

vol. [15]

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

المجلد [15]



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

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the chapter of

al-Anbiya'

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

The chapter of *al-Anbiya*⁽²⁾, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَقْتَرَبَ لِلنَّاسِ حِسَابُهُمْ وَهُمْ فِي غَفْلَةٍ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿١﴾

**Ever closer to people draws their reckoning, while they
turn away, heedless [1] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 1)**

‘Drawing near’ refers to either time or place. If it is a matter of distances, we say, ‘There has drawn near to the people their reckoning,’ that is, its place. If it is a matter of duration, we say, ‘There has drawn near to the people their reckoning’, that is, its time. Thus, ‘near’ means the ever close impending occurrence of an event in the manner of time or of place.

When Allah *Glorified is He* declares in the past tense, ‘There has drawn near to the people...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 1), it indicates that that thing is necessary and is inevitably going to happen. When human beings speak about an approaching thing, they say ‘it draws near,’ not ‘it drew nearer’ because no one says ‘it

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- (1) The Islamic conception of 'Allah' is not the same as the Christian and Jewish conception of 'God'. However, the word 'Allah' does not refer to a tribal god or God of only Muslims, it refers to the Creator of the whole world, the One God (who has no son). We prefer, however, to use 'Allah' rather than 'God' as it has a unique character: it cannot be used to refer to any false gods and does not have any derivatives like goddess, gods, etc. It is a unique word used solely to describe the One God of this universe.
- (2) The chapter of *al-Anbiya* is number 21 in the order of the Quranic chapters. It was revealed in Mecca according to all of the scholars, and it contains 112 verses. It was revealed after the chapter of *Ibrahim* and before the chapter of *al-Mu'minun*. The chapter of *al-Anbiya* is number 72 in the order of the revelation of the Quran. See *As-Suyuti, Al-Itqan Fi 'Ulum Al-Quran*, 27/1.

drew' in this manner of affirmation, except Allah *the Almighty* Who controls all events and has Power over them. Human beings, on the other hand, do not control events and are not able to command something over which they do not have control after making this statement.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Allah's commandment has come; therefore do not desire to hasten it....' (*an-Nahl*: 1) The verb 'has come' indicates that the action has come to pass before He makes this statement. However, it will happen in the future, as He says: '...therefore do not desire to hasten it...' (*an-Nahl*: 1). Actually, you are only told, 'Do not hasten the advent of something' if the event will happen afterwards. How, then, does Allah *the Most High* combine the past, '...has come...' (*an-Nahl*: 1), and the future, '...therefore do not desire to hasten it...'? (*an-Nahl*: 1) Scholars said, 'You are forbidden to command the proceeding of a future thing because you do not even have control over your own self, nor do you control the circumstances of the future, a point which is clear in His saying: 'And do not say of anything, "Surely, I will do it tomorrow" without saying, "if Allah wills"...' (*al-Kahf*: 23-24).

Thus, you must complement your statement with saying, 'If Allah wills', since your saying, 'I will do that tomorrow' is a matter having different components: the subject of the action, which is you; the object of the action, the time, which is tomorrow; the cause which calls you to do this act; and the power which enables you to do it.

Now, you do not have control over any aspect of these components. Perhaps tomorrow will come, and one of these components will have changed and will have intervened between you and what you want. Therefore, it is necessary to free yourself from the probability of lying by saying 'If Allah wills'. In this way, you return the affair to the All-Powerful Who controls all of these components. It is as though your Lord instructs you: 'Do not be a liar.'

Therefore, we find that language accords with the power of the speaker and fixes for him suitable tenses to use. So, if you knew about the occurrence of an action, you would say in the past tense, 'So-and-so came', as the matter finished. However, if you knew that he was betaking himself to come or

getting ready to do so, you would say, 'So-and-so is coming', or in other words, soon; or 'He is going to come', or in other words, after that.

This is what is in conformity with the power of human beings. On the other hand, Allah *Glorified is He* controls the time of the events and their orientations. Everything is subject to His cosmic Command, so when He says for a future thing, '[it] has come...' (*an-Nahl*: 1) or 'There has drawn near to the people...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 1), believe it to be the truth because nothing deviates from His Command. It is He Alone Who has His Commands obeyed with the word 'Be.' If He says it, then the matter is finished.

Therefore, He says in the verse under study, 'There has drawn near to the people their reckoning...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 1) in the form of the past tense, and not 'draws near' or 'will draw nearer' because the speaker is Allah *the Almighty*.

The past tense of the verb 'to draw closer' also occurs in His saying, 'The hour drew nigh and the moon did rend asunder.' (*al-Qamar*: 1) And in His saying: 'Nay! Obey him not and fall in prostration and draw nigh (to Allah).' (*al-'Alaq*: 19)

As for Allah's saying, '... reckoning...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 1), it is a word to which many meanings are applied, for it means that you count something by numbers, adding, subtracting, or multiplying, and then you direct the result for or against you. If it is for you, you are a creditor, and if it is against you, you are a debtor. Or you connect the causative factors with their causes.

There are things which come without reckoning, as Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Surely, Allah gives to whom He pleases without measure.' (*Al-Imran*: 37) However, you are not able to control this case, and Allah *the Exalted* is not asked, 'Give me excess or deficiency.'

As for the reckoning in Allah's saying: 'There has drawn near to the people their reckoning...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 1), it demands the existence of a someone to reckon, namely Allah *the Almighty*, the ones who experience reckoning namely mankind and that by which they are reckoned are the acts and the events which they brought forth in their world. The latter is divided into two categories: the deeds before they were charged with observing the prescribed obligations and deeds they undertook after they were charged with that. Allah *the Most High* does not hold us responsible for that which was

before the age of maturity, which marks the beginning of bearing obligations. Rather, He leaves us being merry, revelling in His Blessings, without being asked about anything. However, after maturity, He obligated us to observe things which bring about good for us and enjoined us to follow the Way of Guidance which ensures our happiness by obeying injunctions and refraining from prohibitions. This entails that we are held responsible for that which we did or did not do.

Therefore, the affair of reckoning is not haphazard as if one group is consigned to the paradise and another group to the Fire. As for His saying in the Qudsi Hadith, 'These are in paradise and I do not care, and these are in the Fire and I do not care',⁽¹⁾ it only refers to His Knowledge of what will happen to them at the time of reckoning, for He knows what they accomplished and what they neglected.

You should not forget that it is Allah *the Almighty* Who judges on the Day of Judgment. If the reckoning is for good, He will multiply the good deeds and repay you for that with favour and excess of such as He wills. If the reckoning is for bad, it will be recompensed with a punishment equal to it, without excess of such, as He says: 'Requital corresponding.' (*an-Naba'*: 26)

Thus, the Reckoner is Allah *the Almighty* Who does not profit from what He imposes upon His creation. It is a manifestation of His Mercy and Blessings towards us that He warned us against the causes of perdition; He did not seize us unaware, nor did He come upon us suddenly and unexpectedly with the reckoning. Rather, He elucidated for us the obligations, made clear to us that which is allowed and that which is forbidden and informed us about the Day of Reckoning so that we prepare ourselves for it and not follow our desires in the proceedings of life. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'So, he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it. And he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it.' (*az-Zalzala*: 7-8)

It is out of His Mercy towards His servants that He made them this promise and taught them this measure while they are still in this worldly life,

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad and 'Abdullah Ibn Ahmad in his additions to the Musnad of his father on the authority of Abu Ad-Darda' Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, 441/6.*

capable of correcting mistakes and renewing repentance and righteous conduct. It is out of His Mercy towards us that He exhorts us with this exhortation and repeats it to us day and night.

Therefore, our Lord did not take us by surprise, and the Resurrection did not come upon us suddenly with its terror. Thus, you should know that 'There has drawn near to the people their reckoning...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 1). As long as the affair is thus, it is up to the human being to assess the extent of the drawing close and when he is going to be taken to the Day of Reckoning. Evidently, you should not think that your life span is like that of the worldly life since Allah *the Almighty* has created it. Rather, your life span and your worldly life correspond to your stay within it, and it is a hypothetical, uncertain stay. This is due to the fact that there exists in creation ones who were allowed to live for a long time and ones who died in their mothers' wombs. Therefore, do not delay your repentance, for you do not know whether the appointed time grants you respite until you repent or descends swiftly upon you so that you are seized in your sin.

Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'There has drawn near to the people their reckoning...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 1) although the Hour is still far away, and between us and the Resurrection is that which no one knows except Allah *the Almighty*. How is that the case? Scholars said that this is because the Reckoning is according to the deeds which have a fixed time during one's life; after one's death, his deeds stop. At that point, the time of his reckoning draws near because he is not aware of the period he spends in the grave. For him, it is as if it was a single hour in a day.

If you say, 'Amongst mankind is he who lives for one hundred years or one hundred and fifty years', we reply, 'This thing is hypothetical. We are not sure about it. Man is liable to die at any moment, whether for one reason or another or without any reason at all.'

We notice in His saying, 'There has drawn near to the people their reckoning...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 1) that He says 'to the people' although the reckoning could be for them or against them. Does the phrase 'to the people' imply that the Reckoning is for their benefit? This is unlikely since He says afterwards: '...while they turn away, heedless.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 1) Thus, the Reckoning is

not for their benefit; rather, it is against them. Then, how is it possible in a context such as this that He says, 'There has drawn near to the people their reckoning...' (*al-Anbiya*: 1) while the affair is against disbelievers?! One would suppose that He would say, 'Closer drew over the people their reckoning.'

We say, 'That is the case if you take the particle "to" as referring to the Reckoning, but here it is referring to the drawing near, not for the Reckoning.' In other words, it drew near to people. As for the Reckoning, it is either for them or against them, but this is a different matter.'

In His saying, '...while they turn away, heedless...' (*al-Anbiya*: 1), the meaning of heedlessness is the disregarding of something which should not be disregarded; rather, it should be remembered and taken into account. Heedlessness is not similar to forgetfulness since heedlessness disregards a matter which one must not disregard and which cannot be ignored, whereas forgetfulness is unintentional.

The heedlessness of the people in this case is about the core of the religion and its summit which is faith in Divinity. If you believe in Allah's Divinity, then heedlessness is pertinent to the rulings of the religion, whose violation entails committing sins. The discourse in this respect is about disbelievers as indicated by His saying afterwards: 'Whenever any fresh revelation comes to them from their Lord...' (*al-Anbiya*: 2). Similar to heedlessness of the Supreme Lord is heedlessness of His Rulings, though there is a distinction between the former heedlessness and the latter.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told his companions about this heedlessness as narrated by Hudhayfa ibn Al-Yaman *Allah be pleased with him* who said, 'The Messenger of Allah related to us two Hadiths, one of which I have seen (happening) while I am waiting for the other. He narrated that honesty was preserved in the roots of the hearts of men (in the beginning) (Honesty in this Hadith refers to true faith in Allah. This means that faith descends and comes to dwell in the heart and we utter the testimony of faith), and then they learnt it (honesty) from the Quran, and then they learnt it from the (Prophet's) *Sunna*. He also told us about its disappearance by saying, "A man will go to sleep whereupon honesty will be taken away from his heart" which means that he becomes heedless and only its trace will remain, resembling the traces of fire (like a cigarette, for example, when it

falls on the skin, burns it and alters its colour). He then will sleep whereupon the remainder of the honesty will also be taken away (from his heart), and its trace will resemble a blister. (Which means from an ember of fire that is raised over the surface of skin, and in fact this blister does not contain anything or it becomes swollen). So there will come a day when people will deal in business with each other, but there will hardly be any trustworthy persons amongst them. Then it will be said that in such-and-such a tribe there is so-and-so who is honest.' This is due to the rarity of honesty. Then the narrator added, ' There came upon me a time when I did not mind dealing with anyone of you, for if he were a Muslim, his religion would prevent him from cheating, [In other words, if he acted dishonestly toward me in anything or an error happened (in) what concerns the sale] and if he were a Christian, his Muslim ruler would prevent him from cheating [In other words, the men charged with supervision of the markets (and they are the people of reckoning), for if they see deception, they stop it and return the property to its rightful owner.], but today I cannot deal except with so-and-so and so-and-so.'⁽¹⁾ Now, if this was the case in their time, what about our time?

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke the truth when he said, 'People are like a hundred camels. You can hardly find one worth riding amongst them.'⁽²⁾ What this means is that despite their great number, you do not find amongst them a camel that will bear you and your luggage.

In another Hadith, he said, 'Temptations will be presented to men's hearts as a reed mat is woven stick by stick',⁽³⁾ that is, as the mat is woven, reed after reed, until it is complete, and then comes to take possession of the heart.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Hudhayfa ibn Al-Yaman Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 7086; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 143.*

(2) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him. In his commentary, Ibn Hajr says, 'The meaning is: you do not find among a hundred camels one riding camel suitable for riding because the one which is suitable for riding should be smooth and readily obedient. Likewise, you do not find one among a hundred men who is suitable for companionship, who supports his friend and is easy-going at his side.' See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6498; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 2547; Ibn Hajr, Fath Al-Bari, 335/11*

(3) *This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad and Muslim on the authority of Hudhayfa ibn Al-Yaman Allah be pleased with him. Its conclusion is as follows: 'Whatsoever a heart becomes =*

So, these people are heedless of both the summit of religion and Divinity, not of the religious obligations because they are not believers in the Lawgiver *Glorified is He*.

Allah's saying, '...while they turn away...' (*al-Anbiya*: 1) indicates that they are pursuing this act with stubbornness.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

مَا يَأْتِيهِمْ مِّنْ ذِكْرٍ مِّن رَّبِّهِمْ مُّحَدَّثٍ إِلَّا اسْتَمَعُوهُ وَهُمْ يَلْعَبُونَ ﴿٢﴾

**Whenever any fresh revelation comes to them
from their Lord, they listen to it playfully [2]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 2)**

This means that when they hear any new reminder from the Quran for the first time, '...they listen to it playfully' (*al-Anbiya*: 2) not paying any attention or giving any concern to it. In fact, they do this intentionally, urging and prodding one another to do so, a point which is clear in Allah's saying about them: 'And those who disbelieve say, "Do not listen to this Quran and make noise therein, perhaps you may overcome."' (*Fussilat*: 26)

They are afraid that if they listen to the Quran they will be influenced by it and start to believe in it. Therefore, they do not listen to it but make noise, in order that no one may hear it in calm and repose and thus believe in it. This means that this activity is to their advantage because they are not able to reply to the arguments of the Quran, nor to stand firm in the face of its inimitability, eloquence and influence upon souls. In fact, they can do nothing except to divert mankind from listening to it and jumble it to the point that no one is able to hear it. By so doing, it does not penetrate their hearts in order that faith may enter therein.

Playing means that you occupy yourself with a purposeless activity, just as a young child takes his brother's notebook and scribbles in it with a pen, without any method or goal.

= filled with makes a black mark on it, and whatsoever a heart renounces makes a white mark on it.' See Ahmad, Musnad, 5/368, 405; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 144.

There is also diversion, which is an action intended toward a goal, but a goal which you have set for yourself or which someone else who wants to corrupt you by means of it has set for you. Therefore, it is an intentional activity, and it has a goal; it is not disinterested scribbling as one who occupies himself, for example, with sketching some pictures for amusement or with solving a crossword puzzle, for these are activities from which one derives no benefit.

As for the useful activity with which a person should occupy himself, it is that which is set for you by someone superior to you and who is wise and loving towards you. You do not find these specifications except in the Allah *the Almighty*; therefore, everything which diverts you from that which He sets for you is diversion because it distracts you from that which is more important.

Therefore He says: 'The life of this world is only idle sport and play...' (*Muhammad*: 36). So, playful amusement is for the phase of childhood when we tell our children to play, whereas diversion is nothing other than occupying yourself with an intentional activity that has a goal, but it diverts you from a higher goal set for you by the Wise, the All-Powerful and *the Most High* Who loves you.

Therefore, the ultimate conclusion of diversion and playful amusement is that they play with the hearing of the Quran. They even did not hear the Quran as a diversion which has a goal; rather, they heard it as playful amusement having no goal and without any benefit since its goal is detrimental to them.

Even if playful amusement is permitted in the period before maturity, it is, nonetheless, necessary that people's hearts are brought up in a way, ensuring that they turn towards Allah *the Almighty* the Creator, the Sustainer in this early period of their life. Hence, this is a father's duty, for when he brings food or drinks for his younger child; he should say in front of him, 'Our Lord provides us with this.' This is to be done in all the affairs of life; he returns the affairs to Allah *the Exalted* and instructs the young child to say, 'In the Name of Allah' and to say, 'All praise belongs to Allah.'

In this manner, a child's emotions are cultivated according to the certainty of Allah *the Almighty* the All-Powerful. If a child does not see Him, he nonetheless sees His Signs and Blessings, and he sees his father who supports

him and brings everything for him. A father does not claim the glory for himself; rather, he ascribes everything to Allah *the Almighty*.

His father, who is the greatest example for him, removes these matters from him and ascribes them to Allah *the Exalted* so that the consciousness of the child is brought up in line with faith. However, if a child is not brought up in this way, diversion and playful amusement will seep stealthily into his soul.

We have already said, 'It is inevitable that every action arises from some emotion, and no action arises without an emotion except the action of a madman. People's hearts are those which direct their limbs, and if their hearts were not heedless, their limbs would not play.'

For that reason, when 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* saw a man playing with his beard while praying—as many do—he said, 'If the heart of this one were humble in his prayer, his limbs would be humble as well.'⁽¹⁾ This is because the movement of the limbs indicates preoccupation of the heart. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

لَا هِيَ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَأَسْرُوا النَّجْوَى الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا هَلْ هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ
مِّثْلُكُمْ أَفَتَأْتُونَ السِّحْرَ وَأَنْتُمْ بُصُورٌ

With frivolous hearts. The evildoers conferred in secret: 'Is this man anything but a mortal like your- selves? Are you going to fall under his spell with your eyes wide open?' [3]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 3)

If it were only the case that each of them did that action by himself, but instead they deliberated together against Allah *Glorified is He* to distort His Message by means of play and diversion. He *the Most High* says: 'The evildoers conferred in secret' (*al-Anbiya*: 3), that is, they whisper to each

(1) In his book, Imam *Al-Ghazali* mentions this as a Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Al-'Iraqi says, 'At-Tirmidhi Al-Hakim narrated it in *An-Nawadir* on the authority of Abu Hurayra *Allah be pleased with him*. It has a weak chain of narrators because it is from the saying of Sa'id ibn Al-Musayyib narrated by Ibn Abu Shayba in *Al-Musannaf* and there is a man whom he did not name. See *Al-Ghazali, Ihya' 'Ulum Ad-Din*, 151/1.

other concerning sinful doings and keep that a secret. Secret conversation is to lower the voice as is mentioned in Allah's saying: 'nowhere is there a secret counsel between three persons, but He is the fourth of them, nor (between) five, but He is the sixth of them...' (*al-Mujadala*: 7).

So, do not think that you are hidden from the sight of Allah, or that you can hide anything from Him *Glorified is He*. If we carefully reflect upon this aforementioned verse of the chapter of *al-Mujadala*, we will notice that it did not mention the conversation that takes place between two persons; rather, it began with highlighting that conversation that takes place among three persons. Why is this? This is because 'secret conversation' usually takes place amongst three persons when two of them secretly converse with each other to the exclusion of the third.

Also, we should take into account that this verse in question does not highlight the sequential order of numbers respectively; in other words, it does not say, for example, 'and not four except that He is the fifth of them' because this order of numbers is not the prime concern of this verse.

The same prohibition of 'secret conversation' is also mentioned in the following saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Have you not seen those who are forbidden secret counsels, then they return to what they are forbidden, and they hold secret counsels for sin and revolt and disobedience to the Messenger...' (*al-Mujadala*: 8). This verse clearly indicates that as long as they secretly converse with each other, it goes without saying that their speech is against sound human nature, for if what they said were truthful, they would speak it openly. We can thus conclude that their 'secret conversation' is a conclusive proof that they suffer (spiritual) defects in their minds, hearts, etc.

As for His saying concerning Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'O you who have attained to faith! Whenever you [intend to] consult the Messenger, offer up something in charity on the occasion of your consultation...' (*al-Mujadala*: 12), this raises a good question, which is 'Did the companions use to converse with Prophet Muhammad secretly?' The answer is 'No', yet He instructed the companions how to politely speak with him *peace and blessings be upon him*; this fact is clear in His saying: 'Do not hold the Prophet's calling (you) amongst you to be like your calling one to the

other...' (*an-Nur*: 63). So, if this is the case, what is the true meaning to be deduced from the aforementioned verse of *al-Mujadala*? We understand from this verse that we are not allowed to raise our voices, as we do with one another, in the presence of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; that is, we must revere and venerate him *peace and blessings be upon him* while in conversation with him.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* says: '...The evildoers conferred in secret...' (*al-Anbiya*: 3). Thus, arises the following grammatical question, which is 'Is the relative pronoun *Al-Ladhin* (who) in the original Arabic verse the subject of the verb *Asarru* (conferred in secret)? Before answering this question, we should consult the Arabic grammar, which clearly states that if a verb comes before a subject, the latter must be in the singular form. Arabs say, '*Akala Al-Qawmu*' ('The people ate ...') with a singular subject to come after the verb. If we apply this grammatical maxim on the verse in question, we will fully realise that the Arabic particle known as *Waw Al-Jama* 'a (a letter that is attached to the end of verbs to indicate that the subject is plural) is the subject of this verb in question and not the relative pronoun. It is as though a questioner asked, 'Who are those who conferred secretly?' So, the answer will be as follows: 'The evildoers are the ones who do so.' As for the Arabic word *Zhalamu* (they committed evildoing), it includes all kinds of injustice. First of all, people commit injustice against themselves by committing injustice against Allah *the Almighty* Himself. This actually takes place when they ascribe partners to Him in worship, a point which is proven by His saying: '...most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity.' (*Lugman*: 13)

Second, people may commit injustice and in equity against one another, so why does Allah *the Exalted* mention the word *Zhulm* in its general sense? The answer is that as long as man has committed injustice and equity against Allah *the Almighty* he will not hesitate to commit wrong against other people. Back to the verse being examined, we have the following questions, which are 'What is the secret conversation which those people concealed? Who informed Prophet Muhammad about it?'

As for the first part of the question, the answer is stated clearly in the following verse: '...And they say to themselves, "Why does Allah not chastise us for what we are saying?"...' (*al-Mujadala*: 8)

Let us now move to the second part of the question which is 'Who informed Prophet Muhammad about it?' It goes without saying that Allah *the Almighty* the Lord of Prophet Muhammad, is the One Who informed him *peace and blessings be upon him* of it, which is why these deniers of the Truth should have taken into account that there is nothing in the universe that could be concealed from Him. In other words, they should have occupied their minds with the undeniable fact that Allah *the Most High* knows fully all the secrets of the universe. As a matter of fact, if they had done so, they might have been turned into believers instead of being polytheists.

In this verse under study, Allah *the Almighty* informs us of some of their secret conversation, affirming that they wondered about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, 'Is this man anything but a mortal like yourselves?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 3) This clearly indicates that they rejected him *peace and blessings be upon him* on the grounds that he was a mere mortal and not an angel. Allah *Glorified is He* then concludes the verse with their question: 'Are you going to fall under his spell with your eyes wide open?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 3) This question on their part clearly tells that they have viewed the Quran as a kind of spell, for they claimed that it, i.e. the Quran, sparked off disputes between fathers and their sons and between brothers one another, which is the result of nothing but sorcery.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

قَالَ رَبِّي يَعْلَمُ الْقَوْلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ

**He said, 'My Lord knows everything that is said in
the heavens and the earth: He is the All Hearing,
the All Knowing'[4] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 4)**

It is as though a questioner said, 'from where did you get all of this information, O, Prophet Muhammad, given that your people had concealed it?' So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* answered, 'My Lord knows everything that is said in the heavens and the earth...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 4). This means that there is nothing in the universe that could be concealed from His Sight, a fact which is conclusively proven by His saying at the end of the

verse, '...He is All Hearing, All Knowing' (*al-Anbiya*: 4) meaning that He *the Almighty* hears all what is said, openly or secretly, and that He knows fully well all that is done in the universe.

Allah *Glorified is He* then sheds light on another part of their secret conversation by saying:

بَلْ قَالُوا أَضْغَتْ أَحْلَامٌ بَلْ افْتَرَاهُ بَلْ هُوَ شَاعِرٌ
فَلْيَأْتِنَا بِنَايَةٍ كَمَا أُرْسِلَ الْأَوَّلُونَ

**Some say, 'Muddled dreams'; others, 'He made it up';
yet others, 'He is just a poet, let him show us a sign as
previous messengers did' [5] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 5)**

The use of the Arabic particle *Bal* (Nay) in this verse plainly indicates that the deniers of the Truth persisted on their rejection; thus, they added to their speech about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* what Allah mentions in His saying: 'Muddled dreams'. As for the Arabic word *Adghath* it is the plural of *dhighth* which refers to a bunch of grass of different forms, a meaning which is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* about Prophet Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him*: 'And take in your hand a bunch [of grass] and strike with it and do not break your oath.' (*Sad*: 44)

This word in question, i.e. *Adghath*, has also been mentioned in the chapter of *Yusuf* when Allah *the Almighty* talks about the vision of the ruler of Egypt, 'They said, "Confused dreams, and we do not know the interpretation of dreams."' (*Yusuf*: 44)

As for His saying, 'Others say, "He made it up" (*al-Anbiya*: 5), it clearly points out that these deniers of the Truth had persisted in their rejection; thus, they accused Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of telling a lie. They yet did not stop at this limit, but they accused him, of composing poetry, a point which is deduced from His saying" '...Yet others say, "He is just a poet..." (*al-Anbiya*: 5). It is thus clear that they did not reach a consensus on one accusation against him *peace and blessings be upon him* a point which clearly indicates their utter confusion, for they, first of all, denied that he was

not a human being, then they accused him of practising sorcery; afterwards, they accused him of being an inventor and finally of being a poet.

We have previously refuted all of these accusations, concluding that they were big liars who told lies about him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah *the Exalted* then concludes the verse with His saying: ‘...let him show us a sign as previous messengers did.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 5) This part of the verse indicates that they were not convinced with the Quran as a Divinely revealed sign, which is why they asked him *peace and blessings be upon him* to bring them another sign as previous messengers and prophets did. Yet, the Quran itself refutes their allegation, affirming that if they were to believe when the sign they asked for came to them, Allah would have made it for them, but all the previous experiences of prophets and messengers with their people clearly indicate that they would never believe, no matter how many signs were shown to them, which is why they must be chastised in the Hereafter for their rejection and stubbornness.

Concerning the fact that Allah *the Almighty* has promised that He would not chastise the disbelievers in this worldly life as long as Prophet Muhammad is still alive amongst them, He did not make for them the signs they wanted. This is due to the fact that Allah *the Exalted* never breaks His Promise; in other words, if He had allowed His Messenger to perform them a miracle, and they did not believe after that, punishment would have certainly afflicted them. For this reason, Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards:

مَاءَ أَمْنَةٍ قَبْلَهُمْ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَفَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٦﴾

**But of the communities We destroyed before them not
a single one believed. Will these now believe? [6]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 6)**

This verse refers to how the previous nations acted with their messengers and prophets and how they opposed and rejected the Divine Messages sent down to them. For this reason, Allah *the Most High* told Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the disbelievers from amongst his people or nation would follow in the footsteps of previous disbelievers as to stubbornness

and rejection and that had He shown them a sign, they would not have believed, a point which is supported by the saying of Allah *the Almighty* in the chapter of *al-An'am*: '... And if they were brought back [to life], they would return to the very thing which was forbidden to them, for, behold, they are indeed liars!' (*al-An'am*: 28)

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ إِلَّا رِجَالًا نُوْحِي إِلَيْهِمْ فَسْأَلُوا
أَهْلَ الذِّكْرِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٧﴾

And even before your time [Prophet], all the messengers We sent were only men We inspired — if you [disbelievers] do not know, ask people who know the Scripture [7] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*': 7)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* replies to their objection to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* being a human being and their demand that he should be an angel, a demand which they frequently asked for as shown in the Quran; for example, Allah *the Almighty* tells us that they say: '... Shall mere mortal men be our guides?...' (*at-Taghabun*: 6)

This aforementioned verse of the chapter of *at-Taghabun* tells us about what these disbelievers said; they wondered how they could be guided by these mortal messengers and prophets who were, as they thought, like them and are not better than they are! Thus, we should ask them the following: 'Does a messenger guide you by means of his humanity, or, instead, by something given to him from above? Is he the one who invented the Divine Way of Guidance for you?'

As a matter of fact, Prophet Muhammad is not a social reformer, but a bearer and a conveyer of the Divine Message of Allah Lord of all the worlds. In this regard, it is of great importance, O, disbelievers, to know that all the messengers and prophets we sent before Prophet Muhammad were mortal; this is the meaning of the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'And even before your time [O, Prophet], all the messengers We sent were only men We inspired...' (*al-Anbiya*': 7). In addition, If We had sent an angel to them; We would have

sent you an angel as a messenger. Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, '...if you [O, disbelievers] do not know, ask people who know the Scripture.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 7) In this part of the verse, Allah *Glorified is He* directs the disbelievers to ask the Jews and the Christians about the nature of the messengers and prophets sent to them; that is, were they men or angels?

The impossibility of sending an angel as a messenger is viewed in the light of the fact that a messenger or prophet serves as a model example for his people and a conveyer of the Divine Way of Guidance which he must first abide by before asking others to apply it. In other words, he should not ask people to do something he himself does not do. Therefore, we should take into account that a fundamental condition of people to follow a 'model example' is that the latter must be a human being like themselves.

Let us illustrate this point by giving the following example; if you saw a lion in the jungle, leaping, roaming and killing, would you think, 'Someday I will be a lion'? Will you take the lion as a model example for you? The answer is an emphatic 'No' because your model example must be a human being like yourself. Yet, the case is totally different if you take a courageous horseman as your model example, for he, like yourself, belongs to the human race.

As such, it is clear that if Allah *the Almighty* had sent an angel as a prophet or a messenger, He would have made him a man. Thus, we should take into consideration the fact that angels do not disobey Allah in what He commands them to do; rather, they do as they are commanded. As for us, the human being, we err and commit sins.

Referring to the disbelievers' objection to the humanity of messengers and prophets, Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Yet, whenever [Allah's] Guidance came to them [through a prophet,] nothing has ever kept people from believing [in him] save this their objection: "Would Allah have sent a [mere] mortal man as His Messenger?" Say: "If angels were walking about on earth as their natural abode, We would indeed have sent down unto them an angel out of heaven as Our Messenger."' (*al-Isra'*: 94-95)

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* refutes their claim by saying: 'And [even] if We had appointed an angel as Our Message-bearer, We would certainly have made him [appear as] a man' (*al-An'am*: 9)

Therefore, it is not possible that there be a messenger for human beings who is not himself a human being. If we examine the case of Prophet Muhammad in the light of this plain fact, we will reach the conclusion that he *peace and blessings be upon him* is a human being who is inspired by Allah *the Almighty*.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...if you [O, disbelievers] do not know, ask people who know the Scripture’ (*al-Anbiya*: 7), it means that if you, O, disbelievers, are in doubt as to this statement, then ask the people of the Book from amongst the Jews and Christians to whom messengers and prophets were sent before you.⁽¹⁾

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying, ‘...if you do not know...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 7) to indicate that the disbelievers have superficial knowledge concerning this topic.

The True Lord *the Most High* says:

وَمَا جَعَلْنَاهُمْ جَسَدًا لَا يَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ وَمَا كَانُوا خَالِدِينَ ﴿٨﴾

**We did not give them bodies that ate no food, nor
were they immortal [8] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 8)**

The pronoun ‘them’ in the saying of Allah, ‘We did not give them...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 8) refers to the messengers. As for the Arabic word *Jasadan* (body), it literally refers to something which is moulded and solid, and which does not eat, drink, or move. On the contrary, messengers and prophets are human beings, who, like all other humans, eat, drink and walk in the market streets; in other words, they normally act as mere humans, which is why He *the Almighty* concludes the verse with His saying: ‘...nor were they immortal.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 8) This is because immortality is not of the characteristics of mankind, a point which is fully realised by disbelievers. As a matter of fact, this point of the immortality of mankind is also stressed in the following saying of Allah: ‘Surely, you shall die and they (too) shall surely die.’ (*al-Ankabut*: 30)

(1) This is the opinion of Sufyan. As for Ibn Zayd, he holds the position that this verse refers to the Quran; the meaning thus is ‘Ask those believers who are well versed in the Quran.’ Jabir Al-Ja’fi is related to have said, ‘When this verse was revealed, ‘Ali Allah be pleased with him said, “We are the people who know the Scripture.”’ See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame’ Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4447.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

ثُمَّ صَدَقْنَاهُمُ الْوَعْدَ فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُمْ وَمَنْ نَشَاءُ وَأَهْلَكْنَا الْمُسْرِفِينَ ﴿٩﴾

We fulfilled Our promise to them in the end: We saved them and those We wished to save, and We destroyed those who exceeded all bounds [9] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 9)

This verse under discussion refers to one of Allah's Laws in the Universe, which is that He *Glorified is He* always fulfilled His Promise to His messengers in the end, a point which is evidenced by the fact that we have never heard about any group of disbelievers and rejectionists who were given victory over their messengers and prophets, a point which is definitively proven by the following saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'For, long ago has Our Word gone forth unto Our servants, the Message-bearers, that, verily, they would be succoured and that, verily, Our hosts would [in the end] be victorious!' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173)

As for the fulfilment of the Divine Promise, it is achieved by saving prophets, messengers and whomsoever Allah *the Exalted* wishes from their opposing people. It is also fulfilled by destroying *Al-Musrifin* (those who exceeded the bounds). In other words, in the very end of the prophets' struggles with their people, Allah *the Almighty* grants them over the disbelievers, thus fulfils His Promise to them.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ كِتَابًا فِيهِ ذِكْرُكُمْ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

And now We have sent down to you [people] a Scripture to remind you. Will you not use your reason? [10] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 10)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* addresses those who rejected the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying to them, 'I did not send down to you a sign which is difficult for you to understand; rather, I sent you a messenger with a miracle from the same kind of that field in which you were very proficient. Then, when the Quran was revealed, you understood its meanings and fully recognised its objectives, a point which is proven by

the fact that you did not object to the strange vocabulary used in it, nor did you accuse Prophet Muhammad of inventing them of his own, although you tried your utmost to discover one mistake on his part, if any.

For instance, when the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'Alif Lam Mim' was revealed, we did not know of any of them who said, 'O, you who believe in Muhammad! Your prophet claims that he has been given a miraculous Book, so ask him, "What is the meaning of *Alif Lam Mim*?"' This actually proves that they had properly and correctly understood the meanings of these discrete letters and that they did not find any mistake in them for which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* might be blamed. This is based on the fact that Arabs themselves used these letters in their speeches to alert the attention of the listener.

We know very well that speech is the way of communication between a speaker and a listener. As a matter of fact, a speaker carefully prepares his speech before articulating it, which is why he cannot be surprised by it; as for the hearer, he might become surprised, thus needs to be alerted so that no part of the speech would escape him. In this manner, Arabs use a number of particular particles known as *Adawat At-Tanbih* to call the attention of the listener to the importance of speech so that he would miss nothing of it. An example of the use of these particles is ever so clear in the following verse of poetry by 'Amr ibn Khulthum⁽¹⁾:

Ha, girl! Up with the bowl! Give us our dawn draught ...⁽²⁾

Another example may also be found in the following verse:

Oh! Grant one more morning, decayed ruins!

(1) 'Amr ibn Kulthum ibn Malik, Abu Al-Aswad is a poet lived in the pre-Islamic period and belonged to the tribe of Taghlib. He was born in the northern part of the Arabian Peninsula in the region of Rabi'a. He was very proud of himself. He became the master of his tribe while still a youth. He lived long, and died 40 years before the advent of Islam in the island known as Al-Furatiyyah. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-'Alam*, 5/84.

(2) The first hemistich of this poetic verse under discussion is quoted from the Hanged Poem of 'Amr ibn Kulthum. The word 'bowl' is used to refer to the large drinking-cup. The meaning thus is 'Oh, wake from your sleep, O female cupbearer! Give me a morning draught in your great drinking-cup'. See *Az-Zawzani, Sharh Al-Mu'laqqat As-Sab*, p. 165.

But can one in an empty time grant favours?⁽¹⁾

It is thus clear that the particles 'Ha!' and 'Oh!' are used to call the attention of the listener to the importance of the speech. The same particles are also used by the Quran. For example, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Oh, verily, they who are close to Allah—no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.' (*Yunus*: 62) He *Glorified is He* also says: '...verily, they [who are bent on denying the truth of this Divine Book] are enshrouding their hearts...' (*Hud*: 5).

It is therefore clear that they properly understood the meanings of these verses and letters of the Quran, and perhaps they understood even more than this from them, yet they did raise any objections to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in this regard despite their burning desire to criticise him.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...to remind you...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 10), the Arabic word *Adh-Dhikr* (reminder/remembrance) may be used, as we explained earlier, to refer to the Quran or the heavenly revealed Scriptures. It might also be used to convey the meaning of honour and dignity. It may further be used to give the meaning of praise, remembrance, and glorification.

However, what is the intended meaning of this verse? A possible explanation of this verse is that it reminds them of Allah the Creator and of His Divine Way of Guidance. O, disbelievers, if you had paid attention to the laws mentioned in the Quran, you would have fully realised that it is in total agreement with your innate disposition and that it was not revealed to oppose all of your laws, a point which is proven by the fact that the laws of the Quran accepted some of your, O, disbelievers, laws to which you were guided by your human instinct.

The following are examples which prove the aforementioned point; the Quran agreed on their law as to the blood money prescribed in the case of killing. It does not change it. In the same connection, the Quran accepted the topics of engagement, marriage and the giving of dowry all of which were prevailing amongst them during that time. We know for certain that so many of the Arabs during that period of time, based on their innate disposition,

(1) The verse is composed by *Imru' Al-Qays*. See *Az-Zawzani, Shah Al-Mu'llaqat As-Sab'*, p. 12.

viewed the drinking of wine as forbidden; others never prostrated to idols. It is thus clear that the sound innate disposition never contradicts the Divine Way of Guidance.

Another possible explanation for this part of the verse is that it refers to their nobility, good repute, position and high rank amongst nations and peoples, for the Quran has been revealed in your Arabic language. Thus, it is as if Allah *the Almighty* wanted to turn the hearts and minds of all mankind to your language, encouraging them thereby to study it, to use it in their conversations and to disseminate it amongst mankind. For those who are not able to speak it, they are allowed and encouraged to translate it; how great an honour it is!

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...Will you not use your reason' (*al-Anbiya*': 10), it encourages them to use their minds to reach the sound conclusion that their good exists in the Quran. In other words, if you, O, disbelievers, want the sound religion along with good moral character, you will find them in the Quran; likewise, if you want to attain a high position, this will also be achieved by the Quran. As a matter of fact, there is no honour greater than your prophet being an Arab and your Quran being revealed in the tongue of Arabs.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَكَمْ قَصَمْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ كَانَتْ ظَالِمَةً وَأَنْشَأْنَا بَعْدَهَا قَوْمًا آخَرِينَ ﴿١١﴾

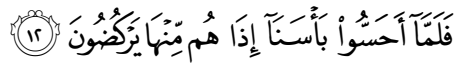
How many communities of evildoers We have destroyed!
How many others We have raised up in their places! [11]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*': 11)

The Arabic word *Qasamna* (destroyed) refers to the act of breaking into fragments after which there is no mending. Therefore, Allah *the Most High* tells them with the news of the punishment that afflicted those opposing and disbelieving nations before them, so that they would take admonition. Allah *the Almighty* also warn them that destroying the evildoers is not something new for Him; rather, it had so many precedents in history.⁽¹⁾

(1) In his *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, Al-Qurtubi says, 'In this verse, He the Almighty refers to those cities that were in Yemen. Other scholars yet are of the opinion that it refers to a=

For this reason, He *the Almighty* says: 'How many communities of evildoers We have destroyed!' (*al-Anbiya'*: 11) The Arabic word *Kam* (how many) in this context indicates that the number of the destroyed communities was so huge that it could not be counted. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* warned disbelievers that they might be afflicted with the same punishment in case they persisted in their rejection and stubbornness. As for the saying of Allah, 'How many others We have raised up in their places' (*al-Anbiya'*: 11), it means that many nations and communities had taken the places of their evildoers who were destroyed.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:



When they felt Our might coming upon them, see how they tried to escape it! [12] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 12)

This verse tells that when the disbelievers felt the Might of Allah *the Almighty* coming upon them, '...they tried to escape it' (*al-Anbiya'*: 12) so that the punishment would not overtake them. As for the Arabic word *Ar-Rakdu* (running), it means to run fast, or hurriedly. This word of *Ar-Rakdu* is also used to refer to the galloping of a riding animal, an act which is done by striking the animal with one's legs in order to make it run quickly. The same word in question has been mentioned elsewhere in the Quran; Allah *the Almighty* says, '...Strike [the ground] with your foot...' (*Sad*: 42), giving thereby an order to Prophet Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* to strike the ground with his foot in order to extract water from therein; He *Glorified is He* then says: '...Here is cool water to wash with and to drink!' (*Sad*: 42)

As a matter of fact, this aforementioned verse of the chapter of *Sad* clearly indicates on the miraculous aspects of the Quran. We know that Prophet Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* suffered from a skin disease, which is why Allah *the Almighty* ordered him to strike the ground with his leg; when he *peace be upon him* did so, cold water gushed from the ground. It is from this water

= people of a place called Hadur to whom a Prophet under the name of Shu'yab ibn Dhi Mahdam was sent.' See *Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4449.

that Ayyub (Job) drank and by which he washed his body; in other words, Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* was treated internally and externally.

If we reflect on this point in the light of today's medicine, we will find that doctors pay attention to treating pimples and sores on the skin with creams which heal the lesions but are yet unable to put an end to the causes which give rise to the disease. As for the Divine Treatment, it healed Ayyub (Job) *peace be upon him* internally and externally.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

لَا تَرْكُضُوا وَارْجِعُوا إِلَى مَا أُتْرِفْتُمْ فِيهِ وَمَسْكِنِكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُسْأَلُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

Do not try to escape. Go back to your homes and the pleasure you revelled in: you may be questioned [13]

(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 13)

Relating the events of the story of these deniers of the Truth, Allah *the Almighty* told us about the main reason why He afflicted those people with punishment by saying: '...How many communities of evildoers We have destroyed!' (*al-Anbiya'*: 11) He *the Most High* then detailed how He destroyed them, affirming meanwhile that when these deniers of the Truth felt that they were about to be afflicted with the Divine Punishment, they left their towns in a hurry, lest the punishment would overtake them, which is why He, in this verse in question, orders them not to run and to go back to their homes and the pleasure they revelled in.

As for the Arabic word *At-Taraf* (pleasure), it means to live a luxury life. Arabs say, '*Taraf Ar-Rajulu Yatrafau*' to convey the meaning that one lived and still lives in luxury. Yet, when we add Hamaza at the beginning of the verb, it becomes *Atrafa*, which means that a man enjoyed a luxury life, but he was now deprived of it because of his arrogance. Also, when we say, '*Atrafahu Allah*', it means that even though Allah *the Almighty* had caused him to live a luxury life, he did not thank Allah for it; thus, he deserved to be afflicted and overtaken with Divine Punishment.

Therefore, the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...and the pleasure you revelled in...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 13) means that He has given them great pleasure,

yet they did not thank Him for it, thus deserving to be overtaken with Divine Punishment. Here arises a question which is ‘As long as Allah *the Almighty* wants to chastise them, why does He give them pleasure?’ The answer is quite clear in the fact that He wanted to double the punishment for them, as follows: when you punish someone for something he does, it is true that the punishment will cause him pain; yet if you provide him with pleasure, then take this pleasure out and replace it with punishment, this will be viewed as adding chastisement to their chastisement. We previously gave an example to illustrate this point, saying that if you want to make your enemy suffer quite a bit, you should drop him from the top of something which is high so that the punishment will be more painful and difficult.

This aforementioned point of doubling their punishment is mentioned elsewhere in the Quran where Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Then, when they had forgotten all that they had been told to take to heart, We threw open to them the gates of all [good] things...’ (*al-An‘am*: 44). This means that when the deniers of the Truth forgot all that they had been told to take to heart, Allah *the Almighty* gave them health, wealth, power, land, mansions and palaces ‘...until—even as they were rejoicing in what they had been granted—We suddenly took them to task, and lo, they were broken in spirit.’ (*al-An‘am*: 44) Thus, to afflict them with punishment after they had been provided with considerable pleasure is awful pain.

In the same respect, there is another subtle observation in the aforementioned verse of *al-An‘am*; Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...We threw open to them the gates of all [good] things...’ (*al-An‘am*: 44). As a matter of fact, there is a big difference between this verse and that of the chapter of *al-Fath* in which Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Surely, We have given to you a clear victory.’ (*al-Fath*: 1) As for the first verse, it indicates that the act of opening was not in their interest, whereas the latter indicates that it was for the interest of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. In other words, Allah *the Exalted* tells believers that these blessings given to disbelievers will be the cause of their destruction and punishment, so, you, O, Muslims, should not be deceived by the pleasure they revel in.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...you may be questioned’ (*al-Anbiya*: 13), it is an order from Him to them to return to their homes and palaces and the comforts in which they revelled, for perhaps someone might pass by and ask them about the previous pleasure they used to enjoy. As a matter of fact, the humiliation they now suffer from after being punished will make them unable to speak or to narrate what happened to them; rather, all what they will say is what Allah *the Almighty* mentions and records in the following verse:

قَالُوا يَوَيْلَنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

**They said, ‘Woe to us! We were wrong!’ [14]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 14)**

This verse tells plainly that when the deniers of the Truth felt the coming of Divine Punishment, they tried to run away, lest it might overtake them. Yet Allah *Glorified is He* ordered them to go back to the pleasure they revelled in, confirming that none would now save them from His punishment since no one could challenge His Will. So, when they found themselves in this position, they did not find anything to do except to grieve, and so they turned to their souls to rebuke them and to pass judgment on them that they deserve the punishment that overtook them.

Concerning the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...Woe to us...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 14), it indicates that they themselves called upon their punishment, just as people say: ‘Oh! My misery’ or ‘Oh, My misfortune’! This raises the following question which is ‘Is it conceivable that someone might call upon misery or misfortune to afflict him?!’ The answer is ‘No’, for man only seeks and calls upon what is good and pleasant.

Back to this part of the verse in question; it means that the deniers of the Truth will call upon the punishment to afflict them. It is at that particular time that they will have nothing to be happy with; they will regret for all what they did; they now blame themselves when they were completely certain with the utmost assurance that they will be overtaken by the punishment.

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying: ‘...We were wrong!’ (*al-Anbiya*: 14) This part of the verse plainly indicates the regret of the deniers of the Truth who committed injustice against themselves by

disbelieving in Allah *Glorified is He* a point which is ever so clear in Allah's saying: 'Lest any human being should say [on Judgment Day], "Alas for me for having been remiss in what is due to Allah ..."' (*al-'Ankabut*: 56).

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

فَمَا زَالَتْ تِلْكَ دَعْوُهُمْ حَتَّىٰ جَعَلْنَاهُمْ حَصِيدًا خَمِيدٍ ﴿١٥﴾

And that cry of theirs did not cease until We made them burnt-off stubble [15] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 15)

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'And that cry of theirs did not cease...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 15), it means that they continuously used to say, 'Woe to us! We were wrong!' (*al-Anbiya'*: 14) In other words, they did not say this statement of regret just one time; rather, they used to continuously repeat it. As a matter of fact, they thought that it was only this statement that would remove the rage of their hearts exactly as a criminal does; he used to blame himself for the commitment of the crime confessing that he deserves to be sent to jail.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...until We made them burnt-off stubble' (*al-Anbiya'*: 15), the Arabic word *Hasid* (stubble) refers to a plant after being harvested and reaped, while the word *Khamidin* (burnt off) refers to one of the traits of fire; we know fully well that fire, when started, is blazing and aflame, then it becomes silent and calm after which it turns into dust. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* refers to their stubbornness and persistence in rejecting the Message of Prophet of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* confirming that all of this had now come to an end.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَمَا خَلَقْنَا السَّمَاءَ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا لَٰعِبِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

We did not create the heavens and the earth and everything between them playfully [16] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 16)

In this verse, Allah *the Exalted* tells about His Ultimate Power by offering us an example for the miraculous creation of the heavens and the earth about

which He *the Almighty* says in the chapter of *Ghafir*: 'Greater indeed than the creation of man is the creation of the heavens and the earth...' (*Ghafir*: 57). However, why is the creation of the heavens and the earth greater than that of man? It is because man is subject to change; he dies after his life span comes to its end. As for the creation of the heavens and the earth and what is between from the stars and planets, it is indeed greater than the creation of man, for the heavens and the earth are predestined by Allah *the Exalted* not to suffer from any defects.

At this point, it is of great importance to know that Allah *the Almighty* does mention this blessing of the creation of the heavens and the earth in this regard because they are subdued to serve mankind, and not because they are wondrous creation. We know for certain that entire universe including the sky, the sun, the moon, the stars, the air, the rain, the clouds and the earth and even what is beneath it is subdued to you, O, mankind; even the created beings from which you get not direct benefit are also created for the sake of serving you.

In the light of this undeniable fact of subduing all the created beings to man, the question to be asked here is 'What is the role of man in the universe? In other words, as long as all other created beings have a specific role to do in the universe, what is the role entitled to man?' It is thus clear that if man has no role to perform in this life, he will be less significant than animals, plants and even innate things, which is why you, O, man, must have a role fitting your supremacy over all other created beings to perform. Regarding this, we should also take into account that these created beings did not subdue themselves to you by their own will, but they did by the Will of Allah *the Almighty*. So, you should become conscious of the One Who subdued all of these created beings which are stronger than you are, to you; likewise, you should be fully aware of the fact that you have no authority over the heavens, nor will you be able to reach the sun or the moon in height. Allah *the Most High* says: '...for you cannot cut through the earth nor reach the mountains in height.' (*al-Isra*': 37)

Therefore, you, O, man, should have made use of your mind to reach the sound conclusion on Who subdued the entire universe to you; you should

have recognised that Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator of the heavens and the earth and what is between. You should have known that He did not create them in vain or for play; rather, He created them for your sake. This point is definitively proved by the following Qudsi Hadith in which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'O son of Adam, I created the things (i.e. the other created beings of the universe) for your sake, and I created you for My Sake. So, do not occupy yourself with that which is for your sake over and above Him for Whose Sake you are (created).' In this way, we can say that the entire universe is owned by man who himself is owned by Allah *the Almighty* which is why He orders man not to be fully occupied with what is subservient to him in such a way that makes him forget about Him.

At this point, we should ask the following question which is 'What is the profound wisdom behind the creation of the heavens and the earth and all that is between them?' The answer to this question is quite clear in the fact that these created beings lead us to realise this Ultimate Power that created the entire universe: Power of Allah *the Almighty*. In other words, they serve as means to prove the Attributes of Majesty and Beauty of Allah *the Exalted*. For example, if someone claims that he is a poet, we are going to ask him about a poem he composed. If he brings it, he will be already a poet; otherwise, he will be claiming something without a proof.

Once again, Allah *the Most High* created the entire universe for you, O, man, and allowed you to make use of it in all possible ways. He *the Almighty* also subdued all of other created beings to you. The sun, for example, never objects to rising, nor do the moon, the stars, the rain, the air, the earth, and the plants object to being subdued to man. As a matter of fact, these created beings all bring benefit to people, believers, and disbelievers alike. This is because all of them are subdued to man; in other words, they do not have free will to choose what to do. Man, on the other hand, has free will to choose what to do and what not to do.

When you contemplate the entire universe, you will find that it is divided into two parts: one part with which man has nothing to do at all; that is, he has no authority over it. As a matter of fact, the created beings of this part run smoothly and efficiently in a harmonious manner; none of them suffers any

defects at any time. As for the second part, it is subject to man's interference; in other words, he has power and authority over it and it is amongst the created beings of this part that corruption takes place.

Referring to the created beings of the first part, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And [they have a sign in] the sun. It runs in an orbit of its own, which means it is laid down by the Will of the Almighty, the All Knowing, and [in] the moon, for which We have determined phases [which it must traverse] till it becomes like an old date-stalk, dried-up and curved; [and] neither may the sun overtake the moon, nor can the night usurp the time of day since all of them float through space [in accordance with Our laws].' (*Ya Sin*: 38-40)

It is thus clear that the entire universe is efficiently run and kept in perfect order by the command of Allah *the Almighty* the Creator, with no created being ever falling behind. If you were to examine, for example, a complete year of 365 days and tried to turn it back to another year, you would find that the sun would rise from the same place it rose from in the previous year and that it rose from the same place it rose from in the second day, and so on and so forth. Glory be to its Creator!

Therefore, those who establish the calendar in order to know the periods of time first establish it of thirty-three years, taking note of the revolution of celestial bodies. Amazingly enough, the information they recorded for one year recurs in the following year, and so on. Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; when the specialists determine the appointed time of a solar or lunar eclipse, or of a partial or annular eclipse of either kind, you find that the time is perfectly regulated, happening at exactly the same appointed time. This is evidence of the regularity of the movement of this part of the universe over which man has no authority at all.

In contradistinction to that part of the universe, if you reflect over anything which man has authority or power, you will find that it is almost corrupt. We, human beings, involve in a number of daily dealings with each other, including buying, selling, measuring, weighing, etc. In actuality, most of these dealings, out of man's fraudulence and deceive, is corrupt, which is why Allah *the Almighty* sent His Divine Way of Guidance to root out this corruption on the human part.

It is thus clear that all the corruption on the surface of the earth is the result of man's interference. It is as though Allah *the Almighty* says to man, 'O, man! You get yourself into troubles. I have created the entire universe to serve you, with no created being in it falling behind. Yet, even though I granted you the free will to choose what to do and what not to do, you have transgressed against yourself. O, man! My Divine Way of Guidance is better for you than all your plans, so if you abide by it and then come to Me in the Hereafter wherein there will be no room for causes, I assure you that you will be in everlasting blessings and that you will find no pain nor misery.'

Therefore, if one occupies himself by firmly adhering to the Divine Way of Guidance, everything he has will suffer no corruption at all. If we contemplate the main reason why Allah *the Almighty* had subdued the entire universe to the service of mankind, we will reach the conclusion that He wants nothing from His creation but to willingly bear witness that there is no god but He and that Prophet Muhammad is His Messenger. Here, we should cast light on the difference between the legally responsible created beings in this universe, namely man, jinns and the rest of the created beings; as for the latter, they have no free will to choose, thus bearing witness to the Oneness of Allah *the Almighty* from the very beginning of their creation, whilst the former have free will, thus He will provide them with great reward if they willingly bear witness to His Oneness; yet if they reject, they will be severely punished in the Hereafter.

In the same respect, Allah *Glorified is He* wants to tell man about the favours He conferred upon him by saying, 'O, man, in addition to all these blessings I gave you, I sent you a Divine Way of Guidance imparting you the knowledge of what you must do and what you must not do. So, if you carry out My Commands, I will reward you; but if you disobey, I will punish you. This is actually the ultimate goal behind the creation of the heavens and the earth which are not created for mere play. O, man, as for this Divine Way of Guidance, you should know it from the messengers sent to you; so, if you reject and deny them, you will know nothing about these rulings included in this Way of Guidance, thus you will be punished.'

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

لَوْ أَرَدْنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ لَهُوَ لَا تَتَّخِذَنَّهُ مِنْ لَدُنَّا إِنْ كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

**If We had wished for a pastime, We could have found it
within Us – if We had wished for any such thing [17]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 17)**

This verse clearly means that If Allah *the Exalted* had wanted a pastime, He would have had it, for His Power is Ultimate and His Will cannot be challenged. As for His saying, ‘...thus had We wished for any such thing’ (*al-Anbiya*: 17), it clearly indicates that this will never happen.

As for the Arabic word *Al-Lahw* (pastime), it means to turn one’s attention to an activity which has no goal and from which one derives no benefit. In actuality, heedless man leaves behind something important in order to turn himself towards something unimportant. Therefore, we should take into account that pastime and play actually involve movement of the bodily limbs but without deriving any benefit at all, which is why these two are described as being futile.

Allah *Glorified* is He says:

بَلْ نَقْذِفُ بِالْحَقِّ عَلَى الْبَاطِلِ فَيَدْمَغُهُ فَإِذَا هُوَ زَاهِقٌ وَلَكُمُ الْوَيْلُ مِمَّا نَصِفُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

**No! We hurl the truth against falsehood, and truth
obliterates it – see how falsehood vanishes away! Woe
to you [people] for the way you describe God! [18]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 18)**

This verse tells that as long as deniers of the Truth indulged in their pastime and play and so long as they did not thank Allah for the blessings He gave them, they will no longer enjoy this. As a matter of fact, Allah *the Almighty* gives respite to the oppressor, but when He seizes him, He does not let him escape.

As for the Arabic word *Al-Qadhf* (to hurl) in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘No! We hurl the truth against falsehood...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 18), it means to throw with extreme forcefulness. As for the word *Yadmaghuhu* (obliterate), it means to hit one in his head. Due to the fact that it contains the brain, the head is the most important organ in the human body. It the bodily organ responsible for

running the affairs of the human body, so if it acts properly, the entire body will work efficiently; otherwise, life will come to an end. For this reason, Allah *the Most High* made the bones of the skull the strongest within the entire body, so as to protect this important organ, namely the brain. At this point, we affirm that doctors do not declare the death of a person unless the brain stops functioning; they do not do so if the heart, for example, stops working because by particular methods, the heart may be brought back to operate efficiently, which is not the case with the brain.

After the digestion of food within the body, the brain, being the most important organ in the human body, gets the most important elements of this digested food. Regarding the rest of the body organs, they get what enables them to perform and act. As for the surplus, it is to be stored in the form of fats from which the body will get energy in case there is no food, but when these fats are over, the body will take its energy from the meat and then from the bones. Everything in the body therefore serves the brain because it is the highest of the organs. This is not the case with plants, for the most important of them, unlike man, is the lower part, which is why if there is no water in the soil, they take nourishment from the leaves until they die, and then from small branches, the stem and the root, respectively.

Referring to this scientific fact, Allah *the Almighty* says about Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him*: ‘He prayed: “O, my Lord! Feeble have become my bones, and my head glistens with grey hair”’ (*Maryam*: 4) This aforementioned verse of the chapter of *Maryam* clearly indicates that bones are the last storehouse of food in man’s body, so when Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) says that his bones became feeble, this means that he is about to die. It is thus clear that the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...obliterates it...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 18) means to hit in the most important organ in the human body, and not in another organ that may be brought back to function if damaged. It is for this reason that Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards, ‘...See how falsehood vanished away!’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 18) It means to ‘violently pass away’.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘Woe to you [people] for the way you describe Allah’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 18), it means that whosoever rejects the Divine Way of Guidance and denies messengers will be eventually in loss, for

Allah *the Almighty* will hurl the Truth against falsehood and thus obliterate it. It is at that time that when evildoers feel the coming of punishment that they will say, as mentioned in the Quran, '...Woe to us! We are wrong!' (*al-Anbiya*: 14)

The Arabic word *Tasifun* (describe) in this verse being examined means that the deniers of the Truth used to tell lies against Allah and His Messengers. Upon seeing a beautiful man, Arabs say that his face tells that he is beautiful. In the same respect, Allah *the Almighty* says: '... and [all the while] their tongues utter the lie...' (*an-Nahl*: 62); what this means is that if you, O, Prophet Muhammad, want to know their falsehood, listen to their speech and what their tongues say.

In actuality, Arabs have a particular statement which carries this meaning; they used to say, '*Hadith Khurafa*' (or fabulous speech). This statement is in essence attributed to a man whose name was *Khurafa* and who once said, 'I have an arrow which, when fired at a gazelle, follows behind it. When the gazelle turns to the right, it follows behind it. When it goes to the left, it follows behind it. When it climbs a mountain, it follows behind it, and when it descends, it follows behind it.' It is as if this arrow of *Khurafa* looks like today's modern guided missile. From this point onward, this statement has been used by people in reference to anyone who tells lie.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, a poet says:

That speech is fabulous, O, mother of 'Amr

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying, 'O, Messenger of Allah, if you want a definition for falsehood, I am not telling you that it is speech which does not agree with reality, but instead I will direct you to listen to their

(1) In his *Musnad*, Imam Ahmad narrated on the authority of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her who said: 'Prophet Muhammad told his women a story one night and one of the women among them said, "O, Messenger of Allah, that story seems to be fabulous," to which he *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, "Do you know who is *Khurafa*?" He was a man from the tribe of 'Udhra and he was captured by the jinns wherein he lived with them for a long period of time, then they returned him to mankind. He used to tell men of the wondrous things he saw amongst the jinns, until men came to use the phrase 'speech of *Khurafa*.' See Ahmad, *Musnad*, 6/157.

speech because it is the truest depiction of falsehood, for it is fully exposed to everyone.' This meaning is also clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...Limitless is He in His Glory, and sublimely Exalted above anything that men may devise by way of definition' (*al-An'am*: 100) which means that the deniers of the Truth tell lies and fabrications about Allah *the Almighty*. At this point, someone might ask, 'Why does Allah give respite to falsehood and does not obliterate it until it grows stronger?' We say in reply, 'The wisdom of this is to try people's faith. We know for certain that man does not truly love truth until he has seen the ugliness of falsehood, and he does not fully realise the dignity of justice until he has seen the ugliness of wrongdoing, for nothing is good or ill but by comparison. At this point, we can quote the following verses of poetry:

The face like the daybreak is whitened;
The hair like the night, blackened.
Contraries when combined are beautiful,
The beauty of one displaying the other

So, we do not fully realise the beauty of the truth except by identifying the ugliness of falsehood, nor are we able to realise the sweetness of faith except after experiencing the bitterness of disbelief.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَلَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَنْ عِنْدَهُ لَا
يَسْتَكْبِرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ وَلَا يَسْتَحْسِرُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

**Everyone in the heavens and earth belongs to Him,
and those that are with Him are never too proud to
worship Him, nor do they grow weary [19]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 19)**

Allah *the Most High* previously informed us that He created the heaven, the earth, and all that is between them. He *Glorified is He* created other created beings and allowed them to dwell therein. Therefore, we should take into account that from amongst the creation of Allah *the Almighty* are those who are

given free will to choose what to do and what not to do, yet this free will has only to do with the matters of legal obligation; as for those matters pertaining to cosmic affairs, these created beings have nothing to do at all. This is why we clearly state that man has nothing to do with defining the date of his birth or death, nor does he have the ability to determine whether or not he will be healthy, intelligence, tall, short, etc. That is to say that he is totally subdued to the Will of Allah *the Almighty* with the exception of the matters of legal obligation over which He gave him free will to decide on. Heaven and earth, on the other hand, are wholly subjugated and subdued to the Will of Allah *the Almighty*; He *Glorified is He* says: 'Verily, We did offer the trust [of reason and volition] to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it' (*al-Ahzab*: 72) This verse clearly tells that both the heavens and the earth chose subjugation to the Will of Allah over free choice for which they have no ability.

As for man his intellect prompted him to bear it, thus he preferred to have free choice, thinking that he would direct this trust [of reason and volition] safely and soundly; Allah *the Almighty* says: '... Yet man took it up, for verily, he has always been prone to be most wicked, most foolish.' (*al-Ahzab*: 72)

As a matter of fact, Allah *the Exalted* describes man, upon choosing to bear the trust, as being most wicked and most foolish since he did not realise the consequence of assuming this burden. Take into consideration if one were to say the following, 'Then what is so special about the obedience of the heavens and the earth, given that they are compelled to obey?' We would say in reply, 'they are compelled by their own free choice, for Allah *Glorified is He* let them choose, and they chose compulsion.'

Regarding the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...and those who are with Him are never too proud to worship Him...' (*al-Anbiya*': 19), it means that angels continuously offer their acts of worship to Him and that they, unlike human beings, never tell lie or disbelieve in Him because they '... do not disobey Allah in whatever He has commanded them, but [always] do what they are bidden to do.' (*at-Tahrim*: 6)

Concerning the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...nor do they grow weary' (*al-Anbiya*': 19), the word *Yastahsirun* (grow weary) means to become weak,

fatigued, weary and afflicted by listlessness and exhaustion. This meaning is also clear in the saying of Allah *the Exalted*: ‘Yea, turn your vision [upon it] again and yet again, [and every time] your vision will fall back upon you, dazzled and truly defeated...’ (*al-Mulk*: 4), which means that his vision will turn to him weak, exhausted and unable to face intense light, just like when your eyes are brought in direct contact with the light of the sun or the light of a car; it goes without saying that such light hinders you from seeing since the nature and essence of light is that it enables us to see what we are unable to see.

Referring to the total obedience of angels to the commands of Allah *the Almighty* he *Glorified is He* says elsewhere in the Quran: ‘Never did the Messiah feel too proud to be Allah’s servant, nor do the angels who are near unto Him ...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 172) As a matter of fact, angels get their dignity from being totally obedient to Allah *the Exalted*.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

يُسَبِّحُونَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لَا يَفْتُرُونَ ﴿٢٠﴾

**They glorify Him tirelessly night and day [20]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 20)**

This verse plainly indicates that angels worship Allah *the Almighty* and extol His Limitless Glory. It also tells that neither weakness nor lassitude afflicts them, nor do they feel any tiredness from their worship of Him; in other words, they are not too proud to worship and to submit to Him. This meaning is also deduced from the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘Behold, those who are near unto your Lord are never too proud to worship Him, and they extol His Limitless Glory and prostrate themselves before Him [alone].’ (*al-A'raf*: 206)

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَمْ اتَّخَذُوا إِلَهًا مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ هُمْ يُنشِرُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

**Have they chosen any gods from the earth who can
give life to the dead? [21] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 21)**

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* asks the deniers of the Truth about the reason why they are heedless of all of these facts mentioned up till now; He

also asks them whether they have any gods other than Him *the Almighty* the One Who created the heaven, the earth and what it is between and the One to Whom belongs all the creation including man, jinns and angels. It is as if He asks about the reason why they turn away from Me to these false gods. Are they better than Me?! Are they closer to them than Me?! It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* denies their turning away from Him, even though He is the One Who grants them all of the blessings and to Whom belongs all what in the heavens and the earth and what is between.

As for the saying of Allah *Glorified is He* ‘...who can give life to the dead?’ (*al-Anbiya*: 21), the Arabic word *Yunshirun* means having the ability to give life to the dead. It goes without saying that none but Allah *the Almighty* has the ability to resurrect the dead.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

لَوْ كَانَ فِيهِمَا آلِهَةٌ إِلَّا اللَّهُ لَفَسَدَتَا فَسُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَرْشِ عَمَّا يَصِفُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

If there had been in the heavens or earth any gods but Him, both heavens and earth would be in ruins: God, Lord of the Throne, is far above the things they say [22]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 22)

This verse clearly tells that despite the deniers of the Truth turning away from believing in Allah *the Almighty* to Whom belongs dominion over the heavens and earth and with His Limitless Glory all creatures extol, there is in fact no other god in existence; this is a point which is derived from the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘If there had been in the heavens or earth any gods but He, both the heavens and the earth would be in ruins...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 22) As a matter of fact, the speech is still relating to the heavens and the earth.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...any gods but He...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 22), the particle *Illa* (but) indicates exception; in other words, it is used to exclude what follows it from the activity of what precedes it. For example, if you were to say, ‘All the people came except Mohamed’, this means that Mohamed is the only one who did not come. So, if we understand this verse in question in the light of this rule, the meaning will be that had there been any gods other

than Allah *the Exalted* the heavens and the earth would have been in ruins. It is thus clear that *illa* here gives the meaning of *Ghayr*. This meaning is also clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* about Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*: ‘And this was revealed unto Nuh (Noah): “Never will any of your people believe [other than] those who have already attained to faith”’ (*Hud*: 36) The meaning of this part of the verse being examined will thus be: ‘If there were in the heavens and earth things described as being gods other than Allah, the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into ruin. It is thus impossible for there to be a partner beside Allah *the Almighty*.’

Similar to this verse is the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘Say: "If there were, as some people assert, [other] deities side by side with Him, surely [even] they would have to strive to find a way unto Him Who is enthroned on His Almightyness"' (*al-Isra'*: 42).

By these verses of the Quran, Allah *the Exalted* wants us to use our minds to reach the correct conclusion, asking us to suppose that there are gods other than Him, ‘Say: “If there were, as some people assert, [other] deities side by side with Him ...”’ (*al-Isra'*: 42), yet if this was supposed, then ‘... surely [even] they would have to strive to find a way unto Him Who is enthroned on His Almightyness.’ (*al-Isra'*: 42) The word ‘a way’ in this verse means ‘a path’ which means that they sought a path unto Him Who is enthroned on His Almightyness, that is, unto Allah *the Almighty* but why? It is because the deniers of the Truth want to argue and compete with Allah *the Almighty* as to how He seized Divinity and Dominion over the heavens and the earth or because they want to come near to Him and seize divinity from Him, exactly as He gave effective power to fire, for example, from within His Power, for fire does not act by itself; rather, it acts by the Will of Allah *the Almighty* the One Who created fire, which is proven by the fact that He is the One Who caused fire to lose its power in the story of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*; Allah says: ‘[But] We said: "O, fire! Be you cool and [a source of] inner peace for Ibrahim (Abraham)!"’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 69)

Allah *the Almighty* also says: ‘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). This noble verse, among many others, confirms that Allah *Glorified is He* exists and that He *the Almighty* is One, with no partner with Him *Glorified is He*.

But on the assumption that the Arabic word for 'but' is a particle of exception, it confirms that He *the Almighty* exists, but does not preclude His having a partner nor affirm His Oneness. Therefore, this particle is actually a noun meaning 'other than'. Since this word ends indeclinably, its grammatical inflection appears according to what follows it. So, the grammatical status of the Arabic word for 'but' which appears in the verse in question before the Word of Majesty, 'Allah', is actually the grammatical status of the Arabic word for 'other than'. But we may ask here, 'Why would the heavens and the earth fall into ruin if there had been therein any gods other than Allah *the Almighty*?' This is due to the fact that in this case there are only two possibilities: either these gods are equal as to the attributes of perfection, or else one of them possesses the attributes of perfection while the others possess the attributes of imperfection. On the assumption that they all possess the attributes of perfection, do they hold the same position in the creation of the things, or do they differ from one another? If they held the same position in the creation of something, this would constitute an unnecessary repetition; for one of them will create and thereby leave nothing for the other to do, given the fact that there is only one agent for each effect. Whereas if they differ in the creation of things, one of them will say: 'This is for me', while the other will say: 'This is for me;' they thus will surely try to overcome one another.

On the other hand, if only one of them possesses the attributes of perfection, while the other possesses the attribute of imperfection, then it is not appropriate for the latter one to be a god. In this manner, Allah *Glorified is He* illustrates the examples in various ways in order to prove, by the means of the revelation and logic, that there is no god but Him and that it is false to associate gods with Him *Glorified is He*.

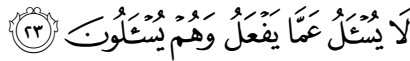
Likewise, He *the Almighty* refutes the claims of those who call on other gods besides Him such as those who say, 'Ezra is the son of Allah', or 'The Messiah is the son of Allah', and those who take the angels as gods apart from Him. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'Those whom they call upon,

themselves seek the means of access to their Lord—whoever of them is nearest...’ (*al-Isra'*: 57). So, if these gods whom they call upon beside Allah *the Almighty* are themselves seeking a means of access to Him, in order to come nearer to Him, how can they be true gods?

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘Allah, Lord of the Throne, is far above the things they say.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 22) Here, He *the Almighty* declares Himself to be far above what they utter of blasphemies, lies, and calumnies.

As for the word ‘throne’, it is used to refer to the elevated seat on which a king sits, and it is a sign of supreme authority and domination, a meaning which is clear in Allah’s saying about the Queen of Sheba: ‘Surely I found a woman ruling over them, and she has been given abundance and she has a mighty throne.’ (*an-Naml*: 23) So when He *the Almighty* says: ‘...Lord of the Throne...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 22), He turns one’s attention to His Throne which nothing surpasses and with which no other throne contends.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about Himself:



**He cannot be called to account for anything He
does, whereas they will be called to account [23]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 23)**

Allah *the Almighty* will not be questioned about what He does because both the questioner and the one questioned possess ranks, with the latter usually being of a lower rank than the former. Therefore, there is no one who can question Allah *the Almighty* about what He does, whereas He *Glorified is He* questions mankind and calls them to account. For this reason, some wise people say, ‘The proof that Allah has no partner is His creation of so-and-so because if He had a partner, His partner would oppose Him in this matter.’ Thus, there is no one superior to Him *the Almighty* so that s/he could ask Him, ‘Why did you do such and such?’

Afterwards, He *Glorified is He* says:

أَمِ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ ءَالِهَةً قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ هَذَا ذِكْرٌ مَنْ مَعِيَ وَذِكْرُ مَنْ قَبْلِي بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ الْحَقَّ فَهُمْ مُعْرِضُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

**Have they chosen to worship other gods instead of Him? Say, ‘Bring your proof. This is the Scripture for those who are with me and the Scripture for those who went before me.’ But most of them do not recognize the truth, so they pay no heed [24]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 24)**

As long as they took gods apart from Allah *the Almighty* then they should produce the proof that their objects of worship are true gods. Just as Allah *the Almighty* — Who is the True God — brought irrefutable proofs of His Existence, Power, Oneness and Uniqueness, they, likewise, should produce their proofs. As a matter of fact, being unable to offer proofs or evidence on their existence clearly indicates that these are false gods, especially if we take into account the fact that they neither revealed a Book, nor sent a Messenger, nor sent down a Divine Way of Guidance.

Where are these gods, then? If they have no knowledge of what happens, then they are heedless gods, not suited to occupy this exalted rank. If, on the other hand, they are knowledgeable of what happens, why did they not oppose the realities and defend themselves? Clearly, they are not capable of such opposition.

So, Allah’s saying: ‘Bring your proof’ (*al-Anbiya*: 24) is a challenge for them to produce a proof of the existence of any god other than Him *the Almighty*. The word ‘proof’ here refers to the existence of the universe in this wondrous order; for have you ever heard that another alleged god said, ‘I am the one who brought this all into being’? Furthermore, has this alleged god ever sent a Messenger with a miracle?

Thus, their claim of the existence of others gods besides Allah *the Almighty* is a lie, a fabrication and an invention sprung from their own selves because they are not knowledgeable people. However, this does not mean that they were not given knowledge; no, they were given it, but they turned away from hearing it, a point which is clear in Allah’s saying: ‘But most of them do not recognise the truth, so they pay no heed.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 24) It is as though the

truth has features by means of which it is known so that s/he who proceeds to know it will surely find it. By contrast, how could those who turn away from knowledge come to know about the Truth? It is thus clear that the Truth does exist, and those who seek it will surely find it through proof and evidence.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَّسُولٍ إِلَّا نُوحِيَ إِلَيْهِ
 أَنَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنَا فَاعْبُدُونِ ﴿٢٥﴾

**We never sent any messenger before you
 [Muhammad] without revealing to him:
 ‘There is no god but Me, so serve Me’ [25]
 (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 25)**

This verse clearly indicates that Allah’s Oneness is the most essential topic in all the Divine Messages, starting from the first Message of Adam *peace be upon him* to the last Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. All the Messengers and Prophets were sent with the Message that ‘there is no god but Allah’. This is the most important topic in all the Divine Messages.

In Allah’s saying: ‘...any messenger...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 25), the word ‘any’ is used in the sense of inclusion and generalisation, that is, every single Messenger of Allah. If a person says to you, ‘I have some money,’ this statement may mean that s/he has a little bit of money, some coins, for example, which are too few to be called money. But if s/he says to you, ‘I do not have any money,’ then s/he categorically negates the idea of having money, that is, s/he does not have even a single penny.

Therefore, the issue of association of partners with Allah *the Almighty* or the denial of His Existence is but a new false issue that those deniers of the Truth made up.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَقَالُوا أَخَذَ الرَّحْمَنُ وَلَدًا سُبْحَنَهُ ۚ بَلْ عِبَادٌ مُّكْرَمُونَ ﴿٢٦﴾

And they say⁽¹⁾: ‘The Lord of Mercy has taken offspring for Himself.’ May He be exalted! No! They are only His honoured servants [26] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 26)

When Allah says ‘May He be exalted’ (*al-Anbiya*: 26), He declares Himself to be far above having a son. He *Glorified is He* has honoured servants who are the angels.

Allah *the Almighty* then mentions some of the qualities of these honoured angels, saying:

لَا يَسْقُونَهُ ۖ بِالْقَوْلِ ۖ وَهُمْ بِأَمْرِهِ يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٧﴾

They do not speak before He speaks and they act by His command [27] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 27)

Although the angels are honoured servants, they do not speak before Allah *the Almighty* speaks, that is, they do not say what He has not said, nor do they speak before Him *the Almighty* even if what they would say is in accordance with His Will. Furthermore, they do not do what He does not command them to do.

In this regard, it is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is giving us an indication of some of the evil aspects of the society, which is to see the great, honoured ones fashioning for themselves temporal power, saying what their Lord did not say, doing what He did not order them to do and giving precedence to their orders over His.

As for His saying: ‘...and they act by His command’ (*al-Anbiya*: 27), it means that they carry out His Commands; when He bids, they act, and when He forbids, they refrain.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi says, ‘This verse is revealed concerning the tribe of Khuza’a since they said, “The angels are Allah’s daughters”, thus used to worship them, seeking their intercession for them.’ See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame’ Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4457.

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَلَا يَشْفَعُونَ
إِلَّا لِمَنِ ارْتَضَىٰ وَهُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَتِهِ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

He knows what is before them and what is behind them, and they cannot intercede without His permission — indeed they themselves stand in awe of Him [28] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 28)

The discourse here is about the honoured servants among the angels. Although Allah *the Almighty* honoured them and favoured them, He nonetheless did not leave them alone, free from monitoring and observation; rather, He knows what is before them and what is behind them. He also did not leave the matter of intercession to them, so that they may intercede for whomever they like. On the contrary: ‘...they cannot intercede without His Permission.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 28)

This means that they do not intercede except for those whom Allah *the Almighty* loves and with whom He is pleased. So, beware of thinking that when you say ‘the angels are Allah’s daughters’, or when you worship them apart from Allah that they will intercede for you before Him. This is due to the fact that the honoured angels do not intercede for any but those whom Allah *the Almighty* loves and is pleased with from among the believers.

You should not, then, think that they are: ‘...honoured servants’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 26) in the sense of being spoiled, able to do whatever pleases them. On the contrary, in spite of being honoured, they observe their bounds and do not transgress them, for they are given all of this honour only because they are obedient and adherent to Allah’s Commands. Along with this obedience, they: ‘...themselves stand in awe of Him.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 28) Thus, despite this honour, they do not rest at ease and security, but rather tremble fearfully and apprehensively in awe of Allah *the Almighty*.

For that reason, He *Glorified is He* then says:

وَمَنْ يَقُلْ مِنْهُمْ إِنِّي إِلَهٌ مِّنْ دُونِهِ فَذَلِكَ نَجْزِيهِ
 جَهَنَّمَ كَذَلِكَ نَجْزِي الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

**If any of them were to claim, ‘I am a god beside Him,’
 We would reward them with Hell: this is how We
 reward evildoers [29] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 29)**

So, supposing that one of them made such a statement – for this did not actually take place, nor is it possible for them to say it – then: ‘We would reward them with Hell: this is how We reward evildoers.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 29) What is the reason for that? It is because they would have committed the highest level of wrongdoing, which is associating partners with Allah *Glorified is He* in worship, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: ‘...most surely polytheism is a grievous iniquity.’ (*Luqman*: 13)

Therefore, despite being angels and being honoured, Allah *the Almighty* threatens them: ‘if one of them should make that claim, he would be requited with Hell.’ This fact serves as reassurance for all the creation.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to offer proof for His Uniqueness which He strongly emphasised in the preceding verse. In fact, even though Allah’s Uniqueness embodies His Unity, there is a distinction between them; they are not synonyms as some people mistakenly think. This is because ‘the One’ and ‘the Unique’ are two distinct attributes of Allah *the Almighty* as He says: ‘Say: “He, Allah, is One”’ (*al-Ikhlâs*: 1); and elsewhere He *Glorified is He* also says: ‘...and He is the Unique, the Supreme.’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 16)

‘The Unique’ means the One for Whom there is no equivalent. Allah *the Unique* is One in His Essence, that is, He does not have parts. So, His Uniqueness precludes that there exists a single one like Him, and His Oneness precludes that He is, in His Essence, comprised of parts. This is so because if He *Glorified is He* were comprised of parts, every part would come to be in need of another part to form His entirety. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* is neither holistic nor partial.

Allah *the Almighty* chose for the purpose of offering proof of His Uniqueness the universally witnessed signs of the cosmos which no one can

deny, as they are regulated, clear and beneficial, all at the same time. Here, we should take into account that the sign could be clear, but for which one has no pressing need. But the human being would be acutely aware of the benefit of the sun if it were absent from him, and, likewise, s/he would be acutely aware of the benefit of the rain when the sky ceases raining, and so on. Thus, witnessing these signs and benefiting from them calls for paying attention to them, so that when they are absent from you, you wait and watch attentively for their returning anew.

Allah says:

أَوَلَمْ يَرِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا
فَفَقَعْنَاهُمَا وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

Are the disbelievers not aware that the heavens and the earth used to be joined together and that We ripped them apart, that We made every living thing from water? Will they not believe? [30] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 30)

Allah's saying: 'Are the disbelievers not aware...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 30) means: 'have they, i.e. the disbelievers become blind that they do not perceive this amazingly crafted and masterfully engineered and ordered creation? So, they disbelieve because they are blind and unable to see Allah's signs in the universe'.

Here arises a question, which is, 'How can Allah *Glorified is He* say: 'Are the disbelievers not aware...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 30), while the discussion here is about the heavens and the earth, and He has said: 'I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor of the creation of their own souls; nor could I take those who lead (others) astray for aiders' (*al-Kahf*: 51)? The creation of the heavens and the earth was not witnessed by anyone, nor did anyone inform them about it, so how would they have seen it?

We spoke previously about the Quranic usage of the verb 'to see' and said that it is used in different senses: sometimes it is used in the sense of visual sight; and sometimes it is used in the sense of knowledge, as in Allah's saying: 'Do you [Prophet] not see how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1) As Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

did not see or witness this event – since he was born in the same year – the meaning thus is: ‘Do you, O Prophet Muhammad, not know?’ So, why does the meaning of the verb ‘to see’ turn from the optic perception to the intellectual one despite the fact that the sight of the eye is the most certain source of knowledge to the point that people say, ‘With the eye there is no “where”,’ that is, there is nothing which the eye does not see?

Scholars replied that Allah *the Almighty* wants to inform Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with the following, ‘Even though you did not see it with your own eyes, your Lord informed you about it; and being informed by Allah *the Almighty* is more reliable than seeing it with your own eyes because it is possible for your eyes to deceive you, or for you to see things without paying attention, whereas information received from Allah *the Almighty* is absolutely reliable, free from all deception.’ A relevant example of this is Allah’s saying: ‘Do you not see that We have sent the devils against the unbelievers, inciting them by incitement?’ (*Maryam*: 83)

But, how would they come to have an intellectual view with regard to the creation of the heavens and the earth? Scholars replied, ‘This is because when the human being sees this amazing creation, s/he must ask him/herself – even out of his/her curiosity– ‘From where did this amazing creation come?’ Naturally, the human being turns toward things that are amazing and asks about them, even if s/he has no interest in them and derives no benefit from them. So, what do you think would be the case regarding something which benefits him/her?

Thus, they should have considered the following question: ‘Who is it that informed Messenger Muhammad of this matter?’ Moreover, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* produced a miracle confirming his truthfulness in his transmission from Allah *the Almighty* and informing them of that about which they were inquiring. Since the Speech is from Allah, then it is absolutely truthful, for: ‘...who is truer of word than Allah?’ (*an-Nisa*: 122)

The Quran was revealed in the Arabian Peninsula which was populated by the disbelievers who worshipped idols, and by the Jews, as well as some Christians, both known as the people of the Book. These Jews and Christians, who believed in Allah, His Messengers, and His Books, used to argue with

the disbelieving idolaters, saying, 'When Prophet Muhammad appears, we will follow him, and with him we will kill you, like the peoples of 'Ad and Iram.'⁽¹⁾ Despite that, when there came to them that which they knew from Allah *the Almighty* they disbelieved in it and made an alliance with the disbelievers, forming with them a single front and a single party united only by their aversion towards Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and towards what was set forth to them of the true religion. This is similar to what is happening right now, with all of the eastern and western camps uniting together against Islam.

Thus, after the advent of Islam, the people of the Book and the disbelievers united in a single camp against Islam. The disbelievers used to listen to the people of the Book, and in the Torah there is a discourse on the creation of the heavens and earth, which says: 'The first thing which Allah created in creation was a jewel. Then He looked upon it with awe so that a reaction took place within it giving rise to vapour and smoke. The smoke rose above and formed the sky, and the residue remained and formed the earth.'

In this manner, a bit of knowledge came to them concerning the creation, and that is why Allah *the Almighty* says here: 'Are the disbelievers not aware that the heavens and the earth used to be joined together and that We ripped them apart....' (*al-Anbiya'*: 30)

The orientalist casted doubts on Allah's saying that the earth and heavens, '...used to be joined together...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 30). They said, 'As "the heavens"

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir cites that Mohamed ibn Ishaq narrated on the authority of 'Asim ibn 'Amr that Qatada Al-Ansari said on the authority of some sheikhs, 'Concerning us, by Allah, and concerning them—that is, concerning the Helpers and the Jews who were their neighbours—this story was revealed, that is, Allah's saying: 'And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have, and aforesaid they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieve, but when there came to them (the Prophet) that which they did not recognize, they disbelieved in Him' (*al-Baqara*:89) They said, 'We had overwhelmed them by force for a time in the period before Islam when we were the polytheists and they were the people of the Book, and thus they would say, 'A Prophet will be sent soon whom we will follow. His time has approached, and with him we will kill you like those of the tribe of 'Ad and Iram' then, when Allah sent His Messenger from Quraysh and we followed him, they disbelieved in him.' See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim*, 124/1.

is plural and 'the earth' likewise has a plural form, the grammatical rule requires that we use the plural pronoun instead of the dual.' But the one who raised this objection does not realise that Allah *the Almighty* considers the heaven here as a type and the earth as a type. So, the intended meaning here is 'heavenly substance and earthly substance', which are dual.

The Quran, being set forth in the Arab manner of speaking which is based on perspicacity, intelligence and a nimbleness of understanding, contains many instances similar to this. Consider, for example, Allah's saying: '...And if two parties of the believers quarrel, make peace between them...' (*al-Hujurat*: 9). Here, Allah *the Almighty* does not use the verb 'to quarrel' in the dual form because a party, even if singular, comprises a group. So, fighting does not take place between one faction and another, but rather, between the individuals belonging to each faction. Therefore, we note that when the Quran speaks about fighting, the plural is employed. On the other hand, when we come to make peace, we see that peace is not made between these individuals; but rather, between a representative of each faction. As peace is made through two individuals representing each party, the statement reverts to the dual; Allah says: '...make peace between them; but if one of them acts wrongfully towards the other, fight that which acts wrongfully until it returns to Allah's command; then if it returns, make peace between them with justice....' (*al-Hujurat*: 9)

Here, to 'be joined together' means something cohering together and contiguous. As for Allah's saying: '...We ripped them apart...' (*al-Anbiya*: 30), it means that He *the Almighty* separated them and took away that coherence. We should note that what is mentioned in the Torah to the effect that Allah *the Almighty* created a jewel and then looked upon it with awe so that such and such happened to it is confirmed by Allah's saying in the Quran: 'Then He directed Himself to the heaven and it is a vapour, so He said to it and to the earth: Come both, willingly or unwillingly....' (*Fussilat*: 11)

When the scholars apply themselves to the verses concerning the cosmos, they do so according to the different schools of interpretation and their ability to make personal reasoning. As a matter of fact, every scholar arrives at his/her own understanding in accordance with his/her level of education and knowledge.

The ancient Arabs did not have much knowledge about cosmic phenomena. For example, the Arabs did not know about the laws of gravity or the sphericity and movements of the earth. So, had the Quran mentioned the likes of these phenomena which his/her intellectual faculties did not perceive and which his/her education did not include at that time, s/he would have turned away from this discourse which s/he would not understand. You can imagine what it would be like if it were said to him/her, for example, 'The earth is a sphere which rotates along with us and everything else, including oceans and mountains, etc.'

As the Quran is first and foremost a Book containing a Divine Way of Guidance on what one should and should not do, everything connected with it is presented clearly, without any obscurity. As for the affairs of the cosmos which are subject to human education and civilisation developments, only a general concept is given about them. These general concepts await the reflective minds to bring their relevant phenomena to light one after another. Allah *the Almighty* gives us a mere intimation and leaves it to contemplative minds to complete the picture.

The scholars of Islam have held two positions on this matter, both of which emanate from love for Allah's religion, ardent devotion to His Book and a genuine desire to confirm the veracity of the cosmic facts which the Quran mentioned more than 14 centuries ago and which modern science has just known about nowadays.

The first position is held by those scholars who used to say that there is evidence in the Quran for every new discovery, thus they say, 'The Quran arrived at this fact before modern science did, and Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was truthful in his transmission from Allah.'

Those who maintained the second position feared yet to interpret the Quran according to the theories which had not been proven yet; otherwise, they would have connected Allah's Book with something which could be proven false afterwards.

The true position yet is to make a distinction between scientific theory and scientific fact, for the theory is a matter which is still subject to research and study, thus has not been confirmed yet. Therefore, people say, 'That statement

is theoretical', meaning that it requires something to corroborate it in reality. On the other hand, the scientific fact is something which undergoes the process of experimentation, and then its correctness is confirmed in practice. We thus become sure that it is a fact that will not change.

We must not, therefore, connect the Quran with a their, which permits either truth or falsehood. By so doing, mankind will not waver in understanding the Quran, nor will s/he accuse us of interpreting it according to our own caprices. As for the confirmed scientific fact, however, once established in an irrefutable way, there is nothing to prevent us from connecting it with the Quran.

Let us give an example of the sphericity of the earth to fully illustrate this point. When the scientists first asserted it, many people objected, provoked an outcry over it and even wrote books about their opposition to it. What is more, among these objectors were people declaring those who upheld this view to be disbelievers on the grounds that the Quran did not clearly mention this matter. Then, when knowledge progressed and sufficient proofs confirming this theory abounded, they saw that other planets such as the sun and the moon, were spherical, so why would the earth not likewise be so?

Likewise, if you stand, for example, on the shore of the ocean and look at a ship coming from afar, you will not see anything of it except the edge of its sail, and will not see the rest of the ship until it comes near to you. This indicates that the surface of the earth is not flat, but that there is a bending in it, which in turn indicates its sphericity.

Afterwards, when the age of space exploration began and the scientists went into outer space and returned to earth with photographs, its sphericity became a fact. In this way, a theory evolved into an irrefutable, undisputed scientific fact. Even those who opposed it when it was but a theory cannot do anything except to accept and believe in it.

The same applies to the rotation of the earth, for who in ancient times would believe that it is the earth – along with everything on it, including waters, buildings and so on – which revolves around the sun? In order to understand this phenomenon, you should take a small jug of water and tie it with a string from above, then swing it rapidly in a circle, from down below to up above.

You will notice that when the opening of the jug points downward, it does not spill any water. So, what is the reason for this? It is because the speed of the rotation surpasses the gravitation of the earth which pulls the water towards it. This is proven by the fact that if you become lax in your rotation of the jug, the water will spill from the opening, as gravitation will inevitably have an effect. As a matter of fact, it is the gravitation of the earth that holds the water upon it throughout its rotation.

But we must not adopt a new theory produced in the phase of research and study and then happily connect it with the Quran. This happened in the beginnings of the modern period and scientific revolution when the scientists discovered the solar system, which at first comprised only seven planets ordered according to their nearness in position to the sun, as follows: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and Uranus.

Here some of the famous scholars—including Sheikh Al-Maraghi—hurried to assert that these planets were the seven heavens, and wrote treatises asserting that the Quran was the first to say this. Then, as the days passed, scientists discovered an eighth planet (Neptune), and then a ninth.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, to connect a theory before it is scientifically confirmed with the Quran is a big mistake. It is possible that when newer instruments and bigger microscopes become available to them—as some astronomers say—they will discover many other planets. This is because our solar system is but 1 among 100 million systems in the galaxy which we, following the Greeks, call the Milky Way.⁽²⁾ In fact, these planets which we see are vast and immense to an extent surpassing the human imagination. For example, the sun which we see is 125 million times bigger than the earth,⁽³⁾ and there are planets big enough to encompass 1 million suns within them. The distance

(1) The discovery of this ninth planet (Pluto) did not take place until the year 1930. See *Mawsu'at Al-Ma'rifa*, p. 37.

(2) The first person to describe the broad light beam known as the Milky Way was Democritus, who thought that the Milky Way was simply composed of an abundant number of stars so as to be impossible for anyone to distinguish between them. Modern astronomical telescopes have confirmed the correctness of this view. See *Mawsu'at Al-Ma'rifa*, p. 5.

(3) If the sun were an empty sphere, it could encompass 1,300,000 spheres the size of the earth before it would be filled.' See *Mawsu'at Al-Ma'rifa*, p. 22.

between us and the sun is estimated by 8 light minutes, and a light minute is calculated by what is travelled in 60 seconds, with 1 second of speed including 186,000 miles, that is, 800,000 kilometres.⁽¹⁾

As for the distance between the earth and the Andromeda Galaxy, it is calculated by light years, not seconds, and is estimated to be 100 light years away. The brightest star, Sirius, on the other hand, which Allah *the Almighty* mentions as one of His Favours, saying: 'And that He is the Lord of the Sirius' (*an-Najm*: 49) is farther away than that. Now, all of these planets and stars are in the lower heaven alone, so what connection does this have with the seven heavens about which they spoke?

For this reason, many fans of these scholars tried to erase this matter from their books in order that it is not taken as a flaw and as a mistake against their intellectual methods.

Also, among the incorrect theories which they maintained is the following: the solar system, including the earth, came into being because of the rotation of the blazing mass of the sun, from which some fragments broke off, issued forth, and then cooled with the passage of time. In this way, the earth was created, and when the earth cooled, it became suitable for plant life, then animals, and then man. They substantiated this theory by the point that the interior of the earth remains blazing to this day, erupting forth in volcanoes such as Mount Vesuvius,⁽²⁾ for example.

Now, the logic would require us to say, 'If the earth is a fragment of the sun which has separated off from it, then it would be natural for the sun to cool with the passage of time and for its heat to lessen. But the facts, to the contrary, prove that this theory is unsound. Furthermore, their stance requires that they actually know something about the creation of the heavens and the earth which Allah *the Almighty* did not reveal. In this regard, He *the Almighty*

(1) That is, the sun is distant from the earth by approximately 94 million miles, and its light, which travels at a speed of 186,000 miles per second, reaches us in just more than eight seconds. See *Mawsu'at Al-Ma'rifa*, p. 36.

(2) Mount Vesuvius is situated at a distance of 11 kilometers from the city of Naples in Italy, and it is tantamount to a volcano within a volcano because it is situated in the basin crater of the inactive volcano of Mount Zuma. See *Mawsu'at Al-Ma'rifa*, p. 1012.

says: 'I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth.' (*al-Kahf*: 51)

Then, He *the Almighty* states a general principle: '...nor could I take those who lead (others) astray for aiders.' (*al-Kahf*: 51) Therefore, those who lead mankind astray are those who take them from the truth to error. Here, it is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is giving us an indication of the misguiding statements that will come into being, with some people saying, 'Such and such happened in creation.'

These details may only be known from the Creator *Glorified is He* and so stop at this boundary because our knowledge of how something was created is not a condition for benefitting from it. In fact, we benefit from Allah's creatures whether or not we understand how they were created, or how they were previously. We had benefitted from the sphericity of the earth, from the sun and from the moon, without even knowing anything about them. Moreover, scholars determined the timetables for the solar and lunar eclipses and the periods of time for calendars before the sphericity of the earth was discovered.

Let us offer an example to further illustrate this point; the illiterate man who knows nothing buys a television, for example, and learns how to turn it on and how to use it, without knowing anything about its formation, its mode of operation, or its transmission of images and sounds, and so on. So, you should take what is beautiful in creation and benefit from it, just as Allah *the Almighty* created it for you, without delving into the source of its creation or the manner of its formation, just as if an appetising dish were placed before you, would you search to know who cooked it?

The opinions of the scholars concerning the verse in question and the meaning of the heavens and the earth being 'joined together' and then being 'ripped apart' have varied greatly. Among them are those who held the view stated by the Torah that there was a jewel which Allah *the Almighty* looked upon with awe, to which such and such happened and then it formed the heavens and the earth.

In addition, some of them held that the meaning is specific to each, the earth and the heavens, individually, and that they were never conjoined, using some verses as a proof; Allah says: 'Then let man look to his food, [24] That

We pour down the water, pouring (it) down in abundance, [25] Then We cleave the earth, cleaving (it) asunder, [26] Then We cause to grow therein the grain, [27] And grapes and clover, [28]' (*Abasa*: 24-28).

Elsewhere, He *the Almighty* says: 'So We opened the gates of the cloud with water pouring [11] And We made water to flow forth in the land in springs, so the water gathered together according to a measure already ordained. [12]' (*al-Qamar*: 11-12)

The intended meaning, then, is that the earth was 'one single entity' by itself and burst forth with plants, and the heaven was 'one single entity' and burst forth with rain.⁽¹⁾ So, Allah *the Almighty* split the heaven with the rain, and split the earth with the plants which burst forth from it, a point which is clear in His saying: 'I swear by the rain giving heavens, [11] And the earth splitting (with plants); [12]' (*at-Tariq*: 11-12).

Furthermore, He *the Almighty* says about the heaven: 'And on the day when the heaven shall burst asunder with the clouds....' (*al-Furqan*: 25) On the assumption that the word 'heaven' means everything above you and which overshadows you, the clouds may also be said to be part from the heaven.

According to this view, we understand that the 'ripping apart' is not the parting asunder of heaven and earth, but the parting of each of them individually. In any case, this understanding does not yield a new judgment, but is an interpretation in accord with reason. The passage of time may confirm it, or may instead bring something else. What is important is that neither of the two interpretations prohibits the other.

In regard to Allah's saying: '...We made every living thing from water...' (*al-Anbiya*: 30), the representatives of the second interpretation say, 'Since it is mentioned here, water must definitely have a connection with the heavens and the earth's being 'joined together' and being 'ripped apart.'

(1) This opinion was held by 'Ikrima, 'Atiyya, Ibn Zayd, and Ibn 'Abbas as well, according to what Al-Mahdawi mentioned: 'The heavens were one single entity and did not rain, and the earth was one single entity and did not sprout. Then heaven was split open by the rain, and the earth by plants.' See *Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4460.

We notice that the verse does not say 'everything living' but rather: '...We made every living thing from water....' (*al-Anbiya'*: 30) They, i.e. the followers of the second interpretation inferred from this that what is intended by 'life' here is the human life which we live, yet they did not realise that water is included in the formation of everything. This is because the animals and plants live on water, and if they fail to find it, they die and come to an end. Likewise, within the lowest animals and plants there is also a watery element. In fact, everything possessing radiance, or moistness or softness has water within it. So Allah's saying: '...every living thing...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 30) refers to everything of this kind in existence.

It is a matter of scientific fact that everything has a life, and that everything has water within it, as is proved by Allah's saying: 'O you who believe! Answer (the call of) Allah and His Apostle when he calls you to that which gives you life....' (*al-Anfal*: 24) Yet Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the believers in this manner even though they are already living! So, the intended meaning is that He *the Almighty* will give them another valuable life. This is because their life in this world is limited, and that is why they are called to another, eternal life, which is the life of the Hereafter.

That entity which is joined to the physical body so that life enters into it is called a spirit, for Allah *the Almighty* says: 'So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My Spirit....' (*al-Hijr*: 29)

Likewise, the Way of Guidance which descends from the heaven to guide the people is called a *ruh* (spirit), and so is called the angel who brings it down. This is based on the fact that the Divine Way of Guidance gives us an eternal, everlasting life which never ceases.

If we descend lower than this, we would find that animals also possess life, for they perish and die, and so do the plants, for if you deprive them of water, they dry up, wilt and come to an end. Finally, the inanimate objects possess life as well, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying: '...everything is perishable but He....' (*al-Qasas*: 88)

Here, He *the Almighty* describes everything which can be called a 'thing' as being 'perishable'; and, as perishing is the opposite of life, everything which perishes must necessarily first possess life. Have you not read His saying:

‘...that he who would perish might perish by clear proof, and he who would live might live by clear proof...’? (*al-Anfal*: 42) The opposite of life, therefore, is perishing.

Then, every one of the created things, all the way down to inanimate objects, possesses life, and water plays a role in its formation, as Allah *the Almighty* says in the verse in question: ‘...We made every living thing from water...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 30).

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* concludes this verse by saying: ‘...Will they not believe?’ (*al-Anbiya*: 30) So, how can they be blind to these signs which have been pointed out to them, and refuse to believe in the Oneness of Allah *the Almighty*? They should have turned their attention to these amazing signs from which they could derive benefit. How can they not do so, while human beings today, upon seeing amazing modern inventions, devices and even toys, wonder about their inventors and their lives, education, etc.?

It is more appropriate that we turn our attention to the Most Great Creator, Who amazingly created for us this cosmos, for being heedless of Allah’s Signs and turning away from them is an unnatural state which does not suit the people of understanding.

Allah says:

وَجَعَلْنَا فِي الْأَرْضِ رَوَاسِيَ أَنْ تَمِيدَ بِهِمْ وَجَعَلْنَا
فِيهَا فِجَاجًا سُبُلًا لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

**And We put firm mountains on the earth, lest it
should sway under them, and set broad paths on
it, so that they might follow the right direction [31]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 31)**

The words ‘firm mountains’ means fixed, immovable mountains. Elsewhere, Allah *the Almighty* also describes the mountains as ‘pegs’, for He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And the mountains [its] pegs?’ (*an-Naba*: 7) In this verse, He *the Almighty* compares the mountains in relation to the earth with pegs in relation to a tent.

Then He *the Almighty* mentions the reason for this setting up of firm mountains, saying: ‘...lest it sway under them...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 31), that is, for

fear that the earth tilts, shakes and be set in motion with mankind. If the earth had been created in the state of fixity, it would not sway or be set in motion, and would not require being stabilised by the mountains. But this is not the case, and that is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘And you see the mountains, you think them to be solid, and they shall pass away as the passing away of the cloud....’ (*an-Naml*: 88)

So, it is not strange that we know today that the mountains move—though you do not see their movement because they are fixed in respect of your position in relation to them. This is because you have the same movement, just as if you and your companion were on a boat and the boat moved along with you both; you would not be aware of the movement of your companion because you have the same movement.

Allah *the Almighty* compared the movement of the mountains with the passing of the clouds, for the clouds do not pass by means of a self-produced movement, but rather by the propulsion of the winds. Likewise, the mountains do not move by means of a self-produced movement, but rather by the movement of the earth as a whole, which is a clear proof of the movement of the earth.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and set broad paths on it....’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 31) This means that one of the manifestations of Allah’s Wisdom is that He set up for us on the earth paths on which we may travel. This is due to the fact that if the mountains were a single mass filling the surface of the earth, it would not be suitable for the human beings’ life and movement. As for His saying: ‘...broad paths...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 31), it means wide paths in the valleys and places of level, soft ground. In another passage, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘That you may go along therein in wide paths.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 31) The object pronoun in Allah’s saying: ‘...and set broad paths on it....’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 31) may refer to either ‘the mountains’ or ‘the earth’, for on both there are paths on which the people travel—on the mountains in the form of trails and valleys.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the reason for this appointing of paths, saying: ‘...so that they might follow the right direction.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 31) ‘Following the right direction’ here bears two meanings, as follows: either to find their way to the Creator of these paths and thereby be guided by them to

the marvellous Maker of all things, or to find their way to different countries and places of different directions. In former times, they used to make of the mountains as indications and signs and make them signposts, to the extent that they used to describe things by means of their positions in relation to the mountains. So, they would say, 'Such-and-such a place is near to such-and-such a mountain, and to the right of such-and-such a mountain.' One of their poets said:

Take the inner track of Hirshay⁽¹⁾ or its backside, for
on both sides of Hirshay there is a path.⁽²⁾

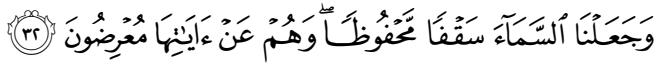
So, His saying, 'Follow the right direction' (*al-Anbiya'*: 31) here can carry both of these two meanings, just as in Allah's saying: 'and landmarks; and by the stars they find the right way.' (*an-Nahl*: 16) This indicates that they find their way to the paths and the directions by the means of the stars. An Arab used to say, for example, 'Travel with the Pleiades to your right—or the Pole Star, Canopus, or another star', for they were acquainted with the locations of these stars and travelled by their guidance.

Another possible interpretation is that they find their way to the knowledge that the stars have a connection with the life of man. In the past, they used to say 'So-and-so's star fell', as though every star in the sky had a connection with something else. This is something which some specially qualified people know about, and they may be guided by means of the stars to something, but only on condition that they be truthful and honest, not misleading the people.

This is confirmed by Allah's saying: 'But nay! I swear by the falling of stars; [75] And most surely it is a very great oath if you only knew [76]' (*al-Waqi'a*: 75-76), which signifies that if you had knowledge of that, you would know that the stars play a major, profound role in the universe.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

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- (1) *Hirshay* is a mountain trail on the way to Mecca near to Al-Juhfa, from which one can see the sea. It includes two paths, both of which lead in the right direction. See *Ibn Mandhur, Lisan Al- 'Arab, h-r-sh*.
- (2) *In his book. Ibn Mandhur cites this verse, but did not ascribe it to anyone. See Ibn Mandhur, Lisan Al- 'Arab, h-r-sh.*



And We made the sky a well-secured canopy – yet from its wonders they turn away [32] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 32)

The sky is called a canopy because it refers to everything which overshadows you. But there is a difference between a man-made canopy, which depends on supports and props and a canopy made by the Most Great Creator, which covers the entire earth and is well secured without any supports. It is an even canopy neither swelling nor cracks.

The sky was wonderfully created by Allah *the Almighty*. He *Glorified is He* miraculously created it, as He miraculously created Adam *peace be upon him*. So, whereas every human is brought into existence as a result of the sexual relationship between man and woman, Adam was created directly by Allah *the Almighty*. That is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘He said: O Iblis! What prevented you that you should do obeisance to him whom I created with My Two Hands?’ (*Sad*: 75) Indeed, this is an extraordinary honour for Adam.

Likewise, He *the Almighty* says concerning the creation of the sky: ‘And the heaven, We raised it high with power....’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 47) In another verse, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘I swear by the heaven full of ways.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 7) That is, the sky which is tightly woven and firm. The meaning of its ‘weave’ is that its tiny particles, which are not individually perceivable due to being closely united with one another, are not completely united, but closely united as tiny particles. For that reason, you see the sky as being smooth, and so the Creator *Glorified is He* says about it: ‘He raised high its height, then put it into a right good state.’ (*an-Nazi‘at*: 28)

Consider the workmanship of human beings when one of us wants to build a wall, for example. Despite the act of building being carried out with extreme precision, some bricks inevitably protrude out from others. Then the trowel-man comes, tries to level the wall, and measures it with a level, but still some curves or bends remain in the wall. Then the painter comes and, trying to remedy these and similar faults, prepares a cosmetic paste, which becomes an essential element in the completion of the wall.

After the person exhausts all of his/her means to prepare his/her house as s/he likes, a number of days pass and then Allah *Glorified is He* exposes the faults of all these workers; for as a result of the falling of the smallest particles of dust, some faults of the workmanship appear, and all of the faults of the wall stand clearly revealed to all.

If the workmanship of human beings differs according to the difference in the skilfulness of each one of them and his/her proficiency in his/her work, then what do you think if the One Who created, built, evened and adorned is Allah *the Almighty*? In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'Who created the seven heavens one above another; you see no incongruity in the creation of the Beneficent....' (*al-Mulk*: 3)

Consider the most skilful of makers who levels a roof for a number of rooms; s/he employs one material with the same colour; inevitably, you will find a difference in the degree of the colours, even if the worker mixes the colour one time for every room. This is because when s/he takes from this mixture, you will find that which is left over to be stronger in concentration than what was taken. Also, if s/he does not complete the work on the same day, you will find that the paint which remains until the next day loses an amount of water, which also affects the degree of the colour.

As for Allah's saying: '...Well-secured' (*al-Anbiya*: 32), it means that the structure of the sky is well secured, for it is perfect, without any disparity in it. In fact, one only secures something which is precious and noble. So, from what thing does Allah *the Almighty* secure it, i.e. the heaven? In fact, He *the Almighty* secures it from moving to and fro and from falling upon the earth except by His Leave, a fact which is crystal clear in His saying: 'And He withholds the heaven from falling on the earth except with His permission....' (*al-Hajj*: 65) He *the Almighty* also says: 'And one of His Signs is that the heaven and the earth subsist by His Command....' (*ar-Rum*: 25)

Thus, the heaven has been created miraculously. As well, it is protected by means of Allah's Power, and no one except Him *Glorified is He* is able to do so. It is Allah *the Almighty* Who protects it; He does not leave its protection to the human beings, even if, strictly speaking, it does not require protection because it is His creation.

Among those matters which Allah *Glorified is He* clarified for us with regard to the sky is 'eavesdropping'. Before the advent of Islam, the devils used to eavesdrop,⁽¹⁾ but after the revelation of the Message to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, Allah *the Almighty* willed that His Message not be falsified by Satan's hearing it and then revealing it to Prophet Muhammad's enemies. So He *the Almighty* prevented the Jinn from eavesdropping by means of flames. In this connection, He *the Almighty* says: 'And certainly We have made strongholds in the heaven and We have made it fair seeming to the beholders. [16] And We guard it against every accursed devil, [17] But he who steals a hearing, so there follows him a visible flame. [18]' (*al-Hijr*: 16-18)

Then He *Glorified is He* says in the verse in question: '...yet from its wonders they turn away.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 32) In this way, He *the Almighty* declares that there are signs which are specific to the sky, for there are innumerable signs in the cosmos, thus the sky has its own signs, including the sun, the moon, the stars, and the other celestial bodies. In the same vein, we hear from the scientists at observatories that there are stars in the sky whose light has not yet reached us, from the time of Allah's creation of the earth until now, despite the fact that the speed of light is 300,000 kilometres per second. It is possible for us to understand this in the light of His saying: 'And the heaven, We raised it high with power, and most surely We are the makers of things ample.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 47)

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti says, 'Allah relates that the jinn said: 'And that we sought to reach heaven, but we found it filled with strong guards and flaming stars. [8] And that we used to sit in some of the sitting-places thereof to steal a hearing, but he who would (try to) listen now would find a flame lying in wait for him: [9]' (*al-Jinn*: 8-9) Ibn 'Abbas said, 'The devils had positions in the sky from which they would eavesdrop on the revelation. When they heard a word, they would add to it nine words—the word which they heard being truthful, and the words they added being false. When Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent, access to their positions was blocked. They narrated this to Satan—as the stars did not used to emit flames before that—and Satan said to them, 'This happening is only because of something which happened on earth.' Then he sent his army, and they found Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* standing, praying between two mountains. They came to Satan and informed him, whereupon he said, 'This is the event which happened on earth.' This narration was cited by At-Tirmidhi, who authenticated it, An-Nasa'i, Ibn Jarir, Abu Nu'aym and Al-Bayhaqi in *Dala'il An-Nubuwwa*. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 302/8.

Therefore, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gives us an approximate picture of this matter so that we do not overstrain ourselves with reflection about it, saying, 'In relation to the Dominion of Allah, the heavens and the earth and all that is between them are nothing but as a ring cast in a vast desert.'⁽¹⁾

Despite that, when the astronauts went to the moon, some of our scholars, out of their love to Islam and sincere belief in the Quran, hastened to state that these astronauts travelled to the heaven, this being the intended meaning of Allah's saying: 'Assembly of the jinn and the men! If you are able to pass through the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass through; you cannot pass through but with authority.' (*ar-Rahman*: 33) They said that the authority in the verse refers to that of knowledge, which enabled the astronauts to travel into outer space.

However, if they passed beyond the regions of the heavens and the earth by the authority of knowledge, why does Allah *the Almighty* say after this: 'The flames of fire and smoke will be sent on you two, then you will not be able to defend yourselves.'? (*ar-Rahman*: 35) Thus, the intended 'authority' is not that of knowledge as they think, but rather, it is that of Allah's Permission and Will.

If the matter were as they say, the disbelievers of Mecca would have said to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he informed them about his Ascension to the seven heavens, 'How can you say that, O Muhammad, while your Lord says: "Assembly of the jinn and the men! If you are able to pass through the regions of the heavens and the earth, then pass through; you cannot pass through but with authority."?' (*ar-Rahman*: 33) Therefore, the intended meaning of 'authority' here is Allah's Permission; when granted, the doors of the sky were opened for Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Moreover, what is the connection of the moon with the sky, given the fact that the Divine Speech is about passing beyond the regions of the heavens? How can the moon be compared with the heaven? As the distance between

(1) *Ibn Hibban* narrated this Hadith on the authority of *Abu Dharr Al-Ghifari* which includes the following: 'O Abu Dharr, the seven heavens along with the Throne are nothing but as a ring cast in a vast desert, and the Throne surpasses the Footstool as the vast desert surpasses the ring.' See *Mawarid Adh-Dham'an*, Hadith no. 94.

the earth and the moon is two light-years, the moon is, therefore, but an outskirts among the outskirts of the earth, like Al-Ma'adi, for example, in relation to Cairo. So about which heaven are they speaking?

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...they turn away.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 33) We have already spoken about 'turning away,' which is to avert oneself from something, that is, to turn one's back to it.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ وَالشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ كُلٌّ فِي فَلَكٍ يَسْبَحُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

**It is He who created night and day, the sun
and the moon, each floating in its orbit [33]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 33)**

Allah *the Almighty* graciously bestowed blessings upon some of His creation, and He only mentions, from among what He has bestowed, that which is considered a great blessing and favour. These blessings include the night and the day, by which He *Glorified is He* swore an oath in His saying: 'I swear by the night when it draws a veil, [1] And the day when it shines in brightness [2]' (*al-Layl*: 1-2). He *the Almighty* also says: 'I swear by the early hours of the day, [1] And the night when it covers with darkness. [2]' (*ad-Duha*: 1-2) So, the night and the day are two complementary signs. They are not contraries, for Allah *the Almighty* created the earth for His vicegerent to inhabit and cultivate, a point which is clear in His saying: '...He brought you into being from the earth, and made you dwell in it....' (*Hud*: 61)

This verse means that Allah *the Almighty* commands us to inhabit and cultivate the earth through the means of subsistence He gave to us, including an intelligent intellect, effective bodily limbs, and power. In fact, all the material things are created by Allah *the Almighty* and it is not incumbent upon you to do anything except to employ His blessings in the habitation and cultivation of His earth. When the person exerts his/her effort during the day, the body afterwards needs rest in the night. Sleep is, therefore, one of the greatest signs of Allah for the human being which indicates that the Creator *Glorified is He* is a reliable guardian of the self even more than is the self's possessor, that is, man.

Thus, we see some overburdening themselves with work, not giving their bodies their natural rest until they become unable to work. This is where sleep comes in, as though it were an innate control within you, forcing you to rest, and sounding the alarm: You are not fit right now for work; be merciful to yourself and give it its rightful rest. Now, when you try to sleep before the proper time of sleep, the body refuses and it does not comply. However, when it overtakes you, it seizes you from all the surrounding factors to the extent that you may sleep on small stones.

As in the Arab proverb, 'The tired one's bed is soft, and the hungry one's food is pleasant.' That is, when the tired, overworked person sleeps, s/he sleeps even on small stones, without any means of comfort. Despite all this, s/he sleeps restfully. In another proverb, it is said: 'Sleep is a guest: if you search for it, it will afflict you; if it searches for you, it will relieve you.' Allah *Glorified is He* speaks to us about the sign of sleep in another statement: 'And one of His signs is your sleeping by night and (by) day....' (*ar-Rum*: 23)

Here, we should add a precautionary remark: although sleeping takes place at night as the proper time for rest and repose, there are people who work at night and sleep during the day—like watchmen, policemen, bakers, and others—and these people are not forbidden from sleeping in the daytime to maintain the proceeding of life.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says: '...the sun and the moon....' (*al-Anbiya*': 33). Of course, there are many other signs in Allah's universe, but the most apparent among them all are the sun and the moon, for they are witnessed by all. He *the Almighty* then says: '...each floating in its orbit.' (*al-Anbiya*': 33) This is because the night, the day, the sun and the moon revolve one after another, succeeding one another, as He *the Almighty* says: 'And He it is who made the night and the day to follow each other....' (*al-Furqan*: 62)

The word '...floating...' (*al-Anbiya*': 33) is a subtle Quranic expression for the rendering of movement. It is taken from the swimming of fish in water wherein they float by means of a streamlined, easy movement.

These two kinds of movements are actually observed in the clock wherein the minute hand moves with a leap, that is, it proceeds from stillness to movement and then to stillness once again. In other words, there is a point of

time in which the minute hand makes a motion while another in which it is idle. As for the second hand, it makes a steady motion. The swimming of fish proceeds in the same manner, a meaning which is also clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'and float [through space] with floating serene.' (*an-Nazi 'at*: 3)

It is in this same manner that the movement of the shadow takes place; Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Are you not aware of your Lord [through His Works]?—how He causes the shadow to lengthen....' (*al-Furqan*: 45) This is also how the child grows. As a matter of fact, if you carefully and continually watch your young child over a period of time, you will be barely able to notice how it grows to the extent that you might believe that it does not grow. Yet, if you were absent for a couple of months, for example, and then go back, you can then easily and fully realise how it grew bigger. That is because the matter of growth takes place every single second, not because growth suddenly appears.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَمَا جَعَلْنَا لِشَرٍّ مِّنْ قَبْلِكَ الْخُلْدَ أَفَإِن مِّنْ فَهْمٍ الْخُلْدُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

We have not granted everlasting life to any other human being before you either [Muhammad] – if you die, will [the disbelievers] live for ever? [34] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 34)

Allah *Glorified is He* mentions this matter on the death of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because the disbelievers tried to kill him *peace and blessings be upon him* by throwing a stone upon him from a high place.⁽¹⁾ By so doing, those deniers of the Truth, really wishing Prophet Muhammad's death, thought that they could get rid of him *peace and blessings be upon him*. Here,

(1) It is narrated that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had gone to the Jews of Banu An-Nadir, seeking their help in paying the blood-money for the people of two persons who were killed by a Muslim. The Jews then replied in the affirmative, confirming that they would help him *peace and blessings be upon him* in this regard. Yet, when they were alone, they said to one another, 'This is the best opportunity to get rid of Muhammad.' They agreed on assigning one of them, known as 'Amr ibn Jihash, to climb to the top of a house and to let a stone fall down upon his head. However, when the man took his place to carry out the mission, Gabriel came down and told Prophet Muhammad of their scheme, which is why he stood up suddenly and went back to Medina. When he got home, he ordered Muslims to be ready to go to fight against them. See Ibn Hisham, *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya*, 3/190.

Allah *the Almighty* stresses that Prophet Muhammad, like all the Messengers and Prophets before him, will for sure die, a meaning which is crystal clear in the following verse of the chapter of *az-Zumar*: ‘...Verily, you are bound to die [O Muhammad,] and, verily, they, too, are bound to die.’ (*az-Zumar*: 30)

Undoubtedly, death is one of Allah’s Established Laws in the universe. It is though He *Glorified is He* was saying to Prophet Muhammad not to grieve, for he will be rewarded greatly in the Hereafter for all the hardships and difficulties he endured in the cause of delivering the Divine Message to mankind. It is for this reason that when he *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked to choose whether to live until the Day of Resurrection, or to die right now, he said, ‘I choose the Company of my Lord *the Most High*.’⁽¹⁾ It is thus clear that the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘We have not granted everlasting life to any other human being before you either [Muhammad]....’ (*al-Anbiya*: 34) indicates that Prophet Muhammad, like the Prophets and Messengers before him, will for sure die, confirming meanwhile that those who will come after him *peace and blessings be upon him* will not be granted eternity in this life, a point which is clear in His saying: ‘...if you die, will [the disbelievers] live forever?’ (*al-Anbiya*: 34) This part of the verse tells that the disbelievers shall not be happy with your death, O Prophet Muhammad, for they will not live forever.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

كُلُّ نَفْسٍ ذَائِقَةُ الْمَوْتِ وَبَلَّوْكُمْ بِالْشَّرِّ وَالْخَيْرِ فِتْنَةً وَإِلَيْنَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

**Every soul is certain to taste death: We test you all through
the bad and the good, and to Us you will all return [35]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 35)**

This verse clearly indicates that death is one of Allah’s Established Laws in the universe; none will be safe from it. Here, we strongly stress that death, in essence, entails good, so why? The answer is as follows: in case the dead is

(1) This is part of the Hadith narrated by ‘Aisha Allah be pleased with her who said, ‘I often used to hear Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, “Allah the Almighty does not cause any Prophet to die until He asks him to choose (between life and death).”’ ‘Aisha then continued, ‘When Prophet Muhammad was in the agony of death, I heard him *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘Nay, rather, the highest companions of Paradise’. See Ahmad, Musnad, 6/274.

a good person who acted righteously in this worldly life, death then serves as a means of hastening the reward to him/her; yet in case s/he was a wrongdoer, people will be relieved from him/her.

Here arises the following question, which is 'How is death tasted?' The answer to this question is crystal clear in the fact that the act of tasting means 'man's experience of the pain of death.' For once one has really died, it is impossible for him/her to taste anything, but before s/he dies, s/he will for sure taste the agonies of death, a meaning which is clear in the following poetic verse:

Grief after the separation of the spirit is impossible,
and grief does not exist before the separation

It is thus clear that the meaning of the verse in question refers to the agonies of death which afflict man at the time of his/her death, for no matter how healthy a man may be, a moment will inevitably come in which s/he perceives that s/he is most certainly dying—that is when the spirit comes up to the throat, a meaning which is deduced from the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Nay, but when [the last breath] comes up to the throat [of a dying man], [26] and people ask, "Is there any wizard [that could save him]?" [27] The while he [himself] knows that this is the parting. [28]' (*al-Qiyama*: 26-28) meaning plainly that death, under this case, will inevitably take place.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...We test you all through the bad and the good...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 35), it means that Allah *the Almighty* will for sure try and test mankind in this worldly life. In this regard, we strongly stress that the act of trying and testing itself is not bad, but rather, it is the result obtained from it that might be praised or blamed. This point may be further explained in the light of the final exam which students have to sit; can we consider this exam to be bad? Here arises a very good question which is 'Does Allah *the Almighty* need to try His slaves to know about their affairs?!' The answer is 'No,' for He *Glorified is He* tries them to make them a witness against themselves. With His *Glorified is He* saying: '...We test you...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 35), He addresses all people: the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick, the ruler and the subject, and so forth.

Therefore, all of us are a trial for one another: the rich is a trial for the poor, and vice versa, but how could we understand this? As for the poor person, Allah *the Almighty* tests him/her to see whether or not s/he will be content with what He *Glorified is He* had predestined for him/her, and whether s/he will envy the rich, or say, 'It is as Allah has pleased, there is no power save in Allah! O Allah, bless him and give me from Your Provision.' As for the rich, He *the Almighty* tests him/her to see whether or not s/he will spend his/her money for the Pleasure of Allah.

In this way, you can draw comparisons like these to reach the conclusion that 'evil' and 'good' are both but a mere test and trial which ends either in success or failure. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* concludes the verse with His saying, '...band to Us you will all return.' (*al-Anbiya*: 35) This means that people will be returned to Allah *the Almighty* to be requited for their deeds; if they do good, they will be greatly rewarded; otherwise, they will be afflicted with severe punishments.

Allah says:⁽¹⁾

وَإِذَا رَأَوْكَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِذَا يَتَخَذُونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوًا هَذَا الَّذِي
يَذْكُرُ إِلَهُتَكُمْ وَهُمْ يَذْكُرُ الرَّحْمَنَ هُمْ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

When the disbelievers see you, they laugh at you: 'Is this the one who talks about your gods?' They reject any talk of the Lord of Mercy [36] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 36)

This verse in question sheds light on a particular incident that took place between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the disbelievers.

(1) Ibn Abi Hatim narrated that As-Suddi had said: 'Prophet Muhammad, Allah's peace and blessings be upon him once passed by Abu Sufyan and Abu Jahl who were speaking to each other. When Abu Jahl saw him Allah's peace and blessings be upon him he laughed and mockingly said to Abu Sufyan: "This is the Prophet of Bani 'Abd Manaf", whereupon the latter angrily said: 'why do you deny the prophethood of this man from Bani 'Abd Manaf?!" When Prophet Muhammad Allah's peace and blessings be upon him heard this conversation, he returned to Abu Jahl and said: 'I believe that you will not stop what you are doing (i.e. denying the Message of Islam) until you are afflicted with that which afflicted your uncle.' Then, he turned to Abu Sufyan and said: "You only said this out of zeal." Then Allah the Almighty revealed His saying: "When the disbelievers see you, they laugh at you ..." (*al-Anbiya*: 36)' See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/630.

As for the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'When the disbelievers see you, they laugh at you...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 36), the Arabic particle *I'n* (when) does not indicate 'conditionality,' but rather, 'negation', a meaning which is also clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'As for those of you who [henceforth] separate themselves from their wives by saying, "You are as unlawful to me as my mother," [let them bear in mind that] they can never be [as] their mothers: none are their mothers save those who gave them birth....' (*al-Mujadala*: 2)

The meaning of this aforementioned part of the verse thus is: 'When the disbelievers see you, O Prophet Muhammad, they do not take you except in mockery, that is, they mock at you.' But, what is the sense of mockery referred to in this verse? The answer is clear in the saying of Allah in the same verse in question, '...Is this the one who talks about your gods?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 36) In other words, 'Is this the person who insults your gods? The saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Is this...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 36) indicates that those deniers of the Truth belittled Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

In this regard, it is important to know that *Adh-Dhikr* (talk) may be good or evil; you expect your friend to say good about you; as for your enemy, you expect him/her to speak badly of you. Accordingly, as long as Prophet Muhammad is talking about their so-called gods, it is inevitable that he is going to speak badly of them. For example, he will say that they are made of stones and that they can cause man neither harm nor benefit, a meaning which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'If you invoke them, they do not hear your call; and even if they could hear, they would not [be able to] respond to you. And [besides,] on the Day of Resurrection they will utterly disown your having associated them with Allah....' (*Fatir*: 14)

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying: '...They reject any talk of the Lord of Mercy.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 36) In this part of the verse, Allah *the Almighty* wonders why those disbelievers are angry with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he speaks bad of their gods, while they themselves deny the Existence of the True Lord *Glorified is He*. We notice that Allah *the Almighty* has mentioned the Arabic particle *Hum* (they) twice in order to lay emphasis on the fact that those deniers of the Truth have indeed disbelieved in Allah, the Lord of Mercy.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

خُلِقَ الْإِنْسَانُ مِنْ عَجَلٍ سَأُورِيكُمْ آيَاتِي فَلَا تَسْتَعْجِلُونِ ﴿٣٧﴾

Man was created hasty: I will show you My signs soon, so do not ask Me to hasten them [37] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 37)

The meaning of the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...hasty...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 36) is that man was created hasty. As for the Arabic word *Al-‘Ajala* (hastiness), it means that a person hurries to obtain the results of something before its due time. As a matter of fact, man may be in a hurry to obtain the good, which is permissible; yet to hurry to be afflicted with evil is utter stupidity. The Quran has many examples which indicate this foolishness on the part of the disbelievers; Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘When is that promise [of Allah’s Judgment] to be fulfilled? [Answer this, O you who believe in it,] if you are men of truth!’ (*al-Anbiya*: 38)

Telling about them, Allah *the Almighty* also says: O Allah! If this be indeed the truth from You, then rain down upon us stones from the skies, or inflict [some other] grievous suffering on us!’ (*al-Anfal*: 32) This clearly indicates that those disbelievers had hastened punishment because they did not believe in it; they did not believe it to be true that something such as this would happen to them, which is why Allah *the Almighty* replied to them, saying: ‘...I will show you My signs soon, so do not ask Me to hasten them.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 37) In another position in the Quran, He *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘...And whether We show you [in this world] something of what We hold in store for those [deniers of the Truth], or whether We cause you to die [before that retribution takes place—know that, in the end], it is unto Us that they will be brought back.’ (*Ghafir*: 77) This means that He *the Almighty* will show you, O Prophet Muhammad, how We would severely punish them, and even if We were to cause them to die, you would for sure watch their punishment in the Hereafter.

Allah says:

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

They say, ‘When will this promise be fulfilled, if what you say is true?’ (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 38) [38]

This verse clearly indicates that the disbelievers mistakenly thought that Allah *the Almighty* would not punish them in the Hereafter, and that they would not be held accountable for their deeds before Him *Glorified is He*; they did not even think that He *the Almighty* would punish them severely in the Hell-Fire to the extent that when their skins thoroughly burned, Allah would change them for other skins, so that they may taste the chastisement. In the Quran, Allah tells us that the disbelievers did not believe that they would be punished after death; He *the Almighty* says: ‘Or you cause the skies to fall down upon us in smithereens, as you have threatened, or [till] thou bring Allah and the angels face to face before us.’ (*al-Isra'*: 92)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

لَوْ يَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا حِينَ لَا يَكْفُرُونَ عَنْ وُجُوهِهِمْ
النَّارَ وَلَا عَنْ ظُهُورِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ يُنصَرُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

If the disbelievers only knew, the time will arrive when they will not be able to ward off the Fire from their faces or their backs, and they will get no help[39] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 39)

This verse in question means that the disbelievers knew nothing about what would happen to them at this time when they would not be able to repel the Fire from their faces in the Hereafter. Allah *the Almighty* has mentioned the ‘face’ in particular because it is the most honoured of man’s body parts, which is why if any dirt falls upon your face, you strive to remove it with your hand, even if you can do no more than shifting the dirt from your face to your hand! Why do you do this? It is because the face is precious to you, thus cannot accept it to be insulted in any way.

It is thus clear that the saying of Allah: ‘...they will not be able to ward off the Fire from their faces...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 39) plainly indicates that the

disbelievers will face great humiliation, whilst His *saying*: ‘...or their backs...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 39) indicates that they will be covered with the fire from all directions. As for the saying of Allah: ‘...and they will not get help.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 39), it means that they will find none to save them from this punishment or to defend them, even the Satan that used to entice them in this worldly life will renounce them on the Day of resurrection. Allah *the Almighty* says about this: ‘...It is not for me to respond to your cries, nor for you to respond to mine...’ (*Ibrahim*: 22). The Arabic verb *Asrakha* (to respond to one’s cries) means to eliminate the cause of his/her crying, which is why the *Hamza* in this verb is known as the *Hamza* of removal and elimination. You say: ‘So and so cries’, when s/he is afflicted with something beyond his/her capacity of endurance, thus cries out calling for help and assistance. So, in case s/he was given help and assistance and his/her suffering was removed, this means that this person had removed the cause of suffering. As such, the meaning of this aforementioned verse of the chapter of *Ibrahim* is that the Satan tells his followers that he will be unable to defend them, nor will they be able to defend him, and that he will be unable to save them from the chastisement, nor will they be able to save him from the punishment.

This undeniable fact of the Satan renouncing his followers in the Hereafter is also mentioned in the following verse of the chapter of *al-Hashr* in which Allah says: ‘The like of [what happens] when Satan says unto man, “Deny the Truth!”—but as soon as [man] has denied the Truth, [Satan] says, “Behold, I am not responsible for you: behold, I fear Allah, the Lord of all the worlds!”’ (*al-Hashr*: 16) This clearly means that Satan can do nothing to the children of Adam but to cause them to fall into sin after which he disclaims all association with them.

But, this is the clause of condition, so where is the clause of result? It is implicitly understood from the context of the verse, that is, if the disbelievers who are bent on denying the Truth knew that there would come a time when they would not be able to ward off the Fire from their faces, nor from their backs, and would not find any succour, then they would stop their wrongdoing and get rid of all the means leading to it.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

بَلْ تَأْتِيهِمْ بَغْتَةً فَتَبْهَتُهُمْ فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ رَدَّهَا وَلَا هُمْ يُنْظَرُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

**It will come upon them suddenly and stupefy them;
they will be powerless to push it away; they will not
be reprieved [40] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 40)**

This verse refers to the Day of Resurrection. As for the Arabic word *Baghta* (suddenly), it refers to an event which takes place while people are heedless of it, whilst the word *Baht* (stupefying) means surprise and confusion. As such, Allah *the Almighty* says that the Day of Resurrection will come down upon the disbelievers all of a sudden, thus they will be so surprised and confused that they would be unable to decide what to do or where to go. In actuality, when someone is stupefied with something, s/he will be unable to prepare for it or even protect themselves from it. In our contemporary world and particularly at times of war, warning sirens would be activated to alarm people about an eminent attack or raid, thus people take their precautions and go into shelters and refuges. Yet, in case they were attacked suddenly by the enemy, they would have no opportunity to be safe from this danger.

Another example of stupefaction is found in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* about that person who argued with Prophet *Ibrahim peace be upon him* concerning his Lord; Allah says: 'Verily, Allah causes the sun to rise in the east; causes it, then, to rise in the west!' Thereupon he who was bent on denying the Truth remained dumbfounded....' (*al-Baqara*: 258)

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...they will not be reprieved' (*al-Anbiya'*: 40), it means that Allah will not allow them any respite, nor will He *Glorified is He* delay their punishment. This is because when it is the Hereafter, the matter has no longer fallen under the category of threatening, but rather exceeds it to afflicting them with the punishment in reality.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ فَأَحَاقَ بِالَّذِينَ سَخِرُوا
 مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ يَسْتَهْزِئُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

**Messengers before you [Muhammad] were also
 ridiculed, but those who mocked them were
 overwhelmed in the end by the very thing they
 had mocked [41] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 41)**

Taking into account that Allah *the Almighty* had previously addressed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with His saying: ‘When the disbelievers see you, they laugh at you...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 36), He *Glorified is He* in this verse in question comforts and consoles him *peace and blessings be upon him* telling him that all the Messengers and Prophets before him had been ridiculed, which is why he *peace and blessings be upon him* should not grieve, for those deniers of the Truth will surely be afflicted with the Divine Punishment as a result of their mockery and evildoing.

Let us offer an example to further clarify this point. Allah *the Almighty* tells us in the Quran about the story of Prophet Noah *peace be upon him* with his people, saying: ‘And [so Noah] set himself to building the ark; and every time the great ones of his people passed by him, they scoffed at him...’ (*Hud*: 38). So Noah *peace be upon him* answered in reply: ‘...If you are scoffing at us—behold, we are scoffing at you [and your ignorance], just as you are scoffing at us.’ (*Hud*: 38) meaning that you, O deniers of the Truth, shall wait until the end, and you will see!

