٰ ﴿١٣٤﴾

If We had destroyed them through punishment before this Messenger came, they would have said, ‘Lord, if only You had sent us a messenger, we could have followed Your revelations before we suffered humiliation and disgrace!’ [134] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 134)

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying, ‘I have refuted any excuse you might make. Certainly, if I had annihilated you during a break in the sequence of the prophets, you would have said, "Why did you not keep us alive until a messenger came to us? If a messenger had come to us, we would have believed in him before falling into ignominy and disgrace." Thus, the meaning of the verse is that if Allah *the Almighty* had destroyed them by punishment before the revelation of the Quran, they would have said, ‘Our Lord, if only you had sent a messenger to us, we would have believed in him and would have been rightly guided.’ This is merely an empty statement which they might utter, for as Allah *Glorified is He* says about them: ‘...And if they were sent back, they would certainly go back to that which they are forbidden, and most surely, they are liars.’ (*al-An‘am*: 28) Indeed, it is merely a statement meant to save them from their dubious state.

In Allah’s saying, ‘...before we suffered humiliation and disgrace!’ (*Ta Ha*: 134) Humiliation refers to what befalls a living person due to what he has done, rendering him humble and submissive after having been high and haughty. Humiliation occurs above all through defeat, but being taken captive is even more humiliating than defeat since it is possible to be defeated and then you escape. More humiliating than either of these is being killed. Hence, humiliation occurs in this worldly life before those who witnessed it and who were contemporaneous to their being submissive after being proud and exalted. As for ‘disgrace’, it means to be afflicted by shame. This signifies the disappointed waning of the soul after its having been elevated. Related to this is the expression, ‘You are disappointed’ which means you were anticipating something, but you found its opposite.

Relevant to this usage is Allah’s saying: ‘Our Lord! And grant us what You have promised us by Your messengers and disgrace us not on the Day of Resurrection...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 194). So, while humiliation is hastened for them in this world, disgrace is delayed until the Hereafter. In this way, it will be their degrading

shame for all to see—as one says, ‘A humiliating disgrace with sounding bells’—since their disgrace will be witnesses by everyone attendant at the Day of Judgment.

This word translated in this verse as 'disgrace' carries with it memories of an amusing situation during the days when we were young, memorising the Quran under the tutelage of his eminence Sheikh Hasan Zaghlul *upon whom be Allah's Mercy*. He was a blind man, and we used to take advantage of his debilitated condition, eluding him and escaping from correcting our recitation of the part of the Quran which we were memorising. Now, the one who attempts to memorise it on his own just from the printed copy of the Quran is susceptible to error. This is what actually happened in the case of a colleague of ours whose name was Sheikh Mohammed Hasan ‘Abd Al-Bari. It happened that the principal of the school appeared unexpectedly, and he wanted to hear us recite. Sheikh ‘Abd Al-Bari had not corrected his recitation of the part from which he was going to recite, and so he recited: ‘Our Lord, surely whomsoever You make enter the fire, him You has indeed brought to disgrace...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 192). However, instead of pronouncing the verb of the final phrase as *Akhzata*, he recited it as *Akhrayta*. At this the Sheikh *may Allah be Merciful to him* laughed for a long time, and then said, ‘O, my son, the meaning is correct, but the authoritative narration is not like that.’

Afterwards, we used to make use of it as a way of embarrassing Sheikh ‘Abd Al-Bari, so whoever wanted to make him angry would say. ‘Surely, whomsoever You make enter the fire...’, and then be silent! However, Allah *the Most High* decreed that each one of us would face a similar situation which could be held against him. In my case, I made a mistake when I recited, before correcting my recitation, from the beginning of chapter *ash-Shu'ara* which is made up of the five free-standing letters written in two blocks: *Ha–Him* followed by ‘*Ayn – Sin - Qaf*. I had previously come to know how to pronounce *Ha - Mim*, but I had never come across ‘*Ayn - Sin - Qaf*, and so I recited, ‘*Ha - Mim- ‘Asaqa*’ pronouncing the second block of the discrete letters as a conjoined word. Thereafter, whenever I said, ‘Surely whomsoever You make enter the fire...’ to Sheikh ‘Abd Al-Bari, he would reply, ‘*Ha – Mim*’.