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...overwhelmed...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 41), it means that those who mocked the Messengers and Prophets were overcome and befallen with severe punishment, a meaning which is also clear in the saying of Allah: ‘Behold, those who have abandoned themselves to sin are wont to laugh at such as have attained to faith; and whenever they pass by them, they wink at one another [derisively]; and whenever they return to people of their own kind, they return full of jests.’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29–31), meaning that those evildoers used to happily go back to people of their kind, which is an indication of their ignobility and baseness of character, for they do not only suffice with their derision, but also report and boast

about it. Allah *Glorified is He* then continues: ‘And whenever they see those [who believe,] they say, “Behold, these [people] have indeed gone astray!” And, withal, they have no call to watch over [the beliefs of] others; But on the Day [of Judgment], they who had attained to faith will [be able to] laugh at the [erstwhile] deniers of the truth: [for, resting in paradise] on couches, they will look on [and say to themselves]: “Are these deniers of the truth being [thus] requited for [aught but] what they were wont to do?”’ (al-Mutaffifin: 32–36) Here arises the question, which is ‘Could we now requite them for their deeds?’ Yes, O Lord!

At this point, we should stress that the disbelievers’ derision and mockery of the People of Truth will not last forever, for it will for sure end in the life of this world, yet Allah *Glorified is He* will not cease mocking at them, i.e. the deniers of the Truth in the Hereafter. It is yet of great importance to take into consideration the following subtle observation, which is that even though the believers are frequently ridiculed and mocked at by the disbelievers, Allah *Glorified is He* protects the lives of those disbelievers as a result of the existence of the believers among them, a reason which is clearly mentioned in the following Qudsi Hadith in which Allah says: ‘Were the children not suckled, the elderly not bent over in body, and the livestock not put to pasture, I would surely impose punishment upon you.’⁽¹⁾

So, when you see a pious man, express gratitude for him or even follow his example, or the least you can do is leave him alone without any derision or annoyance. That is because by the very existence of this pious man, your life, O mocker, is protected and safeguarded.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Al-Haythami in his *Majma' Az-Zawa'id* from a Hadith narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra; Al-Haythami yet attributed it to Al-Bazzar and At-Tabarani in his *Al-Awsat*. The chain of transmission of the Hadith includes Ibrahim ibn Khaytham, who is weak.

قُلْ مَنْ يَكْلُوْكُمْ يَالَيْلٍ وَالنَّهَارِ مِنَ الرَّحْمٰنِ بَلْ هُمْ
عَنْ ذِكْرِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّعْرِضُوْنَ ﴿٤٢﴾

**Say, ‘Who could protect you night and day from the Lord of Mercy?’ Yet they turn away when their Lord is mentioned [42]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 42)**

The Arabic word *Yakl'u* means ‘protect’ and ‘safeguard’. In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* says how those deniers of the Truth deny Me in spite of the fact that I have showered countless blessings upon them. In other words, you, O disbelievers, hurt and mock the pious from among His *Glorified is He* slaves even though He *the Almighty* is the One Who ‘...protects you night and day...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 42). This very fact of Allah’s Protection of mankind is mentioned elsewhere in the Quran; He *the Almighty* says: ‘...that could preserve him from whatever Allah may have willed...’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 11). It is yet very important to know that the meaning of this aforementioned verse of *ar-Ra’d* is that those angelic keepers are not to protect man from what Allah had predestined for him/her because the command of protection originates from Allah *the Almighty*. Here, we stress that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who commissioned these angels to protect you, that is, they do not do this act of protection voluntarily. It is thus clear that one of Allah’s Blessings upon man is that He *the Almighty* protects you day and night through His angels who ward off harm from you.

We often hear about some person who got up from sleeping and found a snake in his/her bed. Amazingly enough, the snake neither bit nor hurt him/her in any way. Yet, upon seeing the snake, s/he might feel badly frightened because s/he does not know that the snake will not hurt him/her so long as s/he does not harm it which is one of the wonders of these creatures, that is, they do not hurt you so long as you do not hurt them. It is thus clear that Allah *the Almighty* is the Only One Who protects you from all that which causes you harm while sleeping.

At this point, we should strongly stress that Allah’s Protection of man is not limited to the act of protecting him/her from dangers, but rather extends to providing him/her with means of subsistence, including the sun, the moon, the earth, the sky, the water, etc. Yet despite all these blessings, those deniers of the Truth stubbornly refuse to believe in Him *Glorified is He* and mock at His

Messengers and pious slaves, which is why He *the Almighty* concludes the verse with His saying: ‘...Yet they turn away when their Lord is mentioned.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 42) It means that they should not have been heedless of the Remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

أَمْ لَهُمْ آلِهَةٌ تَمْنَعُهُمْ مِنْ دُونِنَا لَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ
نُصْرَ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَلَا هُمْ مَتَّاعِيَصْحُوبُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

Do they have gods who can defend them against Us? Their gods have no power to help themselves, nor can they be protected from Us[43] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 43)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* asks: ‘Do those deniers of the Truth have other gods that prevent them from believing in Me?’ He *the Almighty* then gives the answer to this question, affirming that these so-called gods are not capable of helping themselves, let alone help others! How could they help themselves when they are mere idols made of stone, and sculpted by their servants in various forms?! How could they help themselves when if the wind carried away one of them, it would require someone to pick it up and put it in its place?!

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...nor can they be protected from Us’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 43), it is to be explained in the light of the fact that a Bedouin used to seek the help of a strong person to protect him from a particular tribe against whom this person has previously committed wrong, especially as he was about to pass by the houses of this tribe. In actuality, this meaning is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* about Moses *peace be upon him* when he asked Allah to support him with his brother Aaron. Allah says: ‘...They keep a grave charge [pending] against me, and I fear that they will slay me’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 14) meaning that Aaron would accompany him *peace be upon him* and protect him from the wrongdoing of the people of Pharaoh, thus being safe from them.

Back to the verse in question; this particular part of the verse clearly indicates that Allah will not accompany those deniers of the Truth, nor will they be saved from His Punishment. In addition, none can accompany them, nor can anyone save them from the Divine Punishment.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

بَلْ مَنَعْنَا هَؤُلَاءِ وَءَابَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى طَالَ عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ أَفَلَا يَرَوْنَ
 أَنَّا نَأْتِي الْأَرْضَ نَنقُصُهَا مِنْ أَطْرَافِهَا أَفَهُمُ الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

We have allowed these sinners and their forefathers to enjoy life for a long time. But do they not see how We are shrinking their borders? Is it they who will prevail? [44]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 44)

This verse clearly tells that those deniers of the Truth have enjoyed the Blessings of Allah *the Almighty* for a long time, yet what was the end of those sinners? Allah *the Almighty* gives an answer to this question, so that we might take admonition; He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Have they, then, never journeyed about the earth and beheld what happened in the end to those [deniers of the Truth] who lived before their time? Greater were they in power than they are; and they left a stronger impact on the earth, and built it up even better than these [are doing]....’ (*ar-Rum*: 9)

Elsewhere in the Quran, He *the Almighty* clearly states that the sinners were seized by a mighty, powerful seizure. He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Do they not see how many a generation We have destroyed before their time—[people] whom We had given a [bountiful] place on earth, the like of which We never gave unto you, and upon whom We showered heavenly blessings abundant, and at whose feet We made running waters flow? And yet We destroyed them for their sins, and gave rise to other people in their stead.’ (*al-An‘am*: 6)

Back to the verse in question; He *the Almighty* says: ‘...But do they not see how We are shrinking the borders of the earth?’ (*al-Anbiya*: 44) In the chapter of *ar-Ra‘d*, He *Glorified is He* mentions a similar verse, saying: ‘Have, then, they [who deny the Truth] never yet seen how We come to the land, diminishing it in its extremities. For, [when] Allah judges, there is no power that could repel His Judgment: and swift in reckoning is He!’ (*ar-Ra‘d*: 41)

As a matter of fact, some Muslim scholars attempted to understand these two aforementioned verses of *ar-Ra‘d* and *al-Anbiya*’ in the light of the recent

modern scientific discoveries. Upon discovering that the earth is oval and not perfectly circular, they, trying to prove the veracity of the Quran and that it mentioned this scientific fact even before modern science, held the view that these two verses cannot be explained except in the light of this particular scientific discovery. They thus believe that this act of shrinking of the borders of the earth takes place at the Equator, not the two poles.

Yet these scholars did not take into consideration the point that these two verses clearly mention that the act of shrinking takes place from all the borders and sides of the earth and not just from one side or border. For this reason, it is very important to know that such opinions may lead people to have doubts about the Quran. With regard to the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...But do they not see...?’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 44), we have a question: ‘Is the act of seeing in this verse relating to real vision or to science?’ In case we said that it is relating to real vision, this opinion would be rejected by the fact that this phenomenon was not discovered until the 20th century, that is, none knew anything about it before that time, thus it is not relating to real vision. Also, it has nothing to do with science because this piece of information discovered recently was not known by anyone. In addition, the Arabs were not people of knowledge or culture, so how can we then understand this part of the verse?

The answer is that those deniers of the Truth had actually known about the previous nations and how they opposed and rejected the Divine Way of Guidance for nothing but that it came to eliminate their power and to achieve equality among mankind. In spite of all their stubbornness, the number of the followers of Islam increased day by day, whilst their numbers dramatically decreased.

In other words, Allah *the Almighty* diminishes the land of disbelief by either causing people to die, or by demolishing their houses and buildings by way of earthquakes; this is on the part of the disbelievers. As for the believers, Allah *Glorified is He* causes them to increase in number, and thus increases the area of the land of faith.⁽¹⁾ Here, we strongly stress that all the previous nations had actually experienced this matter.

(1) *Commenting on this verse, Ibn 'Abbas says, 'Have these disbelievers not seen that We are opening the lands for Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him one after one.' Al-Hassan and Ad-Dahhak, on their part, say, '(This verse) refers to Muslims' victory over the polytheists.' As for 'Ikrima, he says, 'Had the earth actually diminished in=*

If someone yet asks: 'How can we assent to this interpretation of this Meccan verse when the increasing of the land of faith did not happen until after the Hijra? We say: 'The fact of the verse being Meccan does not in any way affect the meaning, for it is not necessary that they themselves should experience this established law of diminishing the land of disbelief, but it is rather sufficient to take admonition from the previous nations, a point which is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'And, verily, [to this day] you pass by the remnants of their dwellings at morning-time.' (*as-Saffat*: 137)

He *the Almighty* also says: '...and with [the tribe of] Thamud, who hollowed out rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh of the [many] tent-poles? [It was they] who transgressed all bounds of equity all over their lands, and brought about great corruption therein.' (*al-Fajr*: 9–12) Yet another possible interpretation of this verse is that those deniers of the Truth had actually known about this fact of diminishing the land of disbelief from their allies of the people of the Book. The meaning thus is: you, O disbelievers, will be afflicted with the same punishment that afflicted the previous nations. Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying: '...Is it they who will prevail?' (*al-Anbiya*: 44), meaning 'Have those disbelievers not witnessed that We diminished the land in its extremities? Or this did not happen, thus leaving them thereby the victors?!' In other words, 'which of the two parties are victorious: Allah's Messengers or the disbelievers?' The answer is for sure that it is the disbelievers who were defeated and humiliated; this is an undeniable fact which is crystal clear in the Quran. Allah *the Almighty* says: '...Verily, Our Hosts—they indeed—would [in the end] be victorious!' (*as-Saffat*: 173) He *Glorified is He* also says: 'Behold, We shall indeed succour Our Apostles and those who have attained to faith in this world's life....' (*Ghafir*: 51)

Allah *the Almighty* then addresses His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying:

= size, people would not have found any place to reside in, thus they will for sure die.' Commenting on all these opinions, Ibn Kathir holds the position that he supports the first opinion, which is also the opinion held by Ibn Jarir. See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Adhim*, 2/520.

قُلْ إِنَّمَا أُنذِرُكُمْ بِالْوَحْيِ وَلَا يَسْمَعُ الصُّمُّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا مَا يُنذَرُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

Say, 'I warn you only through the Revelation.'

The deaf will not hear the warning call [45]

(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 45)

This verse tells clearly that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not tell the disbelievers anything from his own accord; rather, all the revelations including the giving of glad tidings and warnings, were from Allah, Most High. You, yourselves, O disbelievers, know for certain that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was a mere human that only received the Divine Message from Allah to deliver it to you.

As a matter of fact, had Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to you, 'I am the one who warns you...', then you would have a right to doubt. But, on the contrary, the One Who gives this command is Allah *the Almighty* and Prophet Muhammad has nothing to do with it at all but to convey to you this Message from Allah Who Alone has the Omnipotence to do what He wills.

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying: '...The deaf will not hear the warning call.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 45) In this regard, we should know that 'hearing' is the first sense through which man gets information. In addition, it is the first sense that functions in the human body. That is why before a child speaks, it must necessarily hear something first, in order to pronounce that which it heard because 'hearing', as we previously said, is the first sense that functions in the human body, thus followed by all other senses. In the same vein, we should know that the ear starts working before the eye, which is why Allah *the Almighty* mentions the sense of hearing before that of seeing. He *the Almighty* says: '...Verily, [your] hearing and sight and heart—all of them—will be called to account for it [on Judgment Day]!' (*al-Isra'*: 36)

It is of great importance to be fully aware of the fact that 'ears' are the only body organs that do not stop functioning, even if a person is asleep. That is because 'hearing' is the sense which responds to people's calling. For this reason, when Allah *the Almighty* wanted to put the People of the Cave to sleep for that long period of time, He smote their ears, thus their sense of hearing became inactive, in order that the sounds of nature outside the cave would not

disturb them. He *the Almighty* says: ‘...We veiled their ears in the cave for many a year.’ (*al-Kahf*: 11)

The meaning of the saying of Allah: ‘...The deaf will not hear the warning call’ (*al-Anbiya*: 45) is thus that those deniers of the Truth did really hear, but yet did not respond positively to the Divine Way of Guidance. In other words, they did not get any benefit from their hearing because the benefit of hearing is that you listen and respond to someone who speaks to you, so if you do not respond, then it is as if you did not hear. If, for example, you ordered an employee to do something, and he paid no attention to it, you would say to him, ‘Are you deaf?’ For this reason, the Quran refers to them as being ‘deaf’.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: ‘...the warning call’ (*al-Anbiya*: 45), it means that, if only it were an ordinary summons to which they paid no attention, but no, they pay no attention and turn away from Our Warning, that is, when they are warned against Our Punishment. As a matter of fact, one should pay great attention to the ‘warning’ because it causes him/her to get benefit through keeping away from harm which is why it is foolish not to take care of it. For instance, if you warned man against a particular road which is full of lions, or wolves, or snakes or robbers and he did not pay attention to your warning, this would be viewed as foolishness, for he did not take the necessary precautions to save himself.

We previously said that ‘to warn someone’ is to inform him/her of an approaching evil before its time in order that s/he may prepare him/herself for it and, if possible, eliminate it before it arrives. So, to tell someone about an evil at the time of its happening is not ‘warning’ in any way because you do not give him/her the opportunity to take the necessary precautions to save him/herself.

It is thus clear that the problem with those deniers of the Truth has nothing to do with their body organs, but rather with their ability to properly and correctly understand the Divine Way of Guidance. For the disbeliever, when you talk about faith, s/he does not pay you any attention because the matter does not appeal to him/her.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلَئِنْ مَسَّتْهُمْ نَفْحَةٌ مِّنْ عَذَابِ رَبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ يَنْوَلِنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

**Yet if a mere breath of your Lord's punishment
touches them, they will be sure to cry, 'Woe to us!
We were wrong!'** [46] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 46)

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* tells that those deniers of the Truth will not take heed of the Truth until the punishment touched them.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Yet if a mere breath of your Lord's Punishment touches them...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 46), it means that the punishment that will touch them in this stage is not severe. As for the Arabic word *An-Nafha*, it refers to a gentle breeze which carries the traces of things but not their reality, such as that which comes up with the scent of roses; as a matter of fact, this breeze in question does not carry the roses themselves, but only their scent.

Likewise is this touch of the Divine Punishment: it is nothing but a mere touch, exactly as we say of the slightest heat of the fire that touches us even though we are far away from it.

As for the Arabic word *Nafha* (breath), it, linguistically, indicates that those deniers of the Truth will be touched with the Divine punishment for only one time in this stage. It is of great importance to know that they, in this stage, will be afflicted with just one touch and one breath of punishment, yet they are unable to endure any. So, how will they act in case they are to be afflicted with the everlasting Divine punishment?!

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...they will be sure to cry, 'Woe to us! We were wrong' (*al-Anbiya'*: 46), it indicates that those deniers of the Truth will, upon being afflicted with this touch of the Divine punishment, admit the absolute truth which they concealed for a very long period of time. It is now that you, O disbelievers, are going to speak! It is now that you become able to fully realise the essence of things! You now do all of this as a result of being afflicted with just one touch of breath from the Divine punishment! So, where were your feelings and senses before that?! It is thus clear that the matter has to do with the ability to understand things properly and correctly, not with the nature of man.

The saying of Allah: 'Woe to us' (*al-Anbiya*: 46) plainly tells that they, upon being touched with this one breath of the Divine punishment, become fully aware of the severe punishment they are going to meet in the Hereafter. Having sensed this punishment, they will openly admit '...We were wrong!' (*al-Anbiya*: 46)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَنَضَعُ الْمَوَازِينَ الْقِسْطَ لِيَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ فَلَا تُظْلَمُ نَفْسٌ شَيْئًا وَإِنْ كَانَ
مِثْقَالَ حَبَّةٍ مِنْ خَرْدَلٍ أَتَيْنَا بِهَا وَكَفَى بِنَا حَاسِبِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

We will set up scales of justice for the Day of Resurrection so that no one can be wronged in the least, and if there should be even the weight of a mustard seed, We shall bring it out – We take excellent account [47] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 47)

In this verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* sheds light on another topic. He *Glorified is He* shifts from speaking of the disbelievers' denial and rejection to the Message of Prophet Muhammad, their disbelief in the Divine Revelation and their stubbornness on not to pay attention to the good brought to them to another topic which is that of accountability and the scale of justice. So why does He *the Almighty* do so? As a matter of fact, He *the Almighty* does this in order to call their attention to the fact that this Divine Way of Guidance which they have received with denial and doubt is for their own benefit. In addition, He *Glorified is He* wants to tell them that they will for sure be held accountable for all their deeds, and that all of their actions are recorded and written down. That is to say that He *the Almighty* out of His Infinite Mercy, still gives them advice to be safe from the chastisement.

The Arabic word *Mawazin* (scales) is the plural of the word *Mizan* (scale) which is an instrument by means of which we determine things with regard to their weight. In actuality, such determination is possible for a number of things, including measuring weight by means of a scale, determining distance by means of a measure, and so forth. It is important in this regard to know that people have established fixed and strict criteria according to which the weight, the length, the height, etc. of something is exactly and precisely determined.

People formerly used to weigh a piece of stone equivalent to a kilo, for example, and use it on the balance-scale because it served as a fixed reference. But this piece would wear down as a result of the frequent use and so inevitably undergo change.

Back to the verse in question; Allah *the Almighty* speaks about something which is weighed, but He does not mention other measures, so why? Scholars believe that this is because those things which are applicable to be weighed are larger in number than anything else. For this reason, they used to test the children, saying to them, 'Is a kilo of iron heavier, or a kilo of cotton?' Then the child would look at the cotton, see that it is soft and fluffy, thus say, 'Cotton!' As a matter of fact, cotton is of bigger size than iron, but the area it occupies may yet be diminished by pressing, which is why it is commonly believed that 'weight' is the most important criteria according to which the essence of a thing might be determined.

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And the skies has He raised high, and has devised⁽¹⁾ [for all things] a measure.' (*ar-Rahman*: 7) Here arises a question, which is: 'Is Allah *the Almighty* going to set up just one scale or more than one?'

We strongly stress that the entire creation will be held accountable for their deeds at one time. They will not stand in a long procession, each one waiting for his/her turn, but everything will happen at one time. For this reason, when Imam 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* was once asked, 'How will Allah reckon the entire creation at one time?' He said, 'As He provides them all with means of subsistence at one time.' Even though you, O man, believe that this matter is of enormous difficulty, it is extremely easy for Allah *Glorified is He*.

The Arabic word *Al-Qist* (justice) is an adjective for the scale; it is a verbal noun meaning 'justice,' as you say in praise of a judge: 'That is a just judge,' that is, one characterised by justice. Yet if you wanted to intensify the

(1) In his *Fath Ar-Rahman bi Kashf Ma Yaltabis Fi Al-Quran*, Imam Abu Yahya Zakarriya Al-Ansari says, 'Allah *the Almighty* joined between the raising of the skies and the scale because the scale is one of the most important blessings of Allah *the Almighty* for it is by means of which that the system of the entire universe is established.' See Abu Yahya Zakarriya Al-Ansari, *Fath Ar-Rahman bi Kashf Ma Yaltabis fi Al-Quran*, p. 405.

expression, you would say: 'That judge is justice,' as though he himself personified justice. Therefore, *Al-'Adl* (the All Justice), not *Al-'Adel* (the Just), is one of the Names of Allah *the Almighty*.

Here, we should take into account that this word in question, i.e. *Qist* carries a number of meanings in the Arabic language; it even gives a meaning and its opposite; exactly like the word *Zawj* (spouse) which applies to both the man and the woman alike; the word '*ayn* (eye), which is used to refer to the following: the body part by means of which one is able to see, to a spring of water, to a spy, as well as to gold and silver.

Likewise is the Arabic word *Al-Qist*; it gives the meaning of justice; this meaning is crystal clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...Verily, Allah loves those who act equitably.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 42) As for the word *Al-Qast*, it gives the meaning of 'injustice'; Allah says: '...As for those who abandon themselves to wrongdoing—they are indeed but fuel for [the fires of] hell!' (*al-Jinn*: 15) The Arabic word *Al-Qasitun* in this regard gives the meaning of tyrants and wrongdoers.

In this regard, it is of great importance to know that the word *Al-Qist* gives the meaning of *Al-'Adl* in case 'justice' is applied from the very beginning as to a particular matter, which is why the word *Aqsat* clearly indicates that there was an unjust ruling which was nullified and altered to be 'just'. This meaning is perfectly clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...Call them by their [real] fathers' names: this is more equitable in the sight of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5). The Arabic word *Aqsat* in this aforementioned verse of the chapter of *al-Ahzab* indicates that even though the ruling of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was just and equitable, the ruling of Allah *the Almighty* is even more just and equitable.

We know that Zayd ibn Haritha preferred Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to his family; he chose not to go back home with them, which is why he *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to reward him for this act, thus called him Zayd ibn Muhammad.

After that, Allah *Glorified is He* altered this just ruling of Prophet Muhammad to a more equitable one of His, that is, even though he *peace and blessings be*

upon him has acted justly and equitably in this regard, the Ruling of Allah is even more just and equitable.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...Call them by their [real] fathers' names...' (*al-Ahzab*: 5), it came to nullify the practice of adoption. By abolishing this act, Allah *the Almighty* wants to lay down a new legislation concerning the family affairs. In addition, He *Glorified is He* wanted to modify a lot of rulings which cannot take place in the light of this act of adoption. For instance, how will the members of the family act and behave when the adopted son reached puberty? Would it be allowed for this boy to look at the women of this family even though he is a foreigner to them?

In this regard, the orientalist aroused doubts on the topic of the Hereafter's scales, to the extent that they claimed that these following two verses: 'We will set up scales of justice for the Day of Resurrections...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 47) and '...No weight (*wazn*) shall We assign to them on Resurrection Day' (*al-Kahf*: 105) are contradictory with one another; they claimed that the first verse affirmed the existence of the balance while the second negated it.

We said: 'Being unable to correctly understand the rulings of the Arabic language, those people are unable to understand the Quran. As a matter of fact, if we reflect upon the Arabic particle *Lam* (to) in the second verse, we will be able to properly understand the meaning; this *Lam* indicates possession and benefit exactly as they say in the language of accounting 'for him' and 'against him,' that is, to his credit or to his deficit, a meaning which is also clear in the Quran; Allah says: '...In his favour shall be whatever good he does, and against him whatever evil he does....' (*al-Baqara*: 286)

The meaning of this verse of the chapter of *al-Kahf* thus is Allah *Glorified is He* will not assign to them a weight in their favour on the Day of Resurrection. On the contrary, He *the Almighty* shall judge them guilty. In the same connection, the word *Al-Wazn* is used to refer to a material weight, or an incorporeal weight. An example of the latter is the saying of Arabs, '*La Wazna Lahu Bayn Ar-Rijal*' meaning 'So-and-so holds no weight (i.e. value) among men.'

Based on this, this verse of the chapter of *al-Kahf* can be understood as referring to both the disbelievers' material and incorporeal weight. This meaning is yet crystal clear in the story of the son of Prophet Nuh (Noah)

peace be upon him about whom Allah says: '[Allah] answered: "O Noah, behold, he was not of your family, for, verily, he was unrighteous in his conduct..."' (*Hud*: 46) which clearly means that even though this boy was sired by Noah *peace be upon him* he is not his son as to the matters of faith and belief, for he did not believe in the Message of his father.

In fact, the disbelievers and the sinners thought that they would be honoured by Allah *the Almighty* in the Hereafter just as they were in this worldly life, a point which is crystal clear in the story of the man of the Two Gardens about whom Allah tells that he said to his friend: '(I have) more wealth have I than you, and mightier am I as regards [the number and power of my] followers!' And having [thus] sinned against himself, he entered his garden, saying, 'I do not think that this will ever perish!' And neither do I think that the Last Hour will ever come. But even if [it should come, and] I am brought before my Lord, I will surely find something even better than this as [my last] resort!' (*al-Kahf*: 34–36) But it is absolutely out of the question that those deniers of the Truth will possess weight in the Hereafter, for weight on that particular Day is given to works alone, not to people of distinction. The meaning, then, is that Allah *the Almighty* will not assign weight to people of distinction from among the disbelievers, but rather will weigh their works and deeds. For that reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is narrated to have addressed his relatives, saying, 'Let no people bring me their works on the Day of Resurrection, yet you bring me your (familial) relations.'⁽¹⁾

In the same connection, he *peace and blessings be upon him* also says, 'O *Fatima*, daughter of Prophet Muhammad, do good deeds, for I cannot avail you anything with Allah.'⁽²⁾ This clearly indicates that people's lineages and families will avail them nothing in that situation.

(1) *Abu Hurayra narrated that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'My close friends on the Day of Resurrection are the most pious. People's lineage will avail them naught in the Hereafter. So, O family of Muhammad, let not people come with their good deeds while you come with the sins of this world on your backs, for then you will call upon me, saying, "O Prophet Muhammad! but I will turn away from you."' See Ibn Abi 'Asim, As-Sunna, 1/94.*

(2) *Hudhayfa said, 'I once came to Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him while Al-'Abbas was sitting on his right and Fatima on his left. Then he peace and blessings be upon him said, "O Fatima, do good deeds, for I cannot avail you anything with Allah."' See Ibn Abi 'Asim, As-Sunna, 1/94.*

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...so that no one can be wronged in the least...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 47), it means that those deniers of the Truth had wronged Allah *the Almighty* by associating partners with Him in worship, and that they had wronged Messenger Muhammad by accusing him of practising sorcery, telling lies and being crazy. Even though one of the established rules of the Sharia that whoever is wronged has the right to requite, a meaning which is crystal clear in His saying: '...if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him just as he has attacked you...' (*al-Baqara*: 194), He *Glorified is He* clearly states in this verse in question that no injustice will be committed on that Day of Resurrection.

As for the Arabic word *Al-Khardal* (seed of mustard) in the verse in question, it indicates exactness and precision in investigating everything. Today the mustard-seed is also the international standard measurement unit.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...We shall bring it out...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 47), it means that all of their deeds, whether for or against them, will be brought on the Day of Resurrection. So, in case the balance of deeds is in their favour, they become fully certain that Allah never wrongs them, for He *Glorified is He* carefully investigates all of their deeds, even the smallest of small acts of goodness, and if it is against them, they know that He *the Almighty* will thoroughly examine everything in the Reckoning. By mentioning the grain of mustard-seed, which is of small size, and the word *Mithqal*, which indicates weight, Allah *the Almighty* gathers together between the size and the weight of man's deed.

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the verse with His saying: '...We take excellent account.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 47) This part of the verse clearly indicates that none can do this matter as precisely as Allah *the Almighty* does, for He *Glorified is He* is never heedless of anything.

As a human being, do not think that this matter of the Reckoning and the Balance-Scale is an easy one in which you could arrive at perfect exactitude,

= be upon him said, "O Fatima, daughter of Prophet Muhammad, do good deeds, for I cannot avail you anything with Allah." See *Al-Haythami, Majma' Az-Zawa'id*, 1/49; he attributed it to *Al-Bazzar*.

no matter how many precautionary measures you took to do so, for you are a mere human being who is incapable of weighing things exactly because the iron measure by means of which you weigh things is liable to increase and decrease.

For example, dust may accumulate upon the measure you use in weighing things, or a drop of oil may even fall upon it; with the passage of time, the process of weighing things may be affected either for the interest of the buyer or for that of the seller. In the same connection, if we carefully consider the doorknob, we will find that it, unlike the rest of the door, is shining, which is to conclude that everything in the universe is decreased by virtue of touching or being in direct contact with it.

This point is also applicable to even the modern balance-scales which ensure a high level of precision and accuracy. These balances are still unable to give you the most absolute accuracy, a thing which is entitled only to Allah *the Almighty* as He says: ‘...None can take count [of man’s doings] as Allah does!’ (*al-Ahzab*: 39) and ‘...None can take count as We do!’ (*al-Anbiya*: 47) because He *Glorified is He* neither forgets, nor is heedless of anything.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ الْفُرْقَانَ وَضِيَاءَ وَذِكْرًا لِّلْمُنِيبِينَ

**We gave Moses and Aaron [the Scripture] that distinguishes
right from wrong, a light and a reminder for those who are
mindful of God [48] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 48)**

In this verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to console His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and relieve the burdens of the hardships which he suffered at the hands of his people. Therefore, He *the Almighty* tells him here of these examples from those previous Messengers who were endowed with firmness of heart⁽¹⁾ and who were persecuted and

(1) Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Remain, then, patient in adversity, just as all of the apostles, endowed with firmness of heart, bore themselves with patience...’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 35) Commenting on this verse, Ibn Kathir said: ‘Scholars differed over the number of those Messengers who were endowed with firmness of heart, yet the most common opinion is that they are Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, the seal of all of them.’=

hurt by their people. In actuality, by so doing, He *the Almighty* wants to make Messenger Muhammad's task of conveying the Message easier, thus his peoples' offense would not divert him from his very purpose of conveying the Divine Message to mankind.

In this verse, Allah *the Almighty* starts with Prophet Moses *peace be upon him* because he is one of the Messengers who suffered greatly in conveying the Message to his people. It is enough to know that he *peace be upon him* had suffered from the believing men of his people, so what about the disbelieving ones?! Here, in this verse, Allah *the Almighty* says that He has given *Al-Furqan* to both Moses and Aaron because they both were sent to deliver the same Message, a meaning which is crystal clear in His saying: 'And my brother Aaron—he is far better in speech than I am...' (*al-Qasas*: 34) and 'Add You through him to my strength, and let him share my task.' (*Ta Ha*: 31–32)

The Arabic word *Al-Furqan* is used to refer to something by means of which two things are distinguished from one another. It is one of the names of the Quran. Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Hallowed is He who from on high, step by step, has bestowed upon His servant *Al-Furqan* by which to discern the true from the false, so that to all the world it might be a warning.' (*al-Furqan*: 1)

The word *Al-Furqan* thus is a verbal noun indicating intensification. Arabs say: '*Farraq Tafriqan wa Furqanan*' to indicate the intensification of the act. That is because adding the two letters *Alif* and *Nun* at the end of the word strengthens the meaning and makes it clearer. This is because when you distinguish between two things the difference between which is insignificant, you call this simply a 'distinction' (*farq*). So, when you distinguish between two things, the difference between which results in something momentous for the formation of society and the proceeding of life; this is a 'conclusive distinction'. It is for this reason that the Quran is called *Al-Furqan* because it distinguished the Truth from falsehood.

This meaning of this word is also clear in His saying: 'O you who have attained to faith! If you remain conscious of Allah, He will endow you with a standard [or

= Other scholars believe that this description applies to all the previous Messengers and Prophets.' See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim*, 4/172.

distinction] by which to discern the true from the false...' (*al-Anfal*: 29). There is no consciousness of Allah except by means of carrying out His Commands and Instructions which are mentioned in the Quran which was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. As for the word *Al-Furqan* in this aforementioned verse of *al-Anfal*, it means a light by which you separate between things and distinguish between obscurities.

As a matter of fact, the more you are conscious of Allah, which is the first *Furqan*, He *Glorified is He* will provide you with the second *Furqan* by means of which you could distinguish among things and have the perspicacity by which you could get out of any troubles.

Do not you see them saying, 'So-and-so is clever' and 'So-and-so is quick-witted,' that is, able to summon remote or improbable things and turn them to advantage in the present moment? This actually results from the good fortune and success granted to him/her by Allah *the Almighty*. In this regard, Arabs used to be proud of the intelligence and sharp-wittedness of Iyas ibn Mu'awya, a point which is clear in the following poetic verse:⁽¹⁾

The boldness of 'Amr with the magnanimity of Hatim,

The forbearance of Ahnaf, and the sharpness of Iyas

Let us offer this striking example to see how Allah supports His pious slaves by *Al-Furqan*. It is narrated that when the Abbasid Caliph Abu Ja'far Al-Mansur wanted to make pilgrimage to Mecca for the last time in his life, he was told that Sufyan Ath-Thawri⁽²⁾ was speaking of him, criticising him and accusing him of injustice. So the Caliph said, 'I am going to make the pilgrimage this year, and I want to see him crucified in Mecca.' This news reached the people of Mecca where Sufyan Ath-Thawri was residing in the

(1) He is Abu Tammam, Habib ibn Aws At-Ta'i. He was born in one of the villages of Syria in 180 A.H. He experienced a poor life and used to work for a weaver while he was a boy. He died in the year 231 A.H. at the age of 51.

(2) He is Sufyan ibn Sa'id ibn Masruq Ath-Thawri Al-Mudari. His nickname is Abu Abdullah. He is the most knowledgeable person of the Hadith and the other sciences of religion at his time. He was born in Kufa in 97 A.H. The Abbasid Caliph Al-Mansur asked him frequently to be appointed as a ruler, but he refused. He died in Basra in 161 A.H. while hiding from the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mahdi. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-'Alam*, 3/104.

company of his companions from the Sufis, including Sufyan ibn 'Uyyana and Al-Fudayl ibn 'Iyad who both deeply loved Ath-Thawri.

One day the three of them were at the Mosque and Ath-Thawri was lying down between his two companions, with his head on one's lap and his feet on the other's, when the news of Al-Mansur and his proclamation reached them. So Ibn 'Uyyana and Al-Fudayl pleaded to Ath-Thawri, 'O Sufyan, do not disgrace us and disappear so that Al-Mansur could not see you, for if he seizes you and carries out his threat against you, he will weaken men's firm belief in those who are mindful of Allah.'

It is at this point that Ath-Thawri said, 'By Him in whose Hand is my soul, he will not enter the city,' And this is what actually took place, for Al-Mansur entered Mecca from the direction of Al-Hajun where he fell from his riding animal and died at once. As such, he entered Mecca as a dead body and Ath-Thawri himself was the one who led his funeral prayer. This is the distinction, light, insight and perspicacity of the believer who sees by Allah's Light and does not set about any affair except according to His Guidance.

It is also narrated that Al-Mahdi, the Abbasid caliph, entered the *Ka'ba* and found there a young boy of the age of 16 or 17. Around him, 400 eminent, bearded sheikhs of awe-inspiring appearance and dignified status were gathered, and the boy was giving them a lesson. Astonished, Al-Mahdi said, 'Ugh, should not head one of these bearded people not head the gathering?!' Then he approached the boy, wanting to scold and upbraid him, and said to him, 'How old are you, boy?' Thereupon the boy said, 'My age equates that of Usama ibn Zayd when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* appointed him as a commander of an army which included within its ranks Abu Bakr and 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with them.*' Then, acknowledging the boy's sharpness of wit and his rightful assumption of that position, Al-Mahdi replied, 'May Allah bless you.'

The appellation of the 'criterion', then, is not applied to anything except momentous, mighty affairs, equivalent to that which descended upon Moses *peace be upon him* or that which descended upon Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It also came to be a proper noun for the Quran, for there is a distinction between the name and the description. You describe

everything which distinguishes between truth and falsehood as a 'criterion', but when this word is used as a proper noun, it applies to the Quran.

The one who contemplates this matter of the division that distinguishes between truth and falsehood in the Quran finds that it plays a role in the story of Moses, for its very first verse reads: 'And when We parted the sea for you....' (*al-Baqara*: 50)

The division is to separate between something which is simultaneously contiguous and different. In arithmetic they say 'mixing' and 'mingling', for there is a difference between separating between mixed things such as an orange, an apple, and a grape, and separating them while they are mixed together as juice, intermingled to the point of becoming a single thing.

Therefore, the division of the sea for Moses *peace be upon him* is not simply a 'division', but a 'conclusive division,' because the greatest kind of division is to divide the water into two parts, each of which is like an immense, towering mountain—and who has the power to do such a thing except for Allah *the Almighty*?

Then He *the Almighty* says: '...a light and a reminder for those who are mindful of Allah.' (*al-Anbiya*: 48) This means that what was revealed to Moses *peace be upon him* was a light which guides the people throughout the paths of their life free from any harm. Otherwise, how would they pass through the narrow passes of life? If the human being journeyed without guidance, s/he would either collide with what is stronger than him/her and be smashed, or else s/he would collide with what is weaker than him/her and smash it. The Light, therefore, is important and necessary in the human being's life, for by virtue of this Light s/he is rightly guided in the proceedings of a peaceful life. Leading it according to clear evidence, s/he neither wears himself/herself out nor troubles others.

As for Allah's saying: '...and a reminder...' (*al-Anbiya*: 48), it means that the scripture reminds those who are heedless and calls them to attention. This is because when layers of heedlessness accumulate, they form a covering which veils one's ability to see and blinds one's insight. Therefore, when the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave a likeness for man's

heedlessness, he said, 'Temptations will be presented to men's hearts as a reed mat is woven stick by stick.'

According to another narration, he said, 'seeking protection again and again', that is, seeking Allah's Protection from these temptations afflicting a believer. Have you seen the maker of the reed mat when s/he subjoins one reed to another until s/he has formed a complete mat? Likewise, when the temptations are presented to us, the reminder eliminates our heedlessness so that the layers of heedlessness do not pile-up upon us, one over another.

The Hadith then continues, 'Any heart which is impregnated by them—that is, accepted them—will have a black mark put into it, but any heart which rejects them will have a white mark put in it. The result is that there will become two types of hearts (Allah's Messenger spoke truly): either white like a stone which will not be harmed by any turmoil or temptation, so long as the heavens and the earth endure; and the other black and dust-coloured like a vessel which is upset, not recognising what is good or rejecting what is abominable.'⁽¹⁾

The scholars said that this is the rust about which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Nay! Rather, what they used to do has become like rust upon their hearts.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 14) Thus, the reminder is that which removes this rust.

Some of the qualities of those: '...who are mindful of Allah.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 48) are mentioned in the following verse:

الَّذِينَ يَخْشَوْنَ رَبَّهُم بِالْغَيْبِ وَهُمْ مِّنَ السَّاعَةِ مُشْفِقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

**Those who stand in awe of their Lord, though
He is unseen, and who fear the Hour[49]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 49)**

To 'stand in awe' is to fear something due to its exaltedness and awesomeness. You might fear something which you detest and despise, but to 'stand in awe' is to fear that your father or your teacher, for example, sees you being negligent. You will feel ashamed that he sees you in this state of negligence.

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Muslim in the Book of Iman and by Ahmad on the authority of Hudhayfa ibn Al-Yaman Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 144; Ahmad, *Musnad*, 5/386, 405.

Thus, the meaning of 'standing in awe' of Allah *the Almighty* is that you fear being negligent in what He commanded and with which He entrusted you. This is due to the fact that Allah's standards are high, and perhaps you failed to do that with which you are entrusted.

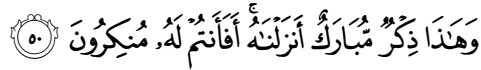
Elsewhere, Allah *Glorified is He* explains this matter, saying: '...those of His servants only who are possessed of knowledge fear Allah...' (*Fatir*: 28). What is the reason for this? It is because the scholars are the most knowledgeable of Allah *the Almighty* and of His Wisdom in His creation; whenever the truths of the creation and its secrets are disclosed to them, their fear of Allah *the Almighty* and their awe and reverence of Him increases. For that reason, He *the Almighty* says about them: 'They fear their Lord above them...' (*an-Nahl*: 50). This verse shows that they fear their Lord, Who is superior to them, but they do so with love and awe of Him.

The meaning of Allah's saying: '...though He is unseen...' (*al-Anbiya*': 49) is that they fear Allah *the Almighty* despite the fact that they do not see Him with their eyes, but rather see Him in the traces of His creative Power. Another possible interpretation is that the 'unseen' here refers to the affairs which they do not witness, but which Allah *the Almighty* informs them about, and thereby these affairs become as if they were seen with their own eyes.

The meaning could also be that they fear their Lord in their periods of seclusion from the world, for the awe of Allah *the Almighty* and proper comportment toward Him accompanies them even in their seclusion and solitude, unlike those who hypocritically demonstrate this comportment in front of people, and then become rebellious against Allah *the Almighty* in their solitude.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...and who fear the Hour.' (*al-Anbiya*': 49) They also fear the Hour, but their fear is accompanied by wariness, unlike their fear of Allah *the Almighty* which is accompanied by awe. This is because they fear that the Hour will come upon them before being completely prepared in a way that makes them happy with Allah's Requitat when they receive it.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:



**This [Quran] too is a blessed message We have sent
down – are you [people] going to deny it? [50]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 50)**

That verse means that just as the Torah is: ‘... a reminder...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 48), the Quran which Allah *the Almighty* revealed to Prophet Muhammad is a reminder, but it is: ‘...a blessed reminder...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 50).

They say, ‘this thing is blessed,’ which signifies that it gives to you goodness on top of what one expects from it. An example of this is when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to give his companions milk to drink from a single deep, wooden drinking cup,⁽¹⁾ and to feed the entire army from a small, scanty amount of food.⁽²⁾

Let us offer an example from our daily life; we hear the people say, ‘So-and-so’s salary is small, but despite that, he and his children live a good life.’ This is because Allah *the Almighty* blesses this small amount of money for him.

Thus, the meaning of Allah’s saying: ‘...a blessed reminder...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 50) is that its goodness is beyond what you think. So, you should beware of saying, ‘It is merely a Book of statutes and commandments’, for the Quran

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- (1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah Allah be pleased with him that on the Day of the Tree in Hudaibiyya, Allah's Messenger peace and blessings be upon him brought water in a small drinking vessel, put his hand in it, and made the water flow out between his fingers as though they were springs. Jabir said, 'We drank and it sufficed us.' Then he was asked, 'How many were you?' and he said, 'If we had been 100,000 it would have sufficed us. We were 1,500.' See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 4152; and Al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il An-Nubuwwa, 4/115.*
- (2) *'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him said, 'When Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him reached the valley of Murr Azh-Zuhuran during the days of the Peace Treaty with Quraysh, his companions said to him, 'O Messenger of Allah, if we slaughtered some of our camels and ate from their meats and fats and sipped from the broth, we would wake up in the morning—if we hastened to do it—and we would be rested.' He said, 'No, but bring me what remains of your provisions.' So they spread out their leather mats and cast forth upon them the remainder of their provisions. Allah's Messenger peace and blessings be upon him invoked a blessing upon them, and they ate until they were completely filled. Then they wrapped up what remained of the provisions in their sacks.' See Muslim, Sahih, Book of Al-Luqta; Al-Bayhaqi, Dala'il An-Nubuwwa, 4/120.*

possesses the quality of eternity, and contains endless secrets. Its blessing includes all the spheres and all the domains up to the Hour of Resurrection, for regardless of the times we repeat its verses, we find it beautiful and eloquent. In every age, it reveals new secrets, and it never wears out from repeating its recitation, nor do its wonders come to an end. So the Quran is blessed because the goodness it comprises transcends the period of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and, indeed, every period, age and century. Every day it bestows a new secret from among what Allah *the Almighty* has mentioned in it.

The Quran, then, is: ‘...a blessed reminder...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 50) because its aspects of goodness transcend the period in which it was revealed, and go beyond every age and century, for every day it bestows a new secret from what Allah *the Almighty* reveals in it. Thereby, He *the Almighty* mentions how astonishing their rejection is: ‘...are you [people] going to deny it?’ (*al-Anbiya*: 50) How can the like of this Speech be denied?

We have already clarified their statements about the Quran. Among them are those who said, ‘It is sorcery’; others who said, ‘It is poetry’; and still others who said, ‘It is lies and the fairy-tales of the ancients.’ All of this reflects their bankruptcy in argument which is meant simply to ensnare people. It merely reveals the inconsistency of their thinking.

Did they themselves not say: ‘Why was not this Quran revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) Thus, they acknowledged the veracity and the standing of the Quran and that it is from Allah *the Almighty*. They do not object to it in anything, but they object to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to whom the Quran was revealed, which indicates that they have not yet awakened from their heedlessness.

We should take into account that Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘This is a blessed reminder...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 50), and does not say, ‘This is the Quran,’ as though ‘the reminder’ does not point to anything except the Quran.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ رُشْدَهُ مِن قَبْلُ وَكُنَّا بِهِ عَلِيمِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

**Long ago⁽¹⁾ We bestowed right judgment
on Abraham and We knew him well [51]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 51)**

We notice that Allah *Glorified is He* began His consolation of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by mentioning a part of the story of Moses *peace be upon him*, and then turned immediately to the story of Abraham *peace be upon him*, despite the fact that Abraham came before Moses. So, what is the reason for this? This is because Moses *peace be upon him* had a direct connection with the Jews who lived near to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in Medina and were a people of argument and opposition.

Here, Allah's saying: '...right judgment...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 51) refers to the right guidance of Abraham's intellect to the perfection of righteousness and the greatest extent of goodness such that depravity never returns after righteousness, nor evil after goodness, nor does he forsake nobility for baseness—this is the meaning of 'right judgment.' Superficial righteousness, on the other hand, drags you into depravity, or causes you to forsake goodness for evil, for there is no 'right judgment' in that.

Now, we hear them talking about beautiful arts, and winning over people with glittering catch phrases which they admire until boldness brings them to call dancing a refined and beautiful art. How far is Allah from every imperfection! Dancing would be as they say if it were truly refined and beautiful and remained that way always, and did not devolve into something ugly and base. But what happens when a man sits in front of a female dancer while she displays her charms and movements in such a way that his wife at home is not able to do? How many homes are ruined and families destroyed due to a female dancer? What, then, is the refinement and the beauty in this art?

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi says, 'This means before the Prophethood, that is, Allah gave him rectitude in vision and reasoning when the night covered him and he saw the star, the sun, and the moon. However, it is said that 'long before,' means before Moses and Aaron *peace be upon them*. According to this opinion, 'the right judgment' refers to the Prophethood. The first interpretation is held by most of the Quranic exegetes.' See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4473.

Imam 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* summed up this matter by saying, 'There is no evil in an evil after which comes paradise, and there is no goodness in a goodness after which comes the Hellfire.'

Therefore, the human being must pay attention to that rectitude which is the right guidance of the intellect in the direction of the greatest propriety, perfection, and goodness. This rectitude has two dimensions: rectitude of the physical constitution and rectitude of thought.

Rectitude of the physical constitution is the completion of the human being's formation so that every organ within him/her performs its function properly, and this does not come about until the age of maturity. The Creator *Glorified is He* made the maturity of the procreative organs an indication of the completion of this rectitude, when the human being becomes able to beget the like of him/herself.

This is clear in fruits; their taste does not become sweet until after their ripening and the maturation of their seed to germinate when it is sown. Out of the Wisdom of the Creator, we eat the fruit and save its species through its sound seed. But if the fruits ripened and we ate them before the maturation of their seeds, we would have eaten the existing fruits but not saved their species, and they would then die out.

Another manifestation of Allah's Wisdom is that when the fruit ripens, and there is no one to harvest it, it falls to the ground of its own accord, and then its life cycle begins anew.

For a good reason, Allah *the Almighty* appointed religious obligation to begin after maturity. If He *the Almighty* had obligated you before maturity, you would have found in the obligations a prohibition of some things which you did not know about and were not aware of, and you would have objected to your Lord, saying, 'How can I adhere to this obligation, O Lord, when my natural impulse drives me to do such-and-such?'

In the same vein, there is rectitude in every part and apparatus in the human body which corresponds to it, and its growth corresponds to one's formation. Take, for instance, a child's eyes, mouth, and fingers; all of them grow and develop in a way corresponding to the child's formation.

The teeth in particular comprise a profound Wisdom from the Creator *Glorified is He*. During the stage in which the child is not able to clean his/her teeth by himself/herself, nor is someone else able to do so, Allah *the Almighty* gives him/her a temporary set of teeth called 'milk teeth', which stay with him/her during his/her earliest years. Then, when s/he grows to become able to clean his/her teeth by himself/herself, Allah *the Almighty* replaces the first set of teeth with another one which remains with him/her throughout his/her life.

Moreover, there is a higher rectitude; it is a mental, intellectual rectitude in which the intellect and reflection become sound, and the mind which selects and compares alternatives to determine which is preferable matures. The physical, bodily rectitude may mature for a person without his/her intellectual maturity. In this case, we do not allow him/her to freely administer anything until we test him/her, in order to know the extent of his/her proficiency in administering that which s/he possesses. Then, if s/he passes the test, we give him/her the property which belongs to him/her to freely administer it. This ruling is mentioned in Allah's saying: 'And test the orphans until they attain puberty; then if you find in them maturity of intellect, make over to them their property...' (*an-Nisa'*: 6) That is, the guardian should not wait until the child becomes older and then give him/her the property to do with it as s/he wants without having any experience. Rather, the guardian should test him/her and make him/her engage in the daily life's activities. In this way, s/he becomes an experienced young person, able to soundly administer his/her affairs.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And do not give away your property to the weak of understanding...' (*an-Nisa'*: 5). This is because his/her bodily rectitude has matured unlike his/her intellectual rectitude. So, be careful not to say, 'It is his/her property which s/he is entitled to administer as s/he wills', for property is not to be given to those who are weak of judgment, as indicated by His saying: 'And do not give away your property to the weak of understanding...' (*an-Nisa'*: 5). Here, Allah *the Almighty* does not say 'their property,' because these guardians should take care of the property of the people of weak understanding as though it were really theirs, for they are responsible for it before Allah *the Almighty*. The property of one who is weak of judgment is not given to him/her unless s/he shows a sound administration of it.

Another example of rectitude is that which the Quran calls 'full maturity': '...until when he attains his maturity and reaches forty years, he says: My Lord! Grant me that I may give thanks for Your Favour which You has bestowed on me and on my parents...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15).

'Full maturity' is to become established in rectitude. Allah *the Almighty* says here 'forty years,' despite the fact that the human being normally attains bodily and intellectual rectitude after the age of maturity, at about 15 years old. Therefore, there is no hope for one who does not attain rectitude until the age of forty, and, in fact, the fire is the most appropriate place for him/her. This is because when s/he disbelieves or deviates from the path in the prime of his/her youth and vigour, we may excuse him/her, saying, 'The petulance of youth, passion, adolescence and etc.' but when s/he reaches forty years old, what excuse does s/he have?

If s/he does not learn the principles of rectitude in his/her childhood or adolescence, s/he will undoubtedly find in the occurrences of life throughout forty years events which forcibly guide him/her. Throughout this time, s/he sees his/her works and their consequences, his/her errors and mistakes, and should take from them a practical and theoretical lesson in rectitude.

Related to this are some contemporary technical terms we hear, such as when people speak about 'political rationality' and 'rationing' of food consumption. So, what do these terms indicate? They indicate that the events and experiences of life, and the lack of rectitude in man's journey through it tormented mankind and forced them to reflect on some 'rationalisation' by which this corruption may be eliminated.

An example of practicing rectitude for oneself and 'rationalisation' for others is as we do when we rationalise our use of wheat. We used to feed the livestock with wheat, until things came to a point where we could not find it around anymore. As a result we started rationing loaves of bread, and we eventually came to a point where we divided a single loaf into four parts, which we ate in limited quantities, never wasting anything. Moreover, if any amount left over from one meal which remained clean, we would serve it again in another meal.

If the baker did not possess such 'rationalisation,' s/he may remove the loaf from the oven before it is ready and so find it to be still in a doughy state, pulpy throughout. Then the attentive lady of the house would come, open the loaf before placing it on the table, take from it this pulp, combine it all together, and finally toast it in the oven and make from it some other meal.

What we said about rationing of bread also applies to rationing of water. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* commanded us to ration water, even to the point of doing so in the ritual ablution which is something which connects us to Allah *the Almighty*.

This rectitude which we described applies to everyone who possesses an intellect and is not a Messenger. By this rectitude, one finds the way to deal with the affairs of his/her life in a proper manner, but the result of this rectitude is witnessed in this world only. On the other hand, the rectitude of the Messengers is higher and is pertinent not only to this worldly life, but also to the Hereafter, for is it a gift from Allah *the Almighty* to the Messengers.

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says concerning Abraham *peace be upon him*: 'Long ago We bestowed right judgement on Abraham...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 51). It is as though Abraham's rectitude is not subject to these principles and depends on neither maturation nor prophethood. Rather, his rectitude is precocious, from the time when he was young and used to contemplate the stars and search for his Lord: '...then when he saw the moon rising, he said: Is this my Lord? So when it set, he said: If my Lord had not guided me I should certainly be of the erring people. Then when he saw the sun rising, he said: Is this my Lord? Is this the greatest? So when it set, he said: O my people! Surely I am clear of what you set up (with Allah).' (*al-An'am*: 77–78) So, Abraham was qualified for the Message from the time of his youth. When he was sent as a Prophet, the manifestation of his rectitude appeared upon his being thrown into the fire: Gabriel *peace be upon him* came to him and offered him assistance. Thereupon, Abraham said, 'I need nothing from you'. This was the first of the propitious signs of Abraham's rectitude in thought and doctrine.

Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* says about him: 'And when his Lord tried Abraham with certain words, he fulfilled them...' (*al-Baqara*: 124). This verse means that He *the Almighty* tested him in some obligations, and he

fulfilled them, performing them in the most perfect manner. Among these obligations is that He asked him to erect the foundations of The House. It would have sufficed that Abraham *peace be upon him* raised the foundations of The House just as far as his arms could reach, but he was eager to fulfil the commandment as perfectly as possible. So he reflected upon it and exercised skill and ingenuity in bringing a stone and standing upon it in order to raise the edifice to the further extent of the stone. His young son Ishmael *peace be upon him* helped him in this, handing him the stones, but the young child's feet would slip whenever he lifted up the stones to his father. So he exercised skill and ingenuity in this matter and carved the shapes of his feet into the stone so that he could stand upon it firmly. These two footprints are still witnessed by us to this very day on the stone of Ishmael.

Thus, Abraham *peace be upon him* possessed an ardent love for religious obligations and an eagerness to fulfil them. The fact expressed in Allah's saying: '...We knew him well' (*al-Anbiya*: 51) is also attested to clearly in His saying: '...Allah best knows where He places His Message...' (*al-An'am*: 124).

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا هَذِهِ التَّمَاثِيلُ الَّتِي أَنْتُمْ لَهَا عَاكِفُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

**He said to his father and his people, 'What are these images to which you are so devoted?' [52]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 52)**

This means, O Muhammad, when Abraham *peace be upon him* said to his father and his people: 'What are these images ...?' (*al-Anbiya*: 52) 'Images' here is the plural of 'image,' which is taken from the word for a similitude or a likeness, and the similitude of something is what is similar or equivalent to it. They used to apply themselves to things with a certain mass and to shape them according to the form of things created by Allah *the Almighty* such as the form of man or of animals. These images were made out of stone, iron, wood, etc. Then they would set it up in order to worship it.

They used to exaggerate in this by making an image out of stone and another one of marble: this one is small, that one is big. Furthermore, they would put in its eyes two beads in order to appear to people that it possessed

the power of sight, which was one of the various kinds of activities in this craft. Therefore, Abraham *peace be upon him* says disparagingly to his father and his people: 'What are these images to which you are so devoted?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 52) But the question here is not a real one, but a negative question bearing a tone of mockery, scorn, and rebuke. Inevitably, he would pose this question to them in an expressive way infused with rebuke.

We already spoke previously about the meaning of 'his father' here, when we said that the intended meaning is actually his uncle, as evinced by Allah's saying in another place: '...to his father, Azar....' (*al-An'am*: 74) He raised the issue first with his father or his uncle, who was the closest to him among men, wanting people to be reassured concerning that to which he was calling them, and that it was good; otherwise he would not have begun with his father. This is also because he might not have held any influence with the people, or they might not have held him in esteem or affection, while they did have affection and respect for his father or for his uncle. In spite of that, this esteem did not prohibit him from despising their vain speech and actions, as is mentioned in Allah's saying: 'Say: If your fathers and your sons and your brethren and your mates and your kinsfolk and property which you have acquired, and the slackness of trade which you fear and dwellings which you like, are dearer to you than Allah and His Messenger and striving in His way, then wait till Allah brings about His command: and Allah does not guide the transgressing people.' (*at-Tawba*: 24)

The commentators carefully examined the preposition '*Lam*' translated as 'to' in Allah's saying: '...to which you are so devoted?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 52) The meaning is that they are intensely devoted to the worship of these images, as is stated in another verse: '...they came upon a people who kept to the worship of their idols.' (*al-A'raf*: 138) However, in the first verse the preposition *Lam* is used instead of '*Ala*', which collocates in Arabic with the verb to devote. To this some scholars said that the preposition *Lam* here means '*Ala*'. So, why does Allah *the Almighty* use the preposition *Lam* instead of the preposition '*Ala*' which is more usually used with the verb devote?

If we reflected on the connotations of the word: '... so devoted...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 52), we say that being 'so devoted' linguistically means staying

at the mosque. Thus, these people were intensely devoted to the service of these gods. The preposition *Lam* translated as 'to,' however, bears another connotation, for it indicates possession and benefit. Another example for this is Allah's saying: 'On the day when We will roll up heaven like the rolling up of the scroll for writings....' (*al-Anbiya*: 104)

'Scrolls' here mean sheets or leaves of paper on which we write, as for instance when people say, 'We record such-and-such,' that is, they write it on the scroll or on paper in order to preserve it. The meaning of Allah's saying: '...for writings...' (*al-Anbiya*: 104) is something written down, so the meaning becomes as though, 'We shall roll up the paper with what is written upon it.'

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالُوا وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا هَآءِهِمْ

**They replied, 'We found our fathers
worshipping them'[53]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 53)**

Therefore, they have no argument for their worshipping of these images which they themselves fashioned and set up except that they saw their fathers worshipping them. Their argument, then, is blind imitation, and if they had an argument for the fact that they themselves worship them, they would have stated it.

In another place, they also said: '...Surely we found our fathers on a course, and surely we are followers of their footsteps.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 23) Therefore, we blame them for this blind imitation, and we blame their fathers as well. So, what was Abraham's reply?

The word '...worshipping...' (*al-Anbiya*: 53) indicates the fact that their worship of the idols was derived from a lack of understanding because worship means the compliance of the worshipper with the commands of the one s/he worships. So, what did their idols command them to do?

Then Allah *Glorified is He* relates that Abraham *peace be upon him* said to his people:

قَالَ لَقَدْ كُنْتُمْ أَنْتُمْ وَآبَاؤُكُمْ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

He said, 'You and your fathers have clearly gone astray'[54] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 54)

He wanted to set this foolishness aright so he said, 'You have strayed from the right path because you blindly imitated your forefathers who contrived this affair and established it as a custom for you. Faith, however, cannot be realised by blind imitation.'

It is astonishing that they blindly imitate in this case exactly, for who persists in doing exactly what his/her father did? Do we not instead see each new generation producing something which was unknown to the previous generation? Therefore, they say, 'Men resemble the time in which they live more than they resemble their fathers.' This is due to the fact that every time has its conventions and its progressive developments. You have control over your child so long as s/he is young, so that s/he eats drinks and dresses as you like. But when s/he grows and becomes an adult, s/he comes to have his/her own particular personality and thinks independently, choosing his/her food and clothes and the college where s/he will study, and s/he may even find fault with you in some things.

Thus, the people of Abraham blindly imitated their fathers only in this matter of worship. But why did they hold fast to blind imitation in the matter of faith, apart from all other matters? If it were the case that every generation arrived as an exact replica of its predecessor, the course of life would never change, but it does, which proves that every generation possesses its own distinct identity and way of thinking.

These people blindly imitate their fathers in this worship and in no other matters precisely because it is a worship and a piety without any obligation; that is, their gods provide no Way of Guidance to mankind, and neither constrain them concerning anything nor prohibit them any of the desires which they are accustomed to. In short, it is a religiosity without any consequence or responsibility.

For this reason Allah *Glorified is He* replies to them in two different ways. In one place He *the Almighty* says: '...and when it is said to them, follow what Allah has revealed, they say: Nay! We follow what we found our fathers upon. What! And though their fathers had no sense at all, nor did they follow

the right way.' (*al-Baqara*: 170) Elsewhere, He says: 'And when it is said to them, Come to what Allah has revealed and to the Messenger, they say: That on which we found our fathers is sufficient for us. What! Even though their fathers knew nothing and did not follow the right way.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104)

We notice that the second half of each verse is different, for in one place He says: '...had no sense at all...' (*al-Baqara*: 170), and in the other, '...knew nothing....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104) Why does this difference exist? This is because the second half of each verse corresponds to its first half, and the first part of each verse is different. In the first verse they say: 'Nay! we follow what we found our fathers upon....' (*al-Baqara*: 170) So, they may follow either this or that without limiting themselves to one thing. On the other hand, they said in the second verse: 'That on which we found our fathers is sufficient for us.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104) This means that they rendered that on which they found their fathers sufficient for them, and they did not want anything additional added to it. So in this case they limit themselves to that which they found their fathers believing in and doing.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says in the second half of the first verse: '...had no sense at all...' (*al-Baqara*: 170), and in the second half of the second verse He says: '...knew nothing...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104) because only s/he who uses his/her reason is rightly guided to the Truth.

As for the one who knows, s/he can derive his/her knowledge from what s/he reflected on and also from what others attain to by using their reason. Therefore, the circle of knowledge is wider than the circle of reason because reason guides to one particular thing, whereas knowledge includes what others were guided to. Then Allah *the Almighty* relates their reply:

قَالُوا أَجِئْنَا بِالْحَقِّ أَمْ أَنْتَ مِنَ اللَّاعِينَ ﴿٥٥﴾

They asked, 'Have you brought us the truth or are you just playing about?' [55] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 55)

That is they said, 'O Abraham is this speech of yours serious? Or are you joking with us?' It is as though they find it farfetched that Abraham's speech would be serious because it is difficult for them to understand.

Abraham *peace be upon him* then replies to them:

قَالَ بَلْ رَبُّكُمْ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الَّذِي فَطَرَهُمْ وَأَنَا عَلَىٰ ذَٰلِكُم مِّنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

He said, Listen! Your true Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He who created them, and I am a witness to this [56] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 56)

Abraham *peace be upon him* replies, 'I brought you the Truth, which declares that these idols are not to be worshipped; rather, the one who deserves worship is Allah, the Lord of the heavens and the earth: 'He said, 'Listen! Your true Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, He who created them...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 56) So, he negated that their idols are true gods and then affirmed that Allah *the Almighty* is the true God. Allah's saying: 'He who created them...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 56) means that He is the Creator of the heavens, the earth, the idols themselves and indeed everything in existence. Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...and I am a witness to this.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 56) A witness is someone who attained to the truth through its evidence, as though it is seen by his/her very eyes. So Abraham *peace be upon him* said, 'I am one who bears witness to the fact that your Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth, and with me is the evidence of this truth.'

Allah *the Almighty* then relates that Abraham *peace be upon him* said:

وَتَاللَّهِ لَأَكِيدَنَّ أَصْنَامَكُمْ بَعْدَ أَنْ تُوَلُّوا مُدْبِرِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

By God I shall certainly plot against your idols as soon as you have turned your backs! [57] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 57)

After all that transpired of their being stubborn and quarrelling in vain, Abraham *peace be upon him* swore, 'By Allah I shall certainly plot against your idols...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 57) with the particle 'by' here indicating the swearing of an oath. But is it possible for someone to plot against idols? So, the intended meaning is that he would plot against his people by the means of the idols. This is because the idols are Allah's creation which extol His praises and are thankful to Abraham *peace be upon him* for this action.

How beautiful is that which the poet⁽¹⁾ said with this meaning, when he spoke on the tongue of the stones in the cave of Hira' and Thawr, where the stones used to be jealous and envious of *Hira' because Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him* used to devote himself to the worship of Allah *the Almighty* in it, before the time of his mission. It witnessed and was pleased with Prophet Muhammad's worship and companionship. So when he came to the cave of Thawr during the Hijra, Thawr became overjoyed because it had attained the same rank as Hira':

How much we envied Hira' when we saw
the faithful spirit flooding you with lights.

Then Hira' and Thawr became equal—

He pleaded at both for stones' alternation.

They worshipped us, while we were the greatest of the worshippers
of Allah who stand in prayer in the early mornings.

They took our silence as a proof against us,

And so we became for them fuel for the Fire

This is because Allah *the Almighty* says: '...the fire of which men and stones are the fuel...' (*al-Baqara: 24*)

They accused us of ignorance, just as

they accused of it Mary's son and the Apostles.

To the exceeeder of bounds, his requital; but that by which he exceeded,

The All-Forgiving's mercy delivers

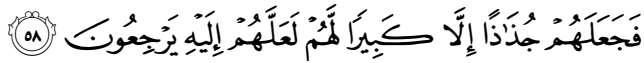
The smashing of the idols, then, does not constitute plotting against them, but rather against their worshippers who believe the idols to be capable of harming or benefiting. By means of his action, it is as though Abraham *peace be upon him* establishes for them proof of the futility of worshipping stones, a tangible proof which cannot be refuted. It is as if he says to himself, 'If I am in the wrong when I smash the idols, they will prevent me and repel the axe

(1) One of the poems of Sheikh Al-Sha'rawi on the *Hijra* incident.

from my hand, but if I am in the right, they will allow me to proceed with what I am doing.'

As for Allah's saying: '...as soon as you have turned your backs!' (*al-Anbiya'*: 57) This means he will do it after they have turned away from the idols and are unaware of them.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:



He broke them all into pieces, but left the biggest one for them to return to [58] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 58)

We notice here that the Quranic style omits that which is understood from the context, just as in the story of Solomon and the hoopoe: 'Take this my letter and hand it over to them, then turn away from them and see what (answer) they return.' (*an-Naml*: 28) It omits the part of the story when the hoopoe travelled to the Queen of Sheba, cast the letter before her, and she took it and presented it to her Council: 'She said: O chief! Surely an honourable letter has been delivered to me.' (*an-Naml*: 29)

The meaning of '...into pieces...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 58) is into scattered shards and fragments after they had been assembled bodies: '...but left the biggest one for them to return to.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 58) This means that he left it and did not shatter it. They used to place the idols in a special formation and décor, in such a manner that the large one would be in the middle, surrounded by all of the small idols, as though it possessed dominion over them and a high-standing among them. They also used to place in its eyes green jewels cut from peridot in order to give the impression to one viewing it that it was looking at him/her.

Allah's saying: '...for them to return to' (*al-Anbiya'*: 58) means that Abraham *peace be upon him* left the biggest one so that they could ask it about what happened to the smaller gods, and why it did not defend them, especially since they found the axe on its shoulder?

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* relates their statement:

قَالُوا مَنْ فَعَلَ هَذَا بِآلِهَتِنَا إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٩﴾

They said, ‘Who has done this to our gods? How wicked he must be!’ [59] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 59)

So, when they went to their house of worship in which they worshipped their idols and found them shattered, they said: ‘Who has done this to our gods? How wicked he must be!’ (*al-Anbiya*: 59) He must be wicked, in their opinion because he attacked the undamaged gods and broke them.

Therefore, these gods are not able to defend themselves from harm, and these people who worshipped them should have paid attention to this event. How could they accept to worship them when, if the mere wind caused one of the idols to fall, it would break it? Thereby the idol would require someone to repair it and set it back in its place—so what kind of divinity is this which they uphold, contrary to the idols’ realities?

Allah *the Almighty* narrates what happened after this:

قَالُوا سَمِعْنَا فَتًى يَذْكُرُهُمْ يُقَالُ لَهُ إِبْرَاهِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾

Some said, ‘We heard a youth called Abraham talking about them’[60] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 60)

This means that some of them voluntarily spoke without being asked, and said this. These people had a fixed day on which they would go to their place of worship where the idols were, bringing with them their food and drink, which appears to have been a feast for them. Azar prepared himself for this day and wanted to take Abraham *peace be upon them* with him, hoping that the gods might guide him and turn him away from that in which he was involved.

But Abraham *peace be upon him* claimed that he was sick, unable to go with them, a fact which is clear in Allah’s saying: ‘He said: Surely, I am sick!’⁽¹⁾

(1) Allah the Almighty says: ‘Then he looked at the stars, looking up once, Then he said: Surely I am sick (of your worshipping these).’ (as-Saffat: 88–89) In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir relates that Qatada said, ‘The Arabs say of him who reflects, “He gazes at the stars.”’ Qatada means that Abraham gazed at the sky reflecting on what he could say to distract them, and then he said: ‘Surely I am sick’ (as-Saffat: 89), that is, ill. See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al-‘Azhim, 4/13.

(*as-Saffat*: 89) When he had resolved to smash their idols and said: 'By Allah I shall certainly plot against your idols as soon as you have turned your backs!' (*al-Anbiya'*: 57) Some of the people heard him and informed the rest of them of his resolution.

Here, Allah's saying: '...talking about them.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 60) means speaking with evil about them. As for His saying: '...called Abraham...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 60), it means that his name is Abraham, or, when they call him, they say, 'O Abraham.'

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالُوا فَاتُوا بِهِ عَلَىٰ عَيْنِ النَّاسِ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَشْهَدُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

They said, 'Bring him before the eyes of the people, so that they may witness [his trial]' [61] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 61)

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...Before the people's eyes...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 61) means within their field of vision so that they may see him with their own eyes. Allah's saying: '...so that they may witness [his trial]...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 61) means that they did so in order that the people might witness the punishment which they will bring down upon him. This is meant to be a warning to others so that no one else would dare to commit such an act.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قَالُوا ءَأَنْتَ فَعَلْتَ هَٰذَا يَا هَيْهَاتَ يَتَابِرُ هَيْمُ ﴿٦٢﴾

They asked, 'Was it you, Abraham, who did this to our gods?' [62] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 62)

Here, a part of the discourse is also omitted, for first they brought him, and then they asked him this question. The question: 'Was it you, Abraham, who did this to our gods?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 62) It is a question about the agent of the action because the act is apparent, not requiring any questioning. Thus they did not say, 'Did you do this, Abraham?' Instead, they were concerned with the agent of the action, saying: 'Was it you, Abraham, who did this to our gods?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 62) As you say, 'Did you build that house which you

were intending to build?', which is a question about the act, but when you say, 'Is it you who built the house?', the intended focus is on the agent.

Allah *the Almighty* then relates Abraham's reply:

قَالَ بَلْ فَعَلَهُ كَبِيرُهُمْ هَذَا فَسْأَلُوهُمْ إِنْ كَانُوا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

**He said, 'No, it was done by the biggest of them –
this one. Ask them, if they can talk' [63]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 63)**

It is as though he wants to elicit from them the acknowledgement that their biggest god does not do anything so that they will find themselves facing the question: Why, then, do you worship them? Abraham's saying: 'No, it was done by the biggest of them...' (*al-Anbiya*: 63) contains a certain reproach and rebuke for them, in so far as he ascribed the action of smashing the idols to the one who is not capable of doing it. Az-Zamakhshari *may Allah be merciful to him* gave as an example of this a man with beautiful handwriting and another who does not know how to write well. The second one sees a beautiful sample of writing and says to the first: 'Are you the one who wrote this?' Thereupon the second one says: 'No, you are the one who wrote it!' reproaching and rebuking him.

Then Abraham *peace be upon him* declares openly to them what he wants: 'Ask them, if they can talk.' (*al-Anbiya*: 63) But they will not ask them because they know the idols' true state.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَرَجَعُوا إِلَى أَنْفُسِهِمْ فَقَالُوا إِنَّكُمْ أَنْتُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

**They turned to one another, saying, 'It is you who
are in the wrong' [64] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 64)**

So, they paid attention, returned to their senses, and spoke the truth: 'It is you who are in the wrong.' (*al-Anbiya*: 64) This means that it is they who are wrong because they worship the idols, while they know that they neither benefit nor harm anyone; they neither see nor speak.

Thus, they themselves faced this reality and exposed the futility of this worship. But this sobriety will be at their expense, and their loss from it will be great. It will cause them to lose the temporal power in the shade of which they live, and by means of which they benefit from that which is offered to the idols. Therefore, in no time at all they retrace their steps and turn back upon their heels, once the harsh reality overwhelms them and they think about what this sobriety entails.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* then says:

ثُمَّ تَكْسُوا عَلَىٰ رُءُوسِهِمْ لَقَدْ عَلِمْتَ مَا هَٰؤُلَاءِ يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

But then they lapsed again and said, ‘You know very well these gods cannot speak’ [65] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 65)

After they faced the truth, ‘they lapsed again...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 65). A ‘relapse’ is when one who is high comes to be low—of course, you know what it is! So they threw back upon him the very argument he placed against them: ‘You know very well these gods cannot speak.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 65) This is the very essence of foolishness.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَكَالَ افْتَعَبُودَةٍ مِّنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُكُمْ شَيْئًا وَلَا يَضُرُّكُمْ ﴿٦٦﴾

Abraham said, ‘How can you worship what can neither benefit nor harm you, instead of God? [66] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 66)

That is, an idol will neither benefit them if they worship it, nor will it harm them in any way if they renounce its worship. Then, Abraham’s response continues:

أَفِ لَكُمْ وَلِمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

Shame on you and on the things you worship instead of God. Have you no sense? [67] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 67)

The Arabic word translated here as ‘shame on you’ is a verbal noun with the meaning of being angry. It is neither a noun, nor a verb, nor a preposition,

but a noun possessing the meaning of a verb because it possesses a dimension both of being nominal and of being verbal. Therefore, Arabs' speech revolves around nouns, verbs and prepositions alone. Another word of this kind is the word translatable as 'far from the mark,' which is a verbal noun with the meaning of being far off. Thus, by this expression 'shame on you,' Abraham *peace be upon him* expresses his anger and exasperation at his peoples' actions with regard to worshipping idols instead of Allah *the Almighty*.

Thereafter, Allah *the Almighty* states their reaction, saying:

قَالُوا حَرِّقُوهُ وَانصُرُوا آلِهَتَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ فَاعِلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

**They said, 'Burn him and avenge your gods,
if you are going to do the right thing' [68]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 68)**

We notice that their saying: '...burn him...' (*al-Anbiya*: 68) is an intensified form of the verb 'to burn,' which is employed to express hyperbola. So, they agreed upon that course of action and then erected a structure and placed a fire in the middle of it. They continued to heat it up for 40 days, adding to it everything capable of catching fire. By so doing, the heat of the fire became extremely intense, to the point that any bird which flew above the fire would immediately be roasted and fall from the sky, due to the intensity of its heat. The proof of this is that when they wanted to cast Abraham *peace be upon him* into the fire, they were not able to approach it on account of its intensely scorching heat, and therefore had to construct a catapult in order to cast him into the fire from a far distance.

Their saying: 'Burn him and avenge your gods...' (*al-Anbiya*: 68) is in accordance with their belief that there is as though a battle between Abraham *peace be upon him* and their false gods. But the reality is that false gods which they worship are on Abraham's side, not against him, and therefore the real battle is between Abraham and the idol worshippers.

They then said: '...if you are going to do the right thing.' (*al-Anbiya*: 68), that is, they said, 'If you are going to do anything with Abraham *peace be upon him*, then burn him.'

Thereafter Allah *Glorified is He* says concerning His deliverance of Abraham *peace be upon him* from the burning fire:

قُلْنَا يَنْتَارُ كُوفِي بَرْدًا وَسَلَامًا عَلَىٰ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٦٩﴾

But We said, ‘Fire, be cool and safe for Abraham’ [69] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 69)

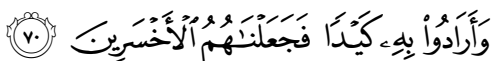
This command came from the Supreme Lord to transcend the prevailing laws of the cosmos by this miracle. In fact, no one can transcend these laws except the One Who established them, just as we said concerning the story of Moses *peace be upon him*, ‘The norm of water is liquidity and free passage, and no one can deprive it of this essential property except its Creator. Therefore, He parted it for Moses by means of a ‘conclusive partition’—as we said—with each part being like an immense, towering mountain.’ Thus, no one can suspend the norm of things except their Creator because these things were not created with a kind of power over their own self-existence; rather, they were created in order to fulfil a function, and only He Who created them for that function has the Power to deprive them of their essential properties.

In the same vein, there is a distinction between the action of the servant and the action of Allah *Glorified is He*. Let us give an example to illustrate this fact; imagine that you are highly skilled at aiming and shooting a gun and are standing in front of a target with a revolver in your hand. You fire a bullet facing the target—but do you have control over it after that? Is it possible for you to command it to incline toward the right or the left? On the other hand, Allah *Glorified is He* has control over it, and can cause it to travel however He wills. He *the Almighty* created the fire and created within it the essential property of burning and He Alone has the Power of depriving it of this essential property, rendering it unable to burn, as it does not possess self-existence by itself.

Therefore, some people say, ‘As soon as the first part of the command: ‘Fire, be cool and safe...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 69) was uttered, all fires in existence went out. Then when He said ‘...for Abraham...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 69), the command became specific to Abraham’s fire only, and all other fires began

burning again. We notice here that Allah *Glorified is He* qualified coldness with peace because coldness in general causes pain.⁽¹⁾

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:



**They planned to harm him, but We made them suffer
the greatest loss[70] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 70)**

The intended meaning of ‘planning to harm him’ here is their plan to burn him. The meaning of plotting is secret planning made with regard to the enemy in order that s/he not perceive what is being planned for him/her and therefore not be on guard against it. It can be in the interest of someone or against him/her, as Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...Thus did We plan for the sake of Joseph...’ (*Yusuf*: 76). Here, planning was for his benefit, for Allah *the Almighty* does not say, ‘We planned against Joseph,’ rather, He says: ‘...Thus did We plan for the sake of Joseph...’ (*Yusuf*: 76). They say that contrivance indicates a weakness and an inability to confront the other, for one who plans concerning someone else and conspires against him/her secretly only does so because s/he is not capable of confronting him/her face to face.

Therefore they say, ‘I take refuge in Allah from the grip of the weak, for I am superior to the grip of the strong.’ For whenever a weak person has an opportunity to do something, s/he never misses it because s/he cannot be sure whether or not s/he will have another one. By contrast, the strong person who is confident of his/her ability is able to take hold of his/her adversary at any time. Hence one poet said:

She is weak but if an opportunity comes,
she kills; likewise is the ability of the weak

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti relates that Ibn ‘Abbas said, ‘If the command: “Be cool” was not followed by: “and safe,” Abraham would have died from its coldness; and if this were not followed by “for Abraham,” no fire would have remained on earth that day which did not go out, thinking itself to be intended by the command.’ This is narrated by Al-Faryabi, ‘Abd ibn Hamid, Ibn Jarir and Ibn Abu Hatim. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/640/5.

Thus the scholars' judge the weakness of women by Allah's saying: '...surely your guile is great.' (*Yusuf*: 28) Inasmuch as their guile is indeed great, their weaknesses are also great, or even the greatest.

Then He says: '...but We made them suffer the greatest loss.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 70)

'The greatest losers' is the plural of 'the greatest loser,' in the form of the superlative, indicating an intensification of loss. Their loss may be seen to be connected with the burning of Abraham *peace be upon him* from a number of perspectives: firstly, Abraham *peace be upon him* was not afflicted by any evil, despite his being thrown into the fire; then, they did not avert his enmity towards them; and, after that, they will be punished for their action in the Hereafter. Is there a greater loss than that?

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَلُوطًا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي بَارَكْنَا فِيهَا لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

**We saved him and Lot [and sent them] to the land We
blessed for all people [71] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 71)**

Allah's saying: '...We saved him...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 71) means that there was an imminent evil and harm which was about to afflict Abraham, but Allah *the Almighty* delivered him from it. This deliverance was continuous because after Allah *the Almighty* delivered him from the fire, He delivered him also from the harm to which he was exposed.

Allah *the Almighty* saved both of him: '...and Lot...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 71), who was Abraham's nephew: '[and sent them] to the land We blessed for all people.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 71) That is, Allah *the Almighty* said to Abraham, 'Leave this land—the land of Babylon in Iraq—go to a hallowed land in Ash-Sham, and bring your brother's son with you.' Thus, once He *the Almighty* had delivered them, He did not leave them in that place, but chose for them this blessed place.

When a land is described, it refers to a specific area; but if it is not described, it refers to the land in general, unless the context specifies it. For example, when Joseph's brother said: 'Therefore I will by no means depart

from this land until my father permits me...' (*Yusuf*: 80), the context clarifies for us that the land intended here is Egypt.

But in Allah's saying: 'And We said to the Israelites after him: Dwell in the land...' (*al-Isra*': 104), He does not specify a certain land which suggests that the intended meaning is the land in general. The meaning is: 'Dwell on the earth as a whole, that is, scatter about upon it; you do not have an independent homeland'—as He says in another verse: 'And We cut them up on the earth into parties...' (*al-A'raf*: 168).

When Allah *the Almighty* wants to gather the children of Israel who are dispersed— '...when the promise of the next life shall come to pass...' (*al-Isra*': 104), that is, the time when they will be victorious — '...We will bring you both together in judgment.' (*al-Isra*': 104) In this manner, they will assemble in one place to facilitate their being judged all at once.

In Allah's saying: '...We blessed...' (*al-Anbiya*': 71), the 'blessing' could be material or spiritual. In the first case, the meaning would be that this land is endowed with green crops, fruits, rivers and treasures of the earth; in the second case, the meaning would refer to the values of this hallowed land, which is the land of Prophets and of places of Prophethood and Divine Messages.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ نَافِلَةً ۚ وَكُلًّا جَعَلْنَا صَالِحِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

**And We gave him Isaac and Jacob as an additional
gift, and made each of them righteous [72]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*': 72)**

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* relates to us a part of the story of Abraham, but one far from what we were just discussing about him. He *the Almighty* bestowed Isaac upon Abraham *peace be upon them* when he prayed to Him, saying: 'My Lord! Grant me of the doers of good deeds.' (*as-Saffat*: 100) This is despite the fact that he had already been given Ishmael *Allah's peace be upon him* who was born of Hagar, which aroused the feelings of jealousy within Sarah. She found within herself the strong urge to have a child, a feeling which women often experience concerning childbirth. Sarah was upset that, while Abraham

peace be upon him could have a son from his wife Hagar, she was not able to give him a son as well.

Therefore, Sarah implored to Abraham *peace be upon him* to pray to Allah *the Almighty* to provide her with a son, whereupon he *peace be upon him* did. So, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to answer His Prophet Abraham's call and to fulfil his *peace be upon him* wife's desire of having a son, yet His *Glorified is He* Will decreed that He would eternalise the mentioning of this son through making the connection between him and one of the articles of faith, so that none would forget his story.

This is proved by the fact that the story of Isaac *peace be upon him* in the Quran begins with Allah *the Almighty* commanding His Prophet Abraham in a dream-vision to sacrifice his son Ishmael *peace be upon him*. Abraham thus told Ishmael what he saw. Allah *the Almighty* tells us about this in the chapter of *as-Saffat*, saying: '...O my dear son! I have seen in a dream that I should sacrifice you: consider, then, what would be thy view!' (*as-Saffat*: 102)

By telling Ishmael about this vision, Abraham *peace be upon him* seemed that he wanted to have the consultation of his son in this difficult matter. He also wanted not to take him by surprise, so that the boy would not unknowingly change his thoughts and feelings of love towards his father. He *peace be upon him* further wanted that his son not be deprived of the great reward for this act of obedience and for patience with this trial.

As for Ishmael *peace be upon him* he did not object to what his father told him about. He did not say, for example, 'O my father! This is just a dream, not a Divine Revelation. How can we take such a crucial decision on grounds of it?' Rather, we find him *peace be upon him* saying: '...O my father! Do as you are ordered...' (*as-Saffat*: 102). Here, we notice that he *peace be upon him* did not say to his father, 'Do as you say,' but he, firmly believing that this was the Command of Allah, clearly said: '...He said: O my father! Do what you are commanded; if Allah please, you will find me of the patient ones.' (*as-Saffat*: 102)

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'But as soon as the two had surrendered themselves to [what they thought to be] the Will of Allah...' (*as-Saffat*: 103), it clearly indicates that both Abraham and Ishmael had

together submitted to the Command of Allah *the Almighty*. As for His *Glorified is He* saying: ‘...And [Abraham] had laid him down on his face’ (*as-Saffat*: 103), it means that Abraham *peace be upon him* had laid the head of his son Ishmael upon the hill, which is an area of land that is higher than the surrounding land. As for His saying: ‘...on his face’ (*as-Saffat*: 103), it means that he *peace be upon him* had placed his forehead on the ground, so that he could slaughter him by the neck, which is viewed as the most rapid way to slaughter someone or something.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘and We called out to him saying: O Abraham! [104] You have fulfilled the dream...’ (*as-Saffat*: 104–105) So, Abraham *peace be upon him* was benevolently rewarded because he fulfilled the dream-vision and hastened to apply the command, even though it came in a form of a dream-vision. He could have slacked off on the fulfilment of this command, but, on the contrary, as soon as it was decreed, he and his son carried it out.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* does not want anything from his servant regarding the Divine Decree except that s/he submits to it. One poet⁽¹⁾ spoke truthfully when he said:

Surrender to your Lord’s judgment, for wisdom determines it,
in order to find rest and lead a life of ease.
And remember Allah’s friend in the sacrifice of his son:
His Creator spoke, and he surrendered.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* does not relieve the human beings from a Divine Decree unless they become satisfied with it, for no one can compel Him *the Almighty* to do anything. Let us offer an example to clarify this point: when a father enters the house and finds his son doing something he detests, he may scold him or beat him lightly in an expression of his anger. If the boy submits to and obeys his father, the father turns toward him affectionately and compassionately, and may even hug and make up with him. But if the boy resists and becomes rude, his father treats him with more toughness, compounds his punishment, and increases his severity toward him.

(1) Sheikh Ash-Sha’rawi *may Allah be Merciful to him*.

In the case of Abraham, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'We ransomed his son with a momentous sacrifice.' (*as-Saffat*: 107) Not only did Allah *the Almighty* ransom Ishmael for Abraham *peace be upon him* but He *the Almighty* also: '...gave Abraham the good news of Isaac...' (*as-Saffat*: 112). Thus He *the Almighty* increased His Favour on Abraham *peace be upon him* so far as Isaac *peace be upon him* was also made a Prophet, like Ishmael *peace be upon him*. This is the relevancy of the discourse about Isaac and Jacob, *peace be upon them*.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...and We gave him Isaac and Jacob as an additional gift...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 72). The additional gift of Abraham *peace be upon him* is that when he asked his Lord for a righteous son, Allah *the Almighty* announced to him the good news of Isaac, and after him of Jacob, both of whom were Prophets. Therefore, He *the Almighty* says: '...an additional gift...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 72) because this was an addition to what he, i.e. Abraham asked for. That is to say that Isaac *peace be upon him* was the answer to Abraham's prayer, and Jacob *peace be upon him* was an addition to this.

In fact, while the happiness that man experiences for having a son is great, the happiness he experiences from having a grandson is even greater. As they say, 'The grandson is dearer than the son.' The man ensures his continued remembrance after his death through his son, so when a grandson arrives, he ensures that his grandfather will continue to be remembered for yet another generation.

This gift came from Allah *the Almighty* because Sarah was a barren woman, as indicated by the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'Then his wife came up in great grief, and she struck her face and said: An old barren woman!' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 29) Thereupon the Messengers replied to her: 'They said, 'Are you astonished at what Allah ordains?' (*Hud*: 73) This means that Allah *the Almighty* is Powerful over everything.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: '...and made each of them righteous.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 72) So Abraham's grandson, that is, Jacob was an additional gift, an increase in the gift of progeny and honour on the part of Allah *the Almighty* for Abraham *peace be upon him*. Then He *the Almighty* bestows His Favour on all of them by causing them to be among the righteous and the Prophets, a fact

which is clear in Allah's saying in another verse: '...and each one of them We made a Prophet.' (*Maryam*: 49)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَهْدُونَ بِأَمْرِنَا وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَيْهِمْ فِعْلَ الْخَيْرَاتِ
وَإِقَامَ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءَ الزَّكَاةِ وَكَانُوا لَنَا عَابِدِينَ ﴿٧٣﴾

We made all of them leaders, guiding others by Our command, and We inspired them to do good works, to keep up the prayer, and to give alms: they were Our true worshippers[73] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 73)

'Leadership' here does not mean their possession of temporal power; rather, their being models for people: '...guiding others by Our command....' (*al-Hajj*: 73) So, they do not proceed in anything except upon guidance from Allah *the Almighty*.

As for Allah's saying: '...We inspired them to do good works...' (*al-Hajj*: 73), it means that He *the Almighty* opened for them the doors of goodness and made it easily attainable. This is because He *the Almighty* opens the ways of goodness and helps the one who possesses the inclination to goodness to attain it. Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...to keep up the prayer, and to give alms...' (*al-Hajj*: 73). As a matter of fact, keeping up prayer is the essence of all good deeds, for while doing good deeds is a blessing, keeping up prayer entails being present before the Bestower of Blessings. Thus, prayer is the essence of goodness.

Despite this fact, we find some people neglecting prayer, trying to excuse themselves on account of work, lack of time, etc. However, all of these are weak excuses. So, I used to say to such people, 'By Allah, when you need to use the bathroom you must find time to do so—or do you not?' Thereupon, they would say, 'We find the time.' To this I reply, 'Why, then, do you allocate some time for that, but do not make efforts to arrange a time for prayer?' When your Lord *Glorified is He* knows that you are responding to His call, He *the Almighty* makes the response easy for you. We have seen that He *Glorified is He* makes even the disbeliever subservient to you to help you keep up the prayer.

On one of our trips to Belgium, we saw that Muslim children there do not study anything about the Islamic religion in the schools, but are taught about the Christian religion. So we requested an interview with their minister of education, and we spoke with him about this matter. Our argument was as follows, 'You, Belgians, accepted the presence of these Muslims in your country and their participation in the proceedings of your life because of your need for them. Now, it is to your advantage that these Muslims possess a religion which will supervise them prior to your own supervision of them. Indeed, you are the first of those who would derive benefit from teaching the Islamic religion to the Muslim children. Then, in the very next day, they did pass a resolution concerning the teaching of the Islamic religion in the schools to the Muslim children. This was because Islam is a fruitful and positive religion whose teachings are guaranteed and trusted.

Thus, due to the importance of prayer Allah *Glorified is He* mentions it at the beginning of the acts of goodness, and at their forefront. This is due to the fact that the summit of good deeds is to be present with Allah *the Almighty* Who confers these good deeds on you.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...and to give alms...' (*al-Hajj*: 73). In fact, *zakat*, which is to give out a portion of your property for the sake of Allah *the Almighty* is a practical application of the response to Allah *the Almighty*. The mention of prayer is always combined with *zakat*, for the connection between the two is strong. While *zakat* is the sacrifice of a portion of your property, which is actually the result of work during a period of time, prayer is the sacrifice of time itself.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: '...they were Our true worshippers.' (*al-Hajj*: 73), it means that they obeyed His commands and avoided that which He *the Almighty* prohibited as worship entails that the worshipper obeys that which s/he worships.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلُوطًا ءَاتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي كَانَتْ
تَعْمَلُ الْفَبْثِثَ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَاسِقِينَ ﴿٧٤﴾

**We gave Lot sound judgement and knowledge and saved him from the community⁽¹⁾ who practised⁽²⁾ obscenities — they were shameless people who broke God's law! [74]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 74)**

The word 'Lut' appears in the accusative because it is connected to Allah's saying: '...Long ago We bestowed right judgement on Abraham...' (*al-Anbiya*: 51). Likewise, Prophet Lut *peace be upon him* was given sound judgment, that is, wisdom. Etymologically, the two Arabic words for 'sound judgment' and 'wisdom' are originally derived from the word for the curb which is placed under the chin and lower jaw of a horse. This is because a horse might bolt from its owner or turn in a direction unwanted by its rider. Therefore, a bridle, which is a piece of iron with two outermost parts, is placed under the horse's chin and lower jaw in order to direct it to go to the right or to the left.

Wisdom means to put something in its proper place, and sound judgment means to put the truth in its place in relation to the complainant or the defendant, that is, in relation to the two opposing parties.

In Allah's saying: 'We gave Lut sound judgement and knowledge...' (*al-Hajj*: 74), there is a distinction between 'sound judgment' and 'knowledge'. The latter signifies that you realise and know, whereas the former means to apply what you knew. Thus, knowledge is the realisation while sound judgment is the application.

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- (1) *The village of Sodom... In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi relates that Ibn 'Abbas said, 'There were seven villages. Gabriel peace be upon him overturned six of them, and left one of them untouched for Lut and his dependents. This was Zaghar, in which is located Ath-Thamar, from the district of Palestine to the border of As-Sara. It includes many villages extending up to the Red Sea. See Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4484.*
- (2) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi says, 'Concerning the deeds of obscenities which they used to commit, there are two opinions. The first of them is sodomy. The second is to break wind, that is, they used to break wind in the company of one another and in their gatherings.' See Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4485.*

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and saved him from the community who practised obscenities...’ (*al-Hajj*: 74). Just as Allah *the Almighty* saved Abraham *peace be upon him* from the fire, He *the Almighty* also saved Lut *peace be upon him* from the community which practised obscenities. These abominable deeds of Lot’s people are well-known.⁽¹⁾

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says afterwards: ‘...they were an evil people, transgressors.’ (*al-Hajj*: 74) The evil person is s/he who harms anyone that interacts with him/her. He does not harm only some people, but everyone who interacts or comes into contact with him/her.

Transgression is to disobey the religious commands. This expression, like all of the Quranic expressions, is taken from the realities of the Arabian life. The original meaning of the Arabic word for transgression refers to the coming forth of the fresh, ripe date from its skin; when the small, green dates have ripened and their skin separates from them so that the fresh, ripe dates come forth from them. Now, this skin was created in order to perform a function, namely, to protect the fruit. Similarly, we use this word to express deviating from Allah’s Way of Guidance which, likewise, performs a vital function in our life. Therefore, whoever violates it is a transgressor.

Allah says:

وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ

**We admitted him to Our mercy; he was a
righteous man[75] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 75)**

Here, a question arises, which is, ‘How did Allah *the Almighty* admit Prophet Lut to His Mercy while all of us are within the compass of His Mercy?’ The scholars answered that this is because there is general Mercy for all the human

(1) Ibn ‘Asakir narrated that Abu Umama Al-Bahili said, ‘Lut’s people were known for possessing ten negative traits: sporting with pigeons; throwing hazelnuts; whistling by the lips; throwing pebbles or stones; uttering poetry before its completion; cracking and popping chewing gum; letting the loin cloth hang down (extending beyond the heels); putting outer garments with full sleeves aside; sodomy; and having drinking companionships. The negative traits of this community will outnumber these. See *As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/644.

beings, including even the disbeliever, and there is special Mercy that exceeds the general one. This special Mercy is Prophethood, as evinced by Allah's saying: 'And they say: Why was not this Quran revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) To this Allah *the Almighty* replies: 'Will they distribute the mercy of your Lord?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) — That is, Prophethood—'We distribute among them their livelihood in the life of this world...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32).

So how do they distribute Allah's Mercy, that is, Prophethood, which is the greatest form of Mercy, while He *the Almighty* distributes for them what is even lower than it that is, their livelihoods, and subsistence in this world? Thus, the meaning of Allah's saying, 'We admitted him to Our mercy...' (*al-Hajj*: 74) is that Lut *peace be upon him* was chosen as one of the Prophets. As for Allah's saying: '...he was a righteous man' (*al-Hajj*: 74), it implies that he *peace be upon him* was suitable for Prophethood and Allah *the Almighty* knows best to whom He entrusts His Message. However, the summit of this Mercy was embodied in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is the last Prophet and Messenger; he is not emended or supplemented by any Messenger after him. For that reason, his Lord addressed him, saying: 'It was only as a mercy that We sent you [Prophet] to all people.' (*al-Anbiya*: 107) Therefore, while the Messengers before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were a mercy to their peoples, he is a mercy to all the worlds.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions to us another Messenger who is endowed with firmness of heart, saying:

وَنُوحًا إِذْ نَادَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ، فَجَعَلْنَاهُ
وَأَهْلَهُ مِنَ الْكَرْبِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٧٦﴾

**Long before that, We answered Noah when he cried out to
Us: We saved him and his family from the great calamity [76]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 76)**

As in the case of Prophet Lut, Allah *the Almighty* endowed Noah *peace be upon him* with sound judgment. In Allah's saying: 'Long before that, We answered Noah when he called out to Us.' (*al-Hajj*: 76) To 'cry out' linguistically

means to ask someone to come. If one in a higher position asks someone of a lower position, it is a 'calling out.' If they are of equal standing, then it is a 'request,' and if the lower in position asks the one of the higher position, it is a 'supplication'. So, when you say 'O Lord,' the 'O' here is not for calling out, but for supplication.

When you test a pupil, you may say to him, 'What is the grammatical function of the word 'Lord' when one says, 'Lord, forgive me.' If s/he is perspicacious, s/he will say, 'The Lord is the object of supplication, as "O Lord" is implied.' As for the pupil who says, 'The Lord is the object of calling out,' we treat him/her with indulgence because s/he is somewhat correct. This is because the 'O', in its original sense, is for calling out, but this answer is not accurate. Likewise, with regard to 'forgive me,' if one says the verb is imperative, we give him/her half a mark, but if s/he says it is a supplication, we give him/her the full mark.

Back to the verse in question; what did Noah *peace be upon him* say in his supplication? Allah *Glorified is He* informs us about that elsewhere, relating that Noah implored: 'My Lord! Leave not upon the land any dweller from among the unbelievers.' (*Nuh*: 26) Then, He *the Almighty* answered the supplication of Prophet Noah *peace be upon him*: 'We saved him and his family from the great calamity' (*al-Hajj*: 76). The 'calamity' meant here is Noah's persisting in calling his people to Allah *the Almighty* for a thousand years save fifty, and the toil and hardship he suffered due to his mission, concerning which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And whenever I have called them that You may forgive them, they put their fingers in their ears, cover themselves with their garments, and persist and are puffed up with pride: Then surely I called to them aloud: Then surely I spoke to them in public and I spoke to them in secret.' (*Nuh*: 7–9) Afterwards, when Allah *the Almighty* commanded him to build the ark, they began to scoff at him. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'And he began to make the ark; and whenever the chiefs from among his people passed by him they laughed at him...' (*Hud*: 38).

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* accepted his supplication: 'We answered Noah when he called out to Us.' (*al-Hajj*: 76) This fact is also mentioned in Allah's saying: 'And Noah did certainly call upon Us, and most excellent answerer of

prayer are We.’ (*as-Saffat*: 75) Here, He *Glorified is He* describes His response by the indeclinable word meaning ‘how excellent,’ signifying praise.

Does this mean that there is evil responder? The scholars said, ‘Yes, this is true when you ask for something which is evil for you, and the one asked complies with your request. On the other hand, Allah *the Almighty* is the best of responders because He does not answer your request unless it be something wholesome and beneficial to you. When there is something evil in your supplication, He refuses to answer it in light of His Knowledge that it will not benefit you.’

It is as though the Supreme Lord says to you, ‘I am not your employee who answers all your requests; rather, I am Ever-Watching over you. It may be that you ask for something which you think is good for you, whereas I know by the eternality of My Knowledge that it comprises evil, not goodness. So the true goodness for you is that I do not answer this request, as I am the best of responders.’

Suppose that Allah *the Almighty* responded to every one of us as we desired; how would the situation of a mother, for example, be if she became angry with her only son, and in a moment of anger supplicated against him, saying, ‘My Lord, make him taste Your fire’? So, Allah *the Almighty* is the best of responders because He refuses the like of this supplication and prevents its realisation. For that reason, He *the Almighty* says: ‘And man prays for evil as he ought to pray for good, and man is ever hasty.’ (*al-Isra*: 11) This means that the human being prays and implores in his prayer for that which s/he thinks is good while in reality it is not.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَصَرَّنَاهُ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ
كَانُوا قَوْمَ سَوْءٍ فَأَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

**And We helped him against the people who rejected Our
signs – they were evil people, so We drowned them all [77]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 77)**

The verses continue to narrate to us a brief account of some of the Prophets, as we are in the chapter of *al-Anbiya*, that is, the Prophets. When

we reflect on this verse, we find that Allah *the Almighty* punishes by means of water, just as He punishes by means of fire, despite the fact that they are two opposites which never meet. Indeed, no one has the power to do so except the Creator *Glorified is He*.

The story of the drowning of the people of Noah and the people of Sheba after the collapse of the dam of Ma'rib comprises strong, impeding events for the people of the Arabian Peninsula. This is because as soon as they see water, they fear it and move away from it, even to the point that when they need water, they will go to a distant place to fill up their water skins—all due to their knowledge of the danger of the flood, and that it could neither be turned away nor held back from them by anything.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* tells us about some Prophets of the children of Israel who came after Moses *peace be upon him*:

وَدَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ إِذْ يَحْكُمَانِ فِي الْحَرْثِ إِذْ نَفَشَتْ
فِيهِ غَنَمُ الْقَوْرِ وَكُنَّا لِحُكْمِهِمْ شَاهِدِينَ

**And remember David and Solomon, when they gave
judgement regarding the field into which sheep strayed by
night and grazed. We witnessed their judgement [78]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 78)**

The judgment here refers to the decree of David and Solomon regarding a quarrel between two parties. A 'field' is a piece of land where the soil has been turned over to be suitable for agriculture. The same word translated here as 'field' is also mentioned, translated as 'tilth,' in Allah's saying: '...and destroy the tilth and the stock...' (*al-Baqara*: 205).

Evidently, the field itself is not destroyed; rather, the crops and fruit that spring from it are destroyed. So, the crop is called tilth because it springs up from it, as is also found in Allah's saying: 'as the likeness of wind in which is intense cold (that) smites the tilth of a people who have done injustice to their souls and destroys it...' (*Al-Imran*: 117).

Now, why is tilth called crop, when tilth is simply the preparation of the earth for cultivation? They said, 'This is in order to make clear that it is not

possible to have crops without tith, as it means the stirring up of the earth's soil. This activity helps with the incorporation of air into the soil and the dehydration of its extra water, for after the process of repeated irrigation, a layer of dross forms upon the earth which clogs the pores of the soil and prohibits the evaporation of ground water, which in turn brings about the ruin of the roots of the plants.

Therefore, the best quality soil is not that which is purely clayey, nor that which is purely sandy; while the clayey earth holds back the water, the sandy soil allows the water to seep through. Thus, neither of these two kinds of soil are suitable for plants. On the other hand, the good soil is that which combines these two qualities, for such soil provides the plants with the necessary ventilation and gives them water according to their need for it.

Therefore, a young crop is called tith because it is the cause of its growth, its increase, and its good quality. Moreover, this turns our attention to the fact that there is no crop without tith, a point which is clear in Allah's 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 this matter, there is an allusion to one of Allah's universal laws, which is that you must necessarily work in order to attain to your purpose. Your Lord and Creator has conferred His Blessings on you even before He brings you into existence and charges you with anything. You kept enjoying His Bestowals before reaching the age of maturity without being held responsible for any of your actions.

Similarly, Allah *the Almighty* will give you endless Bestowals in the Hereafter, without making any effort to get them. All of this is in return for your obeying Him in matters of free choice during the time of being entrusted with the religious obligations.

Therefore, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said in a noble Hadith: 'Give the labourer his wage before his sweat dries,'⁽¹⁾ because

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Abu Nu'aym on the authority of Abu Hurayra; At-Tabarani on the authority of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah; and by Ibn Majah on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Umar, though, according to Al-Busiri, there are two weak links in Ibn =*

he laboured and therefore deserves the wage; and the matter is the same in the case of the tilth.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...into which sheep strayed by night and grazed...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 78). This verse refers to a quarrel between two parties who asked David *peace be upon him* to pass judgment on it: one man had a crop, while the other had sheep, and the sheep strayed due to the heedlessness of their owner and ate the crop. So, the owner of the crop complained about the owner of the sheep to Prophet David *peace be upon him* who, perhaps finding that the crop which the sheep destroyed was equal to them in value, decreed that the owner of the crop should take the sheep.

When the opposing parties left, Solomon *peace be upon him* who was 11 years old at the time, met them, and came to know from them his father's ruling in this case, whereupon he said: 'The most gracious ruling for both parties is other than this.'⁽¹⁾ Thus, he called his father's judgment gracious, and did not accuse him of injustice, for example, but he was aware of a judgment which would be still more gracious.

Then, when his remark reached his father, he asked him, 'What is the most gracious settlement between the two parties?' Solomon *peace be upon him* replied, 'We give the sheep to the owner of the crop to make use of their milk and wool, and we give the land to the owner of the sheep to cultivate it until it is returned to its previous state, at that time the owner of the sheep will take the sheep and the owner of the crop will take the crop.'

The Arabic verb for: '...strayed by night and grazed...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 78) has another meaning as well, which is to take on a size greater than one's

= *Majah's chain of transmission. See Abu Nu'aym, Hilyat Al-Awliya', 7/142; At-Tabarani, Al-Mu'jam As-Saghir, 1/20; and Ibn Majah, Sunan, Hadith no.2443.*

(1) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi mentions that Solomon asked the two parties after they had left the presence of his father David how Allah's Prophet David had settled things between them. They said, 'He judged that the sheep should go to the owner of the tilth.' Then he said, 'Perhaps the judgment will be different than this—proceed with me.' He approached his father and said, 'O Prophet of Allah, you determined such-and-such, whereas I see that which will be even more gracious for everyone.' Then he stated his judgment between the two parties, whereupon David said: I agree, my son, may Allah never diminish your understanding. See Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4487.*

normal size—just as when you take, for example, a piece of bread or rusk and put it in milk or water and then notice that it swells up and increases in size. We say, using the same verb, ‘It swelled up,’ just as we say to someone who assumes a stature greater than his/her, ‘You are ruffling your feathers.’

As for Allah’s saying: ‘...We witnessed their judgement.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 78), it means that He *the Almighty* oversaw their judgment.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

فَفَهَّمْنَهَا سُلَيْمَانَ وَكَوْنًا حَكَمًا وَعِلْمًا وَسَخَرْنَا مَعَ دَاوُدَ
 الْجِبَالَ يُسَبِّحْنَ وَالطَّيْرَ وَكُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ ﴿٧٩﴾

**And made Solomon understand the case [better], though We
 gave sound judgement and knowledge to both of them. We
 made the mountains and the birds celebrate Our praises
 with David – We did all these things [79]
 (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 79)**

David and Solomon *peace be upon them* are both Prophets, but each of them has his distinct position. Allah *the Almighty* gave them both sound judgment and knowledge, yet their statement in this case differed. However, the understanding which Solomon *peace be upon him* arrived at neither belittles David’s knowledge nor contests his judgment.

The judgment of both David and Solomon *peace be upon them* is similar to the verdict of the court of first instance and the court of appeal. You must be careful not to think that when a court of appeal overturns a ruling of the first instance, this means that it necessarily contests or challenges it.

This is the case in Allah’s saying: ‘And made Solomon understand the case [better]...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 79) He *peace be upon him* set forth a judgment different from that of his father. Therefore, the judge of first instance might rule concerning a case, and it may be adjourned so that it proceeds to an appeals judge, who reads the same case but with another view, so that his judgment comes to be different from the first.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘We made the mountains and the birds celebrate Our praises with David...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 79). When Allah *the Almighty*

mentions both David and Solomon, He *the Almighty* intends to demonstrate to us some of what He *the Almighty* has conferred on them. Consequently, His saying: 'And made Solomon understand the case [better]...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 79) is an expression of Solomon's distinction. Then, He *the Almighty* demonstrates a distinctive mark of David *peace be upon him* as well, saying: 'We made the mountains and the birds celebrate Our praises with David...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 79).

When Allah *the Almighty* subjects something to do a certain action, it means that He *the Almighty* compels the subjected thing to ceaselessly do something about which it has no choice or option. We notice here a progressive development from the lower to the higher; first, He *the Almighty* subjected the mountains, which are inanimate objects and then the birds, which are more elevated than the inanimate objects. But even if we conceived that the birds can celebrate Allah's praises because they are alive and possess a spirit, a movement, and an expressive sound, how is it possible for the hard and solid mountains to do so?

When they turn to consider this verse, some of the scholars take it by the external indications of interpretation, not by in-depth insight into the meaning. They see the mountains as solid bodies, without any expressive sound such as birds possess, and therefore they are astonished by the statement that the mountains glorify Allah *the Almighty*. They wonder, 'How is it possible for them to do so while they are solid, inanimate bodies?'

However, there is nothing to be astonished about, for if you undertook a comprehensive survey of the races of men on earth, with their languages, tongues, appearances and colours differing according to the environment in which they live, you would find that men differ in the likes of these matters and agree only in their natural dispositions. All the races share the instincts of hunger, thirst, fear, laughter, and affections; they have no choice or option regarding them.

Have you not considered Allah's saying: 'And that He it is Who makes (men) laugh and makes (them) weep...' (*an-Najm*: 43)? Since He *the Almighty* is the One Who causes to laugh and to weep, we will not differ in these respects.

Speech is, then, one of the things in regard to which the human beings differ. But this difference has nothing to do with the sound of the letters, for

the letters are the same. For example, when we pronounce *Shrshl*, the speakers of other languages also pronounce it in the same way: with (sh), (r), (sh) and (l). We are united with regard to the letters, but different with regard to the meanings of things.

It may be difficult for some throats to pronounce certain letters according to their natural formation. Non-Arabs, for example, do not pronounce the letter (ḍ), but have only the letter (d), whereas in Arabic we make a distinction between the soft (d) and the emphatic (ḍ), between (S) and (th), between (z) and (dh), and between *Hamza* and *'Ayn*. Therefore, we find that a non-Arab does not say 'Ali, but 'Ali, for s/he is not able to pronounce the *'Ayn*, despite the fact that s/he is a human being who possesses a language and speaks.

The human beings do not understand one another's languages—for there is Arabic, there is English, there is French, and so on—and unless they study these languages, they will not understand them.

It is well known that language is born of hearing and imitation, for the tongue speaks that which the ears hear. So, the dumb one who does not speak was first of all deaf, not hearing anything. The child speaks that which s/he hears, for if you placed an English child in an Arab milieu, s/he would speak Arabic.

Why, then, are we astonished when we do not understand the language of the birds or the language of inanimate bodies, which are completely different from us? Being unable to understand them does not mean that they do not possess a language among themselves which they all share and by which they express themselves.

Do not consider it far-fetched, then, that the lower species possess languages by which they understand one another, but you do not understand them. This is proven by the fact that Allah *the Almighty* gave us an illustration of the language of birds, and showed that He *the Almighty* teaches it to whom He wills, as in the case of Solomon *peace be upon him* who was able to understand and speak the language of the birds.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* relates Solomon's saying: '...men! we have been taught the language of birds, and we have been given all

things...' (*an-Naml*: 16). If Allah *the Almighty* had not taught him the language of the birds, he would not have known it.

Solomon *peace be upon him* inspected the birds and, not finding the hoopoe, he threatened it, but the latter said afterwards: '...I comprehend that which you do not comprehend and I have brought to you a sure information from Sheba.' (*an-Naml*: 22)

We notice here the exactness of Solomon *peace be upon him* in inspecting his kingdom, for he did not neglect anything, even the hoopoe. We also notice his good manners in his saying: 'How is it I see not the hoopoe or is it that he is of the absentees?' (*an-Naml*: 20) Here, he doubted his vision first, for perhaps the hoopoe was present, but he did not see it.

We should take account of the hoopoe's speech to the king: '...I comprehend that which you do not comprehend...' (*an-Naml*: 22), and also his precise knowledge of Allah's Oneness and other articles of faith: 'I found her and her people adoring the sun instead of Allah...' (*an-Naml*: 24). The hoopoe objects to this polytheism and replies to it by something specific to it, a phenomenon which concerns it: 'That they do not make obeisance to Allah, Who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and the earth...' (*an-Naml*: 25).

The hoopoe chose to talk about the phenomenon of bringing forth what is hidden, because it is in this manner that it gets its food, for it does not eat things on the surface of the earth, but must necessarily dig up its food out of the ground, bringing forth what is hidden within it to be its food.

This is also the case with the ant, which is smaller than the hoopoe; it spoke to Solomon *peace be upon him* and he understood its speech. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And when they came to the Valley of the Ants, one ant said, 'Ants! Go into your homes, in case Solomon and his hosts unwittingly crush you.' Solomon smiled broadly at her words...' (*an-Naml*: 18–19). This ant was talking to the other ants, but Solomon *peace be upon him* understood it, and so he said: 'Lord, inspire me to be thankful for the blessings You have granted me...' (*an-Naml*: 19). Thus, we do not understand these languages unless Allah *the Almighty* teaches them to us.

In spite of this, when the scholars encounter this verse: 'We made the mountains and the birds celebrate Our praises with David...' (*al-Anbiya*: 79), they say, 'The celebration of Allah's praises here is not meant literally; rather, it is an indicative glorification, for by their state the mountains are indicative of the Creator *Glorified is He*. However, the soundest interpretation is to concede that the mountains extol praise, but we ourselves do not understand them, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah's saying: '...but you do not understand their glorification...' (*al-Isra*: 44).

Given that we witness scholars today working to produce a dictionary for the language of fish and other animals, we do not think it far-fetched that sometime in the future a dictionary of the language of stones or other inanimate bodies will be produced. Otherwise, what will be the progressive developments in knowledge destined to take place in the future? The Quran already established this truth, and we simply await its discovery by modern science.

The privilege which Allah *the Almighty* bestowed upon Prophet David *peace be upon him* is not all about the mountains' extolling of praise, as the mountains extol Allah's praise in David's presence and in the presence of anyone else. Rather, David's privilege is that they intone with him and concur with him in extolling praise, and echo him. So, when he says 'Glory be to Allah,' the mountains intone beside him 'Glory be to Allah,' as though they were together a single chorus, intoning the same hymn.

Referring to the mountains as 'inanimate,' does not mean that they are devoid of life, for it is with respect to the form of their constitution that they are described as such. If you reflected on the stone quarries within the layers of the earth, you would realise that they have lives, reactions, and movements throughout millions of years. It is the result of this movement that the colour and constitution of stones change, which is a clear indication that there is life, present within them. For example, if you paint a stone with a certain colour, it will inevitably change with the passage of time. There is, therefore, life in these solid bodies, but we do not perceive it.

We should note that it is inaccurate to consider the glorification of the pebbles in the hand of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a miracle. This is because the stone glorifies Allah while being in Prophet

Muhammad's hand or in that of Abu Jahl. One should say, 'The miracle is that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard the glorification of the pebbles in his hand.'

There is nothing in Allah's cosmos which does not possess a life appropriate to it and a language by which it glorifies Him *the Almighty* whether or not it is perceived by us. This is due to the fact that speech is derived from the presence of life, and everything in existence possesses life. For example, the scientists say that a single box of matches, which we use all the time, comprises between its atoms interactions which would suffice to drive a train around the world. These interactions indicate movement and life.

In this vein, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...everything is perishable but He...' (*al-Qasas*: 88). So, everything which can be called a 'thing'— except for Allah *Glorified is He* — is bound to perish. However, nothing can perish without having a previous life, for perishing is the opposite of living, a point which is evidenced by Allah's saying: '...that he who would perish might perish by clear proof, and he who would live might live by clear proof...' (*al-Anfal*: 42).

As a matter of fact, everything in existence possesses life according to its own laws. It is not necessary that you hear the speech of something in order to acknowledge that it has a life. Sign language, for example, is a meaningful language which we can understand. A servant, for instance, understands with a single glance what his master wants him to offer the guest.

Moreover, sailors have certain signs which they all understand and by which they communicate with one another. The telegraph system is also another way of effectuating communication and another means of understanding. It is not necessary, therefore, that communication be brought about by means of speech. Rather, each of the species understands and speaks with one another in its own language. If Allah *the Almighty* wants to endow you with His illuminations, He *the Almighty* gives you the intuitive insight and knowledge by which you would understand the languages of different species.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...Each knows its [own way] of prayer and glorification...' (*an-Nur*: 41). The indefiniteness of 'each' in this verse signifies universality. Everything possesses its suitable kind of prayer and has its glorification which accords with its nature.

When Allah *the Almighty* demonstrates the issue of glorification, submission, and compulsion of all created beings to Him, He *the Almighty* makes the statement universal, concerning all species—with the single exception of man because glorification and submission is specific to only some people. This fact is clear in His saying: ‘Do you not see that Allah is He, Whom obeys whoever is in the heavens and whoever is in the earth, and the sun and the moon and the stars, and the mountains and the trees, and the animals...’ (*al-Hajj*: 18), meaning that there will be no exception. As for the human beings, He *the Almighty* then says: ‘...and many of the people; and many there are against whom chastisement has become necessary; and whomsoever Allah abases, there is none who can make him honourable; surely Allah does what He pleases.’ (*al-Hajj*: 18)

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...We did all these things.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 79) Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* is the Creator of everything and the Doer of everything, but nevertheless He *the Almighty* emphasises this truth in order that we not be astonished by the glorification of the birds and mountains. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* is the Doer, the Giver and the Mover.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says about David *peace be upon him*:

وَعَلَّمْنَاهُ صَنْعَةَ لَبُوسٍ لَّكُمْ لِنُحْصِنَكُمْ مِّنْ بَأْسِكُمْ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ شَاكِرُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

We taught him how to make⁽¹⁾ coats of mail for the benefit of you [people], to protect you in your wars, but are you grateful for this? [80] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 80)

Allah *the Almighty* begins this verse with His saying: ‘We taught him...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 80). Knowledge is the communication of beneficial information from someone who knows it to someone who does not. The human being is always in need of knowledge and learning because s/he is Allah’s Vicegerent on earth. S/he will not fulfil this task except by moving extensively among the

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi, says, ‘Making here refers to the sort of activity which enables man to abstain from depending on other men, and by which he defends himself from harm and injury. In a Hadith it is said, ‘Allah loves the modest, weak, gainfully employed believer and loathes the importunate beggar.’ David’s craftsmanship was making armors.’ See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame’ Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4500.

people which requires understanding, knowledge, interaction, and mutual exchange of knowledge and cultures. Such beneficial information includes, for example, the fact that in order to mould iron, it must first be heated until it becomes pliable and mouldable; likewise, water must first be brought to a boil for such-and-such time, etc.

The matters of knowledge required for the human being's movement upon the earth are of two kinds. The first of these is that which Allah *the Almighty* does not entrust to the created beings themselves, so it came from Him by means of revelation and that is why the intellect has nothing to do with it. This was meant to prevent people's desires from causing any disagreement about the Way of Guidance which He *the Almighty* revealed, saying to you 'Do this,' and 'Do not do that.'

As for the matters concerning which the human beings' desires do not differ—but rather, they strive to share them, to compete for them, and perhaps to steal them—Allah *Glorified is He* left them to the activity of people's minds and their strivings. He *the Almighty* may inspire someone with these matters or facilitates a process of learning for him/her, even if it be by means of one lower than oneself, as He *the Almighty* taught Adam's son, Cain, by means of the raven how to conceal his brother's vile body. In this regard, He *the Almighty* says: 'Then Allah sent a crow digging up the earth so that he might show him how he should cover the dead body of his brother...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31)

A scientific theorem may have its premises in the cosmos, so if we apply our minds to study it, we may arrive at scientific truths. Moreover, a scientific theorem may come from experience or from an idea which Allah *the Almighty* casts into a man's heart.

Back to the verse under discussion; Allah *the Almighty* says: 'We taught him how to make coats of mail for the benefit of you [people]...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 80). It is possible for us to say that this was instruction by revelation, by experience, or by casting into the heart. This craftsmanship was not known before David *peace be upon him*.

The 'coats of mail' mentioned in the verse are stronger and more judicious than 'clothing.' 'Clothing,' from the same Arabic root as 'coats of mail,' refers to

that which covers the human's private parts and that which protects him/her from the heat and the cold, as is mentioned in Allah's saying: '...and He has given you garments to preserve you from the heat...' (*an-Nahl*: 81).

But in war, we require greater protection and increased defences than what we usually find in clothing. We need something which safeguards us from being injured and protect us from the enemies' deadly strikes. Therefore, the human beings were guided to fashion helmets and armour to protect the vital parts of the human body. They made them fit the head and the chest, for in the head is the brain, and in the chest is the heart, and if these organs are safe and sound, then broken bones can be set and everything else can be treated in some way.

The 'coats of mail' here, then, are stronger and greater in protection than mere clothing because their function is more serious than the function of clothing. Before David's time, there were thin outer garments on the surface of which a sword would slide. Then, when David *peace be upon him* fashioned armour, he made it consist of rings in order that a sword would break upon it. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says afterwards: '...to protect you in your wars...' (*al-Anbiya*': 80). This means that the armours might protect, guard, and defend you in your war against your enemies.

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* inspired David *peace be upon him* so that he began to think and to create. In fact, all the reflections on how to progressively develop and improve a production begin simply by observing the faults of previous productions. Subsequently, the maker attempts to correct the previous mistakes until we arrive at something without fault, or at least something avoiding the faults of earlier productions—which is why the final product is called the 'latest model.'

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...but are you grateful for this?' (*al-Anbiya*': 80) This means that the people should be grateful for the blessings of Allah *the Almighty* who guards and protects them in dilemmas and difficult situations. He *the Almighty* commands us to treat our enemies harshly in order to show that the believer must be prepared to confront the disbeliever and to seize hold of the causes of survival if a war broke out.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...We also sent iron, wherein is great violence and advantages to men, and that Allah may know who helps Him and His Messengers in the secret; surely Allah is Strong, Mighty.’ (*al-Hadid*: 25)

Thus, the function of iron in life is not solely to benefit the human beings; it has also a function in battle. That is why Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...We also sent iron....’ (*al-Hadid*: 25), just as He *the Almighty* says: ‘Surely We Ourselves have revealed the Quran to you.’ (*al-Insan*: 23) As the Quran is revealed to guide the human beings, iron supports this guidance inasmuch as we use it to strike the disobedient disbelievers and to protect the breasts of the truthful believers. This is why He *the Almighty* says: ‘...We also sent iron...’ (*al-Hadid*: 25), that is, from above, although it comes out of the earth.

That there is iron upon the earth, then, is one of the greatest blessings that Allah *the Almighty* has bestowed upon us, for we use it to protect ourselves from the enemy. Indeed, Allah *the Almighty* fashioned the creation and did not simply leave it to manage its affairs; rather, He *the Almighty* created it and established for it the laws of its protection and preservation. This merits our eternal and unfailing gratitude.

Thereafter, the Quran directs our attention to Solomon, the son of David. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَسَلِّمَنَّ الْرَّيْحَ عَاصِفَةً تَجْرِي بِأَمْرِهِ إِلَى الْأَرْضِ الَّتِي
بَرَكْنَا فِيهَا وَكُنَّا بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

**We harnessed the stormy wind for Solomon, so
that it sped by his command to the land We had
blessed – We have knowledge of all things [81]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 81)**

There is no doubt that Solomon *peace be upon him* benefitted from that which Allah *the Almighty* taught his father, David *peace be upon him* and received a portion of Allah’s Blessing toward his father. Here, his Lord *Glorified is He* distinguished him by some privileges, including his dominion over the stormy wind, that is, the wind which is intensely forceful and which:

‘...sped by his command to the land We had blessed...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 81). It is as though the winds served as interior transportation means within his kingdom from Iraq to Palestine.⁽¹⁾

Elsewhere, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and grant me a kingdom which is not fit for (being inherited by) anyone after me; Then We made the wind subservient to him; it made his command to run gently wherever he desired.’ (*Sad*: 35–36)

That the wind was ‘gentle’ signifies that it was light, soft and smooth, while here it is described as: ‘...stormy...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 81). So it is as though, within this one wind, Allah *the Almighty* united the quality of speed, by using the adjective ‘stormy,’ with the quality of ease, by using the adjective ‘gentle.’ No one has the power to unite these two qualities except for Allah *the Almighty*. For example, when a car in which we are riding accelerates, it is not possible for us to be at ease and reassured; rather, people become alarmed and demand that the speed be slowed down.

As for the wind which was subservient to Solomon *peace be upon him* it used to hasten with him to his destination, and yet it was restful, smooth and calm, without having any affect upon his bodily condition. Furthermore, he did not experience any shock or feel the force of the wind’s rushing which would require him to use a safety belt, for example. No one except Allah, the Contractor and the Outspreader, has the Power to unite these qualities. He contracts time with respect to some people and outspreads it with respect to others.

The blessing in Allah’s saying: ‘...We had blessed...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 81) includes both a sensible blessing by way of its crops, fruits, fertility and treasures of the earth, and a spiritual blessing in so far as He placed therein places where divine revelation and prophethood descend, as well as signs and traces of the Prophets.

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir relates that Al-Hasan Al-Basri said, ‘He used to depart in the morning upon his carpet from Damascus and descend in Persepolis, where he would have breakfast, go back from Persepolis to Kabul and spend his night there. For one who goes quickly it would normally take one full month to travel between Damascus and Persepolis, and another full month to travel between Persepolis and Kabul.’ Kabul is the present capital of Afghanistan. See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-‘Azhim*, 3/528/3.

The subjection of the winds to Solomon *peace be upon him* did not consist in their carrying him, for example, as we see in movies, on a flying carpet which carries something and travels with it through the air, nor did it consist in their propelling his ships upon the seas. Rather, their being subjected to him means that they moved according to his will and carried out his orders, travelling wherever he wanted, whether to the right or to the left. They did not blow according to the natural law according to which Allah *the Almighty* created them, but instead according to Solomon's will.

While this gentle wind carried him on internal trips within his kingdom, there were also winds which carried him on external trips and journeys, about which Allah *the Almighty* says: 'And (We made) the wind (subservient) to Solomon, which made a month's journey in the morning and a month's journey in the evening...' (*Saba'*: 12). So he travels by them throughout the world: '...wherever he desired.' (*Sad*: 36)

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...We have knowledge of all things.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 81) This means that Allah *the Almighty* possesses the Knowledge by which He regulates the affairs according to His Will, and He *the Almighty* willingly breaks the natural law originally established by Him, and thus causes the wind to travel as He likes, even to the contrary of the natural law.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمِنَ الشَّيَاطِينِ مَنْ يَغُوصُونَ لَهُ وَيَعْمَلُونَ
عَمَلًا دُونَ ذَلِكَ وَكُنَّا لَهُمْ حَافِظِينَ

**And We made some of the jinn subservient to him,
to dive for him and do other works besides. We were
watching over them [82] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 82)**

After Allah *the Almighty* subjected to him the wind, He subjected to him the jinn: '...to dive for him...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 82). 'Diving' means to delve into the depths of the sea in order to bring for Solomon its treasures, gems and wondrous things which Allah *the Almighty* stored within it. The jinn also: '...do other works besides...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 82), that is, Solomon *peace be upon him* charged them with toilsome works which men are not capable of performing.

This is explained in another place where Allah *the Almighty* says: 'They made for him what he pleased of Sanctuaries and images, and bowls (large) as watering-troughs and fixed cauldrons...' (*Saba*: 13). Thus, the designs of the work were included in his will.

'Sanctuaries' is the plural of 'sanctuary,' which is a place of worship such as the *Qibla*, for example. 'Bowls' is the plural of 'bowl,' which is a very large, wide basin, big enough for a large number of people. As for the 'fixed cauldrons,' they are the ones which have been constructed and are firmly established so that it is not possible to move them from one place to another.

We saw something similar to these fixed cauldrons in Riyadh during the time of King 'Abd Al-'Aziz *may Allah be Merciful to him*. It was so wide and high that if a man stood before it stretching his arms upwards as far as possible, he would not reach its height. In pre-Islamic times, Ibn Jad'an and Mut'im Ibn 'Adi were well known for possessing the like of these fixed cauldrons.

As for 'images,' they are well known, and the position concerning them has been clear ever since the time of Abraham *peace be upon him* when he broke them and forbade their being worshipped. This view opposes that of those who say that the statues and images were originally permitted, until men became infatuated with them and worshipped them apart from Allah *the Almighty* and at which time they became forbidden. So, how do we explain the fact that Allah *the Almighty* mentioned the subjection of those who make statues for Solomon as one of His Blessings bestowed on him while they are forbidden? To this we reply that they used to make statues for him, not for the purpose of glorification and worship, but in insulting and contemptuous forms by making them in the shape of a giant man or a larger lion which supports part of the palace or one of its balconies; or they formed them to support a dining table, and so forth. That is, they were not for worship or glorification.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...We were watching over them.' (*al-Anbiya*: 82) This means that He *the Almighty* kept watch over the people of that time who witnessed these works in order that the jinn neither harmed nor frightened them—as it is well known that jinn see human beings, while human beings do not see them, a fact which is crystal clear in Allah's saying: '...he surely sees you, he as well as his host, from whence you cannot see them....' (*al-A'raf*: 27)

Solomon *peace be upon him* however, used to see the Jinn and to supervise them, while they worked for him, and his story includes the following episode: 'But when We decreed death for him, naught showed them his death but a creature of the earth that ate away his staff....' (*Saba'*: 14) Here, there is an indication that the Jinn do not know the unseen. That is why Allah *the Almighty* then says: 'and when it fell down, the jinn came to know plainly that if they had known the unseen, they would not have tarried in abasing torment.' (*Saba'*: 14)

It is said that, after Allah *the Almighty* bestowed His Favour upon Solomon *peace be upon him* and gave him dominion which is not fit for being inherited by anyone after him, he took these jinn and confined them in bulgy, long-necked bottles so that they would not work for anyone other than him.

This is merely a snapshot from the story of Solomon *peace be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* then directs our attention to the story of Job *peace be upon him* saying:

وَأَيُّوبَ إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ أَنِّي مَسَّنِيَ الضُّرُّ وَأَنْتَ أَرْحَمُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

Remember Job, when he cried to his Lord, 'Suffering has truly afflicted me, but you are the Most Merciful of the merciful' [83] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 83)

We said that crying out to someone equal to you is means to seek a response, but with respect to Allah *the Almighty* it has the meaning of a prayer or a supplication. Therefore, the meaning of Allah's saying: '...when he cried to his Lord...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 83) is that Job *Allah's peace be upon him* prayed to Allah *the Almighty* and invoked Him for a request which is expressed in Allah's saying: 'Suffering has truly afflicted me, but you are the Most Merciful of the merciful.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 83)

A 'suffering' is a trial from Allah *the Almighty* which concerns the body such as an illness. However, the same Arabic word for suffering, with a difference in the vowels, signifies harm and a trial which concerns anything other than the body. In fact, there is nothing prohibiting Prophets from falling ill, but only with non-repulsive, non-repellent illnesses.

Now, how is it possible that Job *peace be upon him* invokes his Lord and voices his pain, saying: 'Suffering has truly afflicted me...'? (*al-Anbiya'*: 83)

Does Allah *the Almighty* not know that a suffering has befallen him? Moreover, is it fitting for a Prophet to lament his being tried by Allah *the Almighty*? Yes, lamenting is permissible for Job *peace be upon him* because the servant is not supposed to be courageous toward his Lord. In this connection, when a man paying a visit to Imam 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* found him suffering from an illness and expressing his pain, he said to him, 'Are you lamenting—you, the father of Hasan?' Thereupon, Imam 'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* replied, 'I am not supposed to show courage before Allah.' That is to say, he is not valorous before Allah *the Almighty*.

Surely, the polite behaviour towards one who wants to prove his/her strength to you, and seizes hold and squeezes your hand, for example, in order that you shout and feel pain is that you comply with him/her and say, 'Ouch,' showing him/her, even if in a friendly way, that s/he is stronger than you.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...but you are the Most Merciful of the merciful.' (*al-Anbiya*: 83) When Allah *the Almighty* states that His creatures possess the like of one of His Attributes, as in His saying: '...the most merciful of the merciful' (*al-Anbiya*: 83), His saying: '...the best of the creators' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14), and His saying: '...the best of schemers' (*Al-Imran*: 54), you should know that He *the Almighty* does not disregard their rightful possession of it.

Mercy, for example, is one of the human beings' qualities, as indicated in the noble Hadith: 'The merciful are shown mercy by the All-Merciful,'⁽¹⁾ and also in Messenger Muhammad's saying, 'Be merciful on the earth, and you will be shown mercy from Who is above the heavens.'⁽²⁾ To be merciful signifies being characterised by the Character Traits of Allah *the Almighty* as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Be characterised by the Character Traits of Allah.'

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi, and Abu Dawud on the authority of 'Abdullah Ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'As. At-Tirmidhi said, 'This Hadith is good, authentic.' See Ahmad, *Musnad*, 2/160; At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 1924; and Abu Dawud, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 4941.

(2) This Hadith is narrated by Abu Nu'aym, At-Tabarani on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud, expressed in the following form: 'If you (singular) are merciful toward those on earth, the One above the heavens will be merciful toward you (singular).' See Abu Nu'aym, *Hilyat Al-Awliya*, 4/210; At-Tabarani, *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir*, Hadith no. 10277, and *Al-Mu'jam As-Saghir*, 1/101.

Thus, the creation possesses the quality of mercy, but Allah *the Almighty* is the Most Merciful of all the merciful, as His Mercy encompasses all things. As we said with regard to the quality of being a creator, it is possible for you, for example, to make a drinking glass from sand and thus bring it into existence and make use of it, but is your creation of the drinking glass similar to Allah's creation?

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ، فَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِ مِنْ ضُرٍّ، وَآتَيْنَاهُ أَهْلَهُ،
وَمِثْلَهُمْ مَعَهُمْ رَحْمَةً مِّنْ عِندِنَا وَذِكْرًا لِلْعَبِيدِ ﴿٨٤﴾

We answered him, removed his suffering,⁽¹⁾ and restored his family to him, along with more like them, as an act of grace from Us and a reminder for all who serve Us [84]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 84)

Allah *the Almighty* responded to Job's supplication by removing the affliction which had befallen him and giving him, on top of this, a gift for which he did not even pray. This gift was the restoration of his family along with more like them since his family was small in number. Allah *the Almighty* then says: '...as an act of grace from Us and a reminder for all who serve Us.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 84) This is meant to teach every worshipper that if s/he devotes his worship to Allah *the Almighty* then when an affliction or concern befalls him/her and s/he takes refuge in Allah *the Almighty*, He will respond to his/her request and will give him/her, in addition to that, another gift. Therefore, that which happened with Prophet Job *peace be upon him* is an example which one must follow.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi says, 'Opinions differ over how long he suffered the trial. Ibn 'Abbas said, 'The period of his trial was seven years, seven months, seven days, and seven nights.' Wahb said, 'Thirty years,' and Al-Hasan said, 'Seven years and six months.' I said, 'A more correct opinion than these—and Allah knows best—is eighteen years, as narrated by Ibn Shihab from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as mentioned by Ibn Al-Mubarak.' See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4507.

وَلِإِسْمَاعِيلَ وَإِدْرِيسَ وَذَا الْكِفْلِ كُلٌّ مِنَ الصَّابِرِينَ ﴿٨٥﴾

**And remember Ishmael, Idris, and Dhu Al-Kifl⁽¹⁾: they
were all steadfast [85] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 85)**

We said that the chapter of *al-Anbiya* ' does not tell a complete story of the Prophets, but gives us only a part of it. Here, it mentions by name only Ishmael, Idris, and Dhu Al-Kifl *peace be upon them*. Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: '...they were all steadfast.' (*al-Anbiya*: 85) It is as though patience in itself was a consideration on account of which Allah *the Almighty* sends a given Messenger. Let us reflect on the patience of Ishmael *peace be upon him* and how he bore patiently his father's sacrificing of him because of a dream-vision he had seen — what patience can be greater than this? Then, during his youth and until he becomes older, he lives in a valley bereft of plants and bears the hardships of this dry, barren environment, obeying Allah's saying: '...our Lord! That they may keep up prayer....' (*Ibrahim*: 37) It is as though leaving this land and requesting one which provided comfort, sown fields, and fruits would be tantamount to refusing to perform the prayer. Therefore, we see that he prefers to remain in that place and to abstain from the comfort of this world, which others enjoy, as an act of obedience to Allah's Command.

The result of this is that Allah *the Almighty* gave him something better than sown fields and fruits. He *the Almighty* gave him a gift in which he can take pride among all of the Prophets: He *the Almighty* made the Last Prophet, Muhammad Ibn 'Abdullah *peace and blessings be upon him* to be from his progeny. What outcome can be more excellent than this?

As for Idris *peace be upon him* he belongs to the fifth generation of the descendants of Adam *peace be upon him*. Some of the scholars say that he is 'Osiris,' but we say only what the Quran says: he is Idris. The prophetic biographers say, 'Prophet Idris was the first to whom Allah taught the spinning of wool and the sewing of clothes; before that, people used to cover their

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir says, 'The apparent meaning from the context is that Dhu Al-Kifl would not be connected with the Prophets unless he were himself a Prophet. Others said, 'He was a righteous man, a just king, and a fair judge,' but Ibn Jarir hesitated with regard to this issue. Allah knows best.' Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim*, 3/190.

nakedness with pieces of leather.' He was also the first to use the stars in order to know the directions and the years, as well as the first to write by the pen. These are called the 'firsts of Idris.'

As for Dhu Al-Kifl *peace be upon him* the Arabic word *Dhu* means 'the possessor of,' and *Kifl* means a 'fortune' or 'portion.' So why is he called 'Dhu Al-Kifl'? Dhu Al-Kifl is the son of Job *peace be upon him* and it is clear that Job's children were many in number. However, Allah *the Almighty* favoured Dhu Al-Kifl with a Message, and this was his fortune, apart from Job's other sons. For that reason, he is called 'Dhu Al-Kifl.'⁽¹⁾

This same root (*k-f-l*) also appears in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*: 'O you who believe! Be careful of (your duty to) Allah and believe in His Messenger: He will give you two portions of His mercy....' (*al-Hadid*: 28) This verse came after a discourse about Jesus *peace be upon him* and those who believed in him and followed him. It is as if Allah *the Almighty* says, 'O you who believed in previous Messengers, the last of whom is Jesus, believe in the Seal of the Messengers so that you will come to have two portions, that is, two shares and two allotments of Allah's Mercy: one share for your faith in Jesus and the Messengers who preceded him, and another share for your faith in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.'

Then, Allah *the Almighty* describes these three Prophets as: '...they were all steadfast.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 85) He *the Almighty* describes all Prophets as being patient because they stand up against all kinds of persecution, offences, and calamities for the sake of their mission, and bear that all with patience.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir mentions that Mujahid said, 'Dhu Al-Kifl was a righteous man, but not a Prophet. He guaranteed the Prophet of his people that he would spare him from the affairs of his people and would straighten them out for him and judge among them with justice. He did this and so was called Dhu Al-Kifl.' In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi mentions other opinions including the following: [1] He was a virtuous man who would take upon himself the affairs of every man who was suffering from a trial, accusation, or demand, and Allah would save the man by means of him. [2] He was called Dhu Al-Kifl because Allah *the Almighty* guaranteed to him the double reward of his effort and work in comparison other Prophets of his time. Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-Adhim*, 3/190; and Al-Qurtubi, *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4508.

وَأَدْخَلْنَاهُمْ فِي رَحْمَتِنَا إِنَّهُمْ مِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

We admitted them to Our mercy; they were truly righteous [86] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 86)

‘Mercy’ here refers to Prophethood which is a tremendous affair and an enormous gift. Therefore, if, for its sake, they have to undergo a number of hardships, this is justifiable.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَذَا النُّونِ إِذْ ذَهَبَ مُغْضِبًا فَظَنَّ أَنْ لَنْ نَقْدِرَ عَلَيْهِ فَنَادَى فِي الظُّلُمَاتِ
أَنْ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا أَنْتَ سُبْحَانَكَ إِنِّي كُنْتُ مِنَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

And remember the man with the whale, when he went off angrily, thinking We could not restrict him, but then he cried out in the deep darkness, ‘There is no God but You, glory be to You, I was wrong’ [87] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 87)

‘Dhu’n-Nun’, that is, ‘the man of the whale’ is Prophet Jonah, son of Amittai. In Arabic, the word *Nun* is one of the names of the whale; its plural being *Ninan*, and for that reason Jonah *peace be upon him* was called ‘Dhu’n-Nun.’ He was sent to the people of Ninawa in the land of Al-Mawsil in Iraq. In this regard, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to ‘Addas, ‘you are from the land of a righteous Prophet: Jonah, son of Amittai.’⁽¹⁾

Nun is also the name of one of the letters of the Arabic alphabet, but the name of a letter may concur with a name for something else, as in the case of *Qaf* which is the name of a mountain, and *Sin*, for there is a river called the Sin River. Thus, the names of letters may coincide with the names of things.

Allah *the Almighty* then says: ‘...when he went off angrily...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 87) Someone may be described as angry at something; however, the anger

(1) In his biography, Ibn Hisham narrates this Hadith which also includes the following: ‘Addas said, ‘How could you know who Jonah, son of Amittai, is?’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘He is my brother; he was a Prophet, and I am a Prophet.’ Then ‘Addas, proceeded to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* kissing his head, his hands and his feet. See Ibn Hisham, *As-Sira An-Nabawiyya*, 2/421.

described in the verse is mutual, as it indicates an action done between two agents. That is, there is another person in front of you: you are angry and s/he also is angry.

However, in the basics of the language, we incline the side of activity to one of them and the side of passivity to the other, as we say, 'Zayd participated with 'Amr.' That is, the participation is mutual between the two of them, but the side of activity is greater with regard to Zayd. Each of them is the agent at one time and the object at another. Sometimes, language considers this participation, and so the expression bears both meanings, being the agent and being the object, at the same time. An example of this is found in the saying of the Arab poet describing one's movement on land abounding with snakes that, if you move without resisting them, they will make their peace with you and not harm you. He says:

His step made its peace with the snakes,
the viper and the large serpent

This means that he made his peace with the snakes, so the snakes made their peace with him. Thus, the making of peace takes place between both of them, together. But it is the side of the snakes that triumphed, and therefore appears grammatically as the agent because their harm is greater than his harm. So when he substitutes for the snakes the viper and the large serpent, which are names of snakes, he should produce a substitute in the nominative case, in accordance with the word for which they are substitutes. Yet he produces a substitute in the accusative case because he perceives that the snakes are not just the agents, but also the object.

Back to the verse in question; Why did Jonah *peace be upon him* become angry? This is because his people denied his Message. So, he threatened them that, if they did not repent, a punishment would fall upon them. Then the appointed time came and that with which he threatened them did not befall upon them. Subsequently, he feared that they would consider him a false Prophet and would harm him. So, he abandoned them angrily and went off to another place, not knowing that they repented and that, as a result, Allah *the Almighty* waived their punishment.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* makes this situation clear, saying: 'And wherefore was there not a town which should believe so that their belief should have profited them but the people of Jonah? When they believed, We removed from them the chastisement of disgrace in this world's life and We gave them provision till a time.' (*Yunus*: 98) This verse means that it did not happen before that time that a community attained to faith before the punishment befalls it and thereupon benefited by its faith, except for one community, which were the people of Jonah. When they believed and repented, Allah *the Almighty* waived their punishment.

Thus, Jonah *peace be upon him* left while there was mutual anger between him and his people and they were the cause of his wrath. This is similar to what happened in the emigration of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. He emigrated from Mecca, but he did not abandon this love for it. Therefore, it is called an emigration. This is because the people of Mecca abandoned Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* first of all, and abandoned his mission and also compelled him to emigrate and leave Mecca; thus they played a role in the emigration and were its cause.

For that reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, addressing Mecca, 'By Allah, you are the best land of Allah, and the dearest of the land of Allah to me. By Allah, had I not been expelled from you I would never have left.'⁽¹⁾

The poet Al-Mutanabbi⁽²⁾ takes this meaning and gives expression to it in his saying:

(1) This Hadith is narrated by *Ibn Majah* and *Ad-Darimi* on the authority of *Ibn 'Abdullah Ibn 'Adi ibn Hamra' Al-Zahri*, who said, 'I saw the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* while he was atop his riding camel, stopping at *Al-Hazura*, saying...' See *Ibn Majah, Sunnan, Hadith no. 3108; and Ad-Darimi, Sunnan 2/239*.

(2) He is Ahmad ibn Al-Husayn Al-Kindi Abu At-Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi, the wise poet, and one of the objects of pride of Arab literature. He was born in Kufa in 303 AH in the 'Kinda' quarter, and raised in Ash-Sham. Then he moved to the desert, where he studied literature, the Arabic language, and the people's history. He came to Sayf Ad-Dawla Al-Hamdani, the commander of Aleppo, and praised him. He departed to Egypt, where he praised Kafur Al-Ikhshidi, then satirised him. He, his son and his servant were killed on camel-back in the year 354 AH. See *Az-Zirikli, Al-A'lam, 1/115*.

If you abandoned a people while they

Could have prevented you, it is they who are the abandoners

With regard to Allah's saying: '...thinking We could not restrict him...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 87), some people look at it with a superficial glance and say, 'How can Jonah think that Allah *the Almighty* could not restrict him?' This understanding springs from ignorance of the language, for the word that they think it means having power over something, possesses another meaning, as in Allah's saying: 'Let him who has abundance spend out of his abundance and whoever has his means of subsistence straitened to him, let him spend out of that which Allah has given him...' (*at-Talaq*: 7) Here, the one 'whose means of subsistence straitened to him' is s/he whose means of subsistence constrained him/her.

Another example is Allah's saying: 'Surely your Lord makes plentiful the means of subsistence for whom He pleases and He straitens (them)...' (*al-Isra'*: 30). A third example is 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.' (*al-Fajr*: 15–16)

Thus, Allah's saying: '...thinking We could not restrict him...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 87) means that when Jonah *peace be upon him* departed from his land in wrath toward his people, he thought that Allah *the Almighty* would not constrain him, but would enrich him and give him a better place than the one he left, as indicated by the fact that he said afterwards: '...but then he cried out in the deep darkness, "There is no God but You, glory be to You, I was wrong."' (*al-Anbiya'*: 87) So, how would he doubt Allah's Power while he invokes Him to relieve him from his distress which depends on Allah's Power? How, then, would the meaning be proper if we said that the verse means that Allah *the Almighty* will not have power over Jonah?⁽¹⁾

(1) In his *Tafsir*, *Al-Qurtubi* says, 'This saying is rejected because it entails disbelief.' *Ath-Tha'lab*, 'Ata', Sa'id Ibn Jubayr, and many scholars say that the meaning is, 'Thinking that We will not constrain him.' *Al-Qurtubi*, *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4511

The proper meaning is attained by saying that the verse means that Jonah *peace be upon him* thought that Allah would not constrain him. After all, Jonah *peace be upon him* knows that he is Allah's Messenger and that his Lord will not forsake him or abandon him in that distress.

An obscurity in the story of Jonah is found in Allah's saying: 'But had it not been that he was of those who glorify (Us), He would certainly have tarried in its belly to the day when they are raised.' (*as-Saffat*: 143–44) How is it possible that Jonah *peace be upon him* would have remained in the belly of the whale until the Day when all shall be raised from the dead, despite the fact that he as well as the whale would die? Or would the whale remain until the Day of Resurrection, carrying Jonah in its belly? The sense of the verse would be upheld if we considered the potential death of both Jonah *peace be upon him* and the whale in the light of the containment theory concerning mixtures. Consider, for example, what happens when you dissolve sugar in a glass of water: the water particles encompass the sugar particles. As the greater encompasses the less, the sugar does not encompass the water; rather, the water encompasses the sugar.

Then, if the whale died and Jonah *peace be upon him* also died in its belly, and their atoms combined and blended with one another, the whale would encompass Jonah *peace be upon him* until the coming of the Hour. In this manner, the meaning would remain sound, for he would be in the whale's belly, despite their atoms being dispersed.⁽¹⁾

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَأَسْتَجِبْنَا لَهُ وَنَجَّيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْغَمِّ وَكَذَلِكَ نُخَيِّجُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ

**We answered him and saved him from distress: this is how
We save the faithful [88] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 88)**

Allah *the Almighty* responds to the crying out of Jonah *peace be upon him* and delivers him from his distress: '...this is how We save the faithful.'

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti says, 'Concerning Allah's saying "He would certainly have tarried in its belly to the day when they are raised."' (*as-Saffat*: 44) Qatada said, 'The belly of the whale would become a tomb for him until the Day of Resurrection.' As-Suyuti ascribes it to 'Abd Ibn Hamid, ibn Jarir, Ibn Al-Mundhir and Ibn Abu Hatim. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 7/127.

(*al-Anbiya'*: 88) This verse shows that this matter is not specific to Jonah *peace be upon him* but rather applies to every believer who invokes Allah *the Almighty* with this supplication. So Allah's saying: '...this is how We save the faithful' (*al-Anbiya'*: 88) means that just He *the Almighty* saved Jonah. He *the Almighty* saves the believers who take refuge in Him by these words: 'There is no God but You, glory be to You, I was wrong,' (*al-Anbiya'*: 87) for Allah *the Almighty* eliminates his grief and dispels his anxiety.

For that reason, Ibn Mas'ud *Allah be pleased with him* says, 'Inquire into the Quran,' that is, delve and penetrate into its verses in order to discover its treasures and secrets.⁽¹⁾ Ja'far As-Sadiq was one of those who inquired into the Quran and meditated upon it. He used to extract from its verses a cure for every disease and a 'prescription', as we say, for all the conditions of the believer.

The believer fluctuates among different states, including fear, be it fear that the comfort of this worldly life will escape him/her, or fear that a tyrant will threaten him/her. S/He may feel an anxiety and constriction in his/her breast without any causes, which is grief. Moreover, s/he may face the scheming of the schemers, the guile of the beguilers, and the plotting of evil people.

All of these states befall the human being, and in the midst of them s/he needs someone who would support him/her and pull him/her out of that which s/he is undergoing. This is because, in this state, s/he has neither power nor strength and is incapable of taking precautionary measures with regard to all of these affairs.

The splendour and vanities of this life may try to entice him/her so that s/he looks forward to having what is greater than what s/he already has, and seeks for the maximum in everything. In fact, there is no end to the human being's ambition in this regard, as the poet said:

His needs die with the man,
but his needs continue as long as he lives

(1) Concerning the tradition of 'Abdullah, 'Draw forth [the meanings of] the Quran, for it contains news of the early and late generations.' Shamir said, 'The "drawing forth" of the Quran is the reading of it and the scholars' diligent inquiry into its explanation and meanings. See *Ibn Mandhur, Lisan Al-'Arab, th-w-r*.

People constantly strive to grasp all the comforts and luxuries of this worldly life, but they are mistaken, for the completeness of something entails the beginning of its end, as the poet said:

When something becomes complete its diminution begins;

When 'complete' is uttered, expect a coming to an end

This is because the human being is prone to changeability; no state persists for him/her, whether it be one of health or illness, wealth or poverty, or sadness or happiness, for changeability is one of the qualities of the human beings—and glory be to Him who does not change. So, what would happen after you reach the highest point, given the fact that you are prone to change? We see people becoming angry and complaining when one of this world's amenities or comforts escapes them, or when life diminishes something of theirs. But these people do not see that this diminution is the very thing which preserves their blessings, for it protects them from the eyes of the envious, whereby what they have remains intact.

You see, for example, a good family which has gained the interest and respect of the people, despite the existence of a bad, evil person who shames the family. Now, it is this very person who protects the family from the envious eyes of the people. Al-Mutanabbi grasped this meaning and expressed it in his praise of Sayf Ad-Dawla,⁽¹⁾ saying:

Mankind gazes at your perfection, so seek health

From the evil of their eyes in but one fault

We return to the prescription of Ja'far As-Sadiq who extracted it for us from the Book of Allah, just as the doctors extract the medications and cure from the physicians' books. He says, 'I am amazed by the one who fears and does not take refuge in Allah's saying: '... Allah is sufficient for us and most excellent is the Protector' (*Al-Imran*: 173) for Allah *the Almighty* says immediately

(1) He is 'Ali ibn 'Abdullah ibn Hamdan Abu Al-Hasan Sayf Ad-Dawla Al-Hamdani, patron of Al-Mutanabbi and object of his praise. He was born in Mayyafariqin in Diyar Bakr, in the year 303 Ah, and grew up to be brave and well-mannered, possessed of determination. He ruled Wasit, Damascus, and Aleppo, where he died in the year 356 Ah, at the age of 53. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-A'lam*, 4/303.

afterwards: 'So they returned with favour from Allah and (His) grace, no evil touched them...' (*Al-Imran*: 174).

As-Sadiq then said, 'I am amazed by the one who is distressed and does not take refuge in Allah's saying: 'There is no God but You, glory be to You, I was wrong' (*al-Anbiya'*: 87) for Allah *the Almighty* says immediately afterwards: 'We answered him and saved him from distress: this is how We save the faithful.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 88) As-Sadiq continued, 'I am amazed by the one who against whom a plot is contrived and does not take refuge in Allah's saying: '...and I entrust my affair to Allah...' (*Ghafir*: 44), for Allah *the Almighty* says immediately afterwards: 'So Allah protected him from the evil (consequences) of what they planned...' (*Ghafir*: 45). Finally, As-Sadiq said, 'I am amazed by the one who seeks this world and its embellishment and does not take refuge in Allah's saying: '...It is as Allah has pleased, there is no power save in Allah...' (*al-Kahf*: 39), for Allah *the Almighty* says immediately afterwards: 'Then maybe my Lord will give me what is better than your garden....' (*al-Kahf*: 40)

In this way, the believer can be at peace putting his/her trust in Allah's Care because s/he takes refuge in her/his Lord by means of an appropriate supplication in each of these states. When your Lord sees that you invoke and take refuge in Him, and that you attribute to Him every blessing concerning yourself, your people, or your property, and that you recognise Him as the Benefactor, He gives you that which is even better.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* tells us about another one of the Prophets, saying:

وَزَكَرِيَّا إِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبَّهُ، رَبِّ لَا تَذَرْنِي فَرْدًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْوَارِثِينَ ﴿٨٩﴾

**Remember Zechariah, when he cried to his
Lord, 'My Lord, do not leave me childless,
though You are the best of heirs' [89]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 89)**

Zechariah *peace be upon him* aged and Allah *the Almighty* had not bestowed upon him a son, so he turned toward Allah *the Almighty* saying: 'He said: My Lord! Surely my bones are weakened and my head flares with hoariness, and, my Lord! I have never been unsuccessful in my prayer to You: And surely I

fear my cousins after me, and my wife is barren, therefore grant me from You an heir...' (*Maryam*: 4–5).

When Allah *the Almighty* gave him the good tidings of a son, he was astonished, because he looked at the given facts: how could Allah *the Almighty* bestow a son upon him, when he had become far advanced in years and his wife was barren? So, he wanted to confirm these tidings, saying: '...O my Lord! when shall I have a son, and my wife is barren, and I myself have reached indeed the extreme degree of old age? He said: So shall it be, your Lord says: It is easy to Me, and indeed I created you before, when you were nothing.' (*Maryam*: 8–9) So, Allah *the Almighty* put Prophet Zechariah *peace be upon him* at peace, saying, 'Discard the natural causes of the created order, because the One Who brings you these good tidings is the Creator.'

Zechariah *peace be upon him* had already learned from his guardianship of Mary that Allah *the Almighty* gives in accord with causes, and He also gives without cause. Mary's people competed for her guardianship and sought to outdo one another in the performance of this service because they knew her nobility and her rank. Therefore, they rewarded her guardianship by the casting of lots. When they threw them into the sea,⁽¹⁾ Zechariah's lot emerged, and he won the guardianship of Mary. In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'This is an account of things beyond your knowledge that We reveal to you [Muhammad]: you were not present among them when they cast lots to see which of them should take charge of Mary, you were not present with them when they argued [about her].' (*Al-'Imran*: 44) The lot casting is implemented in the light of the importance of this affair and its profound significance, as lot casting is a measure for deciding affairs according to the Divine Decree, in order that no caprice or arbitrariness may enter therein.

When Zechariah *peace be upon him* became in charge of Mary, he used to provide her with whatever she needed and to take care of all of her affairs.

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir mentions that 'Ikrima, As-Suddi, Qatada, Rabi' ibn Anas, and several people relate that they went to the River Jordan, where they took a vote that they would throw their quills and whoever's quill stood firm in the flow of the water would be her guardian. So they threw their quills, and the water carried away all of them except for Zechariah's, which stood firm. It is said that the quill went upward, cutting through the flow of water. Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-'Azhim*, 1/363.

One day, he entered upon her and found with her some food which he had not brought.⁽¹⁾ In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘He said, “Mary, how is it you have these provisions?” and she said, “They are from Allah: Allah provides limitlessly for whoever He will.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 37) Here is a point and an indication of the necessity for the head of a family to follow and pursue everything concerning his family. When he sees something inside the house which he himself did not bring there, he should ask about its source, for it is possible, for example, that one of the children took something which did not belong to them. Asking ‘Whence came this to you?’ is a basic rule and practice which we need to apply whenever we have a doubt.

Zechariah *peace be upon him* grasped Mary’s answer which came quickly and confidently, pointing to the clear truth that does not change: ‘...and she said, “They are from Allah: Allah provides limitlessly for whoever He will.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 37) Yes, this is something which Zechariah *peace be upon him* knew, but it had not come to reside in the seat of his consciousness until Mary reminded him about it. Thereupon, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘There and then Zechariah prayed to his Lord, saying, “Lord, from Your grace grant me virtuous offspring: You hear every prayer.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 38) It is as if Zechariah *peace be upon him* said, ‘If that is the reality of the matter, then give me a son who will inherit Prophethood after me.’ Then, he mentioned the reasons of childlessness like weakness, old age and his wife’s barrenness; yet he asked for a child, given the fact that Allah *the Almighty* grants sustenance to whom He wills, beyond all reckoning and beyond all causes.

Thus, Zechariah *peace be upon him* benefited from these words, and Mary likewise benefited from them in what followed — when the pregnancy with the Messiah *peace be upon him* came upon her without any natural cause.

In the verse in question, Zechariah *peace be upon him* prays to his Lord, saying: ‘My Lord, do not leave me childless, though You are the best of heirs.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 89) It is as if he said, ‘I do not seek a son in order to

(1) That is, he found her in possession of summer fruits during the winter, and winter fruits during the summer. In his *Tafsir*, Ibn Kathir, says, ‘This is the opinion of Mujahid, Sa‘id ibn Jubayr, Qatada, As-Suddi, and Al-‘Awfi. See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Al-Quran Al-‘Azhim*, 1/360.

inherit my possessions after me, for You, Allah, are the best of inheritors, Who inherits the heaven and the earth, and everything belongs to You.'

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَاسْتَجَبْنَا لَهُ، وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ، يَحْيَىٰ وَأَصْلَحْنَا لَهُ، زَوْجَهُ، إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا
يُكْسِرُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَيَدْعُونَكَ رَعْبًا وَرَهْبًا وَكَانُوا لَنَا خَاشِعِينَ ﴿٩٠﴾

We answered him — We gave him John, and cured his wife of barrenness – they were always keen to do good deeds. They called upon Us out of longing and awe, and humbled themselves before Us [90] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 90)

Thus, Allah *the Almighty* responded to Zechariah *peace be upon him* not only by bestowing upon him a son despite his being advanced in years and his wife's barrenness, but also by naming that son. Allah *the Almighty* gave him this name, that is, Yahya (John) for a certain purpose. This is because the people are free with regard to giving names to named things, as we said; nothing prevents us from naming a black girl 'Moon,' because the name can depart from its original meaning and become a signifier for this named person. There is, then, a difference between the name and the named thing. We may choose the names optimistically, hoping that the named person will become like the name, as in the case of the man who named his son Yahya (John), which means 'to live', apparently because he was concerned about the potential death of his children. Therefore, he said:

I named him John that he might live but there is
no way for Allah's decree (of death) to be stopped

That is, he named him John hoping that he will live, but this did not prevent Allah's Decree from coming to pass. Likewise, when 'Abd Al-Muttalib named Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he said, 'I named him Muhammad in order that he might be praised on earth and in heaven.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Abu Al-Hakam At-Tanukhi said, 'When it became the seventh day (after the birth of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Abd Al-Muttalib sacrificed an animal and invited the tribe of Quraysh. When they had eaten they said, 'O 'Abd Al-Muttalib, did you see this son of yours on account of whom you have honored us—What did you =

But, when the One Who names John is Allah *the Almighty* who holds sway over life and death, then the named one will necessarily accord with the name, that is to say, the one named John—‘the living’—will necessarily live—to the extent that if he dies, he will die a martyr in order that life may be realised on his part, even after death.

The meaning of Allah’s saying: ‘We gave him...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 90) is that He *the Almighty* granted John to Zechariah *peace be upon them* without being bound by natural human laws or causes. Then, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...and cured his wife of barrenness...’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 90) So, after she was barren, unable to give birth, Allah *the Almighty* carried out a ‘divine operation’ for her to restore her ability to give birth. In fact, a woman may give birth as long as she possesses the ovules involved in the formation of an embryo. When these ovules cease being produced, a woman becomes barren. These ovules are found in a bunch, and have a fixed number, resembling in this a bunch of hen’s eggs. Therefore, some people call the last of the children the ‘last of the bunch.’ Thus, John’s coming into being runs counter to the natural causes for birth because the One Who put all the creation into being so willed.

Now, why does not Allah *the Almighty* say to Zechariah *peace be upon him* ‘We cured you’? The scholars said, ‘This is due to the fact that the man is fit for begetting offspring for so long as he is able to perform the sexual act, no matter how advanced in years he may become. This is contrary to the receiving woman, for the cessation of the ability to beget children takes place on account of her.’

In those who are barren and unable to beget children, we witness some of Allah’s signs. We see that the spouses are both healthy and that their bodily organs are fit for begetting children, and yet they do not beget children. But, when each of them marries another person, they beget children. This is because the matter is not merely mechanical; rather, above and beyond the apparent causes, there Allah’s Will and Intention. For that reason, Allah *the Almighty* says:

= *name him?’ He said, ‘I named him Muhammad.’ They said, ‘Why did you choose for him a name other than one of his family’s?’ He said, ‘I wanted that Allah in heaven and His creation on earth should praise him.’ See Al-Bayhaqi, Dala’il An-Nubuwwa 1/112; Ibn ‘Asakir, Tahdhib Tarikh Dimashq Al-Kabir, 1/282; and Ibn Kathir Al-Bidaya Wa An-Nihaya, 2/264.*

‘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.’ (*ash-Shura*: 49–50)

Then, the verse clarifies the causes of honour for Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and why Allah *the Almighty* answered his supplication: ‘...they were always keen to do good deeds. They called upon Us out of longing and awe, and humbled themselves before Us.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 90)

These three qualities highly qualified Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and his wife for that divine gift. We should take account of what happened with Prophet Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* for it is not specific to him; rather, it applies to every believer who possesses these qualities.

Therefore, I advise the one who is inflicted with sterility and childlessness and who is depressed by the causes of this world and the methods of modern medicine to take refuge in Allah *the Almighty* like Zakaryya (Zechariah) *peace be upon him* and his family: ‘...they were always keen to do good deeds. They called upon Us out of longing and awe, and humbled themselves before Us.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 90) You should take it as a divine ‘prescription’, and the answer will not be long in coming, if Allah *the Almighty* so wills.

Now, why has the following quality ‘...they were always keen to do good deeds...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 90), been mentioned specifically? The scholars say, ‘this is because those who are barren or sterile and unable to beget children are in most cases greedy, not possessing that quality which would encourage spending. They consider it too much to take out and give something to a poor person because he is not their son.’

But when one vies with another in spending and doing good deeds of all different kinds, it challenges his natural disposition so that he becomes contrary to his original state in this regard. Those whom Allah *the Almighty* tests with sterility or barrenness may be prone to envy other people, or may harbour resentment for those who are able to beget children. However, if they get rid of this envy and look upon others’ children as if they were their own, they will come to harbour affection for them and vie with one another in good deeds, and then they will invoke Allah *the Almighty* out of longing and awe.

Allah *the Almighty* Who is the Supreme Creator, may thus transcend for them the natural laws and bestow upon them a child through a way that they did not consider.

As for Allah's saying, '...and humbled themselves before Us' (*al-Anbiya'*: 90), it means that they were content with Allah's Will concerning them; they accepted their being childless in so far as it was a trial and a divine decree. In fact, a divine decree is not lifted from the servant until he becomes fully content with it, for it is not fitting that a believer should rebel against Allah's decree. Actually, being humble to Allah *the Almighty* entails being content with the divine decree prescribed by Allah for the people.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says,

وَالَّتِي أَحْصَنَتْ فَرْجَهَا فَنَفَخْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ رُوحِنَا
وَجَعَلْنَاهَا وَابْنَهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

**Remember the one who guarded her chastity. We breathed
into her from Our Spirit and made her and her son a sign
for all people [91] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 91)**


You may ask, 'Why is Maryam (Mary) mentioned after the previous prophets'? We say, 'This is because prophethood signifies Allah's preference of the prophet to the rest of His creation. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* preferred Maryam (Mary) to all the women of creation; Allah *the Almighty* did so allowing her to miraculously beget a child without being touched by a man. This is a special privilege to Maryam (Mary) alone, apart from all other women. As a matter of fact, while the act of selecting prophets recurs, the selection of Maryam (Mary) for this particular affair will never recur for anyone else ever'. Allah's saying, '...the one who guarded her chastity...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 91), means that she was modest and preserved her chastity, for she did not succumb to any man.⁽¹⁾

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi says, 'Ihsan (chastity) means the opening of her shirt, that is, no suspicion attached to her garment, i.e. she is a chaste woman. There are four openings of the shirt: the two sleeves, above, and below. As-Suhayli said, 'So your imagination should not wander to anything other than this. It is an example of the subtlety of indirect expression because the Quran is the purest in meaning, the most =

As for Allah's saying, 'We breathed into her⁽¹⁾ from Our Spirit...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 91), it signifies that this matter is special to her and that it transcends the laws of nature, for she did not have sexual intercourse with any male. Rather, the Spirit, which Allah *the Almighty* had previously breathed into Adam and from which there then came the subsequent spirits, is the same Spirit which Allah *the Almighty* breathed into Maryam (Mary), and from which there came a single Spirit. So, it is the same Spirit about which Allah *the Almighty* says, 'So when I have made him complete and breathed into him of My Spirit...' (*al-Hijr*: 29).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...and made her and her son a sign for all people.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 91) Here, a 'sign' means something wondrous in the cosmos. There is wondrousness with regard to both of Maryam (Mary) and 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*; she gave birth to a baby without a male, and he was begotten without a father. Both are signs of Allah *the Almighty* and a divine miracle.

Having presented a brief account about the prophets, Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:


 إِنَّ هَذِهِ أُمَّتُكُمْ أُمَّةً وَاحِدَةً وَأَنَا رَبُّكُمْ فَاعْبُدُونِ

**[Messengers], this community of yours is one single
community and I am your Lord, so serve Me [92]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 92)**

An *ummah* (community) is a group of people united by a single bond, be it belonging to the same land, being ruled by the same king or even having the same religion, as mentioned in Allah's saying, '...We found our fathers on a course...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 22), that is, following a religion.

= judicious in formulation, the subtlest in allusion and the most perfect in expression, preventing the imagination from going in any undesired direction.' See *Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4518.

(1) In his book, Abu Yahya Zakaryya Al-Ansari says, 'This means that the angel had breathed into the pocket of her chemise.' In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti mentions that Qatada said, 'He breathed into her bosom,' but Muqatil said, 'He breathed into her vulva.' A chemise is a women's garment. See *Al-Ansari, Fath Ar-Rahman*, p. 271; see also *As-Suyuti, Ad-Dur Al-Manthur*, 5/671.

So, the intended meaning is that the *ummah* of the messengers is a single *Ummah* by nature, without any difference within it.⁽¹⁾ All the messengers come only to complete a single building, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'The similitude of mine and that of the prophets before me is that of a person who built a house quite imposing and beautiful, but for one brick in one of its corners. People would go around it, appreciating the building, but saying, "Why has the brick not been fixed here?"' he said, "I am that brick and I am the last of the Prophets."⁽²⁾ This clearly means that with the coming of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prophethood is completed and sealed.

The word '*ummah*' also refers to the person who combines all the qualities of goodness. We know for certain that Allah *the Almighty* has scattered the qualities of goodness throughout creation, for there is not a single person who combines within himself all talents and virtues; rather, each one of us has a distinctive feature and a virtue as to a specific aspect or field. Therefore, people need one another, and they attain to perfection through cooperation, by which the different elements of society come to be closely connected with one another. This integration is either brought about by voluntary needs or else by compulsory ones.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; if all the people studied together and graduated from the university and all became professors and teachers, who would occupy other crafts and jobs?! Who would sweep the streets and perform other such tasks?! What if the sewer drainage pipelines became obstructed? Would these professors and teachers unite with one another to clear and repair them? Even if they did so one time, that would be on a voluntary, unpaid basis.

The public welfare, however, is not based on voluntariness, but on need and necessity. If this need did not exist, the drainage worker, for example,

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi says, 'When Allah the Almighty mentioned the prophets, He said, "All these prophets agree upon the Oneness of Allah, therefore the word '*ummah*' means the religion, which is Islam." This is the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid and others.' See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4519.

(2) This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim in the *Book of Virtues*, Hadith no. 22, on the authority of Abu Huraira Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 3535; Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 2286.

would not leave in the morning to do his exhausting, repellent work—but how can he not, when he is shouldering the responsibility of a family, children and expenses?

We have said previously that the human being should not let himself be deceived by whatever talents or virtues he possesses, and deem himself to be above other people because of them. Rather, he should seriously consider other people's talents without which he can not do.

Need, then, is the connecting link within society. If the link were instead based on voluntariness and courteousness, we would never accomplish anything, for if we said to the worker, for example, 'Can you sweep the streets please', you would find him giving a thousand excuses for not doing that. However, if his children would starve if he did not go to work, then, for sure, he would hurry and hasten to work.

The truth is that each individual in society serves no one except himself, for just as you are useful to others, you also make use of them. Therefore, take care not to envy someone's talent in a particular thing because his talent ultimately benefits you.

This matter should be taken into consideration with regard to the worldly life as well as the Hereafter. So, when you see a pious person who is endowed with noble character, you should neither scoff at him nor mock him, as some people like to do. This is because his righteousness will be in your interest, and you will benefit from his piety and rectitude; and perhaps Allah *the Almighty* bestows abundant provision on us because of these individuals.

There may be in one and the same house young, intelligent, educated people, but amongst them there is a handicapped or insane person. They may look down upon and disregard him, taking no pride in knowing him. Yet, it may be that they live together under his protection and are sustained in his honour.

Often, we see people becoming angry and resentful about Allah's decree when Allah *the Almighty* bestows upon them a child with a defect or a disability. But, by Allah, if you would be content with that child and accept Allah's decree concerning him, he would be a source of constant protection for you. In fact, such individuals are created thus for wisdom in order that we

do not rebel against Allah's creation in His universe. Furthermore, this is meant in order that the people of blessing, well-being, and health fully realise the favour bestowed upon them; and in order that we perfectly know that Allah *the Almighty* does not withhold anything from His servants except that Allah *the Almighty* gives them something else in compensation for it.

You should notice, for example, the conditions of the insane people whom other people neglect, despise, and turn away from their ragged appearance. Despite that, you see that when a dilemmatic situation befalls people of rank and authority, they take refuge in the likes of these insane people, seeking blessings and prayers from them. This, in itself is, the highest thing that the people of rank, authority, and influence could aspire to—that their word is regarded, their command is obeyed, and that men take refuge in them just as they take refuge in these poor, insane ones.

Whenever Allah *the Almighty* bestows goodness upon this sheikh, the insane, you see the person of high rank try to get closer to him, inviting him to partake of his food, defending him from people's offences and even embracing him in his arms. This is because the person of high rank tested the matter and came to know that this sheikh possesses a portion of Allah's abundance and a mark of honour with which Allah *the Almighty* favours whosoever He wills from among His servants. All of us are Allah's servants; none of us is Allah's son or shares any sort of kinship with Him *Glorified is He*.

Even though intellect is the most exalted thing which the human being takes pride in, for it is what gives man preference to other creatures, you should consider the crazy person who has lost his mind and become deprived of this invaluable faculty. You see people pointing at him, saying 'This one is crazy'. Yes, he is indeed crazy, but when you consider the comportments of these people, do you see crazy people stealing? Do you see them committing adultery? Do you see them committing suicide? Thus, even though he is crazy, he is fully aware of himself. Even if he is deprived of the intellectual faculties, his Creator *Glorified is He* gave him, instinct which governs him, just as the instincts of animals govern them. Do you ever see a donkey, for example, throw itself in front of a train?

We should not, then, disparage these people or deem them to be insignificant, for Allah *the Almighty* has compensated them for that of which Allah *Glorified is He* deprived them. Even among us, there are those who strive to reach that which these people have already reached, but they are unable. Who among us does not hope to be like this crazy person whom the people praise, and from whom they seek blessings and prayers? What greatness does the human being seek higher than this? It suffices such a person that he is not held accountable for what he does in this worldly life, nor will he be questioned for them in the Hereafter.

Back to the verse under discussion; Allah *the Almighty* says, '[Messengers], this community of yours is one single community...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 92). Among the various meanings of the word '*ummah*' is the person who gathers all of the qualities of goodness. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* described Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* as an 'exemplar', saying: 'Surely, Ibrahim (Abraham) was an exemplar⁽¹⁾...' (*an-Nahl*: 120). This verse means that he combined within himself all the qualities of goodness, which are only found together in a complete *ummah* as a whole.

An *ummah* will not be united except when its formation is built on the basis of belief in one God, for if its formation were based on belief in many gods, each god would lead what he created; some would overcome others, and life would fall to ruin. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* 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).

Therefore, the *ummah* will not be one unless it receives its commands from one God, and submits to a single object of worship. If it neglects this one God, it becomes divided and dispersed.

It is as though Allah *the Almighty* was saying to the believers, 'You all will try being a single *ummah*, by means of which you will rule over this world. Your call will start from an illiterate *ummah* bereft of knowledge and culture and unpractised in the government of nations. This is because your *ummah*

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti says that 'Ibn Mas'ud was asked, "What is the exemplar?" He said, "The one who teaches goodness to the people."' Qatada said, 'He is an Imam who guides and is emulated, and whose way is followed.' See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/176.

was a tribal one in which each tribe had its own laws, its own dominion, and its own leadership'.

Then, the divine way of guidance, which encompasses all the affairs of this world, was revealed to the early Muslims. It was a system which overwhelmed the civilisation of both Persia and Byzantine and subdued them both. If the Muslim *ummah*, in its early time, were an educated one, other people would call this shift a civilizational leap, but, on the contrary, it was an unlettered *ummah*, and so was its Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, the way of guidance which stripped these civilisations of their might and glory must be greater than all other ways and civilisations.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and I am your Lord, so serve Me.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 92) Here, Allah *the Almighty* commands the believers to firmly adhere to His divine way of guidance, in order to remain one *ummah*. Allah *Glorified is He* chooses the quality of being a Lord, for He did not say, 'I am your God'. This is because the Lord is the One Who creates, sustains, and brings up, whereas the God is the One Who prescribes religious obligations.

It is as Allah *the Almighty* was saying, 'As long as I am your Lord Who created you out of nothing, provided for your needs, look after your interests and welfare, watches over you by night and day and sustains even the disobedient and the disbeliever—given all of this, I am more deserving of worship. It does not behove you, after all of this, to worship any god other than Me'. This is the reasoning of sound intellect, as they say, 'He who eats my morsel listens to my word'.

Obedience to Allah's Commands and prohibitions is part of worship. In fact, the fruit of this obedience returns to you, for Allah *the Almighty* possesses the attribute of Eternal Perfection before He even created the one who obeys Him. Thus, your obedience will not add anything to Allah's Dominion, nor will your disobedience diminish Him in any way whatsoever. Therefore, the matter is up to you, and your Lord rewards you for an action which, in reality is for your own good.

But, have the people heard this call for one *ummah* and work in accordance with it? Are we really one *ummah* like that one which made Islam triumphant within half a century? This *ummah* whose impacts we still continue to see in

these countries which revolted against Arabism and the language of the Quran! As a matter of fact, a religion and an *ummah* of this nature should not have been abdicated.

To the question: 'Did the one *ummah* remain?' the following verse responds:



**They have torn their unity apart, but they will all
return to Us [93] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 93)**

This verse shows that the people became sects, parties, groups and factions, as Allah *the Almighty* says, 'surely, they who divided their religion into parts and became sects, you have no concern with them...' (*al-An'am*: 159).

Why does Allah *the Almighty* tell Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he has nothing to do with those people? This is because they destroy the unity of the *ummah*, which only takes place when its members differ. The *ummah* does not differ except when its paths become multiple, but if all the people follow one path, they will not differ. In so far as they have torn their unity apart and have become different divisions, each with its own path and law, religious obligations and banner, will they be left in this state, or will they be returned to Allah *the Almighty* in the end?

Allah *the Almighty* provides the answer saying, '...but they will all return to Us.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 93) As long as the people were a single *ummah* in creation from the beginning, in the return and in the end, then why do they differ in the middle of the path? Difference, then, originated when the people followed different paths, while they should have followed only one path. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came as a Seal of the Messengers, and Islamic law came as a universal law comprehending the excellences of the previously revealed laws, and even adding to them the excellences necessitated by the ages which were to come after him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

So, the believing *ummah* should have come together in agreement upon that comprehensive, universal way of guidance, which cannot be supplemented. In this way, the unity of the *ummah* will be forged, and its religious obligations will come from a single God. Consequently, these obligations will not be

subjected to arbitrary views based on whim and personal opinion, temporal powers or base intentions.

Therefore, when the groups which profess Islam become numerous and divided, we say to them, 'Be a single group, and if you do not, then with which one of you is the truth? This is because Allah *the Almighty* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with His saying, 'Surely they who divided their religion into parts and became sects, you have no concern with them...' (*al-An'am*: 159).

The callers to a single call do not become divided except by following arbitrary views and selfish interests. True religion, on the other hand, is that which comes in accordance with that which pleases Allah *the Almighty* regarding mankind.

The believers have dispersed from that which has united them about Allah's Command. Subsequently, their unity has been torn apart and they followed different directions to the point that no statement unites them except for 'There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah'. As for their paths and their laws, however, they take them from here or there. Ultimately, these laws will torment them, and these civilisations will abandon them, and they will see their evil effect. Then, they will return in the end to Islam, for it is the only place of refuge—as we hear today the call that 'There is no solution except Islam'.

Yes, Islam is the solution to problems, crises, conflicts and weapons; the solution to the multiplicity which has weakened the Muslims and undermined their brotherhood, concerning which Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And hold fast by the covenant of Allah all together and be not disunited, and remember the Favour of Allah on you when you were enemies, then He united your hearts so by His Favour you became brethren....' (*Al-Imran*: 103)

By Allah, were we to return to the covenant of Allah *the Almighty* and hold fast to it so that arbitrary views did not toy with us, we would return to be a single *ummah* which rules over the whole world?

So, Allah's saying, '...but they will all return to Us' (*al-Anbiya'*: 93) means that they will eventually return to Him in the Hereafter for the

reckoning. I say, 'O Lord, if only this return could take place in this worldly life so that when man-made laws torment us, we take refuge with You and return to You anew'. Then, our glory would return to us, and the saying of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would prove true for us: 'Islam initiated as something strange, and it would revert to its (old position) of being strange, so good tidings (are) for the strangers.'⁽¹⁾

This understanding is corroborated and this hope is strengthened by Allah's saying afterwards:

فَمَنْ يَعْمَلْ مِثْقَالَ ذَرَّةٍ خَيْرًا يَرَهُ
وَأَن تَعْلَمُوا أَنَّهُ هُوَ يُسْأَلُ عَنْكُمْ
كُلَّ يَوْمٍ وَلَئِنَّا لَهُ كَنُيُوتٌ

**If anyone does good deeds and is a believer,
his efforts will not be ignored: We record
them for him [94] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 94)**

Here, Allah *the Almighty* admonishes us to do righteous deeds in order to give us hope if we return to Him. This world as a whole bears witness that every ideology is futile, and that every slogan is but a false and transitory thing by which particular people embellish their arbitrary views; thus it will not be long before every ideology comes to an end. At that time, it will become clear to its adherents that it is wrong, and so they will abandon it.

An example of this is the Communist ideology which ruled over Russia in 1917 and, for the sake of which, holy things were violated; blood was shed; houses were razed; and riches were confiscated. While Russia was previously a nation which exported food to the countries of the world, it has now become one which begs for food from other countries, which were the first to be harmed by this ideology and suffer from its laws.

Back to the verse in question; Allah's saying, 'If anyone does good deeds and is a believer...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 94) connects the doing of righteous deeds with faith because faith is the starting point of the believer in everything he does; it is

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Muslim in the Book of Faith, and by Ibn Majah on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Muslim, *Sahih*, Hadith no. 3986; and Ibn Majah, *Sunnan*, Hadith no. 3986.

also the point from which he abstains in order to attain by means of his righteous doings, the good fortune of both this worldly life and the Hereafter.

As for the one who does righteous deeds, just because they are righteous, viewing the matters of humaneness and nobility as the main basis for his actions yet void of sincerity, he will be rewarded for this in the worldly life; they may acquire honour, authority and good reputation, but he will, for sure, have no share in the reward of the Hereafter because he performed these good deeds without being heedful of Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us an example of this in His saying, 'And (as for) those who disbelieve, their deeds are like the mirage in a desert which the thirsty man deems to be water; until when he comes to it he finds it to be naught, and there he finds Allah, so He pays back to him his reckoning in full...' (*an-Nur*: 39).

This verse means that the disbeliever will be seized suddenly by Allah, Who recompenses and repays him. This possibility never crossed his mind, so it will be said to him, 'You have done such-and-such to be mentioned by people, and this has happened...and the matter is finished'. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Whoever desires the gain of the Hereafter, We will give him more of that...' (*ash-Shura*: 20). This verse means that Allah *the Almighty* shall grant him an endless reward in the Hereafter. Then, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...Whereas to him who desires [but] a harvest in this world, We [may] give something thereof—but he will have no share in [the blessings of] the life to come.' (*ash-Shura*: 20) This is because he worked for the sake of the people, and therefore took his wage from them by perpetuating his memory, making exhibitions and statues for him, etc.

Allah's saying, '...his efforts will not be ignored...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 94) means that He, Almighty, will never neglect this man his rightful due nor will Allah *Glorified is He* deny his endeavour. Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...We record them for him' (*al-Anbiya'*: 94) which means that Allah *Glorified is He* records for their deeds for them. Amazingly, man was supposed to be the one who records for himself, but when the One Who records your deeds for you is your Lord Himself and Who rewards you for them, there is no doubt that it is a precise recording which does not neglect even the weight of an atom of your deeds.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَحَرَامٌ عَلَىٰ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا أَنَّهُمْ لَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

No community destroyed by Us can escape its return [95] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 95)

Allah's saying, '...It is unfailingly true...' (*al-Anbiya*: 95) means that it is impossible that a community can escape its return to Him *the Almighty*. A 'community' here means every community whom Allah *the Almighty* has destroyed for their disbelief in the messengers and for their standing against them in resistance and opposition. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* destroyed them for their sins in this worldly life. Is it reasonable, then, that Allah *the Almighty* will leave them in the Hereafter without holding them accountable for their sins? Undoubtedly, these disbelieving peoples and communities will return to Allah *the Almighty* in the Hereafter to be recompensed by means of a permanent, eternal punishment.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فُزِحَتْ يَأْجُوجُ وَمَأْجُوجُ وَهُمْ مِّن كُلِّ حَدَبٍ يَنْسِلُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾

And when the peoples of Gog and Magog are let loose and swarm swiftly from every highland [96] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 96)

The story of Gog and Magog is told at the end of the chapter of *al-Kahf*, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked about the wandering man who walked about the earth, whereby it was revealed: 'And they ask you about Dhu Al-Qarnayn. Say, "I will recite to you an account of him."' (*al-Kahf*: 83)

The scholars speak about Dhu Al-Qarnayn; they hold different opinions concerning him, as follows: some say that he is Cyrus, while others believe that he is Alexander, the Great. But the Quran is not concerned about the person himself, or else it would mention him by name. It does not give a history of a man or erect, as it were, a statue of him, but rather, it wants to emphasise the qualities which concern Allah *the Almighty* and His creation.

It suffices that we know that he was a man whom Allah *the Almighty* gave power over the earth. That is, Allah *the Almighty* granted him the means for obtaining power, dignity, and authority. Furthermore, Allah *the Almighty* gave to him from all the means of power, including property, knowledge, and armies. However, he did not confine himself to that; rather, ‘...he followed a course.’ (*al-Kahf*: 85) This means that he pursued the means that were conducive to goodness.

We spoke previously about the issue of the personification or exact designation of the heroes in the stories of the Quran. The Quran does not give a special history of the individuality or the personality; rather, it wants the character to be universal in order for it to be an example to be imitated. By so doing, it provokes reflection and brings about the intended effect of the story.

That which concerns us in the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn is that he was a man who was given power over the earth, and that he possessed certain qualities. Likewise, that which concerns us about the People of the Cave, is that they were young men who believed in their Lord, clung to their religion and creed, and made sacrifices for their sake; in other words, neither the personalities, time, place nor the number concern us in this regard.

Therefore, the Quran makes all these matters obscure, for any young man, at any time, in any place and by any names can reach this position of faith. However, if Allah *the Almighty* had specified them, some people would have said, ‘It is an event specific to these people, or they are examples which are not repeated’. Therefore, the Quran makes them obscure in order that they may be an example and a model until the end of time.

Likewise, when the Quran wants to give an example of those who disbelieve; it mentions both of Nuh’s (Noah’s) wife and Lut’s (Lot’s) wife but does not describe either of them in detail. Similarly, it gives Pharaoh’s wife as an example of those who believe but does not mention exactly who she is.⁽¹⁾ This is because the purpose of citing these examples is not to know the

(1) In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Allah sets forth an example to those who disbelieve the wife of Nuh (Noah) and the wife of Lut (Lot): they were both under two of Our righteous servants, but they acted treacherously towards them so they availed them naught against Allah...’ (*at-Tahrim*: 10).

personalities, but rather to know that women have the freedom of belief and an independence of view. She is not subordinate to anyone, which is clearly indicated by the fact that both Nuh (Noah) and Lut (Lot) were unable to guide their wives. Similarly, Pharaoh, the disbeliever who falsely claimed to be divine, was unable to prevent his wife from having faith in Allah *the Almighty*. In this connection, she said, ‘...My Lord! Build for me a house with You in the garden and deliver me from Pharaoh and his doing, and deliver me from the unjust people.’ (*at-Tahrim*: 11)

Thus, that which concerns us in the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn is that Allah *the Almighty* established authority for him on the earth and gave him every means for obtaining power and dominion. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* trusted that he would be a balance for goodness and truth, and He entrusted him to judge between the people according to his vision of truth and justice.

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Until when he reached the place where the sun set, he found it going down into a black sea, and found by it a people. We said, “O Dhu Al-Qarnayn! Either give them a chastisement or do them a benefit.”’ (*al-Kahf*: 86)

Allah *the Almighty* had strengthened and entrusted him, so he used this strengthening at the right time and place and took up the trust in accordance with its rights, for he said, ‘...As to him who is unjust, we will chastise him, then shall he be returned to his Lord, and He will chastise him with an exemplary chastisement...’ (*al-Kahf*: 87). This means that Dhu Al-Qarnayn punishes the unjust people in proportion to his power; then they shall be returned to their Lord Who will punish them according to His Power.

On the other hand, Dhu Al-Qarnayn said, ‘And as for him who believes and does the good, he shall have goodly reward, and We will speak to him an easy word of Our command.’ (*al-Kahf*: 88)

This should be the constitution of the ruler who was given power over the people; the constitution of reward and punishment by which the affairs of countries and mankind are put in order. When he sees a shortcoming, he punishes the one responsible for it, no matter what his rank may be. This ruler is not to be afraid of the wrongdoer, nor should he dissimulate before him.

Furthermore, he should fear none but Allah *the Almighty*. By contrast, when he sees one who is virtuous and diligent, he repays and rewards him.

We see in our society that this basic rule has become inoperative among workers, for everything has become confused; affairs have been overturned; and other criteria for reward and punishment, for which Allah *the Almighty* has not sent down any authorisation, have been set, that is, the criterion has been turned upside down, so that the indolent boast and the assiduous and virtuous are disappointed.

Regarding the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn, Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'Until when he reached the land of the rising of the sun, he found it rising on a people to whom We had given no shelter from it.' (*al-Kahf*: 90)

This is the totality of that of which Allah *the Almighty* informed us about Dhu Al-Qarnayn. It appears that he, in his wandering across the globe, arrived at a land over which the sun remained rising for three or six months without setting. Therefore, he found them to be without any covering, that is, any shade, which would veil them from the sun. Allah *the Almighty* then says, '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)

Despite that, he strove to make them understand and to communicate with them; he did so out of his desire for their welfare and for that which would be advantageous for them. This is the quality of the believing ruler when he is given power over the earth, when the means for obtaining leadership are given to him and when he is entrusted with the human beings. If he had not been desirous for their welfare, he would have excused himself on grounds that he did not understand them and they also did not understand him.

Then, when they arrived at a common language, which may have been sign language by which we communicate with those who are unable to speak, for example, they said, 'O Dhu Al-Qarnayn! Surely, Gog and Magog make mischief in the land. Shall we then pay you a tribute on condition that you should raise a barrier between us and them?' (*al-Kahf*: 94).

Afterwards, Dhu Al-Qarnayn commanded them to bring pieces of iron, and he set a fire ablaze upon them until they became red. Then, he said,

'...Bring me molten brass which I may pour over it.' (*al-Kahf*: 96) In this manner, he fashioned for them a barrier which protected them from Gog and Magog. But his benefit to them was not limited to this affair in itself; rather, he benefitted them in a way which bestowed upon them goodness and power in order that they would not be subjected to the like of this situation. This act is in accordance with the wisdom of the saying: 'Do not give me a fish, but teach me how to fish'. That is to say, he made them take part in the work so that they would perceive the importance of the barrier and be keen on observing and protecting it. Then, if they ever found themselves in a similar situation again, they would not need to wait for someone to come and fashion a barrier for them, but rather, they would fashion it by themselves.

This example, which the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn presents, is applicable to all times and places, and for every ruler whom Allah *the Almighty* gives power over the earth and makes him hold sway to worldly affairs. In a Hadith about the best act, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Help a worker, or work for one who is unskilful.'⁽¹⁾

Opinions differ about the identities of Gog and Magog; some say they are the Tartars. Others say they are the Mongols. Still others say they are the Hittites, the Sirdiyal, or the tribes of the Huns.

However, if there had been a benefit in their being specified, the Quran would have done so. Rather, the important point to take from their story is that they were a people who corrupted in the land and refused to leave what is good and healthy in its state of goodness. Then, when one who has been given power over the earth confronts them, it is his duty to bar them from causing corruption. It is our duty not to corrupt, as these people have done, that which is good. Indeed, we should not only leave what is good and healthy to its goodness, but we should also increase its goodness.

(1) *Abu Dharr Allah be pleased with him narrated, 'I said, "Messenger of Allah, which of the deeds is the best?" He replied, "Belief in Allah and to strive in His cause." I again asked, "Who is the slave whose emancipation is the best?" He replied, "One who is valuable for his master and whose price is high." I said, "If I can not afford to do it?" He replied, "Help an artisan or make anything for the unskilled (labourer)." See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2518; and Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 84.*

There are a number of lessons which we can deduct from Dhu Al-Qarnayn's building of the barrier; thus, it is incumbent upon those in power and those who are entrusted with the welfare of mankind to pay attention to. Among these lessons is that he did not limit himself to their request to build a barrier which would prevent the harm of their enemies; rather, he strove and advanced in that matter in order to accomplish what was better for them. A massive, continuous barrier of a single piece is easier to be destroyed or penetrated, and that is why he said, '...therefore you only help me with workers, I will make a fortified barrier between you and them.' (*al-Kahf*: 95)

They requested a barrier but he said, 'a fortified barrier'. Thus, he advanced the idea for them, and wanted to make for them a barrier in a special form which would absorb the blows, without affecting its structure. This is because he made between the two sides a coil-like rampart which gave the barrier a sort of elasticity. This clearly tells us how the true believer must act when he bears the responsibility of the people.

When they offered money to him in compensation for his work, he refused it and said, '...That in which my Lord has established me is better, therefore you only help me with workers...' (*al-Kahf*: 95). It is as if he said to them, 'Out of Allah's bounties, I have much money, but just help me with whatever strength you possess'. Thus, the prescribed charity for having strength and power is to hold back corruption from other people.

Back to the verse in question; Allah's saying, 'And when the peoples of Gog and Magog are let loose...' (*al-Anbiya*': 96) is pertinent to His saying, 'They have torn their unity apart...' (*al-Anbiya*': 93), for when the people of goodness tear asunder and separate, the people of corruption are encouraged to assail them. The least of what they say concerning them is that if they had been upon goodness, they would have benefitted themselves. In this way, the people of falsity incite other people not to listen to the reformers, whereby they weaken the strength of the people of truth, and turn people away from them.

Allah's saying, 'And when the peoples of Gog and Magog are let loose...' (*al-Anbiya*': 96) means that the sources of corruption and tribulation came into the world. These sources of corruption and tribulation do not gain ground and do not find any opportunity or temporal power except when the people of

truth become heedless and disunited and therefore fail to repel them and to bar their way by force.

Gog and Magog are the people of corruption in every time and place, such as Genghis Khan who destroyed the first Islamic province in Khwarizm, which was ruled by King Qutb Arslan. Then, from the third generation of his descendants came Hulagu who entered Baghdad, the capital of the Islamic caliphate at that time, destroyed it, killed its people until blood flowed in the streets, and threw Islamic books into the river until they formed an arched bridge by which one could cross over. These are the people referred to as the Tartars.

Thus, the Quran relates to us a story from the ancient history of Gog and Magog, a story which happened in the days of Dhu Al-Qarnayn; then we, Muslims, ourselves had experienced the brutality of the Tartars during the Islamic era. Allah *the Almighty* willed the Muslims to benefit from the attacks of these barbarians, thus He caused the Muslim states to unite and repel the Tartars' attacks on the land of Egypt under the leadership of Qutuz and Zahir Baybars, both of whom were examples of those given power over the earth, although they were both Mamelukes.

These attacks of those tartars who corrupted the earth were barbaric and savage. Nowadays, the descendants of Gog and Magog⁽¹⁾ have gathered together in the modern period to launch their so-called 'civilised' attacks against the Muslim World. These include the crusaders who were defeated by the union of the Muslims under the leadership of Saladin *may Allah rest his soul*.

Thus, in the course of history we, Muslims, are victorious when we are one *ummah*; and we are defeated when we become separated and split up into nations and groups. These truths prove the veracity of the Quranic teachings concerning unity and non-dispersion, which we have emphasised here.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and swarm swiftly from every highland.' (*al-Anbiya*': 96) The 'highland' here refers to a raised place on a mountain

(1) This is a simile made by late Sheikh Sha'rawi *may Allah have mercy upon him*; he wanted to make simile between the wrongdoers including the crusaders and the people of Gog and Magog.

north of China from which these corrupt people come. As for Allah's saying, '...and swarm swiftly...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 96), it means to 'rush'.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَأَقْتَرَبَ الْوَعْدُ الْحَقُّ فَإِذَا هِيَ شَاخِصَةٌ أَبْصَرُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا
يَتَوَلَّوْنَ فَمَا هُمْ بِغَافِلِينَ ﴿٩٧﴾

When the True Promise draws near, the disbelievers' eyes will stare in terror, and they will say, 'Woe to us! We were not aware of this at all. We were wrong' [97]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 97)

Thus, the people of corruption will come rushing from every corner and direction, but their corruption will not last long, for the Day of Judgment has drawn near. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'The hour drew nigh and the moon did rend asunder.' (*al-Qamar*: 1); Allah *the Almighty* also says, 'Allah's commandment has come; therefore do not desire to hasten it...' (*an-Nahl*: 1).

This is an awakening for the heedless and a warning for the oppressors from among the people of corruption, and an appeasement and a hope for the wronged and oppressed people. They should rest at peace, for the time of recompense draws near.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'The true promise shall draw near...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 97). A 'true promise' means that which will be fulfilled by the one who makes it, for you might make a promise which you are incapable of fulfilling. In this case, it is a promise, but a false one. In fact, promises differ according to the virtue of the one who makes them and his capabilities and power to fulfil that which he promised.

But, no matter what capabilities you may have, and no matter what means of effectuation you may possess, can you guarantee that the conditions and the circumstances will put you in a position to fulfil a given promise. No one possesses power over all this except for Allah *the Almighty*. This is because when Allah *the Almighty* makes a promise that which He has promised with is carried out. The true promise, then, is the promise of Allah *the Almighty*.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'The True Promise shall draw near...' (*al-Anbiya*: 97), you should be careful not to weigh this worldly life by its elemental life span; rather, you should weigh it by your life span within it. This is the real weight of the worldly life with regard to you, for you have nothing to do with the worldly life of others. So, if you do not know when you will be separated from the worldly life, then there is no doubt that the end of your life is near, and that the true promise has drawn near with regard to you.

Likewise, the period of your stay in your grave until the coming of the Hour will pass by you as but a single hour of a day, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying, '...as though they had not stayed but an hour of the day...' (*Yunus*: 45).

If each one of us perceived Allah's concealment of his time of death, he would know that this concealment indicates the greatest clarity, for when Allah *the Almighty* conceals it, we expect it in every moment and in every breath. That is why it is said, 'When one dies, his Day of Resurrection comes'.⁽¹⁾ This is because the resurrection means the reckoning and requital for one's deeds, and when one dies his deeds come to an end and his scroll is rolled up.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...then, lo! The disbelievers' eyes will stare in terror...' (*al-Anbiya*: 97). Allah's promise here refers to the resurrection, which will come upon us suddenly and take us by surprise. That is why we say that the Arabic particle translated as 'then, lo!' signifies suddenness or unexpectedness, as if you said, 'I went out, but then, lo! There was a lion before the door', that is, you were taken by surprise by it. In the same manner, the hour in which the Hour comes will take everyone by surprise; no one will know what to do.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...then, lo! The disbelievers' eyes will stare in terror...' (*al-Anbiya*: 97). One 'stares in horror' when he sees

(1) In his book, *Al-'Ajluni* narrates this Hadith on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. In its full version, it reads: 'Increase the remembrance of death, for if you remember it in the midst of wealth, it will trouble you, and if you remember it in the midst of poverty it will enrich you. Death is the Resurrection.' See *Al-'Ajluni, Kashf Al-Khafa*, Hadith no. 2618.

something which he did not anticipate or take into consideration. One stares in astonishment, with the upper eyelid, which usually opens and closes over the eye, be immobile and unable even to blink. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...He only gives them respite until a Day when their eyes will stare in terror...' (*Ibrahim*: 42).

If you want to see eyes staring in horror, just watch someone taken by surprise by something which he did not have in mind, for you will see him—without his being aware of it and by his natural instinct—staring fixedly, with unmoving eyelids.

Then, the disbelievers will say, 'Woe to us! We were not aware of this at all.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 97) This is because the situation is not confined to staring in horror, but other means of perception are also roused, thus the tongue says, 'Woe to us!', which is an outcry of distress. That is, their time has come and therefore they have no other option but to say, 'O punishment, this is your time, so present yourself'.

Distress is the swift destruction for which they are calling. But, does the human being seek destruction and call for it against himself? We say, 'Yes', this is when he does something and sees its evil consequences, and the bitter truth faces him, he inclines towards punishing himself. Have you not heard the likes of those who say, 'I deserve it', 'I merit the beating' and so on? This is the blaming of the soul and its rebuke for that which came forth from it, for it is the soul which caused itself to fall into this plight.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'the friends shall on that day be enemies one to another, except those who guard (against evil).' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67) Why, then, does he not blame his soul and seek the punishment for it when it is the one which brought about his fall into this peril? In that situation, the measures to which they were accustomed to in this world are overturned, and their friends involved with them in doing evil and disobedience are now their enemies.

Thus, the disbelievers will say, 'Woe to us! We were not aware of this at all.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 97) This situation never crossed their minds, and thus they never accounted for it. 'Unawareness' is to avert from your mind that which should be in your mind at all times. But, how could this heedlessness happen,

given that Allah *the Almighty* reminds us about this situation at every moment of night and day? Do you not see that Allah *the Almighty* named the Quran a reminder in order to drive this heedlessness away from us? Whenever you become heedless, the Quran reminds you, raises your emotions, and stirs up your sentiments.

The matter, then, is not one of heedlessness, and that is why we see that they correct their own speech, saying, 'We were wrong.' (*al-Anbiya*: 97) This is because they remembered that Allah *the Almighty* frequently roused their sentiments and propelled their emotions in the direction of faith, but they did not respond. Therefore, they will acknowledge their wrongdoing and will not be capable of denying it in the like of this situation, for lying would be of no use. Perhaps they seek a kind of mercy by means of being truthful, thinking that the truth will benefit them, but this is impossible.

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* was relating this encounter when the resurrection with its terrors takes them by surprise, and when their eyes stare in horror; it is at that point that some of them say, 'Woe to us! We were not aware of this at all.' (*al-Anbiya*: 97) Then, their companions reply to them, 'What is this unawareness? Allah reminded us about the resurrection and about this situation in every moment, but "We were wrong." (*al-Anbiya*: 97) By so doing, their companions negated the first statement and affirmed that all of them were wrongdoers. Thus, they acknowledged their wrongdoing and confront one another, but only after it is too late.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِنَّكُمْ وَمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ حَصَبُ
 جَهَنَّمَ أَنْتُمْ لَهَا وَرَدُونَ

**You [disbelievers] and what you worship instead
 of God will be fuel for Hell: that is where you
 will go [98] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 98)**

The idols, the graven images, the sun, the moon and the stars which they took as gods apart from Allah *the Almighty* will precede them to hell, in order that Allah *the Almighty* cut off from them any hope of salvation. This is

because when they see the punishment, they will perhaps remember these idols and think about seeking refuge with them, thus appealing to them for help, hoping that these false gods might deliver them from this dire strait. They said previously about these gods: '...These are our intercessors with Allah...' (*Yunus*: 18); they also said, '...We do not serve them save that they may make us nearer to Allah...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 3).

Therefore, in order to cut off all hopes and expectations, Allah *the Almighty* gathers them all together in Hell, where both the disgrace of the object of worship and the failure of the worshipper become apparent, as the worshipper comes to the fire and finds that his object of worship has already arrived there before him. However, will all the objects of worship be fuel to the Hell without any exception? After all, the disbelievers worshipped idols, and among them were those who worshipped 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* those who worshipped Ezra, and those who worshipped the angels. So, will they also be gathered together with their worshippers in the fire?

If we were to hold this view, then their entrance into the fire would be like the one into which Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* entered, for Allah *the Almighty* joined for him fire and safety at the same time. Their presence there would be solely for the purpose of having their worshippers see them in the fire and know that they are, therefore, unable to benefit them in any way.⁽¹⁾

In Allah's saying, '...fuel for Hell...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 98), 'fuel' means everything by which fire burns, be it wood, straw, petrol or electricity. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...a fire whose fuel is men and stones...' (*at-Tahrim*: 6).

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti relates that Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him said, 'When the following verse "You [disbelievers] and what you worship instead of Allah will be fuel for Hell: that is where you will go." (*al-Anbiya'*: 98), was revealed, Ibn Ziba'ri said, "Do you not maintain, O Muhammad, that 'Isa (Jesus) was a righteous servant, that Ezra was a righteous servant and that the angels are righteous?" He said: "Yes, absolutely." He said: "But these Christians worship 'Isa (Jesus), these Jews worship Ezra, and these people of the tribe of Malih worship the angels." The people of Mecca immediately became noisy, raising a cry, and started to make merry. But then the following verse was revealed: "But those for whom We have decreed Paradise will be kept far from Hell" (*al-Anbiya'*: 101), that is, Ezra, 'Isa (Jesus) and the angels.' This was narrated by Abu Dawud in his *Nasikh*, as well as by Ibn Al-Mundhir, Ibn Mardawayh and At-Tabarani. See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Dur Al-Manthur*, 5/679.

Therefore, the fire itself longs for the disbelievers, waits expectantly for them, and is eager to receive them, a fact which is clear in Allah's saying, 'On the Day that We will say to Hell, "Are you filled up?" And it will say, "Are there any more" (*Qaf*: 30)?

In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'When they shall be cast therein, they shall hear a loud moaning of it as it heaves, Almost bursting for fury...' (*al-Mulk*: 7-8).

As for Allah's saying, '...that is where you will go.' (*al-Anbiya*': 98), the verb 'go' means entering immediately, but it has a different meaning in other verses like Allah's saying, 'And there is not one of you but shall come to it...' (*Maryam*: 71).

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

لَوْ كَانَتْ هَتُوكَآءِ ءَالِهَةً مَا وَرَدُّوهُآ وَكُلُّ فِىهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

**If these [idols] had been real gods they would not
have gone there – you will all stay there [99]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*': 99)**

When the disbelievers enter the hell and immediately see their gods in front of them, their hope in their gods' intercession will be cut off, as Allah *the Almighty* says in the case of Pharaoh: 'He shall lead his people on the Resurrection Day, and bring them down to the Fire...' (*Hud*: 98). Their leader will go ahead of them and precede them to the fire, for if Pharaoh were not in front of them, the people would think that he would deliver them from this dire strait. If these idols were indeed gods as they claim, they would not enter the fire.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...you will all stay there.' (*al-Anbiya*': 99) It is well known of fire that it eats that which is inside it and then dies down. This fire, however, has no end, for whenever their skins become well cooked, Allah *the Almighty* replaces them with new skins, and in this manner the fire remains blazing and never becomes extinguished. The word: '...all...' (*al-Anbiya*': 99) includes both the worshipper and the object of worship.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

لَهُمْ فِيهَا زَفِيرٌ وَهُمْ فِيهَا لَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

There the disbelievers will be groaning piteously, but the [idols] will hear nothing [100] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 100)

It is well known that exhalation is the exteriorising movement of the respiratory process, for in inhalation the human being takes in oxygen, and in exhalation he sends forth carbon dioxide. We notice that the expression here is limited to exhalation without inhalation because exhalation is the hot, outer air, and in the fire there is not any air for inhalation. Thus, it is as though they are without any inhalation—may Allah protect us from punishment.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘...but the [idols] will hear nothing.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 100) This is among the verses to which the Orientalists paid attention because there are other verses confirming the opposite, that is, those in the fire will be able to hear and to speak, as in Allah’s saying, ‘And the dwellers of the garden will call out to the inmates of the fire: “Surely we have found what our Lord promised us to be true; have you too found what your Lord promised to be true?” They will say, “Yes.” Then a crier will cry out among them that the curse of Allah is on the unjust.’ (*al-A’raf*: 44)

Yes, they will hear, but they will not hear anything which will gladden their hearts. Rather, they will hear blame and rebuke, a fact which is clear in Allah’s saying, ‘And the inmates of the fire shall call out to the dwellers of the garden, saying, “Pour on us some water, or of that which Allah has given you.” They shall say, “Surely Allah has prohibited them both to the unbelievers.”’ (*al-A’raf*: 50)

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ سَبَقَتْ لَهُمْ مِنَّا الْحُسْنَىٰ أُولَٰئِكَ عَنْهَا مُبْعَدُونَ ﴿١٠١﴾

But those for whom We have decreed paradise will be kept far from Hell [101] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 101)

After Allah *the Almighty* has mentioned the recompense of the disbelievers in the fire, He mentions the opposite, for a meaning is clarified through contrast with an opposite. For example, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Most surely the righteous are in bliss, and most surely the wicked are in burning fire.’

(*al-Infitar*: 13–14) Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Therefore they shall laugh little and weep much...’ (*at-Tawba*: 82). In this way, the comparison remains vivid in one’s mind.

Allah’s saying, ‘But those for whom We have decreed paradise...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 101) means that Allah *the Almighty* decreed ultimate bliss for the people of obedience and the people of paradise. Allah *the Almighty* took a portion of His creation and said, ‘These ones are for paradise, and I do not care; and these ones are for the fire, and I do not care.’⁽¹⁾ In this vein, you should not say, ‘What is the wrong which these people have committed?’ because Allah *the Almighty* decrees matters in accordance with His prior, Eternal Knowledge about the obedience of some people and the disobedience of others.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘...Those⁽²⁾...will be kept far from Hell’ (*al-Anbiya*: 101), it means that they will be far away from the fire.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

لَا يَسْمَعُونَ حَسِيسَهَا وَهُمْ فِي مَا أُشْتَهَتْ أَنْفُسُهُمْ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾

**They will not hear a murmur from it – and endlessly
they will enjoy everything their souls desire[102]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 102)**

The ‘murmur’ of the fire means its hissing and the sounds which issue from it when it first flares up. In Allah’s saying, ‘...and endlessly they will enjoy everything their soul’s desire’ (*al-Anbiya*: 102), Allah *the Almighty* does

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- (1) Imam Ahmad narrates on the authority of Abu Ad-Darda` that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, ‘Allah created Adam at the time of his creation, struck his right shoulder, then extracted white offspring as if they were atoms. Then He struck his left shoulder and extracted black offspring as if they were embers. He said to those in his right [shoulder], “To Paradise, and I do not care”, and He said to those in his left shoulder, “To the fire, and I do not care”. See Ahmad, Musnad, 6/441.
- (2) In his Tafsir, Ibn Kathir relates that Ibn `Abbas said, ‘These’ here means the friends of Allah, who will pass by the Fire, along the path, faster than a flash of lightning, while the disbelievers remain kneeling within it.’ Others—such as Hajjaj ibn Mohammed Al-A`war on the authority of Ibn Jurayj and `Uthman ibn `Ata` on the authority of `Ata` on the authority of Ibn `Abbas—said, ‘But it was revealed that, among the objects of worship, there is an exception, for Ezra and the Messiah will be removed from them. See Ibn Kathir, Tafsir Al-Quran Al- `Azhim, 3/198.

not say, for example, 'They will abide with all that their souls have ever desired', but rather: '...and endlessly they will enjoy everything their souls desire' (*al-Anbiya'*: 102), as though they are immersed in the blessing of that which their souls desired, and as though their souls' desires were a covering which enclosed and contained them. This fills the people of goodness and righteousness with longing for paradise and its blessing, in order that they strive for it and prepare themselves for this blessing.

Previously, we said that the human being toils at the start of his life and learns a craft, or takes an academic degree in order to benefit from it and find rest in his future. His rest is commensurate with his labour and exertion of efforts, for every fruit necessarily requires cultivation and exertion, and Allah *the Almighty* does not let the reward of anyone who does a good deed, go to waste.

Let us offer an example to illustrate this point; we used to see a farmer with worn-out clothes and a ragged appearance spending his day in his field, nothing occupying him except his work there. Then, you see another well-dressed, clean person sitting happily in the coffee shop, and perhaps even making fun of his companion who distresses himself with work. Ultimately, when the time for harvest comes, the worker finds the fruit of his labour, while the idler finds only grief and remorse.

So, your Lord has given you energy and body organs, wanting you to be active; for activity incurs blessings. If the farmer kept overturning his land and stirring up its soil without even sowing it, Allah *the Almighty* would still compensate him and his labour would bear fruit, even if by allowing him to find something valuable in the soil, such as a gold ring.

As a matter of fact, the human being obtains luxury and relaxation in accordance with his labour at the beginning of his life. Therefore, the one who labours for ten years, for example, will get rest throughout his life; if he labours for twenty years, he as well as his children, after his death, will get rest; and if he labours for thirty years, his descendants will also rest, and so forth.

The educated person also acquires luxury in accordance with his academic degree. So, the one who acquired a middle-level degree, a higher degree or a doctorate obtains position and standing in his society according to these degrees.

Despite that, whatever worldly comforts and luxuries the human being prepares for himself, this comfort will be viewed in accordance with his capabilities and possibilities. When we travelled to San Francisco, we saw one of the grand hotels and people said to us, 'King Faisal *Allah be merciful to him* used to stay herein', and so we wanted to wander about and look around inside it. Truly we were captivated by the manifestations of luxury and splendour and the magnificence of the architecture within it. There were people from the high class with me, and I said to them, 'This is what the servant prepares for the servant, so can you imagine what the servant's Lord prepares for him'?

So, whenever you see people of comfort and luxury in this world, you should not envy them because their comfort should remind you about and fill you with longing for the eternal comfort of the Hereafter.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

لَا يَخْزُهُمُ الْفَزَعُ الْأَكْبَرُ وَتَلَقَّيْنَهُمُ الْمَلَائِكَةُ
هَذَا يَوْمُكُمْ الَّذِي كُنْتُمْ تُوعَدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

**They will have no fear of the great Terror: the angels⁽¹⁾
will receive them with the words, 'This is the Day you
were promised!' [103] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 103)**

The people of the paradise will enjoy endless bliss and unceasing bestowals, which will never pass away from them due to deficiency or death. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says regarding them, 'They will have no fear of the great Terror...' (*al-Anbiya*: 103).

How can the people of paradise undergo any terror while they are in this eternal blessing?! Another possible interpretation for this verse in question is that before entering paradise, the calamities and the terror of the Day of Resurrection will cause them no grief.

(1) In his *Tafsir*, As-Suyuti mentions that Ibn Abu Hatim narrated that Mujahid said, 'Those angels who were connected with them in this world will receive them on the Day of Resurrection and say, "We are your protectors in the life of this world and in the Hereafter. We will not separate ourselves from you until you have entered Paradise."' See As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/683.

As for Allah's saying, '...the angels will receive them with the words, "This is the Day you were promised"' (*al-Anbiya'*: 103), it means that Allah *the Almighty* fulfilled His promise to them and bestowed upon them the bliss of the Hereafter.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says,

يَوْمَ نَطْوِي السَّمَاءَ كَطَيِّ السِّجِلِّ لِلْكُتُبِ كَمَا بَدَأْنَا
أَوَّلَ خَلْقٍ نُعِيدُهُ وَعَدًا عَلَيْنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا فَاعِلِينَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

**On that Day, We shall roll up the skies as a writer rolls up
[his] scrolls. We shall reproduce creation just as we
produced it the first time: this is Our binding promise.
We shall certainly do all these things [104]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 104)**

Thus, the punishment of the disbelievers and the bliss of the believers will be on that Day of Resurrection when Allah *the Almighty* shall roll up the skies as a writer rolls up his scrolls. The 'Day' here refers to the time when the disbelievers are severely punished and when the believers dwell eternally in the paradise.

As for the word 'scrolls', it refers to the sheets of paper on which we write down something in order to record it.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and the heavens rolled up in His Right Hand...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 67). This verse shows that Allah *the Almighty* rolls the heavens up by His Power because our right hand is the active one by which we do things. But we should not understand the act of 'rolling' here to be like what we experience in our life; rather, we should understand it in the light of Allah's saying, '...There is nothing like Him...' (*ash-Shura*: 11).

As for Allah's saying, 'We shall reproduce creation just as We produced it the first time...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 104), it demonstrates to us that Allah *the Almighty* is speaking about the first creation, and His saying, 'We shall reproduce creation...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 104) demonstrates the existence of a second creation.

Thus, Allah's saying in another verse: 'On the Day when the earth shall be changed into⁽¹⁾ a different earth and the heavens (as well), and they shall come forth before Allah, the One, the Supreme' (*Ibrahim*: 48) makes it clear that the first creation depends on causes and effects. This is because Allah *the Almighty* gave the human being in this worldly life the means of subsistence, such as the sun, the moon, the rain, the soil, the water and so forth. He has nothing to do with these affairs, and his duty is confined to just employing the intellectual faculties to develop these affairs and to attain luxury through them.

In the second creation, on the other hand, you receive the bliss from Allah *the Almighty* without seeking its worldly causes. This is because the Hereafter is not based on causes; rather, it is based on the Causer *Glorified is He*. When you see the bounties which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard and no human heart has ever perceived in the paradise, you will know for certain that what your Lord has prepared for you is greater than your deeds.

However much the means of luxury in this worldly life are progressively developed, and whatever means of relaxation and high-class service the people have, the utmost limit of what they possess is that you press a button and the door opens for you, or a meal or a cup of coffee is brought to you. But I challenge the whole world to use all the advancement and technology it possesses to present me with whatever food or drink occurs to my mind, so that I see it in front of me without even speaking, for no one has the power to do so except for Allah *the Almighty*.

Regarding Allah's saying, 'We shall reproduce creation just as We produced it the first time...' (*al-Anbiya*: 104), the resurrection does not merely signify bringing the creation back to their original state. Rather, Allah *the Almighty* brings it back in a state superior and preferable to its previously

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi says, 'It is narrated from a Hadith on the authority of Abu Hurayra, and traceable in an ascending order of transmitters to the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him that he said, "The earth shall be changed, and He will spread it out and extend it as a skin, on which you will see neither crookedness nor unevenness. Then Allah the Almighty will drive away the creation with a cry, and suddenly everyone will be in the second creation in the like of their position in the first creation: those who were in its interior will be in its interior and those who were on its surface will be on its surface."' This was mentioned by Al-Ghaznawi. See *Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 5/3721.

state, inasmuch as the blessing is bestowed upon you once it crosses your mind. In paradise, the believer will reach for a kind of fruit and say, 'I ate the like of this before.'⁽¹⁾ Then, it will be said to him, 'It is not thus; rather, this one is better than what you ate and more pleasant than what you tasted.' This is because if you take, for example, an apple of this worldly life, you will find it subject to the peculiar quality of the soil, the water, the surrounding environment, the means of extermination such as insecticides which agriculture cannot do without these days and so forth. The apple of the Hereafter, on the other hand, is something completely different; it is a Lordly work and a divine preparation.

It is as if Allah *the Almighty* turns His servants' attention towards the fact that His care for them is better than their care for their own selves because Allah *the Almighty* is more protective towards us than we are towards ourselves. In this way, we come to know the distinction between something in our hands and something with Allah *the Almighty*.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...this is Our Binding Promise. We shall certainly do all these things.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 104) This means that nothing is exempted from that which Allah *the Almighty* promised, and that no one can contradict Allah *Glorified is He*.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلَقَدْ كَتَبْنَا فِي الزَّبُورِ مِنْ بَعْدِ الذِّكْرِ أَنَّ
الْأَرْضَ يَرِثُهَا عِبَادِيَ الصَّالِحُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

**We wrote in the Psalms, as We did in [earlier] Scripture:
'My righteous servants will inherit the earth' [105]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 105)**

'To write' here means to record. As Allah's Knowledge is eternal, not requiring any recording, this recording is for our sake, in order that we become reassured. This is similar to the case when you take a loan from your

(1) In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* 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).

companion and you record it; you do so in order to be reassured, despite the fact that both of you trust each other.

In Allah's saying, 'We wrote in *Az-Zabur*...' (*al-Anbiya*: 105), '*Az-Zabur*' refers to the Psalms which was revealed to Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him*; it may also refer to something which is written down. So, in its generality, this word applies to every Book revealed by Allah *the Almighty*. As for His saying, '...after the Reminder...' (*al-Anbiya*: 105), the word 'Reminder' applies sometimes to the Quran and others to the previously revealed Books. As long as *Az-Zabur* applies to every Book revealed by Allah the Reminder necessarily possesses a more comprehensive meaning. Therefore, it refers to the Preserved Tablet because it is the Reminder which includes everything. So, the meaning of Allah's saying, 'We wrote in *Az-Zabur*...' (*al-Anbiya*: 105), is that Allah *the Almighty* wrote in the Books which was revealed to the prophets what Allah *the Almighty* had already written in the Preserved Tablet, or what He wrote in the Psalms; it does not mean that Allah *the Almighty* gave to Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* more than what He gave to the other prophets and messengers. Allah's saying, '...after the Reminder...' (*al-Anbiya*: 105) indicates that one of the two Books was earlier than the other, yet we say, 'The Quran is the eternal Speech of Allah *the Almighty* and there is nothing in the Divine Books more ancient than it. So, that which is intended by Allah's saying, '...after the Reminder...' (*al-Anbiya*: 105) is not the temporal order but rather, the order of mentioning the Quran after the *Az-Zabur* in this sequence mentioned in the verse.

What, then, is it which Allah *the Almighty* wrote for Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* in the Psalms? Allah *the Almighty* laid down for him: 'My righteous servants will inherit the earth.' (*al-Anbiya*: 105).

As for the word 'Earth', it, if applied generally, refers to the terrestrial globe as a whole. It could also be qualified by a specific description, as in Allah's saying, '...the holy land...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 21), and in His saying, '...I will not depart from this land...' (*Yusuf*: 80), that is, the land in which he dwelled. On the other hand, Allah's saying '...the earth...' (*al-Anbiya*: 105) refers to the earth in general. As for His saying, '...will inherit...' (*al-Anbiya*: 105), it means that the earth will truly and officially belong to Allah's righteous servants.

Which Earth, then, is this? Is it the earth on which we are living right now, or is it another changed Earth?

Since we are talking about the beginning of creation and its resurrection, the intended meaning is the changed earth to come in the Hereafter,⁽¹⁾ which Allah's righteous servants shall inherit. Inheritance here is similar to Allah's saying, '...that this is the garden of which you are made heirs for what you did.' (*al-A'raf*: 43)

Here, we may ask, 'From whom did they inherit this earth?'

When Allah *the Almighty* created the creation, He has prepared paradise to be large enough for all of humanity if they all believed, and He prepared the fire to be large enough for all of the humanity if they all disbelieved. So, there is no question of over crowdedness in any case, for when the people of paradise enter the paradise and the people of the fire enter the fire, the places originally established in paradise for the people of the fire will become empty, thus, Allah *the Almighty* will grant them to the people of paradise and divide them up among them so that these places will enlarge the portion of the people of the paradise.

Another possible interpretation is that the 'earth' here means the earth of this worldly life,⁽²⁾ whereby the meaning would be that Allah *the Almighty* gives to the right person who reforms the earth power over it, even if he is a disbeliever. This is because Allah *the Almighty* does not deprive the human being of the fruits of his labour even if he is a disbeliever. In this regard, 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)

(1) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi says, 'The best interpretation among those given here is that the intended meaning is the land of paradise, as Sa'id ibn Jubayr said because the land of this world is inherited by both the righteous and the non-righteous. This is the opinion of Ibn 'Abbas, Mujahid and others.' See Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4530.*

(2) *In his Tafsir, Al-Qurtubi says, 'According to Ibn 'Abbas, it is the land of the disbelieving communities. The ummah of Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him will inherit them by means of conquest.' See Al-Qurtubi, Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran, 6/4530.*

But, concerning the disbelievers' reformation of the earth and the empowerment of their civilisations, how quickly will calamities befall them and their civilisations turn against them! Look, we already see the calamities of the advanced, developed nations and the difficult social diseases from which they suffer. This is because the reformation of the earth is not confined to the economy, food, drink, and luxury. Sweden, for example, is one of the foremost countries in the world in terms of income, but despite this, it also has the highest suicide rate and the highest degree of perversion, which constitutes the hard, wretched way of life about which the Noble Quran says: 'And whoever turns away from My reminder, his shall be a straitened life, and We will raise him on the day of resurrection, blind.' (*Ta Ha*: 124) Wretchedness does not only stem from poverty and need; no, indeed, it has many other forms. Thus, you should not measure the level of civilisation only on material grounds. Rather, you should consider in your consideration all other aspects, for the one who perfects the material, worldly aspects enjoys them only in this worldly life. By contrast, having righteousness, good character, and values is the means to attain the luxury of this worldly life as well as the blessing of the Hereafter.

Thus, Allah's saying, 'My righteous servants will inherit the earth' (*al-Anbiya*: 105) comprises the material prosperity of this worldly life and the spiritual prosperity of the Hereafter. So, if you seize prosperity under any circumstances without having faith, you will find its fruit for some time, and then it will turn against you, for where are the people of the ancient civilisations like 'Ad, Thamud, and the Pharaohs?

Regardless of whatever success these civilisations attained, it was not possible for any of them to maintain itself in perpetuity, for each of them perished and disappeared.

In this connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, '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) These advanced civilisations were buried beneath the layers of the earth so that we do not know even where their places are. But if you

take hold of spiritual prosperity prescribed by Allah *the Almighty* you will gain both the blessings of this worldly life and the Hereafter. This is because the activity of life requires a way and a method in order for it to proceed harmoniously; this main way is clear in the tow orders: 'Do this and 'Do not do that'. The human beings cannot establish this way of guidance. Therefore, it is established by the Lord of mankind who fully knows what puts them in order, and who prescribes for them what makes them happy.

Allah's way of guidance alone is what commands and prohibits us, and informs us of what is allowed and what is forbidden. It is incumbent upon us to carry it out, and the rulers and the people in charge, who are holding firm to the balance of justice, must keep an eye on its implementation, and put in charge those who are fit for this task in order to undertake it in the perfect way possible, or else the society will become corrupt. The ruler must oversee people, encourage the worker and punish the sluggish and place the appropriate person in his appropriate place.

The components of a prosperous society include scholars who delimit right from wrong, and rulers who implement this and manage the affairs accordingly. The Arabic word for 'ruler' is taken from the word for a bridle bit, that is, the bridle which allows one to control a horse and direct it.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is narrated to have said, 'One who puts someone in charge over the community, while there is someone still better than him among the people will not smell the scent of paradise.'⁽¹⁾

What is the reason for this? This is because such conduct spreads corruption in the earth, and hinders lofty resolutions and strong ambitions—that is, when you see one who is less qualified than you put in charge of affairs, while you are cast aside. But when you consider the balance of justice, each one of us will strive diligently to attain his appropriate position.

(1) *Imam Ahmad narrates that Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him related that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'The one who rules over the Muslims in some respect and invests someone with authority over them out of favouritism or partiality will have Allah's curse upon him, and Allah will not yield to him purely or equitably until He has thrown him in Hell.' See Ahmad Musnad, 1/6.*

Therefore, the duty of the rulers and the people in power is to advance society. We do not say to the ruler, for example, 'Prepare food for us', or 'Make for us an appliance', for this is not his function. It is narrated that one of the emirs possessed some land which he cultivated. One of the employees whom we call 'plantation overseers' assumed responsibility for it; his duty was to oversee the land.

One day the emir went to attend to his land and examine its various conditions in the company of the plantation overseer. On their second round about the land, the plantation overseer saw a stream from which water was overflowing and flooding the field, and he went down and closed it up by himself. At that moment, the emir became angry and discharged him from his work. This was because the overseer worked with his hands, whereas his function was to oversee the plantation, and he had at his disposal workers who could undertake the like of this work. But why this way is followed in the management of works? This is because when you work with your hands, you are but one person; but when you oversee, it is possible for you to oversee thousands of workers. It is for this reason that the specialisation of works and activities came into being.

Thus, the ruler and the person in power must preserve Allah's way of guidance and must oversee people's implementation of it. The ruler must resist every instance of corruption, bar the transgression of the perpetrators, and reward the diligent worker, a point which is clear in Allah's saying in the story of Dhu Al-Qarnayn: 'He said, "As to him who is unjust, we will chastise him, then shall he be returned to his Lord, and He will chastise him with an exemplary chastisement. And as for him who believes and does good, he shall have goodly reward, and We will speak to him an easy word of Our command."' (al-Kahf: 87-88)

This is the case because Allah *the Almighty* restrains by force that which is not restrained by the Quran. Were we to leave the people of corruption and the deviants until the Day of Resurrection, society would become corrupt. There is no way to avoid using force to uphold the soundness of society and to punish the corruptors; there is no way to avoid using force to stop those who attack us and demand the alteration of our Islamic system. That is why

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier, to frighten thereby the enemy of Allah and your enemy...' (*al-Anfal*: 60). The enemy must know that you possess a deterrent which will repel him if he commits excesses against you or attempts to corrupt the uprightness of the society.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says in a Hadith⁽¹⁾ that with regard to an arrow which is shot for the sake of Allah *the Almighty* a portion of the reward will go to everyone who had a hand in its being shot, starting from the one who cut it from a tree to the one who trimmed and sharpened it and ending up with the one who set it in the bow and shot it at the enemy. This is because in that act lies the preservation of Truth and righteousness, whereby righteousness endures and no one becomes able to corrupt it.

The responsibility here is not restricted to the rulers and the people in power; rather, it is the responsibility of every individual in charge of any affair of the Muslims, as is stated in the following Hadith: 'Every one of you is a guardian and every one of you is responsible (for his wards). A ruler is a guardian and is responsible (for his subjects); a man is a guardian of his family and responsible (for them); a wife is a guardian of her husband's house and she is responsible (for it), a slave is a guardian of his master's property and is responsible (for that). Beware! All of you are guardians and are responsible (for your wards).'

⁽²⁾

It is incumbent on the worker to supervise himself even before paying attention to the employer's supervision. After all, Allah *the Almighty* watches all people. It is stated in a Qudsi Hadith: 'If you believe that I do not see you, then there is a defect in your faith, and if you believe that I see you, then why do you make Me the least significant of those who observe you?'

(1) 'Uqba ibn 'Amir narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah *the Almighty* admits three people into Paradise by means of one arrow: the maker who has a good motive in making it, the one who hands it up for shooting and the one who shoots it.' See *Ad-Darimi, Sunnan*, 2/204; see also *At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan*, Hadith no. 1637; and *Ibn Maja, Sunnan*, Hadith no. 2811.

(2) This Hadith is narrated by *Muslim, Ahmad and Al-Bukhari* on the authority of Ibn 'Umar Allah be pleased with him. See *Ahmad, Musnad*, 2/54, 111; *Al-Bukhari, Sahih*, Hadith no. 2409; *Muslim, Sahih*, Hadith no. 1829.

Anyone who reflects upon the proceedings of life will see that it is comprised of an intricate intertwining of different factors. For example, if you wanted to build a house, the architecture constitutes one activity, the building is another activity, the electricity is still another activity, the carpentry is also a different activity, and so forth. If, then, we said, 'This work is comprised of one hundred activities, for example, then you do not in fact have power except over one activity in which you are proficient; the rest of the activities is performed by others. If you are faithful in your activity, Allah *the Almighty* will inspire other people to be faithful to you, even inadvertently. Therefore, you will be faithful in one activity and perform it skilfully, and the people will be faithful in ninety-nine activities'.

You should consider that the thoughts and ideas are controlled by Allah *the Almighty* for if, out of fear of Him, you perform well your work for others, Allah *the Almighty* will oversee them in their work for you, and His Oversight will suffice you. For example, a craftsman may make something for you and desire to cheat you, but Allah *the Almighty* prevents him from carrying out his intention. Perhaps an acquaintance will sit with him and he will be ashamed to act dishonestly in front of him, or he will not find anything by which he can cheat you. In this way, Allah *the Almighty* causes the craftsman to perform his craft skilfully for you, despite this being contrary to his intention. Thus, if you want your affairs to thrive, promote the affairs of others.

Among the principles by which we promote and inherit the earth is that we look upon all people as being equal. No one is superior over another except by means of piety and righteous action, for there is none among us who is the son of Allah *the Almighty* nor is there anyone among us who can claim kinship with Allah *Glorified is He*. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...In Allah's Eyes, the most honoured of you are the ones most mindful of Him...' (*al-Hujurat*: 13).

Within Islam, there is no discrimination between classes except with regard to perfection of work, for the value of each person is that which he does well. We previously gave an example of this, and we still mention it, even though it is an example of a non-Muslim. There is a Frenchman who was a leader of the Labour Union, and he used to defend the rights of the

workers and demand for them an increase in pay from the Ministry budget. Then, when he assumed the position of the Minister and shouldered this responsibility, he desisted from that which he used to demand. So, the workers raised an uproar, and one of them, wanting to make him angry, said to him, 'Remember, Your Excellency the Minister, that you were, a long time ago, a shoe-shiner.' The man did nothing but say, 'Yes, but I used to do it well.'

Previously we mentioned that Allah *the Almighty* distributes talents and abilities amidst His creation. So, when you see yourself distinguished over someone else in something, you should not be deluded by it, but search for that by which someone else is distinguished over you. After all, we are all equal before Allah *the Almighty*; He does not favour one over another. As you are distinguished by your knowledge or your power, someone else may be distinguished by his happiness with his family, or his trustworthiness and people's confidence in him. Another one may be distinguished by his contentment with what was apportioned to him, his self-sufficiency, and contentment with little, or having a righteous son who is obedient to him and who is the delight of his eye. This matter, then, is decreed and determined because the Lord *Glorified is He* is Ever-Watching over you; no secret of yours is hidden from Him. When Allah *the Almighty* distinguishes some of us over others, it is in order to destroy the conceit and pride within us and to strip away the jealousy and rancour from our hearts. In this manner, society becomes balanced, and distinction does not become a cause of envy since the distinction over you can be for your own benefit, and will redound upon you.

Allah *the Almighty* tells us about the Day of Resurrection and about how the sun will move near to peoples' heads, affirming that people's grief and distress will become severe on that Day, except for those whom Allah *the Almighty* gives shade when there is no shade except for His shade. This is because those righteous people served as a shelter of peace in this world; therefore, Allah *the Almighty* will give them shade in the Hereafter. This is clearly indicated in the following Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in which he says, 'Seven people Allah will give them His shade on the Day when there would be no shade but the shade of His Throne (i.e. on the Day of Resurrection): And they are: a just ruler; a youth who grew up with the

worship of Allah; a person whose heart is attached to the mosques, two men who love and meet each other and depart from each other for the sake of Allah; a man whom an extremely beautiful woman seduces (for illicit relation), but he (rejects this offer and) says, "I fear Allah"; a man who gives in charity and conceals it (to such an extent) that the left hand does not know what the right has given; and a man who remembers Allah in solitude and his eyes become tearful.'⁽¹⁾

Indeed, by their upright conduct these people created a shelter of peace in the world, and thus they deserve Allah's shelter in the Hereafter. By the likes of these people, Muslim society attains equilibrium and rises to the highest point possible. This society which we want is that in which the rich are humble, the poor are noble and generous, and the youth are obedient.

The Lord of Mighty *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith: 'I love three kinds of people, and My Love for three others is even greater [thus we divide these six people into two groups]: I love the poor person who is humble, but My Love for the rich man who is humble is even greater [because even though he actually possesses the causes for pride, he remains humble]; I love the rich person who is generous, but My Love for the poor person who is generous is even greater; and I love the old person who is obedient, and My Love for the youth who is obedient is even greater.' The Qudsi Hadith continues, 'Likewise, I detest three people, and My Detestation of three others is even greater: I detest the rich person who is arrogant, and My Detestation of the poor one who is arrogant is even greater; I detest the poor one who is greedy, and My Detestation of the rich one who is greedy is even greater; and I detest the youth who is disobedient, and My Detestation of the old one who is disobedient is even greater.'

These are twelve types: six in Love and six in Detestation. That is to say, the more we adhere to this criterion, and the more our society will be advanced and progressed.

(1) *This Hadith is narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 660; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1031.*

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِنَّ فِي هَذَا لَبَلَاغًا لِّقَوْمٍ عٰكِدِيْنَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

**There truly is a message in this for the servants
of God! [106] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 106)**

A 'message' is something important which the people must know about. Therefore, when the people are preoccupied with war and await its news, it comes to them in the form of communiqués; they say, 'Communiqué number one' because it is an important matter.

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'There truly is a message in this...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 106). This means that what the Quran states is the true and the supreme message which leaves no excuse for the people, no possibility of being heedless, and no possibility for one to emend or supplement it in any way. This is because the message of the Quran is the highest degree of what it is possible for you about which to be informed.

Here arises a good question, which is, 'For whom does the Quran constitute a message'? Undoubtedly, the Quran is a message '...for the servants of Allah!' (*al-Anbiya'*: 106), those who firmly believe in the Will of Allah *the Almighty* and carry it out, be it a command or a prohibition

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً لِّلْعٰلَمِيْنَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

**It was only as a mercy that We sent you [Prophet]
to all people [107] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 107)**

As long as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Seal of the Messengers and Prophets, then his mission to mankind must have been final and complete; it must have been eligible for all times and places until the advent of the Hour. Previous messengers' messages were dedicated only to a specific period of time and to a specific group of people, yet his *peace and blessings be upon him* Message came as a grace and mercy to all the worlds. Therefore, it

must necessarily be fully able to address the incidents and occurrences of life which may face and challenge people, today and in the future.

The word *al-`alamin* (The worlds) here refers to all what Allah *the Almighty* has created, like the world of the angels, the world of jinn, the world of mankind, the world of inanimate objects, the world of animals, and the world of plants, etc. So, how can Prophet Muhammad's Message be a mercy to all of them? Scholars replied that he *peace and blessings be upon him* is a mercy to the angels, for Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* used to fear the final outcome until the following saying of Allah *the Almighty* was revealed to Messenger Muhammad: 'The processor of strength, having an honourable place with the Lord of the Dominion' (*at-Takwir*: 20); whereupon Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* rested at peace and felt safe.

Likewise, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a mercy to the inanimate objects because he commanded us to remove any harm from the path. He is also a mercy to the animals, as it is stated in a Hadith: 'Never does a Muslim plant trees or cultivate land and birds or a man or a beast eats out of them but that is a charity on his behalf.'⁽¹⁾

Moreover, there is a Hadith concerning a woman who entered the fire for detaining a cat; she neither fed it, nor allowed it to drink, nor left it to eat of the vermin of the ground.⁽²⁾

There is also a Hadith concerning a man who entered paradise because he gave water to a dog which was panting and eating the moist soil from the severity of thirst. The man descended into a well, filled his shoes with water, and gave the dog to drink. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* thanked him and forgave his sins for him because he descended into the well without any vessel to fill

(1) *This Hadith was narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him. See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 2320; Muslim, Sahih, Hadith no. 1553.*

(2) *Ibn `Umar Allah be pleased with him narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'A woman entered the (Hell) fire because of a cat which she had tied, neither giving it food nor setting it free to eat from the vermin of the earth.' Ibn Hajar says, 'The intended meaning of 'vermin of the earth' is the pests of the land and its insects, such as mice and other such things.' See Al-Bukhari, Sahih, 8/33; Ibn Hajar, Fath Al-Bari, 6/357.*

with water but strove with his own resources, employing artful means in the situation and worked hard to bring water to the dog to drink.⁽¹⁾

Thus, Islam shows mercy to animals, birds, mankind etc. As a matter of fact, the religion of Islam sets everything in life in order, leaving out nothing from the people's affairs, whether big or small, for the mere chance. It is for this reason that it is a mercy to all the Worlds. Therefore, Allah's saying, 'It was only as a mercy that We sent you [Prophet] to all the worlds' (*al-Anbiya'*: 108) clearly means that all things brought by Islam are included within the elements of mercy.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

قُلْ إِنَّمَا يُوحِي إِلَيَّ أَنَّمَا إِلَهُكُمُ إِلَهٌ وَاحِدٌ فَهَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿١٠٨﴾

Say, 'What is revealed to me is that your God is one God – will you submit to Him?'[108] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 108)

The Oneness of Allah *the Almighty* is the first mercy bestowed upon us which entails that all of us are equal. That we worship only one God, without any partners, is one of the greatest Graces of Allah *the Almighty* upon us, for worshipping Him Alone frees us from the worship of anyone else. If there were numerous gods, we would be afflicted by the confusion arising from a god who commands us to do something and another who prohibits us from doing it. For that reason, Allah *the Almighty* wants us to take pride in His Oneness and Divinity. Expressing this meaning, the Islamic poet Mohammed Iqbal says:

Within this prostration in which you dislike residing
is deliverance from one thousand other prostrations

(1) *Abu Hurayra* Allah be pleased with him narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'While a man was walking on his way he became extremely thirsty. He found a well; he went down into it to drink water. Upon leaving it, he saw a dog which was panting out of thirst. His tongue was lolling out and he was eating moist earth from extreme thirst. The man thought to himself: 'This dog is extremely thirsty as I was.' So, he descended into the well, filled up his leather sock with water, and holding it in his teeth, climbed up and quenched the thirst of the dog. Allah appreciated his action and forgave his sins.' The Companions asked, 'Shall we be rewarded for showing kindness to the animals also?' He said, 'A reward is given in connection with every living creature.' See *Al-Bukhari, Sahih, Hadith no. 6009*.

Your prostration to Allah *the Almighty* protects you from prostrating to anyone other than Him, for if you did not prostrate yourself to Him, you would have to prostrate yourself to everyone who is stronger than you are. You should, therefore, be proud of offering your acts of worship to Allah *the Almighty* Alone because this protects you from worshipping human beings whom might call you 'a servant' of one of them. It goes without saying that you are truly a servant to Allah *the Almighty* and not to a mere human being like you.

Allah *the Almighty* gave us an example of this matter in His saying, 'Allah sets forth an example: There is a slave in whom 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) Is a servant of a number of masters who order him at the same time and, on top of this, disagree with one another, equal to a servant who is owned by only a single master? Thus, we are all servants of Allah *the Almighty*; when we submit, we do not submit to any other than Him; I do not submit to you, and you do not submit to me. Therefore, they say: 'No blood will spill from the finger of someone, whom the Sharia orders it to be cut' because it is a command from on high, from the heaven which no one has anything to do with.

Therefore, worship is forbidden when it is offered to human beings like you because the master, in this case, takes the benefit of his servant without giving him anything in recompense, whereas in the case of worshipping Allah *the Almighty* the servant himself is the one who takes the benefit of his Master *Glorified is He*. The poet⁽¹⁾ says:

My soul is sufficed by the glory of being a servant;

The Lord receives me kindly without any appointment

He in His Holiness is the most glorious,

But I meet with Him whenever and wherever I like

Take it upon yourself to compare between a meeting with one of the people of authority of this worldly life and a meeting with your Lord *Glorified is He*, for if you want to see one of these people, you must necessarily request an

(1) This poetry is composed by Sheikh As-Sha'rawi *may Allah have mercy upon him*.

appointment, and then wonder whether your request will be accepted or rejected. If it is accepted, you will have no power over any element of the meeting; the time, the place and the subject of conversation will be decided by someone other than you.

By contrast, if you want to have a meeting with your Lord *Glorified is He* you need to do nothing but make an ablution and raise your hands, saying 'Allah is the Greatest'. After that you will be in Allah's company; that is, you yourself are the one who has decided the time, the place, the subject of conversation, and the end of the meeting with Him *the Almighty*.

Do you not see how Allah *the Almighty* showed favour to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the 'Night Journey' and the 'Ascension,' in so far as He described him as a servant to Him, saying, 'Glory be to Him Who made His servant to go on a night...' (*al-Isra'*: 1). Thus the wisdom of revealing the saying of Allah, 'Say, "What is revealed to me is that your God is one God..."' (*al-Anbiya'*: 108) after His saying, 'It was only as a mercy that We sent you [Prophet] to all the worlds.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 107) is to clearly indicate that His Order to us to worship Him Alone undoubtedly saves us from being servants to human beings like us.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* makes us desirous of this worship with His saying, '...will you submit to Him?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 109) In such a manner, you urge your lazy son to be like his companion who does excellent work and takes first place; for you say to him: 'Will you not study and work hard in order to become like him'?

This is similar to the saying of Allah here, '...will you submit to Him?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 109) It is as if Allah *the Almighty* is saying to the people, 'Will you surrender yourselves to Me? Indeed, your welfare lies in being Muslims and your glory lies in offering your acts of worship to Me'.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَإِنْ تَوَلَّوْا فَقُلْ ءَاذَنْتُكُمْ عَلَىٰ سَوَاءٍ وَإِنْ أَدْرِي
أَقْرَبُ أَمْ بَعِيدُ مَا تُوعَدُونَ ﴿١٠٩﴾

But if they turn away, say, ‘I have proclaimed the message fairly to you all. I do not know whether the judgement you are promised is near or far [109] (The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 109)

As for Allah’s saying, ‘But if they turn away...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 109), it means that if they rejected the Message and turned their back on it, ‘...say, “I have proclaimed the message fairly to you all.”’ (*al-Anbiya*: 109) From the same root as the word for ‘proclaim’ comes the word for the call to prayer meaning to notify about something. To ‘notify’ someone originally means to do so by means of listening and speaking, given that people originally did not possess the practice of reading and writing, and therefore notification depended upon speech and hearing. Thus, the meaning of Allah’s saying, ‘I have proclaimed the message fairly to you all...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 109) is that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has actually informed them about the Message.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘...fairly to you all...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 109), it means that the Message was conveyed to them all; Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* be upon him did not distinguish someone over another. Regarding being notified, they were all equal; none of them is distinguished over anyone else. Therefore, he *peace and blessings be upon him* used to strive for the Message to be conveyed to everyone, a point which is crystal clear in his Hadith: ‘May Allah gladden a man who hears something from us, so he conveys it as he heard it. Perhaps the one it is conveyed to has more understanding than the one who heard it.’⁽¹⁾ In this manner, goodness spreads and circulates among all people.

Thus, Allah’s saying, ‘...say, ‘I have proclaimed the message fairly to you all...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 109) means that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings*

(1) This Hadith is narrated by Ahmad, At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Maja and Al-Hamidi on the authority of ‘Abdullah ibn Mas`ud Allah be pleased with him. See Ahmad, Musnad, 1/437, At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith no. 2657, 2658; Ibn Maja, Sunnan, Hadith no. 232; and Al-Hamidi, Musnad, 1/47.

be upon him did not inform one community apart from another, nor did some ears hear but not others. One of the tokens of the perfection of faith is that the hearer should inform those who did not hear because no one of you becomes a true believer until he likes for his brother what he likes for himself.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* attracts their attention to the matter of the Hour, saying, ‘...I do not know whether the judgement you are promised is near or far.’ (*al-Anbiya'*: 109) It is as though Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was saying to them, ‘You should pay attention, take heed, and be careful, for I do not know, perhaps the Hour is near; perhaps it will take you by surprise before I finish my speech with you’.

Therefore, when they asked one of the righteous people, ‘To what did you give your entire life?’ He said, ‘I gave my entire life to four things: I knew that I am not free from Allah’s Sight for a single instant, so I was ashamed that I disobeyed Him. I knew that I possessed a livelihood which would not pass me by, for Allah *the Almighty* ensured it for me, so I contented myself with it. I knew that I have a debt which no one else would repay it for me, so I devoted myself to paying it off. I knew that there was an appointed time of death for me which would strike me suddenly, so I took advantage of it unhesitatingly’. The intended meaning, then, is: prepare yourself for the Day of Judgment before it takes you by surprise.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says,

إِنَّهُ يَعْلَمُ الْجَهْرَ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تَكْتُمُونَ

But He knows what you reveal and conceal [110]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 110)

Given that your Lord fully knows that which is spoken in public, that which is spoken in secret and that which is yet more hidden, you should beware of dissimulation because Allah *the Almighty* forbids you from doing so with human beings, so it is with all the more reason that Allah *the Almighty* forbids you from doing it with Him, for Allah *Glorified is He* knows what you conceal just as He knows what you reveal. In this regard, human beings know nothing about you except that which you make public. Therefore, the most

important thing for all criminals is to do their crimes in secret, so that people will know nothing about them, thus be able to escape punishment. But how can anything be disguised from the Sight of Allah *the Almighty* and His All-Comprehensive Knowledge?

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'But He knows what you reveal and conceal.' (*al-Anbiya*: 111) Here, Allah *the Almighty* teaches us the proper conduct extending even to that which we hide. Therefore, there is all the more reason to observe proper conduct in that which we make public. We believe in the fact that Allah *the Almighty* is unseen, not witnessed by the eyes. Supposing that you are in your house, you know everything within it because it is something seen with your own eyes. That which is outside of your house, however, is unseen by you, so you do not know it. But as for Allah *the Almighty* He is unseen and knows everything which is seen as well as everything which is unseen.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلَا أَدْرِي لَعَلَّهٗ فِتْنَةٌ لَّكُمْ وَمَنْعٌ إِلَىٰ حِينٍ ﴿١١١﴾

**I do not know: this [time] may well be a test for
you, and enjoyment for a while [111]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya*: 111)**

It is as if Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was saying to them, 'Perhaps the grant of respite, your remaining without punishment (in the worldly life), and the slowness of the Hour in reaching you are none but a trial and a test to you. I wonder if you will be successful and triumph in this test; commenting on this point, Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse, '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) Allah *the Almighty* also says, 'And let not those who disbelieve think that Our Granting them respite is better for their souls; We grant them respite only that they may add to their sins; and they shall have a disgraceful chastisement.' (*Al-Imran*: 178)

As for Allah's saying, '...and enjoyment for a while' (*al-Anbiya'*: 111), it means that this enjoyment of this worldly life will not last long because it has a limited period.

Allah *the Almighty* then concludes the chapter of *Al-Anbiya'* with His saying:

قَالَ رَبِّ أَحْكُم بِالْحَقِّ وَرَبُّنَا الرَّحْمَنُ الْمُسْتَعَانُ عَلَى مَا تَصِفُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾

He said,⁽¹⁾ 'My Lord, pass the true judgement.'
And, 'Our Lord is the Lord of Mercy. We seek His
assistance against what you [disbelievers] say' [112]
(The Quran, *al-Anbiya'*: 112)

Allah's saying, 'He said, "My Lord, pass the true judgement"' (*al-Anbiya'*: 112), is similar to the prayer of the preceding prophets: '...Our Lord! Decide between us and our people with truth; and You are the best of deciders.' (*al-A'raf*: 89)

But what is the importance of describing Allah's Judgment as 'true', given that He only judges with the truth? The scholars said: 'Allah *the Almighty* wants to clarify this fact for us because we live in this worldly life where falsehood is common. So, it is as though we are hearing a judgment by the truth for the first time'.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'Our Lord is the Lord of Mercy. We seek His assistance against what you [disbelievers] say.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 112) This means that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Whose Aid is ever to be sought against those who accuse Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of madness, sorcery, etc.

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi, relates that Qatada said, 'The Prophets used to say: "...Our Lord! Decide between us and our people with truth..." (*al-A'raf*: 89). Therefore, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was commanded to say, "My Lord, pass the true judgement." (*al-Anbiya'*: 112). So, whenever he encountered an enemy—and he knew that he was in the right and his enemy was in the wrong—he used to say: "...Our Lord! Decide between us and our people with truth..." (*al-A'raf*: 89), that is, settle by means of it.' This is also mentioned by As-Suyuti who attributed it to Ibn Abu Hatim. See Al-Qurtubi, *Jame' Ahkam Al-Quran*, 6/4532; As-Suyuti, *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, 5/689.

We notice in the verses of the chapter of *al-Anbiya`* that Allah *the Almighty* speaks about the rolling up of heaven as a scroll is rolled for the writings; then He says, '...this [time] may well be a test for you, and enjoyment for a while' (*al-Anbiya`*: 111), and afterwards Allah *the Almighty* says, 'My Lord, pass the true judgement.' (*al-Anbiya`*: 112) All of this is in order to bring the matter of the Hour and its rising near to us, to make us be able to understand it easily, and to prepare us to turn towards the chapter of *al-Hajj*.

the chapter of

al-Hajj

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

The chapter of *al-Hajj*⁽¹⁾.

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ أَتَقُورِبَ كُمْ إِنَّ زَلْزَلَةَ السَّاعَةِ شَيْءٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١﴾

**People, be mindful of your Lord, for the
earthquake of the Last Hour will be a mighty
thing [1] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 1)**

This address is given to all people in general. Addresses which encourage faith are usually issued to all mankind with no exception, yet when Allah *the Almighty* orders carrying out a legal ruling, He uses the expression: ‘O you who believe’.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says here, ‘People, be mindful of your Lord...’ (*al-Hajj*: 1) Allah *the Almighty* wants to draw people’s attentions to the power of faith. In His saying, ‘...be mindful of your Lord...’ (*al-Hajj*: 1), ‘mindfulness of Allah’ means to place a barrier between yourself and what displeases Him, that is, something to protect you from torment which you do not have the power to endure.

We can observe here that sometimes Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...Be conscious of Allah...’ (*al-Baqara*: 194), whilst other times Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...Be conscious of the fire...’ (*al-Baqara*: 24); this is because the meaning is ultimately the same. The meaning of ‘Be conscious of the fire’ is

(1) The chapter of *al-Hajj* is the 22nd chapter in the written order of the Quran, and contains 78 verses. It was revealed in Mecca and Medina according to most scholars, as narrated by Al-Qurtubi in his *Tafsir*.

to place a protective barrier between yourself and the fire, and this is done by obeying Allah's Commandments and keeping away from His prohibitions.

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Be conscious of Allah' because Allah *the Almighty* has attributes of Beauty and attributes of Majesty; as for the Attributes of Beauty, they are such as the Most Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy, the Out spreader, the Coverer of faults etc. As for the attributes of Majesty, they are the All-Compeller, the All-Dominant, and other awe-inspiring Attributes.

So, you should place a barrier between yourself and the attributes of Majesty, for you do not have the power to endure His Dominance and His Mightiness. Now, the Hellfire is one of Allah's hosts and one of the manifestations of His Dominance; so just as we say, 'Be conscious of Allah', we say, 'Be conscious of the Hellfire'.

In the verse in question, Allah *the Almighty* chooses to speak about His attribute of Lordship, saying, '...Be Mindful of your Lord' (*al-Hajj*: 1), that is, Allah *the Almighty* did not say, 'Be mindful of Allah' because the Lord is the One Who sustains and looks after His creatures. So, the One Who warns you here is the One Who loves you and gives you, and He is the One Who created, sustained, and provided you.

So, the attribute of Lordship entails giving, that is, creating and providing out of nothing; and therefore, it is all the more fitting that you be conscious of Allah *the Almighty* for He has done great favours for you.

As for the Attribute of Divinity, it entails the religious responsibilities and worshipful obedience of 'Do' and 'Do not'. In other words, it indicates that Allah *the Almighty* is worshipped and obeyed in all what He commands and all what He prohibits.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, '...for the earthquake of the Last Hour will be a mighty thing.' (*al-Hajj*: 1) An earthquake is a sudden violent movement of the earth's surface, sometimes causing great damage. For example, if you want to take a peg out of the ground, you must first shake it and rock it back and forth so that the hole in the earth around it gets wider, and then it can come out. If you just try to pull it right out, you will find it very difficult and strenuous. The dentist does the same thing when he pulls a tooth.

So, the meaning of ‘earthquake’ is a violent motion which removes things from their places; Allah *the Almighty* speaks many times about this movement, saying, ‘When the earth shall be shaken with a (severe) shaking. And the mountains shall be made to crumble with (an awful) crumbling. So that they shall be as scattered dust.’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 4-6) In the same connection, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘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)

So, this ‘earthquake’ will not be like the earthquakes we see, which destroy some houses, or even bury entire villages, for these are only cosmological signs which prove the truth of Allah’s Message, and remind you about the most enormous earthquake which will herald the coming of the Hereafter so that we are not deluded by our mastery of the world which is only Allah’s gift to us.

When the earthquake hit Agadir, they noticed that the animals sensed something and began to panic minutes before the earthquake struck, and some of them went running into the open. So how did they know this? What awareness do they possess, although we consider these creatures to be dumb animals without reason or sense? This is a sign to the human being who deems himself the master of this universe: beware, for had Allah *the Almighty* not given you this mastery, these animals would revolt against you and overthrow you.

As for the earthquake referred to in the verse in question, it will not be an ordinary one, but will be a special earthquake which will strike the earth by Allah’s inspiration, when He commands it to quake. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* describes this earthquake as being something mighty: ‘...for the earthquake of the Last Hour will be a mighty thing.’ (*al-Hajj*: 1) When you, as a human being, say that something is mighty, it is so based on your own standards; as for the mighty thing here, it is so according to the standards of Allah *the Almighty*. So, you can imagine the terror of an earthquake which Allah *the Almighty* Himself calls a ‘mighty thing’.

This chapter begins with the mention of the earthquake and the resurrection because Allah *the Almighty* says before that: ‘The true promise draws near....’ (*al-Anbiya*: 97) So, it was certain that Allah *the Almighty* would give us a picture of this ‘promise’, and a glimpse of what will occur thereupon to

indicate His Power through which He will undoubtedly bring forth the earthquake of the Hereafter, and to show that the earth is not intrinsically steady, but rather, its stability is sustained by His Command and Power; that is to say, if He wants this stability to end, it will come to an end.

That is why Allah *the Almighty* says elsewhere, 'And the earth brings forth her burdens.' (*az-Zalzala*: 2) Thus, the volcanoes and disturbances within the earth, and all the other wonders we see, are all included in this verse, and therefore Allah *the Almighty* says, 'His is what is in the heavens and what is in the earth and what is between them two and what is beneath the ground.' (*Ta Ha*: 6)

As long as Allah *the Almighty* tells us of His Dominion over what lies beneath the ground, this means that there must be treasures and precious things under the surface of the earth. As a matter of fact, we get most of our precious substances from beneath the surface of the earth, and most of the wealthy nations rely on underground riches, such as oil, metals, minerals, gold etc.

We mentioned before how Allah *the Almighty* spread His bounties throughout His universe, and how Allah *the Almighty* gave each of them an appropriate time to be discovered. In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and We do not send it down but in a determined measure.' (*al-Hijr*: 21)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

يَوْمَ تَرَوْنَهَا تَذْهَلُ كُلُّ مُرْضِعَةٍ عَمَّا أَرْضَعَتْ وَتَضَعُ كُلُّ ذَاتِ حَمْلٍ
حَمْلَهَا وَتَرَى النَّاسَ سُكَرَىٰ وَمَا هُمْ بِسُكَرَىٰ وَلَٰكِنَّ عَذَابَ اللَّهِ شَدِيدٌ ﴿٢﴾

On the Day you see it, every nursing mother will think no more of her baby, every pregnant female will miscarry, you will think people are drunk when they are not, so severe will be God's torment [2] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 2)

We know that 'to see' can refer to the perception of knowledge or the beholding of the vision. The things we know are either 'certain knowledge', or a 'certain vision', or 'true certainty'. Certain knowledge means that someone you trust tells you something, just as the explorers gave many reports about the existence of a continent which they later called 'America', and said that it

contained such-and-such; this is what we call ‘certain knowledge’. If you get on a plane and go to America and see what is there from the plane window, this is called ‘certain vision’. Moreover, when you disembark from the plane and walk in the streets and see the buildings, this is what we call ‘true certainty’.

Therefore, when Allah *the Almighty* tells us that there is a punishment for the disbelievers in the Hellfire which is undoubtedly a true report, our knowledge of that is ‘certain knowledge’. When we actually see it, this will be a ‘certain vision’, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Then you shall most certainly see it with the eye of certainty.’ (*at-Takathur*: 7)

When dwellers of the Hellfire enter therein, and experience its heat and its flames – and only its dwellers will experience this – they will know it with true certainty. Therefore Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And if he is one of those on the right hand. Then peace be to you from those on the right hand. 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*: 90-96)

The meaning of Allah’s saying, ‘...every nursing mother will think no more of her baby...’ (*al-Hajj*: 2) is that every nursing mother will be distracted from what she is doing because of the terror she sees, such as if a servant is frightened when he sees an imposing or powerful man and so drops what he is carrying, for example. This is something involuntarily stemming from something which distracts one from another action which might be emotional or instinctive.

An example of the emotional side is that a mother will be distracted from her baby. In fact, the motherly emotion is commensurate with the needs of the child. During pregnancy, for example, the mother walks and moves carefully in fear for the safety of the foetus in her womb. Allah *the Almighty* placed this emotion in the mother’s heart to protect the child; otherwise, it would easily be exposed to harm or life-threatening things.

Therefore, when they asked the Arab woman which of her children she loved most, she said, ‘The youngest until he grows; the absent until he returns; the sick until he recovers’. Thus, Allah *the Almighty* gives emotion according to need, and so the pregnant women’s emotion, during the period of breastfeeding, towards her baby is the strongest at all.

So consider the breastfeeding woman, and how she will utterly forget her nursling and leave him; what terror must it be to distract and overcome the woman's motherly emotion and affection, and even her instinct?

In the same connection, the Quran gives us another image of this terror when Allah *the Almighty* says, 'The Day on which a man shall fly from his brother, and his mother and his father, and his spouse and his son.' (*Abasa*: 34-36)

An aspect of the greatness of the Quran's rhetorical style is that it mentions the brother here before the mother and father; they say that this is because the parents might exist at a time when he thinks that they do not need him and he does not need them because he is grown-up, but he might hope for aid and assistance from his brother.

When Allah *the Almighty* says, 'every nursing mother will think no more of her baby...' (*al-Hajj*: 2), the word used is *murdi`a*. Now there are two words in Arabic, *murdi`a* and *murda`a*; the latter means a woman who is able to nurse babies, whilst the former means a woman who is actually doing so, and whose breast is now at her baby's mouth. So, what a great deal of terror that could distract her at such a time and cause her to utterly forget what she is doing.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'every pregnant female will miscarry....' (*al-Hajj*: 2) After speaking about nursing, He now goes even further and speaks about the pregnant woman; it is clear that to hold onto one's pregnancy until the proper time comes is which is deep in the very fibre of her body, for as soon as the fertilised egg reaches the womb, it grasps onto it and closes around it, as Allah *the Almighty*, says, '...And whatever We will [to be born] We cause to rest in the [mothers'] wombs for a term set...' (*al-Hajj*: 5).

When the time for birth comes, Allah opens the womb for the child. So, this is a matter of instinct beyond the power and the will of the mother; thus, the bringing forth of this burden before its time is an indication of the great terror and horrible event which will occur.

There are two kinds of burdens: a burden which you carry and is separate from you, and a burden you carry and which is a part of you. Concerning this, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and grievous for them will be the weight [of that burden] on the Day of Resurrection.' (*Ta Ha*: 101) A 'weight' is something

heavy which you cannot manage, whilst a 'burden' is something easy to carry which you can bear. In this regard, a poet said:

A weight is not what the back carries,

It is what the heart contains.

That is, the thing which you can carry and which your back can manage is not a true weight, but a true weight is the grief which your heart bears.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, 'you will think people are drunk when they are not, so severe will be Allah's torment.' (*al-Hajj*: 2) That is to say, they will sway to and fro in confusion, just as drunk people do when alcohol affects them, and so they stagger left and right, and fall to the ground; the drunker they get and the further they stray from their natures, the worse it gets.

This is what it will be like on the Day of Resurrection; not because people will be drunk, but because they will be so frightened and panicked: 'you will think people are drunk when they are not, so severe will be Allah's torment.' (*al-Hajj*: 2)

But the question is, wherefrom will this confused movement come? They say that it is because Allah *the Almighty* created the body parts in such a way which is balanced and stable; the anatomists specify the different parts of the body and the specific areas which are responsible for preserving the body's balance, and if these body parts and glands are disturbed, the person feels dizzy and loses his balance. This happens when you look from a high place, or when you travel at sea, for example.

So, this confusion is not caused by intoxication, but by the terror of what they see, which will cause a change in the glands and cells responsible for balance, so they will stagger like drunkards.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'so severe will be Allah's torment.' (*al-Hajj*: 2) Now they will not have seen this chastisement yet, but simply the coming of the Last Hour and its terrors will cause them to lose their balance because the one who believes that the resurrection is happening in this way, will also believe that after it there will be chastisement in hell: 'It is all over, and the thing we used to deny is happening before our eyes'!

The True Lord then says:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَيَتَّبِعُ كُلَّ شَيْطَانٍ مَرِيدٍ ﴿٣﴾

**Yet still there are some who, with no knowledge,
argue about God, who follow every devilish
rebel [3] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 3)**

An ‘argument’ is a dialogue between two people who each seek to support their opinion and refute the opinion of the other; it is related to the word *jadal*, which means ‘to twist’ a rope or cord, winding one strand over another.

If you reflect on how wool or cotton is spun, you will find that it is composed of small strands no more than a few centimetres long, yet they make from it long ropes by twining these threads together so that the end of one strand is joined to the middle of another, and this is how it is spun and wound. If you want to make this thread stronger, you twist it with another thread. The same is true with argumentation, wherein each interlocutor seeks to strengthen his position and his view, and refute the arguments of the others.

When He says, ‘Yet still there are some who, with no knowledge, argue about Allah’ (*al-Hajj*: 2), how can someone argue about Allah *the Almighty*? To argue about Allah *the Almighty* means to argue about His Existence, like the atheist who denies His Existence; or to argue about His Oneness, such as those who associate other deities with Allah *the Almighty*; or to argue about the unseen things of which Allah *the Almighty* has spoken, such as the Last Hour which some people deny and do not believe in. All these are types of arguments about Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘with no knowledge’ (*al-Hajj*: 2); so to argue about Allah *the Almighty* is permissible and allowed, as long as it is based on knowledge and sound understanding, as He says elsewhere: ‘...and argue with them in the most kindly manner...’ (*an-Nahl*: 125). The True Lord does not forbid argument, but He wants it to be conducted in the best way and with gentle means, as they say: ‘Advice is heavy, so do not make it even heavier by turning it into an argument, and do not try to take a person away from his habit by using methods he does not like; read Allah’s words: “Call them [all

mankind] unto your Lord's path with wisdom and goodly exhortation..." (*an-Nahl*: 125), and 'And do not argue with the followers of earlier revelation otherwise than in a most kindly manner....' (*al-'Ankabut*: 46) Therefore, the Noble Quran taught Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* how to argue, saying: 'Say, "Neither shall you be called to account for whatever we may have become guilty of, nor shall we be called to account for whatever you are doing."' (*Saba*': 25) Look at this elevated eloquent style: when addressing them, He says, '...Neither shall you be called to account for whatever we may have become guilty of...' (*Saba*': 25), ascribing guilt to his own self, and yet when He speaks about them, He says, '...nor shall we be called to account for whatever you are doing' (*Saba*': 25), and does not say here, 'for whatever you may be guilty of', which would have been the equivalent expression. This way of speaking attracts hearts and opens them up to embracing the truth.

When they accused Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of being insane, the Quran replied to them with reason and logic, asking them: What is madness? Madness means that a person's actions are not based on any sound decision from the brain, asking them if they have ever experienced anything like this from Muhammad! What is virtue? Virtue is upright and sound action, which is noble and good, questioning them whether they have ever seen anything but this from Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*! Therefore, He replies to them, 'Say, "I counsel you one thing only: Be [ever-conscious of] standing before Allah whether you are in the company of others or alone; and then bethink yourselves [that] there is no madness in [this prophet,] your fellow-man...."' (*Saba*': 46) How could the man who possesses this virtuous and upright conduct possibly be mad?

As well, when they called him a liar, the Quran responded to them: '...Indeed, a whole lifetime have I dwelt among you ere this [revelation came unto me]: will you not, then, use your reason?' (*Yunus*: 16) The Message came to him after he reached the age of forty, and before then had you ever heard him give a speech or recite poetry? Did he ever deliver a speech, or read a poem which you preserved as you preserved the works of your other poets?

In addition, they said that he *peace and blessings be upon him* possessed a kind of genius – but what kind of genius is this which bursts forth after the

age of forty? If you look at instances of genius, you will find that they occur in the second or third decade of a person's life; so how could Prophet Muhammad have delayed his genius until the age of forty? Who guaranteed for him that he would live that long, when he saw people falling all around him: his father died before he was born, and his mother died when he was an infant, and his grandfather died when he was still young.

In this way, the Quran gives us an example of argument based on wisdom and goodly counsel, and argument based on knowledge of what one says, and of a perception of the true nature of things.

Therefore, when Ash-Sha'bi⁽¹⁾ went to the Byzantine Emperor⁽²⁾, the Emperor said to him, 'You have things in Islam which the rational mind cannot accept.' Ash-Sha'bi asked him which things he meant, and he said: 'You say that in paradise there is food which never runs out, but we know that if we take from something again and again, it will eventually run out.' Look at the line of argumentation which ensued.

Ash-Sha'bi said, 'Tell me, if you had a lamp, and everyone in the world came along and lit their own lamps from its flame, would this decrease anything from the flame?' This was a refined and high level of argumentation. The Emperor continued: 'And how can we all eat in paradise without ever needing to answer the call of nature?' Ash-Sha'bi replied: 'Does the foetus in its mother's womb grow, or not? It grows more and more every day, and this shows that it must be consuming nourishment – but does it produce waste? If the foetus produced waste and relieved itself in its placenta, it would die. So, the foetus consumes as much nourishment as it requires growing, so that none of its nourishment is left over.'

He then said, 'Where do spirits go when they leave bodies?' Ash-Sha'bi answered comprehensively: 'They go to where they were before they entered the bodies. You have a lamp before you, and it is lit' – and he blew it out – 'now where has the light gone?'

(1) A man from the second generation of Muslims (*tabi'un*)

(2) The story of Ash-Sha'bi with the Roman king

Another example⁽¹⁾ of argumentation based on knowledge and perception was given by `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* when Mu`awiya's soldiers killed `Ammar ibn Yasir *Allah be pleased with him* and the companions in the ranks of Mu`awiya *Allah be pleased with him* became angry and remembered what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said to `Ammar *Allah be pleased with him*: 'The unjust faction will slay you'⁽²⁾, and they began to leave Mu`awiya's army one by one. So `Amr ibn Al-`As *Allah be pleased with him* went to Mu`awiya, *Allah be pleased upon him*, and said, 'Dissent has formed amidst the army, and if it continues not one of them will remain with us. Mu`awiya *Allah be pleased with him* asked 'What is it?' He replied, 'They say that we have killed `Ammar, whom Prophet Muhammad said that he would be killed by the unjust faction.'