Hence, we said, ‘Exalted be Allah’;

Whoever finds fault one day in something

He will not die until he finds it [in himself].

In summary, the disbelievers' statement, 'Lord, if only You had sent us a messenger, we could have followed Your revelations before we suffered humiliation and disgrace!' (*Ta Ha*: 134) It is a disputation on their part. It is as if they said, 'If You had sent a messenger to us, we would have followed him before being humiliated in this worldly life by defeat, capture or death, and being disgraced in the Hereafter openly for all to see.'

قُلْ كُلٌّ مُتَرَبِّصٌ فَتَرَبَّصُوا فَسَتَعْلَمُونَ مَنْ أَصْحَابُ الصِّرَاطِ السَّوِيِّ وَمَنِ اهْتَدَى ﴿١٣٥﴾

Say [O, Prophet]: 'We are all waiting, so you carry on waiting: you will come to learn who has followed the even path, and been rightly guided' [135] (The Quran, *Ta Ha*: 135)

In the first section of this verse, the word 'waiting', which occurred two times, means to be readied and poised for something to happen to someone else. You say, 'So-and-so is lying in wait for me.' In other words, he is carefully observing me and trailing me, anticipating some lapse or error on my part. Hence, Allah's saying, 'Say [O, Prophet]: "We are all waiting, so you carry on waiting..."' (*Ta Ha*: 135) signifies that each one of the believers and the disbelievers is expectantly watching the other since they are adversaries; each one is anticipating a slip on the part of the other and intently observing to see what will happen to him.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* illustrates the orientations of this expectant waiting on the part of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and on the part of his enemies: 'Say: Do you await for us but one of two most excellent things?' (*at-Tawba*: 52)

It is as if the believers were saying to the disbelievers, 'What are you waiting for us except due to one of two most excellent things: either that we die as martyrs fighting you or that we are victorious over you, causing you to be subjected? Then, whichever anticipated thing happens will be honour for us, either victory or martyrdom, for both of them are most excellent. We also observe you in anticipation that Allah *the Exalted* will afflict you with punishment from Himself or at our hands, for both of them are vile. Now, as long as the situation is as such, then wait in anticipation as you please, and we will observe you expectantly as we wish, for our watching in anticipation over you brings us joy, while your expectant observing of us causes you pain and grieves you.'

Allah's saying 'Say:...' (*Ta Ha*: 135) in this verse means that the following statement, 'We are all waiting,' (*Ta Ha*: 135) is not on the part of Prophet Muhammad, for he does not hold sway over the universe and is not aware of the unseen. It is therefore the Statement of Allah *the Almighty* Who told him, 'Say, O, Muhammad: 'We are all waiting, so you carry on waiting...' (*Ta Ha*: 135).

Hence, it was said on the part of the One Who has control over everything, for nothing evades His Will. However, perhaps if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said it on his part to them, they would say, 'These are but the words of a man who controls nothing of events.' Therefore, you should comprehend it not according to the criteria of human speech but according to the criteria of the One Who holds sway over all human affairs.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...you will come to learn who has followed the even path and been rightly guided.' (*Ta Ha*: 135) When will this occur? At the time the Last Hour arises when the parting of ways takes place, either to Paradise or to Hellfire. At that moment, disbelievers will know who has followed the straight Path: we, the believers, or they. However, that knowledge will not benefit or be of any avail for disbelievers, for it has come too late. The time of reckoning has come, so the time of doing good deeds and redressing mistakes is up. Surely, it is knowledge which cannot lead to good deeds to save you, for the time of deeds has come to an end. In such a way, it will be knowledge which increases their distress, hurting rather than benefitting.