Mu`awiya wavered for a moment, and then said, 'Tell them that the one who brought him out to fight killed him'⁽³⁾ meaning by this `Ali ibn Abu Taleb *Allah be pleased with him*. When `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* heard about this, he said, 'Ask them then who killed Hamza ibn `Abd Al-Muttalib?' That is, if what you are saying is true, then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* killed Hamza *Allah be pleased with him* because he brought him out to fight.

This is argumentation based on knowledge, and knowledge might be intuitive, meaning that you believe in something, but you cannot prove it, or it might be rational and based on evidence. Knowledge might even come by revelation from Allah *the Almighty* without involving anyone else. We gave the example of intuitive knowledge before by saying, 'Suppose a small child sees his brother sitting next to his father on a chair, and he wants to sit next to his father, so he first tries to move his brother out of the way, taking hold of him and pulling him aside'.

Here, we ask 'How did the small child know that there was not enough room for them both to sit there, and that you cannot occupy a space unless you first remove what is already occupying it'?

(1) The story of the group of Mu`awiya Abu Sufyan *Allah be pleased with him* killing `Ammar ibn Yasir *Allah be pleased with them all* and the response of `Ali ibn Abu Taleb

(2) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari (447) and Muslim (2916)*

(3) This story was narrated by *Ahmad (iv. 199)*

These are principles which we only learn at secondary school, when we learn the meaning of volume and displacement; and this is something which the child knows intuitively.

In fact, if you reflect on geometric theorem, you will find that every theorem is based on a previous theorem; if you want to prove the hundredth theorem, you use the ninetieth, for example, and so on, until you get back to an intuitive theorem which requires no proof. Thus, we can say that everything scientific in the universe is based on intuitive principles which require no proof, and which cannot be defined. Take the sky, for example: they say that it is everything above you and shades you. So, the ceiling is a sky, and mist is a sky, and clouds are a sky and the sky is a sky; but the sky does not actually need this definition, since when you hear the word 'sky', you know what it means intuitively without any definition.

These intuitive principles cannot be argued over because they are obvious; and if you say to this child, 'Sit on top of your brother', this is not a real argument because it is not correct.

As for rational, experimental knowledge, it is that you use one thing to prove another such as if you enter your house and find a cigarette but in an ashtray, so you ask, 'Who came to see you today'? It is just as the Arab man who would travel in the desert and find the tracks of a camel and a driver on the ground, and say: 'These tracks show that a camel and a man have passed this way'.

As for knowledge of Revelation, it comes from Allah, and He sends it to whichever of His servants He wills.

So, the one who argues should use one of these three when he argues; for if he argues without knowledge, it is pure sophistry of no use.

This verse "Yet still there are some who, with no knowledge, argue about Allah..." (*al-Hajj*: 3) was revealed about An-Nadr ibn Al-Harith, who would argue without any knowledge about the Existence of Allah *the Almighty*, His Oneness, the Resurrection and so on. But the verse does not indicate An-Nadr alone but it indicates everyone who does what he did, and utilises his kind of argumentation.

Then, Allah says, ‘...who follow every devilish rebel.’ (*al-Hajj*: 3) That is, this argumentation might either be of his own devising, or it might be inspired by Satan’s whisperings to him, encouraging him to contravene Allah’s way of guidance, whether this satanic force be of man or jinn.

Evil deeds and deviations against Allah’s way come from either the whispered insinuations of the soul, which refuses to renounce sin, or else from Satan who is always trying to recruit you to his side. But we must not make Satan a scapegoat to blame for all our sins and evil deeds, for not all sins come from Satan, and some sins come from the soul itself. And we said before that if Satan is the one who incites to evil then who incited him to evil in the first place? It is as the poet said,

When Satan went astray, who was his Satan?

The difference between a soul-inspired sin and a Satan-inspired sin is that Satan wants you to sin in any way at all, whereas the soul wants you to commit a specific sin and no other so that if you move onto anything else, it will not accept it and will insist on this one sin in particular.

This is different from Satan, for if you refuse to obey him in one sin, he will try to tempt you into another sin, whatever it may be; what is important to him is that you disobey Allah *the Almighty*. In this way, you can determine whether a sin is inspired by your own soul, or by Satan.

When one of the scholars⁽¹⁾ was asked, ‘How can I know if I am a man of this world or a man of the Hereafter?’ he said, ‘No scholar can tell you this, but you must find out the answer from your own self. Look at yourself, and if the one who takes charity from you is more beloved to you than the one who gives you a gift, then know that you are a man of the Hereafter. If the gift is more beloved to you than the charity, then know that you are a man of this world.’

This is because a man always loves the one who gives him the longer-lasting joy; the one who gives you a gift gives you joy in this worldly life, so you love him; and the one who takes charity from you gives you joy in the Hereafter, so you love him. And this is something in which Satan plays no part.

(1) The story of the question of a man to one of the pious people ‘Am I among the dwellers of heaven or hell?’

In another verse, the True Lord says, ‘...And yet, among men there is many a one that argues about Allah without having any knowledge [of Him], without any guidance, and without any light-giving revelation.’ (*Luqman*: 20)

This verse contains mention of all the kinds of knowledge of which we have just spoken; for ‘knowledge’ means intuitive knowledge, whilst ‘guidance’ means proof-based knowledge; as for ‘light-giving revelation’, it means the Revelation which comes from Allah *the Almighty*. All argumentation must be based on these three things, and it must be done in the kindest manner.

The word *marid* (rebellious) is related to *murud* which means insolence and extreme corruption; the word *marid* is also derived from it meaning the one who haughtily seeks to put himself above you.

Allah then says:

كُتِبَ عَلَيْهِ أَنَّهُ مَنْ تَوَلَّاهُ فَأَنَّهُ يُضِلُّهُ وَيَهْدِيهِ إِلَى عَذَابِ السَّعِيرِ ﴿٤﴾

**Fated to lead astray those who take his side, and
guide them to the suffering of the blazing flame [4]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 4)**

That is, Allah *the Almighty* has decreed this about this rebellious satanic force, and has made a plain judgement about ‘those who take his side’ (*al-Hajj*: 3), i.e. follows it and goes behind it, ‘and guide them to the suffering of the blazing flame’ (*al-Hajj*: 4) ‘To lead astray’ and ‘to guide’ are opposites, so how can we combine them?

The meaning is that it will lead him away from the way of truth and goodness, and guide him towards evil; for the meaning of ‘guidance’ is to give directions, whatever they may be. If you direct towards goodness, this is guidance; and if you direct towards evil, this is also guidance.

Read what Allah says, ‘And Allah *the Almighty* will thus command, “Assemble all those who were bent on evildoing, together with others of their ilk and [with] all that they were wont to worship instead of Allah, and lead them all onto the way to the blazing fire.”’ (*as-Saffat*: 22-23) That is, direct them and guide them into hell. Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse,

‘Behold, those who are bent on denying the truth and on evildoing – Allah will indeed not forgive them, nor will He guide them onto any road, but the road that leads to hell...’ (*an-Nisa*: 168-169). A ‘blazing flame’ is a raging fire which neither dies down nor goes out.

The True Lord then says:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِن كُنْتُمْ فِي رَيْبٍ مِّنَ الْبَعْثِ فَإِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ مِّن تُرَابٍ ثُمَّ مِّن نُّطْفَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّن عَلَقَةٍ ثُمَّ مِّن مُّضْغَةٍ مُّخَلَّقَةٍ وَغَيْرِ مُخَلَّقَةٍ لِّنُبَيِّنَ لَكُمْ وَنُقِرُّ فِي الْأَرْحَامِ مَا نَشَاءُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ نُخْرِجُكُمْ طِفْلًا ثُمَّ لِتَبْلُغُوا أَشَدَّكُمْ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يُّنَوِّفُ وَمِنْكُمْ مَّن يُّرَدُّ إِلَىٰ أَرْدَلِ الْعُمُرِ لِكَيْلَا يَعْلَمَ مِن بَعْدِ عِلْمٍ شَيْئًا وَتَرَىٰ الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَإِذَا أَنزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنْبَتَتْ مِن كُلِّ زَوْجٍ بَهِيجٍ ﴿٥﴾

People, [remember,] if you doubt the Resurrection, that We created you from dust, then a drop of fluid, then a clinging form, then a lump of flesh, both shaped and unshaped: We mean to make Our power clear to you. Whatever We choose We cause to remain in the womb for an appointed time, then We bring you forth as infants and then you grow and reach maturity. Some die young and some are left to live on to such an age that they forget all they once knew. You sometimes see the earth lifeless, yet when We send down water it stirs and swells and produces every kind of joyous growth [5]

(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 5)

Allah says ‘People, [remember,] if you doubt the resurrection’ (*al-Hajj*: 5), that is, if you doubt that the resurrection will occur, then here is evidence that it will: ‘that We created you from dust’ (*al-Hajj*: 5). This means the first creation, that of Adam; as for all people after Adam, they were created from a living man, ‘then a drop of fluid’. (*al-Hajj*: 5)

So he who follows the verses of the Quran will find that the True Lord says that man was created ‘from dust’ (*al-Hajj*: 5), and elsewhere ‘out of a drop of fluid’ (*at-Tariq*: 6), ‘out of clay’ (*al-An‘am*: 2), ‘then a clinging form shaped’ (*al-Hajj*: 5) and ‘out of sounding clay, like pottery’ (*ar-Rahman*: 14)

This has led the orientalist to object to the rhetoric of the Quran, and they say, 'From which of these things were you created'?

This objection is the result of their limited understanding of the language of the Quran; for dust, fluid, mud, slime and sounding clay are all different stages of the same thing. When you put water on dust, it becomes mud; and when you leave this mud to ferment and thoroughly mix so that you cannot tell its constituents apart, and its odour changes, it becomes dark slime; and when it dries, it becomes sounding clay like pottery, from which Allah *the Almighty* created and formed man, and then blew something of His Spirit into him. So, these are all different stages of the same process; and if a process moves through several different stages, this does not change the process itself.

The True Lord then speaks about the second creation after Adam, namely that of his progeny, saying, 'then a drop of fluid'. (*al-Hajj*: 5) The word *nutfā* literally means a drop of fresh water, as when the poet said:

The cloud gave the remnant of a few drops its clarity,

Thick at the edges, blue at the sides

Water does not appear blue unless it is pure and unadulterated.

The drop of sperm is also a most essential element because within the human body there are processes of metabolism and processes of production; that is, there is always destruction and rebuilding going on which cause various waste products to be expelled by the body: urine, stools, sweat, tears and earwax are all products of the body's metabolising of food inside the body so that it can extract the essence of the nutrition and transfer it to the blood.

From this essence is derived human semen, from which the sperm-drop is taken. So, it is the essence of the essence of man, and it causes pregnancy and the formation of the embryo. It is as though the Creator purified it and cleansed it in this way because it would be the source of His noblest creature, man.

This drop only comes out of man during sexual intercourse, which is the most pleasurable experience of the living human being. Why? If you reflect on the other pleasures which man enjoys, such as taste, smell, or touch, these are well-known pleasures which are limited to particular human senses. As for the pleasure which accompanies the ejaculation of semen during sexual

intercourse, it is a complete pleasure for which the entire body convulses, so that the exact area of feeling cannot be defined, but rather, every cell of the body experiences it.

Therefore, our Lord commanded us to take purity baths after this action because it involves every cell of the human makeup; and perhaps those who have innate knowledge of Allah *the Almighty* are never heedless of Allah *the Almighty* except in this moment. That is why we are commanded to take purity baths afterwards, as the scholars have said.

As for those people who have profound knowledge of Allah *the Almighty* and His Grace, they say: ‘Allah *the Almighty* created Adam from clay, and made his progeny from this living sperm drop which he placed in Eve, and then from this He brought forth all the rest of mankind; so it is as though in every one of us there is an atom from our forefather Adam, because if this atom had died there would not have been any procreation after Adam. This atom exists within you, exists in the sperm drop which comes from you and makes your own son, it is the purest thing within you because it is the atom which witnessed the first creation, the creation of Adam, your forefather’.

We make this easier to understand by saying, ‘If you take a centilitre of dye and place it in a bottle of water and then stir it until the water is mixed with the dye, then every drop of water will contain an atom of this dye; and the same will happen if you then pour the water from the bottle into a barrel of water, and so on’.

So, every one of us has within him an atom from his forefather Adam, an atom which witnessed the first creation, and witnessed the first covenant which Allah *the Almighty* took from mankind, of which He says, ‘And when your Lord took the seeds of the children of Adam from their loins, He made them bear witness against themselves, “Am I not your Lord?”’ (*al-A‘raf*: 172)

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* speaks about ‘sending’ His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘...the one whom Allah has sent as an apostle’ (*al-Furqan*: 41); the word ‘sent’ implies that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* already existed, and that he had roots in a Message sent directly from Allah *the Almighty* when He took the covenant from

His servants, whilst they were in the loins of Adam. Likewise, He addressed him *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying, 'And so, [O Prophet,] exhort them; your task is only to exhort' (*al-Ghashiya*: 121), that is, to remind them of the ancient covenant which we all took, and to which we all bound ourselves.

Therefore, let us read the following verse: 'And when your Lord took the seeds of the children of Adam from their loins, He made them bear witness against themselves, "Am I not your Lord?" to which they answered, "Yes, indeed, we do bear witness thereto..."' (*al-A'raf*: 172). This was before the creation of mankind, before capricious desire had yet entered men's souls: '...[Of this We remind you,] lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, "Verily, we were unaware of this." Or lest you say, "Verily, it was but our forefathers who, in times gone by, began to ascribe divinity to other beings beside Allah; and we were but their late offspring: wilt Thou, then, destroy us for the doings of those inventors of falsehoods?"' (*al-A'raf*: 172-173)

So, Allah *the Almighty* sent Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to remind people of the first covenant, so that they would not forget it, and so it would remain a proof against them.

Then He says, 'then a clinging form' (*al-Hajj*: 5). The clinging form is called in Arabic *'alaqa* because it *ta'liq* (clings) to the womb. Allah *the Almighty* says in another verse, 'Was he not once a [mere] drop of sperm that had been spilt, and thereafter became a germ-cell — whereupon He created and formed [it] in accordance with what [it] was meant to be?' (*al-Qiyama*: 37-38)

The sperm is carried in a drop of liquid semen, and it is the essence from which the embryo is created; and the 'germ-cell' here means the fertilised egg. After the egg had been bonded to the mother, and the sperm had been bonded to the father, they were united in a new bond, coming together within the womb, as though something in their intrinsic nature makes them cling together; and they call this the 'zygote'.

In Arabic, if someone always stays close to you, you say that he is 'like a germ-cell'.

After this, the germ-cell turns into 'then a lump of flesh' (*al-Hajj*: 5), i.e. *mudgha* which literally means a morsel of meat the size of a single bite, and is

a mixture of several things, such as if you eat a piece of meat with vegetables and rice, and chewing turns them into a mixture. This is because the human body is not made of a single constituent, but of several constituents.

This lump of flesh is ‘shaped or unshaped’ (*al-Hajj*: 5); it is complete in the sense that it is in the shape and form of a human body: there is the head, there is the arm, there is the foot and so on; it means that it is created in the form of a human being.

As for ‘unshaped’, we have discovered recently that this refers to the cells which restore the body and mend it if it is damaged. They are akin to ‘spare parts’ to rebuild and restore the damaged tissues of the body, as happens with wounds, which if left to the natural processes of the body to heal bit by bit without leaving a trace.

We see this with the children of farmers, when one of them is injured or develops sores, and they leave it to the body’s natural resistance; and after a while these sores disappear without leaving any mark at all because they leave the body to receive divine treatment. If we interfere in the wound by applying chemicals or stitching it, it will leave a mark behind, and the area will be scarred. This is because these chemicals disturb the pores of the skin; and therefore, we find that these parts of the body have changed, and the person has the urge to scratch them and rub them, because these pores used to expel the body’s waste in the form of sweat, and when these pores were blocked these effects were caused. And all of this is because we interfered with the nature which Allah *the Almighty* created. So, the meaning of ‘unshaped’ is the process which replaces and rebuilds what is damaged on the human body.

He then says, ‘We mean to make Our power clear to you. Whatever We choose We cause to remain in the womb for an appointed time....’ (*al-Hajj*: 5) That is, that we might clarify to you everything about this matter. ‘Whatever We choose We cause to remain in the womb for an appointed time...’ (*al-Hajj*: 5) meaning the embryonic lump which is destined to be a foetus, and continue to develop until it is born, which is why He then says, ‘for an appointed time’; or He might cause it to be miscarried.

If you say, 'What is the wisdom behind creating and forming it, if it has been destined to die, whilst still in the womb?' we say, 'so that we may know that death can come at any time, and is not governed by cause or age. Death might come to an old man, just as it might come to a foetus in its mother's womb, and life can end at any time'.

He then says, 'and then We bring you forth as infants' (*al-Hajj*: 5), saying 'We' in the plural, yet then using the word *tiflan* which means, not 'infants', but literally 'infant' in the singular. Why? They say it is because there are words in Arabic which can be used for both the singular and the plural so that the word *tiflan* here means 'as infants'. The plural word *atfal* is used elsewhere in the Quran, when Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Yet when the children among you attain to puberty....' (*an-Nur*: 59)

Similarly, the word *`adl* (justice), can also be used as an adjective meaning 'just', in which case it is used for both singular and plural nouns without any change in its form. And in the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* he said about the idols: 'Now [as for me, I know that,] verily, these [false deities] are my enemies...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 77). The word *`adu*, (enemy), is used in the singular form. When Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* spoke about his guests, he said, 'Behold, these are my guests' (*al-Hijr*: 68), using the word *dayf*, which literally means 'guest' in the singular. So, in these instances, the singular word has a plural meaning.

He then says, 'then you grow and reach maturity' (*al-Hajj*: 5). In this way, the context shifts us away from infancy to the final stage of human life; we spoke before about the stages of human life, and how he passes to the stage of maturity: physical maturity, wherein he is able to procreate, and mental maturity, wherein he is able to control his action properly, and make intelligent choices between alternatives.

Then comes the stage of full adult maturity: '...then you grow and reach maturity...' (*al-Hajj*: 5) meaning that he has a mature experience of the events of life, too.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'Some die young and some are left to live on to such an age'. (*al-Hajj*: 5) The abject state of old age means its humiliation,

when a person begins to show signs of decline and weakness, ‘That they forget all they once knew.’ (*al-Hajj*: 5) This is because he forgets. He realises that his health, strength, and power are not intrinsically his, but rather were only given to him by Allah *the Almighty*.

When a man reaches abject old age, he gradually goes back to the state of infancy needing someone to take his hand so he can stand or walk, just as you take a child’s hand; and when he speaks, he babbles and stutters like a child who is learning to speak; and so on, for the other aspects of his life.

Therefore, they say that early marriage is the best way to sire a ‘father’ who will help you in the ‘childhood’ of your old age; a ‘father’, not a ‘son’ because in later life he will perform the role of father for you. They say, ‘He has caught up with his father’ meaning that their ages appear to be the same.

But why do only some of us reach abject old age, and others do not? The True Lord has made this an example for us so we do not say, ‘If only our lives were longer’ because if everyone reached abject old age, it would be very difficult for us; so Allah *the Almighty* is merciful to us by creating death.

He then says, ‘You sometimes see the earth lifeless, yet when We send down water it stirs and swells and produces every kind of joyous growth’ (*al-Hajj*: 5). Just as man was created from dust, then a sperm drop, then a germ-cell, then an embryonic lump complete and yet incomplete, then came forth as an infant, then reached maturity then either died or passed on to abject old age; the same is true of the earth: ‘You sometimes see the earth lifeless’ (*al-Hajj*: 5).

The word *hamida* (dry and lifeless) literally means ‘still’, which is why we say to a restless child, *ihmid*, (be still!); ‘yet when We send down water it stirs and swells’ (*al-Hajj*: 5), that is, its atoms spring into motion and give forth plants, after they had been still and motionless.

To ‘stir’ means for something to move which you thought was fixed but was actually not. This is because everything has some kind of motion, and even the lifeless piece of iron has motion in its atoms, but you do not have the means to perceive this motion. If you reflect on magnetism, you will become aware of this movement in its atoms, for when you rub a magnetised rod over another rod which is not magnetised in a single direction, it takes its

magnetism; and this means that the atoms of the rod have been changed so that they bear a single charge, either positive or negative; and if the rod is rubbed in the other direction, the atoms will change again.

So even iron – the symbol of firmness and immobility – also has motion and life of its own kind, even if it seems to you to be the most lifeless of objects on the surface. Therefore, we say that ‘lifeless’ means motionless to the eye, since it contains no plants; and then ‘it stirs’, increasing and swelling and moving to give forth plants. In reality, it was not motionless at all because its atoms were moving in their own way.

And the meaning of ‘swells’ is that it becomes larger, just as a broad bean becomes larger when you put it in water, taking on extra moisture, as do all pulses. This increase in size of the grain is what splits it into two halves when it germinates, shoots comes out of it, one of which grows upwards as a stalk which seeks out air, and one of which grows downwards as a root which seeks out water. These two halves remain the source or nourishment for the plant until it becomes strong and can take its nourishment from the soil. Once these two halves of the bean fulfil their function in nourishing the plant, they turn into leaves, and are the first leaves the plant grows.

Moreover, we can observe that the plant does not take all of its nourishment from the soil, but rather takes as much as 90% of its nourishment from the air, and you can see this if you look at a flowerpot with a plant in it, for you will find that the volume of soil in the pot does not decrease in any noticeable way as the plant grows in it.

When you reflect on the roots of plants, you find that this is one of the signs of Allah *the Almighty*; for the root reaches out until it finds moisture or water, and when it reaches its source of nourishment it stops. Look at the fenugreek, for example, and you will find that its roots are not equally long, but vary according to how far the seed is from the source of moisture.

‘And [it] swells’, that is, it increases and enlarges, just as dough does when we leave it to rise, ‘and produces every kind of joyous growth’. (*al-Hajj*: 5)

This is a living image which we can all see with our own eyes. The earth is dry and stable, bereft of motion, yet when water falls upon it, it changes and

its atoms move, and it splits open and gives forth plants. This even happens with artificial rain, for we saw at *`Arafa*, for example, how artificial rain was poured onto it, and the valley became green. But when the water stops, it goes back to how it was before because the water does not continue to come. If you were to continue to pour water on it, it would become a place of forests and gardens, as we see in Europe.

Rain does not need the earth to be flattened for it because it waters the highlands and the lowlands equally; the land which you water, on the other hand, must first be levelled so that the water reaches it all equally.

When Allah *the Almighty* sends water to the dry earth, whereupon you see it burst forth with vegetation, then, from where did the seeds come? Why were they not damaged after remaining in the ground for all this time? The earth is what protected them from damage until the right conditions came for them to germinate. The word for this kind of natural germination, when plants grow from the earth without any human involvement is called ‘natural growth’.

When these seeds are transferred to the desert or the valleys, this takes place by means of wind or the dung of animals. The literal meaning of the word *zawj* in: ‘...every kind (*zawj*) of lovely plant’ (*al-Hajj*: 5), is ‘one of a pair’; some people think that it means ‘a pair’, but actually it means ‘one of a pair’, i.e. one thing which is accompanied by another of its kind; for He says, ‘And that it is He who creates the two kinds – the male and the female’ (*an-Najm*: 45), and so each one of them is a *zawj*. Likewise, when you say ‘a pair of shoes’, you mean one individual shoe and another individual shoe alongside it. Likewise, the word ‘twin’ means a child born alongside another child, so that each one of them is a ‘twin’; we say, ‘they are twins’, we do not say ‘they are twin.’

There is a manifestation of the precision of Quranic rhetoric in the words: ‘every kind joyous growth’, for all creatures, whether they be minerals, plants or animals, must have the pair of male and female, this paring of which Allah *the Almighty* has said: ‘And in everything have We created opposites...’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49). Even those minerals which we think of as being lifeless and motionless are made of pairs: positive and negative in electricity, in atoms, and in magnetism. Everything which replicates itself must contain these two opposites.

Therefore, when the True Lord dealt with this matter in the Quran, He dealt with it in a way which allowed for further human possibilities, saying, 'Limitless in His Glory is He who has created opposites in whatever the earth produces, and in men's own selves, and in that of which [as yet] they have no knowledge.' (*Ya Sin*: 36)

His saying, 'that they forget all they once knew' is encompassed all the discoveries that science would make in the future, which would affirm the truth of the Quran as time passed. In the past, we learned of electricity and that it contains positive and negative, and we said, 'This is something of which we had no knowledge'; and this is one of the miraculous qualities of the Quran.

So, take this as a general rule: everything which reproduces more of itself must contain two opposites.

So, when He says, '...every kind of joyful earth' (*al-Hajj*: 5), every kind of plant exists individually and has its pair with it, and this is clear when we see how pollination takes place between the male and female parts of a plant; a plant might either be male or female, as is the case of date-palms, or it might contain both the male and female elements, as is the case of wheat and corn.

And if you look at a corn plant, you will see that at the top of it is a crest containing fine grains bearing the male pollen, and in the middle of the stalk there is a cob containing fibres which each attach to the corn seeds on the cob, which bear the female pollen. And when the wind blows, the top of the sheaf shakes and the male pollen falls onto these fibres and pollinates them. And therefore, we see that those seeds which do not have fibres protruding from them outside the cover of the cob shrivel up and die because they are not pollinated.

The meaning of 'joyful' is attractive, beautiful, and eye-catching; and the beauty of a plant's appearance is common, and not only experienced by the one who owns it, unlike the enjoyment of eating it. When you pass by an orchard or a garden, you can enjoy its appearance and its beautiful colours and fine scents.

Within the human soul there are elements which take nourishment from this verdure and these colours, which enjoy this beauty, even if one does not own them.

Therefore, the True Lord draws out attention to this fact when He says: ‘...Behold their fruit when it comes to fruition and ripens’. (*al-An‘am*: 99) That is, everyone is able to behold this, after which we must leave the more specific enjoyments to those who own them. Enjoy Allah’s creation, for the soul can be nourished by more than just food.

Read what He says about horses: ‘And you find beauty in them when you ride them home in the evenings and when you take them out to pasture in the mornings.’ (*an-Nahl*: 6) So horses are not only meant for carrying burdens, but they are also a source of beauty, splendour, please and satisfy your souls.

The True Lord then says:

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَنَّهُ يُخَيِّ الْمَوْتِ وَأَنَّهُ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٦﴾

**This is because God is the Truth; He brings the
dead back to life; He has power over everything [6]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 6)**

That is, that happens when man is created and formed, when plants germinate and grow, all comes back to the fact that ‘this is because Allah is the Truth; He brings the dead back to life’ (*al-Hajj*: 6), so why did He say, ‘The Truth’ and not ‘The Creator’? They say it is because a creator might create something and then leave it, but Allah *the Almighty* is the True Creator; and the meaning of ‘the truth’ is that which is firm and never changes, and likewise His bestowal never changes, and He will continue to be a Creator who gives to you every day because His bestowal is constant and never runs out.

If you look at the whole universe, you will find that it has a repeating cycle. Allah *the Almighty* created the earth and measured out its constituents; for example, the amount of water which Allah *the Almighty* created in the universe is constant and does not increase or decrease, because water has a cycle, and the water you drink during your whole life does not decrease the total amount of water which exists because it comes from you as waste and returns once again by means of the water cycle.

The same is true of the food we eat, and the pretty flower we pick. Everything in existence has a cycle through which it turns; and this is the

meaning of: ‘...and [He] equitably apportioned its means of subsistence....’ (*Fussilat*: 10) So, the meaning of the ‘The Truth’ is The Constant One who never changes in His creation or His bestowal. So, do not think that Allah’s gifts to you are something new; rather, they are ancient gifts which are repeated for you and for others.

Then He says, ‘and because He alone brings the dead to life’ (*al-Hajj*: 6), as we said about the previous verse: ‘you can see the earth dry and lifeless’ (*al-Hajj*: 5), i.e. still and bereft of life, and only Allah *the Almighty* is able to revive it. Therefore, we find that the scholars of jurisprudence call the land which we make suitable for farming ‘dead land revived’.⁽¹⁾ It is only Allah *the Almighty* that can bring all that is dead back to life, and therefore He then says, ‘He has power over everything.’ (*al-Hajj*: 6) As long as this is the case, and as long as you all witness the sign of the revival of the dead earth, then why do you deny the resurrection and that you shall be brought back to life?

Allah then says:

وَأَنَّ السَّاعَةَ آتِيَةٌ لَا رَيْبَ فِيهَا وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ يَبْعَثُ مَنْ فِي الْقُبُورِ ﴿٧﴾

**There is no doubt that the Last Hour is bound to come,
nor that God will raise the dead from their graves [7]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 7)**

They denied that the dead will be resurrected when they said, ‘Why – after we have died and become mere dust and bones, shall we, forsooth, be raised from the dead? – And perhaps also our forebears of old?’ (*as-Saffat*: 16-17) The True Lord replies to them: ‘Indeed, We shall raise you to life after death; and the One who created you from nothing is the more able to bring you back’. Therefore He said, ‘And it is He who creates [all life] in the first instance, and

(1) This means to take land which was not previously used for anything and to make it suitable for settlement or farming or the like; this land should be far from any settlement, and not adjoining it. The jurists say that this land belongs to the one who revives it, for the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Whoever revives a dead land, it is his.’ There is a difference of opinion among the jurists as to whether the permission of the ruler must be obtained before doing this. (Sayed Sabiq, *Fiqh As-Sunna*).

then brings it forth anew; and most easy is this for Him...' (*ar-Rum*: 27). The True Lord is speaking to us here according to the scope of our minds because we understand that to create something from existing parts is easier than to create it out of nothing; but for the Creator Himself, there is no question of 'easy' or 'easier'.

So, when He says, 'And [know, O man] that the Last Hour is bound to come...' (*al-Hajj*: 7), it is as though the action of raising the dead to life is not the utmost end of Allah's power, but rather, His power encompasses many signs and wonders. The 'Last Hour' means the time of the resurrection and its coming; but the resurrection will be a time of reckoning and judging for mankind, and therefore they must be brought forth from their graves, which is why He says after this, '...nor that Allah will raise the dead from their graves'. (*al-Hajj*: 7) So, everything that has gone before is the fruit of the fact that He is the Ultimate Truth; and because He is the Ultimate Truth, He raises the dead, and has the power to do anything, the Last Hour is coming beyond all doubt and He will resurrect all who are in their graves.

The True Lord then says:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يُجَادِلُ فِي اللَّهِ بِغَيْرِ عِلْمٍ وَلَا هُدًى وَلَا كِتَابٍ مُّنِيرٍ

**Yet still there are some who, with no knowledge or guidance
or any book of enlightenment, argue about God [8]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 8)**

We spoke at the beginning of the chapter about argument based on knowledge and sound counsel. I said that knowledge is intuitive, empirical, and rational, or inspired by Allah *the Almighty*. As for those people who argue about Allah *the Almighty* they do so without intuitive knowledge, 'guidance' (*al-Hajj*: 9), i.e. empirical and rational knowledge '...or guidance or any book of enlightenment, argue about Allah' (*al-Hajj*: 9), i.e. inspiration from Allah *the Almighty*. So, they are people of sophistry and fruitless debate which have no benefit; and when the intelligent person encounters this kind of debater, he should not humour them in their sophistry because no benefit can come of it. Rather he should direct the argument to a position where no sophistry can be used.

We have a fine example of this in Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when he debated Nimrod. Read Allah's words: 'Are you not aware of that [king] who argued with Ibrahim (Abraham) about his Lord, [simply] because Allah had granted him kingship? Lo! Ibrahim (Abraham) said, "My Lord is He who grants life and deals death." [The king] replied, "I [too] grant life and deal death!" Ibrahim (Abraham) said, "Verily, Allah causes the sun to rise in the east; cause it, then, to rise in the west!" Thereupon he who was bent on denying the truth remained dumbfounded....' (*al-Baqara*: 258)

Nimrod used sophistry when he said 'I grant life and deal death' (*al-Baqara*: 258) because he did not really grant life or deal death,⁽¹⁾ Ibrahim (Abraham) wanted to move him to an area where no sophistry was possible, to bring an end to the affair and prevent his rival from engaging in any further nonsense, so he said, '...Verily, Allah causes the sun to rise in the east; cause it, then, to rise in the west!' (*al-Baqara*: 258) The result was that Allah's enemy was unable to give any answer: 'Thereupon he who was bent on denying the truth remained dumbfounded' (*al-Baqara*: 258) That is, he was astonished and confused.

Allah says:

ثَانِيَ عِطْفِهِ لِيُضِلَّ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ لَهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا خِزْيٌ وَنَذِيقُهُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿٩﴾

Turning scornfully aside to lead others away from God's path. Disgrace in this world awaits such a person and, on the Day of Resurrection, We shall make him taste the suffering of the fire[9] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 9)

Man, in his general physical form has a head, neck and shoulders, and he has two sides and a back, and all of these body parts play roles in his life and his motions, and participate in his actions. And the one who argues about Allah *the Almighty* without having any knowledge, guidance or light-giving revelation turns aside from you, and turns his head away because the conversation does not please him – not because what you say is false, but

(1) Nimrod based his claim on the fact that he called forth two men who deserved to die, pardoning one and killing the other.

rather because he has run out of arguments and does not know what to say, and so all he can do is turn aside.

Therefore, they call this kind of argument *mira`* in Arabic, as in ‘Will you, then, contend (*tumarun*) with him as to what he saw?’ (*an-Najm*: 12) That is, will you argue with him about what he saw? *Mira`* means ‘violent arguing’, and is derived from the word *marā* which means ‘to milk an udder until it is completely emptied to the last drop’.

The same is true of the one who makes false arguments, or who argues without possessing any knowledge or proof; you see him stubbornly persisting, trying to take all that his opponent has; and if he had any real knowledge or arguments, he would end the matter without stubbornness and obstinacy.

The Noble Quran gives us an image of this arguing and this rejection of the truth when Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘For, when they are told, “Come, the Apostle of Allah will pray [unto Allah] that you be forgiven,” they turn their heads away, and thou canst see how they draw back in their false pride.’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 5)

The Quran shows us here the gradual way in which a person turns away from the truth, starting by turning his head, and then his side, and then turning his back and showing his shoulders. These are all ways of fleeing from argument when one is not strong enough to convince the other.

He says, ‘Turning scornfully aside to lead others away from Allah’s path....’ (*al-Hajj*: 9) This is the reason he turns his back because he wants to lead astray those who are guided; if he were to stay listen to his rival and the arguments and proofs which he gives, he would be defeated and would not be able to lead the people astray. Therefore, he scornfully turns aside and flees this situation which he cannot face or challenge.

How is such a person requited? Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Disgrace in this world awaits such a person’. (*al-Hajj*: 9) *Khizy* (Disgrace) means ignominy and humiliation, and this is the requital of this worldly life before the Hereafter. Did the disbelievers not experience this disgrace on the day of Badr? Did the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not take a staff in his hand before the battle and point with it, ‘Here is where so-and-so will die, and here is where so-and-so will die’ naming the chieftains of

disbelief and misguidance from Quraysh?⁽¹⁾ After the battle was over, it turned out just as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said it would, and each of these chieftains died at the very places where the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said they would.

And when Abu Jahl was killed at this battle, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud *Allah be pleased with him* stood over him – Glory be to Allah! The shepherd, 'Abdullah ibn Mas'ud *Allah be pleased with him* stood over the leader of Quraysh. When Abu Jahl said, as he lay dying, 'You have indeed climbed high, little shepherd.'⁽²⁾ That is, 'You have climbed above me, though a lowly man you are!' So, what disgrace could be greater than this?

And after Al-'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* interceded for Abu Sufyan with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on the day of the Conquest of Mecca, and Abu Sufyan saw the procession of the Prophet as he entered Mecca, surrounded by the banners of the Helpers in a huge and awesome procession, he could not control himself or conceal what his heart contained, and he said to Al-'Abbas: 'The dominion of your nephew has become great indeed.' Al-'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* replied: 'It is prophet hood, Abu Sufyan.'⁽³⁾ That is, it is not a question of dominion, but rather, prophet hood aided by Allah *the Almighty*.

When the people asked Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* for permission to enter, he allowed those who had embraced Islam the earliest, the slaves and freedmen, to enter, and left the chieftains of Quraysh at the door. They became angry and enraged at this; and among them was the father of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* who said to him, 'Will you give them leave to enter, and leave us?' He replied, 'It is Islam which has placed them ahead of you.' 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* witnessed this, and said to them: 'What angers you so? What business is it of yours if their Lord gives them leave, whilst you must wait?' The true anger will be in the Hereafter when those people are called into paradise, whilst you all tarry in that terrible place.

(1) Narrated by Muslim (1779) and Ahmad (iii. 219) on the authority of Anas

(2) Ibn Hisham, (*Sira*)

(3) Ibid

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘But the foremost shall be [you who in life were] the foremost [in faith and good works], they who were drawn close unto Allah.’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 10-11)

He then says here, ‘...and on the Day of Resurrection We shall make him taste suffering through fire.’ (*al-Hajj*: 9) This disgrace which they endure in this worldly life will not spare them from the disgrace and suffering of the Hereafter. In addition, when He says, ‘suffering through fire (*hariq*)’, the word *hariq* means the fire which burns things in its intensity, such as the fire into which they cast Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and which was so hot that it roasted the birds which flew over it.

The True Lord then says:

ذَٰلِكَ بِمَا قَدَّمْت يَدَاكَ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ لَيْسَ بِظَلَمٍ لِّلْعَبِيدِ ﴿١٠﴾

[It will be said], ‘This is for what you have stored up with your own hands: God is never unjust to His creatures’ [10] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 10)

The word ‘this’ refers to the disgrace of this worldly life and the suffering through fire in the Hereafter which have just been spoken of. This will be a consequence of what their own hands have wrought, it will not be from any wrongdoing on Allah’s part, but rather, they will have wronged their own selves, as He says: ‘...and no wrong did We do to them, but it was they who persistently wronged themselves.’ (*an-Nahl*: 118) Did He take them to task without any warning, or without making it clear that these actions are sinful? You cannot punish someone for a sin unless you first inform them of it, and let them know what penalty is; and if you punish him without letting him know that, this is a sin and a crime, and then you wrong him. Therefore, the lawmakers say, ‘There can be no punishment without a crime, and no crime without a law.’

The declaration has thus come to you and informed you that these actions are crimes, and Allah *the Almighty* has sent the Messengers to you, and you have been forewarned, as He says elsewhere: ‘...Moreover, We would never

chastise [any community for the wrong they may do] ere We have sent an apostle [to them]'. (*al-Isra'*: 15) Also He says, '[It will be said], 'This is for what you have stored up with your own hands: Allah is never unjust to His creatures.' (*al-Hajj*: 10) But are all sins wrought by the hands alone? Sins can be words, deeds, or actions of the heart such as envy or hypocrisy. But, most sins are wrought by the hands.⁽¹⁾

He then says: 'Allah is never unjust to His creatures.' (*al-Hajj*: 10), literally 'Allah *the Almighty* is not *zhallam* to any of His creatures'. The word *dhallam* is an intensive form of the word *zhalim* which means 'wrongdoer', just as *akul* is the intensive form of *akil*, 'one who eats', and therefore means 'one who eats a lot.' So, the action is one, but the results of the action differ. When a verb is intensified, this means either that the action itself is intensified, or that it is repeated. For example, you might eat only a single piece of bread for a meal, or you might eat five pieces, which intensifies the action for a single meal. You eat three meals a day, but you exaggerate the amount you eat in a single meal. But, the nature of the intensity could also be in the number of meals, such as if you eat a single piece of bread in a meal, but you eat five meals a day instead of three; this is an intensity of repetition of the action.

The intensive Arabic form has one meaning when it is affirmed and another when it is negated. If you say that so-and-so is *akul*, 'one who eats much', affirming the intensive adjective for him, you thereby also affirm the basic sense of the verb a fortiori, so he is certainly *akil* 'one who eats.' If you negate the intensive form, then you do not thereby also negate the basic form: if you say that so-and-so is not *akul*, this does not mean that he is not *akil* – he might not eat a lot, but he does eat something.

If we apply this rule to Allah's Words 'Allah is never unjust to His creatures' (*al-Hajj*: 10), the literal meaning will be 'Allah is not *zhallam* (unjust) to any of His creatures'; this would mean that He was still *zhalim* – and far be it for Allah *the Almighty* that this be true! One explains this by saying that there

(1) *Al-Qurtubi says in his exegesis that the hands here are used to symbolize all actions.*

are other verses which negate the basic action itself, such as when He says, ‘...and your Lord does not wrong anyone’ (*al-Kahf*: 49), ‘And it is not We who will be doing wrong unto them, but it is they who will have wronged themselves.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 76) Moreover, the intensive adjective form here is linked to the word ‘creatures’, so if we assume that the intensiveness here is that of repetition, ‘Allah is never unjust to His creatures’ (*al-Hajj*: 10), then it would mean that He does not wrong this person, or that person, or the other person; the objects of the wronging here are creatures, not one single creature.

The essence of wrongdoing is that the strong takes what rightfully belongs to the weak, and the strength of the wrongdoing is commensurate with the power of the wrongdoer. Given this, if wrongdoing were to come from Allah *the Almighty* in accordance with His Strength and Power, it would be severe indeed and no one would be able to bear it. Therefore, the word *zhalim* is not enough to portray this, but *zhallam* is needed, thus the full meaning is only given by the intensive form.

The True Lord then never does the least wrong to His creatures, for He made it clear to them what He permits and what He forbids; He made clear what the crime is and what its punishment will be, and the messengers conveyed this from the very beginning, so no one has any excuse.

Then the True Lord says:⁽¹⁾

(1) Several explanations for the causes of revelation of this verse have been narrated, among them was that certain Bedouins accepted Islam and then went home, and when they found good fortune there in the form of rain and fertile land, they praised Islam, whereas if there was a year of drought, they said, ‘This religion had done us no good’; so, the verse was revealed. This was related by Ibn ‘Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* according to Ibn Kathir in his exegesis. Abu Sa‘id Al-Khudri said that it was revealed about a Jewish man who embraced Islam and then lost his sight, his wealth and his son, and blamed Islam for this and complained of it to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who said, ‘O Jew, Islam cleanses a man just as fire cleanses iron, silver and gold of their impurities’; and then this verse was revealed.

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَنْ يَعْبُدُ اللَّهَ عَلَى حَرْفٍ فَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ خَيْرٌ اطْمَأَنَّ بِهِ وَإِنْ أَصَابَهُ فِتْنَةٌ
 أُنْقَلَبَ عَلَى وَجْهِهِ خَسِرَ الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةَ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الْخُسْرَانُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١١﴾

**There are also some who serve God with unsteady faith: if something good comes their way, they are satisfied, but if they are tested, they revert to their old ways, losing both this world and the next – that is the clearest loss [11]
 (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 11)**

‘There are also some who serve Allah with unsteady faith....’ (*al-Hajj*: 11)
 ‘Worship’ means to obey Allah’s Commandments by fulfilling them, to keep away from His prohibitions by staying clear of what He prohibits. Some people offer worship to Allah *the Almighty* as long as things are going well for them, but as soon as evil befalls them, or they experienced misfortune, they turn away utterly: ‘if something good comes their way, they are satisfied’. (*al-Hajj*: 11)

The True Lord wants His servant to worship Him on a basis of firm faith, which is not shaken or disturbed by events and caused to waver. Your Lord wants you to be His servant in good times and bad times, in ease and in difficulty, for they are both a trial and a test. You only believe in Allah *the Almighty* because you know that He is an All Wise, All Just, and All-Powerful God; you must accept the events which He sends upon you in your life considering these attributes.

So, if life is difficult for you, know that there is a wise reason for this which may not be for you but for your children who will live on after you; for perhaps if they saw you living in ease and goodness, they would fall into greed, corruption and transgression; and perhaps a life of straitened means and scant provision, and your hard toil to give them their life’s needs, will be a motivation for them to do good.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Nay, verily, man becomes grossly overweening whenever he believes himself to be self-sufficient.’ (*al-‘Alaq*: 6-7) Allah *the Almighty* also says, ‘...and We test you [all] through the bad and the good [things of life] by way of trial: and unto Us you all must return.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 35)

You should be aware of this fact: have faith in the wisdom of your Lord in all that He makes happen to you, whether it is a boon or a misfortune. If you fall ill

and are confined to your home, then say, ‘What would have happened outside, from which Allah *the Almighty* has saved me and protected me?’, for goodness may lie in that which you deem evil, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...but it may well be that you hate a thing the while it is good for you....’ (*al-Baqara*: 216)

The statisticians, who have examined some of our households, found that although brothers live in the same house, with the same environment, the same parents, and the same level of schooling, one brother may be upright and virtuous, whilst another is the opposite. Additionally, when they looked into the cause of this phenomenon, they found that the upright and virtuous son was raised during a time when his father was ill and confined to the home for several years, so that this boy had to take a larger share of the responsibilities of looking after the family and helping to raise his siblings and so did not have the opportunity to go out or mix with bad company.

In another study of a deviant youth, they found the cause of deviancy was that the father was a businessman, whilst he was growing up, and was frequently away travelling, yet he spent a lot of money on his family, so that his son grew up in luxury but away from his father.

In another study, they found two brothers, one of whom was successful and the other was the opposite, and when they looked into why this could have occurred, even though they both lived in the same environs, they found that the successful brother suffered from poor health and so he preferred to stay at home and read and study, whilst the other enjoyed good health and so preferred a life of luxury and spent most of his time outside the house. There are many similar examples of this.

So, trials can bring great fortune; there is wisdom behind them because they are sent upon you by the wisdom of your Lord and Creator; they are not the result of your own work. As long as this is true, then be content with them, and worship Allah *the Almighty* with sincerity and firm faith, in good times and in bad ones.

Concerning His words, ‘...serve Allah with unsteady faith’ (*al-Hajj*: 11); ‘unsteady’ means the edge of something, such as if you arrive at a gathering and find the room full, so you sit at the edge by the end most side of the others; usually this is not a comfortable or stable position. The same is true of

those who worship Allah *the Almighty* on the borderline, meaning that faith has not settled comfortably into their hearts and is quickly unseated by trials, because he worships Allah *the Almighty* in a way which is not stabilised with certitude, which the true believer feels in Allah *the Almighty* Who is All Wise in all that He sends upon His servants.

This verse does not leave out any attitude of the human soul, whether in times of good or times of evil.

Reflecting on His words: 'if something good comes their way, they are satisfied, but if they are tested...' (*al-Hajj*: 11), you do not say, 'I have attained to good', but rather good is what has befallen you and come to your door. You do not seek out your provision as much as your provision seeks you out; and therefore Allah *the Almighty* says, '...And unto everyone who is conscious of Allah *the Almighty* He [always] grants a way out [of unhappiness], and provides for him in a manner beyond all expectation...' (*at-Talaq*: 2-3).

The people of sincerity say: 'Your provision knows where you are better than you know where it is'. This means that it knows your address, whilst you do not know its address. This is borne out by the fact that you might seek out provision in a certain place and not find anything at all. You might see crops bloom forth splendidly in the fields, and hope that it will give a plentiful harvest, and build your hopes upon it, but then a storm or blight befalls it, and you do not harvest even enough to meet your barest needs.

We may take admonition from Ibn Udhayna ('Urwa)⁽¹⁾⁽²⁾ When things became difficult for him in Medina, they said to him, 'You are friends with Hisham ibn 'Abd Al-Malik, the Umayyad Caliph, so go to him, and he will be good to you.' So, Ibn Udhayna indeed went to visit his friend, spurring his camel fiercely all the way to the Levant, and asked for an audience with him and was granted it. The Caliph welcomed him and asked how he was, and he replied, 'I am in dire straits indeed.' There were scholars in the court of the Caliph, and so he said to Ibn Udhayna: 'Did you not say' – for he was a poet:

(1) The story of Ibn Udhayna with Hisham ibn 'Abd Al-Malik, the Umayyad Caliph

(2) A poet and jurist who died in 130 A.H.

‘I know – and profligacy is not my nature –

That the provision which is mine will surely come to me’?

Ibn Udhayna then felt that the Caliph had dashed his hopes and thus said to him: ‘May Allah *the Almighty* reward you well, Commander of the Faithful, you have reminded me of what I had forgotten, and alerted me to that of which I had become heedless’, and he left. When he left the Caliph’s court, the Caliph thought about the matter and upbraided himself for treating his friend in this way when he had come to ask his favour, and for responding to him in such a way. He wanted to make amends for this error, so he sent an envoy to him bearing many gifts. But, whenever the Caliph’s representative reached the place where Ibn Udhayna had gone, he found that he had moved on to another place, until he arrived all the way to his house and knocked upon the door, and informed him that the Commander of the Faithful regretted what he had done, and sent him gifts and presents. Upon this, Ibn Udhayna added another line to his aforementioned poem, saying,

‘I seek it out, and such seeking wearies me,

And had I simply sat and waited for it, I would not be so weary!’

We also notice that this verse says: ‘...If something good comes their way, they are satisfied, but if they are tested...’ (*al-Hajj*: 11) that is, Allah *the Almighty* did not contrast ‘good’ with ‘bad’, but rather said ‘tested’ meaning a test because he might succeed in this trial so that it is not bad for him.

As for the saying of Allah, ‘they revert to their old’ (*al-Hajj*: 11), it completely turns things around so that after being an obedient servant he becomes disobedient, thereby ‘losing both this world and the next’ (*al-Hajj*: 11), for a man to lose his worship is a great loss which nothing can replace or supplant, and therefore He then says, ‘that is the clearest loss.’ (*al-Hajj*: 11) So, are there clear losses and unclear ones?! Indeed, some losses can be compensated, but the loss which cannot be compensated is the clear loss which remains with a man and never leaves him. This loss does not apply only to this world such that it could be replaced or borne, but it extends to the Hereafter as well, where loss cannot be replaced and torment cannot be borne. And hence comes the saying of Allah: ‘the clearest loss’ is the loss which

entirely encompasses and overwhelms the one who experiences it. Therefore, we say to those who lose someone dear to them as the mother who loses her only child: 'If those you lost were beloved and dear to you, then sell them for a dear price and enter paradise on their account by bearing the loss patiently and hoping for compensation for it from Allah *the Almighty*'. Also, if you lost out on their account in this world, then do not lose out in the Hereafter; for if we slap our faces, tear out clothes, and object to what Allah *the Almighty* decreed for them, we will then lose out both in this world and in the Hereafter.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke the truth when he, said: 'How wonderful the Muslim's affair is! His affair is all good: If good fortune befalls him, he gives thanks and it is good for him; and if bad fortune befalls him, he is patient and it is good for him. This is only true of the believer.'⁽¹⁾

To be patient in trial and grateful in ease is one of the levels of faith and the stages of certainty in the believer's soul; it is a beginning step which is followed by other steps and ascending stages, according to the strength of one's faith.

Listen to the dialogue which took place between some ascetic scholars competing with one another to reach these higher stages of faith; they competed not for the sake of glory or fame, but for the sincere intention to reach higher levels of faith.

One of these men of sound faith asked another, 'What are the ascetics in your land like?' He replied, 'If good comes to us, we give thanks; and if evil comes to us, we have patience.' The old man laughed and said: 'And what of this? This is what dogs do! As for us, if good comes to us, we share it with others; and if evil comes to us, we give thanks.'

This is not bragging, it is competition, for both men were ascetics who followed the path to Allah *the Almighty* and knew that they would be accounted according to how they followed this path, so they tried to rise to the highest level of it. So, do not think that the final goal is to have patience in times of trial and to give thanks for graces, for this is only the beginning, and beyond it

(1) Narrated by Muslim (2299), Ahmad (v.24) and Ad-Darimi (ii. 318) on the authority of Suhayb Ar-Rumi Allah be pleased with him

there are higher ranks and grades for those who seek to go higher, and to do their utmost to worship their Lord. Look at how one of these ascetics said to his companion, ‘Do you not yearn for Allah *the Almighty*?’, whereupon he said, ‘No;’ he said in astonishment, ‘And why is that?’ He replied, ‘only the one who is absent is yearned for – when did He become absent from me that I should yearn for Him?’ This shows us the levels of faith and the pure relationship between the servant and his Lord *the Almighty*.

The True Lord then says, about the one who worships Allah *the Almighty* on the borderline of faith:

يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَمَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ ذَلِكَ هُوَ الضَّلَالُ الْبَعِيدُ ﴿١٢﴾

**Instead of God, they call upon what can neither
harm nor help them – that is straying far away [12]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 12)**

The meaning of ‘neither harm’ (*al-Hajj*: 12) is: Can the idol which the disbeliever worships possibly harm him? No, the idol cannot harm him; he can only truly be harmed by the One whom he refuses to worship; he is harmed by the Lord which he denies, and the requital which he will be given for his actions. So, what does ‘neither harm’ mean here? It means that it will not harm him if he rejects it and refuses to worship it, and it will not benefit him if he worships it; Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘that is straying faraway’. (*al-Hajj*: 12) Indeed, he is astray because a man should only worship and obey someone he hopes will benefit him in some way, or who he fears will harm him in some way.

I mentioned before what one of those endowed with deep knowledge said affirming: ‘Give your obedience to one whom you cannot do without.’ If we said this to our boys at school, and the educators recognised the importance of it, boys would not tempt one another to engage in bad behaviour; the boy would stop and think a thousand times about his Lord’s Directions, the advice of his mother and father, and how if he succumbed to temptation; he would abandon the directions of those who love him, fear for him and hope for the best for him, all for the sake of the temptation of a friend, though he knows nothing about him and about his character.

We must teach our children the principles of Islam so that the boy knows from his earliest age who loves him and who hates him, and who he is best off obeying.

We can observe in the verse that harm is mentioned before benefit: '...something that can neither harm nor benefit him'. (*al-Hajj*: 12) This is because preventing evil comes before seeking good because evil means the disruption of the natural balance of something. Benefit increases you and gives you something extra, whilst harm takes something away from you, and therefore it is better for you to remain as you are without either losing or gaining anything. So, if you stand before two things, one which brings benefit, and another which wards off harm, you must doubtlessly choose to ward off harm first, preventing evil before you seek good.

We gave an example before to illustrate this: Suppose that one man wants to throw an apple at you, whilst another wants to throw a stone at you at the same time; what do you do? Catch the apple, or protect yourself from the stone?! This is what it means when we say that preventing evil comes before seeking good.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

يَدْعُوا لِمَنْ ضَرُّهُ أَقْرَبُ مِنْ نَفْعِهِ لَيْسَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَلَيْسَ الْعَشِيرُ ﴿١٣﴾

**Or invoke one whose harm is closer than his help:
an evil master and an evil companion [13]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 13)**

The previous verse affirmed that he calls upon what cannot harm him nor benefit him, and this verse affirms that what he calls upon is closer to harming him than benefiting him.

The word *aqrab* (closer) is a comparative form meaning that two things share an attribute but one of them has more of it than the other. If you say, 'So-and-so is handsomer than so-and-so', this means that they are both handsome, but one more than the other.

So, His words, 'Or invoke one whose harm is closer than his help...' (*al-Hajj*: 13) mean that there is some benefit which is likely, but the harm is

more likely. This verse therefore seems on the surface to contradict the previous verse, but in reality there is no contradiction whatsoever, and we must understand this in the light of His words: ‘...Had it issued from any but Allah they would surely have found in it many an inner contradiction!’ (*an-Nisa*: 82)

There were priests for the idols which they used to worship who would rule over them and over those who worshipped them, and if the idolaters wanted anything they would say to the priests, ‘Call upon Allah for us for such-and-such.’ So, they possessed influence and temporal power, and they were the intermediaries between the idols and those who worshipped them, and as such they were given many good and beneficial things, and they would take everything which was offered to the idols.

Idols were a cause of benefit for their priests, but this benefit only applied to this worldly life, they would leave it when they died. So, the duration of the benefit was short, death might have come to one of them before he had a chance to benefit from what he had taken. Once death came, they had no faith, nor good deeds, nor repentance. This is the meaning of ‘...whose harm is closer than his help....’ (*al-Hajj*: 13)

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, ‘...an evil master and an evil companion.’ (*al-Hajj*: 13) The word *bi’s* is used to express blame, and means ‘evil’ and ‘ugly’. A master is the one who is near to you, and one from whom you seek benefit because you only draw close to what benefits you. You might do this because he helps you in hard times and in straitened circumstances, succours you when you need succour; this is meaning of a true master. Or otherwise, you keep him near to you because he consoles you and gives you good company, although he is too weak to succour you; this is the ‘companion’. The idols which they worshipped were vile patrons because they did not succour them in times of dire need; and they were vile companions because they did not console them or give them cheer in times of ease.

The True Lord then says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى
 مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يُرِيدُ ﴿١٤﴾

**But God will admit those who believe and do good deeds
 to Gardens graced with flowing streams. God does
 whatever He wishes [14] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 14)**

After speaking about the disbelievers, denizens of hell and those who worship Allah *the Almighty* on the margins of faith, it was inevitable that the True Lord would then give the contrast because the soul is then able to make a comparison and reflect on the matters which send a man to hell, and those matters which cause him to enter paradise; and this serves to make the point even clearer.

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Behold, [in the life to come] the truly virtuous: will indeed be in bliss, whereas, behold, the wicked will indeed be in a blazing fire.’ (*al-Infitar*: 13-14) Then He says, ‘Let them, then, laugh a little – for they will weep a lot....’ (*at-Tawba*: 82)

Mentioning the blessing alone without its contrasting calamity does not give the desired effect, but when you contrast the blessing with the calamity, contrast the prevention of harm with the gaining of benefit, it serves to highlight the other. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...he that shall be drawn away from the fire and brought into paradise will indeed have gained a triumph....’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 185) If you have faith, then you shall not only be drawn away from the fire – although this is a blessing in itself – but you shall be drawn away from the fire and brought into paradise.

Faith is an action of the heart and feelings which satisfy the soul; but it has requirements. If you attain to faith in Allah *the Almighty* your heart is satisfied that Allah *the Almighty* is the Creator, the Provider and the Necessary Being, then what does this faith require of you? Faith requires that you obey Allah’s commandments, for He is All Wise; that you trust His Power, for He is All-Capable; that you fear His Wrath, for He is All-Compelling; that you do not despair of His Grace, for He is the Giver of Grace; and that you do not feel safe from His Grasp, for His Grasp encompasses all.

You believe in all these things, so when He issues a commandment to you, you must call to mind the reasons for obeying this commandment, and trust that your Lord does not command you and forbid you for no reason but rather does so by the attributes of perfection which He possesses, or by virtue of His attributes of Majesty and Power. So, in all that you do, and in all that you take or you leave, you should take these attributes into mind.

Therefore, the verse combines mention of faith and righteous deeds: ‘Verily, Allah will admit those who have attained to faith and have done righteous deeds into gardens....’ (*al-Hajj*: 14)

In the chapter of *al-‘Asr*, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Consider the flight of time! Verily, man is bound to lose himself, unless he be of those who attain to faith, and do good works...’ (*al-‘Asr*: 1-2); not only this, but He also says, ‘...and enjoin upon one another the keeping to truth, and enjoin upon one another patience in adversity.’ (*al-‘Asr*: 3) The enjoining of truth and patience in times of trial is part of the proper response to the call of faith, and one of its fruits because the believer will encounter, in the journey of life, many trials which might shake him, and he will encounter scorn and derision, and perhaps he will even undergo torture. So, he must grasp firmly to the truth, and share with his fellow believers in enjoining truth, and he must be patient, and share with his fellow believers in enjoining patience. This is because every man may have periods of weakness and laxity, so in times of trial the strong must counsel the weak.

Perhaps this situation might change at another time when a different trial emerges, and the one upon whom you enjoined patience today might enjoin it upon you tomorrow; and in this way, a faithful society becomes filled with mutual enjoining of truth and patience. So, counsel one another, for you shall encounter difficulties which will not affect everybody equally, but will affect some and not others; and if you are weak, then you will find that one of your brethren will counsel you: ‘Be patient, be strong, be cautious, and do not let this trial take you away from the truth or from patience’. These are the constituents of salvation to which the believers must cling: faith, righteous deeds, and the mutual enjoining of truth and patience.

He says, 'Gardens graced with flowing streams...' (*al-Hajj*: 14); the word gardens means crops, trees, plants, flowers and sweet fragrances. And all these things live on water, which is why He says, 'with flowing streams...' (*al-Hajj*: 14); the meaning of '...with flowing streams...' (*al-Hajj*: 14) is that the water which belongs there does not come there from somewhere else such that it might be cut off; in another verse, He says, 'through', literally 'under', 'which running waters flow' (*at-Tawba*: 100). Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah does whatever He wishes.' (*al-Hajj*: 14)

For nothing is beyond His Power; He does not require effort to perform His actions, as human beings do; Allah *the Almighty* says, 'His Being alone is such that when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, "Be" – and it is.' (*Ya Sin*: 82) If you carefully reflect on this verse, you will find that the thing which Allah *the Almighty* wants and commands to exist already exist, since He speaks to it, saying: "'Be" – and it is.' (*Ya Sin*: 82) Therefore, it must already exist in reality, and the commandment here is only for it to manifest itself in the visible world.

The True Lord then says:

مَنْ كَانَتْ يَظُنُّ أَنَّ لَنْ يَنْصُرَهُ اللَّهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ فَلْيَمْدُدْ بِسَبَبٍ
إِلَى السَّمَاءِ ثُمَّ لْيَقْطَعْ فَلْيَنْظُرْ هَلْ يُذْهِبَنَّ كَيْدُهُ مَا يَغِيظُ ﴿١٥﴾

Anyone who thinks that God will not support him in this world and the next should stretch a rope up to the sky, climb all the way up it, and see whether this strategy removes the cause of his anger [15] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 15)

The word 'think' means knowledge which is uncertain and unconfirmed. I spoke before about the ascription of things: there is a verdict given, and the thing for which it is given. If you say, 'Zayd is hard-working', you believe that the attribute of hard work befits Zayd; if your belief is correct, you will be able to offer evidence for it, saying, 'The proof of this is that he is at the top of his class every year'.

But, if someone believes something without being able to give any proof for it, such as if he hears people saying that Zayd is hardworking and so he

says the same thing, but has no proof that it is true, or such as the child who recites, ‘Say, “He is the One Allah”’ (*al-Ikhlās*: 1), this is something true which the boy believes, but he cannot offer any proof for it until he grows up and his intelligence matures.

From where did the child take this matter and believe in it? He took it from his guardians, whether his father or his teacher, and then imitated them. So, if this matter is factually true but you cannot prove it, then this is imitation; if you believe in something factual and you can prove it, then this is the highest level of knowledge; if you believe in something which is not factually true, then this is ignorance.

The ignorant person is the one who believes something which is not true; this is the one who causes problems for the whole world, who makes all those around him suffer; for if a person is uneducated and does not know anything at all and has a clean page unmarked by any notion, you can convince him of the truth and he will accept it from you, because his mind is empty and he will not oppose you.

As for the ignorant person who holds false beliefs, you must first convince him that his beliefs are mistaken so that he renounces them, and only then can you teach him what is correct.

If you have doubts about an ascription so that it seems to you likely to be true or false, this is called ‘doubt’; so, you cannot be sure that Zayd is hardworking, nor that he is not. If it seems more likely to you that he is hard working, then this is ‘supposition’. If it seems more likely to you that he is not hard working, then this is called ‘fancy’.

So, the ascription of something is either knowledge, which is true and which you believe and can prove; or it is imitated knowledge, which is true and which you believe but you cannot prove; or it is ignorance, wherein you believe something which is not true; or else it is doubt; *zhann* (supposition), wherein you find it more likely to be true; or it is *wahm* (fancy), wherein you find it more likely to be false. And the word *zhann* (to suppose or to think) occurs when He says, ‘Anyone who thinks that Allah will not support him....’ (*al-Hajj*: 15)

That is, it occurs to his mind in passing that Allah *the Almighty* will not succour Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or indulges in this fancy – and no one would think this apart from the disbelievers because they hope for this in the battle between good and evil – whoever thinks such a thing should stop thinking it because it is impossible, and it will never happen.

And the disbelievers might have entertained this thought when they saw the beginnings of the victory of the faith and the signs that it would triumph, and this made them feel anguish, and nothing would give their minds peace except to entertain this thought.

Therefore Allah *the Almighty* casts their anguish back upon them, and says to them: ‘Your anguish will continue because faith and its hosts will continue to be succoured, the only option you have left is to cast a rope up towards the sky, tie about your necks and hang yourselves; if you think that this plan will save you from your anguish, then go ahead and do it: ‘...should stretch a rope up to the sky, climb all the way up it and see whether this strategy removes the cause of his anger.’ (*al-Hajj*: 15) But, what is anger? It is a kind of anger accompanied by grief and despair which you feel when you see something happening before your eyes which does not please you, yet at the same time you can do nothing to stop it.

The Arabic word for angry is *ghayzh*, a word based on the same lexical root which appears elsewhere in the Book of Allah *the Almighty*; it is used even for inanimate objects which have no sensation. Allah *the Almighty* says that the fire of hell is ‘well-nigh bursting with fury...’ (*al-Mulk*: 8), and ‘When it shall face them from afar, they will hear its angry roar (*taghayyu*) and its hiss.’ (*al-Furqan*: 12) It is as though the fire of hell feels furious rage at them, and is waiting to receive them.

And both the believer and the disbeliever can feel anguish, for when we see the disbelievers stubbornly oppose faith, scorn and mock it, we feel anguish, but Allah *the Almighty* relieves the anguish of our hearts, as He says, ‘removes the cause of his anger’ (*Yusuf*: 15). As for the anguish the disbelievers feel when they see the faith being succoured, it will remain in their hearts, for our Lord says to them: ‘Be assured that Allah *the Almighty* did not send any messenger without undertaking to succour him; if any of you think otherwise,

then nothing will relieve and abate your anguish except that you hang yourselves'. Therefore, the True Lord says to them in another verse: 'Say, "Perish in your rage!"' (*Al-Imran*: 119) As for His words: 'should stretch a rope up to the sky' (*al-Hajj*: 15), they are to reach out means to unfurl something which was furled such as when He says, 'And the earth – We have spread it out wide...' (*al-Hijr*: 19), so that however far you travel the earth is always spread out, and it never ends, that is, it has no edge.

The word *sabab* is used in this context to refer to the rope such as the rope you use to draw water from a well. But can anyone stretch out a rope to the heavens? So, He connects this matter to something impossible as though He is saying to them: 'Even if you want to hang yourselves, you will be unable, and this anguish of yours will continue'. Or, the meaning of 'to the sky' is 'to the ceiling of the house', such as is the case with one who hangs himself from the ceiling.

I could also understand the word *sabab* to mean 'anything which gets you to the heavens', and any means by which you could ascend. In this case, the meaning would be: 'Use any means you like to reach the heavens and prevent the means of victory from reaching Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; for his succour comes from Allah, so prevent it if you can'. They are also unable to do this, so the anguish will remain in their hearts.

We may observe that we are speaking about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* although the verse does not mention him specifically but rather only has a third person singular pronoun 'him' when He says, 'Anyone who thinks that Allah will not support him...' (*al-Hajj*: 15). These words address those disbelievers who anguish over the successes of the faith; so when Allah *the Almighty* says 'succour him', who does this refer to? It refers to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Why? They say it is because when words are used in a general way, they refer to certain meanings: when you say 'sky', we know what it means; we know what 'heart' means; and we know what 'light' means. The names of things are either explicit, like 'Muhammad', 'Ali', 'Umar', 'earth' and 'sky', or they are pronouns which refer to these explicit nouns, such as: 'I', 'you', 'he' and 'they'. Pronouns are vague, and only the speaker designates their meaning: you say 'I', and other people also say 'I' and 'we'. So, the one who designates the meaning of the pronoun is the

person who speaks it, and the easiest pronouns to understand are those which refer to the speaker himself, or the one to whom he speaks. And if the person in question is neither the speaker nor the listener, but is absent (the 'third person'), then how is he to be identified? When you say 'he', 'she' or 'they', who is meant by these pronouns? How do you designate them? They say that something must come before it to indicate who it is such as if you say, 'A man came to see me and I received him well'; who did you receive? You received the man of whom you are speaking. 'A woman came to see me, and I received her well'. 'Such-and-such people came to see me, and I received them well'. So the pronoun is identified by the earlier mention of its subject.

But Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has not been mentioned here before the pronoun such as would assign it to him. Indeed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has not been mentioned, but reflect on the meaning: the discourse here is about succour in the battle between the side of faith, led by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the side of disbelief, led by these stubborn opponents; so the position here is clearly assigned, and the pronoun could not refer to anyone but to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.⁽¹⁾

Another example of this is found Allah's words: 'Behold, from on high have We bestowed this....' (*al-Qadr*: 1) The pronoun here is clearly assigned to nothing other than the Quran; a pronoun is not clearly assigned unless the mind does not think of anything else except that one particular thing, in the context of the discourse.

Read the saying of Allah: 'Say, "He is the One Allah"' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1), and you will observe that the pronoun comes before the explicit noun, so that the reference is deferred; yet the mind does not think of anything other than Allah *the Almighty* so that if 'He' is said alone in this way, it could not mean anything other than Allah *the Almighty*.

Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Now if Allah were to take men [immediately] to task for all the evil that they do, He would not leave a single

(1) *Al-Qurtubi affirms this opinion in his exegesis of this verse.*

living creature upon its face...' (*an-Nahl*: 16) – upon what face? The mind does not think of anything else here other than the earth.

When Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And see whether this strategy removes the cause of his anger...' (*al-Hajj*: 15), the question here is being asked by the One Who fully knows, and it is therefore a rhetorical question meant to make them acknowledge themselves that their anguish will remain as it is, and nothing will heal it, and that they will die whilst still in anguish, as He says elsewhere: 'Say, "Perish in your rage!"' (*Al- 'Imran*: 119)

The True Lord then says:

وَكَذَٰلِكَ أُنزِلْنَآهُ ءَايَاتٍۭ يَّبَيِّنُهَا وَأَنَّ ٱللَّهَ يَهْدِى مَن يَشَاءُ

**In this way, We send the Quran down as clear messages, and God guides whoever He will [16]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 16)**

The saying of Allah, 'We send' (*al-Hajj*: 16) refers to the Quran because, as we have just said, the reference of this pronoun is obvious, and as long as this is the case it does not need to have been mentioned before. The notion 'bestowal from on high' implies the concept of height; so, if you see that this law which the Quran has brought is difficult for you, or comes between you and your desires, know that it has come down from One Who is higher than you, from Allah *the Almighty* not from an equal of yours whom you could correct or debate, asking the reasons for this commandment and that prohibition. As long as the commandment comes to you from Allah *the Almighty* then you must hear and obey, and not debate.

And we have a fine example of this resignation in Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*. When they said to him, 'Your companion claims that he was taken in one night from Mecca to Jerusalem and then up into the heavens', this man of great sincerity said nothing more than: 'If he said it, he spoke the truth.'⁽¹⁾ He did not debate since the matter had come from on high, from Allah *the Almighty*.

(1) *Ibn Hisham, (Sira)*

We said before that if you visit a sick person and find all kinds of medicines at his side, and you ask him what they are all for, he will say, 'The doctor prescribed them for me'. And if you then begin to criticise these medicines, listing their side effects, dangers and ingredients, you thereby involve yourself into something which is none of your business. Of course, the difference with this example is that doctors are capable of making mistakes when prescribing medicines, but nevertheless it serves to explain the situation – and Allah *the Almighty* is beyond compare. And the poet spoke the truth when he said:

Glory be to Him who inherits the doctor and his medicine,

And shows the patient how even doctors die!

So, the proof of every command is not that we know its wisdom; it is that we know the one who commands it.

The meaning of *ayat* (messages) is 'wondrous signs', the meaning of 'clear' is 'plain to see'. I explained before that the word *ayat* can mean three things: the cosmological signs which prove Allah's Omnipotence and strengthen faith in the soul, such as the night, the day, the sun and the moon; *ayat* also mean the miracles vouchsafed to the messengers to prove that they are really sent by Allah *the Almighty*; and finally, the word *ayat* means the verses of the Quran, bearing Allah's laws.

Here, the word *ayat* in the verse 'In this way, We send the Quran down as clear messages' (*al-Hajj*: 16) could be applied to all of these meanings for the verses of the Quran contain cosmological wonders, and miracles, and lawgiving messages. He then says, 'and Allah guides whoever He wills.' (*al-Hajj*: 16) This is one of those things which confuse some people much such as: '...He lets go astray him that wills [to go astray] and guides aright him that wills...' (*an-Nahl*: 93); other similar expressions are clung onto by those who are themselves not guided, who say, 'Allah did not will to guide us, so what can we do? What have we done wrong?' This is not a rational objection because a rational objection requires that you mention one thing and its contrast, whilst these people only draw attention to one side of this matter and not the other which means that their objection is nothing but a vain excuse. When the misguided person says, 'Allah destined that I be misguided, so what wrong

have I done?’ Why does he not also say, ‘Allah willed for the obedient person to be guided, so why does He reward him’? So why did you leave aside the good, and discuss only the bad?

The one who reflects deeply on those messages which speak of Allah’s will with regard to misguidance and guidance will find that He has made clear which people He wills to send astray and which people He wills to guide. Read His saying, ‘...behold, Allah does not guide people who refuse to acknowledge the truth.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 67) So, their denial of the truth came before their lack of guidance. He says, ‘...behold, Allah does not bestow His guidance upon such iniquitous folk’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 6), and ‘...Verily, Allah does not grace with His guidance people who are given to evildoing!’ (*al-Qasas*: 50)

He only guides those who believe in Him; as for those who choose disbelief and are pleased with it, Allah *the Almighty* sets a seal on their hearts so that faith does not enter it and disbelief does not leave it; they love this disbelief, so He gives them more of it, just as he increases the faith of the faithful: ‘Just as for those who are [willing to be] guided, He increases their [ability to follow His] guidance....’ (*Muhammad*: 17)

Guidance here is direction towards what is good. I gave an example of this before – though Allah *the Almighty* is beyond compare. Suppose that you are following a road which is unknown to you, and you stop at a highway patrolman and ask him for directions, so he shows you which way to go and describes which route you should follow. But do his directions oblige you to follow the route he has described? Of course, you are free to follow it or go a different way. If you show appreciation for the patrolman’s favour to you, and thank him for it, he might sense that you are a good person, and help you out himself with the obstacles on the road, and he might get in the car with you to accompany you through a dangerous area where he fears you might run into trouble. This is the meaning of ‘Just as for those who are [willing to be] guided, He increases their [ability to follow His] guidance and causes them to grow in Allah- consciousness.’ (*Muhammad*: 17) But if you treat this man disrespectfully, or accuse him of not knowing the road properly, he will leave you to your own devices, not even give you any advice.

In the same way, the True Lord directed both the believer and the disbeliever towards goodness, and the believer was content with Allah *the Almighty* and accepted His commandments and prohibitions, and praised Allah *the Almighty* for this blessing, so He increased his faith and helped him with the difficulties of worship, and gave him a guiding light to follow. As for the disbeliever, He leaves him to sink into the darkness of his disbelief and to stumble through the mazes of blindness and misguidance.

The True Lord then says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَالَّذِينَ هَادُوا وَالصَّابِئِينَ وَالنَّصَارَى وَالْمَجُوسَ وَالَّذِينَ أَشْرَكُوا
إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْصِلُ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ شَهِيدٌ ﴿١٧﴾

**As for the believers, those who follow the Jewish faith,
the *Sabi'ans*, the Christians, the *Magians*, and the idolaters,
God will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection;
God witnesses all things [17] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 17)**

Allah *the Almighty* speaks of six factions saying of them: ‘...Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection; Allah witnesses all things.’ (*al-Hajj*: 17), the fact that He will decide between them implies that there is a difference and battle raging between them. And if you seek out the other verses which mention these factions, you will find that there are two verses, one in the chapter of *al-Baqara* and the other in the chapter of *al-Ma`ida*.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Verily, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians and the *Sabi'ans* – all who believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous deeds – shall have their reward with their Lord; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.’ (*al-Baqara*: 62) In *al-Ma`ida*, Allah *the Almighty* mentions the *Sabi'ans* before the Christians, and puts the word in the nominative case (*sabi'un*) instead of the accusative (*sabi'un*), saying, ‘For, verily, those who have attained to faith [in this divine writ], as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the *Sabi'ans*, and the Christians – all who believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous deeds – no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.’ (*al-Ma`ida*: 69)

He says, ‘As for the believers’ (*al-Hajj*: 17), (i.e. in Prophet Muhammad), ‘those who follow the Jewish...’ (*al-Hajj*: 17) means that Jews and Christians that both of whom came before Islam. As for the *Sabi'ans*, they were a group who used to follow the religion of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* then turned to star-worship, so were called *sabi'a* ‘those who change their religion’ because of how they left the true religion. As for the ‘*Magians*’, they were fire-worshippers, ‘...and the idolaters...’ (*al-Hajj*: 17) are the idolaters who worship idols and false gods.

As for the difference in whether the *Sabi'ans* or Christians are mentioned first, they say that it is because the Christians are a large and well-known faction with a prophet, whilst the *Sabi'ans* were a faction who abandoned their prophet and disobeyed him and invented a different doctrine from his; so, they were a minority, but they came before the Christians chronologically. So, when He acknowledges the chronological order, He says, ‘and the *Sabi'ans*, and the Christians’ (*al-Hajj*: 17), whilst when He acknowledges the large number of adherents and the renown, He says, ‘and the Christians, and the *Sabi'ans*’. (*al-Baqara*: 62) So, the word order in both cases exists for a specific reason.

As for His saying ‘the *Sabi'ans*’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 69) in the nominative case, when it would usually be in the accusative case because it is in a list of nouns which follow the word *inna* (verily), which makes the nouns it precedes accusative – so why is this word made nominative in the midst of a list of accusative nouns?

They say that a nominative can only intrude on a list of accusative nouns if it marks the end of one sentence and the beginning of another; so, it is as though He is saying: ‘Verily, those who believe, and the Jews, and the Christians – and the *Sabi'ans*, too’. So, a whole new sentence is being added here so that it is deferred in the meaning and brought forward in the actual wording; therefore, it combines the two different orders in one single verse.

But how do differences between religions originate? The difference originates by there being people who believe in Allah *the Almighty* and believe in the prophet who delivers the message of Allah *the Almighty*, but they then differ amongst themselves about certain things, just like the difference we see between the Mu'tazilite sect and the Sunnis, or between the Jabri sect and the

Qadari sect: one group affirms the divine attributes and another group denies them; and one group says that man has no free will and is destined to do all he does, whilst another group says that he has free will.

And differences might arise between religions concerning prophet hood, for religious people might believe in the All-Powerful Allah but differ about prophets such as Musa (Moses), 'Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon them* even though they are all true prophets. Or the difference might arise because of claims such as those who claim to be prophets, like those who worship fire or Buddha, for example.

So, this verse mentions these six factions; and what is the judgement of them all, now that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has been sent? We say, 'As for the idolaters who worship idols and those who worship false prophets, they are disbelievers and lost; as for the Jews and Christians who believe in an All-Powerful Allah and in true prophet hood, their position after the appearance of Islam is that Allah made a final clean slate for all these religions: in the case of those who were Jews or Christians before Islam appeared, Allah offered them a clean slate in the form of Islam, and if they truly adhered to the primordial faith in Allah *the Almighty*, they had to start anew as believers and Muslims. That is why He then says, '...all who believe in Allah and the Last Day and do righteous deeds – shall have their reward with their Lord; and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve.' (*al-Baqara*: 62)

After Islam appeared, all of these groups – the Jews, Christians, Magians and idolaters – were given a new life and a chance to turn over a new leaf and be born again, for they were all obliged to embrace faith in Allah *the Almighty* and His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is as though Islam is a spiritual occasion which effaces all that has gone before it, Allah *the Almighty* forgives all that was in the past.

When the True Lord speaks about the generation before the prophet hood of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He says, 'And Lo, Allah accepted, through the prophets, this solemn pledge (from the followers of earlier revelation), "If, after all the revelation and the wisdom which I have vouchsafed unto you, there comes to you an apostle confirming the truth already in your possession, you must believe in him and succour him." "Do

you – said He – “acknowledge and accept My bond on this condition?” They answered, “We do acknowledge it.” He said, “Then bear witness [thereto], and I shall be your witness.” (*Al-‘Imran*: 81)

Therefore both Musa (Moses) and ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon them* told their followers about Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and gave glad tidings of him, which is proved by the fact that Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...whenever there came unto them something which they recognized [as the truth], they would deny it...’ (*al-Baqara*: 89); this refers to the Jews and Christians.

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came as a mercy to the worlds to gather all the religions in Islam, which added to them those things which would be required by the affairs of life and the developments of time until the Last Hour.

Islam came as a clean slate for those people, giving them the opportunity to renew their lives with faith and righteous deeds after which they would receive their reward in full, from their Lord and their previous religions, would not tarnish them, nor would their false and corrupt beliefs.

As for if differences that arose concerning matters of prophet hood, as is the case in the verse we are currently examining: ‘Allah will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection. Indeed, Allah is over all things a Witness.’ (*al-Hajj*: 17) The meaning of this ‘decision’ is that we will be shown who is right and who is wrong. Thus, these verses combine the different situations of agreement and disagreement, and show what the requital of each shall be.

And when decisions are made between things, this refers either to their placement or their requital; and they say that of course the judgement passed over them, stating who is right and who is wrong, will lead to their being placed in different places, as well as being given different requitals.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Allah witnesses all things’ (*al-Hajj*: 17) because He is the Judge who makes the final decision between His servants. A judge requires either proofs or witnesses; these witnesses must be just; justice of testimony can only be assured by means of religion which prevents man from straying from the truth. If the One to judge here is Allah *the Almighty*, no proofs or witnesses are required, for His Knowledge encompasses all things and not a single atom in the heavens or the earth escapes Him.

It is amazing that Allah's judgement and decision encompass all forms of authority: legislative, judicial and executive; for His decree cannot be delayed or outsmarted by any stratagems; no rights are ever violated by His judgements, as is the case in the courts of this world.

As for human judgements, there is a separation therein of legislative, judicial, and executive bodies, and therefore a verdict might be given, but its execution might be delayed. As for Allah's judgement, it is executed immediately and nothing can delay it.

So, the matter does not proceed in that way, but rather, it is instantly reckoned, either for you or against you.

The True Lord then says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَسْجُدُ لَهُ، مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالشَّمْسُ وَالْقَمَرُ
وَالنُّجُومُ وَالْجِبَالُ وَالشَّجَرُ وَالْدَّوَابُّ وَكَثِيرٌ مِنَ النَّاسِ وَكَثِيرٌ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِ
الْعَذَابُ وَمَنْ يُهِنِ اللَّهُ فَمَا لَهُ، مِنْ مُكْرِمٍ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَفْعَلُ مَا يَشَاءُ ﴿١٨﴾

Do you not realize [Prophet] that everything in the heavens and earth submits to God: the sun, the moon, the stars, the mountains, the trees, and the animals?

So do many human beings, though for many others punishment is well deserved. Anyone disgraced by God will have no one to honour him: God does whatever He will [18] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 18)

Allah *the Almighty* says '*alam tara*' (do you not see), but meaningfully means 'Do you not realise...' because the prostration of these things is not the same as the prostration which we ourselves do, but rather, every kind of being in the universe has its own way of prostrating.

We spoke before about the genera of being in the universe saying that they are four in number: the lowest is minerals; then comes plants, which are higher in that they have growth and motion; then comes animals which are higher in that they have sensation; and then comes human beings who are higher in that they have the capacity to think and choose between alternatives.

Each one of these genera serves those which are higher than them; this circle ends in the fact that everything in the universe has been subdued by Allah *the Almighty* to serve man. A Qudsi Hadith says, ‘O Son of Adam! I created all things for you, and I created you for Me; so, do not let what was made for you distract you from what you were made for.’ So, man should have thought about this distinction which his Lord gave to him, realised that everything in the world, however small, has a purpose to fulfil and a role to play. O man, since you are the master of this universe, you must also have a purpose and a role to play in life. You are not a lesser being than these things which Allah *the Almighty* has subdued for you; otherwise, you would become lower than they are.

If the purpose of all other beings is to serve you because you are higher than they are, then seek your purpose from one who is higher than you are. If a messenger comes to you from One Who is higher than you to tell you what this purpose is, you should thank him because he has alerted you to what you should be doing and to whom you should always be connected. Therefore, you should never turn away from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because he explains many things to you which are subjects of rational enquiry.

Man should have thought about these beings which serve him: Do you have any power over them? They have served you since you were a child, before you ever issued a command to them and before you had the power to command or utilise these things. You should have been aware of the presence of a power which is higher than you and these things, the power which subdued the entire universe for your service; this is a natural enquiry which must surely take place.

These things which are in your service have never rebelled against you and never refused to serve you. Look at the sun, the moon, and so on: has the sun ever said that these people do not deserve my favour, so I shall not rise upon them today? Has the earth ever rebelled against those who farm it? Has the wind ever refused to blow? These beings are all stronger than you are, and you have no power over them and you could never subdue them; they are in Allah’s grasp, subdued for you by His command because they are subdued; they never refuse to perform their function.

As for man, he causes corruption, and refuses to obey by means of the free will which Allah has given him.

Some people say that the prostration of these beings is only a symbol of how they indicate Allah's Existence, not really a prostration, but this is contradicted by Allah's words, '...Each [of them] knows indeed how to pray unto Him and to glorify Him...' (*an-Nur*: 41). Every being, no matter how small, has its own way of praying, glorifying and prostrating, which suits its nature. If you reflect on how man prostrates by placing his forehead on the ground, you will find that people do it differently according to circumstance, yet they are all the same species. The prostration of the healthy person is not the same as that of the sick person, who might prostrate in his bed, or sitting on a chair, or even only with a movement of his eyes or his fingers to indicate his prostration; and if he cannot even do this, he prostrates by imagining that with his mind. If prostration differs in this way even among the members of a single species, according to his strength and his ability, then why do you find it far-fetched that every kind of being might have its own special way of prostrating which suits its nature?

If this is how prostration is acted by man, then are we waiting to see the sun or the moon prostrate? As long as the True Lord said that they prostrate, then we must believe that they prostrate in a way known only to their Creator.

By Allah, if a sick man prayed on a chair or in his bed before your eyes, would you know that he is prostrating? So how can we hope to know how these beings prostrate?

One of the meanings of prostration is submission and obedience, so if some people find it far-fetched that these beings could truly prostrate, let them consider this prostration to mean submission and obedience, as we say about a proud man: He came forth in prostration meaning that he was humble and submissive. This is reflected by Allah's words: 'And He [it is who] applied His design to the skies, which were [yet but] smoke; and He [it is who] said to them and to the earth, "Come [into being], both of you, willingly or unwillingly!" – to which both responded, "We do come in obedience."' (*Fussilat*: 11)

So, you can understand this prostration in any way you like; you will not go beyond His Intention. Out of His Mercy, Allah *the Almighty* made these creatures obedient to His Will; they never contradict it or contravene it as He says, ‘Verily, We did offer the trust [of reason and volition] to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains: but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up – for, verily, he has always been prone to be most wicked, most foolish.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72)

I shall move on now and relate some of the dialogues of those spiritual wayfarers who have attained knowledge of Allah *the Almighty* by His Grace, who have experienced the sweetness of getting close to Him, who would engage in dialogue and competition, not for the sake of pride, but with the intention of moving ever closer to Allah *the Almighty*.

Two were sitting together; one of them had phlegm in his mouth which he wanted to spit out; he showed signs of confusion, looking here and there, so his companion said to him, ‘Spit it out, and relax.’ He said, ‘How can I, when every time I want to spit it out I hear the earth glorifying Allah *the Almighty*; I am ashamed to spit it upon one who glorifies.’ So the other man – it seems that he had attained a higher rank than him – affected to spit on the floor and said: ‘One glorifier atop another.’

Hence, the people with deep knowledge of Allah *the Almighty* perceive this glorification and acknowledge it; according to the Knowledge of Allah *the Almighty* perception and understanding which you possess, you may become cognisant of these spiritual matters.

When the True Lord says, ‘Do you not realise [Prophet] that everything in the heavens and Earth submits to Allah...’ (*al-Hajj*: 18), it is clear that those in the heavens are the angels, and we are not of them, but we are the people of the earth, therefore we are included in this prostration and part of it, so why does Allah *the Almighty* then say, ‘So do many human beings, though for many others punishment is well deserved’ (*al-Hajj*: 18)?

The statement ‘So do many human beings, though for many others punishment is well deserved’ indicates that we are subdued, compelled and prostrate like the other beings in the universe, but that we also have free will

in some things. The disbeliever becomes accustomed to rebelling against his Lord: He commands him to believe, but he disbelieves; He commands him to obey, but he disobeys; but why does he not rebel in all things? Why does he not refuse to become ill when Allah *the Almighty* makes him ill? Why does he not refuse to die when death comes to him? So, man acquiesces to Allah's commands just like the trees, stones and animals do; it is the sphere of free will which causes this division to exist: many men believe, and many others will inevitably have to suffer.

But why did Allah *the Almighty* not make all His creatures subdue to His will? Scholars say it is because the attribute of subdual, the impossibility of defying Allah's Will affirms His Omnipotent Power over all things, but it does not affirm His Ability to be loved, for love requires free will, that is, feeling freedom to choose whether to believe or disbelieve and then to choose belief, that they be free and able to disobey but then choose to obey.

Suppose you have two slaves, you chain one of them to you whilst leaving the other one free. If you call them both and they answer you, then which one of them is more obedient to you: the one who is forced and compelled, or the one who is free? So, subdual and compulsion affirm His Omnipotent Power, and free will affirms His love.

The difference which occurred between people is that many of them attained to faith, while many others earned suffering for themselves. Why did this difference occur?! It comes from the free will which Allah created in you; so those who wish may believe, or disbelieve. It is therefore as though the disbelief of the disbeliever and his free will only exist because Allah *the Almighty* has subdued him to have free will; so even in his free will, he is subdued.

His statement 'So do many human beings' means by their own free will; it might have been expected that in contrast He would say, 'Whereas a few of them; but those who believe are many, and those who disbelieve are also many'.

The meaning of 'though for many others punishment is well deserved' (*al-Hajj*: 18) is that this is something unavoidable so that the believer and disbeliever are not treated alike: 'Or should We, perchance, treat those who surrender themselves unto Us as [We would treat] those who remain lost in sin?' (*al-Qalam*: 35) These people must be punished, for the truth requires this.

Then He says, ‘Anyone disgraced by Allah will have no one to honour him: Allah does whatever He wills.’ (*al-Hajj*: 18) This is because if you deserve punishment from someone who is equal to you, then someone else who is stronger than him might come and prevent him, or an intercessor might come and intercede for you. It is as though the True Lord is telling them to despair of any salvation from His punishment, for no one could prevent him.

If Allah *the Almighty* wants to disgrace someone, then no one can honour him, neither by succouring him nor by interceding for him. It means then: ‘Anyone disgraced by Allah’ (*al-Hajj*: 18) (disgraces him by the suffering which he will inevitably have to endure after earning it for himself) ‘...will have no one to honour him...’ (*al-Hajj*: 18). Likewise he will have none to restore his pride because the only way to do this would be to overcome Allah *the Almighty* Himself, and this is impossible, or to intercede for him before Allah *the Almighty* no one can intercede before Allah *the Almighty* save with His leave.

Therefore, we say that the True Lord has absolute power over His creatures, no one has any power over Him; that is, no one can say to Allah *the Almighty*: This is mine, not Yours. Therefore, He ends the verse by saying, ‘...Allah does whatever He wills.’ Then, the True Lord then says:

هَذَانِ خَصْمَانِ أَخَصَمُوا فِي رَبِّهِمْ ۖ فَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا قُطِعَتْ لَهُمْ
ثِيَابٌ مِنْ نَارٍ يُصَبُّ مِنْ فَوْقِ رُءُوسِهِمُ الْحَمِيمُ ﴿١٩﴾

**These two kinds of people disagree about their Lord.
Garments of fire will be tailored for those who disbelieve;
scalding water will be poured over their heads [19]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 19)**

The word *khasm* (contender or rival) is one of those Arabic words which can be used for the singular, dual and plural, and for the masculine and feminine, such as when Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And yet, has the story of the litigants (*khasm*) come within your ken – [the story of the two] who surmounted the walls of the sanctuary [in which Dawud (David) prayed]?’ (*Sad*: 21) And He says, ‘[We are but] two litigants. One of us has wronged the other...’ (*Sad*: 22).

The meaning of His words: 'These two kinds of people disagree...' (*al-Hajj*: 19) refers to His words: 'many human beings, though for many others punishment is well deserved...' (*al-Hajj*: 18).

Contention requires that a decision be made concerning those who contend and a decision requires witnesses; but if the decision comes from Allah *the Almighty* then no witnesses are required, for '...none can bear witness as Allah does.' (*an-Nisa*: 79)

If He brings forth witnesses from their own selves, it is only to present them with proof against them so that they will acknowledge the justice of their fate, 'And they will ask their skins, "Why did you bear witness against us?" – [and] they will reply "Allah who gives speech to all things, has given speech to us [as well]..."' (*Fussilat*: 21). If you say, 'How can the body parts testify against their owners on the Day of Resurrection when they were the ones who did the deeds'? We say, 'There is a difference between an act which I intend and an act which I do whilst disliking it'. For example – and Allah *the Almighty* is beyond compare – the military general issues orders to his troops, they must obey him even if his orders are mistakes; once they return to the commander-in-chief, they tell him what their general did; for the commander-in-chief gave the general authority over them, obliged them to obey him and follow his orders.

The Creator *Glorified is He* has given man authority over his body parts, therefore the action is ordained by man's will, whilst the body parts merely carry the action out. When you want to stand up, for example, by simply willing to do this you find yourself standing without thinking about the motion of standing or the muscles which move to cause this action to occur, although it is a complex action carried out by a combination of will, the mind, the nerves and the muscles; you are not consciously aware of any of this – when you stood, did you not command the body parts to move, then, they moved? If your limbs obey you and respond to your mere will, then is it not all the more likely that, as creations of Allah *the Almighty* they will respond to Allah's will?

So, the basis of action is not the limbs, but the will, which is proved by the fact that if Allah *the Almighty* wants to disable a body part, he disables the commanding will and cuts it off from the body part so that it is paralysed and

does not move, if the person wants to move it thereafter he cannot; Why?! It is because he does not know the specific parts which come together to move this body part. If you asked the most knowledgeable of kinaesthetic scientists, or those who manufacture robots, what the exact motions are which take place in the human body when it stands from a reclining or seated position, no one will be able to describe for you exactly what goes on inside the body during this action.

If you look at a mechanical digger, for example, which performs an action very similar to humans, you will find that even a boy can control it by pushing a few buttons; he can describe for you every action which it performs and which devices are involved in each action. So, tell me, by Allah: which button do you press to move your hand or your arm? And which button moves your eyes, your tongue, or your foot? It is nothing but your will, and your body responds however you like; for Allah *the Almighty* created you and gave your will complete control over your body. So do not find it far-fetched that these creations of Allah *the Almighty* will respond when He wills them to do something.

Even the suffering of the Hereafter will not be for these body parts, but will be for the conscious soul. This is proved by the fact that when a man experiences severe pain, he can only find relief from it in sleep, when he wakes up the pain returns. So, it is the soul that feels pain and suffering, not the body.

The True Lord is the One Who will decide between these two contrary kinds of men, as He says in another verse, ‘...verily, Allah will decide between them on Resurrection Day...’ (*al-Hajj*: 17).

‘Ali⁽¹⁾ *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘I shall be the first to kneel before Allah on the Day of Resurrection to receive His decision; with me shall be ‘Ubayda ibn Al-Harith and Hamza ibn ‘Abd al-Muttalib, all of us on one side, and on the other side shall be ‘Utba ibn Rabi’a, Shayba ibn Rabi’a and Al-Walid ibn ‘Utba.’⁽²⁾ Why? Because the first battle of Islam took place

(1) ‘Ali *Allah be pleased with him* calling for fencing in order to stop the bloodshed and the emergence of ‘Amr ibn Al-‘As *Allah be pleased with him* to fight him instead.

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (4744); Qays ibn ‘Abbad said that the verse (*al-Hajj*: 19) was revealed in regard to this; and these men were the champions who fought in single combat at the Battle of Badr.

between these people, and the first contention which occurred in its history. At the Battle of *Badr*, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent certain people out to engage in single combat, for the Arab custom at battles was to send out champions from each side to engage in single combat, rather than making everyone suffer by fighting all at once, thereby exposing the lives of all to peril.

Another example of this is what occurred between `Ali and Mua`wiya at the Battle of Siffin, when `Ali said to Mua`wiya: Come out and fight me, Mua`wiya; if you defeat me, you shall be Caliph, if I defeat you, then acknowledge that I am the rightful Caliph. `Amr ibn al-`As, who was on the side of Mu`awiya, said, 'O Mu`awiya, by Allah `Ali has been fair to you and this will spare the blood of the Muslims on both sides. So, Mu`awiya looked at `Amr and said, 'By Allah, `Amr, all you want is that I will go to fight him and he will slay me, so that you can take command after I am gone! As long as you have said what you have said, no one shall go to fight him save you – so go to him!' So `Amr *Allah be pleased with him* went out to fight `Ali, but was `Amr *Allah be pleased with him* anything like as valiant or strong as `Ali? `Ali fought `Amr fiercely, when `Amr felt that `Ali was about to strike him a killing blow, he resorted to a trick, and used his cunning to get `Ali off him; he exposed his private parts, knowing fully that `Ali would be too pious to look at his revealed nakedness; and indeed `Ali did leave him alone and spare him, and `Amr survived because of this trick.⁽¹⁾

A poet spoke of this event by saying:

There is no good in warding off ruin with a lowly act,

As `Amr warded it off one day, with his nakedness

Also, Abu Firas Al-Hamadani, composed a poem which begins:

I see you unable to weep and always patient;

Does passion not hold any sway over you?

'Indeed, I am filled with longing and grief,

But a man like me never reveals a secret.'

(1) *Ibn Kathir, (Al-Bidaya Wa-An-Nihaya)*

And in this poem, he also says:

We are people who have no middle position:

We shall command the world, or else go to our graves.

Let us return to the Battle of Badr where the disbelievers objected when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent out some men of the Helpers saying, 'These men are unknown to us; we want to be challenged by our own equal, men of Quraysh.' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent out to them 'Ali, Hamza and 'Ubayda ibn al-Harith ibn 'Abd al-Muttalib. The idolaters sent out 'Utba, Shayba and al-Walid to face them; the believers triumphed, while the idolaters were vanquished.⁽¹⁾ This was the day about which Allah *the Almighty* said, 'For, indeed, Allah did succour you at Badr, when you were utterly weak. Remain, then, conscious of Allah, so that you might have cause to be grateful.' (*Al-Imran*: 123) So Badr represented a spiritual judgement between these two contenders, and there will be another judgement in the Hereafter, of which 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'I shall be the first to kneel before Allah *the Almighty* on the Day of Resurrection to receive His decision.'

The meaning of 'These two kinds of people disagree about their Lord.' (*al-Hajj*: 18) appears in their difference concerning their Lord: some of them believe in the existence of Allah *the Almighty* and others deny it; one group affirm that He has attributes, where another group deny these attributes. That is, they are divided by faith and unbelief. Then the decision will be proclaimed 'Garments of fire will be tailored for those who disbelieve; scalding water will be poured over their heads' (*al-Hajj*: 19).

His saying, 'Garments of fire shall be cut out for them' (*al-Hajj*: 19) is as though the fire will be apportioned to them according to their bodily forms, in terms of its torment and its fierceness; so there will be no space therein to decrease its severity, nor will it be loose upon them.

And then 'scalding water will be poured over their heads' (*al-Hajj*: 19), the Arabic word *hamim* means water which is as hot as it can be, so hot that it actually burns; and you can imagine how hot water boiled by our Lord would be.

(1) *Ibn Hisham, (Sira)*

So Allah *the Almighty* combines all manner of torment for them because man wears clothes to conceal his nakedness and protect him from heat and cold, so they cover the whole body with their benefit; and He says, 'And Allah propounds [to you] a parable: [Imagine] a town which was [once] secure and at ease, with its sustenance coming to it abundantly from all quarters, and which thereupon blasphemously refused to show gratitude for Allah's blessings: and therefore Allah caused it to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear in result of all [the evil] that its people had so persistently wrought.' (*an-Nahl*: 112)

They will not be made to taste the clothing, but something else; the purpose of the clothing is to make this misery all encompassing and comprehensive so that the entire body will taste it, and the suffering will be especially severe.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

يُصْهَرُ بِهِ مَا فِي بُطُونِهِمْ وَالْجُلُودُ

Melting their insides as well as their skins [20]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 20)

We said that water will be as hot as it can be; it does not burn at the temperature known to us, but rather, its Lord boils it to a temperature which no one could endure. If you pour boiling water on a human body, it scolds the skin on the outside but it does not reach the inside; as for this water, when it is poured on them it will cause all that is in their bodies to melt away first, then their skin afterwards. Lord, save us from Your punishment on the Day when you resurrect your servants!

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُمْ مَقْمَعُونَ مِنْ حَدِيدٍ

There will be iron crooks to restrain them [21]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 21)

The word for 'crooks' here is *maqami*`; now a crook is the whip you use to spur on a horse and make it obey you, or the person you punish; but these ones will be made of iron. This indicates that they will be humiliated and

broken in spirit, as well as tormented. The True Lord then tells us the purpose of these crooks:

كُلَّمَا أَرَادُوا أَنْ يَخْرُجُوا مِنْهَا مِنْ غَمٍّ أُعِيدُوا فِيهَا وَذُوقُوا عَذَابَ الْحَرِيقِ ﴿٢٢﴾

**Whenever, in their anguish, they try to escape, they will be pushed back in and told, ‘Taste the suffering of the Fire’ [22]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 22)**

The True Lord depicts the condition of the denizens of hell and their suffering and despair that it will never be lessened for them. If they try to get out of the anguish of this suffering, these grips will come and return them to it once more. A man might get used to a certain kind of suffering so that it becomes trifling for him, such as a prisoner who is whipped on the back, and after a few whippings he finds that he no longer feels it any more. The Arabian poet Al-Mutanabbi⁽¹⁾ described this well when he said:

Time flung woe after woe at me, until
It was as though I dwelt in a nest of arrows;
And every time an arrow hit me,
One arrowhead would break on another.

But how the denizens of hell suffering could be lightened, when the True Lord has said, ‘every time their skins are burnt off We shall replace them with new skins, so that they may taste suffering’ (*an-Nisa*: 56)?

So, when they are returned, they will be made to despair after having imagined that they might find salvation; despair after hope, is severely hard on the soul. Therefore, they say, there is nothing worse than bridling despair after unbridled hope.’ Another example of this is when He says, ‘and if they beg for water, they will be given water’ (*al-Kahf*: 29). When they hear that they will be given water, they will feel hope and joy; then despair will come to them when they hear: ‘...water [hot] like molten lead, which will scald their faces’ (*al-Kahf*: 29), and He says, ‘Taste suffering through fire [to the full]’ (*al-Hajj*: 22). The word *hariq* means the doer of burning act.

(1) A famous Arabic poet of the third century A. H

After such a number of verses speaking about the disbelievers and the suffering which awaits them, it was inevitable that He would speak about the contrary state, about the believers, so that the mind would make a comparison between this and that, the believer would thus increase his hold upon faith and his hatred of unbelief, likewise the disbeliever would be reminded of what the outcome of his disbelief will be, hence renounce it and embrace faith. In this way, everybody benefits from this contrast. It is as though by giving us these contrasts in the verses of the Quran, Allah has given us the means of salvation and mercy.

The True Lord says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُدْخِلُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ
يُكَلِّفُونَ فِيهَا مِنْ أَسَاوِرَ مِنْ ذَهَبٍ وَلُؤْلُؤًا وَلِبَاسُهُمْ فِيهَا حَرِيرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

**But God will admit those who believe and do good deeds to
Gardens graced with flowing streams; there they will be
adorned with golden bracelets and pearls; there they will
have silken garments [23] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 23)**

The True Lord makes clear here what He has readied for His believing servants. Dwellings: 'Gardens graced with flowing streams...' (*al-Hajj*: 23), ornaments: 'there they will be adorned with golden bracelets and pearls' (*al-Hajj*: 23) and clothing: 'there they will have silken garments.' (*al-Hajj*: 23) So He will combine for them the blessings of dwellings, ornaments, and clothing. In the Hereafter, men will enjoy silk and gold, which are forbidden for them in this world. Women might object here, saying: what bliss is there for us in things which we enjoy even in this worldly life, namely gold and silk? Indeed, you enjoy gold and silk in this worldly life, but in the Hereafter it will be a different kind, a complete pleasure which is not disturbed by anything. A woman's clothes there will be pure and unruffled, and it will remain with her and no one will take it, she will not need to alter it or sell it, because it will be renewed in her hand every day, and will have a different form and style from what it had before.⁽¹⁾ We said this before when we

(1) Ka'b Al-Ahbar said, 'Allah has an angel which, from the day it was created, makes clothes for the denizens of paradise, and will continue to do so until the Last Hour. If a single=

looked at what Allah *the Almighty* says about the denizens of paradise: ‘They will say, “It is this that in days of yore was granted to us as our sustenance”...’ (*al-Baqara*: 23).

They will think that the foods and fruits of paradise are the same as what they ate before, so their Lord will make it clear to them that they are not like the fruits of this world: ‘...for they shall be given something that will recall that [past]...’ (*al-Baqara*: 23). That is, they will be different kinds of the same sort.

The True Lord then says:

وَهْدُوا إِلَى الطَّيِّبِ مِنَ الْقَوْلِ وَهْدُوا إِلَى صِرَاطِ الْحَمِيدِ ﴿٢٤﴾

**They were guided to good speech and to the path of the
One Worthy of all Praise [24] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 24)**

As for the saying of Allah, ‘They were guided’ (*al-Hajj*: 24), it means that Allah *the Almighty* guided them; so the One Who guided them to the means of entering paradise to enjoy its dwellings, ornaments and clothing, also guides them now in paradise and shows them how to give thanks to Allah *the Almighty* for His blessings; this is the meaning of ‘They were guided to good speech...’ (*al-Hajj*: 24); this best of tenets is summarised in other verses, such as His words: ‘...All praise is due to Allah who has made His promise to us come true...’ (*al-Ankabut*: 74), and: ‘All praise is due to Allah who has caused all sorrow to leave us: for, verily, our Lord is indeed much forgiving, ever responsive to gratitude. He Who, out of His bounty, has made us alight in this abode of life enduring.’ (*Fatir*: 34-35)

When the denizens of paradise enter therein and encounter its enduring bliss, they will find nothing to say but, ‘All praise is due to Allah’, as the True Lord says of them, ‘...And their call will close with [the words] “All praise is due to Allah the Lord of all the worlds!”’ (*Yunus*: 10) Also, some scholars say⁽¹⁾ that ‘the best of all tenets’ means the tenet of monotheism, ‘There is no

= garment of paradise came to earth, its light would outshine the sun; so, do not ask anything else about the clothing of the denizens of paradise.’ Ibn Al-Qayyim, (*Hadi Al-Arwah*)

(1) This was the opinion of Ibn `Abbas Allah be pleased with him according to Al-Qurtubi in his exegesis.

deity but Allah', for the love they had for this tenet is what brought them into paradise. The meaning of 'the best of all tenets', literally 'the best of all words' can encompass all goodly words, as He says elsewhere: 'Are you not aware how Allah sets forth the parable of a good word? [It is] like a good tree, firmly rooted, [reaching out] with its branches towards the sky.' (*Ibrahim*: 24)

Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...and to the path of the One Worthy of all Praise.' (*al-Hajj*: 24) That is, Allah *the Almighty* guided them to the road which leads to paradise, or He guided them to paradise itself, as He says in another verse: '...Allah will indeed not forgive them, nor will He guide them onto any road, but the road that leads to hell...' (*an-Nisa*': 168-169).

The True Lord then says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَيَصُدُّونَ عَنْ سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَالْمَسْجِدِ الْحَرَامِ الَّذِي جَعَلْنَاهُ لِلنَّاسِ
سَوَاءً الْعُرْكُفُ فِيهِ وَالْبَادِ وَمَنْ يُرِدْ فِيهِ بِالْحَكَاكِ بِظُلْمٍ نُذِقْهُ مِنْ عَذَابِ أَلِيمٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

**As for the disbelievers, who bar others from God's path
and from the Sacred Mosque – which We made for all
people, residents and visitors alike – and who try to violate it
with wrongdoing, We shall make them taste a painful
punishment [25] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 25)**

The verses have now moved to another subject. 'As for the disbelievers, who bar...' (*al-Hajj*: 25); the saying of Allah '*alladhina kafaru*' (those who have disbelieved) is used in the perfect tense because they have indeed committed disbelief, and then 'bar' is in the imperfect tense; it might have been thought that He would say 'and barred' in the perfect tense just as He said 'disbelieved' in the perfect tense, but this is not a matter of rules or automatic actions; for their barring of others from the way of Allah *the Almighty* is a result of their disbelief, and this barring is still going on.

The meaning of 'from the path of Allah' is 'from the struggle in Allah's cause' and His saying, 'and from the Sacred Mosque' (*al-Hajj*: 25) because they prevented Muslims from entering it since it was still under their control and their authority. This indeed is what happened at Hudaibiya when the companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* yearned to

perform the minor pilgrimage and circumambulation in the Sacred Mosque, which had long been denied to them; yet when they went, the disbelievers of Mecca forbade them and barred them from entering.

As for His statement: “and from the Sacred Mosque’ (*al-Hajj*: 25), the word *haram* (sacred) implies that it is forbidden to commit any sin therein, or to be disrespectful to it, or to aggress against anyone therein. The word *haram* is used to describe certain places and certain times specifically five things: the *Ka’ba*, the Inviolable Mosque, the Sacred City and Region, which means the areas around the *Ka’ba* – and these first four are all places and then the fifth is the Inviolable Month (or Sacred Month), of which Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘They will ask you about fighting in the sacred month...’ (*al-Baqara*: 217), the reason for the inviolability of these places and times is a wisdom intended by the Creator because He is a Merciful Lord with His creatures and wants to give them an opportunity to shield their pride and check their conceit. Wars and struggles used to rage between the people who were inflamed by tribal customs and cycles of violence such that each side would desire to utterly annihilate the other, and they might continue with the war even though they did not really want to do so, but their pride prevented them from turning back and withdrawing.

Therefore Allah *the Almighty* gave inviolability to these places and times, to provide a cover for this false pride and hateful conceit. Every action requires a time and a place, so Allah *the Almighty* forbade fighting in the sacred months, so that if war was raging between them and then a sacred month came along, the weak would be saved from the grasp of the strong without damaging their pride; perhaps he might shake his head and say, ‘Were it not for the sacred month, I would have done such-and-such to them’. So, this is a mercy from Allah *the Almighty* to His servants, a shield to protect them from the evil of their own selves their impulses and to spare their lives.

The pride of the Arabs in such a situation is akin to the pride of a husband and wife who are unwillingly at odds, each of them wanting to go to the other, but being prevented by their pride from yielding; so the man sits in his room and closes the door behind him, the wife looks and sees him raising his hands and praying to Allah *the Almighty* to help him be reconciled with his wife. So, she goes

and adorns herself, and then comes and opens the door to his room and, as though someone is making her enter, tells him she wants to be reconciled.

Likewise, He has made certain places inviolable, for the times in which He has forbidden fighting are four months, three which are connected and one which stands alone, namely *Rajab*; and the months which are continued are *Dhul Qa'da*, *Dhul Hijja* and *Muharram*.

Allah *the Almighty* also forbade fighting in these places, to prevent the blood of men from being spilled because of the tribes' fighting for the sake of envy, conceit and pride. He says about the prohibition of fighting in the Inviolable House: '...And fight not against them near the Inviolable House of Worship unless they fight against you there first; but if they fight against you, slay them: such shall be the recompense of those who deny the truth.' (*al-Baqara*: 191)

So perhaps when they encounter the months or places of inviolability, they will find relief from fighting and realise the pleasure of peace and the importance of reconciliation, settle their differences by other means than warfare. For war only begets war, whilst the pleasure of peace, the repose of security and the experience of calm life beget the urge to reconcile and to settle these disputes by peaceful means

The one who reflects on these places which Allah *the Almighty* has made inviolable will find that they are arranged in different levels, as though they are concentric circles whose focal point is Allah's Inviolable House, the *Ka'ba*; then comes the Inviolable Mosque around it, then the Inviolable City of Mecca, so the Inviolable Region, which is also determined by a specific time, namely the days of the pilgrimage only.

As for the *Ka'ba*, it is not, as some people think, the building which we see today. The *Ka'ba* is the space itself, whilst this building is the content of the space. If you were to remove the building which is there now, the space where the building stands is the Temple; this place extends down into the earth and up into the heavens.

So, Allah's Inviolable Temple is this space of land extending right up into the heavens. Do you not see that people pray on the higher levels, in places

much higher than this building? They face the air above the *Ka'ba*, not the *Ka'ba* itself. Why? Because the *Ka'ba* extends into the air, as far as Allah wills.

After the Temple comes the Mosque which is a space of land which has been dedicated as a mosque, But there is a mosque in the place where you build it and give it an architectural form like that of which we speak now when we say 'mosque', meaning the place itself; there is also a place which is a 'mosque' because of what goes on within its space, such as when the mosque is full so, we go into the streets and pray so that in this circumstance, the street itself is a mosque; they say that even if this went on all the way to Sana'a, row after row, it would all be one mosque.

Let us return to what went on between the Muslims and the idolaters on the Day of Hudaibiya. The disbelievers barred the Muslims from the *Ka'ba* when they were so close they could see it with their eyes, and this enraged the Muslims, and some of them wanted to enter Mecca by force despite what the disbelievers said.

But Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew a secret which his Lord had divulged to him, so he acceded to their conditions and made a treaty with them known as 'The Treaty of Hudaibiya'. Some of the companions resented this, namely, 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab who said to Prophet Muhammad, 'O Messenger of Allah, are we not on the side of truth?' He said, 'We are.' 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'And are they not on the side of falsehood?' Prophet Muhammad, said, 'They are.' He said, then, why do we yield so humbly against the honour of our religion?'⁽¹⁾

One of the stipulations of this treaty was that if a disbeliever embraced Islam and joined the ranks of the Muslims, Muhammad would send him back, whilst if a Muslim went over to their side they would not have to return him.⁽²⁾

And the mother of the believers Umm Salama *Allah be pleased with her* took a great stance in the midst of this hardship, a sound opinion which rebutted

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

(2) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained his acceptance of this by saying, 'If one of us joins them, then may Allah keep him far from us! And if one of them joins us and we send him back to them, Allah will give him relief and a way out.' Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi and Muslim.

the opinions of the men and guided them back to the truth; this is something which makes us all proud of the Muslim woman and by which we can reply to those who bleat about 'women's rights'.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* returned to his tent in an angry state, and said to Umm Salama, 'The Muslims have come to ruin, O Umm Salama, for I commanded them but they did not obey.' That is, I commanded them to go home without performing the minor pilgrimage this year. So, Umm Salama said, 'O Messenger of Allah, they are disappointed, for they have been barred from entering Allah's House when they are close enough to see it. But go and do whatever your Lord commands you, O Messenger of Allah if they see you do it they will know that the matter is irrevocable.' Indeed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* followed this advice, and shaved his head and slaughtered his offering, and the people did the same; that was that.⁽¹⁾

Before they returned to Medina, Allah *the Almighty* willed to tell them the wise reason why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* accepted the conditions of the idolaters, even though they were unjust and harsh: Firstly, this truce and pact meant that they acknowledged Muhammad, his rank, status and acknowledged him as their equal; this in itself was a gain. Secondly, both parties agreed to halt their fighting for several years, this gave the Muslims the opportunity to devote their time to meeting delegations and spreading Allah's religion. Thirdly, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could have entered Mecca against the wishes of its inhabitants, he could have killed them all, but what would have happened to the dwellers of Mecca who were secret believers, whose identity no one knew? They lived amid these disbelievers, they would therefore have come to the same end as the disbelievers; had the believers in Mecca made themselves known, the disbelievers would have taken them prisoners.

Read what Allah *the Almighty* says, 'It was not for your enemies' sake that He stayed your hands from them: for it was they who were bent on denying the truth, and who debarred you from the Inviolable House of Worship and

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Al-Bayhaqi

prevented your offering from reaching its destination. And had it not been for the believing men and believing women [in Mecca], whom you might have unwittingly trampled underfoot, and on whose account you might have become guilty, without knowing it, of a grievous wrong – (had it not been for this, you would have been allowed to fight your way into the city: but you were forbidden to fight) so that (in time) might admit to His Grace whomever He wills. Had they (who deserve Our Mercy and they whom We have condemned) been clearly discernible (to you), We would indeed have imposed grievous suffering (at your hands) on such of them as were bent on denying the truth.’ (*al-Fath*: 25)

Then He says of the Inviolable Mosque: ‘We shall make them taste a painful punishment.’ (*al-Hajj*: 25) That is, for all mankind, ‘...residents and visitors alike’ (*al-Hajj*: 25), i.e. from outside of Mecca. The meaning of ‘alike’ is that these two kinds of people are completely equal in this regard.

Therefore, we say to those who reserve places for themselves in Allah’s Inviolable Mosque in particular or in any mosque in general: Save yourself the trouble, for Allah *the Almighty* reserves these places for those who come first, not those who set down a prayer-mat to save the place, disturbing others thereby.

Because this verse says, ‘Which We made for all people, residents and visitors alike– and who try to violate it with wrongdoing, We shall make them taste a painful punishment.’ (*al-Hajj*: 25) Some say that it is not permitted to rent out houses in Mecca, that whoever wants to stay in a house there may stay without paying, so that the local and the stranger are equal.⁽¹⁾

This opinion is rebutted by the fact that the houses are now built and established. The land of Mecca belonged to everyone when it was open and all were free to build there if they liked; but once the houses were built and settled, it was no longer permitted for anyone to enter them without the resident’s permission.

(1) *They even used to have no doors on their houses, until theft became prevalent, so the people began to put doors on their houses after `Umar Allah be pleased with him gave them leave to do so. Imam Malik Allah rest his soul said that the houses of Mecca are not the same as the mosque, and that the people have a right to close their houses and forbid people from entering them; and this is what people do these days. Al-Qurtubi, (At-Tafsir)*

A discussion about this took place in Mecca between the two scholars Al-Handhali and Imam Ash-Shafi'i *Allah rest his soul* for Al-Hanzhali deemed it impermissible to rent houses in Mecca because this verse says that they are for everyone; and Ash-Shafi'i *Allah rest his soul* replied to him by saying, 'If this were the case, then Allah *the Almighty* would not have called the Emigrants '...those who have been driven from their homes...' (*al-Hashr*: 8), for He attributed the homes to them, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not have asked, when he arrived in Mecca, 'Did 'Aqil leave for us a single house or a home?'⁽¹⁾ The fact that 'Aqil *Allah be pleased with him* had sold their houses after they emigrated proves that they had owned them. With this, Al-Hanzhali went over to the opinion of Ash-Shafi'i.

In any case, this verse is speaking about the Mosque, not all of Mecca, so the difference of opinion should never have gone as far as to include the whole of Mecca.

He then says, 'And who try to violate it with wrongdoing, We shall make them taste a painful punishment' (*al-Hajj*: 25). *Ilhad* (Profanation) might concern the ultimate truth, namely the profaning of faith in Allah *the Almighty* or *ilhad* (atheism); as for here, what is meant by 'to violate' is to incline away from the truth. And when He says, 'by wrongdoing', evildoing of whatever kind does not go as far as the level of disbelief; yet when evil profanation occurs in Allah's house, this is an enormity, because you are in your Lord's house, the *Ka'ba*.

You should have been ashamed even to think of sinning, for even to think of sinning in this place is itself a sin, because you are in a place wherein you must always have sensations of awe and dread. Just as Allah *the Almighty* has distinguished His house by multiplying the good deeds performed therein, He has also magnified the enormity of the sins you commit whilst in the confines of His house – so be aware of this.⁽²⁾

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* (1588) and *Muslim* (1351)

(2) *Ibn Mas'ud* said, 'If a man intends to sin but does not – anywhere but the Inviolable Mosque – then it is not recorded against him until he does it; but if a man intends a sin in the Inviolable Mosque, Allah will not take him from this world without first subjecting him to painful suffering.' Narrated by *Sa'id ibn Mansur* and *At-Tabarani*

One of the sayings of the countryside here is, ‘You are so impudent you would get drunk in a scholar’s house’. The meaning of this is that it is easy to imagine someone getting drunk in a sinful man’s house or in a bar, but to do so in a scholar’s house would be a real enormity and an act of sheer impudence. Why? Because a place is as inviolable as the one who owns it; if this is the case, and this house belongs to Allah *the Almighty* you disobey your Lord in His own house, then what could be more impudent than this?

This is a special attribute of the Inviolable Mosque; for all mosques are houses of Allah *the Almighty* but there is a difference between a house which Allah *the Almighty* chooses for Himself and a house which Allah’s servants choose for Him. That is why the house which Allah *the Almighty* chose for Himself, the Inviolable House, is the focal point towards which all the other houses of Allah *the Almighty* in the world face.

The consequence of profaning Allah’s House: ‘We shall make them taste a painful punishment...’ (*al-Hajj*: 25), they shall taste suffering by a constant and unchanging decree of Allah *the Almighty*; and taste is the most effective form of perception, and therefore this suffering is truly humiliating. To taste is to perceive the flavour of food and drink, but it can apply to everything that is perceived, not only food and drink. Elsewhere, our Lord says, ‘Taste it –you who [on Earth] has considered thyself so mighty, so noble!’ (*ad-Dukhan*: 49)

That is, taste humiliation and abasement, not in the form of that which is eaten and drunk, but with total perception, perception which involves the entire body: the fingernails taste it, the feet taste it, the chest tastes it and the neck tastes it. This tasting of humiliation and abasement in this worldly life for these people is only a simple example of the severity of Allah’s punishment.

The suffering of the Hereafter will be terrible; and suffering means physical pain, if you want the pain to endure you must continue to apply the tool which imparts the pain.

Allah then says:

وَإِذْ بَوَّأْنَا لِإِبْرَاهِيمَ مَكَانَ الْبَيْتِ أَنْ لَا تُشْرِكْ بِي شَيْئًا
 وَطَهِّرْ بَيْتِيَ لِلطَّائِفِينَ وَالْقَائِمِينَ وَالرُّكَّعِ السُّجُودِ ﴿٦٦﴾

We showed Abraham the site of the House, saying, ‘Do not assign partners to Me. Purify My House for those who circle around it, those who stand to pray, and those who bow and prostrate themselves [26] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 26)

Since the previous verses spoke about the *Ka'ba*, it was appropriate here to speak about its history and how it was built. Allah says, ‘We showed Ibrahim (Abraham) the site of the House, saying, “Do not assign partners to Me. Purify My house for those who circle around it, those who stand to pray, and those who bow and prostrate themselves.”’ (*al-Hajj*: 26) The meaning of *bawwa'a* (show) is ‘to make a dwelling place; that is, one goes about one’s work and business, then returns and goes back to this place, such as the house to which one returns. Another use of this root word is found when Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...they earned (*ba'u*) the burden of Allah’s condemnation...’ (*al-Baqara*: 16).

The particle *idh* (when) is an adverb of time which is used to evoke an event, and then followed by a report of this event, Here it is addressed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and means: ‘Remember, Muhammad, the time when Ibrahim (Abraham) was told such-and-such’. In every verse in the Quran which contains the particle *idh*, it is addressed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* telling him of an event which occurred at that particular time.

But what does the concept of a dwelling-place, or a place assigned for dwelling, have to do with the *Ka'ba*? They say it is because a dwelling-place is a patch of ground which a person chooses and makes into the place to which he returns after engaging in the labours of his life; and a man does not choose such a place unless it furnishes him with all the basic needs of life.

Therefore, Allah says in the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: ‘and thus We established Yusuf (Joseph) securely in the land [of Egypt]. He had full mastery (*yatabawwa'*) over it, [doing] whatever he willed...’

(*Yusuf*: 56). And He says about the children of Israel, ‘And [thereafter], indeed, We assigned (*bawwa`*) unto the children of Israel a most goodly abode (*mubawwa`*) ...’ (*Yunus*: 93).

So, the meaning of ‘We showed Ibrahim (Abraham) the site of the House...’ (*al-Hajj*: 26) is ‘We made it an abode for him, where he could return from the toils of his life, once We had told him and showed him the place it should be’.⁽¹⁾

We said that a place is not the same as the contents of a place: the place is the patch of land upon which and in which the contents reside. So, the land of this mosque is the ‘place’, and the building which is built on this land is called ‘the contents of this place’. With this in mind, we can see that Allah *the Almighty* showed Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the place where He would command him to build the *Ka`ba*.

The scholars discussed this matter to a great length, some of them saying that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was the first person to build the *Ka`ba*. One says to those who hold this view: The True Lord assigned for Ibrahim (Abraham) the site of the *Ka`ba*, meaning that He showed it to him, as though the *Ka`ba* already existed. This is proved by the fact that Allah *the Almighty* tells us that Ibrahim (Abraham) said, ‘O our Lord! Behold, I have settled some of my offspring in a valley in which there is no arable land, close to Your sanctified *Ka`ba*...’ (*as-Saffat*: 14). Allah says elsewhere, ‘And when Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) were raising the foundations of the *Ka`ba*...’ (*al-Baqara*: 127)

It is clear that Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* assisted his father in the building of the *Ka`ba* once he was a grown man and had the power to help his father; but when they first settled there, Ismail (Ishmael) was still a baby. His words: ‘close to Your sanctified *Ka`ba*’ indicate that they were already close to the *Ka`ba* before Ismail (Ishmael) grew old enough to help his father build the *Ka`ba*. This is therefore proof that the *Ka`ba* already existed before

(1) *That is, we showed him its location so he could rebuild it. The Flood washed it away, and when Ibrahim (Abraham) came he could find no trace of it, so Allah the Almighty sent a wind which blew away the sand and revealed the foundations which Adam had built, and Ibrahim (Abraham) built on top of them. (Tafsir Al-Qurtubi)*

Ibrahim (Abraham) came to it. And the True Lord made this matter clear in His saying, 'Behold, the first house ever set up for mankind was indeed the one at Bakkah: rich in blessing, and [source of] guidance unto all the worlds.' (*Al-Imran*: 96)

In order for us to agree on how to understand this verse, we must first ask: who are 'mankind'? They are Adam *peace be upon him* and his progeny until the end of time. Adam *peace be upon him* is a member of mankind, so why would the verse not include him, too? The *Ka'ba* was set up for mankind, and Adam *peace be upon him* is part of mankind, so it must have been set up for Adam, too.

So, it may be said that the *Ka'ba* was set up even before Adam *peace be upon him* therefore we believe the opinion which states that the angels were the ones who first set up the *Ka'ba*, after which the Flood washed away all visible signs of the *Ka'ba*, and then Allah *the Almighty* showed Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* by means of divine inspiration where the location of the *Ka'ba* was, commanded him to rebuild it in this same valley.

It is said that Allah *the Almighty* sent a cloud to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to show him where the site was, and it spoke to him: 'O Ibrahim (Abraham), build the *Ka'ba* the same size as me!'⁽¹⁾

If you reflect on the meaning of 'And when Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) were raising the foundations of the *Ka'ba*' (*al-Baqara*: 127), the word 'raising' implies the notion of height which is the third dimension; it is as though the foundations already had length and width, and Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* added height to them. But why did Allah *the Almighty* assign to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* the site of the *Ka'ba*?

When Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* settled his family close to the *Ka'ba*, he said '...so that, O our Lord, they might devote themselves to prayer...' (*Ibrahim*: 37). It is as though from the very onset it was a matter of worship and prayer, prayer devoted to the True Lord, Allah *the Almighty*; and therefore, He commanded him first of all: 'Do not assign partners to Me. Purify My house for those who circle around it, those who stand to pray, and those who bow and prostrate themselves.' (*al-Hajj*: 26)

(1) Narrated by Ad-Daylimi as a saying of the Prophet Muhammad

The meaning of this is: purify this *Ka`ba* from everything which signifies idolatry, for this is the proper way to begin the establishment of Allah's House. Was there ever any suspicion that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* would ascribe divinity to aught but Allah *the Almighty*? Of course not, for Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was as far from idolatry as could be. But when Allah *the Almighty* sends forth a messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the first one to receive the commandments from Allah *the Almighty* which he must deliver to his community. So, he is the first one to receive and the first one to obey so that he can be a role model for his people and so that they believe in him and trust him, for he commands them things which he himself obeys.

For example, Allah *the Almighty* says to Prophet Muhammad, 'O Prophet! Remain conscious of Allah...' (*al-Ahzab*: 1). Did Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ever cease to be conscious of Allah *the Almighty*? This command is really being given to the whole Islamic community via the person of their Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that it is easier for us when our Lord commands us to be conscious of him, and we do not object to this commandment since it has also been given to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. For you can observe that some people do not like it when you say to them, 'Be conscious of Allah', and they might consider this as an insult and an accusation, imagining that it can only be said to someone who has done something which is contrary to consciousness.

But this is a misunderstanding of the commandment of fearing Allah. When I say to you, 'Be conscious of Allah', this does not mean that you are not afraid of Allah; rather, I am reminding you to begin every action of your life with consciousness of Allah *the Almighty*.

So, when Allah *the Almighty* said to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: '...Do not assign partners to Me...' (*al-Hajj*: 26), this does not mean that Ibrahim (Abraham) was guilty of doing this. The statement: 'do not assign partners' means that the prohibition is applied to all the different forms of false gods whatever they might be: trees, stones, idols, stars or planets. This is emphasised by His saying, 'Purify My house for those who circle around it'. (*al-Hajj*: 26) 'Purification' is to attain spiritual purity by removing all the

means of idolatry and sincerely worshipping Allah Alone without any partners. It is also to attain material purity by cleaning His house of the accretions which had accumulated upon it over time, as well as the effects of the flood that had deposited dirt upon the site.

The meaning of 'those who will walk around it' (*al-Hajj*: 26) refers to those who would perform circumambulation around the Sacred House; regarding His saying, 'and those who will stand before it' (*al-Hajj*: 26), it refers to those who would keep spiritual vigil therein. His statement: 'those who will bow down and prostrate themselves' (*al-Hajj*: 26) talks about those who would go there at the fixed times of prayer to offer their prayer. He signifies prayer with the actions of bowing and prostration because they are the most distinctive actions of it.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَأَذِّنْ فِي النَّاسِ بِالْحَجِّ يَأْتُوكَ رِجَالًا وَعَلَى كُلِّ
ضَامِرٍ يَأْتِينَكَ مِنْ كُلِّ فَجٍّ عَمِيقٍ ﴿٢٧﴾

**Proclaim the Pilgrimage to all people. They will come to you
on foot and on every kind of swift mount, emerging from
every deep mountain pass [27] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 27)**

After raising the house's foundations, Allah *the Almighty* commanded Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to proclaim unto all people the duty of pilgrimage, why? Because such a house belongs to Allah, as mankind are Allah's creatures; so why should the vision of the house be restricted to those who live near it?

The True Lord wanted this distinction to be enjoyed by all His creatures so that they would all go to see their Lord's Sacred House. Although all mosques are dedicated to Allah *the Almighty* this mosque was chosen by Allah Himself to be His house. Therefore, He made it the focal point for all the houses of worship.

One of the signs of fealty which people show is that they go to visit the palaces of the mighty and the noble wherein the visitor records his name in

the visitors' record-book, and he sees this as an honour and a distinction. So, what about the House of Allah *the Almighty*? How could its visitation and its vision be restricted only to its tenants and those who live near it or those who are destined to pass it by?

As for the verb 'proclaim', it means to 'inform'; the ear is one of the primary means of receiving information, thus the word *adhan* (proclamation) is derived from the word *udhn* (ear) Another word derived from this root is found in His saying, 'and [remember the time] when your Lord made [this promise] known (*ta'adhdhana*) proclaimed...' (*Ibrahim*: 7). The ear is the primary means of hearing and learning things, therefore, before we learn speaking, we must be able to hear basically.

When Allah *the Almighty* commanded Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to make this proclamation, no one was anywhere near the house except Ibrahim (Abraham), his son and his wife; so to whom was he supposed to proclaim? Who in this wide and barren desert and this uninhabited valley would listen? Therefore, his Lord called to him: 'O Ibrahim (Abraham), it is for you to proclaim and for Us to pass this proclamation on.'⁽¹⁾ That is, your mission is to raise you voice and make the proclamation; We shall cause this call to reach all the people throughout all times and places. In fact, Allah enabled all mankind to hear it whilst they were still in their forefathers' loins.⁽²⁾ Regarding Allah's Power, He says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...and it was not you who cast, when you didst cast, but it was Allah who cast....' (*al-Anfal*: 17) That is, O Ibrahim (Abraham), do what you are charged to do, and leave what is beyond your power to the power of your Lord! So, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* proclaimed the duty of pilgrimage to the people, the call reached all mankind, and will continue to reach them until the end of time; those who respond and say, 'At Your service', shall have an act of pilgrimage recorded in their books of deeds. Some of the scholars even say that those who respond a single time will have an act of pilgrimage recorded for them, while those who respond

(1) *The like of this was narrated by As-Suyuti on the authority of Ibn `Abbas (Ad-Durr Al-Manthur, vol. 32).*

(2) *As-Suyuti narrates the like of this on the authority of Ibn `Abbas (ibid).*

twice will have two, and so on, because each time they say, 'At Your service', they are responding again and again.⁽¹⁾

If you say, 'Allah *the Almighty* has given us commandments and prohibitions, so why does the pilgrimage in particular have this great status?', we say, 'The pillars of Islam begin with the two testimonies of faith (There is no deity but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah); then comes prayer and it is followed by the order of giving the poor-due which is, in turn, followed by the duty of fasting *Ramadan* and they all are perfected by the duty of performing pilgrimage. Looking at all these pillars, you will find that pilgrimage is the only pillar which the Muslim strives to fulfil. If one cannot afford to do it, he scrimps and saves, even sacrifices his basic provisions, denies himself many things so that he can fulfil this obligation of pilgrimage; people do not do this for any obligation other than the pilgrimage. Why is this? They say it is because Allah *the Almighty* has decreed this matter, saying: 'Proclaim the pilgrimage to all people. They will come to you.' (*al-Hajj*: 27) So, they will come, even without consciously choosing to do so. Do you not see how people are drawn to perform this obligation, as though there is an external force drawing them to do so? This is the meaning of Allah's words: 'make people's hearts to incline towards them'. (*Ibrahim*: 37) *Tahwi* (incline) means that they will come without consciously choosing to do so; it is derived from the verb *hawiya* (to fall), which is something outside a man's control, such as when someone falls from a height, not having the ability to choose not to fall.

In this way, hearts will yearn and burn with desire for Allah's house, as though there is something drawing them to perform this obligation. Allah decreed this by saying, 'They will come to you'. (*al-Hajj*: 7) With other commandments, He issues the commandment and then leaves it up to the free will of those He commands as to whether they will obey or disobey. So, this is something which would surely come to pass, by the testimony of the Quran itself.

Some people of deep understanding opine that the commandment 'Proclaim the pilgrimage to all people. They will come to you.' (*al-Hajj*: 27)

(1) This is narrated by Ad-Daylimi on the authority of 'Alu ibn Abi Taleb, but it is likely a forgery according to As-Suyuti and Al-Fatani.

was not given to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* but rather to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to whom the whole Quran was revealed, affirming that this verse is addressed to him. In this case, the meaning of ‘For when We assigned unto Ibrahim (Abraham) the site of this *Ka’ba...*’ (*al-Hajj*: 26) is: ‘Remember, O you to whom I have revealed My Book, when We assigned unto Ibrahim (Abraham) the site of this Mosque; remember this, and “Proclaim the pilgrimage to all people, They will come to you” (*al-Hajj*: 27)’ . So, it is as though this commandment is meant for Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.⁽¹⁾

That is why one does not see this inclination in the other communities such as the Jews and Christians, for they do not make pilgrimage or visit Allah’s House at all. It is known that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* made pilgrimage to Allah’s House,⁽²⁾ but it is not known that ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* ever did since Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The time is nigh when the Son of Maryam (Mary) shall come down, and come forth as a pilgrim, and visit my grave and be buried there.’⁽³⁾

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said ‘and come forth as a pilgrim’ because ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* has not died yet. He will become a follower of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When he descends from Heaven, he will pray behind an imam from the *ummah* of Muhammad may Allah send blessings upon all His prophets and messengers!

The People of the Book controversially claimed that the son whom Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* almost sacrificed was Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him*. Had it really been Ishaq (Isaac), then the rites of sacrifice, ransom, and stoning of the pillars would be performed by them in the Levant. Yet all these rites are performed in Mecca because the near-sacrificed son was Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*.

Moreover, remember well what your Sacred Scripture says in Genesis 22, wherein the True Lord inspired Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to climb

(1) *Al-Qurtubi mentions this interpretation in his exegesis.*

(2) *This was narrated by Muslim (166) and Ahmad (i.315) on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas.*

(3) *Al-Qurtubi narrated the like of it in his exegesis.*

the mountain of Faran and take his only son to slaughter him. At that time, Ibrahim's (Abraham's) only son was Ismail (Ishmael), not Ishaq (Isaac), because Allah first spared Ismail (Ishmael) and then gave Ibrahim (Abraham) glad tidings of Ishaq (Isaac).⁽¹⁾

Allah's Wisdom placed clues which unveil lies of liars and by means of which we can ascertain the Truth. Henceforth, judges say that there is no such thing as a perfect crime; the criminal will always leave some evidence behind which points to him, no matter how carefully he plans his crime. For example, something might fall from him, even if only a button from his clothes or a small piece of paper bearing a telephone number, and so on. That is why they say, 'Crime does not pay'; for the criminal will surely be caught by the one who investigates him. Judges have a real talent how to extract the real story from the criminals themselves. A judge continues to question the criminal until he finds a flaw or contradiction in his story by means of which he can reach the truth. This is because the truth only has one face, and the one who tells the truth does not stammer or waver. As for falsehood, it has more than one face, if you ask the liar to tell his story more than once; you will find alterations or contradictions in his words. Therefore, the Arab proverb says, 'If you want to be a liar, you must have a good memory'. In other words, 'Remember what you said first, so that you do not change it afterwards'.

An example of a lie which exposes the one who says it is that one person says to another, 'Do you remember the day when we were in such-and-such place in the night before the end-of-Ramadan festival, and the moon was full'? So the other one says, 'How could the moon be full at the end of the lunar month'?

The judge might utilise certain tricks; he must use his cleverness to bring the truth to light, such as the example of the judge⁽²⁾ who must decide

(1) It is clear from reading the Book of Genesis that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was 86 when Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* was born (Gen 16:16), whilst he was one hundred years old when Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him* was born (Gen 21:5), which means that Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* was 14 years older than Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him*. Ishaq's (Isaac's) mother Hagar *peace be upon her* was a wife to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* (Gen 16:3) So how could they say that Ishaq (Isaac) *peace be upon him* was Ibrahim's (Abraham's) only son at the time of the sacrifice?

(2) This is the story of the holder of a trust with the judge.

between two men, one of whom accuses the other of taking money from him as a trust and then claiming it for himself and burying it in such-and-such a place. When the judge questions the accused, he denies the charge, so the judge leaves him and turns to the owner of the trust and says to him: ‘Go to that place and search, for perhaps you forgot it somewhere, or perhaps someone else took it from you’. So, the owner of the money goes off, then suddenly the judge asks the defendant, ‘Why is he taking such a long time?’, and the defendant answers, ‘Because the place where the money is buried is far away, your honour’. So his memory betrays him and he speaks the truth without meaning to do so.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘They will come to you on foot’ (*al-Hajj*: 27); as for the word *rijal*, it is the plural of *rajil* which means someone who goes on foot; regarding the word *damir* (and on every kind of swift), it means a horse or camel which is thin because of the long journey it has travelled.

The way in which those who come on foot are mentioned before those who come mounted emphasises the divine wisdom of ‘They will come to you’; for they will all be eager to fulfil the obligation of the pilgrimage, even if they must go on foot. Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘...emerging from every deep mountain pass’ (*al-Hajj*: 27), meaning that they will traverse every wide road, coming from afar.

The True Lord then says:

لِيَشْهَدُوا مَنَافِعَ لَهُمْ وَيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ فِي أَيَّامٍ مَّعْلُومَاتٍ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ
مِّنْ بَهِيمَةٍ الْأَنْعَامِ فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْفَقِيرِ ﴿٢٨﴾

To attain benefits and celebrate God’s name, on specified days, over the livestock He has provided for them – feed yourselves and the poor and unfortunate [28]

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

Manafi’ (to attain benefits) is a general and comprehensive word which encompasses all manner of benefits: material and worldly, spiritual and otherworldly. One should not restrict what Allah has broadened, because every motion of life connected to pilgrimage can be considered as a benefit.

Your preparations and the arrangement of its expenses, equipment, and transport are all beneficial for you and for others, when you give enough to your family to suffice them until you return.

The buying and selling which go on in the pilgrimage centres include benefits which the people exchange: the merchant sells to you; the owner of the house you rent gets benefit and so does the owner of the car which transports you. So, the material benefits of pilgrimage are numerous, interlinked and connected to the spiritual benefits. The one who buys the sacrificial animal, for example, performs a rite and aids the merchant who sells it to him, the farmer who raised the animal, the butcher who slaughters it and the poor person who eats it.

Therefore, pilgrimage involves a great deal of the motions of life, gives benefit to you and to others without your being aware of it. You can observe the gifts which the pilgrims take back to their families and friends, especially the Egyptians; some of them buy all these presents before they even perform their rites, spending most of their time in the markets, as though they would not be real pilgrims if they did not bring all these gifts back with them. Therefore, people like this used to ask me, 'I have to make a sacrifice,⁽¹⁾ but I have no money left for the sacrificial offering. What should I do'? He wanted to fast to expiate the offering, for indeed, how could he fulfil his obligation when he had spent all the money he had? I would say to those who asked me this, 'Give me your suitcase and I will sell all the gifts in it and leave you with enough money to meet all your expenses until you go home'. Are all these things not benefits?

Another benefit of pilgrimage is that as soon as the pilgrim makes an intention to perform this obligation, prepares himself for it materially and spiritually, he tries to turn over a new leaf, correcting his faults and repenting from his sins and mending all his relationships with others. So, he undergoes a personal refinement which makes a new man out of him as this auspicious occasion merits and makes him worthy to see Allah's House and circumambulate therein.

(1) This means that he performed *'umra* (minor pilgrimage) before *hajj* (the major pilgrimage), coming out of his consecrated state in between the two; and this requires that a sacrificial offering be made.

Part of preparing for the pilgrimage is that the pilgrim must learn his rights and duties. In addition, he must have the proper etiquette of a pilgrim knowing what he must avoid and what is forbidden for him. He must cast off the usual clothing and attire with which he adorns himself and the position amongst the people of which he is proud. He must also be aware that being in the consecrated state makes all equal.

He must learn how to have good etiquette with his own self and with all the different forms of being around him.⁽¹⁾ This is done by not thinking about sin, not even pulling a single one of his hairs, or cutting one of his nails and not using perfume or even scented soap.

The amazing thing about pilgrimage is that as soon as the pilgrim enters the consecrated state, he is as eager as can be to observe these rulings. I am certain that any man who intends to perform pilgrimage and enters the consecrated state will not then commit any sin because he has been preparing himself for a new journey in which he will be purified of all his sins; so how could he commit any more sins when he has come to a distant land to be purified of them?

During pilgrimage, the pilgrim has also etiquette with animals, neither hunting them nor killing them; also with plants, not cutting down any trees. He has etiquette even with inanimate objects which he considers to be the lowest form of existence, for he is eager to kiss the Black Stone and does his best to get to it, for if he cannot reach it, he salutes it with his hand.

Pilgrimage is a period of order and discipline. In pilgrimage, you see the human being's humiliation; this being which is higher than all other creatures

(1) He means that the pilgrim must not hunt whilst in a consecrated state. Allah *the Almighty* says, 'O you who have attained to faith! Kill no game while you are in the state of pilgrimage. And whoever of you kills it intentionally, [shall make] amends in cattle equivalent to what he has killed – with two persons of probity giving their judgment thereon – to be brought as an offering to the *Ka'ba*; or else he may atone for his sin by feeding the needy, or by the equivalent thereof in fasting: [this,] in order that he taste the full gravity of his deed, [while] Allah *the Almighty* shall have effaced the past. But whoever does it again, Allah *the Almighty* will inflict His retribution on him: for Allah is an avenger of evil. Lawful to you is all water-game, and what the sea brings forth, as a provision for you [who are settled] as well as for travellers, although you are *forbidden to hunt* on land while you are in the state of pilgrimage....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 95-96)

is now in a state of extreme humility and modesty, no matter how high his rank usually is. The human soul experiences such great tranquillity and contentment when it kisses the Black Stone; a man is saddened if he is unable to kiss it.

The True Lord then says, 'and celebrate Allah's Name, on specified days'. (*al-Hajj*: 28) They extol the name of Allah *the Almighty* because the pilgrimage actions are accompanied by the remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* and declarations of fealty to Him. The pilgrim does not do anything without saying, 'At Your service, Allah at Your service'! This declaration of fealty continues to be uttered until he stones the pillars at 'Aqaba. The meaning of 'At Your service, Allah at Your service' is 'The concerns of this worldly life call to me, and You have called me to fulfil the obligation with which You have charged me, and I choose to answer You first, because You are my Creator, and the Creator of all the things which concern me and distract me from You'.

As for the saying of Allah, 'on specified days' (*al-Hajj*: 28), it refers to those days of sacrifice on the 10th plus the three days of the festival of sacrifice on the 11th, 12th and 13th of the month of *Dhul Hijja*.⁽¹⁾

The statement 'over the livestock He has provided for them' (*al-Hajj*: 28) instructs Muslims that they give thanks to Allah *the Almighty* for the provision of food and drink which they enjoy at this time, and for the buying and selling in which they engage during the pilgrimage. Or they give thanks to Him *the Almighty* for creating these cattle for them, even if they do not perform the pilgrimage; for the creation of cattle – meaning camels, cows, sheep and goats – and their subdual to man's will were founded on great wisdom. In addition to the benefit of their meat, milk, wool, and hides, give thanks to Allah *the Almighty* for the fact that He subdued them to your will. Had Allah *the Almighty* not subdued them for you; you would never have been able to benefit from them. The camel, for example, is a huge animal which can be led by a small child, it can make it kneel and even load it with goods, whilst man cannot tame snakes or wolves, for example. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Are

(1) Others say it is the first ten days of the month, or the day of sacrifice and the three days after it (the 10th to the 13th), or the day of sacrifice and the two days after it, or the day of 'Arafa, the day of sacrifice and the following three days (i.e. the 9th to the 13th) (Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir*).

they, then, not aware that it is for them that We have created, among all the things which Our hands have wrought, the domestic animals of which they are [now] masters? And that We have subjected them to men's will....' (*Ya Sin*: 71-72) We extol Allah *the Almighty* and give thanks to Him for the cattle which He has provided and allowed us to benefit from by eating, selling and enjoying their beauty, as He says, 'And you find beauty in them when you ride them home in the evenings and when you take them out to pasture in the mornings.' (*an-Nahl*: 6)

Had Allah *the Almighty* not subjected them to your service, you would never have been able to subject them or benefit from them. Therefore, in His Wisdom, Allah *the Almighty* left some creatures untameable so that you cannot tame them or subdue them by any means in order that we would continue to remember this blessing and give thanks to Him *the Almighty* for it.

Before, I gave the example of the flea which is the lowliest of creatures and so small you can barely see it, yet you have no power over it. It might rob you of your sleep and keep you awake all night. You can see this blessing when you see the small boy leading the camel and if it were to refuse to move, you would not be able to force it to move. If it were to attack you, you would not be able to overpower it, it might kill its owner and wreak havoc on all those around it. You have no intrinsic power over it, but you can only benefit from it because Allah *the Almighty* has subdued it for you; you can lead it to its own slaughter where it will stand and calmly yield to you.

The one who reflects on those animals which Allah *the Almighty* has permitted us to eat will be caught by surprise, for the animals which Allah *the Almighty* has allowed you to eat give you benefit for their whole lives; even when they are afflicted by fatal disease, what do they do? They move their head and show you the place where you will cut, as though they are saying to you: 'I am in my final moments of life, and so I am trying hard to let you benefit from my meat'. When people in the countryside see this, they say: 'It wants what is lawful', that is, it wants to be slaughtered lawfully. As for the animals which are not slaughtered and which Allah *the Almighty* has not made lawful, they die with their heads bowed because there is no benefit in them.

We call these animals stupid, dumb, and so on, but if you reflect on them you will change your view. Take the donkey, which some nations use as a symbol for stupidity and moroseness, as an example: you drive it ahead of you, load it with garbage, and beat it, yet it does not object to you or disobey you. If you clean, adorn it with a silver bridle, a velvet saddle, take it as a mount and an adornment, it will carry you on its back and go where you direct it. If you treat it angrily and use it to bear loads and carry garbage, it will carry it contentedly and obediently. Also, if you want it to jump over a ditch which is wider than what it can manage, it will come to a halt, no matter how much you beat it and how harsh you are with it; it will never go any further ahead because it knows how far it can jump, and it knows its own ability and thus never tries to do more than it is able to – yet we call it a donkey!

The True Lord then says, ‘...feed yourselves and the poor and unfortunate’ (*al-Hajj*: 28). The ‘unfortunate’ man is the one whose appearance and clothing clearly show him to be poor; as for the ‘poor’ man, he is the one who appears to be well-off but is actually poor. People do not take any notice of these poor people; they might not even know that they are poor and needy. Allah *the Almighty* says of them: ‘...He who is unaware [of their condition] might think that they are wealthy because they abstain [from begging]; [but] you cannot recognise them by their special mark: they do not beg of men with importunity...’ (*al-Baqara*: 273).

So the meaning is: ‘Eat that which you are allowed to eat, namely that which is purely charitable or an unconditional offering to the Sacred Mosque, i.e. that which is not an obligatory offering like those offering made in the *qiran* or *tamatu`* pilgrimages [which combine *`umra* and *hajj* (the minor and major pilgrimages), either both within the same *qiran* (state of consecration), or *tamatu`* i.e. with a gap in between where the pilgrim comes out of consecration, or an expiation for violating the rules of the consecration, or a vow – for in all of these cases, the person must not eat any of the sacrificed meat.⁽¹⁾

(1) Some say that the *qiran* and *tamatu`* sacrifices may be eaten from, whilst others say they may not. Ash-Shafi'i's opinion was that obligatory sacrifices may not be eaten from by the one who offers them, whilst for voluntary sacrifices it is best for the one who offers them to eat a third of the meat, give a third away as a gift, and give a third away as charity. (*Al-Jasas, Ahkam Al-Quran*)

So, eat some of the voluntary sacrifice you make, and give some to the unfortunate and the poor. In His Mercy with the poor, Allah *the Almighty* made this duty so that the wealthy and well-off go searching for animals to sacrifice, buy them, and then go to the place where the sacrifice is made, undertaking all this toil; then they go searching for poor people to give it to them, while the latter may be relaxing. Their provision comes to them from Allah's Grace, as easily as can be. Therefore, they say Allah *the Almighty* honoured the poor man by making him one of the pillars of the rich's Islam, meaning the obligation of the poor-due and not making the rich man one of the pillars of the poor's Islam.

The True Lord then says:

ثُمَّ لِيَقْضُوا تَفَثَهُمْ وَلِيُوفُوا نُدُورَهُمْ وَلِيَطَّوِّفُوا بِالْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿٢٩﴾

**So let the pilgrims perform their acts of
cleansing, fulfil their vows, and circle around
the Ancient House [29] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 29)**

As for the word *qada*, either it means Allah's decree which is for a man to inevitably undergo, or it means the judgement which a man passes between two contenders. The first reaction that one must do when judging between contenders is to bring an end to the contention; so the meaning of *liyaqdu* here is to 'perform' (*al-Hajj*: 29).

The words 'acts of cleansing' (*al-Hajj*: 29) here are the English translation for *tnafath*; when the Quran was revealed, the people of Quraysh did not use this word, so they asked the Bedouin what it meant, whereupon they told them that '*tnafath*' means the dust and dirt which builds up on the body. 'By Allah *the Almighty*', they said, 'we did not know this word until the Quran used it'.

So, the meaning is: 'Let them rid themselves of the dirt which has accumulated upon them in the course of their adhering to the rules of ritual consecration since the pilgrim spends the days of pilgrimage without using perfume, or trimming his hair or nails. Once he finishes the rites of pilgrimage and makes his sacrificial offering, he is allowed to rid himself of this accumulated dirt and grime once he comes out of his consecrated state. He is once again permitted to do things he had been obliged to avoid.

As for His saying, 'fulfil their vows' (*al-Hajj*: 29), it means that if the pilgrim vowed anything to Allah *the Almighty*, he must fulfil it.

Regarding the saying of Allah, 'and circle around the Ancient House.' (*al-Hajj*: 29), the act of circumambulation meant here is *tawaf al-ifada*. 'Circumambulation' means to go around something so that you begin and end at the same point, and then begin again, and so on. Allah *the Almighty* describes the house as being *'atiq* (ancient); the Arabic word *'atiq* has many meanings, one of which is 'old' or 'ancient'. As long as it is the first house ever to have been set up for mankind, it must be ancient. The attribute of ancientness is a praiseworthy quality here because it means something precious which is preserved and looked after.

We see that some people own precious and rare things which they preserve and pass on to their heirs; they call them 'antiques' such as works of art and the like; the more time passes, the more valuable they become.

The word *'atiq* also means 'beautiful'. If a person is *'atiq*, this means he has been freed from slavery and the control of others. So, what does it mean that the house is called *'atiq*? When the House is called 'ancient', this incorporates all these meaning. It is old; and being the first house ever set up for mankind, it is precious, valuable, and rare, for we can behold signs within it which we cannot see anywhere else. It is enough to mention that to see it and go around it serve as a means for one's sins to be forgiven.

It is also *'atiq* in the sense of being 'freed from the control of others' because Allah *the Almighty* protected it from the aggression of tyrants. Have you not heard the story⁽¹⁾ of the Elephant and What Allah *the Almighty* did to Abraha (the attacker of Mecca) when he wanted to destroy it? Even the elephant which led this army became conscious that this was an act of aggression against Allah's House, so it turned back from it and went in any direction they wanted except for the direction of the *Ka'ba*.

It is said that a man⁽²⁾ went to the elephant and said in its ear, 'Kneel, O Mahmud (the elephant's name), come to your senses, for you are in Allah's Inviolable City'.

(1) *This is the story of the elephant and its people.*

(2) *Ibn Hisham says in his Sira that the man was named Nufayl ibn Habib Al-Khath'ami.*

A poet⁽¹⁾ spoke of this by saying:

The elephant stopped still, and remained thus,

Yelping as though it had been wounded

Then Allah *the Almighty* sent a swarm of birds upon them and it pelted them with stones, until they all died. It is narrated that when `Abdul Muttalib, the grandfather of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to speak to Abraha about the hundred she-camels he took from him, the latter said, 'I used to respect you when I saw you, but you have fallen in my estimation, speaking to me about the hundred camels I took from you, and saying nothing of the house wherein lies all your glory and pride.' How did `Abd Al-Muttalib reply? He said, 'As for the camels, they are mine; as for the house, it has a Lord who protects it.'

Some might accuse `Abdul Muttalib of being negative by saying this; but the great man of Quraysh was not negative, but rather, he had complete trust that Allah *the Almighty* would protect His House; therefore he left it in the care of the One Who was more powerful than him. It was as though he was saying: 'If I were to protect it myself, I could only do so with my power, my strength, and my guile, but I want to leave it to Allah's Power and Strength. I only left the house to Allah's Protection because I am completely certain that its Lord will protect it; and this will unsettle the enemy and confuse him'.

The position of `Abd Al-Muttalib was very similar to the position of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when his people said to him, 'Behold, we shall certainly be overtaken [and defeated]!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 61); he replied with complete confidence and certainty: 'Nay indeed! My Lord is with me, [and] He will guide me!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62)

`Abdul Muttalib was not negative as some people might think. He was positive in an elevated way; for had he been 'positive' in the way you mean (i.e. fighting against Abraha), this would only have given him confidence in his own power, whilst the way he actually acted, which you deem to be negative, gave him confidence in Allah's Power and Strength; and therefore, the hosts of Heaven intervened directly.

(1) *It was Ummay ibn Abi As-Sult Ath-Thaqafi.*

But, why do Muslims go around the *Ka'ba*? Scholars say it is because when the Muslim is away from the *Ka'ba*, he prays towards it according to what direction it lies in relation to his location. So, all over the world, the Muslims face the *Ka'ba*, one from the north, another from the south, a third from the east and a fourth from the west, that is, people face it from every other possible direction.

If you go to the *Ka'ba* itself and have the honour of seeing it, do you face it from the same direction you did when you prayed at home, and do others do likewise? So, all the directions of the *Ka'ba* are equal for you and for everyone else, as Allah *the Almighty* says, 'and wherever you turn, there is Allah's countenance...' (*al-Baqara*: 15). So no place is more appropriate than any other, and therefore we walk in circles around it.

The True Lord then says:

ذَٰلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعِظَّمْ حُرْمَتِ اللَّهِ فَهُوَ خَيْرٌ لَهُ، عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ. وَأُحِلَّتْ
لَكُمْ الْآثَنَامُ إِلَّا مَا يُشْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَأَجْتَنِبُوا الرِّجْسَ
مِنَ الْأَوْثَانِ وَاجْتَنِبُوا قَوْلَ الزُّورِ ﴿٣٠﴾

All this [is ordained by God]: anyone who honours the sacred ordinances of God will have good rewards from his Lord. Livestock have been made lawful to you, except for what has been explicitly forbidden. Shun the filth of idolatrous beliefs and practices and shun false utterances[30] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 30)

The saying of Allah, 'All this' refers to the previous discourse which was a clear proclamation. It calls you to another commandment which shall now be given. This shows that what will be said now is a continuation of what was said before; after speaking about the house and the rites of the pilgrimage connected to it, He continues by saying, 'All this [is ordained by Allah]: anyone who honours the sacred ordinances of Allah will have good rewards from his Lord...' (*al-Hajj*: 30). The True Lord wants His servants to adhere to His commandments by doing what He commands and abstain from what He prohibits. You are forbidden from leaving all that Allah *the Almighty* commands. You are forbidden from doing all that He prohibits; and these are

the sacred commandments of Allah *the Almighty* which you must honour by obeying the commandment and abstaining from the prohibited.

When you honour these sacred commandments, do not honour them for their own nature, nor nothing is inherently sacred, but rather you honour them because they are Allah's sacred commandments and injunctions. Therefore, He might make the conditions of their adherence subject to change and He might send circumstances upon you which appear on the surface to be contradictory.

Take the minor ablution, for example. Some people think that it is meant to clean the body; but if there is no water available, it is replaced by the dry ablution, wherein we put dust on certain limbs. So, it is not a matter of cleanliness, but rather of adherence, obedience and of remembering that you are doing something extraordinary for which you must purify yourself by making ablutions. If He commands you to make the dry ablution, then you must obey without looking for the reasons and causes of the commandment. This is how to respect and honour Allah's Commandments, basically because they are from Allah *the Almighty*. When we see this kind of obedience and respect even in the interactions of our ordinary daily lives and when the soldier is trained, for example, he is taught discipline before taking up a weapon or trains with it. He learns the word 'attention' meaning not to move no matter what the circumstance may be so that even if a scorpion stings him, he does not move.

The drill sergeant goes to the soldiers in the mess hall and says, 'Attention!'; so everyone obeys, the spoon which was on the plate remains on the plate, the spoon which was in the soldier's mouth remains in his mouth, to the extent that you do not see any movement. This behavioural discipline comes before the other important and vital areas of military discipline which only come after it has been learned.

So, your Lord is worthier of this discipline because worship is nothing other than the worshipper's disciplined obedience to the commandments of the one he worships, a complete obedience with no discussion. You are not doing it for its own sake, but in obedience to Allah's Command. When you circumambulate, you kiss the Black Stone, then when you stone the small rocks, you pelt another stone. This is a stone and that is a stone, yet we kiss one and treat the other with disdain; one stone is kissed and the other is

bombarded because this is a matter of obedience and adherence; this is all part of honouring Allah's sacred commandments.

'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* alerted us to this truth when he said about wiping over socks in the ablution: 'if religion had followed our human logic, it would have made more sense to wipe the bottom of the foot than the top'⁽¹⁾; this is because the bottom of the foot gets dirty first.

We mentioned when discussing the previous verses that five things are inviolable or sacred, that is, the Inviolable House, the Inviolable Mosque, the Inviolable City, the Inviolable Regions and the Inviolable Month. Allah's sacred commandments are those things which He has made forbidden, so we must not do them.

The True Lord then states what the result of this obedience will be, saying, 'will have good rewards from his Lord' (*al-Hajj*: 30). The goodness here is not based on outward appearances, people's opinions or the intrinsic nature of the thing; rather, it means what is good for the servant in his Lord's Sight.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'Livestock have been made lawful to you, except for what has been explicitly forbidden.' (*al-Hajj*: 30) You might say, 'How is this, when they were lawful from the beginning since the basis of all things is that they are lawful'?

Scholars say Allah *the Almighty* forbade hunting on pilgrimage and in the sanctuary. Some people might have thought that it was henceforth permanently banned so that they would no longer benefit from it. Therefore, He made it clear that it is all permitted except for those things He explicitly forbade, which the Quran makes clear when it says, 'Forbidden to you is carrion, and blood, and the flesh of swine, and that over which any name other than Allah's has been invoked, and the animal that has been strangled, or beaten to death, or killed by a fall, or gored to death, or savaged by a beast of prey, save that which you [yourselves] may have slaughtered while it was still alive; and [forbidden to you is] all that has been slaughtered on idolatrous altars...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 3), and 'Hence, eat not of that over which Allah's name has not been pronounced: for this would be sinful conduct indeed...' (*al-An'am*: 121).

(1) Narrated by Abu Dawud (162)

As for the saying of Allah ‘Shun the filth (*rijs*) of idolatrous beliefs and practices and shun false utterances’ (*al-Hajj*: 30), the Arabic word *rijs* literally means the thick accumulation of filth which builds up inside something, not only on the surface; it can be easily removed.

The word ‘shun’ does not only mean neither to abstain, nor to approach the things which lead to this sin; for when you approach the things which lead to and cause sin, they will tempt you and occupy your mind. The person who strays near something is likely to fall into it, which is why the True Lord did not say, ‘abstain’, but said ‘shun’. I am astonished by some of those people who sin against themselves and say, ‘The command to shun intoxicants does not mean they are forbidden, since He did not say, ‘intoxicants are forbidden to you’. We say that ‘shun’ is even more of a clear prohibition than saying ‘they are forbidden to you’; for had the True Lord said, ‘Intoxicants are forbidden to you’, this would have meant that you could not drink them, but you could attend places where they are drunk and you could brew them, carry them and sell them. But, when He tells you to shun them, then it means that you cannot even go anywhere near them.

Therefore, I find that the rhetorical style of the Quran in imparting Allah’s commandments and prohibitions clearly distinguishes the bounds of what Allah. Where commandments are concerned, He says, ‘These are the bounds set by Allah; do not, then, transgress them...’ (*al-Baqara*: 229).

Where prohibitions are concerned, He says, ‘These are the bounds set by Allah do not, then, offend against them (literally ‘do not approach them’)...’ (*al-Baqara*: 187). So, when Allah commands and permits something, stay within the bounds of what He permits; do not transgress them by doing anything else. Yet, when He forbids something, do not even approach them. When Allah *the Almighty* wanted to forbid Adam and Eve *peace be upon them* from eating from the tree, He said to them: ‘but do not approach this one tree’ (*al-Baqara*: 35).

After commanding us to shun the loathsome evil of false gods, the True Lord says, ‘...and practices and shun false utterances.’ (*al-Hajj*: 30) So He links idol-worship to bearing false witness, as though they are equal sins. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* finished his dawn prayer one day and then stood up and said, ‘Indeed, Allah has placed

the bearing of false witness right after idol-worship!'⁽¹⁾ Why? Because bearing false witness combines all different forms of evildoing; for when someone says, 'There is no Allah', this is false and then he is a bearer of false witness. When he says, 'Allah has partners', this is false, and the one who says it is a bearer of false witness. Likewise, when he does evil or distorts the truth or insults others, this is all part of bearing false witness.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* therefore listed the enormities, and said, 'Shall I not tell you of the gravest of all enormities?' They said, 'Tell us, O Prophet Muhammad.' He said, 'To associate partners with Allah and to dishonour one's parents.' He was reclining, and then he stood up and said, 'And indeed, bearing false witness! And indeed, bearing false witness!' The narrator said, 'He kept on repeating it until we thought he would never stop.'⁽²⁾

Scholars say about the bearer of false witness: 'O bearer of false witness, you are of blatant evil! You mislead judges and swear false oaths by Allah *the Almighty*!'

It is notable that the bearer of false testimony falls in the estimation of the people; he also falls in the estimation of the one on whose behalf he testifies, even though he testifies on your behalf and gives you an advantage over your rival, he sullies his own dignity, and so you despise him. If he is called to testify regarding someone else, you will be the first one to reveal that he gave false testimony on your behalf.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

حُفَاءَ لِلَّهِ غَيْرَ مُشْرِكِينَ بِهِ ۚ وَمَنِ يُشْرِكْ بِاللَّهِ فَكَأَنَّمَا خَرَّ مِنْ
السَّمَاءِ فَتَخَفَفَهُ الطَّيْرُ أَوْ تَهَوَّى بِهِ الرِّيحُ فِي مَكَانٍ سَحِيقٍ ﴿٣١﴾

Devote yourselves to God and assign Him no partners, for the person who does so is like someone who has been hurled down from the skies and snatched up by the birds or flung to a distant place by the wind [31] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 31)

The verse under discussion suffices with mentioning two attributes which serve as a summation, namely inclining towards Allah *the Almighty*

(1) Narrated by Ahmad (iv. 321), At-Tirmidhi (2300) and Abu Dawud (3599)

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (5976) and Muslim (87)

and turning away from all that is false. That is to say, they do not ascribe divine qualities to aught beside Him. The word *hunafa* is the plural of *hanif* which is derived from the word *hanafa* which describes a leg which is bent and not straight. Now this attribute here does not mean that these people are crooked, but rather, the meaning is that when you deviate away from deviance, you are thereby upright.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* described Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* as ‘one who turned away from all that is false (*hanif*)...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 67) meaning that he turned away from idol-worship.

I said that Allah does not intervene with a new religion until people become completely steeped in corruption and misguidance, and the means of guidance are all exhausted. Consequently, there is no one to give counsel to a man, not his own soul and conscience, nor his religion, nor his community and environment. The human soul has a certain natural immunity against all that which contradicts the truth, but this immunity can be covered over by passions. Once this immunity no longer exists in the entire community, Allah sends a new prophet, a new message, and a new warning.

This is what Allah *the Almighty* means when He says, ‘they would not prevent one another from doing whatever hateful things they did: vile indeed was what they were wont to do!’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 79) That is why Allah *the Almighty* testified that the *ummah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the best *ummah* ever brought out for the good of mankind. The immunity of truth exists within it; it will always advise itself and enjoin what is good and guide the deviant person back to righteousness; and therefore Prophet Muhammad said about it: ‘Goodness will remain in me and in my *ummah*, until the Day of Resurrection.’⁽¹⁾

The meaning of this is, ‘Goodness is encompassed in me, and spread throughout my *ummah*’. He *peace and blessings be upon him* embodied all the attributes of goodness and Allah *the Almighty* gave perfection to him alone, but who of his *ummah* could be as perfect as him? Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* spread out the attributes of goodness throughout the Muslim *ummah* so that

(1) Narrated by *As-Suyuti* although there is some doubt about its authenticity

each of them took one of his attributes; one is generous, another is courageous, a third is forbearing and so on.

Since the *ummah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has this role, this means that he was the Seal of the Prophets, because his *ummah* would continue to convey his Message after him and therefore Allah would not have to intervene by sending another Messenger until the Last Hour.

So, I say that messengers do not come unless there is deviation and they come to straighten this deviation and to incline towards uprightness. This is the meaning of 'Devote yourselves to Allah and assign Him no partners...' (*al-Hajj*: 31). This attribute is defined by upright adherence to Allah's commands, and not the commands of human beings, we cannot choose for ourselves the means of attaining perfection, and say, 'Things must be like this and that'. No, only the Creator can define the means for His creatures to attain perfection.

The True Lord does not want us to do something merely for the sake of the thing itself, but rather because it is His command. I explained this notion before by giving the example of a disbeliever who does good deeds and benefits to other people and society, but not for the sake of religion or Allah's Commandments, but the humanity, social position, renown and esteem. Allah *the Almighty* does not deny such a person what he rightly deserves, or the reward for his actions; yet He gives it to him, but only in this worldly life, as He says, '[But,] behold, as for those who attain to faith and do righteous deeds – verily, We do not fail to requite any who persevere in doing good.' (*al-Kahf*: 30)

These people, however, have no share of the reward of the Hereafter because they worked for the sake of society, people and esteem. They were rewarded in this worldly life with fame, esteem, being renowned. In a Qudsi Hadith, the True Lord says to them, '...You only did it so that (such-and-such) would be said – and indeed it was said.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *Abu Hurayra narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'The first of people to be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who was martyred. He will be brought forward, and shown his blessings, and he will acknowledge them. (Allah) will say, 'What did you do with them?' He will say: 'I fought in Your cause until I was martyred.' He will say: 'You have lied; you fought so=*

Allah *the Almighty* gave us numerous parables to describe these people, such as when He says, ‘But as for those who are bent on denying the truth, their [good] deeds are like a mirage in the desert, which the thirsty supposes to be water – until, when he approaches it, he finds that it was nothing: instead, he finds [that] Allah [has always been present] with him, and [that] He will pay him his account in full – for Allah *the Almighty* is swift in reckoning!’ (*an-Nur*: 39)

So, the deeds of the disbeliever are like a mirage which can be seen from a distance, so that he who sees it thinks there is water there, but in fact there is not. Eventually he comes to realise that there is nothing there, and is surprised to find that a Just Allah exists, he had not had this on his mind when he did any of his deeds.

In another verse, He says, ‘[This, then, is] the parable of those who are bent on denying their Lord: all their works are as ashes which the wind blows about fiercely on a stormy day: [in the life to come,] they cannot achieve any benefit whatever from all [the good] that they may have wrought...’ (*Ibrahim*: 18). He also says, ‘O you who have attained to faith! Do not deprive your charitable deeds of all worth by stressing your own benevolence and hurting [the feelings of the needy], as does he who spends his wealth only to be seen and praised by men, and believes not in Allah and the Last Day: for his parable is that of a smooth rock with [a little] earth upon it – and then a rainstorm smites it and leaves it hard and bare. Such as these shall have no gain whatever from all their [good] works: for Allah does not guide people who refuse to acknowledge the truth.’ (*al-Baqara*: 264)

As rain causes anything to grow when it falls upon a smooth, hard rock, the deeds of the unbeliever are like this. As for those who wish to attain the reward of the Hereafter, they must achieve the true meaning of ‘Devote...to Allah and assign Him no partners’ (*al-Hajj*: 31), and base their deeds on Allah’s Commandments. So, a deed should not be done because it is good in itself, but rather, because Allah *the Almighty* has commanded you to do it. This will be proved by the fact that the Lawgiver will command you some things

= *it would be said that you were brave; and it was said.*’ Then He will order for him to be dragged away on his face, and thrown in the fire.’ Narrated by Muslim (1905), Ahmad (ii. 322), and An-Nasa’i (vi. 23)

which you will not see to be good, yet nevertheless you are obliged to obey them in order to attain the discipline which the Wise Lawgiver wants from you; and then after this, the goodness of this deed will be revealed to you and you will learn the wisdom behind it.

Take the Islamic position concerning the orphan, for example. The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* encouraged us to take care of orphans and provide for them generously, even saying, 'I and the one who provides for the orphan shall be like these two in paradise', placing his first and middle fingers together.⁽¹⁾ So the one who provides for the orphan will be a companion of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in paradise.

There are many hidden wisdoms to be found in this position, of which many people might be unaware. The orphan has lost his father whilst still young, so that he has no father whilst his friends enjoy the protection of their fathers. So, if this young child is not shown affection by all people, as though they are his fathers, he will develop feelings of bitterness and resentment towards Allah *the Almighty* and the fate which denied him the affection and care of a father, but did not deny this to others. Therefore, Islam wants the orphan to have an equal upbringing in society so that he does not feel bitterness towards Allah *the Almighty* or towards the people, as they all treat him as though he were their son.

There is another point worth making here: When you see the position of the orphan, and how society looks after him and raises him, your heart will feel assured if you should die suddenly whilst your children are still young. These are immunities which Islam places in society: immunity for the orphan himself, and immunity for those who look after him and provide for him.

Looking after the orphan and providing for him must be done in light of the words 'Devote yourselves to Allah and assign Him no partners...' (*al-Hajj*: 31) so that your action is devoted solely to Allah *the Almighty* without any regard for worldly pleasures, such as the one who is eager to become an orphan's guardian so that he can utilise the orphan's wealth or because he desires the orphan's mother and so on; for as we said, such deeds are 'like a mirage in

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (5304) and Abu Dawud (5150) on the authority of Sahl ibn As-Sa'idi

the desert' (*an-Nur*: 39), or like 'ashes which the wind blows about fiercely on a stormy day' (*Ibrahim*: 18) or like 'a smooth rock' (*al-Baqara*: 264) from which nothing can grow.

If one tries to devote his intention solely to Allah in deeds such as this, he cannot be certain that this intention will not be mixed with other goals, which is why the Hadith says, 'O Allah, I ask Your forgiveness for every deed I intended for You Alone, but for which my intention was then mixed with something which was not for You.'⁽¹⁾

The second attribute with which Allah describes His faithful servants is: 'assign Him no partners'. (*al-Hajj*: 31) Idolatry is a grave matter indeed because the True Lord, as the Qudsi Hadith says, has no need whatsoever of any associate; so why would you seek refuge in any but Allah *the Almighty* when Allah exists?

Therefore, He says in a Qudsi Hadith, 'Of all [supposed] associates, I have the least need for any association; thus, if anyone does an action for someone else's sake as well as Mine, I will leave it to the one whom he associated with Me.'⁽²⁾ And the True Lord then gives us a clear image of the consequence of idolatry: '...for the person who does so is like someone who has been hurled down (*kharra*) from the skies and snatched up by the birds or flung to a distant place by the wind.' (*al-Hajj*: 31)

The Arabic word *kharra* (hurled down) means falling from the sky without holding onto anything, as He says elsewhere: '...so that the roof fell (*kharra*) in upon them from above...' (*an-Nahl*: 26).

Man has within him an aspect of mineral nature in that the law of gravity applies to him. If he goes up, he must come down because of this gravity and cannot hold himself suspended in the air, since this is beyond his power. Man, also has an aspect of vegetal nature in that he grows and an aspect of animal nature in that he has instincts; and his human nature is found in his mind, his intelligence and his ability to choose between alternatives – by this, he was honoured above all the other kinds of being.

(1) *Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali mentions this in his (Jami' Al-'Ulum Wal-Hikam) as a supplication of Mutraf ibn 'Abdullah.*

(2) *It' is narrated by Muslim (2985) and Ibn Majah (4202) on the authority of Abu Hurayra.*

We can observe here that 'hurled down' is linked to a great height: 'hurled down from the skies'. (*al-Hajj*: 31) Therefore, no power can protect him or prevent him from falling, neither from him nor from anything else. Before he reaches the ground, the birds carry him off; and if they do not carry him off, then the wind blows him away to a far-off place and plays with him. So, he is bound to perish a way or another and any one of these three would be enough to finish him.

The intelligent person should reflect on the meaning of this Quranic image and beware of this fate, for this is the state of those who associate partners with Allah *the Almighty*. If you take this image to be a comparison of one state with another, then the image is plainly there before you; and if you want another interpretation which explains its individual parts, then the 'skies' signify Islam, the 'birds' are passions, and the 'wind' is the exhortation of Satan, which plays around with him, carrying him here and there. So, what loss could be worse than this? And who could save a man from this fate?

The True Lord then says:

ذَٰلِكَ وَمَنْ يُعِظَّمْ شَعِيرَ اللَّهِ فَإِنَّهَا مِنْ تَقْوَى الْقُلُوبِ

**All this [is ordained by God]: those who honour
God's rites show the piety of their hearts [32]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 32)**

As for the saying of Allah, 'this is [ordained by Allah]...' (*al-Hajj*: 32), it refers to what has just been said which has become clear and plain. We now wish to say something else, and draw the hearer's attention to it. Concerning the saying of Allah, 'those who honour Allah's rites' (*al-Hajj*: 32), the word *sha'a'ir* is the plural of *sha'ira* (symbol) which means the rituals which Allah *the Almighty* sets up for His servants that they might attain His reward by honouring them. The consecrated state of the pilgrim is a symbol, the *takbir* (saying *Allahu Akbar*, Allah is the Greater) is a symbol, the circumambulation is a symbol, the rushing between *Safa* and *Marwa* is a symbol, stoning the pillars is a symbol and so on. These are all things which Allah *the Almighty* has honoured, and commanded us to honour. To honour something means more than just to do it or to perform it; to honour the

symbols means to perform them with love, devotion and sincerity, to do them as perfectly as possible and even to do more than is required of one.

A fine example is the devout friend of Allah; Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when Allah *the Almighty* commanded him to raise the foundations of the House. It would have been enough for him to build it as high as his hand could reach and he would therefore have done what he was commanded to do. He felt love and devotion for this responsibility, so he employed strategy and placed one boulder atop another so that he could stand on them and make the building even higher.

To love the commandments of Allah is a stage of faith that we must reach, even in our worldly labours. Suppose that you are relocated to a new office and you learned that the director of this office is a hard and serious man, who does not neglect any mistake and does not tolerate any lateness or negligence during working hours. You will adhere to these new directions to the letter and might even go beyond them, not because you love your work, but because you do not want to be censured by this director one day.

Thus, the point is that fulfilling our obligations with love and devotion will lead us to Allah's love. Therefore, we find that those endowed with deep knowledge say, 'A sin which causes humility and profound regret might be better than a good deed which causes pride and arrogance'. What is important is that we reach the stage of surrendering and humbling ourselves to Allah *the Almighty*. A sin that leads you to this goal is better than a good deed that leads you to delusion and pride.

This is what it means to love the religious responsibilities and the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* expressed this devotion when He said, 'And the coolness of my eyes has been placed in prayer.'⁽¹⁾ Therefore, the Quran reproached those who: 'when they stand up to prayer they stand up sluggishly; they do it only to be seen of men and do not remember Allah save a little.' (*an-Nisa*': 142)

Fatima, daughter of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was cleaning and polishing a dirham. When Prophet Muhammad asked her

(1) Narrated by Ahmad, *An-Nasa'i* and *Al-Hakim*

what she was doing, she said that she wished to give it as charity and that she knew that it was going to Allah before the pauper. This is what it means to honour the rites of Allah and to perform them with desire and love.

In the early period of Islamic history, people used to contend for being the first to get to the mosque when they heard the call to prayer and for being the last to leave the mosque after the prayer is finished. You might like to compare their state to our state today. Those people honoured the indications of Allah and placed them second to nothing. One of those endowed with deep knowledge reached such a level of love of Allah's commandments and rites that made him proclaim that he has become worried that Allah will not reward him for obeying Him. When he was asked why, he replied that he desired it and how could Allah reward him for fulfilling his desire.

Therefore, when a commandment from Allah reaches the people to whom He has given resolve and deep knowledge, they welcome it without any discussion or debate. How could they debate the commandment of Allah, while they honour it? Therefore, we wonder about those who debate and object to those things that the Prophet Muhammad did, such as polygamy. In addition, how could he *peace and blessings be upon him* be accused of committing inappropriate things?! As a matter of fact, as long as you believe that Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah, how can you blame him *peace and blessings be upon him* for doing a particular act while neglecting another. Do you yourselves possess enough perfection to judge the actions of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? In fact, he *peace and blessings be upon him* is an absolutely perfect person.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says that honouring His rites show the piety of the hearts and not of the limbs. That is because the heart is where Allah looks and where the measurement of honouring of His rites take place. Moreover, we said before that Allah does not want us to yield our bodies up to Him, rather, He wants our hearts to yield to Him. If He wanted our bodies to yield, they would yield to Him unwillingly, as He says: 'Perhaps you will kill yourself with grief because they do not believe. If We please, We should send down upon them a sign from the heavens so that their necks should stoop to it.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 3-4)

You can force someone who is weaker than you to do something he hates and you can even make him prostrate before you if you want. However, you cannot make him love or respect you. Why is that? That is because you can force the body, but you have no power over the heart. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ إِلَىٰ أَجَلٍ مُّسَمًّى ثُمَّ مَحِلُّهَا إِلَىٰ الْبَيْتِ الْعَتِيقِ ﴿٣٣﴾

**Livestock are useful to you until the set time.
Then their place of sacrifice is near the Ancient
House[33] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 33)**

As long as these things are the rites of Allah and shows the piety of the heart, you should do and honour them because they shall give you benefits that you could recognise or not. You might recognise some of them but not others because they are veiled from you. The true unknown value of the reward for these rites is commensurate with the level of sincerity with which it is done.

The verse talks about the sacrificial animals since Allah ended the verse by saying ‘Then their place of sacrifice is near the Ancient House.’ (*al-Hajj*: 33) Thus, the rite meant here is that of sacrificing animals whose benefits are obvious. We benefit from their wool, fur, milk, and meat. In addition, we take them as mounts and decorations.

Utilising all these benefits are until the set time which is that time when you say and intend that such and such an animal is for the sanctuary. When you make this intention, you can no longer benefit from any part of it, nor can anyone else do so. Therefore, they label these animals so that if it is lost, the people will recognise that it is an offering for the house of Allah and no one will take it. Inasmuch as these benefits last until a set time, they must be worldly benefits, as you will find the otherworldly benefits later in the Hereafter.

Allah says, ‘Then their place of sacrifice is near the Ancient House.’ (*al-Hajj*: 33) This means that when this set time comes, the pilgrim will take the offering to the sanctuary to be sacrificed. The scholars discussed this verse much. They said that the act of sacrificing is made at Mina, not in Mecca. However, the verse says that it is near the Ancient House. We say that the

sacrifice was originally made in Mecca at the sanctuary, as the verse says, however they later found it inappropriate to perform the sacrifices in the sanctuary because of the mess and the blood it left there. Thus, it was deemed better to make the sacrifice away from the sanctuary so that it would remain clean. However, this does not prevent the original method from being done, which is to perform the sacrifice at the sanctuary, as Allah says in another verse, 'as an offering to be brought to the *Ka'ba*.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 95) In the same vein, a Hadith says, 'Mecca is all a place of sacrifice.'⁽¹⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards:

وَلِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا لِّيَذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَىٰ مَا رَزَقَهُمْ مِنْ
بَهِيمَةٍ الْأَنْعَامِ فَالْكُفْرُ بِاللَّهِ وَجِدْ فَالَهُ أَصْلَمُوا وَيَشْرِ الْمُخْتَلِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

**We appointed acts of devotion for every community, for
them to celebrate God's name over the livestock He
provided for them: your God is One, so devote yourselves
to Him. [Prophet], give good news to the humble [34]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 34)**

The acts of devotion are the sacrifices of worship as Allah tells us that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said, 'Say, "Surely my prayer, and my sacrifice, and my life and my death are (all) for Allah, the Lord of the worlds."' (*al-An'am*: 162)

Allah appointed acts of devotion for every community because the rites, indications, and acts of worship do not have to be the same for all communities. Every community is given what is appropriate for it and appropriate for its temporal and environmental situation. Thus, the messengers did not come to change the fundamental truths upon which religion stands. These fundamentals and foundations are constant from one message to another and they are not changed or replaced when different messengers are sent.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'He has made plain to you of the religion what He enjoined upon Nuh (Noah) and that which We have revealed to you and

(1) *The like of this was narrated by Ahmad and Ad-Darimi.*

that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses) and 'Isa (Jesus) that keep to obedience and be not divided therein.' (*ash-Shura*: 13) This applies to the fundamental roots of doctrine; yet as for the branches, Allah sees what is best for a society and the acts of obedience and worship which are appropriate for it.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* makes clear what the wisdom behind these acts of worship is. He says, 'to celebrate Allah's name over the livestock He provided for them'. (*al-Hajj*: 34) This means that these rites were laid down so that they remember Allah in all things and give thanks to Him for all the blessings they derive from the livestock. That is why we invoke Allah when we sacrifice, saying, 'In the name of Allah, Allah is The Greatest.' We invoke Him because slaughtering means releasing the spirit that Allah created and that you could never release it by your own will alone. Thus, saying the phrase 'In the name of Allah, Allah is The Greatest' means that I am not releasing this animal's spirit of my own accord, but rather because Allah commanded and permitted me to do so. Allah is greater than your will and greater than your emotions.

We see that some people do not like slaughtering and wonder why we slaughter this animal or this chicken. They claim to have mercy and pity for these animals. However, they do not have more mercy for them than their Creator does. We only slaughter them because Allah has permitted this and we only eat them in the name of Allah. This is clearly proved by how we never approach those things which Allah has forbidden us. Do we honour cats more than rabbits since we slaughter the rabbits and leave cats alone? Do we respect the dog more than the sheep? We do not definitely. It is a matter of law and a commandment from Allah which we must honour and obey. Allah provided those livestock for us. This means that he has created them for us, given them to us and tamed them to our will so that we benefit from it. Had He not subjected them to our will, they would never have yielded to our power and strength.

Allah then proclaims His Oneness. This tells that although the laws of one community differ to those of another, do not think that this one is from one God and the other law is from another God. There is only One God, Who

gives each community the laws which are most appropriate and best for them, because divine legislations come to treat specific social ailments.

The pure root of all religions is the belief in One All-Powerful God, who sends messengers with miracles to prove their honesty and convey His message. This is the basis of all revealed religions. Likewise, the fundamental rules and foundations of religion are commonly agreed upon. Stealing, adultery, false testimony and so on, are forbidden in all religions. Nevertheless, there are certain matters which are appropriate for one community but not another and the Lawgiver for all of them is One God. All people, from the very beginning of creation to the Last Hour, are equal before Him and therefore, He chooses what is best for each of them.

Do you not see how the head of a family arranges the affairs of his children, and Allah is beyond compare? For example, the head of the family tells each of them what to do when the food is served. He says that one of them must eat something different because he is ill, for example, and cannot eat the same food the others eat. So, he tells the mother to make something different for the ill child. This is because he is the guardian and the one responsible for all of them. He must consider what is best for each of them individually.

Therefore, differences between the laws of different communities do not mean that there are several gods. Nay, Glory be to Allah! There is only One God, Who gives to each of His servants according to their needs, in order to balance and upright society. In the past, doctors used to have two kinds of medicine which they used to give every patient no matter what their condition was. Therefore, this treatment was useless. Nowadays, a skilled doctor performs the necessary tests and analyses the patient to diagnose his condition. He prescribes the appropriate medicine for this condition with precise measures to cure the illness without harming the patient in another way. The same is true of the diverse sacred laws which were given to different communities.

Inasmuch as God is One and we are all equal in His sight and none of us is His son, then let us devote ourselves to Him. Surrender all our affairs to Him *the Almighty*. Honour and accept gladly His commandment, but if He leaves something up to our free choice, do what we like. In addition, do not

forget that Allah has given us the chance to ascend the levels of faith. In addition, He shows us how to reach spiritual excellence, if you want to.

Subsequently, He tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to give good news to the humble. Generally speaking, a humble man is a person who submits humbly to all the commandments of Allah. The more precise meaning of humble is the one who does not seek revenge for himself when he is wronged, as Allah says, ‘And indeed, whoever is patient and forgiving, these most surely are actions due to courage’. (*ash-Shura*: 43) The word ‘indeed’ here adds extra emphasis. But why did Luqman not add the word indeed when he advised his son: ‘and bear patiently that which befalls you; surely these acts require courage’ (*Luqman*: 17)?

Scholars say that misfortunes are of two kinds. The first is caused by an adversary and is accompanied by rage and lust for revenge. The second is a misfortune which befalls a man without there being any adversary involved, such as illness. That kind which has an adversary involved needs more patience therefore it requires emphasis, unlike the misfortune which befalls you without there being any adversary involved. It comes from Allah and therefore easier to bear patiently than the other kind. Luqman was advising his son to bear patiently that kind of misfortune that has no adversary.

Despite this, Allah *Glorified is He* has given the human soul ways of venting itself to preclude anger from building up inside and turning into hatred and malice, which could cause worse things to happen to you in the first place. Therefore, He has permitted you to respond but has yet encouraged you to do something higher than this and better for you. He says, ‘and those who restrain (their) anger and pardon men; and Allah loves the doers of good (to others)’ (*Al-Imran*: 134). The verse above includes three stages from which you can choose according to how well and correctly you understand the words of Allah and how close you are to Him.

The first stage is to restrain anger, that is, to curb your anger within yourself without translating it into revenge. Anger, then, is an emotion of the heart and a feeling of the soul. The second stage is to pardon men, i.e. to forgive taking revenge and to give anger no place in your soul and willingly cleansing it of all feelings of ire and anger. The third stage which is doing

good is the highest rank of all. It is not to pardon only, but to do good to the one who wrongs you.

Some people say that this is contrary to human nature. Indeed, it is contrary to the nature of ordinary people. However, those who recognise its reward and fully well know that by doing it they will be close to their Lord, find it easy to do and indeed love doing good to those who wrong them. Therefore, when Al-Hasan Al-Basri *Allah rest his soul* heard that someone had backbitten him, he sent him a gift of a plate of fresh dates and said to him, 'I heard that you gave me some of your good deeds yesterday.' It is clear that good deeds are more precious and valuable than a plate of fresh dates. Hence, they say, 'what a strange man who wrongs those who wrong him'. They have given him their good deeds which is the best things that they have done, so why would he wrong them in return?

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* wants to make a balance in society and put an end to the causes of hatred and malice in the human soul. When you do good to the one who wrongs you, you uproot the hatred and malice from his soul, as Allah 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) By doing so, you take your adversary from a position of adversity to a position of friendship and love.

So, a humble person submits humbly to Allah, while a person, who is not humble, is full of arrogance and tyranny towards those around him and holds himself to be better than everyone else. If he invokes the majesty of his Lord, he would humble himself before Him and behave with His creatures as well. Arrogance, on the other hand, is a sign that someone is heedless of Allah's Majesty as though he is unaware of his Creator. Thus, you could say that humility is of two kinds. The first is to be humble before Allah through submitting oneself to him and honouring His commandments, while the second is to be humble before the creatures of Allah through doing justice, forgiving, and pardoning them because of the belief that Allah will be on the side of the wronged person.

Consider your children when one of them wrongs the other. Whom would you support and sympathise with? Undoubtedly, you would be on the side of

the one who was wronged. You would feel for him and want to compensate him for being wronged. Yet, the one who wronged would regret it because of the distinction his brother gained after being wronged. He might even wish that he had been the one who was wronged instead.

Likewise, the humble person sees that all mankind are Allah's dependents and that the most beloved one to Him is the kindest to His dependents. Therefore, he forgives those who wrong him and leaves their affair up to Allah, the Lord of all. In addition, if the wronged person responds to the one who wrongs him, he would only do so according to his limited power and strength, whilst if he leaves the response to Allah, it would be commensurate with His Power.

In addition, it is worth noting that before thinking of revenge, the wronged person should be aware that he might have wronged others without realising and taking note of it as well. Thus, this is something which is for you as well as against you. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith, 'O son of Adam, you have prayed against the one who wronged you', which is permitted as He says, 'Allah does not love the public utterance of hurtful speech unless (it be) by one to whom injustice has been done.' (*an-Nisa'*: 148) This means that the one who is wronged has been given the opportunity of praying against those who wrong him. Allah continues saying, 'And the one you have wronged has prayed against you. Thus, if you will, I shall answer your prayers and the prayers made against you or if you will, I shall leave you both until the Hereafter, where My pardon shall extend to both of you.'⁽¹⁾

The humble man bears all of this in mind and exercises tolerance and forgiveness, so that his Lord will be on his side. Therefore, they say that if a wrongdoer knew what grace Allah had in store for the one he wronged, he would withhold this wrongdoing from him. When you see the one you wrong forgiving and pardoning you, do not think that you have humbled him, for he has only humbled himself, for it is Allah Who will raise him and lift his head above you one day. That is why it is considered an upright conduct when two people quarrel to ask whether they have a father or a boss who shall be called

(1) Al-Ghazali relates this as a saying of Yazid ibn Maysara.

to arbitrate between them and seek his judgement to end this dispute. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

الَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِرَ اللَّهُ وَجِلَتْ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَالصَّابِرِينَ عَلَى مَا أَصَابَهُمْ
وَالْمُقِيمِي الصَّلَاةِ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

**Whose hearts fill with awe whenever God is mentioned,
who endure whatever happens to them with patience, who
keep up the prayer, who give to others out of Our provision
to them [35] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 35)**

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* lists some of the attributes of humble people. Their hearts tremble with awe whenever Allah is mentioned. They quake in fear, shake, and quiver in awe of Allah.

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘now surely by Allah’s remembrance are the hearts set at rest.’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 28) Thus, Allah in one verse says that their hearts fill with awe, and in another verse, He says that their hearts set at rest. Why is that? That is because when the remembrance of Allah comes after a sin, the soul will surely feel fear and quake in dread of Allah, while when His remembrance comes after a misfortune or difficulty, the soul will find rest and comfort. Consequently, when you are best with difficulty and you do not have the means to get out of it, you say, ‘I have a Lord’ and seek refuge with Him, just as Musa (Moses) did when he said, ‘By no means; surely my Lord is with me: He will show me a way out.’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 62)

The second attribute is that they patiently bear whatever ill befalls them which they believe to be bad and consider a misfortune. We judge misfortunes according to the superficial harm they do. But, if you were to bear in mind the reward for the misfortune when you judge it, it would be easy for you and you would not consider it bad. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The truly unfortunate man is the one who loses out on the reward.’ This is the true misfortune that cannot be mended; whilst a misfortune that befalls you and you bear it patiently to earn reward is not really a misfortune.

Allah mentions their third attribute which is that they establish prayer. Prayer shows the faithfulness of a Muslim. It is the obligation that is never

waived under any circumstance. The two testimonies of faith are enough to be said once in your lifetime and alms giving is paid only once a year when you have its fixed amount. Likewise, fasting is only required one month out of the year and the pilgrimage is performed once in your lifetime when you can afford it and there is no blame on you if you cannot afford it.

Thus, prayer is a constant allegiance to Allah throughout the whole day. It is your Lord who calls you to it and you can set the time and place for this meeting with Him because He is ready to meet you at any time. You can imagine a president or a king, for example, calling you and insisting that you come and see him five times every day to be in his presence. Allah *Glorified is He* calls His servants to meet with Him and does not call them only once, but five times throughout the day and night. However, it is not burdensome for Him to repeat these meetings as He can meet them all at the same time. `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* was asked how Allah will reckon all people at the same time, he replied, 'He does so in the same way He provides them all at the same time.'

The fourth attribute is that they spend out of that with which they are provided. They do not spend out of their pockets, but they spend from what Allah has provided for them. Amazingly, Allah gives you provision from His bounty, yet when He wants you to help a needy person, He says to you, 'Who is there that will offer to Allah a good gift.' (*al-Hadid*: 11) It is as though Allah is saying that He does not ask for His gifts back and meanwhile does not say give what he has given to you to so and so a person. However, if you give a poor man a portion of your money, it will be stored up for you and not wasted. The provision which Allah has bestowed upon you belongs to you and He will never cheat you out of any of it. Allah respects your possessions and appreciates your actions, your hard work, and your effort with good rewards.

It is like the example of a man who needs a large amount of money for one of his sons, which is why he takes from his other sons what they have saved up from their allowance and promises to give it back to them later. Therefore, Allah says that He will double it for him. He gives you even more in return. This made some people say that Allah has forbidden dealing in usury, yet He gives usury to us. Indeed He *the Almighty* gives you double and

orders you to leave Him deal in this way. That is because when He gives you more, He does not take anything away from anyone else, nor does He lose anything which He has. He does not cause misery for any weak or needy person, or take advantage of their need.

In Islam, charity is a form of insurance against poverty if you ever become needy. The thing that a man fears most in old age is poverty. When he is unable to earn and no longer able to work, he fears that his money might run out and might need other people to help him in his old age. Here, Allah reassures him to rest easy, for just as he gives to others in his times of ease, others will reach out to him when he is old and infirm. Thus, Allah takes from you in order to give you and insure your future that you fear.

Charity in Islam is a fund to show solidarity with all society. It is like the funds of an insurance company. Thus, when your means are straitened and you grow old and infirm, we say to you: 'Do not grieve, for you are part of a cooperative believing society and just as you were required to give to others when you were well-off, others are required to give to you when you have nothing'.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالْبُدْنَ جَعَلْنَاهَا لَكُمْ مِنْ شَعَائِرِ اللَّهِ لَكُمْ فِيهَا خَيْرٌ فَاذْكُرُوا اسْمَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهَا صَوَافٍ فَإِذَا وَجِئَتْ جُنُوبُهَا فَكُلُوا مِنْهَا وَأَطِيعُوا الْقَانِعَ وَالْمُعْتَرَّ كَذَلِكَ سَخَّرْنَاهَا لَكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

We have made camels part of God's sacred rites for you. There is much good in them for you, so invoke God's name over them as they are lined up for sacrifice, then, when they have fallen down dead, feed yourselves and those who do not ask, as well as those who do. We have subjected them to you in this way so that you may be thankful [36]

(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 36)

After speaking about spending out of what Allah has provided for us, Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the spending of camels, male or female, or the equivalent in cattle. Its Arabic name indicates that it is fat and plump. You must look for this attribute when you choose one to offer as a sacrifice

to Allah and beware of being one of those people who offer that which they do not want for themselves. Be one of those people of whom Allah says, 'O you who believe! Spend (benevolently) of the good things that you earn.' (*al-Baqara*: 267)

Allah asks us to invoke His name over them and mention Him with thanks for giving and subduing them to us. Invoke Allah's name upon them when you slaughter them as they are lined up and standing on their feet with no weak or lameness. They are lined up before you as though they are in a show. These are the attributes of good cattle which befit this ritual and which are worthy of being offered to the house of Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* shows the way of their falling dead. It is well known that camels are not slain on the ground as other cattle are, but rather, they are slaughtered whilst standing and once a camel has been slaughtered, it falls to the ground heavily because of its bulk.

Then Allah orders us to feed ourselves of it. However, we said that only the offering which is completely voluntary and not linked to any of the affairs of the pilgrimage can be eaten. Thus, the offerings of the joint or separate minor and major pilgrimages or an offering given to make amends for a mistake and a vow and so on cannot be eaten from. The reason why we are commanded to eat some of the offering is that they used to disdain to eat of something which had been slaughtered for the poor. Therefore, it is as though commanding them to eat indicates that they must choose that which they would be happy to eat from. In addition, Allah orders us to feed the needy who do not beg, and the beggars.

Allah has subjugated them to us in this instance and in others in order to be thankful. He subdued them for us from the time man was first brought into being. Therefore, we must give thanks to Allah for creating them and making us own them. We must give Him thanks for subduing and subjecting them to our will as well as for guiding us to the performance of this rite and all this good which will bring you benefit in this world and in the Hereafter as well.

Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards:

لَنْ يَنَالَ اللَّهُ لُحُومُهَا وَلَا دِمَاؤُهَا وَلَكِنْ يَنَالُهُ التَّقْوَىٰ مِنْكُمْ كَذَٰلِكَ
 سَخَّرَهَا لَكُمْ لِتُكَبِّرُوا اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ مَا هَدَاكُمْ وَبَشِّرِ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches God but your piety. He has subjected them to you in this way so that you may glorify God for having guided you. Give good news to those who do good [37] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 37)

Before Islam, people used to pour the blood on the idol when they made sacrifices for them as though they were telling them that they have sacrificed and here was the blood of the animal. This action showed their folly and foolish conduct as they thought that if they did not pour the blood on the idol, it would not know that they had sacrificed for it. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* draws attention to the fact that neither their meat nor their blood reaches Him. He does not take anything from them and He is fully able to give to the poor man that you are commanded to give and make him as well off as you.

Actually, what Allah wants from making people different in terms of richness and poverty is to make balance in society. Society is not a machine which moves in unison; rather, it is based on human life that is, in turn, based on need and integration. Thus, these differences must exist between people and the divine legislation intervenes to take from the strong and give the weak and to take from the rich and give the poor, in order to put an end to feelings of rancour, envy, hatred, and selfishness.

For when the strong man gives the weak some of his strength, he will not envy him and will hope it remains with him because its benefit is passed onto him. Similarly, when a rich man gives some of the wealth which Allah granted him to a poor one, he will win his heart and relinquish the feelings of envy and jealousy and make him pray for the rich man to be always well blessed. Thus, these social differences are inevitable to represent the statement of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'The relationship of the believer with another believer is like (the bricks of) a building, each strengthens the other.'⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

Therefore, when a well-blessed person who shares his blessing with others is smite by a financial crisis, others grieve for him and feel his pain because his blessing is passed on to them and his wealth is shared with them. Recently, a man in the countryside might raise a cow or buffalo for its milk and would not neglect to share it with the neighbours and the needy people. They would pray for him that Allah bless his wealth; and when he suffered a financial loss, they would all grieve for him.

Therefore, when you share the blessings given to you with those who do not have them, you protect yourself from a lot of rancour and envy. However, if you do not, then at least conceal this wealth from the eyes of the needy so you do not arouse their resentment. Perhaps if an intelligent man sees you, his faith will keep him from extending his eyes to what you have; however, when little children see you carrying something which they do not have or see your son eating when they have nothing, this is where the problem will arise.

Allah said that it is our piety that reaches Him. Piety is realised after following the way of Allah, which is represented in obeying, remembering, and thanking Him. The way of obedience is to follow the do's and don'ts of the religion. In addition, the religion calls you to remember, with every blessing, the One Who gave these blessings to you and never let the blessing distract you from thanking the One who created it.

We observe at the end of the verse that the Noble Quran contains similar phrases. The end of the verse which reads, 'He has subjected them to you in this way so that you may glorify Allah for having guided you. Give good news to those who do good...' is similar to the end of the previous verse which reads, 'We have subjected them to you in this way so that you may be thankful.' (*al-Hajj*: 36)

Some of the scholars who study the Quran and search through its verses are interested in these similar phrases. They gather together these kinds of similar verses which speak about the same issues and arrange them in their minds. They, by doing so, are often faulty in their memorisation of the Quran. That is why the scholars advised one who memorises the Quran to leave scholarly matters aside, while he is memorising it, so that if he forgets a word he stops and does

not continue until he remembers it. The scholar, on the other hand, might recite another similar verse mistakenly and make it seem to fit.

Allah says that He subjugated them to us so that we may glorify Him for having guided us. This is to remember Him and give thanks to Him for giving us the grace to partake in these righteous acts. Then He gives good news to those who do good. To give good news means to give news of something pleasing before the coming of its time so that the one you tell can prepare for it and rejoice in it. Likewise, to warn means to give news of something bad before it happens so that the one you warn can prepare for it and take the opportunity to correct his mistake, protect himself from the thing of which you warn and find a way to save himself.

The doers of good are those who engage in *ihsan* (spiritual excellence,) which is the highest level of faith. It is to resolve on doing more of those acts of worship which Allah has obliged you to do than what is obliged. For example, Allah *the Almighty* has obliged you to pray five times in the day and night, however you can add more of the same obliged prayers as you like. You cannot invent your own acts of worship. The same is true of fasting, the alms giving, the pilgrimage, and all the other acts of worship which Allah has commanded you to do. On doing this, you have arrived at the level of spiritual excellence. Spiritual excellence constitutes of two elements. There is the act of worship itself, of which you have resolved to do more than that which Allah has obliged you to do and then there is the inspiration behind it, which is that you perform the action as though Allah is watching over you. It is mentioned in the Hadith of Jibril (Gabriel), peace be up him: '*Ihsan* is to worship Allah as if you see him and if you do not achieve this state of devotion, (then take it for granted) that Allah sees you.'⁽¹⁾

Your vigilant awareness of Allah and your recognition of how He is watching over you inspire you to this spiritual excellence. Do you not see how the worker whom you directly supervise and watch, unlike when you leave him by himself, always finishes his work on time and does it well? If you do not reach this level where it is as if you can see Allah, you can at least remember that He can see you and that He is always watching you.

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

Allah says, ‘Surely those who guard (against evil) shall be in gardens and fountains. Taking what their Lord gives them; surely they were before that, the doers of good.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16)

He then explains the cause of their excellence: ‘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*: 17-19) Is it obligatory for you to do this? You have the right to pray the evening prayer and then sleep until the dawn prayer and likewise Allah did not oblige you to pray for forgiveness in the watches of the night, nor to give voluntary charity. So, these recommended righteous deeds because the one who does them to reach the level of *ihsan*, that is the highest level of faith. Thus, let you be prepared to seek it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says afterwards:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَدْفَعُ عَنِ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ كُلَّ خَوَّانٍ كَفُورٍ

God will defend the believers; God does not love the unfaithful or the ungrateful [38] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 38)

The opening words of this verse give us the sense that a battle is being waged. Such battle is between the truth which He has revealed, and the falsehood which opposes it. Allah says earlier: ‘These two kinds of people disagree about their Lord.’ (*al-Hajj*: 19) Inasmuch as there is a disagreement, it will lead to battles that might take the form of words and arguments or they might take the form of violence, fierceness, and direct military combat.

The battle which the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* fought against the idolaters of Mecca who opposed him, was not only a battle of words. They first called him a sorcerer, a madman, a poet, a liar and so on. The matters escalated after that and they harmed the companions of the Prophet Muhammad and tortured them. They would come back battered and bruised to the Prophet Muhammad, but he would say to them that he, ‘I have not been commanded to fight, be patient, and be patient.’ When the aggression of the disbelievers reached a peak, Allah gave Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* permission to fight and revealed this verse.

Allah says that He will defend the believers. The Arabic verb used places emphasis on that matter. To defend means to meet an action with its like, thereby Allah defend them and the disbelievers push back. Thus, pressure is applied by both sides and this only occurs in a battle. A battle means that there will be a victor and a loser. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* reassures the believers that He will enter the battle on their side and will defend them.

The words of Allah express something natural. Allah *Glorified is He* would not send a messenger and let the people of falsehood triumph over him, for otherwise there would be no point in sending the messengers at all. Thus, Allah reassured Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and gave him glad tidings by saying, 'And certainly Our word has already gone forth in respect of Our servants, the messengers. Most surely they shall be the assisted ones. And most surely our host alone shall be the victorious ones.' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173) In addition, Allah says, 'And surely Allah will help him who helps His cause.' (*al-Hajj*: 40) Moreover, He says, 'O you who believe! If you help (the cause of) Allah, He will help you and make firm your feet.' (*Muhammad*: 7)

All these verses reassure and give glad tidings to the believers and they came in stages for a wise reason intended by Allah. He forbade them from fighting at first for a wise reason and exposed them to fighting before giving them leave to fight their enemies for a wise reason, which was to test the believers and purify their ranks from cowards and those whose faith is weak who only half-worshipped Allah. Thus, those with a strong faith and firm belief remain to carry the banner of this religion and spread it throughout the earth, as it is a global message for all times and places until the Last Hour. Inasmuch as the message of Islam has this status, it needed strong men to bear it. If the enemies of Islam succeeded to put an end to it, that religion of Allah would be destroyed forever

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* had to purify the faithful just as a goldsmith purifies gold and removes its impurities by putting it in fire. Similarly, these trials and misfortunes purified the faithful and showed their ranks as they fought together in unity.

Then Allah proclaims his dislike to the unfaithful or the ungrateful. It is as though Allah has become a participant in the battle. The two Arabic words

express hyperbole, i.e. someone who is constantly treacherous and someone who is always ungrateful. The notion of unfaithfulness implies that there was a trust which has been betrayed. Indeed, there was the primordial trust of moral responsibility, of which Allah says, ‘Surely, We offered the trust to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, but they refused to be unfaithful to it and feared from it, and man has turned unfaithful to it.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72) So he betrayed this trust, after having accepted to be worthy of it. In addition, there was another trust even before that, which was the covenant that Allah took from His servants when they were still in the loins of Adam. Allah says, ‘And when your Lord brought forth from the children of Adam, from their backs, their descendants, and made them bear witness against their own souls: Am I not your Lord? They said, “Yes! We bear witness.” Lest you should say on the day of resurrection: “Surely we were heedless of this.” Or you should say: “Only our fathers associated others (with Allah) before, and we were an offspring after them”’ (*al-A‘raf*: 172-173).

If they are going to say that indeed this was a trust, but it was so long ago and how any of them could remember it now. We ask them whether they acknowledged that Allah created and brought them into existence from nothing and sustained them from nothing as Allah says, ‘And if you should ask them who created them, they would certainly say, “Allah.”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 87) Similarly, as they acknowledged that Allah created the heavens and the earth and all the good things in between, they should have honoured this acknowledgment properly and have had faith. However, despite all this they still disbelieved. Is not this a betrayal of the trust that they all took up in their own lifetimes and in which they all shared?

Someone who is ungrateful is the one who shows ingratitude for the blessings of Allah and denies them. As long as they were unfaithful and ungrateful people, it was inevitable that Allah would succour Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and aid him in this battle. It was first permitted to fight and then commanded to make the necessary preparations and utilise the means which lead to victory. If all these means were exhausted, Allah would be with them to aid them with forces of His own.

This occurred at the beginning of the mission. Allah aided His Prophet with forces from Him and aided him even with a stubborn disbeliever like the one who led the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* on his

Emigration. Has Allah not aided him with the pigeon and the spider when he was in the cave? Has Allah not made the ground sink beneath the feet of the horse ridden by Suraqa, who had set out after him?

These were forces which we could not see and with which Allah had aided Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* after He exhausted all the means. Had Allah *Glorified is He* willed, He could have forced all these opponents to submit to Prophet Muhammad and none of them would have been able to raise their heads to oppose him. However, Allah *Glorified is He* had wanted to make the people obey Muhammad and submit to Allah. Allah 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 said before that Allah wants His servants to yield to Him their hearts, not only their bodies. Were He to force them to yield by means of a cosmological sign such as a great wind, a storm or a chasm in the earth or any other sign which destroyed those who came before them, they would have said, 'These are merely natural disasters which have befallen us'. However, Allah allowed this confrontation to occur between the two sides and eased the means of victory to His partisans and forces. Allah, says, 'Fight them, Allah will punish them by your hands and bring them to disgrace, and assist you against them and heal the hearts of a believing people.' (*at-Tawba*: 14)

Consequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أُذِنَ لِلَّذِينَ يُقَاتِلُونَ بِأَنَّهُمْ ظَلِمُوا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ نَصْرِهِمْ لَقَدِيرٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

Those who have been attacked are permitted to take up arms because they have been wronged – God has the power to help them [39] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 39)

Allah *Glorified is He* defended the truth using many ways. The first was to give them permission to fight. The second was to command them to amass the strength needed to fight as He says, 'And prepare against them what force you can and horses tied at the frontier.' (*al-Anfal*: 60) This means that they must use all means and utilise all what they have at their disposal to gain victory over their enemies. In addition, if you utilise and exhaust all means, Allah shall intervene with forces of His own which you cannot see. The fact that Allah defends those who believe does not mean that He will intervene to

protect them whilst they sit at home; rather, it means that they must first muster all the strength they can and seek all the necessary means to attain victory.

Giving them permission to fight means that they were waiting for this commandment and hoping to be allowed to gain victory over their enemies. They had not been allowed to do so first and then Allah willed to fight and gave them permission to do so and revealed the subject verse. Therefore, the reason for allowing them to fight was that they were wronged. Thus, their Lord commanded them to fight, but not to aggress. Allah says, ‘And fight in the way of Allah with those who fight with you, and do not exceed the limits, surely Allah does not love those who exceed the limits. And kill them wherever you find them, and drive them out from whence they drove you out.’ (*al-Baqara*: 190-191)

Thus, Allah first commanded them to have patience. Thereafter, the first stage was to fight in order to repel the aggression of others and to defend themselves without aggressing. The second stage was: ‘O you who believe! Fight those of the disbelievers who are near to you and let them find in you hardness; and know that Allah is with those who guard [against evil].’ (*at-Tawba*: 123) Allah says that He is well able to assist them by giving them the means to attain victory or by succouring them without any material means by sending them subtle power they cannot see. Examples alike have been experienced for real.

Allah *Glorified* is He says afterwards:

الَّذِينَ أُخْرِجُوا مِنْ دِيَارِهِمْ بِغَيْرِ حَقٍّ إِلَّا أَنْ يَقُولُوا رَبُّنَا اللَّهُ وَلَوْلَا دَفْعُ اللَّهِ النَّاسَ
بَعْضَهُمْ بِبَعْضٍ لَفُتَّتْ صُمُوعٌ وَبِيعَ وَصَلَوَاتٌ وَمَسَاجِدُ يُذْكَرُ فِيهَا اسْمُ اللَّهِ
كَثِيرًا وَلَيَنْصُرَنَّ اللَّهُ مَنْ يَنْصُرُهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَقَوِيٌّ عَزِيزٌ

Those who have been driven unjustly from their homes only for saying, ‘Our Lord is God.’ If God did not repel some people by means of others, many monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, where God’s name is much invoked, would have been destroyed. God is sure to help those who help His cause – God is strong and mighty [40]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 40)

Indeed, had they been driven out rightfully and deserved to be driven from their homes due to something such as committing indecency, disturbing

the peace, committing crimes or violating tribal laws, their expulsion would have been rightful. Nevertheless, the reality is that they did nothing and they committed no wrong. They only said that Allah was their Lord.

Their people saw these words a sin and a crime, for which they deserved to be driven from their homes. Likewise, Allah says of the people who made the ditch, 'And they did not take vengeance on them for aught except that they believed in Allah, the Mighty, the Praised.' (*al-Buruj*: 8) Elsewhere, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'do you find fault with us [for aught] except that we believe in Allah?' (*al-Ma'ida*: 59)

In addition, in the story of Lut (Lot), Allah says, 'They said, "Turn out Lut's (Lot's) followers from your town; surely they are a people who would keep pure!"' (*an-Naml*: 56) Thus, they drove them out, not because they engaged in filth and sin, but because they were people who sought to purify themselves. Purity and chastity were the crimes for which they were driven away! It is as though you say, 'so-and-so has no flaws, except that he is generous', or 'so-and-so has no virtues, except that he is a thief'. The latter is an attribute which cannot be praised and the former is an attribute which cannot be faulted.

Those people overturned the balance and violated sound nature with these corrupt judgements that show the corruption of their own natures. What could be more corrupt than to reverse natural standards? They hated what should be loved and loved what should be hated. There is nothing that showed their corrupt natures more clearly than their cult to a stone and their disdain to worship the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* shows what the result of the absence of checking people by means of others on the part of Allah is. In the verse we are currently studying, Allah, says, 'If Allah did not repel some people by means of others, many monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques where Allah's name is much invoked.' In addition, He says in another verse, 'And were it not for Allah's repelling some men with others, the earth would certainly be in a state of disorder.' (*al-Baqara*: 251)

If corruption and disorder should happen between people in the motions of life, it can be amended and corrected. However, when corruption infiltrates the very foundations of spiritual certainty on earth and people started hating

what connects them to Heaven and destroying places of worship, this is a calamity and a corruption which cannot be repaired. It is as though these two verses depict an extremity of corruption and crime.

The earth is overwhelmed with corruption when this reciprocal check is absent. How is that? Suppose that an evil tyrant in a certain land enslaves the people and drains all their wealth and blood without anyone restraining him. This will certainly cause negligence and chaos in society and no one will try to work as hard as he can, for why should he work when someone else is taking all his income? This is how corruption begins to overwhelm the earth.

Since this is a corruption related to the motions of the lives of people, it can be put right. But what do you think will happen if this corruption spreads even to the places of righteousness and worship and severed the connection of the people to Heaven? If the first kind of corruption can be put right, the corruption of religion can never be put right because the balance which used to govern the motions of life is destroyed and society no longer has any balance or principles to which to refer.

One may observe that His saying, ‘If Allah did not repel some people by means of others...’ (*al-Hajj*: 40), refers to all people in general, not to any one sect in particular. He did not say, ‘If Allah had not enabled the believers to defend themselves against the disbelievers’, but rather than He spoke about all the people in general because this is a general principle which views all people equal.

The words ‘of other’ are also framed in this general way to show us that any side could be defended at one time and defended against at another. They are each lying in wait for the other: when one group falls into corruption, the other comes and stops it from going into it any further. It does not mean that one particular group is always defending itself against the other.

Another example of this way of speaking is His saying, ‘...and [We] raise some of them by degrees above others...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32); this part of the verse does not specify who is raised and who is not because each of them is raised in a certain aspect and not in another. This is because all mankind are Allah’s dependents; He does not show nepotism to any of them.

Consider the power of Russia in the East and that of America in the West: they are clear manifestations of Allah's saying, '...If Allah did not repel some people by means of others...' (*al-Hajj*: 40), each of them is prepared to face the other, watching each other's actions and military advances. It is as though Allah *the Almighty* has made them this way to safeguard other people, lest any of them threaten the rest of humanity. This fear, observation and constant state of preparation is what prevents war from breaking out between them. Imagine what would happen if they fought a war which resulted in a clear winner and loser. The winner would certainly unleash corruption upon the earth and wipe out all the others, going further and further in its evil without there being anyone to deter it.

Out of His Mercy to the believers, Allah *the Almighty* provokes the wrongdoers with all their methods and arts against one another. He chastises the evildoer with someone even more evil, so that the good people can remain far away from this battle and not be engaged in it. Good people cannot bear these kinds of actions because they are compassionate ones who are not suited to this violent and brutal revenge.

Read what Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And in this manner, do We cause evildoers to seduce one another by means of their [evil] doings.' (*al-An'am*: 129) In this way, Allah *the Almighty* graces good people, spares their lives and relieves His '*awlia*' (most righteous servants) of the need for entering these struggles between the forces of falsehood.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conquered Mecca after his people had driven him out of it and after committing all acts of wrong against him and his companions, in what manner did he enter the city, bearing in mind that he was the leader of a conquering army that could have done whatever it wanted to its enemies? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entered Mecca with his head lowered so that his head almost touched the saddle of his mount in his humility.⁽¹⁾ Yet, despite this, when Abu Sufyan saw him *peace and blessings be upon him* at this moment, he said to Al-'Abbas, 'Your nephew's dominion has become great indeed.'⁽²⁾

(1) *Ibn Hisham Sira*

(2) *Al-'Abbas replied: 'Nay, it is prophet hood'. Abu Sufyan said, 'Yes, thus does it seem.'*

When Prophet Muhammad had the disbelievers of Mecca at his mercy, and could have killed them all, he said, ‘O people of Quraysh! What do you think I should do with you?’ They said, ‘You are a noble brother, and the son of a noble brother’, whereupon he said to them, ‘Go, then, for you are free.’⁽¹⁾

What is this mercy and what is this tenderness which Allah *the Almighty* has placed in the hearts of the believers? How could anyone oppose and turn away from such a religion?

The True Lord pits evil people against each other. We see this verse manifested in every time and every place in the conduct of the evildoers while good people watch these struggles in which Allah *the Almighty* destroys the evildoers at the hands of each other.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘...many monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, where Allah’s name is much invoked, would have been destroyed...’ (*al-Hajj*: 40).

A monastery is a special place of worship for the Christians. They also have public place of worships to which the people go; they are called churches. The monastery, on the other hand, is a special place of worship in which the inhabitant secludes himself and devotes himself solely to worship. Monasteries are not found in cities, but in the mountains and valleys of the countryside, far from the bustle of civilisation, so that the monk can cut himself off from the motions of life.

Islam forbids this kind of monasticism because it was not established by Allah *the Almighty* as He says, ‘...But as for monastic asceticism – We did not enjoin it upon them: they invented it themselves out of a desire for Allah’s goodly acceptance. But then, they did not [always] observe it as it ought to have been observed...’ (*al-Hadid*: 27).

So, the True Lord did not criticise them for devoting themselves to worship, but He criticised them for cutting themselves off from the motions of life and the means of livelihood; a fact which is recorded in His saying, ‘...But then, they did not [always] observe it as it ought to have been observed...’ (*al-Hadid*: 27).

(1) *Ibn Hisham, Sira*

Islam permits one to devote oneself to worship, as long as he does not abstain from working to earn a living. Rather, a Muslim is supposed to worship Allah *the Almighty* during every action of his life and keep Allah *the Almighty* on his mind at all times, in all that he does and all that he does not do. Therefore, there is a difference between the one who only worships Allah *the Almighty* when he is in seclusion and the one who worships Him *Glorified is He* even in public.

‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* talked about a man who stayed in the mosque all the time to worship, leaving his brother to support him saying, ‘His brother is more devout than he is?’ But, how?! They say it is because you can make every motion of your life an act of worship by making your intention purely for Allah *the Almighty*. Let us draw a comparison between the believer and the disbeliever: they both work and strive to earn a living for themselves and their families, and to live a dignified life, for this is the goal of all our work – but if the believer had no goal for working other than this, he would be just the same as the disbeliever.

The believer, however, bears in mind other goals; he works as much as he can, not only as much as he needs to, then he takes what he needs and spends the rest and gives charity to those who are not able to work for their living.

Therefore, the True Lord says, ‘Truly, to a happy state shall attain the believers: those who humble themselves in their prayer, and who turn away from all that is frivolous and who are intent on [giving] the poor-due.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 1-4) Does this only mean that they pay the poor-due? No, it means that the believers work and toil with the intention of helping those who cannot earn their living, as though when they work and strive, they intend to utilise the extra earnings to gain the reward of Allah *the Almighty*. This is what distinguishes the believer from the disbeliever.

In the thirties, I remember once⁽¹⁾ we came from the countryside in winter to visit our teacher Sheikh Al-Hafizh At-Tijani, who was ill *may Allah rest his soul* and be well pleased with him. He lived in an unpaved outskirt of the town. I decided to take a taxi so we would not have to walk through the mud, but

(1) The story of Sheikh Ash-Sha’rawi’s meeting with Sheikh Al-Hafizh At-Tijani and what happened between them

when I got to the neighbourhood, the taxi driver refused to go any further because he said the fare would not cover the cost of cleaning the mud off his car. After being stubborn for a while, he finally agreed to take us where we wanted to go and we paid him double the fare. But, before he went, I said to him, 'Why do you work as a taxi driver as it is a very hard job?' He said, '(I do so) for my benefit and my children's benefit.' I said to him, 'And would it hurt you to add something else to this and make your intention to do your job to make things easier for people?' These words had an effect on the man, and he said, 'By Allah *the Almighty* I will never refuse another passenger.'

Thus, the meaning of '...and who are intent on [giving] the poor-due...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 4) is that the believers do not only give the poor-due, but rather than that their intention, when they work, is to spend the extra earnings in the cause of Allah *the Almighty* so that they would get reward.

So, Islam forbids monasticism insofar as it prevents the individual from participating in society, which is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'There is no monasticism in Islam'⁽¹⁾ because Islam considers every action done with the intention of benefitting all society as a spiritual act of worship. In this way, work is viewed as worship.

In this respect, Muslim scholars have placed conditions on those who wish to withdraw themselves from the life of people with the aim of devoting themselves to worship, saying that first, he must not rely on someone else to support him financially, meaning that he should first work to save up money to meet his needs, whilst he is in his spiritual seclusion. At that point, we can quote the Pakistani poet Mohamed Iqbal:

It is not true asceticism to be a mystic

Who flees from the realities of life for the sake of religion;

Mysticism exists in the marketplaces,

In money, ambitions and trials.

(1) *Al-Bayhaqi narrated something similar, with the wording: 'Allah has given us, in monasticism's stead, the primordial religion of truth and tolerance.'*

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, 'and synagogues' which refers to the Jewish place of worship. But why does the Quran not list these buildings in chronological order, saying, 'Synagogues, monasteries and churches'? It is because the Quran lists those things which are chronologically nearest to it, and then those which are further away.

As for the saying of Allah, '...And mosques', it refers to Muslims' places of worship. Since the True Lord linked mosques to the verb '...would have been destroyed.' (*al-Hajj*: 40), this indicates that Muslims must have their own places of worship even though the entire earth has been made a purified place of prayer for them, meaning that you can pray on any patch of ground; and if you have no water, you can make ablution with the soil. This means that the earth is both a place of prayer and a place of work, as well as worldly activity. You can work in your factory, for example, and pray there as well. But the True Lord wants us to devote certain places on His earth to be houses for Him, wherein we separate ourselves from all the motions of life and devote ourselves solely to worship.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If someone builds a mosque for Allah— even if it is only like a bird's nest – Allah shall build him a house in paradise.'⁽¹⁾

When He says, '...mosques...would have been destroyed' (*al-Hajj*: 40), this indicates that there should be a special place for worship; for if not, and the whole world was considered to be a mosque, then what would be destroyed? With this in mind, every place where anything other than worship is regularly done is not considered to be a mosque, such as the prayer rooms which they install underneath apartment blocks. These are not mosques and praying in them is just like praying in the street or at home because the mosque is both a place and has a specific function.

Now it is clear that a mosque is to extend from the floor to the sky, a point which is proved by the fact that in Allah's Sacred Mosque, we pray on the roof of the mosque and face the air above the *Ka'ba*, not the building of the *Ka'ba* itself. Why? Because the air above the *Ka'ba* all the way up to the sky

(1) Narrated by Ahmad (i. 241) and Abu Na'im (iv. 217)

is part of the *Ka'ba* itself. The same would be true if we were in a hole or a mine under the ground because all the ground under the *Ka'ba* is part of the *Ka'ba*. The same is applied to the rushing forth between Safa and Marwa: if the ground floor is full, people walk on the second floor or on the roof, because the air above it is included in it.

A mosque is a place which has been especially devoted for worship and it extends from the ground to the sky. No worldly activities are conducted inside it, nor are any deals made and so on.

But if we put a mosque in the basement of an apartment building, wherein people normally practice their worldly activities with all the disorder and commotion they involve, whether lawful or unlawful, pure or impure, including marital relations and so on, this all invalidates the status of the place as a mosque which Allah *the Almighty* has made a place of worship from the floor to the sky. So, we should call these places 'prayer-rooms' not mosques.

The True Lord then describes these mosques by saying, '...where Allah's name is much invoked...' (*al-Hajj*: 40) because the remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* in mosques is constant and uninterrupted – we are not speaking about one mosque, nor the mosques of one region, but we mean the mosques of the whole world from east to west, and from north to south.

If you consider the prayer times, you will see that they are connected to celestial movements and with the relative position of the sun in the forms of sunrise, midday, and sunset. Since these times are different for every place on earth, you find that the remembrance of Allah *the Almighty* never ceases by night or by day. As you are making the call to prayer, other people are just about to pray while others are already praying. When you pray the midday prayer, others are praying the dawn or afternoon prayers. Indeed, when you are in the first unit of the dawn prayer, others are in the second unit; and when you bow, others are prostrating.

This a constant cycle of worship at all times passing through every place on earth, so that the world never stops invoking Allah *the Almighty*. Is this not abundant extolling? Are the words 'Allah is The Greatest' not always being spoken by mankind, without ceasing?

Moreover, since Allah's enabling people to defend themselves against each other might result in a battle in which there is a loser and a winner, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...Allah is sure to help those who help His cause...' (*al-Hajj*: 40). So, if the struggle is waged between the disbelievers, it will not end, whilst if it is between the Truth and a falsehood which Allah *the Almighty* has declared to be false, then it will inevitably end with the triumph of Truth. Such a battle will not usually last long because the Truth is always under Allah's protection. The battles which last long are those which rage between two forces of falsehood; neither one of them deserves Allah's succour more than the other; they will therefore continue to assault each other. If it is not a 'hot' war, it will at least be a 'cold' one. Why? Because there is no power without whims to decide between them, and as long as whims are involved, the battle will continue.

The final logical permutation is a battle between two forces of truth, yet this does not exist because there is only one truth and therefore no conflict can ever arise between two forces who are both on the side of truth.

The True Lord is well able to succour His '*awlia*' and destroy their enemies without there being any war, but Allah *Glorified is He* wants them to utilise the means of succour and therefore teaches them the foundations of this matter by saying to them, 'Now when you meet [in war] those who are bent on denying the truth, smite their necks until you overcome them fully, and then tighten their bonds; but thereafter [set them free], either by an act of grace or against ransom, so that the burden of war may be lifted: thus [shall it be]. And [know that had Allah so willed, He could indeed punish them [Himself]; but [He wills you to struggle] so as to test you [all] by means of one another....' (*Muhammad*: 4)

The saying of Allah, 'you overcome them fully' means that you make them unable to move, 'and then tighten their bonds'; do not, O Muslims, finish them and do not kill them, but rather bind them well and take them as prisoners; this clearly shows the mercy and conduct of Islam in wars; the purpose is not to kill or take life; a point which is clear in the saying of Allah, '...thereafter [set them free,] either by an act of grace or against ransom'; an act of grace means to make a prisoner exchange so that you release theirs and they release yours. Ransom means that the enemy buys his freedom.

This matter provides an argument concerning slavery in Islam. It offers a response to those who enjoy accusing Islam, utilising sophistry and word games to convince people that Islam aided the spread of slavery.

When Islam was revealed, slavery had already been endorsed. Islam did neither begin it nor invent it. At that time, there were many ways in which a man could be enslaved. If someone incurred a debt and could not repay it, he would become the slave of the creditor. If a man committed a sin and feared its punishment, they would take him as a slave. Highwaymen would waylay people in the road and take them as slaves, and so on.

When Islam came, it set about blocking all these channels of enslavement and restricted it to lawful warfare. It then provided many ways for bringing an end to the act of slavery, which already existed. At that time, the only way a slave could be freed was if his master willed to free him. Yet, Islam added other ways to this, making the freeing of a slave an expiation for certain sins, an expiation for vows and a way to take back a certain unlawful form of divorce.⁽¹⁾ Islam even encouraged Muslims to free slaves as an act of charity, to help those slaves who wished to buy their freedom, and so on.

If you do not free your slave, then at least you should feed him the same food you eat, buy him the same quality clothes you wear and refrain from ordering him to do more than he can, or help him to do what he cannot do alone, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘They are not but your brothers.’⁽²⁾

(1) *Specifically, the ancient Arab practice of saying to one's wife, 'You are to me as the back of my mother!', thereby making her forbidden to him without divorcing her; the Arabs would do this to harm and spite their wives. When a woman complained to the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him of this, verses concerning this matter were revealed: 'As for those of you who [henceforth] separate themselves from their wives by saying, "Thou art as unlawful to me as my mother," [let them bear in mind that] they can never be [as] their mothers: none are their mothers save those who gave them birth: and so, behold, they but utter a saying that runs counter to reason, and is [therefore] false. But, behold, Allah the Almighty is indeed an absolver of sins, much forgiving. As for those who would separate themselves from their wives by saying, "Thou art as unlawful to me as my mother", and thereafter would go back on what they have said, [their atonement] shall be the freeing of a human being from bondage before the couple may touch one another again: this you are [hereby] exhorted to do - for Allah the Almighty is fully aware of all that you do.'* (al-Mujadala: 2-3)

(2) *Narrated by Al-Bukhari (2545) and Muslim (1661) on the authority of Abu Dharr*

It is clear that those people who criticise Islam for allowing slavery used to draw a comparison between 'slavery' and 'freedom'. It is not a comparison; they should compare 'slavery' and 'death' because the only people taken as slaves are those who are overcome in battle when the one who overcomes them could easily kill them. But out of His Mercy, Allah *the Almighty* forbids killing them and allows enslaving them. So, the benefit which the victorious soldier attains for himself is taken in exchange for sparing the life of the one he vanquishes. Moreover, once the war is over, we encourage him to set him free and we give him many opportunities to gain freedom. So, do not compare a slave to a free man, but rather compare slavery to death – death is even worse than slavery.

Therefore Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Fight against them! Allah will chastise them by your hands, and will bring disgrace upon them, and will succour you against them; and He will soothe the bosoms of those who believe, and will remove the wrath that is in their hearts. And Allah will turn in His Mercy unto whom He wills: for, Allah is all knowing, wise.' (*at-Tawba*: 14-15) This command bears six results, which are as follows: 'fight against them': 'Allah will chastise them', 'and will bring disgrace upon them', that is, the disgrace is that they were deluded by their power and their fierce tyranny, believing that no one could defeat them, 'and will succour you', 'and He will soothe' 'and will remove' – so these six verbs are the results of the command 'fight against them'.

Then a new sentence begins, although it seems at first that another verb is added to this list, that is, however, a manifestation of the precision of the Quranic discourse. In this way, we see the mercy which Allah *the Almighty* shows even to the disbelievers. He says, 'And Allah will turn in His Mercy unto whom He wills', which is a new sentence with the verb in the Arabic indicative mood, whereas the six verbs in the foregoing list were in the jussive mood. This is because Allah *the Almighty* did not want to associate the believers and disbelievers together, even when listing the results which would come from the commandment He gave.

They were defeated and overpowered, that they had lost their power and dread; they might yet come back to their senses and return to the truth. This

shows how Allah *the Almighty* was merciful to the disbelievers even as they battled against the faith.

But, why would Allah *the Almighty* turn in His Mercy to the disbelievers and have mercy on them, when they are enemies to His religion and His Prophet? They say it is because He is their Lord and Creator, they are His servants and dependents, and He is more merciful to them than anyone is.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says in a Qudsi Hadith, ‘The sky said, ‘O Lord, allow me to fall in pieces upon the son of Adam, for he desires Your goodness, yet neglects to thank You.’ The earth said, ‘O Lord, allow me to swallow up the son of Adam, as he desires Your goodness, yet neglects to thank You.’ The mountains said, ‘O Lord, allow me to fall upon the son of Adam, he desires Your goodness, yet neglects to thank You.’ The oceans said, ‘O Lord, allow me to drown the son of Adam, for he desires Your goodness, yet neglects to thank You.’ The entire universe hates the disbelievers and is set against the sinners and enraged with them – yet what did the True Lord say to them? He said, ‘Leave Me with that which I created; for had you created them, you would have been merciful to them. If they repent to Me, I am their Beloved. If they do not repent, I am their Healer.’

Let us return to His words, ‘...Allah is sure to help those who help His cause...’ (*al-Hajj*: 40). As long as succour comes from Allah *the Almighty* do not analyse your power or compare it to that of your enemy. Your Lord has forces which are known only to Him, the means of succour which may come to you when you are under Allah’s protection are manifold. They can come to you from where you least expect and by the simplest of means. The least of these is that Allah *the Almighty* makes your enemy’s numbers seem small to you and makes the believer’s numbers seem large to the disbelievers which terrifies them and saps their spirits. Or the opposite might occur so that the disbelievers see the numbers of believers to be small so that they are emboldened and advanced – then suddenly they are faced with the truth.

‘...And none can comprehend your Lords forces save Him alone...’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 31). So, do not rely only on your own strength, or gauge how you match up to your enemy. Forget about these calculations; all you

must do is to utilise the means at your disposal as best as you can, then after that you should consider the means of Allah.

The least of your Lord's forces⁽¹⁾ is for Him to cast terror into the hearts of your enemies and this alone is enough. It is related that in one of the Muslims' battles, the breaths of the Muslims changed and became bitter because of how long they had been fighting, so they took out their tooth-sticks and began to clean their teeth and freshen their breath; and when the disbelievers saw this, they said, 'They are sharpening their teeth to eat us!' Allah *the Almighty* thus cast terror into their hearts without their perceiving it.

Then He says, '...Allah is strong and mighty' (*al-Hajj*: 40). *He is Almighty* in that He cannot be overcome. As long as Allah *the Almighty* succours those who succour His cause, then the battle will inevitably end with victory, however much their strength wanes and weakens. Were the Muslims not weak and oppressed in Mecca, unable even to raise their heads in the presence of the disbelievers?

When in the midst of this, Allah *the Almighty* revealed His words, 'Yet the hosts of those who deny the truth shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs (in flight)' (*al-Qamar*: 45) whereupon 'Umar Allah be pleased with him the companion of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was amazed, despite his prescience and his genius. He said, 'Which hosts are these who shall be routed, when we are not even able to defend ourselves?' Then when he saw what happened during the Battle of Badr, 'Umar said, 'Allah spoke the truth when He said, 'Yet the hosts of those who deny the truth shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs (in flight)'⁽²⁾ (*al-Qamar*: 45). Allah *the Almighty* is the Most Powerful and Almighty will surely succour you, and this is something which has been destined since pre-eternity: 'Allah has thus ordained: 'I shall most certainly prevail, I and My apostles! ...' (*al-Mujadala*: 21)

When you have attained to victory, remember that you have a role to play, which is clearly mentioned in the saying of Allah *the Almighty*:

(1) *The story of the Muslim army using their teeth cleanse (as-siwak) in one of the battle and disbelievers thinking that they were going to devour them*

(2) *Ibn Kathir, Tafsir*

الَّذِينَ إِن مَّكَّنَّاهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَآتَوُا الزَّكَاةَ
وَأَمَرُوا بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَنَهَوْا عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ ۗ وَلِلَّهِ عَاقِبَةُ الْأُمُورِ ﴿٤١﴾

Those who, when We establish them in the land, keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, command what is right, and forbid what is wrong: God controls the outcome of all events [41] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 41)

The meaning of ‘...We establish them in the land’ (*al-Hajj*: 41), is that He gives them authority, power and victory, so that no one dares to challenge them or assault them. Yet, they have to know that Allah *the Almighty* did not establish them and succour them just for their own sakes, but to fulfil the mission of reforming and purifying man’s duty on earth from everything which invalidates or corrupts it.

Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* could mount a flying carpet⁽¹⁾ and bid it to carry him wherever he pleased to go. One day as it was carrying him, he entertained a vain thought and the carpet bucked and almost threw him off. Then he heard a voice from the carpet saying to him, ‘We were commanded to obey you as long as you obey Allah.’

The one whom Allah *the Almighty* establishes on earth and gives authority to can force anything he likes upon his society. Even if he is established on earth by means of falsehood, he can force his falsehood upon the people, if only for a while.

So, what should the believer do if he is established on earth? Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Those who, when We establish them in the land, keep up the prayer...’ (*al-Hajj*: 41), so they are always invoking and swearing fealty to their Lord Who gave them this establishment. They present themselves to Him five times a day and night.

As for the saying of Allah, ‘...pay the prescribed alms, command what is right and forbid what is wrong...’ (*al-Hajj*: 41), it refers to the foundations of righteousness in society, and the balance which brings happiness to all.

(1) *The story of Sulaiman (Solomon) peace be upon him and the flying carpet when he felt proud of himself*

Regarding His saying, 'Allah controls the outcome of all events' (*al-Hajj*: 41) means that all things end up with Allah *the Almighty*. Those who adhere to these directions and fulfil their proper role in society will be all the better off for it. Those who reject this will come to a well-known fate.

Then the True Lord consoles His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* so that he is not concerned by the unbelief, stubbornness and opposition to his call which he met from his people.

Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَإِنْ يُكَذِّبُوكَ فَقَدْ كَذَّبَتْ قَبْلَهُمْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ وَعَادٌ وَثَمُودٌ ﴿٤٢﴾

**If they reject you [Prophet], so did the people of
Noah before them, and those of 'Ad, Thamud [42]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 42)**

As for the saying of Allah, 'If they reject you [Prophet]...' (*al-Hajj*: 42), it means that if they give the lie to your call, oppose you and stand in the way of your message in an attempt to nullify it, then know that you are not the first prophet to experience this, for many messengers before you had already suffered this. You must not consider this denial separately from its consequence; indeed, the people gave them the lie, but what was the consequence of this? Did we leave them, or did we take them to task as only *the Almighty* can? So, do not grieve, for the same thing (i.e. punishment) will afflict them just as it afflicted the deniers and stubborn unbelievers who came before them.

To reiterate, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* must bear difficulty and hardship in the way of his Message which is commensurate to its stature. Every messenger before Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent only to his own people and for a limited amount of time, yet even they had to endure many difficulties for the cause of their messages. So, how do you think it would be for a prophet sent to all people in all times and places?! He would certainly have to endure hardships and struggle many times greater than that which his fellow messengers endured before him.

It is as though the True Lord was preparing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and qualifying him to bear hardships from the onset, so

that his spirit would not crumble when encountering them as he began to convey his Message, saying to him: ‘Leadership is not an easy thing, it involves many hardships and perils, so prepare yourself’ exactly when you say to your son, ‘Be careful, the exams at the end of this year will be difficult, for the ministry wants to reduce the number of people admitted to university, so work hard so you can get a high mark’. When the son hears this warning, he buckles down and concentrates, so that he does not suffer an upset when the exams come.

Then the True Lord gives examples of those who gave the lie to His messengers, saying, ‘...so did the people of Nuh (Noah) before them, and those of ‘Ad and Thamud’ (*al-Hajj*: 42).

Then He says:

وَقَوْمَ إِبْرَاهِيمَ وَقَوْمَ لُوطٍ ۚ وَأَصْحَابُ مَدْيَنَ ۚ وَكَذَّبَ مُوسَىٰ
فَأَمَلَيْتُ لِلْكَافِرِينَ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتَهُمْ فَكَيْفَ كَانَ نَكِيرِ ۚ

**Abraham, Lot [43] Midian. Moses too was called
a liar. I gave the disbelievers time, but in the end
I punished them. How I condemned them! [44]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 43-44)**

We may observe here that the True Lord names those who gave the lie, except for the case of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* where He names the one who was given the lie. He does not say, ‘and the people Of Musa (Moses)’, but rather says, ‘...Musa (Moses) too was called a liar...’ (*al-Hajj*: 44). Why is this? They say it is because his mission was especially difficult because he encountered someone who went as far as claiming divinity for himself.

He says, ‘...but in the end, I punished them. How I condemned them!’ (*al-Hajj*: 44) That is, He left them alone for a while so that they thought He had forgotten them. He not only left them alone, but actually gave them more and more, not to honour them, but so that He could then take them to task as only the Almighty Determiner can. In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* explains this brief mention to us in more detail, saying, ‘And they should not think – they who are bent on denying the truth – that Our giving them rein is

good for them: We give them rein only to let them grow in sinfulness...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 178). He also says, 'Let not, then, their worldly goods or (the happiness which they may derive from) their children excite your admiration: Allah but wants to chastise them by these means in this worldly life, and (to cause) their souls to depart while they are (still) denying the truth.' (*at-Tawba*: 55)

So, do not be deluded by what they possess, it is only a trial for them, so that on the day Allah *the Almighty* takes them to task, their loss will be greater. If they never had these blessings to begin with, their hearts would not have become attached to them, and they would not be pained to lose them.

Something like this happened during the time of Sa'd Zaghlul (Egyptian Prime Minister) One of his opponents was abusing and insolent towards him, but then he surprised everyone by giving this man an important position in Cairo; the people were confused by this and asked him about it; he said, 'Indeed, I have given him this position so he can become acquainted with eminence and status, thus feel the loss all the more painfully when it is taken from him.' That is, he raised him up high so that he would fall on his head because what would be the good of throwing him from a mat, for example?

Then Allah says: '...How I condemned them!' (*al-Hajj*: 44) The True Lord here poses a statement in the form of a question that urges you to ask: what happened? This verse asks, 'Did we not punish them as they deserved to be punished?'

The word 'condemned' means to rebuke someone by degrading him, such as the one who is generous and kind to you, smiles in your face, gives you many things and then one day brings an end to all this, so you say, 'Why has so-and-so denied me?', that is, why did he cut his blessings off from me?

It is as though the True Lord wants to draw from us an acknowledgement of His power to punish His enemies who lie to His messengers. This is also true of His words, 'Behold, those who have abandoned themselves to sin are wont to laugh at such as have attained to faith, and whenever they pass by them, they wink at one another [derisively]; and whenever they return to people of their own kind, they return full of jests; and whenever they see those [who believe,] they say, "Behold, these [people] have indeed gone

astray!” And, withal, they have no call to watch over [the beliefs of] others. But on the Day [of Judgment], they who had attained to faith will [be able to] laugh at the [erstwhile] deniers of the truth: [For, resting in paradise] on couches, they will look on [and say to themselves], “Are these deniers of the truth being [thus] requited for [aught but] what they were wont to do?”” (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29 — 36) That is, have the disbelievers been requited for their deeds? Were ‘We able to meet out to them the punishment they deserved’? ‘...How I condemned them!’ (*al-Hajj*: 44) That is, Allah’s rebuke of their position of refusing to fulfil the rights of the blessings they received, which is the reason He turned their blessings into curses.

The True Lord then says:

فَكَانَ مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْنَاهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ فِيهَا خَاوِيَةٌ
عَلَىٰ عُرُوشِهَا وَيَبْرِ مَعْطَلَةٍ وَقَصْرِ مَشِيدٍ ﴿٤٥﴾

**How many towns steeped in wrongdoing We have destroyed
and left in total ruin; how many deserted wells; how many
lofty palaces! [45] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 45)**

There is an expression which indicates a large amount, that is, ‘How many’, such as when you say, ‘How many a favour have I done for you’! It means that you have done many great favours beyond counting. The phrase indicates a large number and amount. Another example of it is found when Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And how many a prophet has had to fight [in Allah’s cause], followed by many devoted men...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 146).

A ‘township’ is a place that when Allah *the Almighty* destroys, He does not destroy the place itself, but rather, He destroys its dwellers and things. So, the meaning of ‘township’ is the town’s inhabitants, as is the case when He says, ‘And ask them in the town in which we were...’ (*Yusuf*: 82), that is, ask the people of the town. The meaning could also be, ‘Ask the town and it will answer you’. If you ask the people of the town, they might lie to you, but if you ask the town itself by consulting its records, it will tell you exactly what happened.

It might be that the town itself is also destroyed and its landmarks altered, as Allah says, 'And [now] those dwellings of theirs are empty, [ruined] as an outcome of their evil deeds...' (*an-Naml*: 52).

The meaning of 'how many deserted wells; how many lofty palaces' (*al-Hajj*: 45) is that it was destroyed because of its evildoing. Allah *the Almighty* does not change the condition of a people until they change what is within themselves, and in another verse, Allah says, 'And Allah propounds [to you] a parable: [Imagine] a town which was [once] secure and at ease, with its sustenance coming to it abundantly from all quarters, and which thereupon blasphemously refused to show gratitude for Allah's blessings: and therefore Allah caused it to taste the all-embracing misery of hunger and fear in result of all [the evil] that its people had so persistently wrought.' (*an-Nahl*: 112)

So, the destruction of townships must have a reason, and when the destruction is visited upon them they become '...how many deserted wells...' (*al-Hajj*: 45). This means that it has fallen and collapsed onto something else. His words '...left in total ruin...' (*al-Hajj*: 45), indicate the huge scale of the destruction, such that the roofs fell in first, and then the walls collapsed; or, it means that Allah *the Almighty* turned them right over so they were upside down.

He then says, '...how many deserted wells; how many lofty palaces!' (*al-Hajj*: 45) A well is a deep hole in the ground which reaches subterranean water, from which they obtain water for drinking, farming and so on. He mentions this elsewhere when He says, 'Now when he arrived at the wells of Midyan...' (*al-Qasas*: 23), that is, the wells from which they drank.

When a well is in use, you see signs of life around it, people spread out around it, plants grow where water is spilled on the ground as it is drawn from it and birds flock around it to drink from it. As for the well which is not in use, you find that it is deserted; there are no signs of life around it. Moreover, the winds might blow dust onto it, so that it is covered up and abandoned. So, the meaning here is a well which no longer serves its purpose, namely to provide water.

To continue: '...how many lofty palaces!' (*al-Hajj*: 45) Home could be a tent of leather or haircloth, a hut, a house or an apartment. When a man wishes to have a higher standard of home, he builds something especially for

himself, but he must still go out to take care of his life's essential needs such as food. Lofty palaces mean a dwelling which contains inside it everything that you need so that you do not need to leave it; so it contains all of life's essential needs. The Arabic word for *qasr* (palace) and from this is derived the word *maqsurat* with which Allah *the Almighty* describes the pure companions of paradise, when He says, 'There the blest will live with their companions pure and modest (*maqsurat*), in pavilions.' (*ar-Rahman*: 72) That is, they never go outside them or leave them.

The word *mashid* 'high' is derived from the word *shayd* which means the plaster which is used as mortar in stone buildings, i.e. an adhesive to stick the stones together and make them level. In the past, they used to build with bricks and clay, but palaces and grad residences would be built with stone and high-quality mortar. From this, the verb *ashada* has been derived, meaning to raise and elevate something or someone. Height is another distinctive feature of castles and it is obvious that the size of rooms in apartments is not the same as that of castles because the former are small and low whilst the latter are large and high.

His statement, 'how many lofty palaces' (*al-Hajj*: 45) indicate that those who were destroyed were people of wealth and comfort, castle-dwellers and nobles.

The True Lord then says:

أَفَلَمْ يَسِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَتَكُونَ لَهُمْ قُلُوبٌ يَعْقِلُونَ بِهَا أَوْ آذَانٌ يَسْمَعُونَ بِهَا
فَإِنَّهَا لَا تَعْمَى الْأَبْصَارُ وَلَكِنْ تَعْمَى الْقُلُوبُ الَّتِي فِي الصُّدُورِ ﴿٤٦﴾

Have these people [of Mecca] not travelled through the land with hearts to understand and ears to hear? It is not people's eyes that are blind, but their hearts within their breasts [46]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 46)

To journey means to cover the distance from one place to another and they call this travelling; and the True Lord invites His servants to travel around the earth because travel has two benefits: Travel may be for the purpose of investment and to seek provision, if you are in a place where it is difficult for you to make a living such as those who travel to other lands to work and seek provisions.

Or otherwise, the purpose of travel is to take admonition and reflect on Allah's creatures in His huge dominion and to find, in Allah's creations and signs, evidence of His Omnipotent Power.

Travelling in different lands gives you the opportunity to observe the differences between different environments: this one is hot and that one is cold, this one is a barren desert and that one is verdant and free of sand. Therefore, our Lord says to us: 'Say, "Go all over the earth, and then behold..."' (*al-An'am*: 11) The words 'and then' in the verse implies that travel has another purpose which is to invest and seek provision. This verse indicates that these two purposes can be combined. So, when traveling for work, do not be heedless of Allah's signs in the place to which you travel and take from it cosmological lessons to benefit you spiritually.

In another verse, He says, 'Say, "Go all over the earth and behold..."' (*an-Naml*: 69). The use of the word 'and' here implies a direct relationship meaning that the purpose of the travel is to behold Allah's signs. This refers specifically to that travel which is undertaken for the sake of reflection and contemplation, not for investment and the seeking of provisions. Therefore, the popular saying goes 'The one who lives in one place sees some things, but the one who travels sees much more'. The more places you see, the more sings, and wonders you see which prove Allah's Omnipotence. You might see one thing which does not move you, and then see another which touches you and stirs your emotions, and encourages you to reflect on the world. His words, 'Have these people [of Mecca] not travelled...' (*al-Hajj*: 46) are meant to emphasise and affirm that indeed they have journeyed. It is like if you say, 'Have I not been kind to you'? This you only say if you have indeed been kind. Indeed, they did travel about the earth in their winter and summer journeys and they would pass by the ruined settlements of those who had been destroyed, as Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And, verily, [to this day] you pass by the remnants of their dwellings at morning-time.' (*as-Saffat*: 137) That is, you are a people who make journeys and expeditions and you have the opportunity of seeing what happened to those who came before you, so how can it be acceptable for you to turn away from Allah's signs? 'Have these people [of Mecca] not travelled through the land with hearts to understand and ears to hear? It is not people's eyes that are blind, but their hearts within their breasts.'

(*al-Hajj*: 46) Since they had travelled and journeyed in the land, how could they not perceive Allah's signs? How could their hearts not be moved?

We might take some time to consider His words, 'with hearts to understand' (*al-Hajj*: 46) – does a man understand things with his heart? It is clear that understanding takes place in the brain, whilst the heart is in the breast.

Indeed, man has means of perception, which are the senses which receive sensory phenomena. In deference to science, they call these the 'five external senses', the science of physiology has shown that man has other senses than the external ones. When you pick up two different things, you can tell which of them is heavier; so which of the five known senses allows you to do this?

If you say it is the eye, then leave the object on the ground and simply look at it. If you say it is touch, then try touching it without picking it up. So, you do not perceive weight by means of these senses, you do it with something else and another means of perception, the muscular sense which can tell what is light from what is heavy.

When you go to buy a piece of cloth from the draper, you stroke the cloth softly with your fingertips and you can tell which cloth is thicker, even if the difference between them is very slight. So, which sense do you use to determine this? It is the sense of discernment. There is also the sense of distance and other senses which modern science has discovered in man.

When man perceives these things with his means of perception, the mind intervenes to sift through these perceptions and to choose from all the alternatives the one which suits it best. If he wishes to choose an item of clothing, the mind says, 'This is softer and finer than that'; if he wishes to choose perfume, the mind says, 'This is nicer than that'. In summer it chooses thin clothing and in winter chooses thick clothing.

After intelligence chooses and weighs up the alternatives, it makes a judgment which settles in the mind and convinces it and there is no more need for perception or for choosing between alternatives. Then you do whatever your soul has settled on and with which your heart feels comfortable.

So, there is a perception with the senses, a distinction with the intelligence and then a settling of the principle of the heart. As long as the principle settles in your heart, it becomes a guide for your life, and all the rest of your body

serves the principle which you have adopted and which has settled in your heart and your core.

But why is it the heart, exactly? They say it is because the heart is what performs the role of pumping the essential means of life, blood, to every part of the body, these body parts which implement the things which settle in the consciousness. That is why they say that the heart is the seat of faith. How? They say it is because you sift and conjugate things until belief and faith settle in your heart and faith or belief is what is tied to the heart and settled within it. Then from the heart this belief extends to the rest of the body parts and senses which act in accordance with this faith. As long as you have decided on a principle and a belief, then you must not contradict it with something else, otherwise your heart will have not understood or comprehended.

The words 'to understand' indicate that the intelligence has another role apart from choosing between alternatives, which is that it keeps one away from error and prevents him from wandering into labyrinths. Some people think that the meaning of *`aql* (intelligence) is 'freedom of thought' and that a man can delve into whatever thoughts he pleases. But no, the word *`aql* derived is from the word *`iqal* which means to tie a camel so that it cannot move and to confine it so that it cannot run away from you.

Then Allah says, '...and ears to hear?' (*al-Hajj*: 46) Why does He say this, when these people already have ears which can hear? Indeed, they have ears which can hear, but since their hearing does not benefit them, it is as though they have no hearing at all. Otherwise, what is the point of hearing something which does not benefit you or have any impact on your life? Hearing such a thing is no different from not hearing it – nay, it would be better not to hear it because if you hear it, it is an argument against you.

'It is not people's eyes that are blind, but their hearts within their breasts' (*al-Hajj*: 46). Blindness of the eyes is a trivial thing when compared with blindness of the heart because a man who loses his sight can still hear, use his intelligence, be guided etc. Others can tell him about what he cannot see for himself and describe it to him in detail as though he can see it. But what can be done is the heart is blind, even if the eyes can see?

If the sight of the eye can be replaced and compensated, then how can the blindness of the heart be compensated? A blind man can feel his way around and if he cannot he can still ask you to take his hand and guide him – but what can a man do if his heart is blind?

Therefore, we call the one who is heedless of an obvious matter or an established principle ‘blind-hearted’ meaning that his heart has been covered over so that it cannot perceive anything.

When Allah says, ‘...their hearts are within their breasts’ (*al-Hajj*: 46), it is obvious that the heart is in the breast, so why does He bother to say this? They say it is to emphasise to you that what is meant is the real heart, so you do not think it is only the notional and intellectual heart, just like when He says, ‘...uttering with their mouths....’ (*Al-Imran*: 167)

It is obvious that utterances come from the mouth, but He wants to emphasise that he means real speech because otherwise it could mean a signal or a gesture, whilst real speech is the clearest and most emphatic form of communication. A poet said:

Wounds made by arrows cause pain,

But not like pain of wounds caused by the tongue.

They say, ‘Mind the tongue between your cheeks’. Yet can the tongue be anywhere else but between the cheeks? The purpose of the expression is to emphasise that speech especially is meant, not any other means of communication.

Then the True Lord says:

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَنْ يُخْلِفَ اللَّهُ وَعْدَهُ وَإِنَّ
يَوْمًا عِنْدَ رَبِّكَ كَأَلْفِ سَنَةٍ مِّمَّا تَعُدُّونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

They will challenge you [Prophet] to hasten the punishment.

**God will not fail in His promise – a Day with your Lord is
like a thousand years by your reckoning [47]**

(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 47)

They called for the hastening forth of the chastisement upon themselves when they said, ‘...O Allah! If this be indeed the truth from You, then rain

down upon us stones from the skies, or inflict [some other] grievous suffering on us!' (*al-Anfal*: 32)

Also, they said, '...Bring about, then, that [punishment] with which thou hast threatened us, if thou art a man of truth!' (*al-A'raf*: 70)

No one calls for the hastening of chastisement unless he does not believe in it, whilst the one who truly believes in chastisement fears it and wants it to be delayed, or to be saved from it. The meaning of 'they will challenge you [Prophet] to hasten the punishment...' (*al-Hajj*: 47) is that they think that if Allah *the Almighty* warns them of chastisement, this means it must come to them immediately, and therefore the True Lord corrects this notion of theirs and says, '...Allah will not fail in His promise— a Day with your Lord is like a thousand years by your reckoning.' (*al-Hajj*: 47) So do not hasten forth that of which you have been warned. It will certainly come to you without doubt because it is a promise from Allah *the Almighty* and does not break His promises. But know that a day in Allah's reckoning is not like a day of yours. For you, a day is twenty-four hours, whilst for Allah *the Almighty* it is like a thousand years of your reckoning of days.

A day is a period of time wherein certain events may take place and is not expansive enough to contain any more events than might possibly take place in such a span of time. But a day in Allah's sight could contain enough events to fill a thousand years of your reckoning. This is because you need effort and exertion to do things, whilst the Creator does not do things with effort, but rather, when He wants something to be, He merely says, 'Be!', and it is. So, your actions require time, whilst your Lord's actions are done with the word 'Be!' The True Lord willed that these people live with the suffering of thinking about this warning for all their lives, suffering its torment even before it occurs.

So, do not think that this chastisement of which you have been warned will occur today or tomorrow; no, because measures of time are not all the same.

Have you not read what Allah *the Almighty* said to Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* upon his supplicating against Pharaoh and his people, '...O our Lord! Wipe out their riches, and harden their hearts, so that they may not

attain to faith ere they see the grievous suffering [that awaits them]!’ (*Yunus*: 88)? His Lord replied to him, ‘Accepted, is your prayer...’ (*Yunus*: 89). The exegetes say that the answer to Musa’s (Moses’s) supplication did not come until forty years after he made it.⁽¹⁾

Elsewhere, Allah says, ‘He governs all that exists, from the celestial space to the earth; and in the end, all shall ascend unto Him [for judgment] on a Day the length whereof will be [like] a thousand years of your reckoning.’ (*as-Sajda*: 5) This period is extended when Allah *the Exalted* says, ‘All the angels and all the inspiration [ever granted to man] ascend unto Him [daily,] in a day the length whereof is [like] fifty thousand years.’ (*al-Ma’arij*: 4) Why? Because when this event comes, time will not apply to you because of the terror you behold, you will find short periods to be long, the time will pass you by slowly, you will hope to be away from it even if this means going to hell.

On the other hand, the man who experiences bliss finds long periods to be short and time passes him like the blink of an eye. You can observe for yourself how fast the time seems to pass when you are with your loved ones and how slow it seems to pass when you are with your enemies or people you do not love. Our Arabic poetry has described this concept many times, such as:

Cheerful events are measured with scales,

And trials are measured in furlongs.

Another example reads:

The night was not long for me, though I slept not,

For what kept me awake was the sweetest of visions.

Ibn Zaydun said:

If the night is long for me after you are gone,

Then how many a night was far too short in your company!

The True Lord then says:

(1) *This was the opinion of Ibn `Abbas, as is narrated by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur.*

وَكَايْنٍ مِّنْ قَرْيَةٍ أَهْلَكْتُ لَهَا وَهِيَ ظَالِمَةٌ ثُمَّ أَخَذْتُهَا وَإِلَى الْمَصِيرِ ﴿٤٨﴾

**To many a town steeped in wrongdoing I gave more
time and then struck them down: they all return to
Me in the end [48] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 48)**

The question by ‘how many’ indicates a large number. So, the meaning is ‘how many a community’. The phrase ‘I gave more time’ (*al-Hajj*: 48) means that Allah gave them respite, but the length of this respite did not mean that He had neglected them. Allah *the Almighty* gives the disbeliever rein and leaves him be for a time and then when the right time comes He takes him to task and chastises him. The power with which someone is taken to task depends on the power of the one who takes him and the severity of the vengeance depends on the avenger. Henceforth, if Allah *the Almighty* Himself takes someone to task, then what will this taking to task be like? In another verse, He answers this question by saying, ‘...as only *the Almighty*, who determines all things, can take to task.’ (*ash-Shura*: 54) He cannot be overcome, nor can anyone restrain Him. The phrase ‘take to task’ implies severity, vigour, and overwhelming power.

Then Allah says, ‘...they all return to Me in the end.’ (*al-Hajj*: 48) That is, the final end is with Allah *the Almighty* and you cannot avoid it. ‘To give rein’ means to delay the chastisement until an appointed time, as Allah says, ‘Let the deniers of the truth have their will; let them have their will for a little while!’ (*at-Tariq*: 17) This set time might be deferred for a time, after which the chastisement befalls them, as was the case with the previous communities, which Allah *the Almighty* destroyed by causing the earth to swallow them up, or by drowning them, and so on. As for the *ummah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* this rein will be given in the form of superficial worldly events, such as what happened to the disbelievers and how they were humiliated, disgraced, defeated and broken. As for the real chastisement, it awaits them in the Hereafter.

Therefore, the True Lord *the Almighty* says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Do not imagine that chastisement and vengeance is slow to come to them in this worldly life, for if you do not see them chastised

in this world, you shall certainly see it in the Hereafter'. Allah says, '...And whether We show thee [in this world] something of what We hold in store for those [deniers of the truth], or whether We cause thee to die [ere that retribution takes place – know that, in the end], it is unto Us that they will be brought back.' (*Ghafir*: 77)

Then the True Lord says:

قُلْ يَأَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّمَا أَنَا لَكُمْ نَذِيرٌ مُبِينٌ ﴿٤٩﴾

Say [Prophet], 'People, I am sent only to give you clear warning' [49] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 49)

Warning is a kind of mercy because you give news of a bad thing before it happens, so that those you warn can be aware of it and try to save themselves from it and avoid the means which lead to it. When I remind you of Allah *the Almighty* and of how He takes His enemies to task as only the Almighty Determiner can, you must guard yourself against this end and save yourself from all that leads to ruin. The meaning of 'clear' is comprehensive, leaving nothing out, whether big or small.

Allah then says:

فَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

Those who believe and do good deeds will be forgiven and have a generous reward [50] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 50)

As long as they have faith and do righteous deeds, this means they have benefitted from the warning and that it has had a positive result on them. They attained to faith in Allah *the Almighty* as an All-Powerful Deity endowed with the attributes of absolute perfection and thus they acted in accordance with His commandments. Therefore, they were granted forgiveness for any sins they might have done and they were granted a most excellent sustenance, a bountiful one, which came to them generously and plentifully. 'Generous' is the one whose hand is always stretched forth to give, as the poet says:

I am a man whose golden coins settle not

On my palm, but pass by like wayfarers

So, the sustenance here seems to be provided by itself because it is extended and never cut off; it is like when you fill a cup of water from a running water source, so that its place is immediately filled.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَالَّذِينَ سَعَوْا فِيْ ءَايٰتِنَا مُعْجِزِيْنَ اُولٰٓئِكَ اَصْحٰبُ الْجَحِيْمِ ﴿٥١﴾

**But those who strive to oppose Our messages
and try in vain to defeat Us are destined for
the Blaze [51] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 51)**

To strive means to work towards a goal; it can mean to physically go somewhere, or it can apply to an intellectual endeavour. It's an action which is done from a certain beginning to a certain end.

Striving is not intrinsically praiseworthy, nor intrinsically blameworthy; if it is done for the sake of a good thing, then it is praiseworthy such as that kind of striving of which Allah *the Almighty* says, '...they are the ones whose striving finds favour with Allah!' (*al-Isra'*: 19) If on the other hand, it is done for an evil thing, it is blameworthy and foul, such as the striving of which Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Now there is a kind of man whose views on the life of this world may please you greatly, and [the more so as] he cites Allah as witness to what is in his heart and is, moreover, exceedingly skilful in argument. But whenever he prevails, he goes about the earth spreading corruption and destroying [man's] tilth and progeny: and Allah does not love corruption.' (*al-Baqara*: 204-205) As for the related expression *sa'a* (goes around the earth), it is usually an evil thing, for it means to indulge slander and to strive to spread calumny amidst the people. A man who is *sa'a* is a slanderer who conveys evil to people with the intention of causing harm. If people do good, these people conceal it, whilst if they do evil they announce it; and if they do not know, they invent lies.

Therefore, I consider the results of this calumny spread between people 'the plague of talebearers' (those who hear evil and then strive to convey it to others), when they should have concealed it and kept it secret, so that this vice

would not spread amongst the people. Once a talebearer told a story⁽¹⁾ about Humam ibn `Abdullah As-Saluli to the tyrant ruler, Ziyad ibn Abih. Ziyad said to the talebearer, 'Shall I bring the two of you together?' The talebearer could only say 'yes' because how could he have taken back what he said? Perhaps he said to himself, 'Maybe Allah will cause something to happen which will get me out of this mess before the meeting takes place'. Then Ziyad arrested Humam and concealed the talebearer behind a curtain in his court and had Humam brought in. He said to him, 'Humam, I hear that you have disparaged me.' He said, 'No, may Allah guide you, I have done no such thing, and you deserve no such thing.' Ziyad then pulled back the curtain and said, 'This man told me that you disparaged me', whereupon Humam looked and found it to be a friend of his with whom he would sit, and said to him:

Either I trusted you as a friend or you betrayed me,

Or else you spoke words of which you had no knowledge;

Thus, in the way you have behaved,

You have proved either a traitor, or a sinner!⁽²⁾

That is, either way you are blameworthy because you either betrayed the trust of our companionship or failed to keep a secret I entrusted to you or you invented this tale deceitfully and untruthfully. Upon hearing this, Ziyad threw his robe over Humam's shoulders, but he did not punish the talebearer. This shows that they were comfortable with those who told them tales, and that they were accustomed to hearing such tales.

Allah *the Almighty* says, '...to oppose Our messages (*ayat*)...' (*al-Hajj*: 51). Verses are cosmological signs such as the sun and moon, or the miracles of the prophets, or the verses of revelation. They strove against them meaning that they said false and untrue things about them, just as a talebearer strives to tell lies about people. When these people looked at the signs of the cosmos, they said, 'It is but the work of nature', and when they saw a prophet perform

(1) The story of Humam ibn `Abdullah As-Saluli with Ziyad ibn Abih when he was plotted against by an envier.

(2) Ghazali tells this story in his *Ihya `Ulum Ad-Din*, but with different personnel.

a miracle they said, 'It is but sorcery and the fables of the ancients', and when they heard the verses of revelation recited to them they said, 'It is but poetry'. And by all this, they only wanted to ruin the faith of the faithful and bar them from Allah's cause.

The word *mu`ajizin* (try in vain to defeat Us) means warriors, it is derived from the verb *`ajaza* which in turn is derived from *`ajaza* meaning 'to be unable'; so each side vies with the other to see which of them will be the first to be rendered incapable of continuing; each side challenges the other to see which of them is best. The verb *`ajaza* is akin to the verbs *sabaqa* and *nafasa*, which mean 'to compete'. So, the act of 'try in vain to defeat Us' (*al-Hajj*: 51) is a reciprocal and two-way action. The verb *naafasa* (to compete) is derived from the word *nafas*, (breath), the action wherein you breathe in and out to give oxygen to the blood so that man's physical life continues. If he stops breathing, he dies. A man can go without food or water for a while, but he cannot go without air even for a single breath. This competition took place between 'Umar Allah be pleased with him and Al-'Abbas⁽¹⁾: 'Umar said to Al-'Abbas, 'Will you compete with me underwater?' That is, we shall both go underwater and see which of us can hold our breaths the longest. A man can prepare for this competition by taking a deep breath before he goes under the water, but if he goes under it whilst his lungs are empty, how will he be able to endure it? Underwater, the competitors only have the air which they stored in their lungs, so this competition shows which of them has the most capacious chest, and which of them can last longer underwater. This is the essence of *mu`ajaza* 'seeking to expose the other's incapacity'.

So, the meaning of 'strive against Our messages, try to defeat Us' (*al-Hajj*: 51) is that they think they are able to defeat Us, for when We give them miraculous clear speech, they invent empty speech in an attempt to defeat Us – yet how could they possibly succeed? How could they hope to harm Allah's speech with their own speech?

Allah the Almighty then states what the requital for this action and this arrogance will be: 'are destined for the blaze.' (*al-Hajj*: 51) This is Allah's judgement on them, plain and clear, for who could ever defeat Allah's Purpose?

(1) The story of the diving race 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab and Al-'Abbas

The True Lord then says:⁽¹⁾

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا مِنْ قَبْلِكَ مِنْ رَسُولٍ وَلَا نَبِيٍّ إِلَّا إِذَا تَمَنَّى أَلْقَى الشَّيْطَانُ فِي أُمْنِيَّتِهِ
فَيَنْسَخُ اللَّهُ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ ثُمَّ يُحْكِمُ اللَّهُ ءَايَتِهِ ۗ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٢﴾

We have never sent any messenger or prophet before you [Muhammad] into whose wishes Satan did not insinuate something, but God removes what Satan insinuates and then God affirms His message. God is All knowing and wise [52]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 52)

This verse has provoked a great deal of discussion on the part of the scholars, and many false reports and legends from other religions have become brought into these discussions, especially concerning the meaning of *tamanna* (wish), which has two meanings in Arabic. As long as a word has two meanings, then nothing makes one of these meanings more prominent than the other except its more prevalent usage by the Arabs. The word *tamanna* can mean ‘to read’, such as when Hassan ibn Thabit eulogised ‘Uthman ibn ‘Affan *Allah be pleased with him* by saying:

He *tamanna* (read) the Book of Allah the Almighty at the night’s start,
And at the night’s end he met with his fate.