Thus, the word 'path' refers to is the straight, even road, while the word 'even' refers to something straight and level, with neither curvature nor protuberance.

The verse ends with Allah's saying: 'and been rightly guided.' (*Ta Ha*: 135) This is because the even path might exist, but there exists no one to follow it. Hence, the intended meaning is that they will come to know the even path and the one who is guided to it and follows it.

Now, perhaps someone might think that this question of waiting in expectant anticipation may take too long, so Allah *Glorified is He* puts an end to this thought with His saying at the beginning of the next chapter of *al-Anbiya*' as follows: 'There has drawn near to the people their reckoning...' (*al-Anbiya*': 1).

In this manner, the two chapters blend in harmony, and the meaning between the verses forms a continuous chain.

Index

Chapter of *al-Kahf*

Verse 1	7	Verse 42	94
Verse 2	12	Verse 43	95
Verse 3	14	Verse 44	95
Verse 4	14	Verse 45	97
Verse 5	15	Verse 46	99
Verse 6	18	Verse 47	103
Verse 7	18	Verse 48	105
Verse 8	20	Verse 49	106
Verse 9	20	Verse 50	108
Verse 10	25	Verse 51	111
Verse 11	26	Verse 52	112
Verse 12	27	Verse 53	114
Verse 13	28	Verse 54	115
Verse 14	29	Verse 55	117
Verse 15	31	Verse 56	119
Verse 16	32	Verse 57	119
Verse 17	33	Verse 58	121
Verse 18	35	Verse 59	122
Verse 19	36	Verse 60	123
Verse 20	39	Verse 61	127
Verse 21	39	Verse 62	128
Verse 22	41	Verse 63	128
Verse 23	44	Verse 64	129
Verse 24	45	Verse 65	130
Verse 25	45	Verse 66	132
Verse 26	47	Verse 67	134
Verse 27	48	Verse 68	135
Verse 28	49	Verse 69	136
Verse 29	54	Verse 70	136
Verse 30	65	Verse 71	137
Verse 31	67	Verse 72	138
Verse 32	74	Verse 73	138
Verse 33	78	Verse 74	138
Verse 34	80	Verse 75	139
Verse 35	81	Verse 76	139
Verse 36	83	Verse 77	140
Verse 37	83	Verse 78	144
Verse 38	85	Verse 79	145
Verse 39	86	Verse 80	148
Verse 40	91	Verse 81	149
Verse 41	93	Verse 82	150

Verse 83	153	Verse 97	169
Verse 84	159	Verse 98	170
Verse 85	160	Verse 99	171
Verse 86	160	Verse 100	173
Verse 87	162	Verse 101	174
Verse 88	163	Verse 102	176
Verse 89	164	Verse 103	177
Verse 90	164	Verse 104	177
Verse 91	166	Verse 105	179
Verse 92	166	Verse 106	181
Verse 93	166	Verse 107	182
Verse 94	167	Verse 108	184
Verse 95	167	Verse 109	185
Verse 96	168	Verse 110	187
Chapter of <i>Maryam</i>			
Verse 1	193	Verse 30	253
Verse 2	194	Verse 31	254
Verse 3	198	Verse 32	255
Verse 4	201	Verse 33	256
Verse 5	205	Verse 34	257
Verse 6	207	Verse 35	258
Verse 7	207	Verse 36	261
Verse 8	211	Verse 37	262
Verse 9	214	Verse 38	264
Verse 10	216	Verse 39	266
Verse 11	217	Verse 40	269
Verse 12	219	Verse 41	270
Verse 13	221	Verse 42	273
Verse 14	223	Verse 43	277
Verse 15	223	Verse 44	279
Verse 16	224	Verse 45	280
Verse 17	229	Verse 46	281
Verse 18	232	Verse 47	284
Verse 19	233	Verse 48	286
Verse 20	234	Verse 49	290
Verse 21	236	Verse 50	293
Verse 22	240	Verse 51	294
Verse 23	240	Verse 52	300
Verse 24	243	Verse 53	301
Verse 25	244	Verse 54	302
Verse 26	246	Verse 55	305
Verse 27	250	Verse 56	307
Verse 28	251	Verse 57	308
Verse 29	252	Verse 58	308