That is, ‘Uthman was killed while he was reading the Quran. Yet, since this meaning of *tamanna* is very rare, it is not usually considered when the Quran is concerned. *Tamanna* also means ‘to hope’ which is its usual meaning in Arabic, whilst its meaning ‘to read’ is not generally used – and what makes it clear that the meaning ‘to read’ does not apply here on principle is that directly before it, Allah says, ‘We have never sent any messenger or prophet before you [Muhammad]’ (*al-Hajj*: 52).

(1) *Al-Wahidi* narrates in *Asbab An-Nuzul* that this verse was revealed about an event wherein Satan caused the Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him to recite something which was not actually part of the Quran in chapter of an-Najm (details are given in the main text), after which Allah the Almighty corrected it and then revealed this verse. It is important to note that this story does not have an authentic basis, as stated by *Ibn Kathir* and *al-Qurtubi* in their exegeses, and by *Qadi ‘Iyad* in *Ash-Shifa*.

Now it is known that a Messenger is given Scripture which he can read, whilst a Prophet is not given any new Scripture, but rather, he follows the law of the messengers who came before him. So as long as Satan casts aspersions on both messengers and prophets, the word *tamanna* here must mean 'hope', not 'read', for what does the Prophet read when he does not receive Scripture?

Those who understand *tamanna* to mean 'read' when Allah *the Almighty* says, 'We have never sent any messenger or prophet before you [Muhammad] into whose wishes Satan did not insinuate something' (*al-Hajj*: 52), whether they be scholars of deep or superficial understanding, say that it means that when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recited the Quran, Satan interfered with his recitation and placed therein that which was foreign to it. They say that after Allah's words: 'Have you, then, ever considered [what you are worshipping in] al-Lat and al-'Uzza, as well as [in] Manat, the third and last [of this triad]?' (*an-Najm*: 19-20), have been revealed, Satan added 'These are the exalted birds, and their intercession is most desired', as though Satan placed these words in the Quran, after which Allah *the Almighty* expelled them again and established His true verses. But this theory casts doubts on the Quran itself and how can we believe in such a thing when Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Trustworthy divine inspiration has alighted with it from on high. Upon your heart, [O Muhammad], so that you may be among those who preach.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193-194) Allah *the Almighty* also says, 'Now if he [whom We have entrusted with it] had dared to attribute some [of his own] sayings unto Us, We would indeed have seized him by his right hand, and would indeed have cut his life-vein, and none of you could have saved him!' (*al-Haqqa*: 44-47)

So, the True Lord protected the Quran and His words from this kind of interference, so how could we accept that these statements of disbelief could be inserted into the Quran? How could their statement 'These are the exalted birds, and their intercession is most desired' make sense, especially if we consider the saying of Allah, 'Have you, then, ever considered [what you are worshipping in] al-Lat and al-'Uzza, as well as [in] Manat, the third and last [of this triad]? Why – for yourselves [you would choose only] male offspring, whereas to Him [you assign] female: that, lo and behold, is an unfair division!' (*an-Najm*: 19-22) How could the one go alongside the others?

So, this understanding of the verse does not make sense, and Satan does not have the power to place something in the Quran which is foreign to it. But, Satan might interfere in another way: when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recites the Quran, containing guidance, counsels, rulings and miracles for mankind, do you think that Allah's enemy would clear the air for the people so they can listen to this speech without distracting them, disturbing their thoughts, and trying to prevent them from listening to it? So, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* recited (*tamanna*) the Quran to them, Satan cast an aspersion on his recitation and sent his human followers to say that the Quran was mere sorcery, poetry, a lie and fable of the ancients.

The role of Satan, then, is not to place something in Allah's word which is foreign to it, for this is not within his power and Allah *the Almighty* would never let him touch His Book; rather, what he does is to cast obstacles on the path of the Quran and its understanding and influence, in order to bar the people from understanding it and being affected by it, and to spoil the Quran in the sight of those who are willing to believe in it.

But did this attempt to defame the Quran and bar the people from it have any result? Additionally, were the people really diverted away from the Book of Allah *the Almighty*? Allah *the Almighty* thwarted Satan's efforts, and his attempts did not place a single obstacle in the path of faith to the Quran and its effect. The Quran found hearts and ears which heard and reflected and embraced faith, yielding to its majesty and magnificence and submitting to its rhetoric and eloquence; they believed in it one after another. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...but Allah removes what Satan insinuates and then Allah affirms His message. Allah is All Knowing and Wise'. (*al-Hajj*: 52) That is, Allah *the Almighty* annulled and quashed the falsehoods and obstacles which Satan cast with the intention of barring people from the Quran; and Allah *the Almighty* enforced His verses and made them clear that they are truly from Him and that they serve as a miracle, the like of which man and jinn-kind could never produce, even if they all cooperated to do so. All of this applies if we consider *tamanna* to mean 'read' or 'recite'.

If, however, we consider it to mean 'hope', then we say that a messenger is someone whom Allah *the Almighty* sends with the religion of truth to

mankind. If he is able to follow this religion himself, then his hope will be that what he has brought will be believed or obeyed; his hope will be that his religion gains authority and control over the motions of human life.

The prophet or messenger has more concern for his people than anyone else and is eager that they be benefitted and guided; the Quran is thus a good thing which he would love for the people to take, as Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'None of you believes until he loves for his brother what he loves for himself.'⁽¹⁾

But would Satan simply sit and watch Messenger Muhammad's hopes for his people be realised, or would he cast obstacles in the way of this hope and stir up souls against it, encouraging his people to rebel against him by reminding them of the power and dominance they would lose because of Islam? In this way, Satan cast aspersions on the hopes of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'wishes Satan did not insinuate something, but Allah remove what Satan insinuates'. (*al-Hajj*: 52)

Satan would not leave the Quran to penetrate people's hearts, or even their ears. He was the author of the notion: '...Do not listen to this Quran, but rather talk frivolously about it....' (*Fussilat*: 26)

If Satan did not cast obstacles in hearing the Quran and raise doubts about it, everyone who heard it would believe in it. The Quran has a sweetness which cannot be resisted, and an effect which penetrates the heart directly.

Yet despite this, the aspersions Satan cast did not degrade the Quran, or the power of the call; it began to increase day after day and the number of those who believed in the Quran increased. What is important is for us to be aware of how to receive the Quran and how to listen to it: we must receive it without any prejudice, for Allah's laws are only received poorly because of the prejudice of whim.

I said before that a container cannot contain two things at the same time and one of them must be taken out if the other is to enter. So, you must first completely empty your mind and your thoughts, and only then receive Allah's

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* (13) and *Muslim* (45) on the authority of *Anas ibn Malik*

word and study it however you like, and you will come to believe in it as long as you cleanse your heart for it so that nothing remains in your mind to cloud the natural disposition which Allah *the Almighty* created in you. When you do this, the Quran will find its way into your heart; and once your heart has experienced the love of the Quran, nothing will ever take it out again.

In the conversion of `Umar⁽¹⁾ Allah *be pleased with him* we have a fine example and a lesson, for when he heard his sister recite the Quran for the first time, his heart was closed and contained only disbelief, so it did not move him, and thus he struck her a blow which made her face bleed. When he saw this, his heart softened and he felt compassion for his sister. It is as though the emotion of love cast out the emotion of enmity so that his pure nature was revealed; and when he heard the Quran after this, he believed in it right away.⁽²⁾

Likewise, if you want to discuss the matter of faith or disbelief and choose one of them – because they cannot be combined, and you must choose one or the other – then if, when you discuss this matter, you insist on disbelief from the onset, then you will never reach faith because Allah *the Almighty* seals the stubborn heart so that disbelief cannot leave it and faith cannot enter it. You must first take the disbelief out and be free of it, and then discuss the matter as you wish.

That is why Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Say, “I counsel you one thing only: Be [ever-conscious of] standing before Allah, whether you are in the company of others or alone; and then bethink yourselves [that] there is no madness in [this prophet,] your fellow-man....”’ (*Saba*: 46)

But, if you discuss the matter whilst having a prejudiced thought in your mind, you will be like those people of whom Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Now among those [hapless sinners] are such as [pretend to] listen to thee, [O Muhammad,] and then, as soon as they leave thy presence, speak [with scorn] unto those who have understood [your message]; “What is it that he has said just now?...”’ (*Muhammad*: 16). That is, what is the latest thing he has brought, and what is miraculous about it? The reply then comes: ‘...It is such

(1) *The story of `Umar ibn Al-Khattab`'s conversion to Islam and his story with his sister*

(2) *Ibn Hisham, Sira*

as these whose hearts Allah has sealed because they [always] followed but their own lusts. Just as for those who are [willing to be] guided, He increases their [ability to follow His] guidance and causes them to grow in Allah consciousness....' (*Muhammad*: 16-17) In another verse, the True Lord *the Almighty* says about the Quran: '...Say, "Unto all who have attained to faith, this [divine revelation] is a guidance and a source of health; but as for those who will not believe – in their ears is deafness, and so it remains obscure to them..."' (*Fussilat*: 44).

So, the same Quran never changes, but those who listen to it are different. We said before that if you want to make a cup of hot tea cooler, you blow in it. If you want to warm up your hands in the cold winter, you blow on them. How could this be, when it is the very same action? Indeed, it is the same action, but the recipient of the action differs from one instance to the other.

Allah says: 'any messenger or prophet before you'. (*al-Hajj*: 52) The word 'any' indicates that these words are comprehensive, referring to all the previous prophets and messengers. Every prophet and messenger hoped that his religion would spread and his way of guidance would be followed, and that all his people would believe in him. But Satan would never sit idly and watch him get all that he hoped for, but inevitably would stand in the way of his call to bar the people from it and divert them away from his call and his message. But in the end, Allah *the Almighty* always succoured His messengers and prophets, and annulled the obstacles which Satan cast in the way of their call, and then made His messages firm and clear so that they were firmly established and no one could deny them.

When you hear the word 'cast', know that it implies obstacles and evils such as when Allah *the Almighty* says, '...And so We have cast enmity and hatred among the followers of the Bible, [to last] until Resurrection Day....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 64)

One of those who understand *tamanna* here to mean 'recite' says that Allah *the Almighty* sent certain things to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to prove his human nature, and then He wiped away the traces of this human nature to show that Allah *the Almighty* always kept Messenger Muhammad under His protection so that if his human nature ever

inclined to something, Allah *the Almighty* would protect him from it. Because of this, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Things come to me so that I say, “I am not like one of you”; and then things are taken from me so that I say, “I am nothing but a human being like you.”’ So, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a human being, but he is divinely inspired with that which protects him from human errors.

An aspect of his human nature was that he was a victim of an act of sorcery, and this is a fact which cannot be denied, and many authentic narrations were narrated about this. The disbelievers plotted all types of schemes against him *peace and blessings be upon him*; they mocked him, insulted him, persecuted him and vilified him; and then they planned one night to kill him, and waited for him, but they did not succeed. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And [remember, O Prophet,] how those who were bent on denying the truth were scheming against thee, in order to restrain thee [from preaching], or to slay thee or to drive thee away: thus, have they [always] schemed; but Allah brought their scheming to not – for Allah is above all schemers.’ (*al-Anfal*: 30)

Allah *the Almighty* planned for the sake of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and delivered him safely from their scheme, and thus Allah *the Almighty* exposed their plotting and thwarted their efforts and both their open and secret plans failed. So, they⁽¹⁾ resorted to the sorcerers, asking them to do to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* what they had been unable to do. They worked a spell on a comb which had one of the Prophet’s hairs on it, adding some fibres of male date-palm pollen. Allah *the Almighty* exposed them and told Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of this, so he sent ‘Ali Allah *be pleased with him* to bring the comb from out of the well of Dharwan.⁽²⁾

It is as though the True Lord *the Almighty* wanted to show us that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was human who is subject to the same things as are all human beings, but his Lord did not leave his human nature alone, but protected it with His All-Sustaining Power.

(1) *They worked a spell on a comb which had one of the Prophet’s Muhammad hairs on it, adding some fiber of male date-palm pollen.*

(2) *Narrated by Al-Bukhari (3268) and Muslim (2189) on the authority of ‘A’isha Allah be pleased with her*

This is what is meant by those people who prefer the first interpretation of *tamanna* as 'read' or 'recite', that is, messengers are subject to the same things as are other human beings, but then Allah intervenes to protect them from this. As for us, we prefer the other interpretation which says that *tamanna* means 'hope.'

The verse then ends with the words: 'for Allah is All Knowing and Wise.' (*al-Hajj*: 52) Allah *the Almighty* knows well the plots and plans of Satan, and has enough wisdom to deal with these plots.

Allah then says:

لِيَجْعَلَ مَا يُلْقِي الشَّيْطَانُ فِتْنَةً لِلَّذِينَ فِي قُلُوبِهِم مَّرَضٌ وَالْقَاسِيَةِ
 قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ الظَّالِمِينَ لَفِي شِقَاقٍ بَعِيدٍ ﴿٥٣﴾

**He makes Satan's insinuations a temptation only
 for the sick at heart and those whose hearts are
 hardened – the evildoers are profoundly opposed
 [to the Truth] [53] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 53)**

Someone might ask: 'If Allah annuls the aspersion which Satan casts, then what is the point of allowing it to be cast in the first place'? Allah *the Almighty* allowed it to be cast as a trial to test the people, to make clear who was prepared to carry the burden of the message, this was a responsibility which could only be borne by those who could overcome such trials and escape from the temptations of Satan and avoid the obstacles he sets up. That is why He said of them: 'You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind....' (*Al-Imran*: 110)

You only attained this rank because you proved worthy of bearing this trust; trials come to you, but you scoff at them and do not let them turn you aside. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'He makes Satan's insinuations a temptation only for the sick at heart and those whose hearts are hardened...' (*al-Hajj*: 53), i.e. hypocrisy such that if they are exposed to trial they turn the other way, and say as others said, 'It is nothing but sorcery, lies and fables of the ancients'.

It was also a trial for 'all whose hearts are hardened', those who have lost the softness of their hearts, not looking at the beauty around them which

Allah *the Almighty* created and gave being and sustenance, nor acknowledging the bounties Allah *the Almighty* gave them, nor rejoicing in Him or coming to Him.

We can observe that the small child feels comfortable with his mother and father and relies on them because he has experienced their affection and grown up in their care; and if he is raised by a nanny, even if his mother is around, he will prefer the nanny and feel more comfortable in her care, and disregard his own mother. Why? Because he looks at the good which is done to him, from where it comes; he looks at those who do him favours and kindnesses and his heart is attached to them, no matter who they might be. These people came into Allah's universe having no power or strength, and He received them with all types of good things, yet despite this their hearts were hard and solid, and they did not acknowledge this kindness.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, '...the evildoers are profoundly opposed [to the Truth].' (*al-Hajj*: 53) They sin against their own selves when they prefer a benefit which is instantaneous and small to a benefit which is eternal and great. The word *shiqaq* (opposed) literally means 'split', as is the case when two people disagree with each other; even if only it were a trivial split which could be healed and re-joined, or a split like those of this worldly life which occur between people because of worldly problems. But the verse states that their split is 'profoundly', meaning that its effect is permanent and terrible. So, the first reason why Satan is allowed to cast these dispersions is that it is a test; as for the second reason, Allah now tells us what it is:

وَلْيَعْلَمَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ أَنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّكَ فَيُؤْمِنُوا بِهِ، فَتُخْبِتَ لَهُ قُلُوبُهُمْ وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهَادٍ لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٥٤﴾

And He causes those given knowledge to realize that this Revelation is your Lord's Truth, so that they may believe in it and humble their hearts to Him: God guides the faithful to the straight path [54] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 54)

His words 'and He causes those given knowledge to realize that this revelation is your Lord's truth...' (*al-Hajj*: 54) mean that they may be ever more certain and convinced that this is the truth, no matter what doubts

other people try to cast on it and no matter how much they call it sorcery, lies or fables of the ancients. For Allah *the Almighty* will annul all of this and the people of sound knowledge and discernment will continue to believe in the Quran because of the facts, indications, and proofs they possess which tell them that it is the truth. As long as it is the truth which cannot be disturbed by these false accusations, they must therefore believe in it: 'and that they may believe in it' (*al-Hajj*: 54), then this faith must be followed by action and implementation: 'and humble their hearts to Him' (*al-Hajj*: 54), that is, surrender with humility, lowliness and resignation.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, '...Allah guides the faithful to the straight path.' (*al-Hajj*: 54) So, Satan's plots and casting of aspersions did not end when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed away, but rather, Satan continues to lie in wait for his community after him. Satan lies in wait and plots against the whole community of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and all those who bear his Message.

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And thus it is that against every prophet We have set up as enemies the evil forces from among humans as well as from among invisible beings that whisper unto one another glittering half-truths meant to delude the mind. But they could not do this unless your Lord had so willed: stand, therefore, aloof from them and from all their false imagery!' (*al-An'am*: 112) That is, leave them aside, for Allah, has plans for them. So, why do they do it? And what is the wisdom behind this? Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And that Allah might render pure of all dross those who have attained to faith....' (*Al-Imran*: 141) He also says, 'Yet, to the end that the hearts of those who do not believe in the life to come might incline towards Him....' (*al-An'am*: 113) So Satan's mission is to take advantage of those whose faith is weak and who worship Allah *the Almighty* on the verge of disbelief; those people who invent arguments to justify how they are immersed in their passions and how they follow the path of Satan; those who enjoy attacking religion and who hope that religion, the Lord and the resurrection are only delusions with no basis in reality because they are afraid that these things could be real and that they might get in trouble due to their evil deeds, and that they might have a painful destiny ahead of them. Because of all this, they

find the resurrection far-fetched and thus say, as recorded in the Quran: ‘Why – after we have died and become mere dust and bones, shall we, forsooth, be raised from the dead?’ (*as-Saffat*: 16) Why? Because they want to justify their behaviour and get themselves out of trouble which they, in reality cannot, get out of, such people will follow anyone, and eagerly embrace any doubt which is raised about Allah’s religion and grasp hold of it; and their intention is to destroy religion at its foundations.

For example, we hear some of these wretched people objecting to how eating carrion is forbidden and eating slaughtered meat is permitted, a point which shows how the seeds of idolatry and disbelief have taken root in their souls; they even give wild arguments which only convince their fellow disbelievers and hypocrites – for this issue is clear, and death is not the same as killing or slaughtering. ‘Death’ means that the spirit leaves the body first before the body is damaged, and the form of the body only begins to break down after the soul leaves it. As for killing, it is when the body is broken first, and thus the spirit leaves, such as if a man or an animal is struck on the head and dies because his brain is damaged and smashed, so that the spirit can no longer remain in it. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And Muhammad is only a messenger; all the [other] messengers have passed away before him: if, then, he dies or is slain...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 144). So, dying is not the same as being slain.

We illustrated this before with the example of the electric light we use, which flows through wires and then manifests itself in electric lamps. We still do not know the nature of this electricity and this light, but we see it and enjoy it. Now if the lamp breaks, the light goes out because the lamp is no longer suitable for receiving this light, although it still exists in the wires. So, electricity’s light only shows itself if this vacuum-sealed glass bulb remains sound. In the same way, the spirit cannot remain in the body unless the body has certain specific attributes, and if these attributes are disturbed, the spirit leaves the body.

As for slaughtering, it also means to expel the spirit from the body, but by the command of Allah *the Almighty* its Creator and by a dispensation from Him in which it resembles the lawful execution of a man for just retribution or another lawful reason. We slaughter the animal which Allah *the Almighty* has

permitted us and commanded us to slaughter, and had Allah *the Almighty* not commanded us to slaughter it we would not do so, and had Allah *the Almighty* not permitted it, we would not eat it which is proved by the fact that we do not eat the animals which He has not permitted us to eat.

Those people who criticise the lawful way of slaughtering and prefer to kill the animals by strangulation, for example, have missed the point and the wisdom of slaughtering: Slaughtering allows all the blood out, and blood contains substances which are harmful to man which must be rid of by removing all the blood of the slaughtered animal, since it contains an amount of impure blood which has not passed through the kidneys to be cleaned.

The Muslim is eager to bear the teachings of Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and eager that these teachings should govern the motions of life; but Satan does not leave him alone to bring this hope to fruition, just as he did not leave the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* alone before him. His plots and casting of obstacles did not end when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed away, but they still continue, and will continue until the Last Hour.

Therefore Allah *the Almighty* says in the next verse:

وَلَا يَزَالُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا فِي مِرْيَةٍ مِنْهُ حَتَّى تَأْتِيَهُمُ
السَّاعَةُ بَغْتَةً أَوْ يَأْتِيَهُمْ عَذَابٌ يَوْمٍ عَقِيمٍ

The disbelievers will remain in doubt about it until the Hour suddenly overpowers them or until torment descends on them on a Day devoid of all hope [55] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 55)

They will not cease to be in doubt and therefore we say that Allah *the Almighty* has given the followers of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the duty of continuing his Message; Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind, and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you...’ (*al-Baqara*: 143). You must bear witness that you have conveyed the message, just as Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a witness over you. It is as though every one of us has been sent by Allah *the Almighty* and just as Messenger

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bore witness that he conveyed the message unto him, he must bear witness that, he in turn, conveyed the Message after the death of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, this verse combines both these aspects so that he *peace and blessings be upon him* bears witness before you, and you bear witness before all mankind.

When the True Lord *the Almighty* gives us this Message to convey, He says, ‘As long as you shall continue the Messenger’s Message, you shall inevitably encounter, just as the Messenger did, those who mock you, persecute you and cast obstacles in the way of your hopes. Yet, if you are steadfast, then Allah *the Almighty* will annul what Satan casts, will succour His *awliya*’ in the end and Islam will remain until the Last Hour’. In addition, there will always be people who will oppose this religion and spread doubts about it, and the atheists who seek to make the people doubt Allah’s Existence will appear, from time to time, to confront us with notions which contradict Allah’s religion, such as saying that this universe was created by nature alone, and you will see and hear these claims in their writings and articles.

Empirical science was not spared from these perversions of theirs, for when they see an animal living in harmony with its environment, they say: ‘Nature has caused it to adapt the right colour and form for its environment’. When it comes to plants, as well, if they are confronted with a sign of Allah *the Almighty* such as that of which He says, ‘... all watered with the same water: and yet, some of them have We favoured above others by way of the food [which they provide for man and beast] ...’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 4), they say, ‘Plants are nourished by the process of selection’, meaning that the plant itself chooses and selects its nourishment so that in the same soil with the same water, different plants grow which are sweet, bitter, acidic and spicy. Instead of acknowledging Allah’s grace and power, they speak of ‘nature’ and ‘natural selection’.

I spoke to some of these people in France, trying to answer them and refuting their claims. The simplest way to do this is to point out that the process of selection requires a conscious will to differentiate between the things which are selected: does a plant have a will which allows it to choose between sweetness and acidity? In addition, can it tell the difference between

bitter and the spicy? They try to convince people of the role of nature in order to distance their minds from the concept of Allah's Power and they say that plants take nourishment by means of narrow capillaries which look like hairs. We know that these capillaries are tubular and hollow on the inside. Now when you place these tiny capillaries in water, the water in them rises to the top because the air pressure inside these tubes, due to their narrowness, is less than the pressure outside them. So, the water rises inside them. If these capillaries were broad, then the pressure inside them would be equal to the pressure outside them and the water inside them would not rise.

So, we said to them: 'If we brought a tank with different liquids inside it and all are mixed together, and then we put these capillaries in it, would you find in each capillary a particular liquid and no other, or would we find the water inside them to be a mixture of all the different ingredients present in the tank'? If you did this experiment, you would find that indeed the liquid would rise in the capillaries in this way, but the different ingredients of it would not be separated; the same liquid would be in each capillary – and how different this is from how plants grow and take nourishment. Allah *the Almighty* speaks the truth when He says, 'Who creates [everything], and thereupon forms it in accordance with what it is meant to be, and who determines the nature [of all that exists], and thereupon guides it [towards its fulfilment.]' (*al-A'la: 2-3*)

So how far these explanations are from reality! How ignorant those who advance them and circulate them are! Especially in an age when science and research has advanced, its means have proliferated, an age when minds have become enlightened, and many secrets of the universe have been discovered which prove the awesome power of its Creator; yet there are still those who advance the cause of falsehood.

The True Lord says, 'The disbelievers will remain in doubt about it until the Hour suddenly overpowers them...' (*al-Hajj: 55*). So, they will be present in the *ummah* of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* until the Last Hour rises, and we shall confront them just as he *peace and blessings be upon him* confronted them. Satan will continue to cast aspersions into these people's souls, whisper to them, inspire his allies from man and jinn-kind, and set up obstacles and barriers to bar people from Allah's religion. This is an example

of how Satan casts obstacles in the way of the most important of all matters, namely; faith in Allah *the Almighty*.

Satan also casts aspersions concerning the matter of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* we find that there are those who attack the personality of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘How could he lead a whole nation when he was an unlettered nomad?’ They accuse him and criticise him over the matter of his multiple marriages, and so on. This represents an obstacle barring the way to attain faith in him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

We are amazed at how these people attack him *peace and blessings be upon him* whilst disbelieving in him, for these attacks of theirs implicitly suggest that they believe that he really was the Messenger of Allah; otherwise, they would not spend so much effort on criticising him, since if he were only an ordinary person, he would not have been subjected to all this criticism.

Therefore, do not debate with these people about Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* but only about the most important issue, that is, Allah’s Existence, then the existence of messengers who convey Allah’s Message. If you begin things with them by discussing the topic of faith in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* you will never reach a resolution with them because they are setting their own standards of perfection and then measuring his *peace and blessings be upon him* conduct against these standards. This is the wrong way around because we take our definition of perfection from him *peace and blessings be upon him* and from his actions; we do not invent our own standards of perfection.

In this vein, they also raise doubts about Allah’s laws. For example, they object to how Islam allows divorce, for how can we divide a married couple? Now it is strange that they take this stand, for how can we force an estranged married couple to stay together when they do not want to, as though they are chained together? How can we do this, when you cannot force a man to befriend someone he does not want to, even if he only sees him once a day, for example? How, then, could you force a couple to remain bonded together in one place, when they hate each other?

Allah *the Almighty* thwarts their efforts and shows the falsehood of these notions, the events of life and its problems have forced them to allow divorce, only it can solve these kinds of problems. These people have raised much debate about Allah's words, 'He it is who has sent forth His Apostle with the [task of spreading] guidance and the religion of truth, to the end that He may cause it to prevail over all [false] religion...' (*at-Tawba*: 33). His words, 'They aim to extinguish Allah's light with their utterances: but Allah has willed to spread His light in all its fullness, however hateful this may be to all who deny the truth' (*as-Saff*: 8) and '...however hateful this may be to those who ascribe divinity to aught but Allah...' (*as-Saff*: 9).

They say: 'But despite this, the religion has not prevailed, and the majority of people in the world still do not believe in Islam'. They mean to raise doubts about Allah's Book, yet this statement of theirs arises from a lack of understanding of this verse, and the meaning of 'cause it to prevail'. This does not mean that Islam will prevail over everything which opposes it so that no one will be left to reject it.

Rather, 'cause it to prevail' means that He will destine victory for it by means of the truth of its arguments and teachings even though the disbelievers and idolaters hate this. So, they will continue to exist, but it will prevail over them, and Islam will become ascendant, and they will be forced to adopt its laws and rulings to solve their problems. The fact that they will adopt elements of Islam to solve their problems, although they do not believe in it, is more of a rebuttal of them than it would be for them actually to believe in it. If they believed in Islam, it would not prevail over them or become ascendant over them.

So, you raised doubts in this matter, and said it was not from any God or messenger, yet the days have forced you, with their events and experiences, to resort to these laws which you opposed. You are adopting the laws of Islam whilst still disbelieving in it, which is proof that it has prevailed over you.

We continue by examining: '...until the Hour suddenly overpowers them'. (*al-Hajj*: 55) The scholars have spoken much about the meaning of 'the Hour': does it mean the Day of Resurrection, or the day on which a man dies? The 'Last Hour' could mean both since when a man dies it is as though his

resurrection has already begun, his deeds have come to an end; and man's death comes suddenly just as the resurrection will come suddenly. So, the two possible meanings are equally valid. But if the Last Hour will come suddenly and surprise them with all its horrors, then what are the minor heralds, and the major heralds? Are they not signs which will indicate that Hour is nigh, which would mean that it is no longer a sudden occurrence? They say that the heralds of something do not necessarily mean that it will definitely happen right away; rather, a herald signifies that something is near, so be ready for it and prepare for it; as for the exact time of its occurrence, no one knows it, and its coming will be sudden despite these forewarnings.

Allah then says, '...and [supreme] suffering befalls them on a day void of all hope.' (*al-Hajj*: 55) Some⁽¹⁾ consider this day to be the Day of Resurrection, and that the Last Hour means death; others⁽²⁾ say that it means the Battle of *Badr*, on which Allah *the Almighty* separated the truth from falsehood. This is an effort for which they deserve our gratitude, but when we reflect on the verse: 'The disbelievers will remain in doubt about it...' (*al-Hajj*: 55), this means that the doubt will continue, and the Battle of *Badr* is over. The doubt will continue until the Day of Resurrection.⁽³⁾

There is nothing to prevent both the 'Last Hour' and the 'Day void of all hope' from both meaning the Day of Resurrection, meaning that they both refer to the same thing. There is a difference between the time of an event and the event itself: The Last Hour is the time wherein the event of suffering will occur, so the Hour will come first and then suffering will follow, although the coming of Last Hour is also in itself a form of suffering. When Allah says, '...The disbelievers will remain in doubt about it until the Hour suddenly overpowers them or until torment descends on them on a day devoid of all hope.' (*al-Hajj*: 55) The word *'aqim* literally means 'barren', that is, someone who cannot conceive children, whether male or female so that nothing will come after them. Allah *the Almighty* used this same word when speaking of Sara, the wife of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: '...A barren old

(1) Including Ad-Dahhak and Mujahid, according to Al-Qurtubi and As-Suyuti

(2) Ibn 'Abbas, Qatada and Mujahid, according to Al-Qurtubi

(3) Ibn Kathir preferred this interpretation.

woman [like me]' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 29). The Day of Resurrection is also a barren day; no day will follow it; it will be the end of the cycle, as someone said, 'The world always gave to them, but now it is barren'.

Or *'aqim* here might mean that it brings no good but only evil such as when Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And [you have the same message] in [what happened to the tribe of] 'Ad, when We let loose against them that life-destroying wind (*'aqim*) which spared nothing of what it came upon, but caused [all of] it to become like bones dead and decayed.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 41-42) This is because when the wind blows, good things are expected from it: it may bring a cloud full of rain, or move the crops so that the male pollen falls onto the female: 'And We let loose the winds to fertilize [plants]...' (*al-Hijr*: 22). But this wind brought nothing good, and nothing beneficial. It would have been a mercy had it gone no further than being bereft of benefit, but no; it actually went as far as bringing harm: '[It] spared nothing of what it came upon, but caused [all of] it to become like bones dead and decayed.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 42) So it destroyed everything it touched.

Allah *the Almighty* says elsewhere, 'And so, when they beheld it in the shape of a dense cloud approaching their valleys, they exclaimed, "This is but a heavy cloud which will bring us [welcome] rain!" [But Hud (Eber) said], "Nay, but it is the very thing which you [so contemptuously] sought to hasten – a wind bearing grievous suffering, bound to destroy everything at its Lord's behest!" And then they were so utterly wiped out that nothing could be seen save their [empty] dwellings....' (*al-Ahqaf*: 24-25)

So, the meaning of *'aqim* here is something which brings no goodness or benefit, but only evil and torment; or otherwise it means that no day will come after it because you will leave the world of vicissitudes where things are always changing from one state to another. The world switches from wealth to poverty, from health to sickness, from youth to old age, from security to fear, from summer to winter, from hot to cold, from day to night and so on. But in the Hereafter, you will move from a world of vicissitudes and means-based life, to another world where you will live with the Ultimate Cause, and to a final Day after which there will be no more days, as though it is barren and has no progeny or successor. It is like when you go to a party of great

munificence and bounty, and you say, ‘That was the party to end all parties!’, meaning that the like of it will never be seen again.

If in this world you live by the means which Allah *the Almighty* has created for you, in the Hereafter you will sit in comfort enjoying the bounty of the Ultimate Cause. You will have to do no more than think of something and you will see it there in your hands. Because after the resurrection there will be no vicissitudes or changes, everyone will remain the same age, growing neither old nor decrepit, nor sickening or dying.

Consider what Allah says about the women of paradise, ‘For, behold, We shall have brought them into being in a life renewed having resurrected them as virgins, full of love, well-matched with those who have attained to righteousness.’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 35-38) To the one who hates his wife in this world because she makes him weary, we say: Do not compare the spouse of this world to the spouse of the Hereafter because Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘there shall they have spouses pure’ (*an-Nisa*’: 57), that is, purified of everything you disliked about them in this world in their forms, their nature and their character. In the Hereafter, there is nothing to spoil bliss.

The True Lord then says:

الْمَلِكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلَّهِ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَهُمْ فَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا
وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ فِي جَنَّاتِ النَّعِيمِ

On that Day control will belong to God: He will judge between them. Those who believe and do good deeds will be admitted to Gardens of Delight [56] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 56)

Someone might ask, ‘Does all dominion not belong to Allah *the Almighty* on every day, as well as that day?’ Indeed, all dominion belongs to Allah *the Almighty* in this world and in the Hereafter, but in this world Allah *the Almighty* created creatures and gave them dominion within His dominion; but this dominion does not last. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Say, “O Allah, Lord of all dominion! You grant dominion unto whom You will, and take away dominion from whom You will; and You exalt whom You will, and abase whom You will. In Thy hand is all good. Verily, You have the power to will anything.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 26)

So, in this world there are people to whom Allah *the Almighty* has granted dominion over certain things, and in this respect the dominion belongs to others; but in the Hereafter all dominion will be Allah's alone: '...With whom will sovereignty rest on that Day? With Allah, the One who holds absolute sway over all that exists' (*Ghafir*: 16). At the resurrection, 'while those who disbelieve and reject Our revelations will receive a humiliating torment.' (*Ghafir*: 16) So, all dominion will return to its rightful Owner, and all means will return to their Ultimate Cause.

The meaning of '...He shall judge [all men and make a distinction] between them...' (*al-Hajj*: 56) is that there is a dispute between two parties, one of which is in the right and the other of which is in the wrong. The judgement of disputes in this world requires witnesses, proofs, and oaths and they say in courts: 'The burden of proof lies with the plaintiff and an oath must be taken by the defendant'. This is true of the disputes of this worldly life. As for the disputes of the Hereafter, they are judged by the True Lord who knows all that is secret and concealed and who requires no proof or witnesses, or any other authority to execute His judgement.

The courtroom of the Hereafter does not require any lawyers; you cannot deceive the judge or bribe a witness to lie for you. In the courtroom of the Hereafter, you cannot use your temporal power to overturn the verdict or quash it. On that day, all dominion will belong to Allah *the Almighty* alone, the judgement on that day will be Allah's alone; Allah *the Almighty* will be judge, witness, and executor, and no one will be able to question His judgement.

As long as there will be a judgement, there will inevitably be a winner and a loser, and Allah *the Almighty* makes this clear by saying, '...Those who believe and do good deeds will be admitted to gardens of delight.' (*al-Hajj*: 56)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ مُّهِينٌ

While those who disbelieve and reject Our revelations will receive a humiliating torment [57] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 57)

These are the tyrants, who had power in the world of disbelief and rebellion, whom Allah *the Almighty* has judged must be punished with shameful suffering

after they had been so proud and haughty in this world. We may observe here that the suffering of hell is sometimes called ‘grievous’, sometimes ‘awesome’ and sometimes ‘shameful.’ The grievous suffering is the one which causes pain to him who experiences it; but this might last for a while and then end, whilst the awesome suffering is unending. The shameful suffering is the one which humiliates and besmirches his dignity, of which he was always proud.

You find that people differ as to how they deal with different kinds of suffering: some of them are unmoved by tough blows, but they be hurt by a word which injures their dignity and pride. Because of this, Allah *the Almighty* speaks of these different kinds of suffering, which encompass all the different psychological faculties, dealing out to each soul that which hurts it most.

The True Lord then speaks about something we needed to know, for the first Muslims in Mecca were driven away from their homes, children and possessions simply because they said, ‘Our Lord is Allah’ and there is no doubt that a man’s homeland, family and place of upbringing have an effect on the dispositions of his soul which cannot be easily erased, and when he is away from home, he misses it and longs to return. A poet said:

Even if my homeland wrongs me, it is dear to me;

Even if my family withhold from me, they are still generous.

Therefore, when the student leaves his local town and heads off for Cairo, people say, ‘He will definitely come home, no matter what hardships befall him’; he will come home to seek help and support from his family, or even at the end of his life, he will come home to be buried beneath the soil of his own homeland. People say that when Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *Allah be pleased with him* saw that one of the birds was missing, ‘...he said, “How is it that I do not see the hoopoe? Or could he be among the absent? If so, I will punish him most severely or will kill him unless he brings me a convincing excuse!’ (*an-Naml*: 20-21), for he was a Prophet and he would not deal out punishment without first hearing the excuse – they say that the birds asked Sulaiman (Solomon) how he would punish the hoopoe and he replied: ‘I shall place him among a species other than his own and in a place which is not familiar to him’, i.e. not his own home.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَالَّذِينَ هَاجَرُوا فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ ثُمَّ قُتِلُوا أَوْ مَاتُوا لَيَرْزُقَنَّهُمُ
 اللَّهُ رِزْقًا حَسَنًا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّازِقِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

**He will give a generous provision to those who
 migrated in God's way and were killed or died. He
 is the Best Provider [58] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 58)**

Earlier, Allah says, 'Those who have been driven from their homelands against all right for no other reason than their saying, "Our Lord is Allah..."' (*al-Hajj*: 40). These people endured many hardships and toiled in the cause of their beliefs, which is why Allah will certainly compensate them for these sacrifices; therefore, He says here, 'He will give a generous provision to those who migrated in Allah's way and were killed or died...' (*al-Hajj*: 58). I made it clear that being slain is not the same thing as dying, for death means that the spirit leaves the body without the body being broken, whilst to be slain or killed means that the body is broken and the spirit leaves it as a result.

As for the saying of Allah, 'He will give a generous provision...' (*al-Hajj*: 58), it means Allah *the Almighty* will give this as compensation for the family and wealth they have left behind at home, just as the fair ruler compensates the victim of wrongdoing by giving him more than what was taken from him. Allah *the Almighty* says elsewhere: 'And he who forsakes the domain of evil for the sake of Allah shall find on Earth many a lonely road, as well as life abundant. If anyone leaves his home, fleeing from evil unto Allah and His Messenger and then death overtakes him – his reward is ready with Allah....' (*an-Nisa*: 100)

Because the one who is killed thereby triumphs in martyrdom and attains to one of the two good things, whilst the one who dies loses out on this honour, and therefore the reward of the martyr is provided with Allah – and what do you think about a reward given by your Lord *the Almighty* Himself? It is like when a weary man walks and has nothing, not even anyone to lend him anything and suddenly his foot falls into a hole and he angrily says, 'This, too'? But then he sees that his foot has unearthed something shiny in the soil and he realises that he has found gold.

It is narrated⁽¹⁾ that the Companion Fudala *Allah be pleased with him* saw the people burying a martyr and another man who had died of natural causes and they saw that he ignored the martyr's grave and went directly to the grave of the one who was not martyred. When they asked him why he had chosen the non-martyr's grave over the martyr's, he said, 'By Allah, I care not from which kind of grave I am raised to life, as long as my reward is ready with Allah.' Then he recited this verse 'And he who forsakes the domain of evil for the sake of Allah shall find on earth many a lonely road, as well as life abundant. If anyone leaves his home, fleeing from evil unto Allah and His Apostle, and then death overtakes him – his reward is ready with Allah...' (*an-Nisa'*: 100).⁽²⁾

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'He is the Best Provider.' (*al-Hajj*: 58) When the True Lord *the Almighty* describes Himself with an attribute and then uses the plural, this means He is declaring that some of His creatures might share this attribute with Him, as we said before about '...hallowed, therefore, is Allah, the best of Artisans!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14) *Al-Khaliqin* means creators. In doing this, Allah affirms that His creatures have this attribute and thus includes them with Himself *the Almighty* in it, i.e. this attribute, for He does not wrong His creatures in any way and He does not deny them the fruits of their labours. To make something means that you have created it to the extent that Allah *the Almighty* even says about lying: '...and [thus] you give visible shape to a lie...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 17). The words *takhluquna ifka* literally mean 'you create a lie'. 'Creation' means to bring something into existence considering that it did not exist before. When you make a tumbler out of glass, you bring something into existence, although it did not exist before; this happens despite the fact this process includes materials which Allah created. You used your mind to bring into existence something new. Here, we should take into consideration that the creation of your Lord is better still, for you create using materials which already exist, whilst your Lord creates out of nothing; additionally, the things you make stay as they are and remain in the same form you fashion them and they do not reproduce, or grow or have any life. As for your Lord's, creation, you know well enough how it is.

(1) The story of Fudala Allah be pleased with him and the martyr's grave

(2) Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir

In the same way, Allah *the Almighty* says here, 'He is the Best Provider' (*al-Hajj*: 58), affirming that His creatures too are providers, in that they are a means of provision. Provision is everything which gives benefit, even if it is unlawful and therefore Allah *the Almighty* says, 'O you who have attained to faith! Partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance...' (*al-Baqara*: 172). I say that the servant is a means of provision, Allah creates the provision in the first place and then gives it you so you can benefit from it and utilise it and give it to others. The provision you give was in turn received from the Original Provider *the Almighty* which is why you, in this sense, are a provider. Yet, they do not like to call a human being a 'provider', even though Allah *the Almighty* says, '...He is the Best Provider.' (*al-Hajj*: 58); why is this? They say this, so that people do not get the idea that provision comes from human beings.

Therefore, we hear many simple labourers or low-level employees, or doormen for example, say to their bosses when they fire them from their jobs: 'Sir, all provision is in Allah's Hand'. How could you say this when you took your pay from your boss's hand and from his money? They say it is because they look at the Primary Giver of the provision and only then to the secondary giver.

As for the goodly provision which Allah has promised those who emigrate in His cause, Allah *the Almighty* clarifies it by saying:

لِيُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ مُّدْخَلًا يَرْضَوْنَهُ، وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَلِيمٌ حَلِيمٌ ﴿٥٩﴾

He will admit them to a place that will please them:

God is all knowing and most forbearing [59]

(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 59)

This is because provision might be good, but not please the one who owns it; but as for the provision which Allah will grant these people, it will be fully pleasing to them. 'Pleasure' means the soul's acceptance of something it finds enjoyable so that it does not seek anything higher than it and want anything more.

Therefore, once the denizens of paradise have enjoyed its bliss, which contains that which no eye has seen, nor ear has heard nor human heart has imagined, the True Lord *the Almighty* will manifest Himself to their eyes and say to His faithful servants, 'O My servants, are you well pleased?' They will

say, ‘And how could we not be well pleased, when You have given us that which You gave no one in the worlds before?’ He will say, ‘Shall I not give you what is better than this?’ They will say, ‘And is there anything better than what we have now?’ He will say, ‘Indeed, I will give unto you My goodly pleasure, such that I shall never be angry with you again.’⁽¹⁾

In this regard, Allah *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘And, indeed, in time will your Lord grant you [what thy heart desires] and you shall be well-pleased.’ (*ad-Duha*: 5) He also says, ‘O you, human being that hast attained to inner peace! Return you unto your Lord, well-pleased [and] pleasing [Him].’ (*al-Fajr*: 27-28) He will give you such pleasure that your life itself will be pleased as though life loves you and is pleased with you.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘...Allah is All Knowing and most forbearing.’ (*al-Hajj*: 59) He knows the bliss which every man deserves at the reckoning. He then gives them even more from His bounty as He wills. Your Lord’s reckoning in the Hereafter is not like your reckoning in this world, for His is based on grace, not justice.

Allah *the Almighty* is Most Forbearing in that He shows forbearance to His servant when he sins and pardons the slip-ups of the righteous. So, if you mix your righteous deeds with evil ones and you contravene Allah’s Guidance in heedlessness or error, do not let this spoil your relationship with your Lord, or disturb the tranquillity of your life, for your Lord is forbearing and will pardon you for these things, as they say: ‘The one who loves you will swallow a pebble for you’.

Therefore, when one of the believers unveiled the plans for the conquest of Mecca to the disbelievers,⁽²⁾ and ‘Umar Allah *be pleased with him* wanted to kill him, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* forbade him and said, ‘Perhaps Allah looked at the men of Badr and said, “Do as you will for I have forgiven you.”’⁽³⁾

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* (7518) and *Muslim* (2829) on the authority of *Abu Sa’id Al-Khudri*

(2) It was *Hatib ibn Abi Balta’a*, who feared for his family in Mecca and so warned Mecca dwellers about the impending conquest.

(3) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* (4890) and *Muslim* (2494) on the authority of ‘*Ali Allah be pleased with him*

It was sufficient that they went out and risked their lives to fight a battle in which they had far less numbers and equipment than their enemies. Do we not remember them for this event? And did the True Lord not say, ‘...for, verily, good deeds drive away evil deeds...’ (*Hud*: 114)? When someone is tested by something he is too weak to face, let him at least be strong in those things he is able to face. If Satan defeats you in one aspect of evil, then defeat him in another aspect of good, for the one will make up for the other.

The True Lord *the Almighty* then says:

ذَٰلِكَ وَمَنْ عَاقَبَ بِمِثْلِ مَا عُوقِبَ بِهِ ثُمَّ بُغِيَ عَلَيْهِ
لِيَنْصُرَهُ اللَّهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَعَفُوفٌ غَفُورٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

So it will be. God will help those who retaliate against an aggressive act merely with its like and are then wronged again: God is pardoning and most forgiving [60]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 60)

‘So it will be...’, that is, ‘All that We have just said has been firmly set in place and We shall not speak about something else’. Allah says, ‘...Allah will help those who retaliate against an aggressive act merely with its like and are then wronged again...’ (*al-Hajj*: 60).

The True Lord *the Almighty* created man and placed in him various faculties so that he could fulfil his role as vicegerent on earth with balanced actions. He created emotions in us and gave them a role to play and these emotions cannot be ruled by laws. He also created instincts in us- these instincts have a role to play, but the use of man’s instincts is governed by laws, so you must not indulge your instincts outside the bounds of the role for which Allah created them.

For example, Allah has given you an instinctive love for food in order to preserve your life, so do not make it a goal for and of itself, eating just to enjoy the food. It is a temporary enjoyment followed by enduring pains and problems. Allah placed this instinct in the human soul and made it completely disciplined, just like an alarm clock: when you are hungry, you find yourself looking for food and seeking it out. If you are thirsty, your soul inclines to

water. It is as though there is a bell inside you which alerts you to your body's need for the essential constituents which preserve it.

Curiosity is another instinct which Allah placed in you so that you would study and seek out the secrets of the universe which illustrate Allah's Power and Might; so do not go beyond this goal and indulge in this instinct by spying on people and seeking out their secrets.

Moreover, procreation is an instinct created by Allah to preserve man's existence, so you must not go beyond this purpose and stray into that which Allah has forbidden.

Anger is also an instinct and a necessary reaction: you do not rationally choose whether to be angry or not, but rather, if things happen to anger you, you cannot help but get angry. Yet, despite this, Allah *the Almighty* made boundaries and laws for it and commanded you to restrain yourself and refrain from reacting.

Love and hate are instincts and emotions which yield to no law and cannot be controlled by reason. You have the right to love or hate, but you must not translate this emotion into deliberate action and reaction which leads you to aggress or do wrong. 'Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and never let hatred of anyone lead you into the sin of deviating from justice....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 8) This is something which cannot be governed by laws and you do not have the power to choose whether to love or hate. Therefore, when 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* met the man who killed his brother⁽¹⁾, he said to him, 'Turn your face away from me, for I love you not.' The man was intelligent, so he said to 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* 'Will your lack of love for me prevent me from getting any of my rights?' 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said 'no', whereupon the man said, 'Only women cry over love!' that is, 'Love me or hate me as you will, but do not wrong me or deny me any of my rights'.

So, do we always stay within the bounds and goals of our instincts? If you reflect on sexual instinct, for example, which some people boldly call a 'bestial instinct': Glory be to Allah, is that one not ashamed to wrong beasts

(1) The story of 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* with the killer of his brother who told him: 'only women weep out of love'

in this way, simply because they do not talk? Indeed, they understand this instinct far better than you do, for if a female has been fertilised by a male, they do not go near it and it does not let them near it once it is pregnant. Yet, you go to excesses in this instinct, indulging in it to a point way beyond its proper goal and wisdom. This person should refrain from saying such things because he is unjust to beasts by saying this; there are people who are far lower than beasts. What we have said about animal's instinct for sex could also be said about their instincts for food and drink.

So, the Creator *the Almighty* created instincts in you and did not restrain them and He gave them lawful outlets so that they could fulfil their roles in your life, surrounding them with a fence of moral responsibilities which direct them and govern them in order that they do not lead you astray. For example, He says about the instincts for food and drink, 'O children of Adam! Beautify yourselves for every act of worship and eat and drink [freely], but do not waste...' (*al-A'raf*: 31).

About the instinct for curiosity, He says, '...do not spy upon one another...' (*al-Hujurat*: 12). In this way, all your instincts have boundaries which you must not cross.

Therefore, when we spoke about the attributes of faith and the attributes of disbelief, we said that Allah *the Almighty* describes the believers as '...firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the truth, [yet] full of mercy towards one another...' (*al-Fath*: 29) because they put every instinct in its proper place, showing firmness to their enemies and mercy to their fellow believers; and they stop at this boundary and do not overturn its standards, adhering to the True Lord's, words: '...humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54).

It is as though the Creator wants us to be balanced with the norms of faith: the believer was not created to be humble all the time, nor to be proud all the time, but rather it is circumstance which puts him in the appropriate place. He is proud and haughty towards the disbelievers and humble and meek towards the believers.

A branch of this matter is the issue of responding to aggression if one is aggressed against; Allah says, '... Allah will help those who retaliate against

an aggressive act merely with its like and are then wronged again....' (*al-Hajj*: 60) The True Lord created the human soul and knows its tendencies and emotions well and therefore He permits you to respond in kind if you are transgressed against so that anger does not fester in your soul, which might result in something even worse than a response in kind. He allows you to respond in kind so that the issue will end there and not escalate; so if someone hits you, you may vent yourself by hitting them back. You have this right, but remember that it must be equal and it must be complete, as Allah *the Almighty* says elsewhere, 'Hence, if you have to respond to an attack [in argument], respond only to the extent of the attack levelled against you...' (*an-Nahl*: 126).

Yet can you gauge this equivalence and return the blow with an exactly equal one? Is your strength the same as his and is the degree of your reaction the same as his? If it should happen that you hit him harder than he hit you because of your anger, what will you do? Will you allow him to deal this extra amount back to you? Or will you be an aggressor and a wrongdoer? Therefore, why would you want to enter such a labyrinth, when you could simply forgive? As a matter of fact, when Allah *the Almighty* says, '...but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for [you, since Allah is with] those who are patient in adversity' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 126); this means that He gives you a way out of this awkward situation.

I previously told you the story of the Jewish usurer who said to someone who asked for a loan, 'I stipulate that if you are late in repaying the debt, I will take a pound of your flesh.' The time for repayment came and the debtor did not pay, so the creditor took him to court and told the judge what he had stipulated, so the judge said, 'Indeed you have the right to take a pound of his flesh, but with a single cut of the knife and if you take any more or less than a pound, we will take the difference from you.'

So, the issue of equivalence here is a way of putting an obstacle in the way of angry revenge and opening a door to the possibility of spiritual growth and advancement. Although the True Lord has permitted you to satisfy yourself by saying, 'But [remember that an attempt at] requiting evil may, too, become an evil...' (*ash-Shura*: 40), He also tells you not to forget forgiveness and tolerance: '...and [those who] hold in check their anger and pardon their fellow-men because Allah loves the doers of good.' (*Al-Imran*: 134)

Therefore, the verse in question reminds us of a spiritual principle which is: ‘...those who retaliate against an aggressive act merely with its like and are then wronged again...’ (*al-Hajj*: 60), kind for kind, ‘...retaliate... aggressive act merely...’ (*al-Hajj*: 60), this means that the other responds again after he has returned the enmity in kind and wrongs him and aggresses against him, ‘...Allah will most certainly succour him...’ (*al-Hajj*: 60), succour him against the aggressor who did not accept Allah’s law of equivalent retaliation.

Then Allah follows this herald of victory and succour by saying, ‘...Allah will help those who...’ (*al-Hajj*: 60), although it might be thought that the best attributes to complement succour would be ‘strong’ and ‘mighty’, as succour requires strength and might. But Allah *the Almighty* chose the attributes of pardon and forgiveness to draw the attention of the one who seeks requital to this possibility of spiritual growth and advancement; forgive, have mercy and pardon because your Lord pardons and forgives. He chose attributes which inspire the believer to have compassion for his fellow believer.

Moreover, have you never sinned against Allah? ‘...Allah is Pardoning and Most Forgiving.’ (*al-Hajj*: 60) As long as you desire that Allah should forgive you, then you should forgive His servants. When you forgive those who deserve to be punished, the result will be, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...lo! He between whom and yourself was enmity [may then become] as though he had [always] been close [unto you], a true friend!’ (*Fussilat*: 34) The True Lord wants to instil in us psychological purity and spiritual unity, so He gave you the chance to respond in kind to aggression to vent your anger and then, He called you instead to show pardon and forgiveness.

The True Lord *the Almighty* then says:

ذَٰلِكَ بِأَنَّ اللَّهَ يُؤَلِّجُ اللَّيْلَ فِي النَّهَارِ وَيُؤَلِّجُ
النَّهَارَ فِي اللَّيْلِ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٦١﴾

**So it will be, because God makes night pass into day, and
day into night, and He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing [61]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 61)**

The saying of Allah ‘So it will be’ means ‘What I said to you before has a proof’. What is this proof? It is that Allah takes from the weak and gives to

the strong and takes from the tall and gives to the short. It is not a predictable or mechanical matter, but rather, Allah created it with a certain measure. Night and day and the two containers in which all that you do is done; the True Lord says, ‘So it will be because Allah makes night pass into day, and day into night...’ (*al-Hajj*: 61). This makes the night grow longer, that is, He makes the night enter into the day, taking it away piece by piece so that the night becomes longer and the day shorter. Then He enters the day into the light, taking it away piece by piece so that the day becomes longer and the night shorter. Therefore, we see that they are not of the same length. For example, in winter the night is longer and the day shorter and in summer the day is longer and the night is shorter. One of them is always longer and the other is shorter and they are both constantly changing.

If even the containers of events are subject to vicissitudes, then the events themselves will also undergo change; when the container is large, the goodness it contains will be ample. We have our traditional measures and each of them takes as much contents as it has room for. In this way, as the containers of events get longer or shorter, the events they contain increase and decrease.

Allah *the Almighty* then ends the verse by saying, ‘... and He is All-Hearing and All-Seeing.’ (*al-Hajj*: 61) Allah *the Almighty* hears all that is said and sees all that is done. Speech is contrasted by deeds and they are both forms of action. Some people think that action is one thing and speech is another, but this is not the case because action means the function of a part of the body and the action of every body part is its proper function: the action of the eye is to see, the action of the ear is to hear, the action of the hand is to touch, the action of the nose is to smell and likewise the action of the tongue is to speak. Speech is for the tongue alone, whilst action is for the other body parts, yet they are all forms of action. That is why we always contrast speech with action, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...Why do you say one thing and do another?’ (*al-Baqara*: 61)

Hearing and sight are the two most fundamental human faculties and the basis of all the other senses, for they are always working, unlike the senses of smell or taste, for example, which only work a few times a day.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

ذَٰلِكَ يَٰأَيُّهَا اللَّهُ هُوَ الْحَقُّ وَأَيُّ مَا يَدْعُونَ مِنْ دُونِهِ هُوَ
الْبَاطِلُ وَأَيُّهَا اللَّهُ هُوَ الْعَلِيُّ الْكَبِيرُ ﴿٦٢﴾

So it will be, because it is God alone who is the Truth, and whatever else they invoke is sheer falsehood: it is God who is the Most High, the Most Great [62] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 62)

His saying ‘So it will be’ means ‘what was just said is something well-established, which We have done’ ‘because Allah alone who is the Truth’ (*al-Hajj*: 62). The truth is the firm thing which never changes; it goes without saying that everything besides Allah *the Almighty* changes. In addition, Allah *the Almighty* causes change, but does not undergo it Himself. Therefore, the people of deep knowledge say, ‘Allah does not change for you, but you must change for Him’.

As long as your Lord *the Almighty* is the Ultimate Truth which never changes and everything besides Him does change, then do not grieve; and if you are angry, then be content and if you are weeping, then smile and be at ease, for you are a subject of vicissitudes in a world of vicissitudes where nothing is constant. Therefore, if a man becomes angry when he suffers a reversal and says, ‘If only it had not happened!’, I say to him: ‘Do you want your life to be perfect? Things will inevitably befall you because you are subject to vicissitudes and even if you get to the top you will certainly have to come down again because you are constantly subject to vicissitudes and changing states – and only your Lord is eternally unchanging’.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘...and whatever else they invoke is sheer falsehood...’ (*al-Hajj*: 62). Everything that you invoke or worship besides Allah is sheer falsehood meaning that it withers away, as Allah *the Almighty* says elsewhere: ‘...for, behold, all falsehood is bound to wither away!’ (*al-Isra*: 81), i.e. it passes away and never remains. ‘...it is Allah who is the Most High, the Most Great.’ (*al-Hajj*: 62) Allah *the Almighty* is exalted in that all His creatures are beneath Him; and He is great in that all of His creatures are small.

One of His names is *Al-Kabir* (The Great) and we only say *Akbar* (Greatest) in the call to prayer and the opening of the prayer. Allah *the Almighty* is the Greatest because everything else but Him is small.

When He calls you and summons you to fulfil your obligation, He says, ‘Allah is the Greatest’ because the motions of your life and your daily needs are something which He considers great, important and worthy of attention, but although your livelihood is something great, Allah is even greater and your Lord takes you away from work to prayer and then calls you again back to work: ‘And when the prayer has ended, disperse freely on earth and seek to obtain [something] of Allah’s bounty...’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 10).

The True Lord *the Almighty* then says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَتُصْبِحُ الْأَرْضُ
مُخْضَرَّةً إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَطِيفٌ خَبِيرٌ ﴿٦٣﴾

**Have you [Prophet] not considered how God sends water
down from the sky and the next morning the earth becomes
green? God is truly most subtle, All-Aware [63]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 63)**

The expression ‘Have you [Prophet] not considered how...’ literally means ‘Do you not see’; if it is used for a physical thing which the eye can see, then it means that you did not see the thing and we are alerting you to it; and if it is used for something which cannot be seen by the eye, then it means ‘Have you [Prophet] not considered how...’; the reason we refer literally to sight rather than knowledge is to convey unto you that when Allah tells you something, this is even more reliable than what your eye tells you.

The meaning of ‘Have you [Prophet] not considered how...’ are both: ‘do you not know?’ and ‘Did you not see?’

‘Have you [Prophet] not considered how Allah sends water down from the sky...’ (*al-Hajj*: 63). This is a sign which you can see, but you can only see the outward superficial side of it: you see the water come falling from the sky – but how does this water come together in the sky? Why does it fall in this particular place? These are processes which you do not see. Allah’s

Power is Absolute; and one may reflect on what effort you would have to exert and the time you would have to expend in the processes of heating and condensation, just to gather a single cup's worth of evaporated water – and do you see all these processes going on when rain is formed?

So you have only seen the surface appearance of rain and therefore your Lord alerts your attention to all what goes on behind this appearance that you might reflect on it. Therefore, the Creator made water cover three-quarters of the earth's surface, for the increased surface area of water increases the amount of evaporation that Allah spreads over dry land. If you were to put a cup of water in your room and leave it for a month or two, you would find that its level would have decreased by perhaps a centimetre; but if you were to pour the water on the floor of the room, it would dry within minutes. So, the thinness of the water level increases the rate of evaporation; and on dry land, we need a large amount of fresh water for farming, drinking and so on and this can only be provided by a large amount of rainfall.

Allah *the Almighty* then speaks of what happens after the water falls from the sky: '...and the next morning the earth becomes green' (*al-Hajj*: 63). That is, after a short amount of time, it becomes green and verdant; He does not mention any human involvement in this process, for man does not plough, plant, or sow, but it is solely a matter of Allah's Power. But where did the seeds from which these plants were formed come from? And who planted them and sowed them? The seeds were in the earth, alive and lying in wait, safe from any harm, even as time passed. Allah was preserving them until the water came and allowed them to germinate, which they did. Therefore, we call these kinds of plants 'wild' because they grew by the power of Allah, without any human involvement.

The winds transferred these seeds from place to place, as He says, 'And We let loose the winds to fertilise [plants]...' (*al-Hajj*: 15). If you follow these seeds back from tree to tree, you will arrive back to the mother tree which the Creator created, before which there was neither tree nor seed. Therefore, it is narrated that Yusuf al-Njjar who used to look after Maryam (Mary) *peace be upon her* and watch over her– when he saw that she was with child and had no husband, he asked her respectfully: 'Maryam (Mary), has a

tree ever grown from no seed?’ She replied: ‘Indeed, the very first tree, which produced the very first seed.’

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...Allah is truly Most Subtle (*Latif*), All-Aware’. (*al-Hajj*: 63) Most Subtle means a precise handling of things. For example, when you want to thread a needle, you find that at first the thread will not pass through the needle’s eye and you try to make the end of the thread thinner and you twist it so that it will be thin enough to pass through the eye. After having been thick, the thread becomes fine and thin, which in Arabic would be called *latif*.

It is said that the finer something becomes, the more dangerous it is. People may imagine that the stronger something is, the bigger it is, but this is not correct, for in fact a thing becomes more dangerous the finer and more subtle it is. Do you not see how a microbe can assail a man and how we cannot sense its presence or feel any pain because it? This is because it is subtle and fine and it has a subtle way of entry which you cannot feel because it is so small that it cannot be seen by the naked eye.

How small and puny is a gnat, yet it can hurt you with a bite of its tiny proboscis which you can barely see. The smaller something is, the more caution you need to defend yourself from its danger. For example, if you want to build a house in a remote or empty place, you need to put iron bars on the windows to protect you from wild animals like wolves and then you need to install meshes to keep out the mice; and if you want to protect yourself from gnats and flies, you need an even finer mesh or screen. In this way, the smaller and subtler the thing is, the more caution it requires.

The thing which is *latif* (fine) enters other things subtly. In Arabic they call a person *latif al-madkhal* (a subtle manoeuvre) meaning that he behaves with each person in the way that suits them best and knows what everyone’s weak points are, that he might assail them from there, as though he has a skeleton key for men, with which he can open up any personality.

But, what do His words ‘...Allah is truly Most Subtle (*Latif*), All-Aware’ (*al-Hajj*: 63) have to do with what He said? Scholars say it is because the process of germination takes place by means of fine pores and capillaries

which emerge from the seed when it germinates, absorbing nutrients from the soil and these root capillaries require unfathomable wisdom and their absorption of the nutrients that each of them need requires awareness, as He says, '...[all] watered with the same water: and yet, some of them have We favoured above others by way of the food [which they provide for man and beast]...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 4).

So, the earth becomes green because of the True Lord's unfathomable Wisdom and because of His Awareness of how to deal with things; and therefore, He says after it: '...Most Subtle, All-Aware' (*al-Hajj*: 63) because of how delicate these root fibres are, we try to keep the level of water in the soil down because if it gets too high it will damage these capillaries and they will decay and die and the plants will become yellow and die.

The True Lord *the Almighty* then says:

لَهُ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ لَهُ الْغَنَى الْحَمِيدُ ﴿٦٤﴾

**Everything in the heavens and earth belongs to Him;
God alone is Self-Sufficient, worthy of all praise [64]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 64)**

So, all that is in the heavens and the earth are under Allah's dominion and yet the True Lord does not derive any benefit from them and He only created them to benefit His creatures and He has no need of any of them. With His attributes of perfection, Allah *the Almighty* created all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth and therefore He then says, '...Allah is Self-Sufficient, The Praiseworthy.' (*al-Hajj*: 64)

Allah's attributes of perfection already existed before He created the universe; He has possession of the heavens and the earth and of all they contain – He owns both the container and the contents. We do not own the heavens, or the earth, but we only own the good and beneficial things therein which Allah has given us. Allah *the Almighty* is Self-Sufficient and He has dominion over everything and He only gives unto us what He truly owns.

His statement, 'The Praiseworthy' (*al-Hajj*: 64) means that He is praised. So He is Self-Sufficient and praiseworthy because His Self-Sufficiency does

not benefit Him *the Almighty*, but benefits His creatures, so they praise Him for His Self-Sufficiency and they do not resent Him for it. It is amazing that the True Lord *the Almighty* allows His creatures to possess that which belongs to Him. Then if someone uses this blessing for its proper purpose and if someone gives the needy person some of the blessing which Allah gave him, Allah thanks him for it even though the blessing came from Him in the first place. This is because you are His servant and He brought you into existence and therefore He has undertaken to take care of you.

If the incapacitated person needs something from you, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Who is it that will offer up unto Allah a goodly loan...’ (*al-Baqara*: 24) He considers it a loan, although it belongs to Him, because He has given you possession of it and therefore would not take it from you, but rather takes it as a loan which He will repay with a goodly increase. He is Self-Sufficient and The Praiseworthy. The self-sufficient one is only praised if others can benefit from his self-sufficiency.

The True Lord *the Almighty* then says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُم مَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَالْفُلَّكَ تَجْرِي فِي الْبَحْرِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَيُمْسِكُ
السَّمَاءَ أَنْ تَقَعَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا بِإِذْنِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِالنَّاسِ لَرُءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٦٥﴾

**Have you not considered how God has made everything
on the earth of service to you? That ships sail the sea at His
command? That He keeps the heavens from falling down
on the earth without His permission? God is most
compassionate and most merciful to mankind [65]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 65)**

This verse is a continuation of the previous one; everything in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him *the Almighty*, but He has subdued it for the benefit of His creatures. If someone asks, ‘Why did He not give it to us and place it in our ownership?’, we answer ‘Because your Lord wants to reassure you that He will never give it to anyone and it will remain in Allah’s ownership so that you can benefit from it – and can you be sure that if Allah gave it to someone else, that person would not withhold it from you?’ Your best hope is that all dominion

continues to belong to Allah exclusively because He is your Lord and your Lord and He will never change on you and never refuse to benefit you.

He says, 'the ships sail the sea at His command.' (*al-Hajj*: 65) This means that ships sail through the sea by His command, and the wind sends them, i.e. ships wherever Allah commands it, as Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and in the change of the winds...' (*al-Baqara*: 164), no one but Allah *the Almighty* has the power to do this. In another verse, He says, 'If He so wills, He stills the wind and then they lie motionless on the sea's surface...' (*ash-Shura*: 33).

Reflect on the precision of the Quranic discourse which comes from Allah, who knows everything, past, present and future. Someone might say today, 'We no longer need the wind to move our ships or direct them because they now run on motors'. Indeed, ships today do run on motors, but the Arabic word *rih* means more than just 'wind'. *Rih* does not only mean this particular natural force which propels ships on the surface of the water; rather, it means 'power' in itself, whether it be wind, steam, electric, nuclear or whatever.

This is borne out by the fact that Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and do not [allow yourselves to] be at variance with one another, lest you lose heart and your moral strength (*rih*) desert you...' (*al-Anfal*: 46). That is, lest your power desert you, whatever this power might be; even the fisherman who goes out to sea in a little boat which he propels by means of oars, using the strength and power of his hands and muscles, does not fall outside this concept. Thus, we see that the meaning of the verse will continue to apply to every time and place, until the Last Hour.

And when the word *rih* is used in the singular, meaning 'wind' (rather than *riyah*, [winds]), it usually implies the occurrence of something evil and harmful, such as when Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And you have the same message in what happened to the tribe of `Ad, when We let loose against them that life-destroying wind' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 41), '...and your moral strength (*rih*) desert you...' (*al-Anfal*: 46) and when He says, '...Nay, but it is the very thing which you [so contemptuously] sought to hasten – a wind bearing grievous suffering.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 24) When it is given as *riyah* in the plural, 'winds', it usually means something good, as when He says, 'And We let loose the winds to fertilize [plants]...' (*al-Hijr*: 22).

I spoke before about the role wind plays in the stability and self-sustenance of things: the huge mountain which we see to be stable and firm is only firm because of the wind's effect on it and how the wind surrounds it on all sides; and if the air were to be removed from one side of the mountain, it would collapse. This is the concept upon which the bomb was designed: the air is what keeps buildings and blocks steady and firm because it surrounds them from all sides and they are balanced; and when the air is removed from one side of the building, it collapses.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, '...that He keeps the heavens from falling down on the earth without His permission?' (*al-Hajj*: 65) So the sky is held above us without any supports and nothing holds it up but Allah, by His Power and Sustenance so that it cannot fall upon the earth save by His leave, as He says in another verse, 'Verily, it is Allah [alone] who upholds the celestial bodies and the earth lest they deviate [from their orbits] – for if they should ever deviate, there is none that could uphold them after He will have ceased to do so...' (*Fatir*: 41).

'...Allah is Most Compassionate and Most Merciful to mankind.' (*al-Hajj*: 65) His attributes include Compassion and Grace; and a superficial understanding of these two attributes sees them to be one and the same, but they are two distinct attributes. Compassion is to remove pain and Grace is to increase blessings and the rule is that preventing harm always comes before bringing benefit. Your Lord is Compassionate with you by removing those things which give you pain and after this He brings you benefit by His Grace.

We explained this matter before by saying: Imagine that one person is about to throw a stone at you and another is about to throw an apple at you – which of them will you deal with first? Undoubtedly you will deal with the stone first and worry about defending yourself from its harm before you try to get the apple.

Therefore, He says, 'Now if Allah were to take men [immediately] to task for all the evil that they do [on Earth], He would not leave a single living creature upon its face. However, He grants them respite until a term set [by Him] ...' (*an-Nahl*: 61).

The True Lord *the Almighty* then says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَحْيَاكُمْ ثُمَّ يُمِيتُكُمْ ثُمَّ يُحْيِيكُمْ إِنَّ الْإِنْسَانَ لَكَفُورٌ ﴿٦٦﴾

**It is He who gave you [people] life, will cause you to die,
then will give you life again – but man is ungrateful [66]**

(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 66)

The True Lord reminds us here of some of His blessings and some of the processes which, if we studied them, we would find within them many blessings which Allah has granted us and we would never forget them. The first of these is: ‘it is He who gave you the life...’ (*al-Hajj*: 66). To give something life means to give it the power to fulfil the function for which it was created. The first life was given to Adam *peace be upon him* when his Lord created and formed him and then blew something of His Spirit into him. Then He brought us into being as Adam’s progeny.

His statement ‘will cause you to die’ (*al-Hajj*: 66) refers to that just as creation is a sign of Allah, so death too is a sign of Allah, which we can see and experience. As long as you believe in the signs of creation and death and you can see them and you do not doubt them, and then when Allah tells you that there will be another life after this, then believe it. This is because the owner of all these signs is One and the precursors in which you believe should lead to a conclusion in which you also believe – and the precursors are right there before you, plainly true.

Therefore, He then says, ‘then will give you the life again’ (*al-Hajj*: 66). The concept of raising to life is used to mean several different things in the Quran including the material life which is manifested by motion, eating and drinking and also the life in the Hereafter of which Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...Behold, the life in the hereafter is indeed the only [true] life: if they but knew this!’ (*al-Ankabut*: 64)

This is the true life because the life of this world is constantly in flux and man therein fluctuates between power and weakness, health and sickness, wealth and poverty youth and old age; and after this, it must end. As for the life of the Hereafter, which Allah *the Almighty* calls it ‘the only [true] life’, it is a life wherein there is neither fluctuation nor end. So you have two lives: a

life of your physical form, which moves, senses and lives; and another eternal life which will never end.

Therefore, the True Lord says, ‘O you who have attained to faith! Respond to the call of Allah and the Apostle whenever he calls you unto that which will give you the life...’ (*al-Anfal*: 24). The question is: how is this when we are already alive? The answer is that this does not mean the life of this material world which is subject to vicissitudes, but rather, it will give you true life in the Hereafter, the eternal unending life of which Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...Behold, the life in the hereafter is indeed the only [true] life: if they but knew this!’ (*al-Ankabut*: 64) That is, if they possessed the real knowledge which guides the one who possesses it.

If the material worldly life was made by the blowing of the spirit into man, then what is the nature of the second life of which Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...he calls you unto that which will give you the life...’ (*al-Anfal*: 24)

They say that this life will also involve *ruh* (a spirit), but not the same spirit as before, but the spirit of the Quran, of which Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And thus, too, [O Muhammad,] have We revealed unto you a life-giving message (*ruh*), [coming] at Our behest...’ (*ash-Shura*: 52). He also called the angel that brought the Quran down *ruh* in His saying, ‘Trustworthy divine inspiration (*ar-ruh*) has alighted with it from on high.’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193)

So, the second spirit, which gives you true immortal life is the guidance Allah conveyed in His Noble Book: if you follow it, you will attain this eternal life and enjoy therein what no eye has seen, nor ear heard nor human heart imagined and it will never be interrupted or withheld.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘but man is ungrateful (*kafir*)’ (*al-Hajj*: 66). *Kafir* is an emphatic form of the word *kafir* which means ‘ingrate’. The *kafir* is the one who does not acknowledge the blessings he receives from Allah, even though if he truly knew their nature he would never cease to give thanks to Him *the Almighty* who gave them.

Man goes through different stages between life and death, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘[Whereupon] they will exclaim, “O our Lord! Twice hast Thou caused us to die, just as twice Thou hast brought us to life! But now that we have

acknowledged our sins, is there any way out [of this second death]?" (Ghafir: 11) When will they say these words?

The scholars say that it will be on the Day of Resurrection. Allah brought them no life from the death of nonbeing and gave them life in this world and then caused them to die and then raised them to life again in the Hereafter; so there was a death before creation, then a death after creation and then they were brought forth again at the resurrection.

The words 'He who gave you [people] life' (*al-Hajj*: 66) are a claim made by the Creator and no one else has made this claim for himself. Despite the large numbers of disbelievers, atheists, and deniers who have existed at all times and in all places, we have never heard anyone claim to have created and this is something we should take a moment to consider: Why has no one ever claimed this? And if no one has ever claimed to create or give life, then who is it who creates, gives life and deals death?

If the people are concerned to chronicle those who invent certain inventions, for example, saying, 'The inventor of electricity was so-and-so and he lived in such-and-such place and he did this and studied there and found that', and so on – so what about the One Who created you and gave you the life, out of nothing? Especially since no one has ever laid claim to it, it is clear that this claim belongs to Allah Alone *the Almighty*.

The True Lord *the Almighty* then says

لِكُلِّ أُمَّةٍ جَعَلْنَا مَنْسَكًا هُمْ نَاسِكُوهُ فَلَا يُنْزِعُ عَنْكَ فِي
الْأَمْرِ وَاذْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ إِنَّكَ لَعَلَىٰ هُدًى مُّسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿١٧﴾

We have appointed acts of devotion for every community to observe, so do not let them argue with you [Prophet] about this matter. Call them to your Lord – you are on the right path [67] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 67)

The True Lord created Adam *peace be upon him* as His vicegerent on earth and gave him a test of his mission which was to follow Allah's Commandments and Prohibitions. He informed him of the enmity Satan bore towards him and

towards his progeny and warned him not to follow in Satan's footsteps. This test resulted in the descent of Adam *peace be upon him* from paradise to earth to go about his mission as Allah's vicegerent on earth, whilst always remembering his first experience with Satan. Allah subdued everything in existence to serve him and work for him.

Then Allah revealed unto him a way of guidance which he could follow to ensure the uprightness of his life and the lives of his progeny and He reminded him of the experience he had already undergone in paradise and what had happened when he disobeyed his Lord's guidance because of which his nakedness was revealed: '...and they began to cover themselves with pieced-together leaves from the garden...' (*al-A'raf*: 22).

Likewise, if you contravene this way of guidance in this world, your nakedness will be exposed. Therefore, whenever you see anything shameful exposed in society of any kind, whether societal, economic, or educational, know that one of Allah's laws has been ignored and so one of society's shameful matters has been exposed. This is because Allah's guidance provides the rules of maintenance which protect you and arrange your affairs so that you can fulfil your true purpose in life.

If you go home and find that one of your domestic appliances is not working properly, you know that it is broken, so you take it to the mechanic who specialises in the maintenance of this appliance. In the same way, if something in your life is not performing its function properly, then take it back to the One Who specialises in its maintenance: take it back to Allah and to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This judicious logic is acknowledged by all, believers and disbelievers alike: you return the product to its producer and to the one who knows the rules of its maintenance. No one has ever claimed to have created you, so when something within you malfunctions you must go to your Lord and Creator. Therefore, whenever something vexed the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he would go and stand in prayer⁽¹⁾ The statement 'Something vexed him' means that something was beyond his power and his mean. So, he would hasten to

(1) Narrated by Ahmad (vol. 388) and Abu Dawud (1319) on the authority of Hudhayfa

prayer to present himself to his Lord. So, if you find that something within you is not right, in any way, then all you have to do is perform ablution and stand before your Lord, so that He can fix whatever is broken within you.

If the mechanic fixes the appliance for you by material means, even with nothing but a little piece of wire, then your Lord is unseen and His treatment is also unseen and will come to you without your perceiving it.

Within the way of guidance which Allah established for the maintenance of His creatures, there are roots and there are branches: the root is that you believe in the One All-Powerful Allah and this is something over which none of the divinely-revealed messages has ever differed, as He says, 'In matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Nuh (Noah) – and into which We gave thee [O Muhammad] insight through revelation...' (*ash-Shura*: 13). So these roots are not differed upon by any religion. When people, however, were spread out all over the world, each community lived separately from the rest because of the large distances and the absence of the means of communication and connection which we have today. Mass communication applications have made the whole world like a single village: when something happens in the furthest east, you can see it and hear about it in the furthest west, at the very same time. As people lived in this isolation, people did not know about one another, to the extent that they were still discovering new continents only two hundred years ago.

The result of this isolation was that there were as many vices as there were communities and the messenger or prophet would come to deal with the vices of a particular community and would be sent to his own people alone: one would be sent to deal with the issue of dishonest weighing and measuring, another to deal with financial tyranny, another to deal with perversions of nature another to deal with tribal fanaticism etc.

As for the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* it came at a time when these disparate communities were beginning to encounter one another and his Message was meant for all people in all places. You find that the different messages of Musa (Moses), 'Isa (Jesus) and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon them all* share a common root, whilst their branches differ according to the different environments.

But since Allah knew that this isolation would come to an end and that these disparate environments would meet and come together so that their vices would be commonly shared, He sent the final Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to them all, for all times and places thenceforth.

And in this verse, He says, ‘We have appointed acts of devotion (*mansak*) for every community to observe...’ (*al-Hajj*: 67). That is, the True Lord *the Almighty* appointed ways of worship for all the communities to whom He sent messengers which were appropriate for their times because they were isolated from one another, as He says, ‘...Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 48).

The laws differ in their branches in a way which is appropriate to their time, place, and environment; as for virtues and doctrines, they are universal. Allah *the Almighty* is one in every revealed religion and lying is forbidden in every revealed religion and no prophet ever came forth to permit his people to lie.

Mansak (way of worship) means a religious form. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Say, “Behold, my prayer, and [all] my acts of worship (*nusuk*), and my living and my dying are for Allah [alone], the Lord of all the worlds.”’ (*al-An’am*: 162)

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘...so do not let them argue with you [Prophet] about this matter...’ (*al-Hajj*: 67) as if they say, ‘You are a messenger and we also follow a messenger who has his own way of guidance and law’. Indeed this is true, but this way of guidance is the seal of all others and has come to encompass and summarise all the laws which came before it and is suitable for all the new issues which may arise.

Therefore, the True Lord reassures Messenger Muhammad after this commandment: ‘call them to your Lord— you are on the right path’ (*al-Hajj*: 67). That is, rest assured that you are in the right and call unto your Lord; you are following the right way which will surely reach them. Even if they do not have faith in it, they will be forced to adopt it as a temporal law because of the events and problems of life; they will find nothing better than Allah’s law with which to govern, even if they do not believe in it.

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* was saying to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon Him* ‘Do not dispute with them and do not let them

draw you into dispute, but rather do what Allah commands you in the verse: 'Therefore declare openly what you are bidden and turn aside from the polytheists' (*al-Hijr*: 94). Turn away from those who argue with you and dispute the Message, for things will happen to them as a result of the evil they do and they will be forced to adopt your word and *Shari'a* (Islamic Law) to solve their problems.'

Allah calls this path the Right Path because it is He who has made it for you. It is a Path made by the Creator Who knows fully well all the dispositions of the human soul. It is made by He who has legislated for each disposition that which suits it best. Thus, the affairs of life will for sure force them to adopt the Law enacted by Allah to His vicegerent on earth.

He *the Almighty* then says:

وَإِنْ جَادَلُوكَ فَقُلِ اللَّهُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

**And if they argue with you, say, God is
well aware of what you are doing [68]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 68)**

The Arabic word *jidal* (argue) is derived from the word *jadl* which means to twist the fibres of a rope together to make it stronger. When a thin thread is twisted, it gets thicker, stronger, and shorter because its parts have grouped together. Similarly, to argue means to bolster something and make it stronger and likewise, an argument is an attempt to strengthen one's argument against one's adversary.

In the verse we are studying, Allah orders His Messenger Muhammad to say that He *the Almighty* is aware of what they are doing; however, He says in another verse: 'And have disputations with them in the best manner.' (*an-Nahl*: 125) Thus, Allah is saying that if they persist in arguing with you after you have dealt with them in the most kindly way, then say that Allah is well aware of what you are doing. This means 'refer them, O Prophet Muhammad back to Allah and seek His Judgement.

He says:

اللَّهُ يَحْكُمُ بَيْنَكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ فِيمَا كُنْتُمْ فِيهِ تَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٦٩﴾

On the Day of Resurrection, God will judge between you regarding your differences [69] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 69)

It is worth noting that Allah *Glorified is He* does not say ‘Allah will judge between you and us,’ as might have been expected since there are two parties involved in the argument. It is as though He *Glorified is He* is saying to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Leave them, for they will themselves continue to differ amongst themselves and will not remain disputing with you.’ That is because a dispute on a single topic is the result of the caprice of the soul, which, in turn, is the result of the desire for temporal power. Thus, rest yourself, for your Lord will judge between them regarding what they disputed.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَلَمْ تَعْلَمْ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ فِي كِتَابٍ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿٧٠﴾

Are you [Prophet] not aware that God knows all that is in the heavens and earth? All this is written in a Record; this is easy for God [70] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 70)

Allah Himself has attributed the knowledge of everything to Himself and no one else has claimed it. No one knows all that is in the heavens and the earth except Allah. This verse comes after that one which spoke about judgement of dispute, so perhaps someone might object and say, ‘As long as Allah has decreed laws to govern all the motions of life and all the Messengers have already conveyed them, what was the need for sending a Messenger to all mankind?’

We said that religion is of two kinds. The first does not change according to the Messengers, communities, and ages. This one includes the fixed general matters, i.e. the doctrines, principles, and virtues. The second, on the other hand, differs among the ages and communities, wherein each rule is appropriate for the given age and the given community.

Inasmuch as Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who will judge between the two sides, He said that He knows all that which occurs in the heavens as well as on the earth. This is to say that He *the Almighty* knows the outer and innermost nature of everything that exists and thus His Judgement is based on knowledge and awareness. Allah says that all this is written in a Record. The Knowledge is one thing and the Record is another. Thus, someone might ask, 'what is the point of that Record since Allah knows everything and He never errs or forgets?'

The scholars said that what is meant by the Record is the Preserved Tablet, which contains a record of everything as Allah says in another verse: 'Nay! Surely it is an admonishment. So let him who pleases mind it. In honoured books, exalted, purified, in the hands of scribes' (*'Abasa*: 11-15). The Quran itself is included inside that record, as Allah says: 'Nay! It is a glorious Quran, in a guarded tablet.' (*al-Buruj*: 21-22)

In addition, He *the Almighty* says: 'Allah makes to pass away and establishes what He pleases, and with Him is the basis of the Book.' (*al-An'am*: 59) He also says: 'And with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures—none knows them but He; and He knows what is in the land and the sea, and there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but [it is all] in a clear book.' (*al-An'am*: 59)

Thus, the reason this record is needed is to show you and to show the observing angels that everything which will happen in the future has been recorded by Allah since before time began. The fact that it comes in the future just as Allah has recorded it is proof of His Ultimate Knowledge. Writing something before it happens and its exact occurrence in the way it has been written is the ultimate proof of the knowledge and encompassment of that thing on the part of the writer. Thus, writing this record is not to help Allah in any way, but to offer evidence against you and it will be said to you: 'Read your book; your own self is sufficient as a reckoner against you this day.' (*al-Isra'*: 14) Here is your chronicle and here is your story. It is not an invention of us, but it is your own deeds; it is proof against you.

The Knowledge of Allah that encompasses that which is in the heaven and earth indicates a promise and a warning at the same time. This is one of the wonders of the Quranic discourse. The Quran gives something and its

opposite at the same time. How is that? Suppose that you have two children and one of them wronged the other in your absence. They rush to you to complain one about the other, when you came home. You then say to them, ‘Be quiet, both of you. I know what happened and I will give each of you what he deserves based on what I know.’ Doubtless, the innocent one will rejoice and smile, while the guilty will be fearful and grow pale.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* knows everything in the heavens and the earth, and His Encompassing Knowledge is a promise to the righteous and a warning to the wicked.

He *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَمْ يَنْزِلْ بِهِ سُلْطَانًا وَمَا
لَيْسَ لَهُمْ بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَمَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ مِن نَّصِيرٍ ﴿٧١﴾

**Yet beside God they serve that for which He has sent
no authority and of which they have no knowledge:
the evildoers will have no one to help them[71]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 71)**

It is as though worship, i.e. obeying the commandments and refraining from prohibitions must be determined by a superior being. None of us have the right to make laws for another, commanding him to do something or even forbidding him from doing another. A commandment that comes from your equal counterpart does not outweigh another and thereby you can say, ‘Why should you command and I obey?’ However, if the command comes from a higher being than you, you obey without any objection and your rationale for doing so is that the command came from a higher being. You say, ‘My father told me to do such and such a thing or My Lord commanded me to do such and such a thing or forbade me from doing such and such a thing.’

Thus, the origin of every instruction to do or refrain from must be originated by Allah, for He is a higher being than you or me. If I acquiesce to His Commands and Prohibitions, this does not inconvenience or harm me because I have not yielded to an equal, but rather to Allah Who is our only Lord, and thus there is no shame in following His Judgements. Therefore, a

parable of the country goes: 'If the Sacred Law cuts off your finger, it does not bleed.' Why not? Because it is not you who cut it off, but Allah. Thus, there is no tyranny or abuse of power on the part of anyone and there is no shame or humiliation for anyone.

Allah *Glorified is He* said that they serve beside Him that for which He has sent no authority. This means that they worship other beings instead of Allah. The authority is either an authority of force or that of a strong argument. To have an authority of force means to force and compel someone to do what he does not want to, while the authority of argument is to convince someone by means of argumentation to do something based on his own free will. On the other hand, these false Gods which they worship besides Allah do not have any authority of force nor of argument. Therefore, Satan argues on the Day of Resurrection with those who followed him saying: 'And I had no authority over you, except that I called you and you obeyed Me.' (*Ibrahim*: 22) Satan is proclaiming that they, i.e. the deniers of the Truth paid heed and responded to him while he had neither any authority or power to force them to commit sins, nor an argument to convince them to do so.

In addition, Allah said that they serve that of which they had no knowledge. This is the deduction (of the disbelievers) which deduces laws from the overall Revelation sent down by Allah *Glorified is He*. This is the knowledge about which Allah says: 'If they had referred it to the Messenger and to those in authority among them, those among them who can search out the knowledge of it would have known it.' (*an-Nisa*': 83) This verse speaks about the people of knowledge. Thus, worship must be based on a clear and unambiguous authority from Allah, or otherwise from the reason-based deduction of the people of knowledge.

Moreover, He *Glorified is He* said that the evildoers will have no one to help them. Allah did not say that they shall not be helped nor did He affirm their defeat because this is something unquestionable; rather, He states that no one shall even attempt to help them. They will not triumph and will not be given succour. No one attempts to give succour to another unless the one he succours is weak.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذَا تُلِيَتْ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتُنَا بَيِّنَاتٍ تَعْرِفُ فِي وُجُوهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا الْمُنْكَرَ
يَكَادُونَ يَسْطُونَ بِالَّذِينَ يَتْلُونَ عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا قُلْ أَفَأَنْتُمْ بِشِرِّ
مِنْ ذَلِكَُمُ النَّارِ وَعَدَهَا اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَيَسَّ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٧٢﴾

[Prophet], you can see the hostility on the faces of the disbelievers when Our messages are recited clearly to them: it is almost as if they are going to attack those who recite Our messages to them. Say, ‘Shall I tell you what is far worse than what you feel now? The Fire that God has promised the disbelievers! What a dismal end!’ [72] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 72)

This verse depicts the state of the disbelievers when they hear the Book of Allah from Prophet Muhammad or his Companions. When they hear it, you can see hostility on their faces. You can recognise the hatred on their faces in the form of frowns, scowls, anger, and emotional reaction. They hate what they hear and their emotion almost turns into an angry physical reaction against the one who recites the Quran. This is because of the evil and grudge they harbour against that to which they listen.

Therefore, Allah said that they were almost going to attack those who recite the Messages to them. They were about to assault and assail them because the emotions that their souls are filled with are first shown on their faces as a reaction to what they would like to do and are then translated into physical actions of assault and attack.

Allah tells Prophet Muhammad to ask them in response to that, ‘What makes you so angry that you attack us and hate what we read to you from the Book of Allah?’ The rage and hostility they showed when they heard the Quran demonstrated that they did not have the ability to answer with arguments, therefore they sank into rage and hatred.

Therefore, Allah directs a question to them saying: ‘Say, ‘Shall I tell you what is far worse than what you feel now?’ (*al-Hajj*: 72) He tells Prophet Muhammad to ask them why they are so enraged by the verses of the Quran and filled with such hatred while things are still easy. Has merely hearing these verses done all this to you?! What would you do when you enter hell in the Hereafter? The thing that you thought to be evil and which enraged and

caused you to attack us is a simple matter, for there is something far worse awaiting you in the Hereafter, which is the Fire.

In this vein, it is narrated that Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* left the chieftains of Quraysh standing at the door and pushed the weak believers inside first, whereupon those chieftains were angry at this and turned up their noses. Abu Bakr wondered if they got angry because He put the weak ahead of them. He said, 'What would you do when Allah admits them into paradise ahead of you?'

Allah *Glorified is He* said that He has promised the disbelievers the fire. Although a promise usually refers to something good, it is used here ironically to scorn and belittle them, as He says elsewhere: 'So give them news of a painful torment.' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 24) They expect to hear some good news; however, they are struck with the news of torment and thereby become worse for them. Another example of this irony is clear when Allah says that the disbelievers will be begging for water and they shall be answered but with a spoiling water; He *the Almighty* says: 'And if they cry for water, they shall be given water like molten brass which will scald their faces' (*al-Kahf*: 29). That is because the despair and disappointment of the soul after it had expected something pleasant cause it to suffer even more. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* ends the verse saying: 'What a dismal end!' (*al-Hajj*: 72) This means that their final end and destination shall be evil indeed. He *the Almighty* then says:

يَتَأْتِيهَا النَّاسُ ضُرْبَ مَثَلٍ فَاَسْتَمِعُوا لَهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ تَدْعُونَ
مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَنْ يَخْلُقُوا ذُبَابًا وَلَوْ اجْتَمَعُوا لَهُ وَإِنْ يَسْلُبْهُمُ الذُّبَابُ
شَيْئًا لَا يَسْتَفِيدُوا مِنْهُ ضَعُفَ الطَّالِبُ وَالْمَطْلُوبُ ﴿٧٣﴾

People, here is an illustration, so listen carefully: those you call on beside God could not, even if they combined all their forces, create a fly, and if a fly took something away from them, they would not be able to retrieve it. How feeble are the petitioners and how feeble are those they petition! [73] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 73)

Allah *Glorified is He* gives a parable saying *duriba Mathal* which is the passive form of the verb *daraba* (strike), i.e. to hit one thing against another forcefully. It is also used with the meaning of minting a coin with a known value.

To give an example means to liken something unknown to another which is known, striking, and noticeable so that it attaches to the mind. For example, we might describe someone you have never seen by comparing him to someone you know, saying, ‘He is like so and so a person.’ That is to say that you do so in order to make your addressee recognise the attributes of that person in question.

There are many examples of this in the Quran. Allah says: ‘Their parable is like the parable of one who kindled a fire but when it had illumined all around him, Allah took away their light, and left them in utter darkness—they do not see’ (*al-Baqara*: 17). He also says: ‘so his parable is as the parable of the dog; if you attack him he lolls out his tongue; and if you leave him alone he lolls out his tongue; this is the parable of the people who reject Our Communications; therefore relate the narrative that they may reflect’ (*al-A’raf*: 176). Moreover, He *the Almighty* says: ‘The parable of those who take guardians besides Allah is as the parable of the spider that makes for itself a house; and most surely the frailest of the houses is the spider’s house did they but know’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 41).

So, giving examples is a way to convey information about something unknown by using something known as a basis. In addition, an example is characterised by eloquence and conciseness, so that it can be passed around quickly because it contains only a few words. For example, you say to a pupil who is lazy and negligent all the year and does not study frantically except when exams approach, ‘Fill your quiver before you shoot.’ This means that you must first fill your quiver with your arrows before going hunting. This is a parable which is said to illustrate the importance of being well prepared for something before its time comes.

Another parable of the Egyptian country folk is ‘Get your bread from the baker, even if he eats half of it.’ This parable is told to those who get things from those who do not specialise in them. It is also said about the one who is negligent in that thing in which he is supposed to be skilled, ‘The carpenter’s door is out of joint!’ Moreover, when you send someone to do something for you and he does it successfully and brings you back the result you were hoping for, he says, ‘The churning has brought forth butter’; churning means to turn milk in a churn to separate the butter from the milk.

In this way, a parable is a concise and eloquent phrase which was said at a particular time, and thus people begin to use it in similar situations because of its beauty and eloquence. A parable keeps its original wording and never changes. It keeps its form of gender and number as well. Why is that? That is because the parable was said at a particular instance at the first place and thereby keeps the same form and the same name, to whomever it is addressed.

Allah *Glorified is He* sets forth a parable to you and orders you to bear it in mind, pay attention and listen well to it and strive to understand it because it will help you with your relations with Prophet Muhammad and the believers. It is addressed to all mankind and does not single out anyone in particular. Allah says: 'People, here is an illustration, so listen carefully.' (*al-Hajj*: 73) He does not call out for the believers, because this parable is addressed to the disbelievers since the believers do not need it. In addition, He orders us to listen carefully to it and understand its meaning and its implication so that we conduct ourselves according to its teachings and according to our understanding of its meaning.

So what is this parable? Allah says: 'Those you call on beside Allah could not, even if they combined all their forces, create a fly.' (*al-Hajj*: 73) This tells that those whom they worship and turn to instead of Allah cannot create the smallest of creatures, i.e. a fly even were they to join all their forces and work together, not individually to that end. This is a bolder challenge, for it increases the power of the opponent.

The Quran also increased the boldness of its challenge to the Arabs. First of all, it challenged them to produce the like of the Quran and it then challenged them to produce the like of ten chapters because the entire Quran was too much for them. However, they could not; so it challenged them to produce the like of a single chapter, but they could not. The Quran issued an even bolder challenge and told them to gather all of their most eloquent and articulate people and all the jinn as well to help them, yet stressing meanwhile that they will still not be able to do so. Allah says: 'Say: If men and jinn should combine together to bring the like of this Quran, they could not bring the like of it.' (*al-Isra'*: 88)

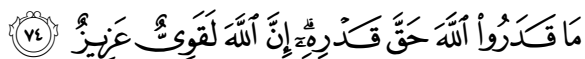
Allah says that they will not create a fly, using the future tense in Arabic. This means that this negation is perpetual for all time. They could not do it in the past and they will never be able to do it in the future. Thus, no one of them imagines that they will one day in the future be able to do this. Allah negates the act in perpetuity in this way because you might refrain from doing something even though you are able to do it, however if you are challenged to do it, you will do it to answer this challenge. So He *Glorified is He* made it clear to them that they could not do it before and will never be able to do it after He challenged them.

Someone might say that the matter of creating a fly is a big challenge that no one could meet. Thus, Allah challenged them to do something easier than actually creating it, namely; retrieving what a fly has took away from them. Can anyone take back the food which a fly takes from them on its wings, feet or snout?

The disbelievers used to make sacrifices before their idols and place the meat before them to bless it. The blood would flow and stain them. The flies would come buzzing around it and take from it on their slender wings, feet, and snouts. Thus, He *the Almighty* challenged them to get back from them what they had taken and this would be easier than creating a fly. One can try this himself. If a fly lands on some honey before you, it will inevitably take a little bit of it even if only an imperceptible amount. Can you take hold of the fly and retrieve what it took from you?

Therefore, Allah said that the petitioners and that they petition are feeble. The fly itself is weak and they are also weak as evident in the fact that they cannot even do this. However, it is notable that there are those who are weak but claim to be strong on one side and there are those who are weak but their strength lays in their acknowledge of their own weakness. Although the fly is weak, Allah says about it: ‘Surely Allah is not ashamed to set forth any parable—[that of] a gnat or anything above that.’ (*al-Baqara*: 26) That is, He *the Almighty* is not ashamed to set forth any parable for something of an even smaller size, not something bigger like a bird, for example.

Then He *Glorified is He* says:



**They have no grasp of God's true measure: God is truly
most strong and mighty [74] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 74)**

This verse tells that those disbelievers who worship false deities besides Allah, cannot create a fly or even retrieve from it what it has taken from them, and thus they, i.e. those disbelievers have no true understanding of Allah. If they had had, they would not have worshipped anything else besides Him *the Almighty*.

We observed that the measures of things differ according to what you are measuring and what you want to know. Length, for example, has its own units of measurement, but these units differ according to the nature of the thing being measured. If you want to measure the distance between Cairo and Alexandria, for example, you do not use millimetres, centimetres or even metres, but you use kilometres. When you want to buy a piece of fabric, you measure it in metres but a photograph picture is measured in centimetres.

Thus, everything has its own measure and dimension. If you want to know the distance, you measure the length, and if you want to know the space of an area, you measure the length and the width, while if you want to know the volume, you measure the length, width, and height. Length is measured in metres, area in metres squared and volume in metres cubed. Likewise, weight is measured in kilos, pounds, grams and so on.

In addition, the same verb used to indicate the measure of something can also mean to straighten as Allah says: 'But when He tries him [differently], then straitens to him his means of subsistence.' (*al-Fajr*: 16) Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'And whoever has his means of subsistence straitened to him, let him spend out of that which Allah has given him.' (*at-Talaq*: 7)

Moreover, just as the material things are measured, so are immaterial things. For example, you speak about material increase by saying that so and so a person has grown up, meaning that he has become a mature man and grown taller. As for immaterial measure, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'a grievous word it is that comes out of their mouths' (*al-Kahf*: 5). This means that their word that 'Allah has taken a son' is grave.

Allah *Glorified is He* is not a material being, for He is beyond material. Thus, the meaning of measure in His regard is the magnificence of His Attributes of Perfection. They, i.e. the disbelievers have no grasp of His true measure and have not duly magnified Him. They do not know His true measure, for if they knew it, they would not worship anything else instead of Him and they would not worship alongside Him these false gods that cannot create a fly or even claim back what it takes from them. How could they think that these false gods are equal to Allah and compare them to Him? If they truly knew Allah's Worth, they would be ashamed to do any of this.

Then Allah ends the verse by saying that He is Most Strong and Mighty. What do these two attributes have to do with what have come before? Scholars observe that Allah *Glorified is He* said in the preceding parable about those who preferred to worship idols than Him that they are both feeble. Thus, in contrast with this weakness, He said that He is Most Powerful and thus More Powerful than the worshippers. Allah does not need their worship and He is More Powerful than the idols they worship, for He could destroy them if He willed. In as much as you have turned away from worshipping Allah and preferred to worship other than Him, this is a prejudice. Thus, it is as though there is a battle being waged and if this is the case, Allah is Almighty and cannot be defeated.

The same words indicating that they have no grasp of Allah's true measure occur in several places in the Book of Allah. Allah says: 'They have no grasp of Allah's true measure when they say, "Allah has sent nothing down to a mere mortal"' (*al-An'am*: 91). They had no true grasp of Allah because they accused Him of imperfection, yet He is Perfectly Just. How could He oblige His servants to worship Him without sending Messengers to them? He is the One Who says: 'Nor do We chastise until We raise a Messenger.' (*al-Isra'*: 15) Thus, when they say that Allah has revealed nothing unto a mortal, it is as though they are asserting that Allah *Glorified is He* punishes people without conveying anything to them. In response to this, He *the Almighty* says: 'Say, "Who was it who sent down the Scripture, which Moses brought"' (*al-An'am*: 91).

In another verse, He says: 'These people have no grasp of Allah's true measure. On the Day of Resurrection, the whole earth will be in His grip. The heavens will be rolled up in His right hand' (*al-'Ankabut*: 67).

One can either give something its true measure or simply estimate its measure, yet measurements differ as for both. For example, you might look at a room and say that it is around 4 by 5, which is an approximate measure. However, if you actually take measurements and measure the room accurately, it might be larger or smaller than this. In the first case, you estimated its measure, whilst in the second case you gave it its true measure. In this regard, when you want to grasp a true measure of Allah's Power and Perfection, you understand them according to the full capacity of the human mind.

What we have already said about the knowledge of certainty, vision of certainty and truth of certainty is related to this. In addition, when Allah revealed the verse that reads: 'You who believe, be mindful of Allah, as is His due' (*Al-'Imran*: 102), some of the Companions said, 'And who can do this?' It is difficult to be as perfectly mindful of Allah as He truly deserves. Therefore, Allah revealed: 'therefore be careful of [your duty to] Allah as much as you can' (*at-Taghabun*: 16), and: 'Allah does not impose upon any soul a duty but to the extent of its ability...' (*al-Baqara*: 286).

Moreover, Prophet Muhammad used to praise Allah and say, 'Exalted are You. We cannot praise You enough. You are as You have praised Yourself.'⁽¹⁾ Why is that? That is because no one, no matter how much eloquence he has been given, has the ability to duly praise Allah. Allah, out of His Mercy to His servants, has excused them from having to do this, for He has praised Himself and taught us how to praise Him. When an eloquent person speaks and praises Allah, he does so using the rhetoric praises and phrases. The ineloquent person who does not speak well, on the other hand, can rest assured when he praises his Lord with words of praise which He taught to him, for the expressions said by a philosopher are not different from those made by a shepherd.

(1) Narrated by Ahmad and Muslim

Had Allah not taught us the phrase of praising Him in the chapter of *al-Fatiha*, i.e. ‘All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds’ (*al-Fatiha*: 2), we would not know how to say this. Thus, Allah’s teaching the words of praise to His servants is itself a blessing which merits praise. In addition, praise itself merits praise and so on in an unending chain. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* is constantly being praised and the servant is constantly praising.

He *Glorified is He* spoke about the matter of divinity and the Attributes of Absolute Perfection, which befit it and warned us not to add to them anything that is not appropriate, which is the pinnacle of all doctrine. Thus, since we must believe in the matter of divinity with such purity and cleanse our faith of all adulterants, we must be informed about this divine power in which we believe. The way we are informed about this is by the sending of Messengers.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

اللَّهُ يَصْطَفِي مِنَ الْمَلَائِكَةِ رُسُلًا وَمِنَ النَّاسِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ سَمِيعٌ بَصِيرٌ ﴿٧٥﴾

**God chooses messengers from among the angels
and from among men. God is all hearing, all
seeing [75] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 75)**

Therefore, the second stage of faith, after believing in the pinnacle of doctrine is to believe in the Messengers. To choose means to elect the best of a large group. Choosing few from many indicates that they are the elite and the best. In addition, the act of choosing differs according to the selector; if the selector is Allah, then He will certainly choose the best of the best.

The selection pervades the entire universe. Allah chooses Messengers from the angels, men at certain times and for certain places. He singled out the month of *Ramadan* from time and the *Ka’ba* from the places. However, He *Glorified is He* did not make this selection simply in order to single out the ones He chose above everyone else, but rather so that the beauty of this selection would spread to all the creatures. When He chose *Ramadan* out of all other time, He did not do this simply in order to single out *Ramadan*, but rather, He did it so that you could recharge your spirit’s strength and purify it for all the other days of the year, and so you could benefit from the righteous deeds you do therein.

Moreover, a single choice might be repeated with a different focus. Therefore, the orientalist have objected to Allah's Words 'And when the angels said, "O Maryam! Surely Allah has chosen you and purified you and chosen you above the women of the world"''. (*Al- 'Imran*: 42) They wondered why the act of choosing is repeated here. However, if we reflect on the verse, we will see that there is a difference between the first selection and the second. As for the first, it means that He chose her to be a pious worshipper and to seclude herself in her niche to invoke Allah, whilst the second one was an election above all the women of the world by conceiving a child without a father. So the focus of the election was different in each instance.

Concerning the matter of choosing the angels, it is divided into those who are chosen and those from whom they are chosen. In another verse, Allah says: 'The Maker of the angels [as] messengers.' (*Fatir*: 1) That is, they all have messages to bear to worlds other than ours. However, as for the verse we are examining now, it refers to the angels who have a connection to man such as Jibril (Gabriel), Mikael (Michael), Israfil (Uriel) and the recording and protecting angels. They are solely occupied with this and do not know anything about this creation. They are the exalted angels, of whom Allah spoke when He said to Satan: 'Are you proud or are you of the exalted ones?' (*Sad*: 75) That is, those who were not included in the command to prostrate because they had another purpose.

Allah ends the verse saying that He is all hearing and all seeing. Hearing is connected to sounds, while sight has to do with deeds. They are the basis of all other senses. When Allah *Glorified is He* says that He is all hearing and all seeing, He is telling us that His Messengers would encounter words that would hurt and mock them. Additionally, He knows for certain they would be barred from making their call. Thus, let this be known to them and not dishearten them, for He *the Almighty* is with them, hears all that is said, and sees all that is done as they are beneath His Hearing, His Sight and His Ken.

Then Allah says:

يَعْلَمُ مَا بَيْنَ أَيْدِيهِمْ وَمَا خَلْفَهُمْ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ تُرْجَعُ الْأُمُورُ ﴿٧٦﴾

He knows what lies before and behind them.

All matters return to Him [76] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 76)

Allah knows that which lies before and behind them. Whatever a man does, Allah's Knowledge encompasses it. Therefore, all matters return to Him and all things will in the end go back to Him. He did not create His creatures just to leave them alone, but rather for a wise reason. He destined an end for them wherein each would be accountable for his deeds. Those who strive, work for the Sake of Allah's call and bear the hardships of aiding Prophet Muhammad will be rewarded for that. Those who oppose them and stand in their way, whether by insulting words and mocking taunts or by actions that obstruct their call will also get the punishment they deserve.

Allah *Glorified is He* after speaking to us about matters of divinity and the Messengers who conveyed His Message, told us about the way of guidance which they would convey and deliver to bring order to our life's motions. This way of guidance is outlined by Do's and Don'ts. Here, we stress that the commandments and prohibitions do not cover every aspect of life's motions. A limited number of things are governed either by commandments or by prohibitions, and everything else is simply allowed. Allah issued commandments and prohibitions for those basic things which protect the motions of life from passions and caprices and left everything else up to our own choice, and thus you may do with them whatever you wish.

Therefore, we see that the scholars speculate and differ over those things which Allah has left for us. If Allah had willed, He could have sent down clear rulings for each of them about which no one would differ. Thus, you might ask, 'Why did Allah *Glorified is He* leave these things up to conflicts, different views, and disputes that would erupt about them?' Scholars say that this was actually the Will of Allah. He created man to be subdued in some aspects and free in others. People can let a scholar strive to reach whatever opinion he feels best and then accept that what he says is true whilst rejecting the opinion of another as false. That is because if Allah wanted it to be only one-way, He would have said so but He left it to be subject to scholars personal reasoning.

Thus, He wanted these different opinions to exist because just as man is compelled in many natural matters and free in other matters, the same is true in the case of moral responsibility. Man is compelled in those matters wherein if he strayed away from, the entire world would corrupt, yet he has free choice in other matters, which are both correct to do or to leave.

Allah *Glorified is He* says about this way of guidance:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا ارْكَعُوا وَاسْجُدُوا وَاعْبُدُوا رَبَّكُمْ
وَفَعَلُوا الْخَيْرَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

**Believers, bow down, prostrate yourselves, worship
your Lord, and do good so that you may succeed [77]
(The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 77)**

The call previously given by Allah while speaking about the parable was meant to address all mankind because He *the Almighty* wanted to alert the idol-worshippers to this parable and make them hear it, However, here He is speaking about a way of guidance and a constitution given especially to those who have attained to faith. That is because He only issues rulings to those who believe in Him, and thus those who disbelieve are not worthy of bearing this trust. Thus, He leaves them and does not give order to their lives. As we said before, the traffic policeman helps those who seek his aid and trust him and he directs and guides them, but if someone doubts his words or demeans him, he leaves them to get lost.

Thus, when your Lord calls you to do something, know that the context differs from the one to the other, such as when He says: ‘O you who believe! Believe.’ (*an-Nisa*: 136) Some of those people who only understand the superficial outward meaning of the Words of Allah have objected to this verse and wondered how Allah addresses them as those who have faith and then command them to have faith. The scholars answer this by saying that the meaning is that ‘O you who have attained to faith before you hear this new ruling, hold fast to your faith once you hear the new ruling and continue to have faith.’ Thus, if you require something of someone who already does it, then the meaning is that you are asking him to keep doing it.

Moreover, there is a difference between believing in a ruling and actually implementing it. You might believe that the ruling is truly from Allah and do not doubt or dispute it, yet you might not apply it or you might disobey it. For example, Allah says about pilgrimage: ‘And pilgrimage to the House is incumbent upon men for the sake of Allah, [upon] everyone who is able to undertake the journey to it and whoever disbelieves,’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 97) All the servants of Allah have to undertake the pilgrimage to the Sacred House but after meeting the essential condition of being able to undertake it, for there can be no responsibility without ability. However, Allah, after mentioning the condition, speaks of those who disbelieve. Does this mean that those who do not make the pilgrimage are disbelievers? No, it does not. That is because the meaning is that all people must believe that they owe Allah a duty of believing that they must make the pilgrimage to the Sacred House. Whoever believes this to be true is a believer, but as for whether he will actually undertake it or not, this is another matter.

The first legal responsibility Allah speaks about in the verse under discussion is prayer. In spite of the fact that Messengers brought many responsibilities from Allah, He *the Almighty* singles out prayer because it is the responsibility which is repeated five times every day, whilst the other responsibilities are seasonal. Fasting is done for one month out of the year; pilgrimage is made once in a lifetime for those who are able to undertake it and alms giving is paid one time for those who have enough to pay it or once they have held the minimum amount for one full year.

Thus, the obligation of the prayer is not like any other obligation and therefore Prophet Muhammad singled it out by saying, ‘That which differentiates us from the disbelievers is our performance of *salat* (prayer) He who abandons it is a disbeliever.’⁽¹⁾ And He also said, ‘Prayer is the buttress of the religion.’⁽²⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* ordained the obligation of the performance of the prayers in a unique way. It was the only obligation to be given directly, whilst the others were given by means of Revelation. We gave an example of this

(1) Narrated by *At-Tirmidhi* and *An-Nasa'i*

(2) Narrated by *Al-Bayhaqi* and *Ad-Daylimi*, some scholars say it is a weak narration

before, Allah is beyond compare, and said that your boss could send you a memo with instructions on it, but if it is more important, he calls you over the phone and tells you what he wants in person. If it is even more important than that and comes from a higher department, he asks you to come here and gives it to you directly. In this way, rules are laid down according to the degree of their importance.

Prayer was not given through Revelation as the other obligations were, but it came directly from Allah. That is because it would be a connection between the servant and his Lord, and therefore He wanted to free it of all intermediaries. Allah further singled it out from all other responsibilities by making it an obligation which has to be always observed no matter what. A believer might be poor and does not have to pay the *zakat* (obligatory alms) One might be unable to do the pilgrimage or unable to fast because of travel or sickness. Nevertheless, you are not exempted from performing the prayers for any reason. If you cannot stand up, you pray sitting, reclining, or lying down, making gestures to indicate your bows and prostrations, or even simply making the motions of prayer in your heart. The point is that you are always remembering your Lord, connected to Him and no time passes except He is always on your mind.

We said before mentioning the Name of Allah through calling for prayer and the announcement for its start is going on at all times, without ever stopping. When you pray the dawn prayer, for example, someone elsewhere is praying the midday prayer. When you bow, someone elsewhere is prostrating. When you say, 'In the Name of Allah, the All Merciful, the Giver of Mercy', someone else is saying 'All praise is due to Allah, Lord of all the worlds.' Thus, it is constant intertwined worship which is never interrupted. One of those people who was endowed with deep knowledge addressed the time saying that a bit of time is all time. He meant that in every piece of time, all time is contained. In this way, the entire world runs with the worship of Allah and never ceases.

Allah singled out from prayer the acts of bowing and prostrating because they are the two most prominent actions of it, since bowing and prostrating are specific actions which both a believer and a hypocrite perform. The

hypocrites were even the first people to reach the front rows of the prayer, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to distinguish that one from the other. Thus, He ordered to worship Him afterwards.

What matters is not the actions of bowing and prostrating, but your dedication of these actions to your Lord and your sincere intention for Allah alone. Otherwise, the prayer becomes mere actions like a physical exercise as some like to put it. Some people say that the prayer contains physical exercises in which the whole body works; indeed it is but an act of worship. An act of worship means to do something because Allah commanded you to do it.

Next, Allah orders to do good so that we may succeed. The word good is a general word which encompasses all the commandments of the religion. It is mentioned alongside prayer to convey a general principle, for everything that is necessary to fulfil an obligation is itself obligatory. Thus, good refers to all the good things which the teachings of the way of guidance establish for society. The way of guidance is only meant to order the motions of life in a way which makes them cooperate and support each other, not oppose each other. If things are properly implemented, then society will live in happiness.

Moreover, do not forget that when the religion restrains your freedom of movement (restricts you from doing a certain act), it does this for your own good and you benefit from this restriction. Allah restricts your freedom of movement so that you do not do evil to others and at the same time He restricts the freedom of everyone else so that they do not do evil to you. You are one person and they are many, yet due to restraining your freedom, Allah has restrained the freedom of all people for your sake. Thus, who benefits most? To illustrate, the *Shari'a* of Islam orders you to refrain from stealing and you are just one person, however it orders everyone else not to steal from you. It orders you to lower your gaze from the womenfolk of others and you are one person, yet it tells everyone else to lower their gazes from your womenfolk. Thus, every commandment Allah issues to mankind gives benefit to you.

Thus, 'doing good' is doing that which never leads to corruption. As long as all motions are under the command of a single will, they will cooperate and support one another. If you have your caprice and the next man has his, then

these caprices will conflict and oppose each other. Therefore, good means everything that the teachings and laws of Allah *Glorified is He* enjoin.

Allah says that 'doing the good' will lead to success. But where will this success be? Is it in this world or in the Hereafter? For those who uphold Allah's Law and keep to His Way of Guidance and do good, this success will be in this worldly life. Success is a natural fruit of the Way of Guidance of Allah in any society whose members try to do good for themselves and for others. Such is a society that acts according to the words of Prophet Muhammad, 'No one of you shall become a true believer until he desires for his brother what he desires for himself.'⁽¹⁾ On achieving this success, you will see that society free of rivalry, conflict, injustice, bribery and so on. This is the success in this world. Moreover, it will be followed by the success of the Hereafter.

Thus, do not think that your religious responsibilities are a burden for you, because they are for your own good in this life and your own happiness and success in the life to come. Subsequently, their reward in the Hereafter will be a pure grace from Allah. The Prophet Muhammad alerted us to this when he said, 'There is none whose deeds alone would entitle him into paradise. It was said to Him, 'And Allah's Messenger, not even You? Thereupon He said, 'Not even I, but that my Lord wraps me in mercy.'⁽²⁾ This is because a man does good in this world for his own good and for the good of the world in which he lives. Thus, he attains reward for it in the Hereafter from Allah's grace and bounty, as Allah says: 'And give them more out of His grace' (*an-Nisa'*: 173). Allah says that if we realise this, we may succeed. Using the model verb may is for hope or expectancy and it has different levels of likelihood. For example, if you say, 'So and so a person may give you,' you hope something from someone else and you cannot ensure that he will actually give. However, if you say, 'I might give you,' the hope is in your own hands and thereby this is more likely than the previous example. But you and I are still equals and I might give you first. However, when you say, 'Allah may give you,' you hope from Allah and this is more likely than the

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* (13) and *Muslim* (45), on the authority of *Anas* Allah be pleased with him

(2) Narrated by *Bukhari* and *Muslim*

other examples. Nevertheless, when Allah Himself says, ‘I may give you’, this is the strongest and likeliest kind of hope there is. That is because the promises and hopes of Allah are never unfulfilled.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَجَاهِدُوا فِي اللَّهِ حَقَّ جِهَادِهِ ۚ هُوَ اجْتَبَاكُمْ وَمَا جَعَلَ عَلَيْكُمْ فِي الدِّينِ
مِنْ حَرَجٍ مِّلَّةَ أَبِيكُمْ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ۚ هُوَ سَمَّاكُمُ الْمُسْلِمِينَ مِنْ قَبْلُ وَفِي هَذَا
لِيَكُونَ الرَّسُولُ شَهِيدًا عَلَيْكُمْ وَتَكُونُوا شُهَدَاءَ عَلَى النَّاسِ فَأَقِيمُوا الصَّلَاةَ
وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَاعْتَصِمُوا بِاللَّهِ هُوَ مَوْلَاكُمْ فَنِعْمَ الْمَوْلَىٰ وَنِعْمَ النَّصِيرُ ﴿٧٨﴾

Strive hard for God as is His due: He has chosen you and placed no hardship in your religion, the faith of your forefather Abraham. God has called you Muslims — both in the past and in this [message] — so that the Messenger can bear witness about you and so that you can bear witness about other people. So keep up the prayer, give the prescribed alms, and seek refuge in God: He is your protector — an excellent protector and an excellent helper[78] (The Quran, *al-Hajj*: 78)

Allah is speaking about duly and truly striving in His cause. It is like what we said before about having a grasp of the true measure of Allah. It is because striving also requires sincerity and that you keep Allah in your mind. You might go out to fight solely to avoid criticism. You might wield your weapon and enter the battle without having on your mind that you are doing it for the cause of Allah and without the intention of ascending the Word of Allah. This is like the one who fights so that people see his rank or because he desires battle-spoils or because he has a score to settle with the enemy and wants to get revenge. These are some of the things which corrupt the true purpose of fighting and render it of any value.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad was asked, ‘O Messenger of Allah! One man fights for booty, other fights to win fame and the third fights to show off.’ He was asked, ‘Which of them is fighting for the cause of Allah?’ The Prophet Muhammad said, ‘The one who fights so that the Word of Allah will

be exalted, is the one who fights in the cause of Allah.'⁽¹⁾ That is what is meant by striving hard for Allah as is His due. You can judge yourself in this regard, for all the criteria are in your hands.

You might wonder why striving for Allah. The scholars say it is because if you benefit from the implementation of the way of guidance of Allah after the Messengers showed you how to do so, you benefit yourself. Allah, however, wants this benefit to spread to those who are with you too and this can only happen if you strive with your life, wealth or anything you love. For otherwise, how will you bring success to the pact you made with Allah, of which He says: 'Surely, Allah has bought of the believers their persons and their property for this, that they shall have the garden.'^(at-Tawba: 111)

The troops on the battlefield have a mission just as those who stay home and do not go out to fight also have a mission. When the soldier endures perils and dangers and risks death, this means that what he would earn by being killed is better than being a coward. This emboldens the others and gives them courage to fight. Therefore, at the battle of Badr, when a Companion who was chewing on a date heard what the Prophet Muhammad said about the reward of the martyr, he said to Prophet Muhammad: 'O Messenger of Allah is there nothing between me and paradise save that I am slain in Allah's cause?' Prophet Muhammad said yes, so he threw the date from his mouth and joined the battle.⁽²⁾ He was completely confident that what he was going onto by being martyred was better than what he was leaving behind. As for those who remain behind and do not go out to fight, their mission is to convey the message and adhere to it fully. Otherwise, if everyone went out to fight and everyone was martyred, who would bear the Message of Allah and spread it?

The word strive here is used in a general sense to mean all forms of striving and struggle. When the military struggle is successful and we defeat the disbelievers so that they no longer stand in the way of our message and leave us alone and wish to live in our country under our protection, then there

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

is no longer any need for fighting and striving in the Path of Allah comes to another arena, i.e. striving against the soul.

Therefore Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘it is He who has elected you’, that is, He has chosen you and selected you to be the best community ever brought out for the good of mankind; the price of this election is that we must be worthy of it, live up to its responsibility and do all that Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to do.

And we advise those groups who work to spread the message and carry its banner: Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen you, so be worthy of this choice, and put His words in their proper context.

He, Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘...and [He] has laid no hardship on you in [anything that pertains to] religion....’ (*al-Hajj*: 78) That is, He *Glorified is He* has not elected you just to burden you, restrain you and make things difficult for you, but rather, He *Glorified is He* has made everything easy, and His Law is based on human capability. He *Glorified is He* has made dispensations to make things easier for you and to remove hardship and discomfort from you. The one who cannot stand may pray in a seated position, the one who is ill does not have to fast and the one who is poor does not have to pay *zakat* (obligatory alms) or perform the pilgrimage.

And He, Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: ‘...And had Allah so willed, He would indeed have imposed on you hardships...’ (*al-Baqara*: 220). But He *Glorified is He* did not impose hardships upon you, nor did He cause you undue discomfort; for the things He *Glorified is He* commands you to do are well within your capabilities.

He *Glorified is He* then says: ‘...the creed of your forefather Ibrahim (Abraham)...’ (*al-Hajj*: 78). The word *milla* (“creed”) here is in the accusative case because it is the subject of an elided verb, which we may explain as: Adhere to the creed of your forefather Ibrahim *peace be upon him*, for he supplicated for you when he said: ‘O our Sustainer! Make us surrender ourselves unto You, and make out of our offspring a community that shall surrender itself unto You, and show us our ways of worship, and accept our repentance...’ (*al-Baqara*: 128).

And another of Abraham's, supplications was: 'O our Sustainer! Raise up from the midst of our offspring an apostle from among themselves....' (*al-Baqara*: 129) Therefore Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I am the prayer of Ibrahim, and the glad tidings of 'Isa (Jesus)⁽¹⁾ That is, from his progeny and the progeny of his son Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon them*.

And Ibrahim *peace be upon him* supplicated before Allah and said: '...and show us our ways of worship...' (*al-Baqara*: 128), that is, give us religious responsibilities; it is as though he longed to receive Allah's commandments, and would anyone long for responsibility, if it entailed discomfort or hardship?

And likewise, the Companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* longed for the responsibilities of Islam, and they would ask Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about them, even though he said, 'Ask me not about things I have left for you.'⁽²⁾ Yet they would ask about religious matters, so that they could build their new lives, not on the customs of the pre-Islamic pagan ignorance, but on the rulings of Islam.

We need to comment on His words '...the creed of your forefather Ibrahim...' (*al-Hajj*: 78) because these words are addressed to the community to whom the message was sent, as well as the community who responded to it, But are all the Islamic community, descendants of Ibrahim *peace be upon him* so that Allah *Glorified is He* could say '...the creed of your forefather Ibrahim...' (*al-Hajj*: 78)?

We say that Islam is based on faith and open to all, and not all of the Islamic community are descendants of Abraham *peace be upon him*. But Abraham is the forefather of Allah's Messenger Muhammad. And the Messenger is a father to all those who believe in him. As the fatherhood of the Messenger is a fatherhood of allegiance and deeds. We can see this in the story of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* when Allah *Glorified is He* said about his (Nuh's) son: '...he was not of your family...' (*Hud*: 46).

And because Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a father to all those who believe in him, Allah *Glorified is He* referred to his

(1) Narrated by Ahmad (v. 262) on the authority of Abu Umama *peace be upon him*

(2) Narrated by Ahmad (ii. 247) on the authority of Abu Hurayra *peace be upon him*

wives as the mothers of the believers, saying: ‘The Prophet has a higher claim on the believers than [they have on] their own selves, [seeing that he is as a father to them] and his wives are their mothers...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 6).

As long as the wives are mothers, then the husband is a father, and because of this connection, Ibrahim *peace be upon him* is the forefather of the Islamic community, although they are not all descended from him.

And we find that some of those who love to raise objections to Allah’s Word say, about the matter of Prophet Muhammad’s fatherhood to all the believers: ‘But the Quran says otherwise, for it said as part of the story of Zayd ibn Haritha *peace be upon him*: ‘Muhammad is not the father of any one of your men...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 40), negating that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is anyone’s father, so this contradicts what you say.’ We answer: If you understood what Allah *Glorified is He* was saying, you would not object to His words. Allah *Glorified is He* is saying: Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not the father of any one of you, but rather, he is the father of all of you. What is negated is that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the father of any one individual, not that he is the father of all his community. And He *Glorified is He* says after this: ‘...but is Allah’s Apostle...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 40), so as long as he is the Messenger of Allah, he is father to all.

And Allah *Glorified is He* then says about Ibrahim *peace be upon him*: ‘...It is he who has named you – in bygone times as well as in this [divine writ]—those who have surrendered themselves to Allah...’ (*al-Hajj*: 78), that is, Ibrahim *peace be upon him* named you Muslims (those who surrender), as though it is clear and obvious that you have been Muslims since the days of Ibrahim *peace be upon him*: ‘...so that the Apostle might bear witness to the truth before you, and that you might bear witness to it before all mankind...’ (*al-Hajj*: 78)

And elsewhere in the Quran, a similar expression is given with the words in a different order, when He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...so that [with your lives] you might bear witness to the truth before all mankind and that the Apostle might bear witness to it before you....’ (*al-Baqara*: 143) Why is this? They say that it is because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed Allah’s message, and called upon Allah *Glorified is He* to bear

witness to this, saying: 'O Allah, I have conveyed it! O Allah, bear witness!'⁽¹⁾ That is, 'Bear witness that I have conveyed Your message.' And Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted each member of his community to bear this message and convey it, so that those who did not see Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could hear his words. In this way, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would be a witness over all those who believe in him, and those who believe in him would be witnesses over those to whom they convey the message.

And therefore one of the principal honours of his community is that no other messenger will ever come after Him *peace and blessings be upon him* because they are trusted to take care of Allah's way of guidance, as though they will never be bereft of goodness. We said before that messengers only come when corruption has spread everywhere, and people have lost their natural immunity to evil, and all society has lost it so that no one prevents anyone else from evil. At this point, Allah *Glorified is He* intervenes by sending a messenger and a new miracle to rectify what has become corrupted. And the sealing of all divine messages with Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a testimony that goodness will never disappear from his community, and no matter how far the people stray there will always be some who resolutely bear the message of Allah's guidance and cling to it, and serve as a role-model for others. Therefore Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* described this by saying: 'Goodness is folded up in me, and it will unfold in my community'. So all goodness and perfection is contained in the person of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and spread out amongst his community.

The discourse then returns to the commandment of prayer: '...Thus, be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues...' (*al-Hajj*: 78) because it is the obligation which is always required of the believer, and it is a constant declaration of fealty repeated five times a day, and through it the remembrance of Allah continues throughout all time without ever ceasing for a moment, when you look at the whole world and add each part of it to the other.

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari (1729) on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas *peace and blessings be upon him*

And the one who reflects on how time is in the sight of Allah *Glorified is He* will find that it is eternal without cease; for a day for us is twenty-four hours, whilst a day for Allah *Glorified is He* is one thousand years of our reckoning, and the Day of Resurrection will last fifty thousand years. And there is a day called 'today', meaning the moment we are in right now, and this is the day of Allah *Glorified is He* of which He said: '...every day He manifests Himself in yet another [wondrous] way' (*ar-Rahman*: 29). Therefore Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in answer to the question, 'What is your Lord's business now, when the Pen of Destiny has dried', said: 'He manifests things, but does not begin them: He raises some people, and lowers others'.⁽¹⁾ So 'today' is a general day, it is not the day of Egypt, or Syria, or Japan. At every moment, Allah *Glorified is He* begins a day and ends a day, and thus His day is constant and unending.

And we read in the Noble Hadith: 'Allah *Glorified is He* stretches out His hand by night so day's sinner can repent, and stretches out His hand by day so night's sinner can repent.'⁽²⁾ Whose day and whose night? Day and night are always present without ending and at every moment of time day ends somewhere and begins somewhere else, and night begins somewhere and ends somewhere else. So Allah's hand is always outstretched, and He *Glorified is He* never withdraws it, as He *Glorified is He* says: '...Nay, but wide are His hands stretched out: He dispenses [bounty] as He wills...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 64).

He *Glorified is He*, then says: '...and hold fast unto Allah...' (*al-Hajj*: 78). Seek refuge with Him in times of hardship; this means that you will be opposed and persecuted, for everyone who ever bore Allah's message was persecuted. But do not let this affect you or crush your spirits, and seek your refuge and protection with Allah *Glorified is He* whenever hardships befall you, as He *Glorified is He* says: '...There is no protection [for anyone] from Allah's judgment, save [for] those who have earned [His] mercy...' (*Hud*: 43)!

(1) Narrated by Ibn Abu 'Asim, Ibn Majah (202), Abū Na'im (v. 252) and Abu Ash-Shaykh in (*Al-'Azma*).

(2) Narrated by Ahmad (iv. 395) and Muslim (2759) on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari

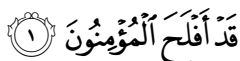
And when you hold fast to Allah *Glorified is He*, you do not have to go to Him, for ‘...He is your Lord Supreme...’ (*al-Hajj*: 78) meaning that He *Glorified is He* looks after your affairs; and as long as He *Glorified is He* is your Lord Supreme, then ‘how excellent is this Lord Supreme, and how excellent this Giver of Succour!’ (*al-Hajj*: 78)

the chapter of

al-Mu'minun

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

The chapter of *al-Mu'minun*⁽¹⁾.



[How] prosperous are the believers! [1]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 1)

In the penultimate verse of the chapter of *al-Hajj*, Allah *Glorified is He* said ‘...so that you might attain to a happy state!’ (*al-Hajj*: 77) the word *la’alla* – translated in the verse as (might) conveys a meaning of hope and so He *Glorified is He* wanted to confirm the prosperity of the believers by saying: ‘Truly, to a happy state shall attain the believers’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 1). Since hope from Allah *Glorified is He* is realised, He used the word ‘truly’ which confirms the actualisation of the event. In this way the beginning of the chapter of *al-Mu'minun* is in accordance with the end of the chapter of *al-Hajj*. The meaning of ‘to attain a happy state’ (*aflaha*) is: attaining the optimal amount of good that the soul desires.

We previously spoke of the process of germination and how it works; plants feed on two halves of a seed until it has a strong root which is able to soak up [water] from the soil. Thus, if you were to throw seeds onto unstimulated land, the root would find difficulty in penetrating and soaking up [water] from the soil.

(1) Al-Qurtubi in his (*Tafsir*): The chapter of *al-Mu'minun* is number 23 in the order of the Quran. It comprises 118 verses. It is a Meccan chapter (6/4635).

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us a scenario from our sensual reality and uses the metaphor of cultivating the earth in order to express the prosperity of the believer and the attainment of permanent bounty in the Hereafter. The farmer tills his land, irrigates it and pastures it. In return, the land gives him seven hundred grains for every one grain he plants. Such shall be the recompense in the Hereafter: 'The parable of those who spend their possessions for the sake of Allah is that of a grain out of which grow seven ears, in every ear a hundred grains: for Allah grants manifold increase unto whom He wills; and Allah is infinite, all-knowing' (*al-Baqara*: 261).

If this earth, which is a creation of Allah *Glorified is He* can give all of this, then what is your opinion of a direct gift from your Creator, the Creator of the earth which gives you? Just as the farmer's struggling and hard work increases his yield, the hard work and struggle of the believer will increase his reward and recompense in the Hereafter.



**Those who pray humbly [2]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 2)**

It is as if the first outward manifestation of prosperity is in the prayer. The statement continues to be connected to what our Lord said in the previous verses 'O you who have attained to faith! Bow down and prostrate yourselves, and worship Your Sustainer [alone]...' (*al-Hajj*: 77) and after this He said '...Thus, be constant in prayer, and render the purifying dues...' (*al-Hajj*: 78).

The first attribute He used to describe the believers who shall attain prosperity was 'those who humble themselves in their prayer' (*al-Mu'minun*: 2). He *Glorified is He* did not say: 'those who perform the prayer' since performing the prayer is an established affair for all the believers. Consideration, here, is given to the form and method; consideration is given to humility, submission, contentment and tranquillity of the heart and the bringing of Allah to mind, the one whom you are standing in front of.

When you say to your child 'sit in front of the teacher attentively and listen to him carefully', you are not ordering him to go to school or to attend

his lessons since this is an already established matter. You are in fact concerned with the core of the matter and the state in which it behoves the child to be.

Humility is for the heart to be still and tranquil during this important affair. It should not be preoccupied with anything other than the prayer because Allah *Glorified is He* did not give man two hearts and as long as he is in the presence of his Lord it does not behove him to be preoccupied with other than Him. So much so that some of the Gnostics have said with regards to humility that whoever deliberately seeks to know who is to his right or left in the rank, his prayer is nullified.

When 'Umar⁽¹⁾ *may Allah be pleased with him* saw a man who was playing with his beard while praying, he struck him upon his arm and said: 'if you are humble, then your organs will be humble'. This is because the organs draw their energy from the heart and the blood which the heart pumps to them. So if the blood from the heart is diverted away from the limbs, they would not be able to move.

This is why when one of the jurists asked a Sufi⁽²⁾: 'what is the ruling of the one who forgets [an element] during the prayer?' he asked: 'the ruling according to us or according to you [the jurists]?' [The jurist] said: 'is the [ruling] according to us different from the [ruling] according to you [the *ansar*]?' He said: 'Yes. According to the jurists, whoever forgets [an element] during the prayer, the prostration of forgetfulness makes up for it. As for [the ruling] according to us, whoever forgets [an element] during the prayer, we kill him.' That is, it is a grave matter.

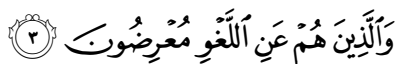
Does your Lord and Creator not deserve from you, that you should be free for Him at least during the time of prayer? It is only five minutes from each of the five [daily prayer] times, while He has left the remaining time to do what you wish. Do you feel it is too much to free your heart for Him, to bring Him *Glorified and Exalted is He* to mind? This action is in your own

(1) The story of 'Umar with the man who was playing with his beard while praying

(2) *The story of the Sufi who was asked about distraction in prayer and answered "In our case or in yours?"*

interest before anything else; it is in your own interest that you may be in seclusion with your Lord and that you may seek energy and sustenance from Him *Glorified and Exalted is He* and that you expose yourself to [receiving] his gifts and illuminations and to seek his lights and secrets.

Out of the desire of the people of God-consciousness for the completeness and wholeness of the prayer, one of them said to his companion who was avid to lead people in prayer⁽¹⁾: 'why are you so avid to be the leader of the prayer knowing that the one who seeks leadership is not given it?' He replied: 'I desire it so that I can be exempt from the [juridical] difference of opinion between ash-Shafi'i *may Allah be pleased with him* who obligated the recital of al-Fatiha behind the Imam, and Abu Hanifa *may Allah be pleased with him* who said that the recital of the Imam is [sufficient for] the follower. Thus, I am avid to lead the prayer so that I can recite and not be preoccupied with this difference of opinion.'



**Who shun idle talk [3]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 3)**

Frivolity (*laghw*) is speech which has no benefit. It also applies to any action which is of no benefit. In another place He *Glorified and Exalted is He* says: '...and [who], whenever they pass by [people engaged in] frivolity, pass on with dignity' (*al-Furqan*: 72), they are not preoccupied with it nor do they pay attention to it. The Quran relates that when the disbelievers hear the Quran they say: '...Do not listen to this Quran, but rather talk frivolously about it...' (*Fussilat*: 26).

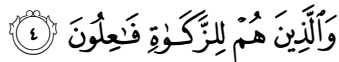
This is why Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* made it one of the bounties of paradise that: 'No empty talk will they hear there, nor any call to sin. But only the tiding of inner soundness and peace' (*al-Waqi'a*: 25-26). It is as if one of the defects and afflictions of this world is that we hear much empty talk which has no benefit. In another verse, He *Glorified and Exalted is He* says

(1) *The story of the Imam who was keen on leading the prayer and when asked about the reason he related: "to get of the conflict between Ash-Shafi'i and Abu Hanifa"*

about the wine of The Hereafter, which neither intoxicates the mind nor makes the drinker delirious: 'and in that [paradise] they shall pass on to one another a cup which will not give rise to empty talk, and neither incite to sin' (*at-Tur*: 23).

In the phrase 'Who turn away' (*al-Mu'minun*: 3), turning away is to keep away from something. It is a depiction of the self's rejection of a particular thing. The people of gnosis give a standard of frivolity: 'every action that you do not earn a reward for from Allah is frivolous.'

Because of this, always be avid that all your movements are for Allah *Glorified and Exalted is He* so that you may be rewarded for them. [Be] like our companion⁽¹⁾ who was sought by a man to decree for him in a matter in which he had no right. Wanting to take advantage of this opportunity to do good and [believing] that there would be a reward in it for him even in preventing him, he said: 'O Allah, indeed he is a slave who sought a slave and I take his hand and seek The Lord, make the rectification of his mistake by seeking me a rectification for seeking you', i.e. 'Even though I am not able to decree the matter, by it I enter into [the presence of] Allah.



And they who are observant of *zakat* [4] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 4)

Firstly, *zakat* can mean cleansing, as in the statement of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Take, [O, Muhammad], from their wealth a charity by which you purify them and cause them increase [In wealth]' (*at-Tawba*: 103). Heedlessness can afflict a person while gathering wealth causing his wealth to mix with that which is doubtful; thus it requires cleansing. Cleansing of wealth is attained by giving charity.

Zakat can also mean development. After having cleansed your wealth you [want to] expand and increase it as in His statement: 'To a happy state

(1) The story of the two men, one of whom asked the other for alms and the response of the other was to pull his hand, raise it to the sky and imploring Allah to respond to his pleas

shall indeed attain he who causes this [self] to grow in purity' (*ash-Shams*: 9), i.e. whoever develops the capacity of good in the self, elevates it such that if you were to look at your [good] actions, which outwardly appear to be deficient, [in reality] they bring about good later on, elevating the aptitudes of good within yourself.

This is why; when Allah *Glorified is He* spoke about usury – which means increase – He made [seemingly] contradictory notions in a single verse. Usury increases wealth, the usurer taking a hundred and ten for the hundred that he lends, while *zakat* outwardly decreases wealth, the hundred becoming ninety-seven and a half after alms. The verse gives the true standard: 'Allah deprives usurious gains of all blessing, whereas He blesses charitable deeds with manifold increase...' (*al-Baqara*: 276) the usury which you believe to be increase is in fact destruction, and that which you believe to be a deficiency is in fact a blessing, an increase and development.

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [remember:] whatever you may give out in usury so that it might increase through [other] people's possessions will bring [you] no increase in the sight of Allah – whereas all that you give out in charity, seeking Allah's countenance, [will be blessed by Him:] for it is they, they [who thus seek His countenance] that shall have their recompense multiplied!' (*ar-Rum*: 39) They are those for whom Allah *Glorified is He* will increase and multiply.

As our Lord commanded us to be humble in the prayer, He commanded the same in *zakat*. He *Glorified is He* did not say: those who perform, But said: '...who are intent...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 4). This is to inculcate the states of worship within man. For when you pray you should humble yourself and submit to Allah *Glorified is He* in your prayer. Likewise when you give *zakat*, you are [in reality] elevating the capacities of good within yourself. Thus when you do [good] actions and strive, do not limit your actions according to your need, instead do according to your ability. So take what you need from the fruit of your striving and make the intention that you will take *zakat* and charity from your remaining wealth. Thus, in your mind and intention, giving *zakat* (obligatory alms) should be a beginning.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَفْوَاجِهِمْ حَافِظُونَ ﴿٥﴾

**And who guard their chastity [5]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 5)**

Allah *Glorified is He* commanded us to guard the private parts for the function for they were created. The function of these bodily parts is: to remove waste through urine and faeces and to perform sexual relations with the goal to preserve lineage. A person must guard his/her private parts to that which Allah *Glorified is He* permitted in His statement:

إِلَّا عَلَىٰ أَزْوَاجِهِمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُمْ فَإِنَّهُمْ غَيْرُ مَلُومِينَ ﴿٦﴾

**Except with their spouses or their slaves — with these they
are not to blame [6] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 6)**

The verse speaks of those who guard their private parts except with their spouses because Allah *Glorified is He* permitted ‘...those whom they rightfully possess...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 60) ownership of slaves is [also] permitted. However it does not have a standing or an existence today. Slaves do not exist as they did before Islam since human international law has outlawed slavery, thus rendering the ruling [of slavery in Islam] inoperative and disused. There is a difference between a ruling being inoperative due to the non-existence of its subject and being overturned. The ruling on the ownership of slaves has not been overturned; it is just that its subject matter, slaves, do not exist anymore.

To clarify this issue, suppose that you are in a society in which everyone is rich – there are no poor people who are legible for taking *zakat*: you say that the ruling of giving *zakat* is inoperative; it is like an existent obligation – it just does not have a subject.

Some literalists say that ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *may Allah be pleased with him* repealed the share of those whose hearts are to be reconciled⁽¹⁾. In reality he

(1) ‘Abd Ar-Rahman ibn Muhammad Al-Muharibi related on the authority of Hajjaj ibn Dinar on the authority of Ibn Sirin on the authority of ‘Ubayda said: ‘Uyayna ibn Hisn and Al-‘Aqra’ ibn Habis came to Abu Bakr *may Allah be pleased with him* and said: ‘O Caliph of the Messenger of Allah (Prophet Muhammad), there is a salt marsh which=

did not repeal the ruling, nor did he have the authority to repeal a ruling of Allah *Glorified is He*; it was that he did not find a single person from the category of those whose hearts are to be reconciled in order to give. Thus the ruling remains intact and is acted upon in Muslim countries even in present times.⁽¹⁾ We and others, who expend their utmost efforts, attempt to reconcile the hearts of some unbelievers and other groups in order to make them more receptive towards Islam. Thus, the share of those hearts which are to be reconciled still remains and is acted upon.

We also hear those who say: 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him nullified the capital punishment for theft during the year of famine. This claim is contrary to the truth because he did not nullify this capital punishment. He merely nullified it in certain circumstances because the legal principle says: 'Avert the capital punishments by doubts'. As long as a thief has stolen to ward off his hunger then he has not reached the quorum of theft since it is only considered theft if it goes over the amount which is sufficient to fulfil one's basic necessities.

One may say: if there is a war between the believers and the disbelievers, we capture slaves] from them and they from us, does slavery not exist in this instance? We say: yes, slavery exists, but you have legally bound yourself to abide by international laws which prohibit slavery and you must therefore comply with them. However, if slavery is found then slave ownership is established. This issue is taken up [by its opponents] as a

= *has no grass nor benefit so please grant us it!*' So he split [the land] for them and witnessed [a contract] for them. Then they went to 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him so that he would witness it. When 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him heard of what was in the contract he took it from them, spat on it and effaced it. They complained and spoke ill. He then said: 'Prophet Muhammad peace and blessing be upon him would reconcile the two of you in those days when Islam was young. Allah *Glorified He* has now enriched Islam. Go and exert all that you will' (Related by Abu Bakr Al-Jassas in *Ahkam Al-Quran* 3/160).

- (1) *Those whose hearts are to be reconciled' are those new to Islam. In order to make their hearts steadfast in Islam, Allah the Almighty makes them one of those people who deserve zakat. Sheikh Sha'arawi refutes the claim that 'Umar abolished this right, confirming meanwhile that he Allah be pleased with him did not find any one of those people at his time to give them their due share of zakat.*

means of disgracing Islam; and how is it that a slave-master can do this and that to his slaves?

This approach is a result of misunderstanding the wisdom behind slave ownership and of the fact that the honour of the bondmaid is in fact elevated by this permissibility. The bondmaid is taken captive in a war. It is possible that he who took her captive could have killed her, but Allah *Glorified is He* protected her blood; developed within the soul the idea of profit and so authorized him who captured her to benefit from her and made conjugal relations with her permissible for him.

You can imagine that while this bondmaid is in her master's house she witnesses the marital relationship between the master and his wife and within the [wider] society around her. It is from the wisdom of Allah *Glorified is He* that He *Glorified is He* permitted her master to have intimate relations with her since after this she will not see the mistress of the house as being superior to her. And if she becomes pregnant from her master, she becomes free due to delivery of a child. Allah *Glorified is He* encourages the emancipation and freedom of slaves. Do you not see that after this He *Glorified is He* opens the door of emancipation and enumerates its causes; thus He made it an option for paying *zakat*, a way of giving charity and expiation (*kaffara*) for certain crimes.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...for then, behold, they are free of all blame' (*al-Mu'minun*: 6), i.e. we do not praise them nor do we blame them. It is as if this issue is of limited importance.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَمَنْ ابْتَغَىٰ وَرَاءَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْعَادُونَ ﴿٧﴾

But anyone who seeks more than this is exceeding the limits [7] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 7)

'...Seek...' means pursue, and '...go beyond that [limit]...' means other than what we mentioned i.e. wives and slaves.

We have mentioned previously that the word 'beyond' (*wara'*) is used in the Quran for a number of meanings. Here it means 'other than' wives and slaves. From that [meaning] is Allah's statement: '...But lawful to you are

all [women] beyond these...' (*an-Nisa'*: 24), i.e. I have forbidden such and such for you, and have permitted for you other than what is mentioned.

'Beyond' (*wara'*) is also used to mean 'after'. 'Otherness' between two events does not negate the possibility of these two events taking place at the same time. As for an event being 'after' another event then the time that these two events take place in is different as in, Allah's statement: 'And his wife, standing [nearby], laughed⁽¹⁾ [with happiness]; whereupon We gave her the glad tidings of [the birth of] Isaac and, after Isaac, of [his son] Jacob' (*Hud*: 71), i.e. after him because the time of Jacob's birth is different from Isaac's birth.

Beyond (*wara'*) can also mean 'behind' as in His statement: 'and lo, Allah accepted a solemn pledge from those who were granted earlier revelation [when He bade them]: "Make it known unto mankind, and do not conceal it!" But they cast this [pledge] behind their backs, and bartered it away for a trifling gain: and how evil was their bargain!' (*Al- 'Imran*: 187) that is, they put it behind their backs.

Beyond (*wara'*) can also mean 'in front' as in His statement: '...in front of them was a king who is wont to seize every boat by brute force' (*al-Kahf*: 79). It is known that the king was in front of them waiting to seize every boat that passed by. And His *Glorified is He* statement: '...with hell awaiting him...' (*Ibrahim*: 16) i.e. Hell is in front of him, it will come later, if it had already passed then it would be behind him.

The phrase '...are truly transgressors' (*al-Mu'minun*: 7) means those who transgress and exceed the bounds that have been legislated for them. When Allah *Glorified is He* is warning us against transgression, He, Allah *Glorified is He* differentiates between transgressing the commands and approaching the prohibitions. If it is related to commands He says: '...do not, then, transgress them...' (*al-Baqara*: 229). If it is related to prohibitions He says: '...These are the limits [set by] Allah, so do not approach them...' (*al-Baqara*: 187).

(1) *Al-Azhari narrated on the authority of Al-Farra' about this verse: 'She laughed out of happiness of security because she feared as Ibrahim did'. Al-Farra said: this is a possibility and Allah Glorified is He knows best. As for those who say that 'she laughed' means she menstruated, I have not heard this from a trustworthy [source]. (Narrated by Ibn Mundhir in Lissan Al-'Arab – root d-h-k.)*

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ لِأَمْتِنَتِهِمْ وَعَهْدِهِمْ رَاعُونَ ﴿٨﴾

**Who are faithful to their trusts and pledges [8]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 8)**

‘Faithful’ i.e. they uphold them and carry them out. Trust is defined as: everything for which protection is sought. The first thing for which one should seek protection is the pledge of faith in Allah; *Glorified is He* that was taken by Him: as long as you have faith in Allah then you must carry out His commands.

Thus there is a trust of Allah *Glorified is He* and a trust of the creation. The trust Allah *Glorified is He* is the one about which Allah said: ‘Verily, We did offer the trust [of reason and volition] to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains: but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up – for, verily, he has always been prone to be most wicked, most foolish.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72) Since you accepted to bear the trust you must honour it.

As for pledge, this is everything that a person promises – other than disobedience – and he must fulfil that which he has promised because when you make a promise to a person regarding something, you have tied his actions and bound his plans to the fulfilment of your promise such as when you say to me, ‘I will meet you tomorrow in such a place at such a time to do such and such’. I will organize my routine according to this promise. If you were to break your promise, then you have allowed yourself to act according to your leisure all the while constraining my actions and neglecting my interests and ultimately ruining my day. This is why Islam is very strict about breaking promises.

وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ عَلَى صَلَوَاتِهِمْ يُحَافِظُونَ ﴿٩﴾

**And who keep up their prayers [9]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 9)**

The previous verses spoke about the prayer in terms of having humility and submission. Here, He mentions the prayer in terms of its performance and guarding it. Guarding the prayer is that you make every prayer at its

allotted time, and the allotted time of prayer is the call to prayer (adhan). Some scholars say that the prayer time is extended; so *Zhuhr*, for example, extends from the call (adhan) for *Zhuhr* until just before the call for *Asr* and like this in all the other prayers. We say: yes, this is correct and that the prayer time is extended. But who has guaranteed that you will live until the end of the prayer time? Who has guaranteed for you that you will pray '*Isha*' before the call for *Fajr*? Yes, you remain free of sin until the last moment if you are able to pray by then. But can you guarantee this? It is like the one who is able to perform the pilgrimage, but delays it until his last days. If he performs the pilgrimage then he is free of responsibility. But he cannot guarantee that he will remain alive long enough to perform the pilgrimage. This is why it is obligatory to perform the pilgrimage without delay as soon as you are able to, so that you are free of sin.



will rightly be given[10]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 10)

'...They...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 10), that is those who possess the aforementioned attributes: 'they' are of six types: those who humble themselves in prayer; those who turn away from all that is frivolous; those who are intent on paying *zakat*; those who are mindful of their chastity; those who are faithful to their trusts and to their pledges and; and those who guard their prayers.

These are the inheritors. Inheritance is taking one's own right without a contract or gift because taking wealth from others has to be by means of selling, a contract or a gift. This is why they asked the inheritor: 'Is this your right?' He said: 'Yes'. They said: 'What is your deed as proof?' That is where is the contract by which you took the wealth? He said: 'my contract and deed is: 'concerning [the inheritance of] your children, Allah enjoins [this] upon you: The male shall have the equal of two females' share...' (*an-Nisa*': 11) this is a contract which is superior to and firmer than the contract of humans. As long as my contract is from Allah *Glorified is He* do not say the inheritance is taken without a contract because it is established upon the firmest of contracts: that is the contract from Allah *Glorified is He*.

Many people leave what Allah *Glorified is He* has legislated in inheritance out of love and monopolization of wealth or out of miserliness from those who have been legislated a portion. So he, who has sons and daughters, gives the sons and prevents the daughters from taking. And he who has daughters bequeaths to them all that he owns, preventing his brothers and their uncles from their right in his wealth. This is very common in society.

It is obligatory upon you to take caution in the affair of inheritance and respect the law of Allah *Glorified is He* and His division of wealth. Allah *Glorified is He* has gifted you wealth and left you to act independently with it throughout your life. You cannot then act independently after your death as well. You must leave the possessor and benefactor of the wealth to deal with it. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...ordinance from Allah...' (*an-Nisa'*: 11), i.e. not from anyone else; as long as the ordinance is from Allah *Glorified is He*, then you must obey it and carry it out. As soon as you refuse it, you are in reality refusing Allah *Glorified is He* and rejecting His division.

The one who ponders upon the issue of inheritance will find virtue upon virtue in that which Allah *Glorified is He* has legislated. Whosoever loves their sons should also give to their daughters so that you do not corrupt the bonds of kinship between your children after your death. Some men, who had previously taken all of their father's wealth preventing it from the daughters, come to us saying: we want to rectify the mistake and repeat the division according to what Allah has legislated.

We find that some people have rays of faith such that if some of the brothers refuse to repeat the division according to what Allah *Glorified is He* has legislated they say: I will bear the inheritance of my sisters from my own personal wealth. It is the likes of these to whom Allah *Glorified is He* grants success and blesses them in that which remains from their wealth because they placed their reliance upon Allah *Glorified is He* and so He *Glorified is He* increases them from his bounty and multiplies their small wealth until it becomes great. As for the one who relies on that which he possesses, Allah *Glorified is He* assigns him to his wealth.

We are perplexed by the one who assigns his wealth to his daughters in order to prevent his brothers from inheriting. We say to him: you are not just

in this dealing, you must deal with them equally, for if you leave your daughters poor with no wealth, who will provide for and look after them after you have gone? Their uncles will provide for them, thus, let your transaction be equitable. When Allah *Glorified is He* gives inheritance to these groups He, Allah *Glorified is He* does so out of his bounty and generosity. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* clarified this by his statement: 'None of you shall enter Paradise by his good deeds' they said: 'Not even You O Messenger of Allah?' He *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Not even I except that Allah will encompass me by His grace.'⁽¹⁾

As for Allah's statement: '...Enter paradise by virtue of what you were doing [in life]!' (*an-Nahl*: 32) this is specific to the mere entering of paradise. As for increase, this is from the bounty of Allah *Glorified is He*, '...and give them yet more out of His bounty...' (*an-Nisa*': 173). From among Allah's names is 'The Inheritor' (Al-Warith). He said: 'and [mention] Zechariah, when he called to his Lord, "My Lord, do not leave me alone [with no heir], while you are the best of inheritors."' (*al-Anbiya*': 89) what is it that Allah *Glorified is He* inherits from us?

Allah *Glorified is He* created humanity, gave mankind the means of obtaining ownership [over things] and from His bounty. He *Glorified and Exalted is He* distributed this ownership amongst his slaves: this person owns such and such and this one owns such and such. On the day of Resurrection all sovereignty will return to its rightful owner. Thus Allah *Glorified is He* will be the sole Inheritor on the day when He *Glorified is He* will say: '...With whom will sovereignty rest on that Day? With Allah, the One who holds absolute sway over all that exists!' (*Ghafir*: 16)

Allah *Glorified is He* is the best of inheritors. The inheritor takes his inheritance so that he [himself] may benefit from it. Allah *Glorified is He* however, inherits that which he had originally left for others so that its benefit would return to them and increase them in their blessings and thus He gives them manifold. Just as He *Glorified is He* used to give them in this world through

(1) *Agreed upon Hadith, Narrated by Al-Bukhari (6463) and Muslim in his Sahih (2816) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him*

intermediary means, He *Glorified is He* will inherit these means in the Hereafter and will give them, from His bounty, without intermediary means. You will live in paradise in harmony, free of tiredness and struggle and will obtain whatever you wish for without having to move.

Thus, humans inherit in order to take, whereas Allah *Glorified is He* inherits in order to give. Because of this He *Glorified is He* is the best of inheritors.

What is it that the believers who are adorned with these attributes inherit? Allah *Glorified is He* answers [by saying]:

الَّذِينَ يَرِثُونَ الْفِرْدَوْسَ هُمْ فِيهَا خَالِدُونَ ﴿١١﴾

That will inherit the paradise; [and] therein shall they abide[11] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 11)

Allah *Glorified is He* inherits the perishable from them in order to give them the eternal *al-Firdaus* – the highest garden in paradise – in the hereafter. Allah *Glorified is He* inherited in order to bring benefit to his slaves and to increase the benefit for them. In this world we used to benefit through intermediary means whereas in the hereafter we will benefit without intermediary means. Allah *Glorified is He* inherited in order to give – not just to return something similar to what he took but He *Glorified is He* gives above and beyond that, because we take as inheritance that which perishes whereas Allah *Glorified is He* gives us from his inheritance that which remains eternally.

But who do they [the believers] inherit *al-Firdaus* from? They said: when Allah *Glorified is He* created mankind He gave them the ability to choose between faith and disbelief; obedience and disobedience and prepared consequences for these choices. Thus He *Glorified is He* made paradise on the presumption that all of mankind would be believers such that if all of them were to enter paradise there would be no resultant overcrowding. Likewise He *Glorified is He* made the fire on the presumption that all of mankind would be disbelievers such that if all of them were to disbelieve they would all have their place in the fire.

Thus when the companions of paradise enter paradise they will be abandoning their places in the fire just as the companions of the Fire will be abandoning

their places in paradise when they enter the fire. The companions of the Fire will inherit the unoccupied places in the fire while the companions of paradise will inherit the unoccupied places within Paradise.

Al-Firdaus is the highest place in paradise. This is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say, 'If you ask Allah, then ask Him for *al-Firdaus* because it is the highest part of paradise and the middle part of paradise'⁽¹⁾. *Al-Firdaus* is a garden on the highest hill in paradise i.e. in a distinguished place. Loftiness is sought after in housing and gardens in this world: people like houses in high places where the air and water are pure. Do you not see them farm on raised [platforms] and wherever the earth is flat they make low drainage canals in order to drain out excess water which damages the harvest. This is why He, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and the parable... is that of a garden on high, fertile ground: a rainstorm smites it, and thereupon it brings forth its fruit twofold...' (*al-Baqara*: 265).

Likewise, high ground is not irrigated by flooding but is irrigated by rainwater which cleanses the leaves before irrigating the roots making the plant benefit [completely]. This is why The Lord of honour says: '...and thereupon it brings forth its fruit twofold...' (*al-Baqara*: 265).

It is known that leaves are the lungs of plants and it is through them that photosynthesis occurs by which the plants are nourished. If the pores of the leaves are closed up and dust gathers over them this will reduce the ability of the plant to breathe. It is like the person whose lungs are afflicted with an illness which prevents him from breathing properly.

Al-Firdaus has another distinguishing feature in that Allah *Glorified is He* planted its trees with His own] hand just as He *Glorified is He* honoured Adam *may Allah be pleased with him* by creating him with His own hand: '...O Satan (Iblīs)! What has kept thee from prostrating thyself before that [being] which I have created with My hands?...' (*Sad*: 75)

It is related that when Allah *Glorified is He* created *al-Firdaus* and planted its trees with His [own] hand He said to *al-Firdaus*: 'Speak'.

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2/335.339), *Al-Bukhari* in his *Sahih* (7423) from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra *may Allah be pleased with him*.

When *al-Firdaus* spoke she said: 'Truly, to a happy state shall attain the believers' (*al-Mu'minun*: 1).

Then Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...therein shall they abide' (*al-Mu'minun*: 11) because the pleasures of paradise are everlasting. We know that the pleasures of this world will come to an end. No matter how much a person is given of it, it will be severed and disappear; either it will leave you, leaving you in poverty and need or you will leave it by dying. This is why He, Allah *Glorified is He* says about the pleasures of the Hereafter: 'never-failing and never out of reach' (*al-Waqi'a*: 33).

In this way see that in the opening of this chapter, Allah *Glorified is He* began talking about success of the Hereafter. He mentioned the fruit[s] and reward of faith first as if to say: 'This is the reward of the one who has faith in Me and follows My methodology.' It is like the opening of the chapter of *ar-Rahman* when He, Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'The Most Gracious. Has imparted this Quran [unto man] He has created man. He has imparted unto him articulate thought and speech' (*ar-Rahman*: 1-4). How is this since Allah *Glorified is He* created man before teaching him the Quran?

This is because the one who makes something is the one who sets its guidelines. They define its purpose before beginning its production. For example—and Allah *Glorified is He* is the greatest example—the one who manufactures a fridge defines its function, purpose and manufacturing guidelines before its production.

And so the Quran is the methodology of the human and is the guideline of human life. Because of this Allah *Glorified is He* created the methodology and put down the guidelines of creation before creating Man.

وَلَقَدْ خَلَقْنَا الْإِنْسَانَ مِنْ سُلَالَةٍ مِّنْ طِينٍ ﴿١٢﴾

We created man from an essence of clay [12]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 12)

We have previously spoken about the creation of Man. We know that the Creator created the first human, Adam, from soil and from him created his partner and then the rest of humanity through intermarriage as He, Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...and out of the two spread abroad a multitude of men and women...' (*an-Nisa'*: 1).

The issue of the creation of the sky and the earth is one which Allah *Glorified is He* kept to Himself – not revealing it to anyone as He, Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor of the creation of their own selves; and neither do I [have any need to] take as My helpers those [beings] that lead [men] astray’ (*al-Kahf*: 51). So do not pay heed to those in every time and place that lead men astray, who claim [to have] knowledge and cognition and say: ‘The universe was [all] a single mass which used to rotate at [great] speed after which it split into parts which formed the earth etc...’ And about Man they say: ‘he is from a monkey’ and other such superstitions which have no authentic basis.

It is for this reason that Allah *Glorified is He* gave us faith-based immunity which protects us from being carried away by these theories. He, Allah *Glorified is He* informed us about these people and warned us about them. Because they have not witnessed anything of creation nor did Allah *Glorified is He* take them as helper so they say such things. This is an affair that Allah *Glorified is He* has taken upon Himself so do not state knowledge about Him except through that about which God Himself has informed you. The word ‘human’ is a generic noun which can apply to the singular, dual or plural; masculine or feminine. Thus, every single one of us is a human by the proof that Allah *Glorified is He* excluded a plural form from a singular word when He *Glorified is He* said: ‘Consider the flight of time! Verily, man is bound to lose himself. Unless he be of those who attain to faith...’ (*al-’Asr*: 1-3). Thus He *Glorified is He* excluded a group from the singular, man.

‘...We create...’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 120) means: we brought into existence from nothingness. We said previously that Allah *Glorified is He* affirmed the attribute of creation for mankind with the crucial difference that Allah *Glorified is He* creates out of nothingness, whereas man creates from something already existent. In Allah’s creation there is movement and life which grows and multiplies, whereas that which man creates is stagnant and does not change. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* when describing His essence said: ‘...hallowed, therefore, is Allah, the best of creators!’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 14)

As for the statement in the Quran about ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*: ‘...I shall create for you out of clay, as it were, the shape of [your] destiny...’

(*Al-'Imran*: 49) this is special for Him *peace be upon him* the bringing into existence is through a command from Allah which He displayed at the hand of His Prophet.

As for the meaning of: 'Now, indeed, We create man...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 12) that is the first man Adam '...out of the essence of clay' (*al-Mu'minun*: 12). The word used for 'essence' here, *sulala* means linguistically to extract the quintessence of something out of it just as a sword is drawn out of its sheath, that is the case in which it is stored. The sword is the effective and lethal instrument, while the sheath is merely the thing that protects and carries this important object.

The essence (*sulala*) is, therefore, the best part of an object. Allah *Glorified is He* created the first man from the best types and elements of soil. If you were to take a fistful of soil the prime of it will slip through your fingers while only the coarse, sandy material would remain in your hand.

When Hassan ibn Thabit *may Allah be pleased with him* wished to mock Quraysh because of their enmity towards Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he said: 'Permit me to mock them from the pulpit O Messenger of Allah'. He *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'will you mock them while I am from them?' So Hassan said: 'I will draw you out of them as a hair is drawn out of dough'.⁽¹⁾

The word essence (*sulala*) is also used to mean a good thing so they say: So and so is from the essence (*sulala*) of such and such a thing and, so and so is of good nobility i.e. a station of praise. So much so that they preserve the known origins of horses by registering birth certificates for them. From this came the fame of the original Arab horse.

Modern science has affirmed the truth of this verse, by laboratory analysis they have affirmed that the elements that make up the human being are the same elements which soil is made up of; sixteen elements from oxygen to magnesium. What is meant here is the fertile soil which is suitable for

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (3531) and Muslim in his *Sahih* (2480) on the authority of their Sheikh 'Uthman ibn Abu Shayba with his chain to 'A'isha *may Allah be pleased with her*

farming because the earth, generally, is made up of many elements some say one hundred and thirteen.

ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَاهُ نُطْفَةً فِي قَرَارٍ مَّكِينٍ ﴿١٣﴾

And then We placed him as a drop of fluid in a safe place [13] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 13)

That is after We made him a regular human being with a spirit, We made him grow. Just as We created the first human from the essence of soil, We will create his progeny from the essence of water [semen] and its purest constituent which is sperm. The human eats drinks and breathes; blood then absorbs the nutrition, the remaining substances leaving the human body by way of faeces. Then the blood is cleansed and filtered in the lungs and kidneys. From blood comes the human's energy and sperm, from which the human is created. Thus, even in sperm he is a purified quintessence.

Sperm, which is the basis of a human's creation, lives in semen. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Was he not once a [mere] drop of sperm that had been spilt.' (*al-Qiyama*: 37) Then We put this sperm '...in [the womb's] firm keeping' (*al-Mu'minun*: 13); 'firm keeping' is the womb which Allah *Glorified is He* created in this fashion. He *Glorified is He* protected it with the pelvic bones and made it suitable for receiving and preserving the sperm.

ثُمَّ خَلَقْنَا النُّطْفَةَ عَلَقَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْعَلَقَةَ مُضْغَةً فَخَلَقْنَا الْمُضْغَةَ عِظَامًا
فَكَسَوْنَا الْعِظَامَ لَحْمًا ثُمَّ أَنْشَأْنَاهُ خَلْقًا آخَرَ فَتَبَارَكَ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنُ الْخَالِقِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

And then We made that drop into a clinging form, and We made that form into a lump of flesh, and We made that lump into bones, and We clothed those bones with flesh, and later We made him into other forms — glory be to God, the best of creators! [14] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 14)

The scholars say that after forty days the drop of sperm turns into a blood-clot [germ-cell]. It is named such because it clings onto the womb's membrane. Scientists have named this the zygote which is in reality a small fertilized egg which begins to take nutrients.

From amongst the wonders of Allah's creation of the human being is that if a woman is not pregnant, she menstruates and if she becomes pregnant she does not menstruate. Why is this? This is because the menstrual blood exits when it has no function and the mother does not benefit from it. As for when she becomes pregnant, by the power of Allah *Glorified is He* it turns into nutrition for the new foetus.

Then He, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and then We create out of the germ-cell an embryonic lump...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14). This is a small piece of flesh the size of a morsel of food. We have previously said that the embryonic lump is thereafter split into that which is complete in itself and that which is incomplete as He, Allah *Glorified is He* said in another verse: '...then out of an embryonic lump complete [in itself] and yet incomplete, so that We might make [your origin] clear unto you...' (*al-Hajj*: 5). This verse explains this stage in detail whereas in the verse we are currently studying He informs of the developmental stages of creation in general. This is so that we do not suspect that the Quran repeats itself as some people claim.

The complete embryonic lump is the one from which limbs and features are formed. As for the incomplete one it remains as a precaution in case of damage to the body, just as when injuries occur, the incomplete one will fulfil its precautionary role.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: '...We create within the embryonic lump bones, and then We clothe the bones with flesh – and then We bring [all] this into being as a new creation...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14) because in all these stages he was: a drop of sperm, then a blood-clot, then an embryo, then flesh and bones which was still connected to its mother taking food from her. Then, when Allah *Glorified is He* wills that, it should be born, it separates from its mother in order to take on life by itself. This is why we find that the moment the foetus separates from its mother during labour it confronts a difficult problem: that it will face an independent existence in which it will have to use its bodily systems for the first time, the first of which is breathing.

It is from Allah's mercy that the first part of the foetus that comes out [of the womb] is the head: this is so that it is able to breathe. Thereafter the rest of the body comes out. If the opposite was to occur, the feet coming out

first, then it is possible that the baby can die. This is because it separates from its mother while still being dependent on her and is thus unable to breathe to maintain its new independent life. This is why in such a case the doctor will resort to a caesarean section to save the foetus's life and prevent it from choking to death.

Since the story of the creation of the human contains many lessons and signs throughout the stages which the human goes through, it was appropriate that the verse should end with Allah's statement: '...hallowed, therefore, is Allah, the best of artisans!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14) This is because when you stop and think about Allah's ability in creating the human you are not able to say anything except: Allah be praised and Praised is Allah *the Creator*.

Therefore, it is narrated that when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* recited this verse, 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'hallowed, therefore, is Allah, the best of artisans!' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said to the scribe: 'write it, for verily it has been revealed'.⁽¹⁾ This is because 'Umar's statement was a natural reaction to Allah's ability, His wondrous design and His unique creation. This is a type of harmony between the Arabic instinct and language and between the methodology of the Quran which was revealed in the language of its people.

It is said that Mu'adh ibn Jabal *may Allah be pleased with him* also uttered it.⁽²⁾ Similarly, another man 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd ibn Abu As-Sarh⁽¹⁾, however

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- (1) {A Hadith from 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him*: narrated by Ibn Abu Shayba and 'Abd ibn Humayd and Ibn Mundhir on the authority of Saleh Abu-Zayl that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said: '[I swear] by the One in Whose hand my soul is in, It was completed by that which you said O 'Umar'} [As-Suyuti narrates it in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* 6/92]
- (2) {From Mu'adh ibn Jabal. Narrated by Ibn Rahawayh, Ibn Al-Mundhir, Ibn Abu Hatim, At-Tabarani in *Al-Awsat* and Ibn Mardawayh on the authority of Zayd ibn Thabit who said: 'The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* dictated the verse: 'Now, indeed, We create man out of the essence of clay,' (*al-Mu'minun*: 12) until: '...a new creation...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14). Then Muadh ibn Jabal *may Allah be pleased with him* said: 'hallowed, therefore, is Allah, the best of artisans!' to which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* laughed. Mu'adh asked Him: 'What made you laugh O Messenger of Allah?'. He replied: It is completed as: '...hallowed, therefore, is Allah, the best of artisans!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14)}

with a different outcome since 'Umar and Mu'adh said it out of a wonder that Allah *Glorified is He* approved by His power and unique design.

As for Ibn Abu As-Sarh, he also said it out of wonder; however when his statement coincided with the statement in the Quran, he became conceited and began to claim that he was receiving revelation just as Prophet Muhammad. And why would he not since he had said that which the Quran did. Despite this he remained well mannered only claiming to receive revelation. However, his haughtiness increased and his delusion eventually made him say: 'I will reveal that which Allah *Glorified is He* reveals, thus Allah's existence is not necessary in this matter'. As a result he apostatized, Allah *Glorified is He* protect us from that! It was about him that Allah's statement was revealed: 'And who could be [more] wicked than he who invents a lie about Allah, or says, "This has been revealed unto me," The while nothing has been revealed to him? – or he who says, "I, too, can bestow from on high the like of what Allah has bestowed" ...' (*al-An'am*: 93).

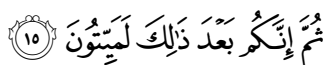
Ibn Abi As-Sarh remained until the conquest of Mecca when 'Uthman *may Allah be pleased with him* interceded on his behalf to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When he saw 'Uthman's desire to release Ibn Abu As-Sarh, he remained silent. When 'Uthman *may Allah be pleased with him* took him and left, The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his companions: 'Was there not amongst you who would finish him off?' They said: 'O Messenger of Allah, if [only] You had nodded (i.e. You had signalled us to do this)'. Look at the logic of prophecy: he *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'It does not befit a Prophet to have treacherous eyes.'⁽²⁾ In other words, this kind of behaviour is not appropriate for

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- (1) He is 'Abdullah ibn Sa'd Abu Sarh Al-Qurashi Al-Amiri from the clan of Amir ibn Lu'ayy the conqueror of Al-Ifriqiya. He accepted Islam before the conquest of Mecca and was one of the scribes of the revelation. He was the right-hand man of 'Amr ibn Al-'As when Egypt was conquered and become its governor after him for a period of twelve years. All of Al-Ifriqiya was under his control. He defeated the Byzantines in the battles of Dhat As-Sawari in the year 34 (A.H.) Died in the year 37 (A.H.). [*Al-I'lam* by Az-Zawkali4/89]
 - (2) Related by Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* (2683) and *An-Nasa'i* (7/1060) from the narration of Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas *may Allah be pleased with him*. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said: "Was there not amongst you a guided man you would kill =

Prophets. If you had done it on your own accord, then there would not have been a problem.

After that, ibn Abu As-Sarh believed and became a good Muslim. He later became the governor of Egypt, led the conquests in Africa, and ended the riot that was raised in Nubia. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* had kept him in store for this important affair.

After the wonder we felt in the [discussion of] stages of man's creation, his coming to life, and the affirmation that Allah *Glorified is He* is the best of creators, He *Glorified is He* reminds us that this life is not everlasting. He *Glorified is He* says:



Then indeed, after that you are to die [15]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 15)

You may ask: how does the True Lord *Glorified is He* inform us about the stages of creation and follow it by the stages of death and resurrection? We say: Allah *Glorified is He* put them together so that you may confront life knowing and remembering the thing that will end it. This is so that you do not become haughty nor heedless of the ultimate end; planning your life on this foundation.

Similar to that is His statement: 'Blessed is He in whose hand is dominion, and He is over all things competent. [He] who created death and life to test you [as to] which of you is best in deed – and He is the Exalted in Might, the Forgiving.' (*al-Mulk*: 1-2) It is as if He *Glorified is He* announced our death before He gave us life. He mentioned death before life so that you may face life and death, not being deluded by the worldly life but working for that which comes after death.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* addressed His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying: 'Indeed, you are to die, and indeed, they are to die' (*al-'Ankabut*: 30).

= him as I had refrained from giving him the oath of allegiance?' They said: 'We do not know, O Messenger of Allah, what you hold inside. If only you had signaled with your eyes'. He said: 'It does not befit a Prophet to have treacherous eyes.'

‘After that’ means after all the stages of creation which have passed: starting with the creation of the first human from soil until He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Blessed, therefore, is Allah, the best of creators!’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 14)

The one who ponders upon this verse will notice that though it talks about death, an event that no one doubts, the True Lord *Glorified is He* begins it with the word ‘indeed’ ‘Then indeed, after that you are to die’. It is known that emphasis is required when encountering a denial, but in the case of no denial, emphasis is not required. Despite this, when He spoke about the Resurrection, an object of doubt and denial, He *Glorified is He* said:

ثُمَّ إِنَّكُمْ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ تُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

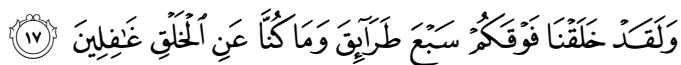
**and then, on the Day of resurrection,
you will be raised up again [16]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 16)**

He did not say: you are to be resurrected as He said: ‘you are to die’. Why does He, then, emphasise the affair about which there is general agreement while not emphasising the affair about which there is denial?

This is because the speaker is Allah, the One Who sees that you are heedless of death despite its clarity. Thus, since you are heedless of it, it is as though you deny it. This is why He emphasised it. This is also why it is said: ‘I have never seen a certainty more resembling of doubt than people’s certainty of death’. Everybody knows and experiences death, yet they distance it from themselves and do not ever imagine it to befall them.

As for the Resurrection, its proofs are clear and undeniable. This is why the verse does not include an emphasis. The proofs of the Resurrection are too clear for the intellect to deny. This is why I will make a general statement regarding it without resorting to emphasis. As for the one who doubts or denies it, we will emphasise the speech.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**And We created seven levels above you: We are
never unmindful of Our creation [17]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 17)**

We observe in this chapter that the number seven holds secrets which we must ponder. In the introductory [passages] of this chapter He *Glorified is He* mentioned seven types [of people]: 'Truly, to a happy state shall attain the believers; those who' (*al-Mu'minun*: 1-2).

We find that the developmental stages through which the human passes are seven: essence of clay; then a drop of sperm; then a blood-clot (germ-cell); then an embryonic lump; then bones; then flesh and then bringing [all] this into being as a new creation.

Here, He says: 'And We have created above you seven layered heavens.' In another verse, He says: 'It is Allah who has created seven heavens and of the earth, the like of them.' (*at-Talaq*: 12)

These seven targets an upper limit, the other seven are for the developmental stages of the human, and last seven for the heavens and the earth that have been created for mankind. 'The layered heavens' refer to the paths that are frequently travelled by the angels. So, look at the sky and its breadth and say: glorified be the One who forged it.

You will notice that the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not mention the earth here. Why? This is because we are firmly established upon the earth and so do not fear any harm from it. Rather, we fear that the sky may fall upon us. This is why He *Glorified is He* said, immediately after: 'and never have We been of [Our] creation unaware'. Thus, We will not be unmindful of the sky above you, rather, We will uphold it by Our hands as He *Glorified is He* said: 'Indeed, Allah holds the heavens and the earth, lest they cease. And if they should cease, no one could hold them [in place] after Him. Indeed, He is Forbearing and Forgiving.' (*Fatir*: 41)

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us a sensory proof for [the truth of] this verse. How does Allah *Glorified is He* hold the sky above us

without any pillars? It is similar to the bird which Allah *Glorified is He* upholds in the sky: 'Do they not see the birds above them with wings outspread and [sometimes] folded in? None holds them [aloft] except the Most Merciful' (*al-Mulk*: 19).

We know that the bird flies in the sky by using its wings to push against the air, thus defying gravity and not falling just as the swimmer whose arms push against water in order to swim. Still, when the bird contracts its wings it remains in the sky without falling, who is it then that upholds it in this instance? You always see this image never doubting it. Thus, when I tell you that I uphold the skies from falling upon the earth, believe it, and use that which you witness in the sensory realm as a proof for this matter of the unseen realm.

In His statement: 'and never have We been of [Our] creation unaware,' it is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying: be at peace concerning the sky above you, as I have put in place binding safeguards which ensure your continued safe existence under its canopy. Be at peace because it is in Our hands and under our care.

But, what is the meaning of '[Our] creation'. Does it refer to mankind or the creation of the sky? It means: We are not heedless of the sky, thus We have put in place systems and an order which protects you and guarantees your safety.

Heedlessness is to abandon something because it has escaped one's mind. This can never be true in the case of Allah *Glorified is He* since He is overtaken neither by drowsiness nor by sleep.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً بِقَدَرٍ فَأَسْكَنْتَهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَإِنَّا عَلَىٰ ذَهَابٍ بِهِ لَقَادِرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

And We sent water down from the sky in due measure and lodged it in the earth — We have the power to take it all away if We so wish [18] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 18)

Concerning water, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And We have sent down rain from the sky in a measured amount'. Are the skies the storage place of water? No, the storage of water is the earth, as is [mentioned] in Allah's

saying: 'Say, "Do you indeed disbelieve in He who created the earth in two days and attribute to Him equals? That is the Lord of the worlds. And He placed on the earth firmly set mountains over its surface, and He blessed it and determined therein its sustenance in four days without distinction – for [the information] of those who ask.' (*Fussilat*: 9-10)

When the Creator *Glorified is He* summoned man to this existence, he places upon the earth the necessary elements for the preservation of life: air, food, and water. We said previously that man is able to withstand a lack of food, but less so a lack of water. As for air, he is not able to do without it. This is why the Power of Allah did not make anyone sovereign over it, being the most basic and necessary element of life. Thus, the atmosphere and the air which encompasses the earth are part of what is meant in His statement: 'and determined therein its [creatures'] sustenance.' The proof of this is that when one leaves the earth's atmosphere, they are deprived of air.

It is from the Creator's divine power and wisdom that He made the water on the earth salty. This is because salt is the base material used in the removal of putridity from things. Fresh water is exposed to change and putrid, it is only by salt that we can remove corruptive elements; we put it in our food to preserve it and use it in tanning of leather, etc.

This is why a poet said:

O men of religion, O salt of the land

Who will rectify the salt if it is corrupted?

Thus, the original storage of water is earth. It falls upon the earth after a process of evaporation which cleanses the water, making it safe for drinking and irrigation. We said that the Creator *Glorified is He* made the portion of water on the earth greater than the portion of dry land, so that the process of evaporation could take place [successfully] allowing enough rainwater to form in order to meet the needs of the earth's inhabitants.

It is from Allah's mercy towards us that the rainwater falls 'in measured amount' in accordance to its need. If it were to fall all at once, it would be a devastating storm as experienced by the people of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* and the people of Ma'rib. In another place He *Glorified is He* says: 'And there

is not a thing but that with Us are its depositories, and We do not send it down except according to a known measure' (*al-Hijr*: 21). Then He *Glorified is He* says: 'and settled it in the earth' so that we can meet our needs from the rainwater. The remaining rainwater seeps into the earth, as He *Glorified is He* said: 'and then causes it to travel through the earth in the shape of springs' (*al-'Ankabut*: 21). From amongst the wonders of Allah's power is that ground water takes different courses such that freshwater does not mix with saltwater despite the fact that water is distinguished by its malleability. Those that dig up wells also find many wondrous things including freshwater neighbouring saltwater, and even in the middle of the sea, this phenomenon is found. Each has its own current, separate from the other.

Underground water is a natural storage for water which we can extract when needed. It also comes to our aid when the water available on the surface of the earth is depleted: and settled it in the earth'. It is a reserve for when the need for it arises. If the rain dries up, you are able to extract it.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* reminds us of His ability to remove this blessing: 'And indeed, We are Able to take it away'. This means use this blessing in a way that will not expose it to being removed. In another place, He said: 'Say, "Have you considered: if your water was to become sunken [into the earth], then who could bring you flowing water?"' (*al-Mulk*: 30)

When you count the blessings of Allah which He has bestowed upon us, beginning with water: 'And We have sent down rain from the sky in a measured amount' you will find that they are also seven. It is clear this number has many secrets in this chapter. Therefore, the scholars have deeply investigated this number.

While I was a professor of the *Shari'a* College in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, I remember being with a number of professors including the leader of our delegation ash-Sheikh Zaki Ghayth *may Allah have mercy upon him and forgive him*, the leader of the delegation of educational affairs Professor Salah Bek Al-Baqir and the Kingdom's Sheikh of scholars during that time, As-Sayyid Ishaq 'Azuz, who would gather us every night in the hotel he was staying in, and we would study some issues of knowledge. In one such

gathering Ash-Sheikh Ibrahim 'Atiyya raised the question of this number in the Noble Quran. While reading the Tafsir of Al-Qurtubi, he found the following: 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab said to Ibn 'Abbas *may Allah be pleased with them* 'O Ibn 'Abbas, do you know when the Night of *Qadr* is?' Ibn 'Abbas *may Allah be pleased with him* replied: 'It is most likely on the twenty-seventh night'. When we heard this, we said we were talking about the number seven whereas the story refers to the number twenty-seven. When we disagreed, Sheikh Muhammad Abu 'Ali *may Allah lengthen his life* suggested that we go and pray in the Noble Sanctuary instead of the hotel, acting by the way of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Anytime we came across a serious issue, he would get up for prayer and we would say: 'perhaps Allah will disclose to us the truth of this matter.'

After finishing praying, we sat to debate the issue. All of a sudden there appeared a man unknown to us, who resembled the dervishes, unconcerned about himself, sat next to us listening to what we were saying. Then he participated in the conversation and said: 'Did the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* not say: "Seek it out in the last ten of *Ramadan*"⁽¹⁾? So: take the first twenty away and only consider the last ten.' We then looked around but could not find him. It was as if he was trying to say that the Night of *Qadr* is only found in these ten and thus the twenty-seventh would in fact be the seventh night. This is also from amongst the secrets of this number. 'But above everyone who is endowed with knowledge there is One who knows all' (*Yusuf*: 76).

May Allah lengthen the lives of those mentioned who remain with us and forgive those who died?

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

(1) *Related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (2021) from the Hadith of Ibn 'Abbas and by Muslim in his Sahih (1166) in the Book of Fasting: On the authority of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him with the wording 'I was shown the Night of Qadr, then one of My wives woke me and I forgot it. So seek it out in the last ten.'*

فَأَنشَأْنَا لَكُمْ بِهِ جَنَّاتٍ مِّنْ نَّحِيلٍ وَأَعْنَبٍ لَّكُمْ فِيهَا فَوَاقِهِ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

**With it We produced for you gardens of date palms
and vines, with many fruits there for you to eat [19]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 19)**

A garden is a place concealed by lofty trees and plants which conceal whoever traverses within it. Thus, he does need other than it to fulfil the requirements of life. It is therefore perfect in that it suffices him. He chose these types of plants and trees 'palm trees and grapevines in which for you are abundant fruits' because of their importance to the Arabs. Thus, He also said 'abundant fruits' because they did not comprise all types.

وَشَجَرَةً تَخْرُجُ مِن طُورِ سَيْنَاءَ تَنبُتُ بِالدَّهْنِ وَصَنِيعٍ لِلْأَكْلِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

**And a tree, growing out of Mount Sinai, that
produces oil and seasoning for your food [20]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 20)**

Sinai is a beautiful place because Allah blessed it. It was upon the mountain At-Tur that Allah *Glorified is He* spoke to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. It is a blessed place, just as Allah blessed the land of Jerusalem. He said: 'Exalted is He who took His Servant by night from Al-Masjid Al-Haram to Al-Masjid Al-Aqsa, whose surroundings We have blessed, to show him of Our signs' (*al-Isra*: 1).

'Produces oil' refers to the olive tree from which olive oil is extracted. 'And food for those who eat'. It is taken as a condiment, eaten with bread. It is the most sought after and tasty food in Sinai and the Levant (Ash-Sham), where olives are cultivated. We tasted this famous delicacy in Lebanon when we went there during the olive harvest.

وَأَنَّ لَّكُمْ فِي الْآلَنَعِمِ لَعِبَةً تُسْفِكُكُمْ مِّمَّا فِي بُطُونِهَا وَلَكُمْ فِيهَا مَنَافِعُ كَثِيرَةٌ وَمِنْهَا تَأْكُلُونَ ﴿٢١﴾

**There is a lesson for you in livestock: We produce milk for
you to drink from their bellies. And they have many other
benefits: you eat them [21] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 21)**

Livestock such as buffaloes are appended to cattle since they did not exist amongst the Arabs. A lesson is something about which one ponders and

draws evidence with regards to the power of Allah and His unique design in the creation of livestock.

But what is the lesson to be drawn from the creation of livestock? The True Lord *Glorified is He* spoke of the creation of man, who is created from the elect material of soil and from sperm and so on regarding all the developmental stages of his creation. In livestock, you can see something of this choosing. Livestock eat from here and there and gather different types of food; from this mixture comes dung, a substance which has a bad unbearable odour, and the blood of the animal is formed. From amongst the dung and blood, the Creator *Glorified is He* brings out pure milk. This is the process of extraction and purification.

We notice that the verse under discussion says: 'We give you drink from that which is in their bellies' because we take the milk from the female only. Then He *Glorified is He* says: 'and for you in them are numerous benefits'. We notice that the verse in the chapter of *an-Nahl* concentrated on the purification of the milk from amongst the dung and blood, whereas here, it concentrates on the other uses of livestock. Each verse takes an aspect of the subject and tackles it from a particular perspective. We clarify this point for those who claim there is repetition within the Noble Quran. Many verses address the same subject; this does not make it repetition. They are in fact different parts of a whole which form the foundation of a subject. Every part gives a particular lesson, such that if you were to put all these apparently repetitive parts together, they would give you a complete picture of the subject.

The uses of livestock are many. We take wool and fur from them. People used to make cloth, carpets, and tents, long before modern textiles were known.

Leather and bones are also some of the uses of livestock. He *Glorified is He* says: 'And Allah has made for you from your homes a place of rest and made for you from the hides of the animals tents which you find light on your day of travel and your day of encampment; and from their wool, fur and hair is furnishing and enjoyment for a time' (*an-Nahl*: 80).

'And from them you eat', He mentioned the eating of flesh as the final use because it is the final part of the animal which can be benefited from. We have mentioned previously that the animal which Allah has made

permissible for us to eat, if exposed to that which will remove its life, will raise its neck uncovering the place of its slaughtering as if it is saying: 'quickly, benefit from me before I die'.

About other uses of the livestock, He *Glorified is He* says: 'And they carry your loads to a land you could not have reached except with difficulty to yourselves. Indeed, your Lord is Kind and Merciful' (*an-Nahl*: 7). Thus, each verse talks about livestock giving us a piece of information, as part of the cohesion of the entire Quran.

وَعَلَيْهَا وَعَلَى الْفُلْكِ تُحْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٢﴾

**And you ride on them, as you do in ships [22]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 22)**

We mount the animals and load our goods on them. But since three quarters of the earth's surface is water, the True Lord *Glorified is He* also wanted to inform us that He also carries us upon the water 'and on ships you are carried'. Just as I (Allah) prepared mounts for you on the narrow, dry land, I also prepared for you that which will carry you on the vast waters.

Since this speech was about ships, it was appropriate to mention the one who has a connection to the ark – Noah *peace be upon him*:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَقَالَ يَنْقُورِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ مَا لَكُمْ مِنِّ إِلَهِ غَيْرُهُ أَفَلَا تَنْقُونَ ﴿٢٣﴾

**We sent Noah to his people. He said, 'My people, serve God,
for He is your only god. Will you not heed Him?' [23]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 23)**

After having informed us of the creation of man and animals, of some of the blessings which He bestowed upon us, the Quran began to inform us of the making of the ark. This is because someone may ask: what is the nature of the ark? Was it created from raw materials just like man and animals or did it grow like plants? The Creator *Glorified is He* clarified that it came into existence through divine inspiration: 'So We inspired to him, "Construct the ship under Our observation, and Our inspiration, and when Our command"' (*al-Mu'minun*: 27).

'Under Our observation', refers to the fact that it was a precise design. The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not leave His prophet to do whatever he wanted to. He followed him up, observed him and instructed him on the method of its construction and what materials to use. He *Glorified is He* said: 'And We carried him on a [construction of] planks and nails' (*al-Qamar*: 13). This refers to ropes by which they would tie the planks of wood together, or nails attaching the planks together.

However firm the planks of wood are made by coming together, there is no escape from gaps through which water can seep. How, then, is it possible to avoid this in the initial stages of building a ship? They say that the designer of a ship must firstly dry the wood very well before using it for building. Thus, when water drops on the wood after it has been built, this will cause the wood to expand, closing of any gaps and in turn preventing water from seeping through.

From amongst the wonders and miracles of the Quran regarding the building of ships is His statement: 'And to Him belong the ships [with sails] elevated in the sea like mountains' (*ar-Rahman*: 24). This type of ships did not exist when the Quran was revealed. Allah informed us of them, indicating that it is He *Glorified is He* who bestowed us with this blessing. He knew the levels that man could reach in the building of ships and that they would be firm and lofty like mountains.

Since this speech of ours is concerning ships, it is natural and appropriate that we should mention Nuh because He was the first one to be guided, by way of divine inspiration, to building the ark. He *Glorified is He* said: 'And We had certainly sent Noah to his people'. After having spoken about livestock and the ensuing benefits and blessings accruing from them—which like the earth will perish—the True Lord *Glorified is He* wished to give us an insight into the eternal life and its everlasting bounties which will not perish, He mentioned His methodology by which Nuh was sent—one of the most determined from amongst the Messengers.

Allah missioned Nuh to the recipients who are His people. Allah only sends a Messenger to people about whom He is concerned. How come they

do not pay Him any concern although being His servants whom He created and of them made His deputies on the earth?

The one who creates or designs something must place guidelines for its maintenance in order to give it its objective in life and fulfils its role in a complete manner. We previously gave the example – and Allah is the loftiest example – of the manufacturer of the fridge or television who prepares a catalogue containing information about installation, how to maintain it and how to repair it.

Thus, the One Who created man and made him His deputy on the earth has more reason to set these guidelines and safeguard His creation. This is why, in the Qudsi Hadith He *Glorified is He* says: ‘O son of Adam, I created everything for you, and created you for Me, so do not preoccupy yourself with that which belongs to you, over that which you belong to’, i.e. as long as everything belongs to you, works for you and fulfils its function then you must also fulfil the function for which I created you.

Therefore, your Lord set laws for your protection by saying do this and do not do that. You must comply by the commands and fulfil them because they are the secret of beauty in the universe, and the secret of felicity and harmony in life. You must also avoid the prohibitions because they will lead to ugliness and uncover the defects of the society. As for the affairs about which He provided no instructions, leaving you free to either do them or leave them because they do not lead to ugliness within the society. These affairs are called ‘the permissible things’. Allah has left them to your discretion and choice.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* summoned man to this universe, He created for him the essentials of life—such as food, drink, and air, as well as a means for the survival of the human race such as reproduction. The safety guidelines address these essentials. He organised and defined that which is permissible to eat and that which is prohibited saying: eat this and do not eat that; drink this and do not drink that. When we observe inventions of material things, we find that the inventor always defines the components of his invention; for example, a machine works at 110 volts and another works at 220 volts; this instrument runs on gasoline and this one on solar power. If you were to misuse these components, they would become dysfunctional. Similarly

– and Allah is the loftiest example – you must adhere to the laws and methodology of your Creator *Glorified is He* and not turn away from it otherwise your state will become corrupt and you will be unable to fulfil your function in life. Hence, if we wish to tread upon a steadfast reforming deputyship for which Allah created us, then we must adhere to the laws of safeguarding which our Creator *Glorified is He* placed for us.

This is why if you see a blatant defect in any aspect of life within society, then know that it is a natural result of leaving the methodology of Allah and breaking His laws. For example, if you see the poor, hungry and needy, know that there is a deficiency in fulfilling one of Allah's laws. Either they are lazy, not wanting to strive, or they are unable because of newcomers who have monopolized all wealth.

Some ask that since the True Lord *Glorified is He* prohibited certain things such as swine and wine, why did He create them? It is their fault for thinking that everything was created for consumption. This thinking is incorrect because Allah *Glorified is He* created these things in order to fulfil a function in life. It is not necessary that they be consumed. Allah created the swine in order to clean up the environment from filth; this is why you do not see it eat anything else. As for wine, it was not created as wine. It is sweet grapes which are eaten fresh, man interfered in its nature and spoiled it by making it into wine, turning that which was permissible into prohibited.

We return to Allah's statement: 'And We had certainly sent Nuh (Noah) to his people'. The word 'people' refers to men – a specific group within society – and not both men and women; the evidence for this is His statement: 'O you who have believed, let not a people ridicule [another] people; perhaps they may be better than them; nor let women ridicule [other] women; perhaps they may be better than them' (*al-Hujurat*: 11).

But was Nuh only sent to men and not to women? Nuh was sent to all of them. Only men were mentioned because they are the ones who will partake in the propagation of the religion, travel for it and convey it to women over whom they have guardianship. The importance of establishing the affairs of the universe and its rectification is dependent upon men. The meaning here is: 'His people' because He is from among them, he is trusted by them and His

earlier life is also known to them. If He was to say something to them, they would not accuse Him of lying. It is from Allah's mercy towards His creation that He sends one of them as a messenger to them. He *Glorified is He* said: 'Indeed, there has come unto you [O mankind] a messenger from among yourselves' (*at-Tawba*: 128). In this way, people are won over and familiarity is established as opposed to the scenario where the Messenger was a king, for example, then the people would feel estranged by Him.

Therefore, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was known as the Truthful, the trustworthy even before being sent with revelation. His past life was known to them, which was an incentive for them to believe in what He came with. How can it be that they believe Him in the affairs of this world, and not believe Him in what He conveyed regarding Allah?

'To his people' means: We did not bring to you a messenger from a different species nor from a different tribe; rather, we brought to you a messenger from amongst yourselves. You know his past, his life and as a result will be more receptive to that which He brings, not as enemies to Him. Or the meaning could be: to people from Him because they will not be responsible for the rectification of life's affairs until they listen to His methodology. They would be from Him because they take the methodology of Allah from Him.

Then He *Glorified is He* said: 'and he said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him"'. He used 'O my people' out of affection for them 'worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him'. Worship is to obey the command of He who is worshipped. Worship necessitates the legal responsibility of commands and prohibitions. Divinity necessitates legal responsibility and worship. As for Lordship, then this necessitates giving and teaching i.e. sustenance. This is why He *Glorified is He* said: 'He is your Lord, and unto Him you will return' (*Hud*: 34). The Lord of you all: the believer, the disbeliever, the obedient, and the disobedient.

As we said: the sun, the moon, the earth, the rain, etc. serve all of humanity. There is no difference between a believer and a disbeliever. This is because this is the giving of lordship. If you asked a disbeliever who created him or who sustained him, the only thing he would be able to say is: Allah.

They should be ashamed for their honour and know that it is He alone who deserves to be obeyed and worshipped. The requirements of lordship and the belief in it necessitate that we believe in divinity.

Similarly, the infant, who grows under the care of his parents and becomes a youth, does not find other than them to fulfil his needs, remove him from harm's way or to stay up all night for his comfort. They do all of this with a good spirit and a content soul. They may even remain hungry so that you can be satiated, remain unclothed so you can be clothed, and deny themselves life's pleasures in order to give you a noble life. But when a child grows and reaches the age of puberty, we find him being disrespectful and disobedient towards them. He is taken away by bad friends who beautify rebellion against his father and mother.

We say to this unruly child: be ashamed and be humble; this is no way to repay your parents. Where were those friends when you were a boy and needed someone to depend upon? It is more appropriate that you only listen to those who do well by you.

This is an example of the Monotheism of Divinity and Monotheism of lordship – and Allah is the loftiest example – so how is it that you take the blessings of lordship from your Lord, but then rebel against Him in His divinity, disobeying His command, and denying His blessings. It is incumbent upon you to faithfully repay Him for His blessing.

You must know that your Lord *Glorified is He* has given you a trust by making you legally responsible for commands and prohibitions because you are His servant and creation. When you fulfil that which is incumbent upon you with regards to [His] divinity, Allah *Glorified is He* does not benefit an iota from it. The benefit returns to you. Likewise, if you were to [follow up] the affairs of obedience, worship and legal responsibility, you will find that they eventually are the blessings of lordship because they return to you with benefit.

So, we take commands and prohibitions to be legal responsibilities and burdens which are necessitated by faith and divinity. We say: yes, they are responsibilities from Allah, but they are for your own good. If you were just, you would find that divinity is from lordship. Thus, when the consumption of

wine is prohibited for you in order to protect the corruption of the intellect, does He *Glorified is He* benefit from that at all? This is why He *Glorified is He* says about them: 'And if you asked them, "Who created the heavens and earth?" They would surely say, "Allah"' (*Luqman*: 25). And He says: 'And if you asked them who created them, they would surely say, "Allah"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87).

As long as He *Glorified is He* is your Creator, your Lord, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, why do you disobey Him? Does your disobedience cause a decrease in His dominion? Does the obedience of anyone cause an increase in His dominion? Before creating you, the True Lord *Glorified is He* created all the necessities of life with perfection; He then summoned you to a universe which was suitable for your arrival and living. Thus, obedience and disobedience neither benefit nor harm your Lord *Glorified is He*. This is why He says in a Qudsi Hadith: 'O My servants, if the first of you and the last of you, the humans of you and the jinn of you were to have the heart of the most pious of you, it would not cause my dominion to increase a bit. And if the first of you, the last of you, the humans of you and the jinn were to have the heart of the most sinful of you, it would not cause my dominion to decrease a bit. And if the first of you, the last of you, the humans of you, the jinn of you, those of you who are present and those who are absent were to gather at a single plateau, and each one of you were to ask me his need and I were to fulfil it for you, it would not cause that which I possess to decrease except like the dipping of a needle by one of you into the seas. That is because I am The Generous, The Founder of existence and The Glorious. My giving is speech, My punishment is speech, and if I wish for a thing, I merely say "Be" and it is'.⁽¹⁾ Therefore, when you obey Me, good will return to you because by this obedience you have guaranteed another eternal life after this perishable one which will disappear regardless of how lavishly you live in it. Its pleasures will evade you, either by death or by poverty. The pleasures of the hereafter, on the other hand, are everlasting and eternal; they will not evade you, nor will you evade them because it is a bounty which is never-failing and never out of reach.

(1) *Related by Muslim in his Sahih (2577), and At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan (2495) via a different chain on the authority of Abu Dharr may Allah be pleased with him. The wording is At-Tirmidhi's who said: 'this is a sound Hadith'.*

This is why He *Glorified is He* said: ‘And indeed, the home of the Hereafter – that is the [eternal] life, if only they knew’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 64). And His statement: ‘Then will you not fear Him?’ This is a question which carries a threat and rebuke. But how can He rebuke them while they have only been ordered to worship Allah without displaying either obedience or disobedience? He saw them turning away so He ordered them to be fearful of Allah, which is to establish a protection between yourself and your Lord that guards you from His attributes of power and omnipotence. It will protect you from the causes of His force and vengeance. The protection which you establish between yourself and these attributes is your implementation of the methodology of Allah by obeying the commands and steering clear of the prohibitions.

From amongst the wondrous compositions of consciousness (*taqwa*) in the Noble Quran is His saying: ‘and fear Allah’ (*al-Baqara*: 194) and His saying: ‘fear the fire’ (*al-Baqara*: 24). They say: Yes, fear Allah and fear the fire because you are conscious or afraid of Allah because of the attributes of force and wrath which are attributed to Him. From amongst these is the fire. Thus, when you fear Allah by implementing His methodology, you are also fearful of the fire.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مِنْ قَوْمِهِ مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يُرِيدُ أَنْ يَنْفَضِّلَ عَلَيْكُمْ
وَلَوْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ لَأَنْزَلَ مَلَائِكَةً مَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

But the leading disbelievers among his people said, ‘He is merely a mortal like you, trying to gain some superiority over you. God would have sent down angels if He had wished; besides, we never heard of anything like this from our forefathers [24] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 24)

‘Eminent’ are the ones who fill the hearts of gatherings with awe, splendour, prestige and leadership. But why was it them who opposed Him with such vehemence? They say: because the methodology of Allah only came to rectify that which had become bad and deteriorated in the universe. The True Lord *Glorified is He* sends down a methodology upon the tongue of

the first messenger and demands from His people to convey the methodology of their messenger after Him. However, heedlessness overtook them making them leave the methodology in a number of ways: Of them are those who leave the methodology of his Lord, however he reproaches and blames himself and quickly repents and regrets. He thus rebukes and scolds himself internally. These are those who mixed good actions with bad ones.

Of them, too, are those who leave the methodology of their Lord with neither rebuke nor return. In our language, we call this type of person deprived in the sense that he lacks the reservation neither from the law nor from within himself. There remains after that the reproach of society: when he sees those who have left the methodology of the True Lord, he must resist them, cut them off, not love, nor respect them. Or else, if the corrupt and those who have embarked upon doing vile actions remain respected by the people and continue to have their status within society, they will persist in their sin, wasting themselves and society, causing society to descend into sin that amounts to widespread corruption and anarchy.

Do you not see that the wise sacred law made the blood money of murder payable by the family of the killer not just the killer himself? Why? It is because they will take their son into account if he begins to deviate or show signs of transgression, otherwise they will have to carry the burden of his misdemeanours.

We say: the 'eminent' were singled out because they are the ones who benefit most from evil and corruption in society. It is in their interest that these circumstances persist so that their temporary rule and status will remain. Therefore, they are the first ones who challenge the divine Messages with rejection and enmity. Did the True Lord *Glorified is He* not say of them in another verse: 'So the eminent among those who disbelieved from his people said, "We do not see you but as a man like ourselves, and we do not see you followed except by those who are the lowest of us"' (*Hud: 27*)?

The ones whom they call 'the lowest' are the oppressed, the poor, those concerned with the affairs of mankind, religion and morals. They gaze upon the Message once they hear it because it came to deliver them from oppression; this is why they are the first to have faith. If the methodology came to deliver justice for these people, then it also came to sever the oppression,

force and ascendancy of the people of power. It is now obvious why they challenge and reject it.

‘Those who disbelieved from his people said, “This is not but a man like yourselves’. The first thing that repelled them from the Messenger was the fact that He was a human. So, what is it that you were waiting for then? This meaning has been explained in His statement: ‘And what prevented the people from believing when guidance came to them except that they said, “Has Allah sent a human messenger?”’ (*al-Isra’*: 94)

It is necessary that the Messenger be from the species to which He is being sent, so that He can be a suitable model for them. They would thus imitate Him and be guided by Him. If the Messenger had come as an angel, how could He have been a suitable example? How could they obey Him, while, as you are well aware, as an angel he would not eat, drink, reproduce nor have carnal desires or the necessary components of disobedience?

Let us suppose that Allah sent to you an angel. How will you see Him and receive guidance from Him? He must, therefore, come in the form of a man so that you are able to see Him and properly receive guidance from Him. Thus, in the discussion of this issue, we come back to the fact that he must be a man. This is why He *Glorified is He* said: ‘And if We had made him an angel, We would have made him [appear as] a man, and We would have covered them with that in which they cover themselves’. (*al-An‘am*: 9) The contention would still remain. It is foolish to suggest that the Messenger should be an angel.

As for their statement: ‘is not but a man like yourselves’, we say: yes, he (the prophet of Allah) is a man, but not like yourselves. You are wrong in making this similitude because he is a man who has been chosen by Allah to receive revelation. This is why the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: ‘When guidance is taken from me I say: I am merely a human like yourselves. When I am given guidance by Allah, I say: I am not like any of you’. He *Glorified is He* says to the Prophet Muhammad: ‘Say, O [Muhammad], “I am only a man like you to whom it has been revealed that your God is but one God’ (*Fussilat*: 6). In this way, His preference lies in that He is a human to whom [the message] is revealed. His humanity is only for the sake of familiarity.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* follows up the statement of the disbelievers from the people of Nuh (Noah): 'who wishes to take precedence over you'. He wishes to attribute virtue, honour, and leadership to Himself so that they become His followers. 'And if Allah had willed [to send a messenger], He would have sent down angels', as messengers. Allah *Glorified is He* refuted this statement of theirs. He *Glorified is He* said: 'Say, "If there were upon the earth angels walking securely, We would have sent down to them from the heaven an angel [as a] messenger' (*al-Isra'*: 95).

Then they say: 'We have not heard of this among our forefathers'. They had never heard anyone saying: worship Allah, for you have no god besides Him, since our forefathers of old used to worship idols. No one prior to Nuh (Noah) came and said what he has said. This is proof that they are merely imitating their forefathers. They do not have independent thinking by which they look at things with a perception of truth and justice. In another place, He *Glorified is He* said about them: 'Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are, in their footsteps, following' (*az-Zukhruf*: 23).

If we ponder upon the state of societies, including the one in which we live, it will become apparent that their claim of following their forefathers is a false one. How is this? Ponder upon different generations and you will find that every generation has its own opinions, ambitions, and aspirations by which a son will differ from his father. Youth today have their own independent opinion. A youth will choose a college that he desires, cloth that he likes even if this disagrees with his parents' opinion. In fact, the matter may even reach a stage whereby the father is accused of being rigid and backward if he does not adhere to his son's decision. This is found in all generations.

Why is it then, that in such affairs you do not say: we found our forefathers agreed on what to believe? Why do you possess an identity of your own and independent thinking in matters of this life but not in the affairs of religion? You have an identity in those affairs that comply with your wishes, desires, and deviations. And you choose imitation in that which minimises your legal (religious) responsibility because legal responsibility will restrict these wishes and desires. This is why they rebel against the methodology of Allah. Thus, we are surprised when we see and hear this from our sons today and how the

reins of mothers and fathers have been set down. A youth will follow his desires in the deviated matters. If his father confronts him, he turns away from him and accuses him of being of an old generation whose time has passed. This affair is now also true of girls. They have also become rebellious against these values and no longer value them.

Thus, their saying: 'We have not heard of this among our forefathers'. They are also false in this statement because had they been truthful, they would have imitated their forefathers in everything; those things in their favour and those not, those of the affairs of this life and those of the affairs of religion, in values and morals. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* remedies this issue in a number of places in His noble book using different methods. From amongst them is His statement: 'And when it is said to them, "Follow what Allah has revealed", they say, "Rather, we will follow that which we found our fathers doing"' (*al-Baqara*: 170). This absolves them from the pains of legal responsibility. If worship is the worshipper's obedience of the commands and prohibitions of the one who is worshipped, then the worship of idols is very easy. This is because they are gods, as they claim, but they do not have a methodology nor do they ordain legal responsibilities. Then what is that an idol commands you to do? What has it prepared as reward for the one who has obeyed it? What has it prepared as punishment for the one who has disobeyed it? Thus, the one that is worshipped in this case is without methodology and legal responsibilities. This is proof of the falsehood of their worship of idols and of their other gods besides them.

Did they not say: '...We only worship them because they bring us nearer to Allah...'? (*al-'Ankabut*: 3) This is foolishness, absurdity and ignorance since their argument is illogical and does not stand. How do you say that you worship them while they do not introduce a way or legal responsibilities, while worship is manifested in the worshipper's obedience of the one who is worshipped? This is only emptiness and creedal bankruptcy. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* refutes them by His saying: '...Even though their fathers understood nothing and were not guided?' (*al-Baqara*: 170) In another place He *Glorified is He* says of them: '...they say, "What we inherited from our forefathers is good enough for us"...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104). This verse is

more expressive of their disbelief than the previous one because they increase the level of disbelief and persist upon it. In light of this, their statement: '...Nay, we follow the ways of our fathers...' (*al-Baqara*: 170) implies that they may recheck their stance and be guided to the truth and go against their fathers.

By contrast, here, they say: '...enough for us...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104), i.e. this is sufficient for us and we will not change it nor turn away from it. For this reason the end of each verse complies with its content. So, in the first verse Allah *Glorified is He* responds to them by saying: '...Even though their fathers understood nothing and were not guided?' (*al-Baqara*: 170) Whereas, in the other He responds to them by saying: '...even though their forefathers knew nothing and were not guided...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104).

The True Lord mentions reason in the former verse because the human deliberates about reason with his self. He mentions knowledge in the latter verse because the human deliberates about knowledge not only with his reason, but also with the intelligence inspired by this knowledge. Thus, knowledge is wider than reason. This is why He mentions knowledge with their saying: '...enough for us...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 104) which indicates exaggeration and persistence upon disbelief.

In their statement: '...we never heard of anything like this from our forefathers...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 24), we observe that heedlessness has become deep-rooted within them. This is because Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* is considered the fifth ancestor after Adam *peace be upon him*, so, there is a long period of time between them. How is it then that throughout this period they did not hear of a messenger or prophet who said: worship Allah, for you do not have any divinity besides Him?

إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ فَرَصَوُا بِهِ حَتَّىٰ حِينٍ ﴿٢٥﴾

He is just a madman, so let's wait and see what happens to him [25] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 25)

'He is just...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 25) i.e. He is not but. '...a madman...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 25). *Jinnah* means madness which is the concealment of the intellect, which has control over the human's actions in life. Thus, He is

directed by its laws: 'do this' and 'do not do that'. As for a madman, he does whatever comes to his mind without first submitting his actions to the faculties of thinking or reasoning. For this reason, it is from Allah's justice that we do not hold a madman accountable for his actions whenever he behaves badly toward someone by cursing or striking, for example. We are only able to smile back and pray to Allah that He protects us from the tribulation with which he has afflicted the madman. If this is the state of a madman concerning his actions, how can someone whose conduct is governed by and complies with the moral laws and values be considered mad? It is strange that the accusation of madness constantly circulates upon the tongues of those who deny the Messengers *peace be upon them* in every place and time. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was accused of it, so Allah refuted them and rejected it being an attribute of His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in His statement: 'Nun (the Arabic letter Nun) By the pen! By all they write! Your Lord's grace does not make you [Prophet] a madman: you will have a never-ending reward—truly you have a great moral character'. (*al-Qalam*: 1-4) How can someone who has a great moral character, then, be mad? If Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was, indeed, a madman why did they entrust Him with their savings and valuable items; why were they content with Him; and why did they name him 'the truthful' and the 'trustworthy'? They only did this because they knew of His character and that He was governed by firm values—based on truth and goodness—that cannot be shaken.

Since it is just a man possessed by jinn, '...so let us bear with him for a time.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 25) That is wait and leave him alone, for maybe he will come to his senses and leave this matter (of being a Messenger) by himself when He sees that we have left Him and are no longer concerned about what he does. Alternatively, let him do whatever he wishes, for if he is on the truth and Allah gives Him victory and brings His affair forth then we will follow Him, and if it is otherwise then know that we have turned away from Him since the beginning of the affair.

قَالَ رَبِّ اُنصِرْنِي يَمَا كَذَّبُون ﴿٢٦﴾

Noah said, 'My Lord, help me! They call me a liar' [26]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 26)

After His people had accused Him of lying He prayed to Allah to give Him victory. The words '...their calling me a liar' (*al-Mu'minun*: 26) mean: 'give me succour over their accusation of lying, and make their accusation improvable' so that I may have victory over them despite their accusation; 'or O Lord, compensate me for their denial with victory'. This is just like when we say: I bought this for this; I took this in exchange with that.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَاَوْحَيْنَا اِلَيْهِ اَنْ اَصْنَعِ الْفُلَكَ بِاَعْيُنِنَا وَّوَحَيْنَا فَاِذَا جَاءَ اَمْرُنَا وَفَارَ التَّنُوْرُ
فَاَسْلُكْ فِيْهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ اِثْنَيْنِ وَاَهْلَكَ اِلَّا مَنْ سَبَقَ عَلَيْهِ الْقَوْلُ مِنْهُمْ
وَلَا تَخْطِبْنِي فِي الَّذِيْنَ ظَلَمُوْا اِنَّهُمْ مُّغْرَقُوْنَ ﴿٢٧﴾

And so We revealed to him: 'Build the Ark under Our watchful eye and according to Our revelation. When Our command comes and water gushes up out of the earth, take pairs of every species on board, and your family, except for those on whom the sentence has already been passed – do not plead with me for the evildoers: they will be drowned [27]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 27)

Allah *Glorified is He* answered the prayer of His prophet Nuh *peace be upon him* by giving him victory over His people and commanded him to build the *fulk* (ark). *Fulk* is a ship and in Arabic it refers to the singular and plural. He *Glorified is He* says: 'So We delivered him and those with him in the laden ark.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 119) Here He says: *fulk* (ark). Allah also says: '...you see the ships ploughing their course so that you may seek Allah's bounty and be grateful.' (*Fatir*: 12) Here He says: *fulk* (ships). Thus, once it refers to the singular, and in another time, refers to the plural.

Allah says: *be'a'yonina* (Our watchful eye). His statement: '...under Our watchful eye and according to Our inspiration...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 27) is

proof that Nuh *peace be upon him* was not, as some claim, a carpenter. If He was truly a carpenter, his own intellect would have directed him in designing the ark. However, he designed it through the inspiration of Allah, by his directions and under His care. Just as He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and planned that you should be reared under My watchful eye.’ (*Ta Ha*: 39) Here He says: *ala ayni* (My watchful eye). The meaning is: design the ark, I will give you success in its design and guide you towards how it should be, and will correct you if you err in any of its design. Thus, I have commanded you, aided you and followed you up. Inspiration is the secret address of Allah to His Messenger.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...When Our command comes and water gushes up out of the earth...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 27). Here the wording did not include the indifference with which Nuh *peace be upon him* built the ark and which was mentioned in Allah's statement: ‘So he began to build the Ark, and whenever leaders of his people passed by, they laughed at him. He said, “if you laugh at us, surely we too laugh at you as you laugh (at us).”’ (*Hud*: 38) This is because they did not have an idea of the reason of building the ship.

In another place the True Lord *Glorified is He* teaches us of how it was designed. He says: ‘We carried him along on a vessel of planks and caulked with palm-fibre’ (*al-Qamar*: 13). He says: *alwah wa dusur* (planks and caulked with palm-fibre).

We said previously that the word *dusur* are ropes by which the planks of wood are drawn together when they are dry. They are brought together tightly in a special way, such that if water was to fall upon them it would cause the wood to expand in size filling the gaps between the planks. This is similar to what we see in the production of oil barrels which are built from pieces of wood. In this manner, someone built a boat out of papyrus using ropes instead of nails and travelled with it to America.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...When Our command comes...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 27), i.e. by saving the believers and destroying the deniers ‘...and water gushes up out of the oven (the earth)...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 27).

A *tannur* is, literally, an oven which is used to bake bread. It is said that it had been inherited by Nuh from the days of Adam *peace be upon them*.

Gushes up with water means that water comes out of it. Originally it is a place from which fire come forth. So, when water comes out of it, it is as though it is boiling. Will all the water, mentioned in the verse, come out of that *tannur* (oven)? Water, will gush up from all over the earth, and descend from the sky. The bubbling of the *tannur* is a signal declaring the start of this grave phenomenon. If this occurs: ‘...put into the ship from each [creature] two mates...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 27). He says: *fasluk* (put into) meaning: bring aboard and carry upon (the ark) a pair, male and female, from every species of creation. Also, He says in His statement: ‘What has brought you into hell-fire?’ (*al-Muddaththir*: 42) Here, He says: *salakakum* (brought you into) meaning: brought you into it. Allah *Glorified is He* also says: ‘...put your hand into the opening of your bosom...’ (*al-Qasas*: 32). He says: *usluk* (put... into) meaning: put it in. He *Glorified is He* says: ‘Thus, do We make it to enter into the hearts of the guilty...’ (*al-Hijr*: 12) He says: *naslukuhu* (make it enter into).

The words *fasluk*, *salakakum*, *usluk* and *naslukuh*’ are derived from the Arabic root *salaka* from which we have taken—according to our linguistic norms—different meanings. For example, we say: he (a plumber) *sallaka* (cleared) a pipeline or a spring, i.e. he slipped through it that which removes the blockage.

In ‘...from each [creature] two mates...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 27), Al-tanween added to the word *koll* made is pronounced *kollen* (from each) in the verse makes the word means: of each thing we desire protection and continuity of. This is because the flood will drown everything. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wishes to preserve the essentials of life for His believing servants— that which will serve them—from animals and all other types of life which give birth or ovulate.

Zawjayn ‘...two mates...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 27) is not as some think that *zawj* refers to two. *Zawj* refers to the singular and with it comes the other half. An example of this is in His statement: ‘...eight animals, in [four] pairs: a pair of sheep and a pair of goats— ask them [Prophet], “Has He forbidden the two males, the two females, or the young in the wombs of the two females? Tell me based on knowledge if you are telling the truth.” And

a pair of camels and a pair of cattle...' (*al-An'am*: 143-144). He thus named every individual from amongst these eight *zawj* (partner) because it is paired with its counterpart.

This applies to all creatures. As for humanity He does not say 'a pair' but says: '...and your family...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 27). However many or of which gender they may be. However, what about the kinship here, is it that of lineage or that of faith?

Here, the kinship referred to is the kinship of faith and adherence, the proof being that Allah *Glorified is He* explains this point in another verse. He says of Nuh *peace be upon him*: '...and said, "My Lord! Surely my son is of my family"...' (*Hud*: 45). So His Lord said to Him: '...O Nuh! Surely he is not of your family; what he did was not right...' (*Hud*: 46).

Thus, the sonship (being a son) to prophets is a sonship of conduct and adherence. If those sons happen to be of the Prophet's progeny it is good, and if he is not of the Prophet's own progeny it is just as good. This is why the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said of Salman al-Farsi *may Allah be pleased with him*: 'Salman is from amongst us, the people of the house'.⁽¹⁾ Thus, he went beyond being a Muslim to being one of the people of the Messenger Muhammad's house.

It is as though Allah says: Also bring aboard it your family. The proof of them being intended is that he made exceptions from them: '...excepting those on whom sentence has already been passed...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 27). Nuh *peace be upon him* had two wives, one which disbelieved in him and betrayed him along with her son Kan'an. She is the one mentioned in Allah's statement in the chapter of *at-Tahrim* (the chapter of Prohibition): 'Allah has given examples of disbelievers: the wives of Noah and Lot who married two of Our righteous servants but betrayed them...' (*at-Tahrim*: 10).

Kan'an is the one who said: 'I will seek refuge upon a mountain which will protect me from the water.' This point is not mentioned here because

(1) Narrated by Al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak* 3/598 from the Hadith of Amr ibn 'Awf Al-Muzani. Adh-Dhahabi and Al-Ajluni in *Kashf Al-Khafa* 1/558 said: its sanad (authenticity) is weak.

the events of this story are sporadically mentioned in the Quran, such that if they were all gathered together they would give a general picture of the story. You could ask: why did it not come altogether as in the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*?

We say: the story of Yusuf *peace be upon him* is mentioned all in one place so that the True Lord *Glorified is He* could give us an example of a complete tightly woven story which indicates His ability of narrating a story in one go for whoever wishes that to be manifest. So, if you desire a complete story, know that We are capable of accomplishing this—here is the story of Yusuf *peace be upon him*. The purpose of narrating stories in the Quran is to make the heart of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* firm. The True Lord says: ‘...We sent it in this way to strengthen your heart [Prophet]; We gave it to you in gradual revelation...’ (*al-Furqan*: 32).

This is because Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* faced accusations of lying, enmity, and rejection from his people. He was exposed to severe adversities and would thus need something to console him and strengthen him in the face of those events. This is why different parts of stories in the Quran are found dispersed in many positions. In this way, they could be a consolation for the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as well as a relief for him every time he is exposed to one of those adversities. By bringing these sporadic parts together a whole story is formed.

Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* brought his other believing wife and children, Sam, Ham, Yaphet (Japheth) and their wives, aboard with him on the ark. These six, besides Noah *peace be upon him* and his wife make eight. They were accompanied by seventy-two believers, and carriers of the foundations of the faith that was being preserved by Nuh *peace be upon him*.

As the judgment—of drowning those who disbelieved from amongst his family—could not be appealed against, the True Lord follow this by saying: ‘...Do not plead with Me for those who have wronged—they will be drowned.’ (*Hud*: 37)

We may ask: whom did they wrong? They wronged themselves when they disbelieved in Allah. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...attributing partners to Him is a terrible wrong...’ (*Luqman*: 13).

It is true that when someone disbelieves, they deny Allah's right of being One, being the Only, being existent; there being no other than Him to be worshiped, and attribute all of that to other than Him. However, this wrongdoing does not harm Allah a bit. In fact, it harms the disbelievers since they have wronged themselves. The height of folly is for a human to wrong himself.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

﴿فَإِذَا اسْتَوَيْتَ أَنْتَ وَمَنْ مَعَكَ عَلَى الْفُلِكِ فَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ الَّذِي نَجَّيْنَا مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ﴾ (28)

And when you and your companions are settled on the Ark, say, "Praise be to God, who delivered us from the wicked people" [28] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 28)

The phrase '...are settled...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 28) once you and those who are with you have ascended and boarded the ark and once your heart is content with the salvation of the believers who are with you, '...say, Praise be to Allah...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 28). It is appropriate that the believer receive the blessings of Allah with praise such that the blessing does not make him forget the Majesty of the one who gave the blessing. The moment everything on the ark has settled and you feel assured, hasten to praise Allah.

In another verse He *Glorified is He* says: 'When trouble befalls man he cries out to Us, whether lying on his side, sitting, or standing, but as soon as We relieve him of his trouble he goes on his way as if he had never cried out to Us to remove his trouble. In this way the deeds of such heedless people are made attractive to them.' (*Yunus*: 12)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is giving us a fortification by making Himself an example for us; such that if our good deeds are met by ungratefulness by someone, we would not become angry. This is because people are ungrateful even to Allah *Glorified is He*. This is why when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said: 'O Lord I ask You to forbid that I be accused of what that is not in me.' i.e. that people do not accuse me unfairly. His Lord *Glorified is He* replied to him: 'O Musa, How can I do that for you when I have not even done so for Myself'.

Thus, this cannot be sought by anyone. If every single person who does good were to hold a grudge against people for being ungrateful, it would lead to a corrupted state. Moreover, people's interests would not be taken care of and kind people would withhold their good. This is why Our Lord *Glorified is He* set a model of Himself.

If a person is sensitive, he does not only behave ungratefully; rather, he goes beyond that; he hates and maintains resentment against those who have been kind to him. This is because human beings have a natural propensity for self-love, haughtiness, and arrogance. Thus, if a person meets anyone who treats him with kindness, he dislikes the latter, because his kindness overwhelms his own arrogance and curbs his haughtiness.

Therefore, they say: 'Beware of the evil of the one to whom you have done good'. Why? Because though he wishes to exercise his haughtiness, your mere presence overcomes his conceitedness. Thus, customize yourself that favours can be denied even if the doer is The Lord of Glory *Glorified is He*. Consequently, do not be saddened when your kindness is met with ungratefulness.

One poet⁽¹⁾ said about this:

The needy people move behind you in humility

Yet, once their need is fulfilled, they leave you behind and take flight

The best of them, when you are mentioned in evil,

Would keep silent, without refuting, while he could have slandered

So, do not quit doing good regardless of their ungratefulness

For verily the reward of Allah is more Increaseable and is abundant

Thus, the meaning of the verse is: once you and those who are with you have ascended, and things on the ark have settled, beware of becoming deluded, turning aside, withdrawing yourself and forgetting to praise Allah for this blessing. This is why when we board a vessel or vehicle we are ordered to say: 'In the Name of Allah be its run and its riding at anchor' because we will not run it due to our skill and power, rather, in the Name of

(1) This is from the poetry of Ash-Sh'arawi.

Allah who has inspired, in the Name of Allah who has aided and in the Name of Allah who has watched over and taken care of us. As long as we remember the Giver of blessings when receiving them and recognise the Giver of bounty while enjoying them, He will keep it for us.

Beware of denying Allah His favours, and attributing them to yourself like the one who said: ‘...“This wealth was given to me on account of the knowledge I possess.”...’ (*al-Qasas*: 78) If you maintain this attitude, then protect and preserve these favours yourself.

Even when mounting an animal, He *Glorified is He* teaches us to say: ‘Limitless in His glory is He who has made this subservient to our use, since—but for Him—we would not have been able to attain to it. Hence, verily, it is unto our Sustainer that we must always turn’.⁽¹⁾

In His statement: ‘...who saved us from the wrongdoing people’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 28) He mentions saving because the fear of harm precedes the acquisition of benefit.

After that, the Lord of Nuh (Noah) teaches him another supplication to pray with when the ark settles and he disembarks it in order to get on with his new life on earth:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَنْزِلْنِي مُنْزَلًا مُبَارَكًا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الْمُنْزِلِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

**And say, “My Lord, let me land with Your blessing:
it is You who provide the best landings” [29]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 29)**

In another place, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And it was said, “Noah, descend in peace from Us, with blessings on you and on some of the communities

(1) Narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* 1342 The Book of Hajj from the Hadith of Ibn 'Umar may Allah be pleased with them that when the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him climbed His camel to go on a journey He would magnify Allah three times and say: ‘Limitless in His glory is He who has made (The Quran, all) this subservient to our use – since (The Quran, but for Him,) we would not have been able to attain to it. Hence, verily, it is unto our Sustainer that we must always turn’. Ahmad has also narrated this in his *Musnad* 2/144, 150.

that will spring from those who are with you...” (*Hud*: 48)—this is because you will disembark it, as it is not your living abode.

In the same vein, the Prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* supplicated as the Quran relates: ‘Say, “My Lord, make me go in truthfully, and come out truthfully, and grant me supporting authority from you”’ (*al-Isra*’: 80). Thus, when mentioning a blessing you must also mention the one who gave it. When some are envied by others for the blessings that Allah has granted them, be sure that when they received the blessings, they did not remember and say the name of the One who has given them those blessings. If a person when receiving a blessing, in terms of his fortune or children, says: ‘That which Allah wills! There is no power but with Allah!’ he, thus, puts the blessing under the protection of the Giver he would guarantee the longevity of the blessing and protection of it from the evil eyes of enviers, for he has placed it under the law of divine protection.

So ‘...land with your blessing...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 29). If something is blessed—when bestowed upon you—it gives way more than its natural capacity. An example of this is when someone with a basic salary lives a good life and gives his children a good education. It causes people to ask: ‘how did he afford all this? Indeed, it is the blessings that reside in something small making it plentiful. It is true that the income is small, but the smallness of the expenditure makes it plentiful.

Also take the example of someone who seeks provision through *halal* (permissible) means. Allah makes his affairs easy and fulfils his needs with very little cost. If his child falls ill Allah cures him with a simple Aspirin tablet and a cup of tea. He is not alarmed by the illness because his heart is tranquil, his soul is content, and he is trustful of Allah’s assistance. As for the one who earns from *haram* (unlawful) means and takes bribes etc. if his child falls ill, he rushes to the doctors and fears the worse. If he takes ten in bribes he will end up spending a hundred (for the treatment). We have said previously that this blessing is an inverse sustenance—it doesn’t increase your income, instead, it decreases your expenditure.

‘...You are the Best of all who bring to land’” (*al-Mu'minun*: 29). We may ask: is the True Lord the best to bring to land, or the only One Who

does this? It is permitted to say about a servant of Allah that he is an accommodator or harbourer when he provides comfortable accommodation to someone, by housing him, for example, in a comfortable apartment or receiving him as a guest. If you, a human, are such a harbourer, then know that Allah *Glorified is He* is the best harbourer because He when he provides accommodation, He does so according to His *Glorified is He* ability, generosity and giving.

Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not withhold from describing His creation as He describes Himself. Consequently, He attributes the ability to create to them, saying: ‘...glory be to Allah, the best of creators.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 14) He affirmed for you (humans) the attribute of creation because you bring a non-existent thing into existence despite the fact that you do this only through something Allah had already brought into existence. For example, you can make a glass from sand and fire. However, that which you bring into existence is inanimate; it does not grow nor reproduce, and it does not have life. Despite this, your Lord calls you ‘a creator’. He also says: ‘...though you are the best of inheritors’ (*al-Anbiya*: 89). He also says: ‘...and Allah is the best of schemers’ (*Al-Imran*: 54). Just as Allah *Glorified is He* did not withhold these attributes from you, do not withhold from Him that He is the best harbourer, the best of inheritors, the best of schemers, and the best of creators.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ وَإِنْ كُنَّا لَمُبْتَلِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

**There are signs in all this: We have always put [people]
to the test [30] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 30)**

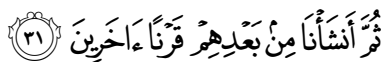
‘In all this...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 30), i.e. in what has preceded ‘...there are signs...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 30), i.e. lessons, exhortations and wonders. If a man was to ponder upon them with impartial reason he will end up with good. ‘...We have always put [people] to the test.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 30) So, do not think that the trials are exclusively for oppressors and disbelievers, those whom He seized with penalty and destroyed. Trials may befall someone

who does not deserve it. When Allah tests the people of good and righteousness, He does so in order to increase their reward, to raise their station and to purify their faith through testing them.

Take, for example, the trials that befell the first Muslims. They were not ordained for them out of detestation or vengeance. Rather, they were intended for their purification; for the manifestation of their firm unshaken faith. This is because they would be the ones to carry the propagation of Allah until the Last Hour. Thus, their filtration and purification through trials were necessary. Just as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'Do people think they will be left alone after saying "We believe" without being put to the test?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 2)

No, trials are necessary to distinguish the truthful from those who worship Allah as it were, upon the very edge (irresolutely). These must fall off the realm of *da'wa* (propagation). Only the firm believers who are not shaken by challenging events should remain. Accordingly, the statement: '...We have always put [people] to the test.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 30) refers to the people of faith who do not deserve punishment, yet they are afflicted with trials because Allah likes to raise their stations and test their faith. Thus, they can become fit for the propagation to Allah. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith: 'By My Honour and Majesty, I will not cause a servant of mine for whom I have desired good to leave the world until I expiate the bad deeds he has done, either by causing illness in his body, loss in his wealth or by taking a child of his. If a bad deed, yet, remains I make the pangs of death heavy upon him until he comes to Me as the day his mother gave birth to him—By My Honour and Majesty, I will not cause a servant of mine for whom I have desired bad to leave the world until I expiate the good deeds he has done, either by giving him physical health, or blessings in his wealth and children. If a good deed remains I will lighten for him the pangs of death until he comes to Me without any good deeds.' Thus, just as calamities can be a form of vengeance for the disbelievers and oppressors, they can also be a form of benefit, a test of faith and a means of reward.

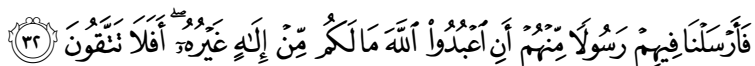
Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**Then We raised another generation after them[31]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 31)**

That means after the people of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*. We said that a *qarn* (generation) is a period of time in which people are drawn together due to their similar life experiences and interests. The scholars have concluded that a *qarn* (generation) is either equivalent to a hundred years, or the length of a dynasty however long it lasts or the length of a prophetic message however long it lasts. All of these are defined as *qarn* (generation).

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**And sent one of their own as a messenger: 'Serve God,
for He is your only God. Will you not heed Him?' [32]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 32)**

After the people of Nuh *peace be upon him* came the people of 'Ad. To them Allah *Glorified is He* sent our master Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him* as mentioned in the statement: 'To the people of Ad We sent their brother, Hud...' (*al-A'raf*: 65). He called them with the same call as Nuh *peace be upon him*: '...serve Allah, for you have no deity other than Him...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 32). He also said to them: '...Will you not heed Him?' (*al-Mu'minun*: 32)

Thus, the message of all the Messengers *peace be upon them* is one and unified as He *Glorified is He* says: 'In matters of faith, He has laid down for you [people] the same commandment that He gave Nuh, which We have revealed to you [Muhammad] and which We enjoined on Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses) and 'Isa (Jesus): "Uphold the faith and do not divide into factions within it"...' (*ash-Shura*: 13).

The religion of Allah is one. All the Messengers and Prophets came with it. What then is the meaning of the Lord's statement: '...for every one of you did We appoint a law and a way' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48)? We say: this is true because doctrines and foundational principles are static, they do not change: 'Worship Allah alone: you have no deity other than Him.'

As for the way and the law which is concerned with jurisprudence, this is the realm of difference between the Messengers. This is because these are affairs which are concerned with daily life and the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives every society—through the messenger sent to them—that which is most appropriate for it and that which will remedy its weaknesses.

Ash-shari'a is the law that governs people's daily life. As for the *din* (faith), it is the unchanging affair of Allah *Glorified is He* which no one is able to alter in the slightest. This is why the scourge of the previous nations was that they divided themselves up into many different sects and parties. It is about these peoples that Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'As for those who have divided their religion and broken up into factions, have nothing to do with them [Prophet]'. (*al-An'am*: 159)

Ponder upon '...have divided their religion...' (*al-An'am*: 159). He did not say 'divided their way or laws of legislation'. That is because the faith of Allah is one. As for the way or laws of legislation, they are the realm of differences which change according to the ills of society. Some of these peoples worshiped idols, some cheated the scales (in trade), whilst some denied the favours of Allah...etc.

We have previously clarified that the difference in ills between these societies was a result of the isolation that distanced them from one another. Thus, although they lived at the same time they were ignorant of one another. As for the message of Islam, the final universal message, it came at a point of co-existence and interconnectedness between civilizations. Accordingly, whatever happened in the northernmost point will be known in the southernmost point. This is why the ills of societies became one and the same. Hence, one final messenger came with a legislation which is suitable for all times and places until the Last Hour.

The scourge of the Muslims has been in the blind fanaticism which causes them to raise interpretive issues—in which Allah has given His servants a degree of freedom and choice—to the level of foundational principles and doctrine in which no interpretative differences are admissible. By doing so they are quick to judge others and accuse them of disbelief at the mere difference of opinion in interpretative affairs.

We say: it is from Allah's mercy in this matter that He made the foundational principles one and the same. As for the branch issues and interpretive affairs which are derived from the understanding of *mujtahid* (qualified jurist) these have been left by Allah to the people of understanding. It behoves each and every one of us to respect the opinion of the other, the proof of this being the True Lord's statement: '...if they referred it to the Messenger and those in authority among them, those seeking its meaning would have found it out from them...' (*an-Nisa'*: 83). Otherwise, if the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted, He would not have allowed for our interpretation in anything and all the affairs of the religion would have been mandatory leaving no room for anyone's opinion or interpretation. As for the True Lord *Glorified is He*, His wisdom willed that He should mandatorily unite us upon affairs, of a nature, that if we were not to agree upon them, they would become corrupted. As for the affairs that accept many perspectives, He left to the interpretation of His creation. We must therefore respect the opinions of others and not to respond shamelessly to them. Rather, we should respect what Allah has chosen for us in terms of freedom of thought and interpretation.

The example we look up to concerning such conduct is the biography of the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the predecessors of this *ummah* (nation) at the battle of Al-Ahzab. When the wind blew towards the camp of the disbelievers, uprooted their tents, dispersed their ranks and when they fled from the battlefield, the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* left for Medina. It was not long before His Lord ordered Him to go to Banu Qurayzha to discipline them. He *Glorified is He* informed Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that the angels were still prepared and that they had not yet laid down the weapons of war. So, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gathered the companions and said to them: 'Whosoever believes in Allah and the Last Day should not pray the *asr* (afternoon) prayer except in Banu Qurayzha'.⁽¹⁾

(1) Agreed upon Hadith. Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih 4119 and by Muslim in his Sahih in the Book of Al-Jihad wa As-Sayr 69 from the Hadith of Ibn 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with them* that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* called amongst them on the day of Al-Ahzab: 'Nobody should pray the noon prayer *Zhuhr* except in Banu Qurayzha' and in another narration the afternoon prayer '*asr*'.

The Companions went towards Banu Qurayzha between *asr* (afternoon) and *maghrib* (sunset). Amongst the companions were those who feared that the sun would set before them having prayed the afternoon prayer and so they prayed on the way. Others adhered to the command of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by not praying except in Banu Qurayzha, even if the sun had set. This difference took place between the Companions of the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and in His presence. However it was only a jurisprudential difference. Afterwards, when they raised the issue to the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He concurred the opinion of both sides and did not reject the interpretation of either side.

In essence, in interpretative issues we must respect the opinion of others. This is why the '*ulama*' (scholars) and the people of balanced thought say: 'my opinion is correct but could be wrong, while the opinion of the other is wrong but could be correct'. If only the Muslims would rid themselves of this grave error which has divided them and weakened their influence amongst other nations! If only they would always remember the statement of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'As for those who have divided their religion and broken up into factions, have nothing to do with them [Prophet].' (*al-An'am*: 159)

In the same vein, when speaking of ablution, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'You who believe, when you are about to pray, washing your faces and your hands up to the elbows, wipe your heads, wash your feet up to the ankles...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6), we notice that Allah says: 'wash your faces' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6) without setting the limits of the face. Why? This is because there is no difference in peoples' understanding of what constitutes the face. However, for the arms He says: '...and your hands up to the elbows...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6). He defines the arm as 'up to the elbows' because it is debatable. Some people say the arm is up to the shoulder, some say it is up to the elbow, while some others say it is merely the hand. This is why our Lord *Glorified is He* defines it in order to take us out of the sphere of difference with regards to the washing of this limb. If He *Glorified is He* had left it without defining it in this way there would have been permissibility in the affair: everyone would wash their arm as they saw fit. Similarly about the head He says: '...wipe your

heads...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6). He left it open to all the possibilities of the suffix *bi* in the word *biru'usikum* (your heads) which some see to convey a meaning of tangency; some consider it excessiveness, while others see it to convey a meaning of partialness.

Thus, when you encounter someone holding an opposing opinion to you in these types of affairs do not accuse him, because the texts have allowed for this difference. Allah has given him the right of interpretation just as he has given it to you.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* said:

وَقَالَ الْمَلَأُ مِنَ قَوْمِهِ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا وَكَذَّبُوا بِإِيمَانِ الْآخِرَةِ وَأُتْرَفَتْهُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا
مَا هَذَا إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِثْلُكُمْ يَأْكُلُ مِمَّا تَأْكُلُونَ مِنْهُ وَيَشْرَبُ مِمَّا تَشْرَبُونَ ﴿٣٣﴾

But the leading disbelievers among his people, who denied the Meeting in the Hereafter, to whom We had granted ease and plenty in this life, said, 'He is just a mortal like you – he eats what you eat and drinks what you drink [33]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 33)

We have spoken about the meaning of *mala'a* (the great ones). They are the elite and people of authority within a nation. They are annoyed by the faith-based way which eliminates their status and stands in the face of their transgression, control, and oppression of people.

'But the leading disbelievers among his people, who denied' (*al-Mu'minun*: 33), had just like what had happened with their predecessors from the people of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* '... the Meeting in the Hereafter, to whom We had granted ease and plenty in this life...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 33). The root *taraf* (ease) is similar to *farah* (joy). We say a man has ease in life when he has a bountiful life. If you add the letter a (in Arabic) it becomes *atraf*, then, it indicates that the blessing granted him ease, Allah granted him ease, i.e the blessing was the cause behind his transgression. Allah expanded the blessings for him so he can expand his transgression.

In the same vein, the True Lord says: 'So, when they had forgotten the warning they had received...' (*al-An'am*: 44), i.e. from the way of truth

‘...We opened the gates to everything for them. Then, as they revelled in what they had been given, We struck them suddenly and they were dumbfounded.’ (*al-An‘am*: 44)

This is such, so that seizing them with punishment would be more powerful, severe, and effective in its pain and woe. We have mentioned previously as a metaphor—and Allah *Glorified is He* is the loftiest example—that if Allah *Glorified is He* wishes to debase a denier of the truth, he does not do so from above a mat, (figuratively speaking), but does so from above a high chair; a lofty status so that the fall will be greater and more severe. For, if Allah seizes an ordinary person with punishment, a person that has no wealth, status or position over which he may lament, the matter would be of no real consequence. Alternatively, if Allah raises and elevates his station and makes his life easy, and then seizes him, there is no doubt that this is a seizure of one Exalted in Might and Perfect in Ability. This is more severe and more harmful.

Hence, ‘We had granted ease and plenty’ means we gave them generously and showered them with different blessings so they would increase in their disbelief and transgression. It is just as what Allah says: ‘So [Muhammad] leave them for a while steeped [in their ignorance]. Do they reckon that, by giving them wealth and sons, We race to give them good things? They really have no idea!’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 54-56) Allah *Glorified is He* extends the means of error and deviation to these people so that they increase in it and become deeply immersed in its sins, whilst We become deeply concerned with their punishment and revenge.

Then, the Quran relates to us the saying that is oft repeated on the tongues of all of these peoples with regards to the divine messages: ‘...He is just a mortal like you...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 33). It is as if this saying has become a standard for all those who belie the Messengers and reject the way of Allah. They reiterate the humanity of the Messenger by saying he: ‘...eats what you eat and drinks what you drink...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 33) Did the disbelievers of Mecca not say to the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘... “What sort of messenger is this? He eats food and walks about in the marketplaces...’ (*al-Furqan*: 7).

Glory be to Allah. Despite the fact that they are of different nations and lived many ages apart, it is as if they speak with one tongue. It is as they say: Disbelief is one cult. Then, the True Lord says:

وَلَيْنَ أَطَعْتُمْ بَشَرًا مِّثْلَكُمْ إِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لَخَسِرُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

And you will really be losers if you obey a mortal like yourselves [34] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 34)

‘You will really be losers if you follow a mortal like yourselves’. However, He is a mortal but unlike yourselves. He is a mortal who receives divine revelation. We do not follow his mortality; rather, we follow that which has been revealed to Him.

أَيَعِدُّكُمْ أَنْتُمْ إِذَا مِتُّمْ وَكُنْتُمْ تُرَابًا وَعِظْمًا أَنَّكُمْ تُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

How can he promise you that after you die and become dust and bones you will be brought out alive? [35] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 35)

They disbelieve in resurrection after death of which their prophet has promised them. However, what is the problem with the issue of resurrection? Is repeating something not easier than beginning it? If the Creator *Glorified is He* created you out of nothing, it is easier for Him to bring you back from your remains; though the word ‘easier’ is not an appropriate term to be used in reference to Allah *Glorified is He*. For, the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not carry out His actions through handling and practice; rather, He does so by the word *Kun* (Be). ‘Easier’ is just used to express the case in terms that people could comprehend.

هَيَّاتَ هَيَّاتَ لِمَا تُوْعَدُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

What you are promised is very far- fetched [36] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 36)

‘Very far-fetched...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 36) meaning *hay-hata* is a verbal noun which indicates that an affair is far-fetched. They said this about our returning after death after our bodies turn into bones and dust.

In Arabic, a word can be either an *ism* (noun), a *fi'l* (verb) or a *harf* (particle). A noun is a word that gives a meaning independently of itself which is not connected to time. So, when you say 'sky' we understand it to be that which is above you and shades you. A verb is a word that also gives a meaning independently of itself, but it is connected to time. So, when you say 'He ate', we understand what has been intended and that it is in the past tense. As for a particle, it is a word which does not give a meaning independently of itself. The particle *ala* (over/upon) conveys a meaning of superiority; however, the superiority of what? The meaning is thus not independent of itself. It needs something else to clarify it. Such are the words *fi* (in), *min* (from) and *ila* (to). Nouns, verbs and particles all have distinct characteristics by which they are known.

There is a fourth category which goes against this principle. This is why they (grammarians) refer to the verbal noun as *al-khalifah* (the *ansari*). An example is *hay-hat* which means to be far since it is a noun which conveys the meaning of a verb without taking on any of the characteristics of a verb. Similar to it are the words *shattan* which means (to be different) and *uff* which indicates being annoyed...etc.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says of them that they said:


إِنَّ هِيَ إِلَّا حَيَاتُنَا الدُّنْيَا نَمُوتُ وَنَحْيَا وَمَا نَحْنُ بِمَبْعُوثِينَ ﴿٣٧﴾

There is only the life of this world: we die, we live, but we will never be resurrected [37] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 37)

They ruled out the possibility of being resurrected. This is because they only believe in the life of this world. For them, everything is limited to it. 'There is only the life of this world...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 37). The Arabic word *in* is a particle of negation which means (it is not) as in His statement: '...they are not their mothers; their only mothers are those who gave birth to them...' (*al-Mujadala*: 2). He says: *in ummahatuhum* (their only mothers), i.e. none are their mothers save those who gave them birth.

Some may think that the statement, '...we die, we live...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 37) means that they believe in the resurrection since they said: 'we die', then, followed it by 'we live'. So, how could it be that they deny it? What is

intended here is: we die and the children we have left behind live on. The proof—that this is not their belief—is their statement thereafter: ‘...but we will never be resurrected.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 37)


 إِنَّ هُوَ إِلَّا رَجُلٌ افْتَرَىٰ عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا وَمَا نَحْنُ لَهُ بِمُؤْمِنِينَ

He is just a man making lies up about God. We will never believe in him [38] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 38)

That is the man, who informed you about resurrection is ‘...a man making lies up about Allah...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 38). This statement of theirs is strange for they are recognizing that Allah exists by acknowledging: ‘...making lies up about Allah...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 38). How, then, can He Allah exist without sending a message on the tongue of His messenger? How — without a messenger—would you come to know the way of Allah? They said: by reason. However, reason does not suffice in this affair.

We have previously given an example—and Allah is the loftiest example—suppose we are sitting in a closed chamber and the doorbell rang. We would all agree that there is someone ringing the bell at the door. This is what is called reasoning. However, we will disagree as to whether it is a man, woman, child or whether it is a bearer of good news or a warner. Accordingly, we agree when we do not go beyond the limits of reasoning, yet, how are we to know who is at the door? We allow the one at the door to reveal his or her identity when we ask: ‘who is there?’ He or she will reply ‘I am so and so, and have come for such and such a purpose.’ Who is it then who will inform of the outcome of the reasoning? It is the one who made the reasoning.

Likewise, your reason believes that the universe has a creator to whom the signs in the universe point. If you were to look at an electrical lamp which lights up a room and reflect on it, you would find that behind its making there are factories, tools, workers, engineers and designers. Despite all of this, it has a limited ability, has a contingent life span, and may even break or its light goes out for any reason.

Do you not look at the sun and reflect upon its signs and wonders, how it illuminates half the globe at the same time without breaking down and without needing any repairs or spare parts. Despite this, no one has claimed

it for themselves. Does this not indicate that behind this great creation is a greater creator?

Since we write records of the discoverer of electricity and the inventor of the light bulb, mentioning what they invented and how they reached it, is it not then worth searching for the creator of this wonderful universe?

If you tried to look at the sun directly during the day, your eyesight would become weak and you would not be able to see. If its heat was to become severe, nobody would be able to bear it. This is despite the fact that it takes eight minutes for the sun's light to reach us, travelling at 300,000 kilometres per second. What is this energy that emanates from the sun?

Moreover, from amongst its wonders are that you are able to feel its heat while on the surface of the earth. Yet, if you were to go on top of a mountain or a high altitude the temperature will drop despite the fact that you are in fact drawing nearer to the sun. The opposite happens when you light a fire: the temperature drops, the further you go away from it. As for the sun, the nearer you draw to it, the temperature drops. Who, then, is able to do this? What if somebody informs me that he is the creator of this sun? I would say to him: 'it is yours', until an adversary comes to claim it for himself. However, until now, there has not been anyone who claimed it for themselves.

Their saying: '...making lies up...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 38) is an exaggeration with regards to their messenger because making up lies is to deliberately lie; and lying, as we said, is when one speaks contradictorily to the truth. However, a speech can sometimes be contradictory to the truth, yet, it is true according to the speaker's knowledge. Thus, it is truthful in his eyes.

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي بِمَا كَذَّبُونِ

The prophet said, 'My Lord, help me! They call me a liar'[39] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 39)

Glory be to Allah! It is as if the history of the divine messages repeats itself with the believers. It is as if a cliché (stereotype expression) consistently repeated on the tongues of the Messengers: 'worship Allah for you have no deity besides Him', they accuse them of lying by saying: 'you are nothing

but mortals like ourselves.' The end is thus always the same: 'O my Sustainer! Succour me against their accusation of lying.' i.e. turn their accusation of lying into victory for me.

This was said by Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him* when His people accused Him of lying. It was also said by Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* when His people accused Him of lying. This is because when a Messenger is accused of lying, He only turns to the one who sent Him, because the one who sent him promised Him victory and succour:

'And the ones who support Our cause will be the winners.' (*as-Saffat*: 173)

Allah also says: '...Allah is sure to help those who help His cause...' (*al-Hajj*: 40)

Allah He *Glorified is He* says: 'Our word has already been given to Our servants the messengers: it is they who will be helped' (*as-Saffat*: 171-172)

The meaning is: 'give me victory as You are the one who sent me. My people have accused me of lying after I exerted all that is in my power to call them to You. I have no power against them. I only have Your help.' When a person expends all that Allah has granted them without reaching his goal, he becomes helpless. He falls under His statement: '...Who is it that answers the distressed when they call upon Him?' (*an-Naml*: 62)

Therefore, do not seek succour in Allah until you have fulfilled your own responsibilities and exerted all efforts to reach your goal. However, do not ignore the means and say: 'O Lord, Fulfil my wishes!' The world is subjugated to you; the axe (the means) is in your hand; you have health and power. So expend your resources'. Do not say this until you have become that desperate person whose prayer Allah answers.

This is why we hear many people say: I prayed to Allah, but He did not answer my prayer. We say to them: you did not pray the prayer of the desperate. You prayed the prayer of someone who has the means at hand but is lazy to use them. This is why your prayer is not answered.

We see this even amongst us humans—and Allah has the loftiest example. Suppose that you are a wealthy person and own a business and you have just received a delivery of imported goods. You closely observe the

workers as they store away the goods. It is not your job to carry and store the goods. This is the job of the workers. However, suppose you see a worker who is finding his load heavy such that the weight of the box is almost causing him to fall. How will you react? You will, no doubt fear for him, take his hand and help him. This is because he has done all he could and has expended his means. You will not, therefore, hold back your assistance.

In this way your Lord *Glorified is He* wants you to fulfil your responsibilities and to expend all the means at your disposal. This is because the means are Allah's outstretched hand to His creation. So do not reject Allah's hand which provides you with the means in order to seek self-fulfilment without expending the means.

This is why the Messengers who were accused of lying said: '...The prophet said, 'My Lord, help me...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 39) not because I am just sitting, languid and careless but '...against their calling me a liar' (*al-Mu'minun*: 39), i.e. I have done everything in my capacity, but I have nothing more I can use against them.

The response comes immediately:

قَالَ عَمَّا قَلِيلٍ لَيُصْبِحُنَّ نَادِمِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

And so God said, 'Soon they will be filled with regret' [40] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 40)

A'mma qalil means after a while. The Arabic word *ann* used here has the meaning of (after) just as in His statement: 'you will progress from stage to stage' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 19). *Tabaqan* '*ann tabaq* mean: stage after stage.

'...Soon they will, in the morning, be filled with regret.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 40): When their accusation of lying will fall upon them and the punishment will befall them they will regret it. This is because they will not be able to rectify for that which has passed them. They will not have anything except for regret. This issue exemplifies to us the human nature: if it is not mixed with whims, it ends up by being on the truth. If anger leads it to falsehood, it then balances out when the tumults of anger subside.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us proofs and indications of this concept in the story of the two sons of Adam *peace be upon him* by saying:

‘[Prophet], tell them the truth about the story of Adam’s two sons: each of them offered a sacrifice, and it was accepted from one and not the other. One said, “I will kill you”, but the other said, “Allah only accepts the sacrifice of those who are mindful of Him”’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 27).

The story develops until He *Glorified is He* says: ‘But his soul prompted him to kill his brother...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 30). This murder was thus a consequence of anger. It should have been that this murder calmed him and made him happy since he had carried out that which he desired. However he ‘...became remorseful.’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 31) meaning that: after the outburst of anger within him had subsided, he regretted what he had done. Why? This is the nature of the human soul which is not led into inordinacy or taken out of its balance except by whims. If whims leave it, it returns to steadfastness and the truth. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* created measurements within the human being which should not be corrupted by whims and which should not be taken out of moderation by anger. This is why they say: the scourge of opinion is the whims.

Qabil (Cain) awoke from his heedlessness, but only after seeing the consequence of the evil deed which he arrived at due to his rashness. Those who are intelligent, however, awake before reacting.

However, why did He choose the morning specifically: ‘...Soon they will, in the morning, be filled with regret’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 40). He says, *latusbehunna* (will, in the morning, be).

The one who traces what happened to the belying nations who denied their Prophets finds that the punishment and vengeance wrought upon them usually took place by morning. Allah *the Most High* says, ‘Do they, then, [really] wish that Our punishment be hastened on? But then, once it alights upon them, hapless will be the awakening of those who were warned [to no avail]!’ (*as-Saffat*: 176-177) Allah *the Most High* also says, ‘And early in the morning the decreed punishment came upon them’ (*al-Qamar*: 38). He *the Most High* says, ‘Then in the early morning they called out to one another’ (*al-Qalam*: 21).

Simply, the morning follows the time of sleep; they arise and the punishment catches them by surprise. It suddenly befalls them when they have no way to escape. Unlike the punishment of daytime when people are

conscious, at this time, they regret their disbelief and denial of the Prophets, which brought calamities upon them. Human regret for loss of good things is natural; man is sometimes overcome by desire and deluded by absurdity to reject the truth. It is arrogance that prevents people from submitting to a prophet under pretexts that he is a human like them. They falsely think that he seeks for power or authority over them. However, when they face the consequences of their belying and absurdity, they become regretful. Alas, too late is that hour of remorse! Therefore, self-arrogance leads a human being to regret when overcome by painful punishment in return for his/her disobedience. In this situation, one regrets arrogance and self-conceited, which she/he had to give up. It is wisely said that 'ultimate bravery is to act prudently and cautiously at times of danger.' For example, when you face an enemy and cannot defeat him/her. We remember President Sadat's statement, 'I cannot fight America.' Some people understood it as a sign of weakness and cowardice. It is not. In fact, it is bravery; rather, a high form of bravery! Bravery shall first be against oneself to remove self-deception. This form of bravery is higher than showing bravery against enemies. Imagine, if Sadat had entered war and lost, how great would be his regret for having a whimsical bravery apart from considering the consequences. We have witnessed the consequences of reckless decisions concerning wars!

Then the Lord *the Most High* says:

فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الصَّيْحَةُ بِالْحَقِّ فَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ غُرَاءَ فَبَعْدًا لِلْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

**And then the blast [of our punishment] overtook them,
justly and unavoidably, and We caused them to become as
the flotsam of dead leaves and the scum borne on the surface
of a torrent. Far distant from, and deprived [41]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 41)**

When the Lord *the Most High* promised and sets an appointed time for His Promise, the Promise must come true at its fixed time. If the promise does not come true—no punishment afflicts them, they would escape remorse and the principle itself will fail. As long as Allah *the Most High* has said it and divinely declared it in the Quran, He will maintain it. 'After a little while they

will surely be smitten with remorse!’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 40) Thus, the punishment must befall them in the morning. Therefore, ‘the blast [of Our punishment] overtook them, justly and unavoidably’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 41); it is not transgression or injustice. In another context, He *the Most High* says, ‘As for ‘Ad, they were destroyed by a storm-wind furiously raging’ (*al-Haqqa*: 6). The two meanings meet, since the storm-wind makes a scolding sound as if it is a blast and a scream. ‘We caused them to become as the flotsam of dead leaves and the scum borne on the surface of a torrent’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 41). The Arabic word *ghuthaa* refers to the floating rubbish, e.g. dead leaves, hay, remains of plants, etc. on the surface of a body of water. This light, yet valueless floating rubbish, on the surface of water is randomly carried away by winds. It is also identical with the valueless about which the True Lord *Glorified is He* says, ‘As far as the scum is concerned, it passes away as [does all] dross; but that which is of benefit to man abides on earth’ (*ar-Ra'd*: 17). The Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* said to His Companions: ‘The nations will call upon one another against you as food is caved in on its vessel’, i.e. they will call on one another to fight you as if you are booty that they want to carve up. The Companions said, ‘Is it because we will be small in number, O Messenger of Allah?’ He *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘In fact you will be great in numbers then, but you will be like the scum of the flood’ i.e. inconsequential and valueless, so can easily be defeated.”

The Lord’s statement: ‘Far distant from, and deprived (of, Our mercy) are the unjust and wrongdoing people’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 41) means that they are away from the Divine mercy and blessings, which We would have granted and promised them, had they believed in Us. The distance is not from punishment indeed. Distance may be in time or space. We usually say, ‘It is far i.e. in time or place’. The intention here is they are far from the blissful graces and bounties that they have won, if they had believed.

Injustice is, as previously said, to seize the rights of others. Polytheism is a grave form of injustice and wrongdoing. Some literalists say that polytheism is a grave wrongdoing because one rejects divinity and wrongs Allah by associating partners with Him, while He is alone with no partners. Yes, you have committed wrongdoing but against yourself; you did nothing to Allah. Simply, nobody can wrong Him, even if injustice is—as said—seizing the

rights of others unjustly. Actually, the rights of Allah are inviolable and established for Him before the existence of all and they are in need of no recognition from anyone. They are established no matter how widespread is falsehood or how arrogant are the people of misguidance! This is why He *the Most High* says, '[He] brought utterly low the cause of the disbelievers' (*at-Tawba*: 40), whereas 'Allah's Cause is always supreme' (*at-Tawba*: 40). He did not say in accordance with the first statement: [and made] supreme Allah's Cause because it implies that it may have passed a time when it was not supreme. Instead, it is 'Allah's Cause' in the nominative case to indicate constancy 'Allah's Cause is always supreme' (*at-Tawba*: 40). It is always supreme even if the cause of disbelievers may be temporarily high. Why? Evidently, the supremacy of disbelievers is in reality inspiring and awakening people to the supremacy of Allah's cause. If disbelief attains high supremacy with widespread evils and corruptions, people then open their minds and retain consciousness. They are alerted to the lowliness of disbelief and wrongdoing. As such, they reject that all and return to the right path and the firm truth of Allah *the Most High*. Thus, Allah's Cause is supreme despite the malicious efforts of disbelievers. Simply, the real beauty is only manifested in the presence of its opposite. Allah *the Most High* does not forsake the truth, but He leaves it to test human solicitude for it. If they do not guard it, then He does Himself. Since they have not wronged Allah — they indeed cannot, they have only wronged themselves. Injustice against others is comprehensible, but self-injustice and self-oppression is most repulsive and extremely grave.

ثُمَّ أَنشَأْنَا مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ قُرُونًا آخَرِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

**And after them We gave rise to new generations [42]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 42)**

A few verses previously the Lord *the Most High* said, 'after those [people of old], We gave rise to new generations' (*al-Mu'minun*: 31). The word generation in Arabic was mentioned in the singular form, since the topic was concerned with the nation of 'Ad—the people of Prophet Hud (Eber) *peace be upon him*. Now, He *the Most High* says, 'After them We gave rise to new generations' (*al-Mu'minun*: 42) because the forthcoming discussion will

explore a number of different nations and divine messages. He mentions the word generation in its plural form i.e. contemporary generations just as Ibrahim (Abraham) and Lut (Lot) *peace be upon them* were contemporaries, and Musa (Moses) and Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon them* were contemporaries.

Then the Lord *the Most High* says:

مَا تَسْبِقُ مِنْ أُمَّةٍ أَجَلَهَا وَمَا يَسْتَخِرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

**[For] no community can ever forestall [the end of]
its term, neither can they delay [its coming] [43]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 43)**

Reflect upon this verse well and give it your full attention. Every community has an appointed term at which it will come to an end. It is like the fixed term of individuals which does not forestall nor is it delayed. Generation passed after generation and community after another in different stages similar to human life. They end and others follow them. Every community has a messenger who brings them the Divine call and way of life. He strives to promote the call until Allah gives him victory when his mission is spread and people follow it. Then, people fall prey to spiritual decline and languor, which mislead them away from the way of Allah; they differ and split apart. This heralds the end of this community, only for another to take its place. The same goes true for civilisations, which grow weaker and finally are overcome by other stronger ones. We hear of the ancient civilizations of Egypt, China, Yemen, Rome, Phoenicia and many others. They come one after the other and take their share of ascendancy and luxury. Then, their status turned into weakness and decline. Their determination and strength turned into diffidence and idleness. They become unaware of the means of their ascendancy and progress, so their civilization is destroyed and another stronger one takes its place.

Here is an example of a great civilization that reached the pinnacle of majesty, 'Have you not seen what your Lord did with the [people of] 'Ad; the people Of *Iram* [City] with lofty pillars (erected as signposts in the desert). The like of which was not built in any land? And with [the people of] Thamud, who hollowed out rocks in the valley? And with Pharaoh of the [many] tent-poles? [10]' (*al-Fajr*: 6-10)

Until today we see the remains of the Pharaonic civilization. We see how people of modern civilizations are attracted to it and how it grabs modern attention. People from all corners of the world come to visit its monuments. However, the civilization of 'Ad was greater than it was; Allah *the Most High* says about 'Ad: 'The like of which was not built in any land' (*al-Fajr*: 6-8). Despite this, we find nothing of their remnants indicating that majesty. This civilisation did not have immunity by which it could protect itself or preserve anything. It suffered destruction and nothing survived to tell about it. The followers of messengers also go through the same cycle. After having strong faith, they would suffer weaker faith and deterioration until the Lord *the Most High* sends a new messenger. '[For] no community can ever forestall [the end of] its term, neither can they delay [its coming]' (*al-Mu'minun*: 43). Clearly, no community can forestall the term that Allah has appointed for it. It neither ends, nor suffers destructions until there comes its fixed time. However, Allah's statement 'Neither can they delay [its coming]' (*al-Mu'minun*: 43) means that no community can forestall its term, i.e. if its term is to be destroyed after twenty years, it cannot be destroyed in fifteen years. As for delaying it after reaching twenty years to further ten years, how can this be? In response, we say that they cannot delay, i.e. they cannot forestall their term, but it is already pre-judged that they could not be delayed; delaying the term beyond its fixed time is impossible. Just like when we say that someone who has reached the age of twenty is not able to die at the age of ten. It means that it cannot be delayed [once it has been reached]

ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا رُسُلَنَا تَتْرًا كُلَّ مَا جَاءَ أُمَّةً رُسُلُهُمْ كَذَّبُوهُ فَاتَّبَعْنَا بَعْضَهُمْ
بَعْضًا وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَحَادِيثَ فَبِعَدَا لِقَوْمٍ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٤٤﴾

And We sent Our messengers in succession: whenever a messenger came to a community they invariably called him a liar, so We destroyed them one after the other and made them into cautionary tales. Away with the disbelievers! [44]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 44)

The Messenger followed 'One after another' (*al-Mu'minun*: 44), so some have thought the word used here (*tatra*) is a verb, while in fact it is a noun, for

it ends with *nunnation*, which never exists in Arabic verbs. In addition, the first ‘t’ [in *tatra*] may stand for ‘w’ as narrated in the Prophetic statement, ‘Safeguard Allah and He will safeguard you. Safeguard Allah and you will find Him *tujahaka* or *wajahaka*, i.e. in front of you.’⁽¹⁾ If you change the first ‘t’ in “*tatra*” into a ‘w’, it becomes *witra*, which means following each other individually; each person after the other. *Witr* means an individual.

He *the Most High* says, ‘Every time their Messenger came to a community, they gave him the lie’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 44). Unfortunately, such was the normal answer of nations to their messengers. No messenger was sent but his people belied him, so he turned to his Lord, ‘[Whereupon the Prophet] would say, “O my Lord! Succour me against their accusation of lying!”’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 39) Accusing the Messenger is always indicative of the wickedness of his people and the necessity of his mission. Messengers only came after falsehood and transgression dominate. As such, Messengers had to endure the false accusations attributing them to lying at the hand of those who benefitted from evils and wickedness insomuch that they defend it with all their might. Their belying of Messengers is a proof of the necessity of Messengers. Otherwise, there would be no need for a new divine message.

Allah’s statement: ‘So We caused them to follow one another’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 44) implies that a messenger passed and another came in his stead or that we destroyed the beliers and then others came after them, who also belied the Messengers and suffered destruction.

‘Let them become [mere] tales’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 44): the Arabic word *ahadith* (tales/narrations/speeches) is either the plural of *hadith*, e.g., the narrations of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* or the plural of *uhdutha*, i.e. a story frequently repeated by people. It is said of someone who is constantly spoken of ‘they have made me a subject of rumour’, i.e. in a denigrating manner. As such, ‘let them become [mere] tales’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 44) as nothing remains except tales which remind of their historical events. In another place, He *the Most High* says, ‘We caused them to become [one of

(1) Ahmad, *Musnad*, (1/293, 303, 307); At-Tirmidhi, *Sunnan*, (Hadith Number: 2516). At-Tirmidhi said, “It is a good narration from ‘Abdullah ibn ‘Abbas.”

those] tales [of things long past] and scattered them in countless fragments...’ (*Saba’*: 19). The Lord *the Most High* says about them and their predecessors: ‘So – away with the folk who would not believe!’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 44); they are away from the Divine Mercy and Bounty which they would have enjoyed, had they but believed.

ثُمَّ أَرْسَلْنَا مُوسَىٰ وَأَخَاهُ هَارُونَ بِآيَاتِنَا وَسُلْطَانٍ مُّبِينٍ

**Then We sent Moses and his brother Aaron,
with Our signs and clear authority [45]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 45)**

The Quran repeatedly relates the story of Musa *peace be upon him* and His brother Harun *peace be upon him* for whom Musa said, ‘Add You through him to my strength, and let him share my task’ (*Ta Ha*: 31-32). Some people think that Musa *peace be upon him* came with only one message, but actually he delivered two messages; a special message for Pharaoh summarised in his saying, ‘Let, then, the children of Israel go with us and cause them not to suffer [any longer]’ (*Ta Ha*: 47). He came with miracles to confirm that His message was from Allah. The dispute Musa had with the Pharaoh about faith was not part of his message, but his debates necessitated it. The other message was for the Children of Israel, which is the Torah.

On Allah’s statement ‘with Our messages’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 45), we said that the word *ayaat* (i.e. verses, messages, signs, etc.) is the plural of *aya* which designates a wondrous thing which turns onlookers towards it. It is a sign of honour and pride for its owner. Signs are either celestial indicating the Divine Power in His creation, such as the sun and the moon; He *the Most High* says, ‘Now among His signs are the night and the day’ (*Fussilat*: 37). The function of celestial signs is to turn the attention of the creation towards the unique design of the Creator and the necessary faith in Him. It is through them that we know that there is a Great Creator and Power behind the unique universe. This Creator sustains and manages it. Who does sustain the sun with this extraordinary power? If the electric current disconnects, the lamp will go out. Who has created the sun out of nothingness and sustained

it with energy from nothingness? There lies a power behind this universe. What is it? What does it seek from us? The function of Messengers is to convey to us the answers to these questions. The word *ayah* also refers to the miracle, which confirms the truth of a messenger in his conveyance of the Divine Message. It also refers to the verses of the Quran, which reveal the divine laws and ways for the creation to follow.

Then Allah *the Most High* says, 'and a manifest authority [from Us]' (*al-Mu'minun*: 45). This sentence takes the same rule of 'with Our messages...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 45). Allah sent the message as well as the manifest authority. Here, the miracles stand for the *sultan* (i.e. compelling authority or power) since authority is proof. The proof of the highest existence lies in the universal signs, whereas the proofs for the truth of messengers are the miracles. The proofs of laws are the verses that carry them.

He named the staff, which was the miracle of Musa *peace be upon him* a manifest authority that is comprehensive because it was a miracle that kept repeating itself as seen in many contexts:

- In a situation, it turns into a snake and swallows other snakes
- On another occasion, it is used to strike the sea and split it.
- It is also used to strike a stone from which waters gush through.

He said of it: 'Many other uses have I for it' (*Ta Ha*: 18).

Sultan also designates the act of compelling someone to do something or convincing others with incontrovertible proofs to do that thing. As such, on the Day of Resurrection, Satan would say to his followers, 'I had no '*Sultan*' at all over you; I but called you and you responded unto me' (*Ibrahim*: 22), i.e. followed my delusions, but I have no authority over you, neither one of compulsion nor one of proof.