Verse 59	311	Verse 79	359
Verse 60	314	Verse 80	361
Verse 61	316	Verse 81	361
Verse 62	318	Verse 82	363
Verse 63	321	Verse 83	365
Verse 64	322	Verse 84	370
Verse 65	327	Verse 85	371
Verse 66	331	Verse 86	372
Verse 67	332	Verse 87	373
Verse 68	333	Verse 88	376
Verse 69	333	Verse 89	377
Verse 70	335	Verse 90	377
Verse 71	336	Verse 91	378
Verse 72	340	Verse 92	378
Verse 73	341	Verse 93	379
Verse 74	346	Verse 94	380
Verse 75	353	Verse 95	380
Verse 76	355	Verse 96	381
Verse 77	356	Verse 97	385
Verse 78	357	Verse 98	388
Chapter of <i>Ta Ha</i>			
Verse 1	393	Verse 26	439
Verse 2	395	Verse 27	440
Verse 3	399	Verse 28	440
Verse 4	399	Verse 29	441
Verse 5	401	Verse 30	443
Verse 6	402	Verse 31	445
Verse 7	403	Verse 32	445
Verse 8	405	Verse 33	446
Verse 9	408	Verse 34	446
Verse 10	409	Verse 35	447
Verse 11	411	Verse 36	447
Verse 12	412	Verse 37	447
Verse 13	414	Verse 38	448
Verse 14	419	Verse 39	448
Verse 15	425	Verse 40	453
Verse 16	429	Verse 41	456
Verse 17	430	Verse 42	457
Verse 18	431	Verse 43	458
Verse 19	434	Verse 44	458
Verse 20	434	Verse 45	461
Verse 21	435	Verse 46	462
Verse 22	436	Verse 47	463
Verse 23	437	Verse 48	465
Verse 24	438	Verse 49	465
Verse 25	439	Verse 50	465

Verse 51	470	Verse 94	545
Verse 52	470	Verse 95	546
Verse 53	471	Verse 96	546
Verse 54	475	Verse 97	548
Verse 55	477	Verse 98	552
Verse 56	480	Verse 99	556
Verse 57	481	Verse 100	560
Verse 58	482	Verse 101	561
Verse 59	483	Verse 102	562
Verse 60	485	Verse 103	562
Verse 61	486	Verse 104	564
Verse 62	487	Verse 105	564
Verse 63	487	Verse 106	569
Verse 64	490	Verse 107	571
Verse 65	492	Verse 108	571
Verse 66	492	Verse 109	573
Verse 67	497	Verse 110	574
Verse 68	498	Verse 111	575
Verse 69	499	Verse 112	576
Verse 70	500	Verse 113	578
Verse 71	504	Verse 114	582
Verse 72	507	Verse 115	593
Verse 73	510	Verse 116	597
Verse 74	512	Verse 117	605
Verse 75	513	Verse 118	606
Verse 76	514	Verse 119	606
Verse 77	517	Verse 120	607
Verse 78	520	Verse 121	607
Verse 79	520	Verse 122	609
Verse 80	521	Verse 123	610
Verse 81	523	Verse 124	613
Verse 82	530	Verse 125	615
Verse 83	531	Verse 126	616
Verse 84	532	Verse 127	617
Verse 85	533	Verse 128	620
Verse 86	536	Verse 129	623
Verse 87	537	Verse 130	624
Verse 88	539	Verse 131	633
Verse 89	541	Verse 132	635
Verse 90	542	Verse 133	639
Verse 91	543	Verse 134	641
Verse 92	544	Verse 135	643
Verse 93	544		