Finally, he also says, 'It is not for me to respond to your cries, nor for you to respond to mine' (*Ibrahim*: 22). A person only cries when something frightens them and they have no way out of it. They cry for someone to come and help them. The one who hurries to his aid is someone who has responded to their cries, i.e. has removed the cause of their cries.

إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا عَالِينَ ﴿٤٦﴾

**To Pharaoh and his prominent leaders, but they responded
with arrogance: they were a haughty people [46]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 46)**

‘Pharaoh’ is a title given to anyone who ruled Egypt, just like the title of Khosrau in Persia and of Caesar in Rome. We explored the meaning of ‘great ones,’ which is derived from ‘*mala*’ (i.e. to fill). It refers to the people who fill the eyes with awe and stature—the leading notables of a people. It is said, ‘So and so is the attraction of sight’, i.e. people always look at him.

Allah’s statement: ‘But these behaved with arrogance, for they were people wont to glorify [only] themselves’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 46). *Istikbaar* (arrogance) is different from *ta'ali* i.e. self-pride. In case of *Istikbaar*, one knows and recognizes the laws, but she/he refuses to obey it and disdains the idea of doing obeying the commands. As for *ta'ali*, one does not believe that she/he is subject to the ruling in the first place. As such, Allah *Glorified is He* addressed Iblis (Satan), when refusing to prostrate himself to Adam, ‘Are you too proud [to prostrate before another created being], or are you of those who think [only] of themselves as high?’ (*Sad*: 75) In reality, the lofty ones are the angels who are fully obedient to Allah *the Most High*; they know nothing of Adam *peace be upon him* and his children.

فَقَالُوا أَأَتَيْنُ لِبَشَرَيْنِ مِثْلِكَ وَقَوْمُهُمَا لَنَا عَبِيدُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

**They said, ‘Are we to believe in two mortals like us?
And their people are our servants?’ [47]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 47)**

Here they questioned the mortality of Musa and Harun *peace be upon them* following the footsteps of past nations. They angels sent as Messengers ‘Whenever [Allah’s] guidance came to them [through a prophet,] nothing has ever kept people from believing [in him] save their objection: “Would Allah have sent a [mere] mortal man as His Messenger?”’ (*al-Isra*: 94) It is absurd to ask for an angel-messenger; if the Messenger was an angel, how could he be a role model for humans? How would they see him and learn

guidance from him? Even an angel would have to assume a human form. Allah says, 'If We had appointed an angel as Our message-bearer, We would certainly have made him [appear as] a man – and thus We would only have confused them in the same way as they are now confusing themselves' (*al-An'am*: 9). The objection remains how to believe that he is an angel.

Allah's statement 'Although their people are our slaves' (*al-Mu'minun*: 47) relates their arrogance; how to believe in Musa and Harun, while their people—the Children of Israel—are our servants, and they obey our commands and we dishonour them, slaughtering their boys, putting their women to shame and humiliating them with a terrible punishment? They call it slavery because submission and humiliation imply slavery.

﴿٤٨﴾ فَكَذَّبُوهُمَا فَكَانُوا مِنَ الْمُهْلَكِينَ

And so they called them both liars: they became another ruined people[48] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 48)

They were drowned. This story is well known and famous since Allah made it a lesson and example for others.

﴿٤٩﴾ وَلَقَدْ ءَاتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَهْتَدُونَ

For, indeed, We had vouchsafed revelation unto Moses in order that they might find the right way [49] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 49)

The 'Revelation' here refers to the Torah as a way of guidance 'in order that they might find the right way' (*al-Mu'minun*: 49), i.e. take the way to a noble and beneficial point.

﴿٥٠﴾ وَجَعَلْنَا ابْنَ مَرْيَمَ وَأُمَّهُ ءَايَةً وَأَوَّيْنَاهُمَا إِلَى رَبْوَةٍ ذَاتِ قَرَارٍ وَمَعِينٍ

We made the son of Mary and his mother a sign; We gave them shelter on a peaceful hillside with flowing water [50] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 50)

After giving this short summary of the story of Musa and Harun, we move onto the Messiah—son of Maryam *peace be upon him*. When talking of

'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* the Quran sometimes call him 'son of Maryam' and at other times "Isa, son of Maryam'. As such, Maryam, His mother—the best of all women, wondered about the glad tidings of giving her a son. She said, 'How can it be while no man has touched me?' It did cross her mind that she may marry and have a child. Allah named him 'son of Maryam' after his mother, so he has no father. Nothing is more difficult for a young woman than to find herself pregnant, even though no man has touched her. The honour of a woman is the most valuable thing she has. The Lord *the Most High* [previously] prepared Mary *Allah's peace be upon her* to face this awkward situation. He fortified her with necessary defence to face this affair, just as we currently use immunization to ward off disease.

When Zakaryya (Zechariah) *Allah's peace be upon her* who was responsible for her, entered into Mary's prayer niche, he found that she had fruits in her possession which he himself had not brought. He asked, 'Whence came this unto you?' She would answer: "It is from Allah" (*Al-'Imran*: 37). Maryam's response reflects her sound understanding of the issue of sustenance. It was not a passing response, since she then said, 'Behold, Allah grants sustenance unto whom He wills beyond all reckoning' (*Al-'Imran*: 37). Here, there is a lesson for every father, guardian, and family leader; he should ask members of his family about everything he sees with them which he himself did not bring. He shall not allow his children to pursue that which is not rightfully theirs.

Zakaryya *peace be upon him* benefited from Maryam's statement. He became assured that Allah grants sustenance unto whom He wills beyond all limits, but this knowledge was on the periphery of his consciousness. When he heard Maryam *peace be upon her* his consciousness led him to pray for Allah to grant him a child despite his old age and barren wife. Maryam *peace be upon her* also benefited from it, because when she became pregnant—despite no man touched her—she was calm; she knew that Allah granted sustenance beyond all reckoning.

As for Allah's statement, 'And [as We exalted Musa (Moses), so, too,] We made the son of Maryam and his mother' (*al-Mu'minun*: 50), it refers to both 'Isa (Jesus) and Maryam. It uses the singular form 'a sign [of Our grace]' (*al-Mu'minun*: 50) because they share it. Maryam becomes a sign

after she reproduced without a partner and 'Isa is a sign for he was born without a father. It is not that only one of them is the sign, but they are equal in it. The Quranic text conveys this fact when referring to 'Isa first 'And [as We exalted Musa, so, too,] We made the son of Maryam and his mother a symbol [of Our grace]' (*al-Mu'minun*: 50) and to Maryam first in another verse '[We] caused her, together with her son, to become a symbol [of Our grace]' (*al-Anbiya*': 91). The text speaks of their equal status making no discrimination between them.

The sign is an extraordinary event affirming the absolute power of the Creator. No one should think that the process of reproduction is automatic and contingent upon parents. The Miracle of the creation of 'Isa *peace be upon him* was that he was an exception from that rule; Allah makes him a proof of His Omnipotence. Allah if He so wills can simply create from nothingness, or from a father only, or from a mother only. Sometimes both a mother and a father exist, but there is no reproduction. To sum up, the Divine Will and Ability know no bounds. He *the Most High* says, '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' (*ash-Shura*: 49-50).

As currently seen, people try to avoid reproduction in many ways, but a child destined to come will come despite human wishes and different contraceptives. He *the Most High* says, '[We] provided for both an abode in a high place of lasting restfulness and unsullied springs' (*al-Mu'minun*: 50). After being pregnant in this manner, Maryam normally suffered persecution and banishment from her people. In fact, she [herself] was embarrassed from facing people and was wary of meeting anyone. Have you not seen Allah's description of the daughter of Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* '[Shortly] afterwards, one of the two [maidens] approached him, walking shyly' (*al-Qasas*: 25). She walked shyly in her way to call a young foreign man. How was then the situation with Mary *peace be upon her* when her people saw her pregnant while she was unmarried? It is the most difficult

thing for a woman. In Paris, Imam Muhammad 'Abduh was asked, 'How had 'A'ishah *Allah be pleased with her* faced her people after being falsely accused of adultery?' Allah inspired and guided him to say, 'The same way in which Maryam *peace be upon her* faced her people when she became pregnant.' They sought to use this occurrence as a source of dishonour to Islam.

In that situation, Allah defended Maryam *peace be upon her* against all suspicion. When Yusuf (Joseph, not the prophet Joseph but a religious man among the Israelites)—the carpenter, Maryam's fiancé⁽¹⁾ and most jealous of people over her, discovered her pregnancy, his heart turned to her with compassion. He did not suspect her and accuse her of promiscuity. Allah *the Most High* says, 'Know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart' (*al-Anfal*: 24). He began to serve her and feel compassion for her. Allah graced him with contentment regarding the affair. In his first wonders of her situation, he said to Maryam *peace be upon her* 'O Mary! Do you know of a tree without a seed?' Mary gently smiled, as she perceived his intention and responded: 'Yes, the tree which sprouted the first seed.' Such is the speech of believers endowed with common sense and perception. As such, Allah gives refuge to her and her son '[We] provided for both an abode in a high place of lasting restfulness and unsullied springs.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 50) The word 'refuge' implies that a person is in dire need of a place for protection. Mary *peace be upon her* was desperately in need of a place for residence and protection from her people. This refuge must contain the necessities of life: air, water, and food, especially for a pregnant one like Maryam who had to prepare for the coming child. Wonderfully, the Lord *the Most High* prepared the place for Maryam '[We] provided for both an abode in a high place' (*al-Mu'minun*: 50):

- *Rabwah* [lit. hill] is a place, which is higher than the earth's surface but lower than a mountain. It has a moderate climate since it is between the heat of the earth's surface and the coldness of the mountaintop.

(1) *As for the claim that Maryam was engaged to Joseph, the carpenter, this information is mentioned only in the Bible, meaning that it was mentioned in neither the Quran nor the Sunnan of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him. Information like this may be accepted from the Islamic point of view as long as it does not call for anything which may be against the sound Muslim creed.*

- 'Of lasting restfulness' (*al-Mu'minun*: 50), i.e. the means of restfulness, such as food and water were all there. She would get water from a spring, which flowed down from the mountaintop and she would get food from the fruits of the date palm, which took root by her side.
- It is well known that a hill is the most appropriate place since water flows down to it from above, but no water remains to damage crops, for the water flows down to lower land. The Lord *the Most High* gives the example of fertile land which has a vast yield saying: 'The parable of those who spend their possessions out of a longing to please Allah, and out of their own inner certainty, is that of a garden on *rabwah* (high, fertile ground)' (*al-Baqara*: 265).

Allah *the Most High* chose for Mary *peace be upon her* a place of lasting rest, rich with the necessities of life to the highest degree inasmuch that she would not need to move to another place. After speaking about a place of stability and the necessities of life, the Lord *the Most High* speaks of the general issue of food, drink, and air. It was thus suitable that He *the Most High* should then talk about food:

يَا أَيُّهَا الرُّسُلُ كُلُوا مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَاعْمَلُوا صَالِحًا إِنِّي بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٥١﴾

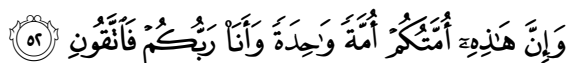
Messengers, eat good things and do good deeds: I am well aware of what you do [51] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 51)

How does the Lord *the Most High* address all Messengers at once? We say that the Noble Quran is the Eternal Word of Allah. It is not restricted to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* even if it was revealed to him; it reiterates the addresses to all past messengers as well. After commanding them to eat good things, the Lord *the Most High* commanded them to: 'Do righteous deeds' (*al-Mu'minun*: 51). He then says, 'Verily, I have full knowledge of all that you do' (*al-Mu'minun*: 51). Clearly, the Lord *the Most High* says: 'Listen to my commands, for I have full knowledge of all that is good for you. I am the Creator who knows how your entity

responds to doing good. Your entity will only be firm and righteous when you eat good and lawful food'. As we said that the designer of a machine decides the proper fuel for its work; otherwise it will break down. Keeping to righteous actions in your daily life is contingent on eating good food, which nurtures your body from lawful sources. Your bodily atoms will thus be in harmony, co-operating with one another rather than opposing one another. If they are in harmony, they will help you in righteousness. If the unlawful food enters your body, it pollutes your atoms. They will repel and reject one another, just as using the wrong fuel for a machine. Learn this affair; the Creator tells of it, so believe in Him just as you believe in the ability of manufacturers who manufactures something for you and sets out the operating system of his design. The Lord firstly commanded messengers to eat from the good because the righteous deed requires a sound system which is inherently in order. As such, the biography of the Prophet relates that Umm 'Abdullah, the sister of Shaddad ibn Aws who sent some milk to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to break His fast on a hot day. He sent a message to her knowing that she was poor and owned nothing, asking: 'Whence did you get this milk?' She sent back saying, 'From a sheep that I possess.' He *peace and blessings be upon him* sent for her again asking, 'How did you get this sheep?' She said, 'I bought it with some money that I had saved.' The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* then drank the milk.⁽¹⁾ Even though we do not investigate our food to this extent, but the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* as a model, carries out the Divine Law perfectly. He also said, 'O people! Allah is good and only accepts good. Allah commands the believers that which He commanded the Messengers. He said: 'O you Messengers! Partake of the good things of life, and do righteous deeds: verily, I have full knowledge of all that you do' (*al-Mu'minun*: 51). And He said: 'O you who believe! Partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance' (*al-Baqara*: 172). He then mentioned a dishevelled and dusty

(1) It is narrated that Umm 'Abdullah then said, 'O Messenger of Allah! I sent the milk to you seeing you [fasting] on a long hot day, but You sent my messenger back with it'. He said to her, 'The messengers have been commanded to eat only lawful things and do only righteous deeds'. See Al-Haythami, *Majma' Al-Zawa'id*, 10/291. He said: 'It is related by At-Tabarani and its chain has Abu Bakr ibn Abu Maryam, who is weak.'

man, on a long journey, outstretches his hands to the sky supplicating: 'O Lord! O Lord! O Lord! While his food is unlawful, his drink is unlawful, his clothing is unlawful and has been nurtured with unlawful, how can his prayers be answered⁽¹⁾ while he prays to Allah with a corrupt body polluted with unlawful means? Likewise, Sa'd *Allah be pleased with him* once said to the Prophet, 'O Messenger of Allah, pray to Allah that he answers my prayers'. In response, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'O Sa'd, make your food good and your prayers will be answered'.⁽²⁾ Then the Lord *the Most High* concluded this verse saying, 'I have full knowledge of all that you do' (*al-Mu'minun*: 51); namely, Allah knows what is right and will bring about good for human being.



The Lord, the Most High, then says, 'And, verily, this community of yours is one single community, since I am the Lord of you all: remain, then, conscious of Me!'[52] (*al-Mu'minun*: 52)

After the Lord *the Most High* spoke of the battle between faith and disbelief, He moved on to another battle which is no less serious than the first. It is the battle of division and differences between believers. He wants to forewarn us of differences and dissension, which sap the strength of the community (*ansar*) and weaken it in face of enemies. As seen, we have

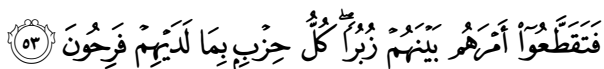
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- (1) *Muslim, Sahih, (Hadith Number: 1015); Ahmad, Musnad, 2/328; At-Tirmidhi, Sunnan, Hadith Number: (2989) from Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him.*
- (2) *Ibn 'Abbas said, "I recited the [following] verse to the Messenger, 'O mankind! Partake of what is lawful and good on earth' (al-Baqara: 168). Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas may Allah be pleased with him stood up and said: 'O Messenger of Allah, pray to Allah that He makes me [one whom He] answers his prayers'. The Prophet Allah's peace and blessings be upon him said: "{O Sa'd make your food good and your prayers will be answered. [I swear] by the one in whose power Muhammad's soul resides that the servant who places an unlawful morsel into his stomach will not have his deeds accepted for forty days. No matter what worship he does, if his flesh springs from the unlawful, then the fire is more deserving of it}. Al-Haythami, Majma' Al-Zawa'id, 10/2910. He said: It is narrated by At-Tabarani in Al-Saghir and its chain has men whom I do not know.*

become sects and parties; enemies mock at us saying, 'Let them agree amongst themselves before preaching Islam'. The *ummah* is a firmly-built community united by time or religion. It also refers to an individual, if she/he has all the characteristics of goodness, which are only found in an entire community. Allah *the Most High* described prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* as an *ummah* in His statement: 'Verily, Abraham was an *ummah* (i.e. man combining within himself all virtues) devoutly obeying Allah's will, turning away from all that is false, and not being of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Allah' (*an-Nahl*: 120). As for Allah's statement, 'Unto every one of you have We appointed a [different] law and way of life' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48). How could it be one *ummah* with different laws? In response, the religion is made up of fundamental principles and beliefs, which are all the same in all prophets' messages. As for ethics and laws, they change from a divine message to another according to the environment and times. He *the Most High* says, 'In matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Nuh (Noah) and into which We gave you [O Muhammad] insight through revelation – as well as that which We had enjoined upon Ibrahim, and Musa (Moses), and 'Isa (Jesus): Steadfastly uphold the [true] faith, and do not break up your unity therein' (*ash-Shura*: 13). The community is united in terms of beliefs, even though it differs in laws, approaches, and provisions. As such, Allah says, 'To make lawful unto you some of the things which [beforehand] were forbidden to you' (*Al-Imran*: 50). In past communities, if impurity tainted clothing, it was necessary to cut the area tainted with impurity. When Islam came it, lightened this hardship and ordained that they should merely wash the area to make it pure. Since your *ummah* is one community, 'Since I am the Lord of you all: remain, then, conscious of Me!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 52), i.e. fear Allah regarding the *ummah* and keep its unity. Beware of means to disunity and differences, which may lead to false accusations of disbelief in pursuit of temporal pleasures at the expense of the religion. The Lord *the Most High* says, 'Verily, as for those who have broken the unity of their faith and have become sects, you have nothing to do with them' (*al-An'am*: 159). Allah clarified the foundational principles over which there can be no differences or misinterpretations. As for the things left open for interpretations, we should respect the interpretation of others. Had

the Lord *the Most High* so willed, He would have made everything unambiguous leaving no room for opinions or interpretation.

As for Allah's statement, 'I am the Lord of you all' (*al-Mu'minun*: 52), it is out of My Grace that I gave you clarified the articles of faith because difference in these affairs corrupts the society. I have left other affairs which you may do or leave according to each interpretation because differences in them do not lead to corruption in society. We have previously given examples of these affairs.

Allah's statement 'Remain, then, conscious of me!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 52): means obey commands and carry out my ordainment. For matters left open for interpretations, respect the interpretation of others. Have we listened to Allah's statement and obeyed Him?!

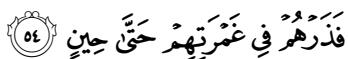


But they have split their community into sects, each rejoicing in their own [53] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 53)

Zurabara i.e. dispersed pieces, which is similar to Allah's saying, 'Bring me *zabara al hadeed*, i.e. pieces of iron' (*al-Kahf*: 96). 'Each group delighting in [but] what they themselves possess [by way of tenets]' (*al-Mu'minun*: 53), i.e. every group is pleased with its opinion as if its opinion is the sheer truth, while all others are false. They seek to have temporal authority over people and deceive them to imagine that they brought that which no one else before perceived or had.

His statement 'What they themselves possess [by way of tenets]' (*al-Mu'minun*: 53) refers to the opinion that they wish to promote in isolation from the ruling of Allah *the Most High*. For example, their saying that prayers in a mosque wherein lies a grave or tomb are void and it is idolatry in worship. If the affair is as they say, then they should destroy the Prophet's grave in Medina. Those who provoke such differences should understand the reality of affairs in the correct way so that they are not from amongst those about whom Allah says, 'But they [who claim to follow you] have torn their unity wide asunder, piece by piece, each group delighting in

[but] what they themselves possess [by way of tenets]' (*al-Mu'minun*: 53). These differences spoilt past religions before Islam. Indeed, every heavenly religion before Islam, especially the religion of Musa (Moses) and 'Isa (Jesus) gave glad tidings of Muhammad. When they were the people of the Divine Book and Message, they would argue with the disbelievers and idolaters, saying 'the time has come for a prophet to come amongst you whom we will follow and with whom we will kill you the way 'Ad and Iram were killed.'⁽¹⁾ However, 'Whenever there came unto them something which they recognized [as the truth], they would deny it' (*al-Baqara*: 89). Why? Simply, they wanted to preserve their temporal authority. Why would they not deny the Messenger of Allah (Prophet Muhammad) *peace and blessings be upon him* while one of them⁽²⁾ was making preparations to crown himself as king of Medina? But the Prophet's arrival to Medina stopped his plan.



**But leave them alone, lost in their ignorance until a
[future] time [54] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 54)**

Dharhum and *Da'hum* are synonyms; it is to 'leave them alone'. The Arabs do not use the past tense of these two verbs, so you only have the present tense *yada'u* and *yadharu* [she/he leaves]. *Dharni* is mentioned in Allah's statement, '*Dharni* (Leave Me) alone [to deal] with those who give the lie to the truth – those who enjoy the blessings of life [without any thought of Allah]' (*al-Muzzammil*: 11). Allah's statement 'Hence, leave Me alone with such as [those who] give the lie to this tiding' (*al-Qalam*: 44)

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- (1) Some elders of the Ansar said, 'We had power over them [the Jews] during the pre-Islamic days. We were idolaters whilst they were People of the Book, so they said: "Verily, a prophet is about to be sent whom we will follow and kill you with him the killing of 'Ad and Iram. When Allah sent His Messenger from Quraysh, we followed Him, whilst they disbelieved in Him'. Ibn Katheer related it in his Tafsir (1/124) through the transmission of Ibn Ishaq.
- (2) He is 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy ibn Salul (d. 9 A.H.), the leader of hypocrites in Madina, nicknamed Abu Al-Habbab from Khuza'a. Salul was his paternal grandmother. He was the leader of Khazraj during the last pre-Islamic days. He used to enjoy any disaster that befell Muslims and to spread evil rumors. See, Az-Zirikli, *Al-A'lam*, 4/65.

which means 'leave them to Me, I will punish them and do with them as I will. Or, leave them to do whatever they wish so that they deserve the punishment when it befalls them'. *Ghamra* (ignorance) literally means the flood of water that covers a man and prevents him from breathing (*tanaffus*); the only hope of life lies then with the proportion of air in lungs. As such, a person is avid in training lungs to carry the maximum amount of air. It is from this root *nafas* (breath) that the Arabic word *munafasa* (competition) was derived, since in competition two people submerge in order to test the one who can survive longer underwater without breathing.

He *the Most High* says, 'Then, let all such aspire as [are willing to] aspire to things of high account' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 26). You can test yourself by taking a deep breath and counting until you see how much air your lungs can carry. The meaning is "leave them in their folly and heedlessness, for they will not last for long. They are like the one who has been submerged under water, the quicker his breaths run out, the sooner he leaves life. Allah *the Most High* then says, 'Until a [future] time' (*al-Mu'minun*: 54). A future time refers to a period of time that could be long as in His statement 'Yielding its fruit at all times by its Lord's leave' (*Ibrahim*: 25). It could also be short like His statement, 'Extol, then, Allah's limitless Glory when you enter upon the evening hours and when you rise at morn' (*ar-Rum*: 17). Allah *the Most High* uses the word *ghamra* to indicate that their time will not be long. The Quran goes on to address a topic of high interest to many believers:

أَيَحْسَبُونَ أَنَّمَا نُؤْتُهُمْ بِهِ مِنْ مَّالٍ وَمَبْنًى ۖ نُسَارِعُ لَهُمْ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ ۚ بَلْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

Do they think that by all the wealth and offspring with which we provide them [55] We [but want to] make them vie with one another in doing [what they consider] good works? Nay, but they do not perceive [their error]! [56]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 55 - 56)

This issue has taken hold many of the believers when they see, the disbelievers prosper and own wealth and power, while they are poor. For some, their faith has been shaken due to these contradictions. We say to the believers, such was not the state of believers in the past. They ruled the

world with knowledge and culture. Their civilization dominated a thousand years, but when they abandoned their religion and morals, the current decline befell them. Others dominated us because they took the means of this world. As Muslims, we shall also take these means. These means are available for all, as a grace from the Lordship, which neither believer nor disbeliever is denied. Whoever excellently uses them will obtain their fruits and advantages. He says, 'To him who desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall grant an increase in his harvest; whereas to him who desires [but] a harvest in this world, We [may] give something thereof, but he will have no share in [the blessings of] the life to come' (*ash-Shura*: 20). In other words, Allah extends graces to His creation; whoever rejects them must be wretched in the journey of life. The prosperity of these people may be a mere vanity leading to transgression; Allah says, 'Then, when they had forgotten all that they had been told to take to heart, We threw open to them the gates of all [good] things, until, even as they were rejoicing in what they had been granted, We suddenly took them to task. Lo! They were broken in spirit' (*al-An'am*: 44). The True Lord *Glorified is He* treats this issue here 'Do they think that by all the wealth and offspring with which We provide them. We [but want to] make them vie with one another in doing [what they consider] good works' (*al-Mu'minun*: 55-56). Do they think it good for them? No, it is a time of allowance and a gradual way for them to increase in transgression. In another place, Allah *the Most High* says, 'Let not their worldly goods and [the happiness which they may derive from] their children excite your admiration: Allah but wants to chastise them by these means in this world' (*at-Tawba*: 85).

As for Allah's statement, 'Nay, but they do not perceive [their error]!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 56) The word *bal* (nay) negates the preceding sentence and confirms the succeeding one. It negates the aforementioned opulence, as it is temporary and perishable. It is in reality a calamity for them but they do not perceive it. They do not perceive that prosperity does not mean that We love or are pleased with them. They do not perceive the plot in motion for them. We have previously clarified that when Allah *the Most High* wills to take vengeance against His enemy; He firstly expands prosperity for them,

makes things easier, and even raises their worldly status such that when He takes them, the fall will be severe and painful.

As for Allah's statement: 'We [but want to] make them vie with one another in doing [what they consider] good works...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 56), the word *musara'ah* (vying or competing) is used to convey the meaning of competition and hastening to do good deeds and achieve the successful ends in the Quranic contexts. When you are away from something good, it is said, 'vie to such and such' to realize this ultimate end and move towards it quickly. But if one is already doing good deeds and wishes to encourage endeavours, you say 'vie in doing good works.' The first addresses whoever has not yet entered the realm of good deeds, whereas the latter for the one who has but wishes to rise within.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ هُمْ مِّنْ خَشْيَةِ رَبِّهِمْ مُّشْفِقُونَ ﴿٥٧﴾

**Those who stand in awe of their Lord [57]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 57)**

Khashya (awe) is the severest form of fear. A person may fear something, yet still hoping that she/he will survive it and expecting the means to save him/her and allay his/her fears to come through. However, when man fears Allah, it is the right fear from which no one can escape. They 'stand in reverent awe' (*al-Mu'minun*: 57) out of fear. Fear is either praiseworthy or blameworthy. The praiseworthy fear exhorts its beholder to stay clear of the causes of fear by doing good deeds. It is the fear of sins, which lead to punishment. It is like a student who studies and works hard out of fear of failure; the believer has fruitful and praiseworthy fear which drives him/her to carry out the means of salvation. This is a sign of faith. As for fear after its right time, the Quran narrates the statement of the criminals 'The record [of everyone's deeds] will be laid open; and you will behold the guilty filled with dread at what [they see] therein. They will exclaim, "Oh, woe unto us!"' (*al-Kahf*: 49) Such fear is of no benefit as it comes after the opportunity is lost and the expiry of the time of action. By that time, the Resurrection has already occurred and the books have been distributed, leaving no hope for salvation.

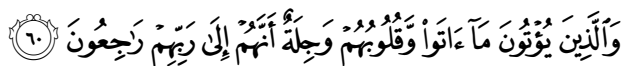
وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يَشِائَتْ رَحِمَهُمْ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾ وَالَّذِينَ هُمْ يُرِيهِمْ لَا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

Then the Lord the Most High says: and who believe in their Lord's messages, [58] and who do not ascribe divinity to aught but their Lord [59] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 58 - 59)

We notice in this verse that the Lord *the Most High* spoke about reverence and awe, then about faith in the Divine signs and finally about polytheism. You may ask: why did He not begin with warning against polytheism? In response it is because polytheism referred to here is the hidden polytheism into which even a believer may fall. Allah said about it, 'And most of them do not even believe in Allah without [also] ascribing divine powers to other beings beside Him' (*Yusuf*: 106). Do not, then, think that polytheism is just to ascribe partners to Allah or to prostrate to an idol. The hidden polytheism penetrates hearts and spoils actions, even if a person is a believer. This is why the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* teaches us the correct manners in this issue. He says in His supplication: 'O Allah, I seek forgiveness from you for every action which I did for you alone, but that which is other than you mixed with that which you know.'⁽¹⁾ A person begins an action and his intention is sincere to Allah. However, ostentation and Satan's embellishment may creep into it. As such, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* described hidden polytheism as being more hidden than the crawling black ant walking in darkness on a massive rock.⁽²⁾ Just as doctrinal polytheism is not imagined from a person with such attributes.

(1) *Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali (Jami' Al-'Ulum wal-Hikam, p. 27) narrated this supplication from Mutarrif ibn 'Abdullah, who used to say: 'O Allah I seek forgiveness from you for that which I repented and then returned to. I ask forgiveness from you for that which I vowed to do, but did not fulfill. I seek forgiveness from you for that which I claimed to be devoted to You but was then mixed with that which You know.'*

(2) *Ahmad, Musnad, (4/403) from Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari may Allah be pleased with him that the Prophet Allah's peace and blessings be upon him said, O people, fear this shirk for it is more hidden than the crawling of an ant. Then someone said: How can we fear it, if it is very hidden, O Messenger of Allah. He said: "Say, O Allah, We seek refuge in You from ascribing partners to you while we know and seek forgiveness in You from that which we do not know."*



**Who always give with hearts that tremble at the
thought that they must return to Him [60]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 60)**

They give out of their wealth in charity 'whatever they [have to] give' without limits, neither a tenth nor a twentieth. Allah *the Most High* wants to expand the idea of giving and benevolence. He says, 'whatever they [have to] give' (*al-Mu'minun*: 60) leaving it open so no one may think that it refers to obligatory charity. We know that Allah *the Most High* opens the way for excellence and virtue. This is the state of doing good about which Allah *the Most High* says, '[But,] behold, the God-conscious will find themselves amid gardens and springs. Enjoying all that their Lord will have granted them [because], verily, they were doers of good in the past' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 15-16). The doer of good (*muhsin*) is someone who obligates himself to do acts of obedience beyond the obligatory duties. He does the voluntary acts of obedience. So, if the obligatory fasting is to fast the month of *Ramadan*, the *muhsin* fasts *Ramadan* in addition to the recommended days. The Quran is very precise when saying, 'They would lie asleep during but a small part of the night, and would pray for forgiveness from their innermost hearts' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17-18). These voluntary acts of worship are additional to the compulsory ones. Allah did not ask you to stand in prayers over the night without sleep; rather, you should pray the night prayer ('*isha*') and sleep until the dawn prayer (*fajr*). Clearly, Allah also speaks of the voluntary charity saying, 'and [would assign] in all that they possessed a due share unto such as might ask [for help] and such as might suffer privation' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 19). He did not say 'known share' because the verse does not speak of the prescribed and fixed charity. It speaks of the supererogatory charity beyond the obligatory prescribed one.

The ambiguity in 'whatever' is also mentioned in His statement: 'and they were overwhelmed by the sea which was destined to overwhelm them' (*Ta Ha*: 78). He did not delineate the amount of water that overwhelmed them. He left the issue ambiguous so that the meaning could be more eloquent and that minds could think of it however they wanted.

However, since they have given and extended their hands to others with giving, why does He *Glorified is He* say: 'their hearts are fearful'? We say: the important part is not the mere action, but rather the acceptance of that action. An action is only accepted if it is sincerely for the sake of Allah, done without ostentation or seeking fame. These people act, attempt to be entirely sincere and seek the means of acceptance. Each one of them will give charity with the left hand not knowing what the right hand has given. Even with this caution, they fear their action may not be accepted. This is also one of the signs of faith.

It is as if your Lord is jealous of you not to take reward when doing an action. This is because if you seek the praise of people in the action, Allah will abandon you to them to take your reward; this is an invalid effort which is of no benefit. Allah is not content for you to be like this. In a Qudsi Hadith: 'sincerity is one of my secrets which I have stored in the hearts of those I love from my servants. No angel can see it so to record it, nor can Satan see it so to corrupt it'.⁽¹⁾

Fearful: is a forceful reaction and tumultuousness which occurs to a limb out of fear or awe. Some of the exegetes are of the opinion that the verse: 'And they who give what they give while their hearts are fearful' was revealed about a man who used to steal, fornicate and drink wine, but his heart used to tremble about the thought of meeting with Allah and out of His awe. He thus still had a remnant of faith and modesty of Allah *Glorified is He*. They said that this is what '*A'isha may Allah be pleased with her*' understood from the verse.⁽²⁾ However, this understanding is inconsistent with His statement: 'who give'. They give to other than themselves, so there is here a giver and a receiver. If he intended theft, fornication and drinking of wine, He would have said: they come. Thus, the meaning is: they give to others what is their due share, whether these rights are those of Allah *Glorified is He* such as the zakat, expiations, oaths and capital punishment, or if these rights are connected to the servants such as deposits, trusts, doing justice in rulings etc. The believer should hence fulfil these rights, while his heart is fearful of the lack of sincerity leading to invalidating his action.

(1) Mentioned by Al-Ghazali in (*Ihya 'Ulum Ad-Din*) (4/376) with a weak chain of transmission.

(2) The Hadith of '*A'isha may Allah be pleased with her* and her understanding of the verse have been mentioned on page 10065.

Then He *Glorified is He* said: ‘because they will be returning to their Lord’. The believer fulfils that which is upon him although you see him fearful and trembling because He believes in the return to Allah, standing in front of Him and that He is his Lord who rewards him according to his sincerity. He also fears that his affair becomes exposed if his action is mixed with ostentation because His Lord is not pleased that He should have a partner in an action. He *Glorified is He* knows everything and will account for every atoms weight of good and every atoms weight of evil.

There are actions which seem to be from the religion, however hidden within them is ostentation, even without a person knowing about it. This is why some people say: I do this for Allah then for you, or I rely upon Allah then upon you etc. These statements and those like them carry within their depths the meaning of polytheism (*shirk*) which you should keep away from in our dealings with Allah. We should not attribute anyone to Allah in order to keep away from *shirk*, even if it is not intended. This is why He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And most of them believe not in Allah except while they associate others with Him’ (*Yusuf*: 106). On the day of Resurrection, the people of sincerity will be content with their reward, while the people of polytheism and ostentation will be shocked by the presence of Allah *Glorified is He* for they were not concerned with Him when they used to act: ‘But those who disbelieved – their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing but finds Allah before Him, and He will pay him in full his due’ (*an-Nur*: 39). Thus, so long as we will be shocked by the presence of the True Lord *Glorified is He* – and there is nothing besides the True Lord, then our actions should be for the True Lord *Glorified is He* and nothing for other than Him.

أُولَٰئِكَ يُسْرِعُونَ فِي الْخَيْرَاتِ وَهُمْ لَهَا سَابِقُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

**It is those who hasten to good deeds, and they outstrip
[others] therein [61] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 61)**

‘Those’ refers to the people who have the aforementioned attributes. ‘Hasten to good deeds’ means they were already vying on one another in doing good actions, but they sought to increase them so they would reach a

loftier station. In His statement: 'and they outstrip [others] therein' was their vying the reason for them outstripping in attaining good actions, or was their attaining good actions the reason for them vying?

Linguistically there is: cause and effect, condition and rewards. For example, when you say, if you study, you will be successful, that means studying is the cause of success. However, did studying precede success? No, in fact success was present in your mind first. You remembered its distinctions and what your status amongst people in society would be. Through this you could find a drive, acted on it, so you studied in order to arrive at this goal.

This is also in: 'It is those who hasten to good deeds, and they outstrip [others] therein'. The meaning is: the intention is to outrun in attaining hence comes the hastening because the mind is ready for it first and its realities are clear.

Thus conditions, results, causes, and effects revolve around a driving factor which is the result and an occurrence which is the condition.

The meaning of '...and they outstrip [others] therein' is that these people are qualified for this deed and are able to do it. It is just as if I were to ask something of you and were to say: 'this thing is difficult.' I would say to you: 'you are fit to do it'.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا نَكْلِفُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا وُسْعَهَا وَلَدَيْنَا كِتَابٌ يَنْطِقُ بِالْحَقِّ وَهُمْ لَا يُظْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

**And We charge no soul except [with that within] its capacity,
and with Us is a record which speaks with truth; and they
will not be wronged [62] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 62)**

After having spoken about hastening and competition, the True Lord *Glorified is He* explained that this is according to one's ability and energy, and that He only charges you because of His knowledge of your ability. Thus, do not look at the ruling and say: I am able to do it or I am unable to do it. Instead look at the burden: as long as your Lord has charged you, know that it is within your capability. As soon as your Lord knows of your inability, He will lighten the burden and not demand it of you. Examples of the lightening of burdens are clear in the prayer, fasting, and the pilgrimage etc.

Nowadays we hear those who say: '[people] no longer have the energy in this time to carry out these burdens; times have changed, work and responsibilities have increased'. We hear such statements by which people seek to absolve themselves of Allah's law. We say: as long as the burden remains, then the ability to carry it out remains. The True Lord *Glorified is He* knows best of the abilities of His creation. Thus, I will firstly look at the burden and then judge that I have the capability. I will now judge the burden according to my capability.

Then He says: 'and with Us is a record which speaks with truth' what is intended here is the record of our deeds⁽¹⁾. But what is the point of recording our deeds? Will the servants belie their Lord *Glorified is He* regarding what has been recorded against them? The wisdom behind the recording of deeds is that it will be a proof against the person and an assurance that Allah has not wronged him. This is why His Lord will say to him: 'Read your record!' (*al-Isra'*: 14) Read it yourself so that the evidence against you stands without any objection from you.

He said after that: 'and they will not be wronged'. This is because wrongdoing cannot be imagined from the True Lord *Glorified is He* since wrongdoing is a result of need, you only wrong someone else when you desire to benefit by some good that he has so you can increase what you already have. Wrongdoing is thus a result of need. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is the Giver and is the Rich Who has no need of anyone, so why would He wrong anyone?

The weak person may also take what belongs to someone else in order to fulfil his need or whim. If he was strong, his own hard work would have sufficed him.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

(1) *Al-Qurtubi in his Tafsir (6/4667) has mentioned other opinions regarding the meaning of record in this verse. He said, 'It is said that it is the Preserved Tablet with everything having been affirmed therein. Hence, servants will do exactly as it has been written. It is also said that the indication in His statement: "and with Us is a record" refers to the Quran. God knows best. All of these are possible but the first is most apparent'. It is the record in which the deeds of the servants are recorded. This was the opinion of Sheikh Ash-Sha'arawi .*

بَلْ قُلُوبُهُمْ فِي غَمَرَةٍ مِّنْ هَٰذَا وَلَهُمْ أَعْمَلٌ مِّنْ دُونِ ذَٰلِكَ هُمْ لَهَا عَامِلُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

**But their hearts are enveloped with confusion
over this, and they have [evil] deeds besides
disbelief which they are doing [63]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 63)**

We notice here that the 'confusion' does not envelop them, but it envelopes their hearts instead. This is a greater calamity because the heart is the repository from where the intellect ascertains cognitions, distinguishes between them, and chooses. Then these cognitions turn into beliefs that guide the heart in its daily movements. If the heart itself is enveloped, then the calamity is greater because it is the store of beliefs and assumptions which illuminate the way for you. The heart is also the place within the servants which receives the divine gaze. This is why He *Glorified is He* says: 'And We have certainly created for Hell many of the jinn and mankind. They have hearts with which they do not understand.' (*al-A'raf*: 179)

He *Glorified is He* said: 'Allah has sealed their hearts' (*al-Baqara*: 7) because they loved disbelief and were content with it, while Allah *Glorified is He* is a Lord who has taken responsibility for sustenance of the creation. He gives them what they want even if it is disbelief. He sealed their hearts so that faith could not enter them and disbelief could not leave because they loved and preferred disbelief.

We see those who have been afflicted with the loss of a loved one and grieve over them, exaggerating in their grief by commemorating them after their death although it is possible the son may have been disobedient to his parents while they were alive. We warn those people and advise every grieved one to close the door of grief with the nails of contentment and submission, for if grief sees its door ajar, it enters and remains with you.

We have previously clarified that the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not remove a calamity from upon His servant until the latter is content with it. We should follow the model in this issue of our forefather Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* who was tried by His Lord to sacrifice in a dream. He considered it to be a [legal] burden; he was content with the decree of Allah

and submitted to His command. He then informed His only son of the dream so that he would not prevent him from this reward or take him by surprise leading him to have a change of heart: 'And when they had both submitted and he put him down upon his forehead. We called to him, "O Abraham, You have fulfilled the vision." Indeed, We thus reward the doers of good. Indeed, this was the clear trial. And We ransomed him with a great sacrifice.'" (*as-Saffat*: 103-107)

After Ibrahim and his son became content with the decree of Allah, the trial was removed from them. A sacrifice was sent to them in place of Ishmael. In fact, their blessings were increased as they were given glad tidings of another child, Ishaq (Isaac) and Ya'qub (Jacob) after him. Recurring generations were a favour and reward for the contentment in Allah's decree. How beautiful is what one poet⁽¹⁾ has said regarding this event:

Submit to the decree of your Lord as it harbours a wisdom
 pursuing which He decrees it, for your comfort and reward
 And remember the friend of Allah in sacrificing his son
 When His Creator told him He submitted

Accordingly, if the hearts themselves are enveloped in confusion then the process of beliefs and assumptions is spoilt. From its damage, the daily movements are spoilt and corrupted. It is as it has reached us in a Noble Hadith: 'Verily, there is a morsel of flesh that if it is good, then the whole body is good, but if it is corrupt, then the whole body is corrupt. Verily it is the heart.'⁽²⁾

Then He *Glorified is He* says: 'and they have [evil] deeds besides disbelief which they are doing'. This means it is not only limited to beliefs. They have many other deeds into which they fall. The True Lord *Glorified is He* only mentions the topmost of their disobediences and examples from them. It is in His knowledge and on the Protected Tablet that they have done such and such deeds. Even if they themselves do not know that it will happen, their

(1) *This is from the poetry of Ash-Sha'arawi.*

(2) *Agreed upon. Related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (52) and Muslim in his Sahih (1599) from the Hadith of Nu'man ibn Bashir may Allah be pleased with him.*

Lord *Glorified is He* through His immense power knows what has already happened and what is going to happen.

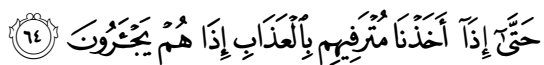
It is one of the wonders of Allah's power that He *Glorified is He* decrees that His disbelieving servant will do such and such a deed, yet none of the disbelievers attempts to contradict this by saying: 'Allah has decreed this for me, but I will not do it in order to prove Allah's decree to be wrong'. This is because the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not judge according to what He has put upon us, rather, He judges according to the choice and decision of the servant because the servant is free to do or not to do a thing.

This issue is clear in His statement regarding Abu Lahab: 'May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he. His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained. He will [enter to] burn in a Fire of [blazing] flame' (*al-Masad*: 1-3). His statement: 'He will [enter to] burn in a Fire' is regarding the future, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* has decreed that he will be in the fire. Abu Lahab was from a community in which there were disbelievers and believers. Who could guarantee that Abu Lahab would not hear this decree, not attaining faith and dying a disbeliever?

Was it not possible for this heedless one to stop in front of a group and say: 'There is no god worthy of worship, but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah', entering therein into Islam and proving the decree against him incorrect? This is the speech of Allah and his ancient decree which cannot be refuted nor rejected by anyone, no matter how powerful he may be. This is from the power of Allah in His actions and the actions of His creation.

Hence, the meaning of 'and they have [evil] deeds besides disbelief which they are doing' is that decree which cannot be repelled nor belied even if that person is informed of it because the knowledge of Allah *Glorified is He* covers both the past and the future. It is if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying: My power is not limited to what I do but also covers what others do; those whom I have given the freedom of choice.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**Until when We seize their affluent ones with punishment,
at once they are crying [to God] for help [64]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 64)**

This means that after they ascribed partners to Allah and disbelieved in Him, and after their hearts become ignorant and blind, they cry out and scream when a part of the punishments afflicts them. Who is able to bear the heat or smell (i.e. the stench of hell) of Allah's punishment? 'We seize' reflects ascendancy over someone through force without their consent. It gives the impression of violence and force such that the one being taken cannot escape no matter how hard he tries. From this is His statement: 'so We seized them with a seizure of one Exalted in Might and Perfect in Ability' (*al-Qamar*: 42), i.e. a severe taking to task, being restless therein not able to break free, 'And the shriek seized those who had wronged' (*Hud*: 67). And He says: 'Indeed, His seizure is painful and severe' (*Hud*: 102). 'We seize their affluent ones' because life depends upon necessities which ensure its continuity, and luxuries which make it comfortable and enrich it. Thus, the one who enjoys pleasure has surplus bounties which are above the necessities of life. The greater the enrichment, the greater the seizure will be and the more severe the pain.

We have previously mentioned the statement of Allah: 'Then, when they had forgotten all that they had been told to take to heart' (*al-An'am*: 44). It refers to forgetting the methodology of Allah. We did not encroach upon them; rather: 'We opened to them the doors of every [good] thing until, when they rejoiced in that which they were given, We seized them suddenly, and they were [then] in despair. So the people that committed wrong were eliminated' (*al-An'am*: 44-45). Here the sense of loss will be more severe and the regret greater.

The addressed here is the disbelievers of Quraysh. How can we say that Allah seizes if they were living in affluence with all the niceties of the Arabian Peninsula coming to them? Allah seized them in their affluence through scarcity over the years. Therefore, when the Prophet *peace and*

blessings be upon him saw them in their affluence and transgression, He said, 'O Allah intensify your vehemence upon *Mudar*, and make it last years like the years of Yusuf (Joseph)'.⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* answered the supplication of His Prophet. Scarcity and drought struck them until they began to eat corpses and *'ilhaz* which is the hair or wool of a slaughtered animal which is mixed with its blood after having dried and solidified under the sun's heat. This is the meaning of His statement: 'Until when We seize their affluent ones with punishment'.

And His statement: 'at once they are crying [to Allah] for help'. After having eaten corpses and excrement, Abu Sufyan said to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* 'O Muhammad, are you not a mercy to mankind? If so, then pray to Allah that He alleviates [our peril]'. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed for them until He alleviated their [peril].⁽²⁾ Or the punishment that is intended here is what happened to them on the day of Badr when Allah humiliated them. Many of them were killed and taken prisoner. Their leadership was slaughtered and their awe was lost. They used to persecute the believers and kill them; they would make them stand in the heat of the sun with huge boulders on their stomachs. In such a difficult situation which the believers suffered from, Allah *Glorified is He* revealed: '[Their] assembly will be defeated, and they will turn their backs [in retreat]' (*al-Qamar*: 45). They received the verse with amazement: such that 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Which assembly is it that shall be routed?' For there was no hope for the victory of the believers, When the

(1) On the authority of Abu Hurayra that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* would say when raising his head from the final rak'a, 'O Allah, intensify your vehemence upon *Mudar*, and make it last years like the years of Joseph'. Related by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (1006) and Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2/470, 502, 521).

(2) On the authority of Ibn 'Abbas *may Allah be pleased with them*: Abu Sufyan came to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and said: 'O Muhammad, for the sake of Allah, I implore you to have mercy, for we have eaten *'ilhaz* – i.e. fur and blood – then Allah revealed: 'And We had gripped them with suffering [as a warning], but they did not yield to their Lord, nor did they humbly supplicate, [and will continue thus]'. (*al-Mu'minun*: 76) Ibn Kathir mentioned this in his *tafsir* (3/251) and attributed it to Ibn Abu Hatim.

day of Badr came and the believers saw what became of the disbelievers, 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* said to himself, 'Allah has spoken the truth, the assembly shall be routed'. And indeed they have been routed.

His statement: 'at once they are crying [to Allah] for help'. A person only cries out when he does not possess the means to ward off a problem; thus he cries out calling for someone to save him raising his voice so that all around him can hear him. They shriek like a calf after having been leaders and tyrants. Why did they not remain leaders? Why are they screaming now? It is expected from them that they would hold themselves and show robustness in times of severity, not allowing the slaves and the poor from the believers to gloat over them. It is as one poet says:⁽¹⁾

I will show my forbearance to those who gloat

That I do not fall apart in the face of trials

However, how far [is this meaning from them] for the punishment has now enveloped them. They cannot cheat themselves any longer. They have only to scream for help of the Helper and Deliverer from destruction.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

لَا تَجْعَلُوا الْيَوْمَ لَكُمْ مَتًّا لَا تَنْصُرُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

Do not cry out today: you will get no help from Us [65]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 65)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* replied to them: 'Do not cry out today' because the one who cries out calls the one who will help him and you will not be helped for: 'by Us you will not be helped'. You will not receive help from Us because I only help My friends, My messengers and those who obey Me. Sever your hope in receiving help from Me because I (Allah) am the One Who has sent down that which makes you cry out. How then can I remove it from you?

In another place, the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks of the people of disbelief who joined forces against Him and who encouraged one another to

(1) The poet is Abu Dhu'ayb, Khuwaylid ibn Khalid Al-Hudhali (d. 27 AH).

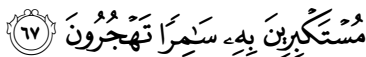
attack the Quran and the Prophet and applauding anyone who did so: '[The angels will be ordered], "Gather those who committed wrong, their kinds, and what they used to worship other than Allah, and guide them to the path of Hellfire. And stop them; indeed, they are to be questioned."' [They will be asked], "What is [wrong] with you? Why do you not help each other? But they, that Day, are in surrender.'" (*as-Saffat*: 22-26) So, do not cry out because you will not receive help from Us. How can We help you in this wailing of yours when you turned away from Our signs?

قَدْ كَانَتْ ءَايَاتِي تُتْلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ عَلَىٰٰٓ أَعْقَابِكُمْ تُنْكِرُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

**My verses had already been recited to you, but
you were turning back on your heels[66]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 66)**

How can you seek Allah's help and cry out to Him when you were blind to the verses that were recited to you which confirmed the existence of Allah through celestial signs, confirmed the truth of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* through miracles, yet you insisted to be blind to all of them? But 'you were turning back on your heels'. The heel is the end of the foot. Instead of walking ahead like Allah had created him to do and using torches to show the way, they walked behind on their heels. It is as if they were taken to task in a way that the normal way of walking was changed. Why? This is because they became blind to the causes of guidance and so they began to get lost in the mazes of life without guidance. It is like the one who stumbles on his back not knowing where his feet are. This is what they did to themselves. The meaning is thus: only blame yourself for refraining from the causes of guidance, as you shut your eyes when they came in front of you.

In another place, He *Glorified is He* said of Satan: 'but as soon as the two hosts came within sight of one another, he turned on his heels and said, "Behold, I am not responsible for you"' (*al-Anfal*: 48).



**And spent the evening making fun of
[the Quran] [67] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 67)**

The meaning of arrogance is to seek greatness when, in fact, such a person is not great himself since he is in need of other than himself. The one who is great in and of himself is the one who can provide himself and has at his disposal the essentials and surplus of life requirements; he does not ask anyone else for them.

However, the necessities and essentials of a human being are provided to him by someone else, so it is inappropriate for him to be arrogant. He who wishes to be arrogant should be so if he has attained health, wealth, power etc. by himself. In actuality, all these things have been gifted to you since the healthy person can become sick, while the rich person can become poor.

Thus, glory be to Allah alone because He alone is the All-Bestower, the Giver of bounties to His creation by which they may have arrogance. From amongst the attributes of His majesty and perfection is that He is the Great. This is because He is the Sustainer of all creation. It is in the creation's interest that only Allah is The Great, so that no one would oppress the people and act arrogantly over them. This is how the True Lord *Glorified is He* protects His creation from His creation.

We have given the example of this – and Allah is the loftiest example – that it is in the interest of a family that there is only one person who is turned to. The common people say, 'if you do not have a prestigious man, you ought to buy one' because it is the balance by which affairs are made proper and by which life can move on.

We have said that one of the names of Allah is the Great. We do not say the greatest even though it is a superlative form; why is this? The greatest is an exaggerated form with respect to us mortals, we say: this is great and that is greater, this is strong and that is stronger. This cannot be said of His attribute because if you were to say: Allah is the greatest, the meaning would imply that you have ascribed partners to him since it would mean that He *Glorified is He* is

the greatest while others are still great. This is why it is not said: Allah is the greatest, except in the call to prayer. Thus, the arrogant one is someone who seeks the qualifications of greatness without really having any of these qualifications. A person should only be arrogant if he possesses the essentials of greatness. However, the creation does not possess any of these. The meaning of 'In arrogance regarding it', the referent in the pronoun 'it' is not clear. In the verse, there was no such reference to which the pronoun returned. However, the speech here concerns the Messenger who was sent to them, and the Quran which was revealed to them as a miracle and methodology. Thus, the pronoun can only refer to one of the two. Or the pronoun could refer to the Noble Sanctuary of Allah (the *Ka'ba* in Mecca) since it was the reason for the status enjoyed by Quraysh amongst the Arabs and gave them leadership and nobility. They would travel on business trips to Yemen and Levant without anyone causing them any harm; this was in a time in which animosity and highway robberies had become widespread amongst the Arabs.

They would not have enjoyed this status if it was not for the Noble sanctuary of Allah to which the Arabs made pilgrimage every year. Its service and maintenance was in the hands of Quraysh. By means of it, they were arrogant towards the entire nation. In fact, they dared by being arrogant towards the sanctuary itself.

He *Glorified is He* says thereafter: 'conversing by night, speaking evil'. They would gather around the House of Allah at night talking about the Prophet, slandering Him and speaking ill of Him and the Quran which was revealed to Him.⁽¹⁾

The affair of these people is strange: how could they do this while in the vicinity of the House of Allah that lent them leadership and status? How could they speak ill of the Messenger of Allah who came to purify this House of its idols and filth? It is ill manners with Allah, His Messenger, and the Quran. True is one poet's saying:

(1) 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas said this according to what *Al-Qurtubi* transmitted in his *Tafsir* (6/4671).

I taught him to shoot everyday

When he became strong, he shot me

How many did I teach to rhyme

Who when rhyming slandered me

These people were arrogant towards the whole nation because of the sanctuary. Despite this, they did not preserve its sanctity. Instead they made it a place of night entertainment, slander, folly, frivolity, and everything else that did not behove of the place. They considered the Quran to be fables of the ancients and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be a magician, soothsayer, poet and madman.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* warns you that the necessities of your life are a gift and generosity from Him. When Abraha came to destroy the Noble House seeking to transfer its greatness and sacredness to Abyssinia, they did not have any power to ward him off nor to protect the sanctuary. If he had destroyed it, their awe would have been lost along with leadership of the tribes. They would have ventured against them as they did to others. However, Allah protected His house and defended its sanctity such that even the elephant was conscious of the lesson, staying put in its place, not moving towards the house. It would move in any other direction though. It is narrated that one of them⁽¹⁾ said to the elephant: 'kneel down and return, rightly guided' In other words, save yourself for you are in Allah's inviolable sanctuary. As one poet⁽²⁾ said:

The elephant was captive in Mughammas⁽³⁾ until

It began to crawl as if it was wounded

In this way, Allah repelled, overpowered, and banished them. He protected the House for you and kept your leadership intact.

(1) *On the authority of 'A'isha may Allah be pleased with her 'I saw the rider and driver of the elephant blind, seeking food in Mecca.' Related by Al-Bayhaqi in Dala'il An-Nubuwwa (1/125). The editor said: "This narration is in the biography of Ibn Hisham (1/59)." Transmitted by Ibn Kathir in Al-Bidaya wa An-Nihaya (2/174).*

(2) Umayya ibn Abu As-Salt ibn Abu Rabi'a

(3) Mughammas is a place near Mecca.

Notice the transition from the chapter of *al-Fil* to the chapter of Quraysh. He *Glorified is He* says: 'Have you not considered, [O Muhammad], how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant? Did He not make their plan into misguidance? And He sent against them birds in flocks, striking them with stones of hard clay, and He made them like eaten straw' (*al-Fil*: 1-5). Then He says in the beginning of the chapter of Quraysh: 'For the accustomed security of the Quraysh' (*Quraysh*: 1). Whatever happened to the people of the elephant happened so that the Quraysh could find familiarity in what they were used to in the caravans of the winter and summer. 'Their accustomed security [in] the caravan of winter and summer' (*Quraysh*: 2). Since Allah *Glorified is He* has protected you and protected The House for you, and has preserved your leadership, you should worship Him alone ascribing no partners to Him. 'Let them worship the Lord of this House, Who has fed them, [saving them] from hunger and made them safe, [saving them] from fear' (*Quraysh*: 3-4).

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

أَفَلَمْ يَدَّبَّرُوا الْقَوْلَ أَمْ جَاءَهُمْ مَا لَمْ يَأْتِ آبَاءَهُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

Then have they not reflected over the Quran, or has there come to them that which had not come to their forefathers? [68] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 68)

In this verse and in the one after it, He *Glorified is He* rebukes them about a number of affairs, one after the other. The first is: 'Then have they not reflected over the Quran'? The question here is reproach and censure, what happened to them? Did they not understand the word that came to them in the Quran? Were they not the community of eloquence and rhetoric so much that they established seasons and fairs for it and hung it on walls?

It is incomprehensible that they do not understand the Quran. It came to you in a manner which is more than eloquent and rhetorical. You must have understood and comprehended what was in it. This statement of yours is proved by their statement: 'And they said, "Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 3)

This is how the liar's nature deceives him; his logic betraying his conscience, thus your objection is not with the Quran. It is in fact with Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because He is poor, from a humble family. The issue is about the struggle for leadership and temporal authority. Did these people not know that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not come to strip them of their authority or to have ascendancy over them? He came to show them the methodology of Allah, all the while bearing the harm of the people of Quraysh, toil and hardship in pursuit of their comfort and eternal felicity.

The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* came to take judgement and carry the methodology of Allah as a burden not prestige. The proof being that His standard of living is lower than yours is. You see that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had lesser food, drink, clothing and furniture than them. Even His relatives were poor. Despite this, he prohibited them from taking *zakat* which He permitted for the generality of the poor Muslims. Similarly, the people would inherit, whereas they (his family) cannot.

Despite all of this, you still say: 'Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?' It seems that you were accustomed to having servitude for the powerful and tyrannous. You were accustomed to servitude for other than Allah. It was too burdensome an affair that Allah should liberate you from this servitude at the hand of a poor, humble man from amongst yourselves who came to rectify you and take you out from the servitude of creation to the servitude of the Creator *Glorified is He*.

Thus: 'Then have they not reflected over the Quran?' is a reproach because they understood the Quran but were jealous of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because it was revealed to Him, not them. He *Glorified is He* said: 'Or do they envy people for what Allah has given them of His bounty?' (*an-Nisa'*: 54) The second affair is: 'or has there come to them that which had not come to their forefathers?' A strange matter came to them of which they had no prior knowledge. It is that a messenger from Allah came to them. This affair was known to them. Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was from them as was Ismail (Ishmael), both of whom they believed in. In fact, they know it well. The same thing that prevented them in the first affair prevents them in this one: jealousy of the Messenger of Allah. This is why He *Glorified is He*

says: 'Now if thou ask those [who worship any being other than Allah] as to who it is that has created them, they say, "Allah"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87).

The third affair is:

﴿ ٦٩ ﴾ أَمْ لَمْ يَعْرِفُوا رَسُولَهُمْ فَهُمْ لَهُ مُنْكَرُونَ

Or did they not know their Messenger, so they are toward him denying? [69] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 69)

Did He send to them a Messenger from the sky of whom they do not know his biography, character, lineage, or lifestyle before being sent? They knew Him well. Before his being sent as a messenger, they named Him the Truthful, the Trustworthy. They were content with His judgment regarding the black stone. They would trust Him with their precious items and wealth. They did not experience lying, betrayal, or any other error of the period of ignorance from him.

I have explained this matter in the statement of Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Indeed, there has come unto you [O mankind] a messenger from among yourselves' (*at-Tawba*: 128), from your species, your kind, your tribe. He is not a stranger to you. You know his lifestyle, his biography, and his character. If you have never experienced Him lying about the creation, can you imagine Him lying about the Creator?

When He informed the people in the beginning of His mission that He was the Messenger of Allah, Did the Quran come to carry people to bring faith in Him? No, it came to resist those who did not believe. As for those who believed from the beginning, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* merely saying: 'I am the Messenger of Allah', they would say: 'you have spoken truthfully'. They would believe Him based on what they had experienced of Him in the past, what was known of His truthfulness and that He had never lied. Therefore, the yardstick that the Companions had was that the Messenger of Allah would speak. If He would speak, then the issue would end there, as He is truthful; nobody doubting his truthfulness.

Regarding the Night Journey and Ascension Abu Bakr *may Allah be pleased with him* said: 'If He said it, then He has spoken truthfully'. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said of Abu Bakr *may Allah be pleased with him*: 'Abu Bakr and I were like two race horses', i.e. in good character

and excellent manners. 'I beat him to prophethood and he followed me. If he had beaten Me, I would have followed him'.

When Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* came down to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* at the start of revelation, he (the Prophet) went to Khadija *may Allah be pleased with her* and told her of what happened as if to enquire from her what had happened without telling her that He was a messenger from Allah. Despite this she took Him to Waraqa ibn Nawfal who had knowledge of the previous divine scriptures. When Waraqa ibn Nawfal heard what had happened, he said, 'It is the same angel who came down to Moses *peace be upon him*. I wish I would be alive when your people cast You out'. He *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Will they cast Me out?' He said: 'No one you came with what you have come with except they were taken as enemies. If I see the day it happens, I will help You with vigour.'⁽¹⁾

Despite this, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was scared that this was something from Satan. Khadija *may Allah be pleased with her* assured him that this would not make sense. Therefore, she said to him: 'you keep your ties of kinship, help the poor and destitute, help against the vicissitudes of time. Allah will never humiliate you.'⁽²⁾

Some people consider Khadija *may Allah be pleased with her* to be the first legal interpreter (*Mujtahid*) in Islam due to this incident because she interpreted and derived from the characteristics of the Messenger of Allah before His Prophethood as being a proof of His truthfulness after the onset of Prophethood. This is why she is the first to be called 'Mother of the believers'. Some of the well-learned people said, 'Khadija is the mother of the believers including the Messenger of Allah amongst them because at that time, the Prophet Muhammad was more in need of a mother than a young wife who would entertain Him. Khadija *may Allah be pleased with her* fulfilled the role of a mother towards the Messenger of Allah and looked after Him, assured Him and stood by Him in the most turbulent and difficult of times'.

(1) Related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (160) in the Book of Faith (*Kitab Al-Iman*) and by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (3) from the Hadith of 'A'isha *may Allah be pleased with her*.

(2) Related by Muslim in his *Sahih* (160) in the Book of Faith (*Kitab Al-Iman*) and by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (3) from the Hadith of 'A'ish *may Allah be pleased with her*.

We notice in the verse: 'Or did they not know their Messenger'. He attributed the Messenger to them (i.e. their Messenger). As for the attribution to Allah (Messenger of Allah), this means a messenger from Him. Thus, the meaning differs depending on to what it is attributed.

أَمْ يَقُولُونَ بِهِ جِنَّةٌ بَلْ جَاءَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَكَثُرُوا لِلْحَقِّ كَذِبُونَ

**Or do they say, 'In him is madness?' Rather, he brought them the truth, but most of them, to the truth, are averse[70]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 70)**

The fourth issue in which Allah *Glorified is He* reproaches them is: 'Or do they say, "In him is madness?"' Madness is the dysfunction of reason which balances movements according to benefit and harm. We should see which characteristic of madness Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* suffered from?

Leave the issue of religion and consider his character! Character is something everyone agrees upon and praises, even if someone has the opposite characteristic. The liar loves the truthful one and recognizes that truthfulness is an honour. The miser loves the generous one, the angry loves the patient. Do you not see that the liar tries to present his lie to the people but dislikes it when someone lies to him? Do you not see the one who gives false testimony, though he saves someone by his false testimony, he belittles him. The people of wisdom say: you are able to raise your head above your opponent because of the false testimony of someone.

In short, the yardstick for all good character is the same; so measure Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by His character not by the religion or message with which He came. Look at His good character towards you, and none of you will be able to say anything bad about it. Since you have nothing bad to say of His character or about His intellect because the intellect is the measure and foundation of good character. This is why His Lord *Glorified is He* says of Him: 'Nun (The Arabic letter Nun). By the pen and what they inscribe, You are not, [O Muhammad], by the favor of your Lord, a madman. And indeed, for you is a reward uninterrupted. And indeed, you are of a great moral character' (*al-Qalam*: 1-4). Thus your sublime way of life is the greatest proof that you are not a madman.

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is, then, innocent of this accusation. The whole issue is as Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'Rather, he has brought them the truth' (*al-Mu'minun*: 70). This is His defect in their eyes because the truth angers those who benefit from falsehood. Some people see the truth in any good that comes their way. If it is something through which no benefit comes to him, he sees it as evil. If you wish to judge something, then do so when it is against you, not when it is for you. For example, you dislike a liar whether he has lied for you or lied against you. Thus, take every issue as if it is both for you and against you. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* restricted you from looking at the women of others, do not feel annoyed, and say: He prevented me from the pleasure of sight etc. However, look at the fact that while He restricted your eyes – and you are alone—He restricted others from looking at your women; i.e. those with familial ties to you such as your mother, daughters, wives etc.

He *Glorified is He* says thereafter: 'but most of them, to the truth, are averse'. It is only natural that the people of falsehood, whose wrongdoing and transgression is widespread, should detest the truth which balances the scales and straightens the tumultuous waves of daily life. The detestation of the people of falsehood towards the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should be a reason to believe in Him, not deny him since if the people of falsehood detest it, then it must mean that it is truth otherwise they would not have detested it

وَلَوْ أَتَبَعَ الْحَقُّ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ لَفَسَدَتِ السَّمَوَاتُ وَالْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهِنَّ
بَلْ أَتَيْنَاهُمْ بِذِكْرِهِمْ فَهُمْ عَنْ ذِكْرِهِمْ مُعْرِضُونَ

But if the Truth had followed their inclinations, the heavens and the earth and whoever is in them would have been ruined. Rather, We have brought them their reminder, but they turn away from their reminder [71]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 71)

Thus, the affairs do not move in accordance with the whims of the creation; they do so according to the will of the Creator. This is because the Creator *Glorified is He* is the maker of this universe and every maker is very

protective of his creation. We see this even in the creation of man. You can imagine what would happen if you were to take away the right of the creation from its maker. It is from giving the due rights that things move according to the will of the maker and not according to the whims of the creation. If the human being leads his life according to his whims, he will take that which is not his, will accept bribes, and incline towards sin and deviation. This is because he thinks that he benefits from it and does not look towards the end result of his action. He looks to the short-term pleasure and forgets the burdensome consequence which he will be unable to bear later. This is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'But if the Truth had followed their inclinations, the heavens and the earth and whoever is in them would have been ruined'. You may say: yes, following one's whims will ruin the earth and the way of life on it, but how does it ruin the heavens? Does anyone have power over them? We say: was it not their wish: 'And they say, 'We will not believe you until you break open for us from the ground a spring. Or [until] you have a garden of palm trees and grapes and make rivers gush forth within them in force [and abundance] Or you make the heaven fall upon us in fragments as you have claimed' (*al-Isra'*: 90-92).

It was their desire that the heavens should be destroyed even if it did so above their own heads. What ruin is left after this? Like this, if you were to follow their whims, the heavens and the earth would fall into ruin. Not just the heavens and the earth but also: '...and whoever is in them...'; their corruption would encompass everything in existence.

Therefore, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* constrains these whims in his statement: 'None of you truly believes until his desires are in accordance with what I have brought'.⁽¹⁾ He *peace and blessings be upon him* is described as: 'Nor does he speak from [his own] desire. It is not but a revelation revealed' (*an-Najm*: 3-4).

Some of the orientalists have objected to this verse: 'Nor does he speak from [his own] desire', saying that this means that all his (Prophet Muhammad's)

(1) Related by Ibn Abu 'Asim in *As-Sunna* (1/12) from the Hadith of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr. It is also mentioned by Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali in *Jami' Al-'Ulum wa Al-Hikam* (page 460) who said it is weak.

speech is correct. Why then does His Lord correct Him regarding some rulings? This must mean that the ruling that he originally made was according to His desire.

If these people had truly understood the meaning of desire, they would not have made this objection. Desire is what moves you away from the truth when you already know what the truth is. The Messenger *Glorified is He* did not know these rulings when He spoke of them. He only spoke and ruled according to what He understood in an affair in which revelation had come from Allah. The ruling was then revealed from Allah to correct the interpretation of His Messenger.

Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not follow a desire by which He spoke. The correction by the True Lord *Glorified is He* to His Messenger — who himself conveyed this correction — is the greatest proof of his truth and trustworthiness in conveying on behalf of His Lord. Otherwise, no one would have known of the correction if the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* had concealed it in order to defend himself.

Similar to this meaning is His statement: ‘O Prophet, why do you prohibit [yourself from] what Allah has made lawful for you seeking the approval of your wives?’ (*at-Tahrim*: 1) He *Glorified is He* says: ‘May Allah pardon you [O Prophet]! Why did you grant them permission [to stay at home]?’ (*at-Tawba*: 43)

It was within the capacity of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to conceal those verses which reproach Him and are taking Him to task. However, He was trustworthy; he would say that which was for him and that which was against him. This is why His Lord says of him: ‘And if Muhammad had made up about Us some [false] sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand; Then We would have cut from him the aorta (i.e. removed his heart)’ (*al-Haqq*: 44-46).

Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘We have brought them their reminder, but they turn away from their reminder.’ The ‘reminder’ here is: nobility, reputation and a lofty status, just as in His statement regarding the Quran: ‘And indeed, it is a remembrance for you and your people’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 44).

His statement: 'We have certainly sent down to you a Book in which is your mention. Then will you not reason?' (*al-Anbiya'*: 10) means that they should have embraced this Quran and held it above their heads. In it is their glory, their nobility and their honour. Without the Quran, the Arabs have no mention, for they were an illiterate community who were nomadic only settling in areas where there was water and grazing. They were Bedouins amongst whom wars and highway robbery were widespread. They would steal in order to host their guests. This is one of the strange things from the customs of the Arabs in the days of ignorance. They did not have a methodology by which they could govern their lives. It is strange to see the love of enmity and generosity present in one nature. They would do whatever they felt like, whatever occurred to them. There was no law to govern them, such that one poet said of them:

Pay no praise to Ibn 'Abbad⁽¹⁾, though he is extremely generous

His is neither miser nor having munificence

It is no more than fits of humour and moodiness

One of the most famous Arabic poems on generosity is the following one which is even ingrained within children, describing a father who considered sacrificing his child to provide food for his guest because he could not find anything else to slaughter.

The poet⁽²⁾ says:

Three days of hunger and sand-ridden food, tying his belly to calm the pangs,

In a desert wasteland, without the traces of any previous settlement

A harsh man indeed, to whom companionship was a distant thing;

The wildness and desolation to him seemed a blessing sweet.

(1) He is Ismail ibn 'Abbad Abu Al-Qasim At-Taliqani, who was a minister and man of letters. He was made a minister by Mu'ayyid Ad-Dawla and then by his brother Fakhr Ad-Dawla. He was given the title As-Sahib (companion) due to him having accompanied Mu'ayyid Ad-Dawla since childhood. He was born in At-Taliqan in the year 326 A.H. He died in Ar-Rayy (Tehran) in 385 A. H and was moved to Isfahan where he was buried. [Al-A'lam by Az-Zirikli 1/316]

(2) He is Al-Hattay'a

In a lonely mountain ravine he left behind his aging wife
And three children all bare-bones, who seemed like the ghosts of wild beast
Shoeless and naked, never having dined on fresh-baked bread,
Nor, since the day they were created, ever tasted wheat.
He saw a spectre in the dark and was terrified,
But when he saw it was a guest, he was eager to welcome him.
He said: 'O Lord, a guest is forthcoming but there is no food
By your rank do not deprive him of meat tonight'
And when his son saw the worry he felt, he said to him:
'Dear father, slaughter me and serve me to your guest;
'And offer no excuses of poverty and straightened means,
Lest he suspect we are secretly wealthy and revile us much.'
Yet as they spoke, from the distance there appeared wild donkeys in a drove,
Walking in a row, as though driven by a skilled herdsman
And they were thirsty, and needed water, so he rushed to them,
As though he were thirsting eagerly for their very blood
And he let them drink, until their thirst, was well quenched,
Then took an arrow from his quiver, and loosed it at them.
And a well-fattened mare, ere-foaled, fell to the ground;
She was well stocked with meat, and blessed with fat.
And oh! What joy he felt as he dragged her to his people;
And oh! What joy they felt when they saw her wound pour forth.
And they spent the night feasting, and taking care of their guest,
And they made no loss at all, nay, they only gained.
And their father, in his joy, became a father to their guest,
And their mother, in her glee, became their mother.

The characteristic of generosity has taken root amongst the Arabs, even within small children. Even a poor person does not like his poverty to be known. He wishes to give the impression that he is a rich, generous person even if this contradicts other blameworthy traits that he may have.

They are a people having contradicting traits. They lived in complete illiteracy and thus did not make a civilization. However, this was a quite merit for them after the emergence of Islam and mission of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. For, how does it come that such people reached such lofty meanings and ways that they eventually ruled over the entire world? If they had been people of knowledge and civilization it would have been said of them and of Islam: it is a leap of civilization.

If the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been able to read they would have said: He read such and such; the True Lord *Glorified is He* said of them: 'And, indeed, full well do We know that they say, "It is but a human being that imparts [all] this to him!"...' (*an-Nahl*: 103)

Thus, the good reputation, nobility, glory and honouring of the Arabs all are established in the Quran. However, they did not act in their own interest nor were they concerned for the Quran. They turned away from it: '...and from this their reminder they [heedlessly] turn away!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71) That means away from the Quran; This is a proof that they were heedless, being unaware of that which was in their own interest. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

أَمْ تَسْأَلُهُمْ خَرْجًا فَخَرَّاجُ رَبِّكَ خَيْرٌ وَهُوَ خَيْرُ الرَّزَاقِينَ ﴿٧٢﴾

Or do you [O Muhammad] ask of them any worldly recompense? But [they ought to know that] a recompense from your Lord is best, since He is the best of providers! [72]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 72)

In the Arabic verse, there are two different forms for the word meaning 'worldly recompense'; these two forms are *Kharj* and *kharaj*. *Kharj* is the expenditure one gives out voluntarily, while *kharaj* is the expenditure given out in voluntarily. In Arabic, the extra letter 'a' found in the second word

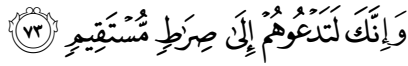
kharaj indicates that there is extra meaning, that is, *kharaj* is a more eloquent than *kharj*. The meaning of His statement: 'Or do you [O Muhammad] ask of them any worldly recompense? But [they ought to know that] recompense from your Lord is best...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 72) is that if you want worldly recompense *kharj* does not take it from them; take it from Your Lord. That which they have is not *kharj* instead it is *kharaj*; '...But [they ought to know that] recompense from your Lord is best...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 72).

Thus, do not take sustenance except from the hand of the Lord of goodness and blessings. The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not hold back in giving His creation their sustenance. It is He who has given them life and He has taken responsibility of providing their livelihood. A relative example is when you invite a friend for food; you may serve them food sufficing ten people. What do you think, then, your Lord *Glorified is He* has prepared for you?

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* appends the verse with His statement: '...since He is the best of providers!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 72) This has caused a problem for some people because the True Lord has described some of His creation as being providers of livelihood. However, He is the best of providers since He provides the root causes of things by which others make their provision. If you were to provide someone with food, for example, then you should know that He *Glorified is He* is the origin and source of that food.

He *Glorified is He* is the creator of soil, water, air, seeds. All you have to do is to use your intellect, use the energy that Allah has granted you and you present this food. For example, when you bring home monthly foodstuff of flour, oil, rice, sugar etc., and then your wife would prepare the food, would you say: it is my wife who has provided this food? This is why the scholars ('ulama') say: refrain your tongue from saying: so and so is a provider *raziq*. Leave it only mentioned in the statement of Allah because He *Glorified is He* is the creator of sustenance and the one who brings its origin into existence. You are merely the one who feeds it to another.

You may notice that He *Glorified is He* attributed *kharaj* to His Lordship which conveys a meaning of rearing, care and providence. So long as the recompense (*kharaj*) is that of Your Lord, O Muhammad, it is a great recompense and a giving which will not be expended.

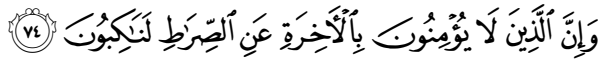


**You call them to a straight path [73]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 73)**

The 'straight path' is the even path which is neither crooked nor bent. How is then that they challenge you and put obstacles in your path while you only invite them to the straightway? Even if one person was to benefit from a crooked way, millions would benefit from a straight way.

We have previously mentioned that you must look at what the divine law has given you before you look at what it has taken from you. If the divine law takes something from you when you are rich, it gives you what you need when you are poor. It commands you to look after the orphan so that your children will be looked if you die, while they are small.

Thus, the divine law insures your life and makes you receive the decrees of Allah with contentment because you are in faith-based society which will not abandon you if you become poor nor will it leave your children if they were to become orphans. In a faith-based society, if a father dies, then everyone becomes a father to the orphan. If however an orphan is abandoned in a faith-based society, this will open the door for anger towards the decree of Allah. Those weak in faith would say: what wisdom is it in taking their father while leaving them as dependents with no one to take charge of them?



**And those who do not believe in the Hereafter turn away
from that path [74] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 74)**

That '...way' (*al-Mu'minun*: 74) is the straight path which leads to the destination with minimal effort. It leads you to the best destination in minimal time. How significant a path is and how highly it is regarded, depends on the significance and sublimity of its destination. Of course, the road from Cairo to Alexandria is not the same as the road between villages and hamlets.

The phrase '...is bound to deviate...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 74) means to deviate from the straight path and thus, take part in perversity and distortion. In our

daily interaction, a person seeking truthful conduct will say to you: 'be straight' i.e. on the straight path which has no crookedness or deceit.

What is it that led them to deviate from the straight path which organizes their way of life for them, makes them support one another instead of opposing one another, and from which the effort of the individual benefits the entire society? Why do they prohibit themselves from the advantages of this path? They said that it is because they disbelieved in the hereafter. If they had not disbelieved in the hereafter, they would have attained faith and followed the methodology of Allah because they would know that they will return to Allah who will reward the righteous and punish the evildoer. Thus, the thing that corrupted them was that they followed their desires and thought that this world was the destination and the end of the cycle. They were heedless of the hereafter and that it is the abode of true bounties; it will not escape them, nor will they escape it. It is as the True Lord *Glorified is He* has said of it: '...whereas, behold, the life in the hereafter is indeed the only [true] life: if they but knew this!' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64) That is the real life.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ رَحَّمْنَاهُمْ وَكَشَفْنَا مَا بِهِمْ مِنْ ضُرٍّ لَلَجُّوا فِي طُغْيَانِهِمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

**Even if We were to show them mercy and relieve them of
distress, they would blindly persist in their transgression[75]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 75)**

That is if this were to happen they would return to what they used to do. As He *Glorified is He* has said in another verse: 'For [thus it is:] when affliction befalls man, he cries out unto Us, whether he be lying on his side or sitting or standing; but as soon as We have freed him of his affliction, he goes on as though he had never invoked Us to save him from the affliction that befell him!...' (*Yunus*: 12)

If only man had stopped at this point. Instead people went beyond this as stated in the verse: '...and claims that there are other powers that could rival Allah...' (The Rival, 39: 8). They say as Qarun (Korah) had said: '..."This [wealth] has been given to me only by virtue of the knowledge that is in

me!”...’ (*al-Qasas*: 78), i.e. this is thanks to my effort, my discussion with so and so and doing such and such.

It is, therefore, natural that the True Lord has said to him: since you have gained it only on account of the knowledge you possess, then protect it with the knowledge that you have. He *Glorified is He* said: ‘And thereupon We caused the earth to swallow him and his dwelling...’ (*al-Qasas*: 81).

Where is your knowledge now? What kind of knowledge is it that cannot protect the things it gained? It is known that the discovery of something is more difficult than its preservation and protection. The word ‘...persist...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 75) means go to extremes ‘...in their overweening arrogance...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 75). Transgression means exceeding limits because Allah *Glorified is He* has put fixed limits to everything in existence that do not decrease or increase. If you maintain the limits depicted by Allah for you, then your life will become stable without trouble. If a thing transgresses, it corrupts the way of life. Even water through which Allah gave life to everything, if it transgresses, it drowns other creatures and destroys them after having been the secret of life when in a state of moderation. In this respect, Allah says: ‘[And] behold: when the waters [of Noah’s (Nuh) flood] burst beyond all limits, it was We who caused you to be borne [to safety] in that floating ark’ (*al-Haqqa*: 11).

The one who oversteps the bounds is called a transgressor (*taghiya*) with the (*ta*) of femininity which expresses exaggeration. If a person further transgresses, they are called *taghut* which means an idol; as if they were wrongfully worshipped because of their transgression.

The consequence of going to extremes in persevering in transgression is ‘...blindly stumbling to and from’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 75). That is they become confused and blind to guidance and the truth. They are unable to distinguish between good and evil. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says⁽¹⁾:

(1) *The cause of revelation of this verse: Ibn 'Abbas said: it was revealed regarding the story of Thumama ibn Uthal after he was captured, then became Muslim and the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon Him, released him. He came between Mecca and Al-Mira and said: By Allah I will not allow a grain of wheat to pass until the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessing be upon Him, gives permission. Allah took =*

وَلَقَدْ أَخَذْنَاهُمْ بِالْعَذَابِ فَمَا اسْتَكَانُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَمَا يَضُرُّعُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

**We have already afflicted them, yet they did not submit
to their Lord: they will not humble themselves [76]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 76)**

To abase oneself (*istikana*) is only said of someone who used to do evil things then calmed down. We say: so and so abased himself or yielded. The Arabic origin word is *kawn*, (to be) in English. Thus, it means to seek a new existence unlike the one they had, or a state unlike the one they were on before. Thus, before they would abase themselves and submit, they must have been rebellious to their Lord.

Existence is of two types: the first is the absolute existence, whereas the second existence is resulting from or occurring after the first. For example, we say: Zayd is born, i.e. Zayd has the first existence. If we ask whether he is, beautiful or ugly, this requires another existence. You say: Zayd was born; this is a complete statement with the subject and the predicate. There is no need to any more information because it is the first existence. But when we say: Zayd was hard working; this is the second existence which is his hard working. It is an existence which is the result of the first existence.

In this regard, we have two meanings of the Arabic verb *Kana* (was); the first has the meaning of complete existence which is mentioned in His statement: 'If, however, [the debtor] is in straitened circumstances, [grant him] a delay until a time of ease...' (*al-Baqara*: 280). That is there is already a debtor with straitened circumstances, and, so, you do not need any more information in this case.

= *Quraysh to task with famine and drought until they began to eat carrion, dogs, and 'ilhiz. It was said: what is 'ilhiz? He said: they would take wool and fur, dip it in blood, then grill it and eat it. Abu Sufyan said: I implore you for the sake of God and kinship; do you not claim that God sent you as a mercy to the worlds? He said: Yes. He: then by God I only see that you have killed fathers by the sword and killed the sons with hunger. Then His statement was revealed: 'And even were We to show them mercy and remove whatever distress might befall them [in this life], they would still persist in their overweening arrogance, blindly stumbling to and fro.' {Description} (al-Mu'minun: 75) Narrated by Al-Qurtubi in his tafsir (6/4677) and Al-Wahidi in Asbab An-Nuzul (page 179)*

On the other hand, we say: so and so wished if Allah would give him a child, then, it was Mohammad, i.e. he existed. Then, this is the incomplete 'was' which requires more detailed predicate. This form of 'was' (*kana*) is indicative of the past tense; verbs must indicate tense as well as an action. This is why it needs a predicate in order to give us an action. We say: Zayd was hard working. The predicate comes to complete the deficient verb. It is as if you describe him saying: Zayd is a hard-working man.

The statement of: '...but they did not abase themselves before their Lord...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 76) is that their humility and abasement was neither for themselves nor for the people. Indeed, humility and abasement must be devoted to Allah by being utterly submitted to His commands. However, they neither did so nor abased themselves, neither in time of mercy and alleviation of suffering nor in times of punishment. They should have known that Allah changed His stance towards them, and, consequently, they should have changed their stance towards Allah, abasing themselves before Him and humbly obeying His commands.

The statement '...and they will never humble themselves' (*al-Mu'minun*: 76) means to humble yourself in imploring (*daraa*, in Arabic) is to supplicate with humility to the one who gave you a hand, as stated in the verse: 'yet when the misfortune decreed by Us befell them, they did not humble themselves...' (*al-An'am*: 43) to seek refuge in Allah by supplication and seeking aid

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا فَتَحْنَا عَلَيْهِم بَابًا ذَا عَذَابٍ شَدِيدٍ إِذَا هُمْ فِيهِ مُبْلِسُونَ ﴿٧٧﴾

**Until We open a gate to severe torment for them –
then they will be plunged into utter despair [77]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 77)**

Indeed, all efforts to divert them to the right path have failed. Mercy did no good to them for they continued in excess, and the punishment did not deter them for they did not abase themselves after being afflicted by it. Thus, there no longer remains any argument or hope for them in salvation. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* opened against them '...a gate of [truly] severe suffering...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 77), i.e. they were afflicted by a calamity as if they were behind a closed door and suddenly got stricken by it, '...and then,

lo! They will be broken in spirit.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 77) despairing of salvation, remorseful of what has passed them by.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنشَأَ لَكُمُ السَّمْعَ وَالْأَبْصَرَ وَالْأَفْعِدَةَ ۚ قَلِيلًا مَّا تَشْكُرُونَ

**It is God who endowed you with hearing, sight,
and hearts – how seldom you are grateful! [78]**

(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 78)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: I created my servants from nothingness and provided them with the staple of life and its necessities from nothingness. Then, I gave them a methodology which organizes their interaction and protect their lives because a maker of an article knows best about it, how it is properly maintained and knows the purpose for which it was created. For example, did the inventor of the fridge, after inventing it, say: look how this tool can benefit you? No, rather, he defined its function before making it. The same applies to the relation between Allah and His creation, and to Allah applies the highest similitude. The one who creates something and sets the purpose for it, knows best the safety regulations which prevent it from ruin and make it fulfil its function with optimum performance. Thus, if you break the safety regulations that your Lord has set for you, your life will fall into ruin and you will be unable to carry out the purpose for which you are created which is the worship of Allah alone without partners. He *Glorified is He* says: 'And [tell them that] I have not created the invisible beings and men to any end other than that they may [know and] worship Me.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 56)

This is why, when disagreement arises between yourselves, He has commanded you to refer it to Allah and His Messenger; just as you return a machine to its manufacturer who knows its nature and defects. We can derive from this issue that if you see a defect or corruption in the universe, know then that a ruling of Allah has been violated. For example, if you see a hungry naked poor man, he is either able to work but has not strived and has opposed the Quranic verse saying: '...go about, then, in all its regions, and partake of the sustenance which He provides: but [always bear in mind that]

unto Him you shall be resurrected.’ (*al-Mulk*: 15) Or, the able have denied him the share Allah has given him in their wealth; they have opposed His statement: ‘and [would assign] in all that they possessed a due share unto such as [those who] might ask [for help] and such as might suffer privation.’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 19) Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* disposes actions and things for His creatures in such a manner that keeps the balance of life and fulfils the needs of the needy. For example, when a wealthy person moves into a country other than his, he brings about his wealth into the new place. There is no particular reason for this person to move except that Allah gave power to a thought that occurred to him in order to preserve the distribution of wealth in society. If you try to account for it, you may find that the amount of alms in his old country has exceeded that which is needed to cover the needs of the needy. Thus, he moved to a country where there are fewer resources to cover the needs of the poor and needy.

After that your Lord did not leave you; instead, He presented you with signs which turn you to Him and which ease you in knowing Him. They are either the wondrous universal signs which indicate the power of Allah *Glorified is He* or miracles which affirm the truthfulness of the Prophets in conveying the message of Allah. Allah does not address each and every one of His creatures individually. Rather, He sends a messenger in order to convey to them, and supports him with a miracle that indicates his truthfulness in conveyance.

When you look at the signs of the universes and derive from them the existence of a powerful creator, you do not know who that creator is. The Messenger comes to you to inform you that it is Allah. We have given the example, and to Allah applies the loftiest similitude, that someone has knocked on the door of a room in which we are sitting. We will all agree that there is someone knocking the door. However, no one knows who it is. Here, there is agreement on the reasoning that there is a force behind the door that is knocking it; but who is it? And what does it want? To know the answer to these questions, the force must inform us. You should not say that you think it is so and so, nor should I. We should wait for the knocker to inform us about itself. You can but ask who it is that at the door and wait

until it introduces itself, tells you reason for coming and what is wanted. Then, the verses (*ayat*) which carry the methodology of Allah come to advise what He wants from you.

The purpose of mentioning this is that all these verses require means of perception. They require hearing and sight in order for us to see and hear them. Then, they require intellect in order for us to reflect and ponder upon them. This is why He *Glorified is He* says: '[O men! Pay heed to Allah's messages,] for it is He who has endowed you with hearing, and sight, and minds...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 78).

Hearing and sight are from the senses which the scholars have, out of caution, named the five outer senses, i.e. there are other senses that have yet to be discovered. Science has discovered muscles which distinguish weight, and the sense of touch which is able to distinguish between thick and thin on clothes, for example. You are not able to know these things with the five senses.

The two primary senses are hearing and sight because if a messenger comes to deliver Allah's message, I must be able to hear him. If you had faith in a deity, then hearing suffices you. If you did not already have faith in a deity, then you would also need sight in order to see the signs that indicate His existence and power, concluding from a design the existence of the designer, and from the creation the existence of the Creator. You would become amazed by the preciseness, engineering, and innovation in Allah's universe.

It is the function of the intellect, after what you have seen and heard, to transform it into rational conclusions and assumptions, to govern your life. For example, if you see fire and touch it, and get burnt by it, you will form the conclusion that fire burns and that you should not touch it. When a child nibbles at a pepper corn, they realize it is hot and feels the pain. When they see it again after that, they will say 'ouch', which, according to a child, is an expression indicating the rational judgement formed as a result of their previous experience with pepper. They have adopted it as a principle to be followed for the rest of their life. Likewise, based on your physical perceptions and experiences, you form mental judgments from which you will benefit thereafter.

Then, through the senses, one forms conclusions and assumptions which the intellect compares until it reaches a judgement which will be fixed in heart. We call this a conviction, i.e. something which has been rooted and cannot be undone.

When you ponder upon the speech of the Quran concerning the senses, you will find that it gives this order: hearing, sight and mind because they are the key senses. For example, we only require smell, taste and touch for few things. As for hearing and sight, the issue of Mission (*da'wa*) rests upon them: hearing is used to hear the conveyance and by sight you can see the signs of Allah which indicate His power.

Modern science has affirmed the order of hearing, sight, and mind. This indicates that it is an order set by the Creator Who has done so out of Wisdom, Knowledge and Power, such that none precedes the other. Physiologists have affirmed this order as well. The first organ which functions in the human being is the ear then the eye. It begins to work from between three to ten days after birth. Thus, hearing and sight feed the processes on which the intellect works.

Thus, this is a congenital and formative order. Just as hearing is the first sense to function, it is also the only sense to remain with the human in all scenarios. The ear hears even during sleep as opposed to the eye. This is because calling is only complete through hearing. This is why it continues to fulfil its function even during sleep.

The eye cannot see in darkness, and it has natural covers which prevent seeing. The ear is not the same, for, if there is a noise, all ears can hear it. But for the eye, a visible thing could exist with you in the same place, yet you cannot see it, while someone else can. Thus, audible things are one, while visual is multiplex. This is why He *Glorified is He* said: ‘...hearing, and sights...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 78). You have no choice in hearing, but you do in sight. Visual perceptions may vary from a person to another, whereas everyone will hear the same thing.

Thus, it is from the inimitability of the Quran that in the story of the people of the cave, Allah *Glorified is He* sealed up their hearing in the cave so that they could sleep without the sounds of the desert disturbing them. If their sense of hearing had remained with them like the rest of creation, they

would not have remained for such a long period of time without the noises startling them. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And thereupon We veiled their ears in the cave for many a year' (*al-Kahf*: 11).

Another sign of inimitability of the Holy Quran is that, in every verse in which hearing and sight are mentioned, they are mentioned in this order: hearing then sight, except in one verse which speaks of the resurrection: They will say: '...Our Lord! We have now seen and heard...' (*as-Sajda*: 12).

Here, sight is mentioned before hearing because on the Day of Resurrection, the visual sight will startle them before the sounds will. This is one of the aspects of preciseness in the inimitable language of the Quran.

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying: you have no excuse for I have given you hearing to hear My message from the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*; I have given you eyes so you can turn to the signs in the universe; I have given you a mind to think with and to lead you to a conclusion that indicates the presence of the Creator *Glorified is He*.

It is as if Allah says to you: I do not come unexpectedly upon you, nor have I deceived you about anything. I have created you, provided you with livelihood, and arranged for you to have the instruments of comprehension in a logical order. What is your plea then? You must beware not to be preoccupied and diverted by your whims away from the message which has come to you on the tongue of Our Messenger.

When reflecting on the structure of the ear and eye, you will find that they are signs and miracles of the Creator *Glorified is He*. Scientists are yet to reach an understanding of their secrets and true essence, despite the progress of the sciences.

Then, He *Glorified is He* says at the end of the verse: '...[yet] how seldom are you grateful!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 78) That is because you had better be so grateful for these blessings and signs of Allah.

Some scholars say regarding the meaning of '... [yet] how seldom are you grateful!' that He *Glorified is He* indicated the utter ingratitude of the human being by using the word 'seldom'. However, this understanding is not appropriate here because Allah affirmed some gratitude being devoted

by them but it is few; your Lord *Glorified is He* wants constant gratitude which accompanies every bounty with which He blesses you. When you see a blind person who has been deprived of the blessing of sight, falling in the road, you say: All praise is for Allah (*al-hamdu li Allah*). You say this by instinct because you continuously live in the blessings of Allah, but do not realize it until you see someone who has been deprived of it.

Therefore, if you wish for your blessing to last, keep hold of it with the remembrance (*dhikr*) of Allah, the Benefactor. When you have been given a blessing or when you see something that pleases you in your family or wealth say: This is what Allah has wished and there is no power gained except from Allah (*ma sha'a Allah la quwwat illa bi Allah*). Do you not see that Allah has made jealousy in order to caution us? If you wish to protect your blessing then do not forget the Benefactor because He is the only one who is able to protect it. Just as if we were to buy a tool, and agree with the manufacturer on a warranty for a fixed price.

Similarly, if you say, when receiving a blessing: This is what Allah has wished and there is no power gained except from Allah (*ma sha'a Allah la quwwat illa bi Allah*), you will not see anything bad coming to it. Because by saying this statement of prayer (*dhikr*), you activate the law of protection and place its protection under control of its maker. A person will not be tried with their blessing unless they are heedless of the Benefactor and abandon gratitude towards Him.

I remember⁽¹⁾ that there was a man of understanding of Allah in our village who owned a third of a *Feddan* (acre) which he used to cultivate in the traditional style. One year, he cultivated cotton on his land and worms almost destroyed it. My father spoke to him regarding the worms but he said: 'O Uncle Mutawalli, do not worry for I have rendered its protection', i.e. he had given out the alms which would protect and bless his wealth.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

(1) *The story of the peasant and the cotton worm in the village of Sheikh ash-Sha'rawi.*



It is He who made you multiply on earth. It is to Him that you will be gathered [79] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 79)

The phrase '...has caused you to multiply...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 79) means He has made you propagate and spread throughout the earth in order for you to inhabit it in its entirety. It is amazing when you see people who reside on mountains and the dry, desolate desert, not being content with an alternative. They bear hardship in order to remain in those places, such that you wonder: why do not they leave this place for a fertile area?

We have seen these types of people who are patient with what Allah has decreed in their lands. We have seen them in Yemen after the flood of 'Iram (The city belonging to the people of Noah) before which it was known as The Felicitous Yemen (*al-Yaman as-sa'id*). We have seen them in Saudi Arabia and in Kuwait. The people of these countries have told us of the tough life they used to live. Then the result of their patience came to them and Allah *Glorified is He* made these mountains and deserts the richest countries in the world. This is because they were content in the first instance with the decree of Allah. And because of their patience, He transformed the troubles of the desert into blessings. If those, who have been granted with those blessings, have been deprived of them in this world, they would have died of the cold.

This is because the Creator *Glorified is He* has distributed wealth in all parts of the earth equally. Every longitudinal part of the earth has the same amount of wealth as in other parts. Once upon a time, landholders were the rich and people of leadership. Then, things changed and riches other than agriculture have emerged. Thus, fortune constantly develops in all parts of the earth. They just become apparent at certain times.

Thus, the scattering of the creation throughout earth has a wisdom which the Creator *Glorified is He* desired. Then, He says: '... and unto Him you shall be gathered.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 79). That is do not think that by scattering you across earth you will be able to flee from Us, or that We are unable to gather you at the same time. Just as We scattered you for a wisdom, We will gather you, for another wisdom, and not a single soul will escape.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي يُحْيِي وَيُمِيتُ وَلَهُ اخْتَلَفُ اللَّيْلِ وَالنَّهَارِ أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٨٠﴾

It is He who gives life and death; the alternation of night and day depends on Him; will you not use your minds? [80]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 80)

In His saying ‘...grants life and deals death...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 80) these are two actions which must take place after existence of life and death. The Creator *Glorified is He* creates life first, then death and then induces whatever action He wants from them.

Life precedes death in all but one verse in the chapter of *al-Mulk*: ‘He who has created death as well as life...’ (*al-Mulk*: 2). The reason for this is that Allah *Glorified is He* gives the human being choice by which he carries out the movements in all his bodily systems. You may think: what is it that you do when you want to get up from your place? What do you do when you wish to move your hand or foot? It is by mere will that your limbs move without you having to exert yourself to carry out these movements. Thus, by your mere will, your limbs respond and take the action you want to do; you are a creation of the Lord. So, if a created being is able to do what it wants without treatment, how can we then consider it to be a difficult thing for Him *Glorified is He* and some of us disbelieve that when He wills creating a being, He says to it ‘Be’ despite the fact that we do what we want with our limbs being motivated and moved by mere will and inner decision, without having to command them with anything or saying anything to them. Allah *Glorified is He* says to a thing ‘Be’, and then it is created, while you do actions without saying anything.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* mentioned death first in this verse: ‘He who has created death as well as life...’ (*al-Mulk*: 2) because life will delude a person by the fact that they have power of their limbs that may lead them to transgression. Thus, the Lord *Glorified is He* wants to warn them: ‘remember that I will deal death’ in order that they may face life with its opposite in mind leading them to become upright in their way of life.

The attributes of creation and causing death are eternal attributes of Allah which existed before He created or causing death to anything. As we have said, these are affirmed attributes of Allah even before He carries out the actions connected to them. For example, when a poet composes a poem, he does so because he is a poet, we do not say that he is a poet because he composed the poem. If he did not have the attribute of composing poetry, he would not have recited it. To Allah, applies the highest similitude.

Just as life is created, death is also created. One might say: if you fired a bullet at someone with the intent of killing, then you have created death. We say: thank Allah you did not claim giving life and sufficed with death. But there is a difference between normal death and killing. Killing demolishes the body first and then is followed by the spirit departing body. As for death, the spirit departs the body first without the body being demolished.

This is why He *Glorified is He* says: 'And Muhammad is only an apostle; all the [other] apostles have passed away before him: if, then, he dies or is slain, will you turn about on your heels? ...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 144)

Namrud (Nimrod), the king who argued with Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* regarding His Lord, ordered the killing of one subject of his, and left the other living. Namrud claimed that he had given life to one and given death to the other. These actions, in reality, were nonsense. If he had any truth to his claim he would have brought the one he had killed back to life. This is why Ibrahim *peace be upon him* did not respond to this and moved onto a different issue in which Nimrud could not resort to trickery.

Thus, demolishing of body leads to the removal of the spirit because the spirit has certain specifications such that it can only take place in a sound body. We have clarified this issue, and to Allah applies the loftiest similitude, with an electrical lamp. The electricity is hidden in the wires whereby we cannot see its light unless we connect the lamp to it. It has such specifications that it will only give out light if they are fulfilled. If it breaks, its light will go out.

Then, He *Glorified is He* says: '...and to Him is due the alternation of night and day...' (*al-Mu 'minun*: 80); night takes place after the disappearance of the sun and the coming of darkness which prevents the vision of things. In

the past, it was thought that vision is complete when light goes from the eye to the object. Then the Muslim scientist Al-Hasan ibn Al-Haytham came and proved the error of this theory and established that vision is complete when light reflects from the object to the eye causing you to see; the evidence is that you cannot see an object if it is in the dark.

The darkness of night alerts us of the importance of light which we need in order to direct us in life. A person will face danger if he travels in the dark because they may bump into something weaker than them and then break it, or they will bump into something stronger than them and then they are injured and feel pain or suffer harm.

Thus, there must be light in order for life to continue, and in order to move throughout the earth. Similarly, there must be darkness to prevent human body from absorbing too much of the Sun's radiation and to rest from the strain of work. Modern science has affirmed the danger of the Sun's rays for a person's health.

This is why He *Glorified is He* says: '...and to Him is due the alternation of night and day...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 80). He made them different and follows one another so that each one of them could fulfil its respective function in the universe. He *Glorified is He* says 'Consider the night as it veils [the earth] in darkness, and the day as it rises bright!' (*al-Layl*: 1-2) As long as each of them has its function, then beware of turning night into day and day into night. By doing so you will be going against the nature upon which Allah has created you. Look at those who lead their life in this manner, keeping awake at night until dawn (*fajr*) and sleeping during the day until sunset (*maghrib*); indeed they spoil the way of life: a student will sleep during his lessons and a worker will sleep and fall short while on the job.

The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* warns us of this issue in His statement: '...turn out the lights when you go to sleep'⁽¹⁾. This is because the body will only take rest and be calm in darkness. The person will arise in the morning strong and energetic. Read the statement of Allah *Glorified is He* saying: 'And made the night [its] cloak. And made the day [a symbol of] life' (*an-Naba'*: 10-11).

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (5624) and Ahmad in his *Musnad* (3/388) from the Hadith of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah. The wording is attributed to Al-Bukhari.

A mark of the preciseness of the Quranic language is that it takes into account those that work during the night because the nature of their work; for example policemen, bakers and the like. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And among His wonders is your sleep, at night or in daytime...' (*ar-Rum*: 23). Night is the original time of sleep and daytime is like night for those who serve the society during the night. This is why they must make the day an artificial night by closing their windows and sleeping in a calm place so that the human body can take its share of rest and serenity.

Thus, night and day are not opposites. They are two complimentary creations, not conflicting. They are like the male and the female, one completes the other. They are not, as some claim, opposites. This is why, after taking an oath by the night as it veils in darkness and the day as it rises bright, the True Lord *Glorified is He* said: 'Consider the creation of the male and the female! Verily, [O men,] you aim at most divergent ends!' (*al-Layl*: 3-4) Night and day are like male and female; each one has a function in life.

The divergence of night and day is in terms of light and darkness, length and shortness and the difference in places. Night does not take up the entire universe, nor does the day. When you are in night, it is day elsewhere. He *Glorified is He* says: 'He makes the night grow longer by shortening the day, and He makes the day grow longer by shortening the night...' (*Fatir*: 13).

The result of this is numerous sunrises and a sunset according to the number of places such that every sunrise coincides with a sunset and every sunset coincides with a sunset. Therefore, they say: a new night and day comes to being in every one millionth of a second.

This way, and as we have said, the continuous remembrance of Allah throughout all times is maintained; the call to prayer (adhan) and the prayer occur in every moment. While you pray the sunset prayer (maghrib), someone else is praying the night prayer ('isha'). Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to be mentioned in the entire universe in all the prayer times at every moment.

One of the Sufis and people of gnosis said addressing time: 'O time, in you, you contained all the times'; i.e. O noon, you are also afternoon, sunset, night and dawn; but elsewhere.

From the divergence of the night and day, the hot summer and the cold winter also arise. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has charged all His servants with one system of religious assignment such as the pilgrimage, and has tied all kinds of worship with the *Hijri* calendar. Summer and winter happen consecutively in the time. This becomes clear if you make a comparison between the *Hijri* and Gregorian calendars; the one who is not able to make the pilgrimage in the summer can do so in the winter because the divergence of the lunar calendar makes it take on all the seasons of the year.

This is why they said: the Night of Power occurs throughout the entire year because the twenty-seventh of *Ramadan* corresponds, in one year, to the first of January, and in another year, it will correspond to the second, another time the third etc.

Another meaning of the divergence of night and day is that they succeed one another; Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘And He it is who causes the night and the day to succeed one another, [revealing Himself in His works] unto him who has the will to take thought – that is, has the will to be grateful.’ (*al-Furqan*: 62)

We see that night follows day, and that day follows night; Allah has made this circulation fixed throughout all time phases relating to it. So long as the True Lord *Glorified is He* has made night and day succeed one another, this must have been so from the beginning of their creation. For if the night had existed before the day, we could not say that night succeeded it because it had not been preceded by anything, This must mean that they were both created together, and as time passed, each succeeded the other. This cannot happen unless the earth is circular such that night and day can occur at the same time; day occurs when the earth in the place which faces the sun and night occurs in the place where there is darkness.

Then, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...Will you not, then, use your reason?’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 80) This is because in these issues, in particular, you should have used reason. The divergence of times used to be based upon reason. Nowadays, it is based upon transportation because distances have shortened and we know now the difference between time zones with precision.

Similarly, people in the past abandoned the theory that the earth was round such that even when they captured images which revealed that it is round some of our thinkers denied it. We say: why do we take such a stance towards theories which our Quran had already established? Why do we give others the impression that our religion is heedless of these issues despite the fact that it had already made these discoveries?

If you were to ponder the statement of Allah: 'And it is He who has spread the earth...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 3) you would find in it the conclusive proof for this theory because the spread earth does not have an edged boundary. This does not make sense unless the earth is round such that if you were to travel in it you would not find an end; until you end up in the place that you started. If the earth was any other shape, such as a square or rectangle there would have been an edged end. However, in the past, we did not possess the tools that would clarify and bring forth this reality.

Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* puts the question: '...Will you not, then, use your reason?' (*al-Mu'minun*: 80) It alerts us of the need to use our reason in matters of existence because we will encounter many of them in our path to Allah *Glorified is He*. Why does a person use his reason in order to plan crimes? However, Allah *Glorified is He* watches over this person and makes them commit an error in order to prove the crime against themselves. Therefore, the judicial specialists say that there is no perfect crime. This is the function of the judge or detective who converse with a criminal in order to reach this clue.

It is as if the True Lord says: you have abused your mind to satisfy your whims, so I must put you down the perilous path in order for your affair to be revealed. If I conceal it for you once, beware of persisting or thinking that you escaped by your reason or your planning, or else I will catch you even if it was a crime that you have not committed because you are not able to use your reason to plan against Allah; His justice is above all planning.

If a person is accused of a crime of which they are innocent and if harm reaches him as a result of this false claim; the divine justice will come down and Allah will conceal another crime that he had committed as a recompense for what he faced in the first. This can only be done by the Lord.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* alerts the human reason and stimulates it by inviting it to ponder, reflect and use reason in order to perceive the universe around it, this is proof that He *Glorified is He* has trust in His creation, His design; this is why He stimulates the minds to search and reflect upon this creation. You can notice this issue when a human presents a product. The one who makes an excellent product exhibits it and calls you to test it and make sure of its quality, while a manufacturer of a bad product will beat around the bush and will distract you from examining it lest you discover its defect.

When your Lord alerts you to reflect upon His creation, you must ascertain the significance of this stimulation in order to reach what Allah has intended for you.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

بَلْ قَالُوا مِثْلَ مَا قَالَ الْأَوَّلُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

**But, like others before them [81]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 81)**

That is they did not take these signs as lessons. Nay, they spoke as the people of olden time spoke:

قَالُوا أَإِذَا مِتْنَا وَكُنَّا تُرَابًا وَعِظْمًا إِأْتَانَا لَمَبْعُوثُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

**They say, ‘What? When we die and turn to dust
and bones, shall we really be resurrected? [82]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 82)**

Whether these were their words or their predecessors’ words, those who were contemporaneous with the prophet Muhammad were sceptical about resurrection after death. All their speech indicates this. They were amazed at this affair.

The Quran mentions the words of one of them in this verse: ‘and [now] he [argues about Us, and] thinks of Us in terms of comparison, and is oblivious of how he himself was created! [And so] he says, “Who could give life to bones that have crumbled to dust?” Say: “He who brought them

into being in the first instance will give them life [once again], seeing that He has full knowledge of every act of creation' (*Ya Sin*: 78-79).

لَقَدْ وَعَدْنَا نَحْنُ وَءَابَاؤُنَا هَذَا مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

**We have heard such promises before, and so did our
forefathers. These are just ancient fables' [83]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 83)**

Do you think that since Allah *Glorified is He* has promised you with death and resurrection that this will be in this world? This is why you say: we have been promised this but it did not happen, and many of us have died but they have not returned nor been resurrected. Who told you that you will die today and be resurrected tomorrow? The resurrection will not take place until all of humanity has died, then all of them will be resurrected at one time.

Thus, this statement of theirs is nonsense and false argumentation. The statement '...we have been promised...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 83) i.e. with the resurrection, a promise (wa'd) is usually of something good just as a threat (wa'id) is of something bad, like in the saying of the poet:

If I was to make a promise and a threat

I will conflict my threat and carry out my promise

That is he is a generous man who leaves the evil which he has threatened with and does the good that he has promised to do. However, the scholars say that both forms of the word can be used interchangeably.

However, can the promise, given to the disbelievers, of resurrection, and punishment that follows it be considered a promise? The scholars say: yes, this threat of punishment which awaits them can be considered a promise of a good thing because it warns them of its danger in order that they may not fall into it. Thus, it is good for them now since it warns them, just as you warn your child of failure in school if he or she neglects his or her lessons.

From this meaning, we have also explained the repetition of His statement: 'which, then, of your Sustainer's powers can you disavow?' (*ar-Rahman*: 13) In the chapter of *ar-Rahman*, after bounties of Allah, this verse is mentioned as

a reproach for those who deny or belie these blessings. It is repeated after each blessing as a confirmation of this reproach. It is strange that this verse is also mentioned after misfortunes as in His statement: 'A flash of fire will be let loose upon you, and smoke, and you will be left without succour! Which, then, of your Sustainer's powers can you disavow?' (*ar-Rahman*: 35-36)

Is there a blessing in fire and flames? We say: yes, there is blessing in it because it is warning for you before meeting this fate, and a warning for you so you can take yourself to account.

They say: '...This is nothing but fables of ancient times!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 83) That is the resurrection is mere fables for them. Fables (*asatir*) is the plural of fable (*astura*) like *a'ajib* (miracles) which is the plural of *a'juba* (miracle). Some scholars say that *asatir* is the plural of *astar* which is the plural of *satr* (line), like *shakl* and *ashkal*; thus it is a plural of a plural. Whether it is the plural of *astura* or the plural or *satr*, the meaning is not different because a written thing can be considered by people to be a superstition which has no reality.

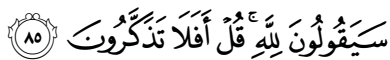
Fables are fabricated statements which have no basis. A Statement is not called a fable until its time of occurrence comes and it does not happen. So you can say fables of something other than resurrection as the time of resurrection of which you say '...fables of ancient times' (*al-Mu'minun*: 83) is yet to come; all of humanity has not died in order for them to be resurrected. Thus you have erred in your timing and for thinking that you will die and be resurrected in this world, while people are still in the vastness of this world.

Thus, the resurrection is not as you say; on the contrary it is true. You have not used the appropriate word for it. This is why these rhetorical questions which establish the case against them are put to them:

قُلْ لِمَنِ الْأَرْضُ وَمَنْ فِيهَا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Say [Prophet], 'Who owns the earth and all who live in it, if you know [so much]?' [84] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 84)

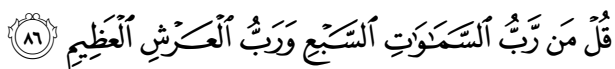
The conditional phrase 'if' indicates that there is doubt in their knowledge.



And they will reply, ‘God.’ Say, ‘Will you not take heed?’ [85] (The Quran, *al-Mu’minun*: 85)

As long as you have established that the earth and all that lives thereon belong to Allah, then ‘...Will you not, then, bethink yourselves [of Him]?’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 85) That is: why do you turn away from the Owner and Creator of the world?

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



Say: Who is it that sustains the seven heavens and is the Lord of the Sublime Throne? [86] (The Quran, *al-Mu’minun*: 86)

We notice that they did not argue this issue, nor did they say, for example, that there is only the sky that we see. This indicates that it is a matter that they do not reject. It must mean that the previous prophets informed them of the heavens and that there are seven. It became a rational principle that they knew of. Otherwise, they would have objected to it since they only see one heaven. Thus, they did not argue this subject.

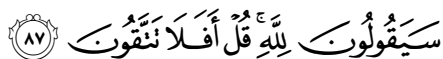
In the question: ‘...and the Lord of the Sublime Throne?’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 86) the Throne is an awesome creation the essence of which only Allah knows, and He also said about it: ‘...and is established on the throne of His almightiness...’ (*al-A’raf*: 54) and said: ‘...the throne of His almightiness has rested upon water...’ (*Hud*: 7).

Nobody has seen the Throne, but the Lord who created it has informed us of it; He said: to Me belongs such and such, it is sufficient that Allah *Glorified is He* has described it as sublime. Regarding this issue also, they did not argue with the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* nor did they say that they have not seen the Throne. This would also indicate that they had attained some of the knowledge of the previous prophets

which had been transmitted to them at a point in the development of human civilization by those who were present.

The throne belonging to human kings was also described as great as well. In the story of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and the Queen of Sheba (Balqis), the hoopoe said: ‘...and hers is a mighty throne.’ (*an-Naml*: 23) because the throne is a symbol of the establishment of rule and of the stability of the command of a king, who nobody opposes, This is why the first thing that Sulaiman *peace be upon him* said regarding her was: ‘...Which of you can bring me her throne...’ (*an-Naml*: 38). It was as if He wanted to firstly take from her the symbol of greatness, safety, security, and stability of her realm.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



And they will reply, ‘God.’ Say, ‘Will you not be mindful?’ [87] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 87)

Since it is the case and you do admit that the dominion of the heavens and the earth belongs to Allah, and that to Him belongs the great throne, why do you not fear this Allah? Why do you rebel against His methodology? This universe and everything therein has been created for your service; does this not make you take heed of the beneficent maker?

This is why He *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith: ‘O son of Adam, I have created everything for you, and I have created you for Me, so do not be preoccupied by that which belongs to you from the one whom you belong to.’⁽¹⁾ That is do not let the blessing distract you from the Benefactor. The human being must first look to his Creator and his Owner and fulfil His right, then look at what they possess.

(1) *Ibn Kathir mentioned in his tafsir (4/2380): It has been mentioned in some of the divine books that God Glorified is He says: O son of Adam, I have created you for My worship, so do not fool around, I have taken charge of your sustenance so you will not be tired. Seek Me and you will find Me, and if you find Me then you have found everything...*

The meaning of: ‘...Will you not, then, remain conscious of Him?’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 87) is that you should create a protective barrier between you and the majestic attributes of Allah. We have previously said that an aspect of the miraculous nature of the verses in the Quran is that one time they will say: ‘be conscious of Allah’ and another time ‘be conscious of the Fire’. The meaning is not contradictory as some may believe. The meaning is in fact the same because the fire is a soldier of Allah and one of the attributes of His majesty. Thus, the meaning is: be conscious of the punishment of Allah and be conscious of the attributes of His force and omnipotence by making a protective barrier between you and them.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ مَنْ بِيَدِهِ مَلَكُوتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ يُجِيرُ
وَلَا يُجَارُ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ

Say, in whose hand is the realm of all things – and He protects while none can protect against Him – if you should know? [88] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 88)

‘...In whose hand...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 88) indicates having control over a thing; when you say that this affair is in my hand, you mean that it is under my control and disposition. And in ‘...the mighty dominion over all things’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 88), the Arabic word for property *malaka* has three forms for its noun: *milk* which means property and possession, *mulk* which means reign and dominion, and *malakut* which means dominion over the unseen worlds.

Property (*milk*) is what you own, even if you only have one item of clothing it is your property. As for *mulk* it is to have authority and power over the individuals who have ownership of seen things. As for *malakut*, it is both the possession and authority of the created things that your senses cannot discern, and which you can only be known by informing of their Creator. Human beings cannot see everything in the universe. Rather, there are things inside themselves which they do not know about. All of these are included in the unseen realm.

In fact, a human being cannot even see the whole of the physical world because they can only see within their eyesight limit; they cannot see whatever goes beyond this limit even if someone else can see it. Therefore, things which are unseen to you may be included in the wider meaning of unseen realm. Thus, the unseen realm or *malakut* refers to the hidden things which nobody can see or which only some can see.

If human beings go deep in the worship and obedience of Allah *Glorified is He*, they will be outpoured with divine inspirations, and Allah will generously give them directly from this dominion, as He says: ‘...and We would have given them a rich reward of Our own.’ (*an-Nisa’*: 67)

Do you not see what the Lord *Glorified is He* says of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: ‘And of Ibrahim, who fulfilled his duty.’ (*an-Najm*: 37) He also said of him: ‘When Abraham’s Lord tested him with certain commandments, which he fulfilled...’ (*al-Baqara*: 124) i.e. he fulfilled the rights of Allah *Glorified is He* with precision and in a perfect way. This is why His Lord *Glorified is He* is content that he will be a leader for the people: ‘...He said, “I will make you a leader of people.”...’ (*al-Baqara*: 124)

Thus, when Ibrahim *peace be upon him* excelled in what was due to His Lord *Glorified is He* and when He reached this station His Lord said of Him: ‘In this way We showed Ibrahim [Allah’s] mighty dominion over the heavens and the earth, so that he might be a firm believer...’ (*al-An‘am*: 75).

By pleasing His Lord to excellence in the first place, He progressed to a station higher than it. This is like when a man enters your house and witnesses the blessings that you have, he feels happy for you, saying: ‘what Allah has willed, *Glorified is Allah*’, and prays that you be given more. When you notice his cordial admiration, you say: ‘come and I will show you that which is greater’.

Another example of this is that of the righteous servant who worshipped Allah *Glorified is He* and drew nearer to Him by following the Path conveyed by Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. When he became steadfast on the Path and was deeply engrossed in the worship and obedience of Allah *Glorified is He*, Allah granted him knowledge, from His grace, without an intermediary or messenger until he became a teacher to Musa *peace be upon him*.

In the verse we are discussing, Allah, then, says: ‘...Who protects, while there is no protection against Him...’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 88). We use *yujeeer* (protect) when someone sought the protection of so-and-so, and the latter protected him, or someone who sought the succour of so-and-so, and the latter gave the former succour. Also, *jar* (protector) is mentioned in Allah’s statement: ‘...I shall be your protector...’ (*al-Anfal*: 48). A human does not seek the protection of someone else unless he is unable to protect himself. That is why he seeks the help of someone who is known to be strong, in order to protect, and defend him.

Thus, this issue comprises three elements; the protector: this is the one who agrees to help you, take you in his custody and defend you; the one being protected: this is the weak one who seeks protection; the one being protected from: this is the strong one who wishes to overpower. It is known that after what happened during the travel to at-Ta’if, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sought the protection of a disbeliever and entered in his protection.

In essence, the True Lord *Glorified is He* protects those who seek His protection and gives succour to those who ask for it. However, ‘...there is no protection against Him.’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 88) This is because the one who protects you does so against someone who is equal to him in strength, thus being able to prevent him from getting to you and protecting you from him overpowering you. Who is it then that can protect you from Allah *Glorified is He*? Who is it that can protect you if Allah *Glorified is He* is the one seeking you out? This is why He says regarding the son of Nuh (Noah) Kanaan *peace be upon him*: ‘...Nuh said, “Today there is no refuge from Allah’s command, except for those on whom He has mercy.”...’ (*Hud*: 43) In fact, Allah *Glorified is He* protects from everything, and whoever spends the morning and the evening under the protection of Allah *Glorified is He* has no fear. Here you can notice the connection between the beginning of this verse and its ending: everything is in the hand and grasp of Allah *Glorified is He*; everything goes to Him. So beware of thinking that you can escape from His grasp by the blessings that He has given you because He is able to take it from you. If this happens, no one can protect you from Allah, nor can anyone give you help from Him.

In addition, read His statement: ‘Say, “Allah, holder of all control, You give control to whoever You will and remove it from whoever You will; You elevate whoever You will and humble whoever You will. All that is good lies in Your hand: You have power over everything.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 26)

In the verse we are studying He says: ‘...if you know [so much]’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 88) meaning if you have knowledge of this issue.

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says of them:

سَيَقُولُونَ لِلَّهِ قُلْ فَأَنَّى تُسْحَرُونَ ﴿٨٩﴾

And they will reply, ‘God.’ Say, ‘Then how can you be so deluded?’ [89] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 89)

In this verse also they say ‘all belongs to Allah *Glorified is He*’. This is because it is a truth that cannot be denied. As such, ‘...‘how can you be so deluded?’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 89) How can you be deluded; or how were you deluded from the truth and turned away from it to this false speech?

These three issues are mentioned in the form of a question in order to condemn them through the manifestation of the creed in the highest existence; the clarity of the proofs of the inimitability of Allah’s message; and the clarity of the signs in the verses that discuss Allah’s Path. The True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted such words to be spoken by them, condemning themselves as witnesses on their own conduct; so that it could be a proof and true testimony against them.

It is well known that confession is the master of proofs. This is why He asks them the following questions: ‘Say [Prophet], “Who owns the earth and all who live in it, if you know [so much]?”’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 84) ‘Say, “Who is the Lord of the seven heavens? Who is the Lord of the Mighty Throne?”’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 86) ‘Say, “Who holds control of everything in His hand? ...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 88)

In answer to all these questions they said ‘Allah’: what, then, remains for you? What is it that prevented you from being mindful of the One whom you believe to be the owner of the earth and heavens, and in whose hand

everything is? It was merely arrogance and rebellion. Otherwise, what did you mean by the word 'Allah' which you uttered?

You know Allah, and know what this word means because the meaning of a word precedes its formation in the human language. For, a language is usually made up of words which are set down for specific meanings. Thus, meanings exist first, then, we set the word which indicates that meaning. Since the word 'Allah' exists upon your tongues you must know what this word indicates. It is a linguistic matter which you have solved. Otherwise, a non-existent thing does not have a name. For example, what was a television called before it was invented? It did not have a name because its meaning had not yet existed. When the television was invented, it was given a name.

Since the word 'Allah' circulated on the tongues, this indicates that the existence of Allah *the Almighty* preceded the existence of His name. So, knowing Him by His name is a proof against you. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* presented these issues in the form of a question in order to get the confession out of them. This is as if a person denies that you did him any good, if you inform him: 'I did such and such for you,' you give him information. Information can be true or false, and he may recognize it or deny it.

Alternatively, when you ask him: did I not do such and such for you? He can not but admit it and utter the truth of what happened. His confession enables you to reach that which witnessing or proof cannot do.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

بَلْ أَتَيْنَهُم بِالْحَقِّ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

**The fact is, We brought them the truth and they
are lying [90] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 90)**

This means let me inform you of their affair and why they denied the truth and did not utter it. They deny the truth because they are liars and want to establish that what they are on is only natural. They do this because they benefit from deviance and falsehood. This is why they impede the message which came to correct the scales and fight deviance and falsehood. In other

words, they resort to belying the message and turning people away from it in order to benefit from falsehood.

This is why you should reflect upon why people disbelieve. They disbelieve because they benefit from falsehood, the truth troubles them and tightens a grip around them.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

مَا اتَّخَذَ اللَّهُ مِنْ وَلَدٍ وَمَا كَانَ مَعَهُ مِنْ إِلَهٍ إِذَا أَذَّاهَبَ كُلَّ إِلَهٍ مِمَّا
خَلَقَ وَلَعَلَّ بَعْضُهُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ سُبْحَنَ اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُصِفُونَ ﴿٩١﴾

Never did God take unto Himself any son. Nor is there any god beside Him— if there were, each god would have taken his creation aside and tried to overpower the others. May God be exalted above what they describe! [91] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 91)

If only their affair had ended at them not attaining to faith in Allah *Glorified is He*. However, they transgressed until they described Allah *Glorified is He* to have things that do not befit Him to have. Since Allah rejects the idea of Him taking any offspring, 'Never did Allah take unto Himself any son...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91) then, saying that Allah had a child, indicates that their transgression and deviation intensified Moreover, their impudence reached the extent of speaking falsely about the Almighty's Divine Entity.

First, we ask: what is offspring? Offspring is what a person begets whether it is male or female. We read in the Quran that they said: Isa (Jesus) is the son of Allah and Uzayr (Ezra) is the son of Allah. They said that the angels are His daughters. By Contrast, Allah says: 'Never did Allah take unto Himself any son...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91). This statement includes both sons and daughters.

The meaning of their claim which Allah negates in the verse 'Never did Allah take unto Himself any son...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91) is that Allah existed, and then took offspring unto Himself. So, the taking of offspring is an occurrence. This indicates that there was a time in which Allah did not have offspring.

Here, we ask: what increase has the (assumed) existence of offspring caused in the dominion of Allah? Have the heavens become eight? Has this added another sun or moon in the universe? The universe is as Allah created it. He provided it with its necessities, foundations, and branches. Nothing has increased. Thus, the taking of offspring is frivolous, and nothing results from it.

They say, 'Allah took a son', in order that the creation could find affinity in the existence of His son, and sense His essence among the creation. They said this at the Council of Nicaea, as if The Messiah ('Isa) *peace be upon him* took the station of divinity. However, how long did he *peace be upon him* stay among them? The Messiah *peace be upon him* was on the earth for thirty-something years before being raised to the heavens. How then were the people who had lived before His birth prevented from this affinity? In addition, how were those who lived after Him prevented from this affinity? Does this not contradict with the justice of Allah *Glorified is He* since all of humanity are the creation of Allah *Glorified is He*, all being equal to him?

Some of them say: He came to remove sins, but sins remained on the earth even after what He did. Thus, these are all weak proofs.

If we were to discuss this issue in a logical and philosophical way, we ask: why does a human take offspring? A human being takes offspring because he loves life, death shortens this life. Thus, he wants offspring in order for it to be an extension to his life, guaranteeing that he will be remembered in the following generation. If his offspring has offspring, of his own, he guarantees that his name will be remembered in two generations. This is why people say (in Egypt): 'Dearer than a child is a grandchild'. What is this remembrance that they hold onto? The real remembrance is the good deeds that you leave behind, and at the same time goes to Allah before you do.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not need remembrance after Him, simply because He remains and does not die. This issue is thus not possible in His case.

Offspring may be taken in order to be a reliance and assistance for its father when he grows and his strength weakens. This is why they say, 'the best marriage is an early marriage because it will help you to beget a son

who will be like a father to you and will look after you during the childhood of old age when you reach old age and become like a child'. This is the result when you beget a child while you are still young. Moreover, this will enable you both to contemporaneous with each other for the longest time possible. The time in which he will continue to be the light of your eyes will be longer, as opposed to someone who begets in old age. This is why it is said that 'a father who looks after you in the childhood of your old age', and did not say 'a son' because in this instance you are in need of the compassion of a father.

This is also impossible in respect with the True Lord because He is the Strong who is not in need of a helper.

On the other hand, man loves his offspring because it is a part of him, and he is the cause of its existence. Therefore, he wishes to have offspring of his own. This is one aspect of man's love of ownership because a person wishes firstly to have land, then, he wishes to cultivate it and eat from its fruits, then, he wishes to have animals from which he can benefit and drink milk, then, after all this has been fulfilled he extends his wishes to taking offspring. It is as if he progresses from the love of inanimate objects to the love of plants, to the love of animals; and from there to the love of humans.

This is also impossible in His case. If you love your offspring because they are part of you; your own offspring that you cherish, then all of humanity are the children and of Allah *Glorified is He*. How, then, would He need offspring?

Thus, these are all false proofs. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* refutes them: 'Never did Allah take unto Himself any son...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91). He uses the word *min* (any) which indicates generality i.e. Allah *Glorified is He* never took anything starting from that which may be called a son, even if it be adopted. It just as if you were to say: *laysa 'andi mal* (I do not have money with me) you negate the possibility of having in your possession that which is usually considered to be wealth, yet this does not negate the possibility of you having in your possession a few pounds or pennies. If you were to say *laysa 'andi min mal* (I have nothing that is money with me), then, you negate the possibility of even possessing the least thing that can be called money.

We reply to the one who says that the word *min*, here, is superfluous by saying that the speech of Allah *Glorified is He* is precise and does not present itself to superfluity. Superfluity is only in the speech of mortals. The True Lord *Glorified is He* is deemed above this.

Then, in His refutation of their claims the True Lord *Glorified is He* takes us to higher level and says: ‘...Nor is there any god beside Him...’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 91), i.e. a deity that is rightfully or wrongfully worshipped. This is why He called the idols deities. However, the word ‘Allah’ is exclusively dedicated to the one who is rightfully worshipped. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* negated having partners in worship, as it is mentioned in another verse: ‘If there had been in the heavens or earth any gods but Him, both heavens and earth would be in ruins...’ (*al-Anbiya*: 22), that is if there were deities other than Allah *Glorified is He*, the heaven and the earth would have fallen into ruin. Moreover, even if there were deities in addition to Allah, they would have fallen into ruin. This is because *illa*, here, is not of exception; it is a noun which means ‘beside’. Its grammatical function becomes clear when the word ‘Allah’ follows it in the sentence.

If you were to reflect upon the idea of multiple deities, its falsehood would become clear to you. If there were other deities with Allah, they would have divided the universe among themselves making it into sections, each one taking his section: one would take earth; another would take the sky; another would take that which is between them etc. However, would any section of the universe be self-sufficient? Could the earth be sufficient without the heaven? If this were the case, a clash would take place by which the state of the universe would not be consistent.

Moreover, we would ask: why did not the deity who took the earth, for example, take the heaven? He must have taken the earth by means of his power, yet, left the heaven out of incapacity. An entity of such a description cannot be a deity. If they were to say: they are all powerful, each one of them possessing the ability of creation by himself, we say: what, then, is the benefit of the others?

Then, He says: ‘...each god would have taken his creation aside and tried to overpower the others...’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 91), i.e. if each one of them

was independent of his own section of the universe, the affairs of the universe would have fallen into ruin. This would be just as we see in the world of humans, when a king attempts to become independent over a part of land to which he has no right. We have seen the ruin that this leads to on the earth. This is an example of His statement: '...each god would have taken his creation aside and tried to overcome the others...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91). This is one portrayal of corruption. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* deals with this issue and announces: 'Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and those who have knowledge...' (*Al-Imran*: 18).

This is not our speech nor is it our testimony. Rather, it is the speech and testimony of Allah of Himself. However, did those entities know of this testimony? If they knew of it then their silence regarding it and lack of opposition is inability. If they were unaware of it, then they are heedless or asleep. In both cases, they cannot rightfully be deities.

In another verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* replies to them: 'Say, 'If there were other gods along with Him...' (*al-Isra'*: 42), then in this case '...they would have tried to find a way to the Lord of the Throne.' (*al-Isra'*: 42) That is they would have gone out looking for the deity who took the universe from them and attacked their authority; either to confront Him or to draw near to Him.

Therefore, He says of those who claim to have deities besides Allah *Glorified is He*: '...are themselves striving to obtain their Lord's favour...' (*al-Isra'*: 57), i.e. 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* Uzayr (Ezra) *peace be upon him* and the angels whom you said are the daughters of Allah *Glorified is He*; all of them turn to Allah and seek to draw near to Him even '...those among them who are closest (to Him) – hoping for His grace and dreading His chastisement...' (*al-Isra'*: 57). In another place He says: 'The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant of Allah, nor would the angels who are close to Him...' (*an-Nisa'*: 172). They never disdain to have servitude to Allah. In fact, they feel honour through this servitude. They are angered and upset when people call them deities, or revere them more than they deserve. This is because their loyalty and allegiance to Allah is greater than their loyalty and allegiance to themselves.

In fact, these things which they take as deities other than Allah will be the first to curse them. The stones which they worshipped other than Allah—despite the fact that the word worship here is wrong, we only repeat it here out of disregard because worship is when the worshipped obeys the command of the one being worshipped and keeps away from what it has prohibited, whereas stones do not have commands nor prohibitions—these stones worship Allah more than they do. And know Allah more than they do. For this reason, the stones despise and curse them. They will turn to fire at the resurrection to burn them.

Read this conversation between the cave of Hira'a—which witnessed the beginning of the revelation and in which the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* found solace in the first verses of the Quran—and the cave of Thawr—in which the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He*, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sought protection during the Emigration. Both of them consist of stones. The poet⁽¹⁾ says:

How we envied Hira'a when it witnessed
 The faithful Spirit nourishes you with lights
 Hira'a and Thawr became equal
 By both, I intercede for the community of stones
 People worshipped us, yet we worship Allah more
 Than those who stand for prayer before dawn
 They took our silence as a proof against us
 And so we became the fuel of Hell fire
 In ignorance they ascribed falsely to us
 What they had ascribed to the son of Mary and the disciples
 Those who overrate will have retribution while what is overrated
 Will be saved by the mercy of the Forgiving

(1) From the poetry of Sheikh Ash-Sha'arawi *may Allah have mercy upon him*

This is why Allah says to 'Isa *peace be upon him*: '...'Isa, son of Mary, did you say to people, "Take me and my mother as two gods alongside Allah?"' (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) 'Isa *peace be upon him* then replied: '...'May You be exalted! I would never say what I had no right to say. If I had said such a thing You would have known it. You know all that is within me, though I do not know what is within You, You alone have full knowledge of things unseen.'" (*al-Ma'ida*: 116) Yes, indeed Allah knows what His servant and prophet 'Isa *peace be upon him* said. The True Lord just wanted to affirm to them (those who claim that 'Isa is the son of Allah) that he *peace be upon him* dislikes what they have said of him.

When the Romans had been defeated by the Persians the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was saddened. Why? Because they are the people of the book who know Allah *Glorified is He*, and who know of the conveyance from Allah, even though they disbelieved in him *peace and blessings be upon him*. As for the Persians, they were Zoroastrians who worshipped fire. Therefore, the True Lord reassures Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with His statement: '*Alif. Lam. Mim.* (These are three Arabic letters) The Byzantines have been defeated* in a nearby land. They will reverse their defeat with a victory* in a few years' time. Allah is in command, first and last. On that day, the believers will rejoice* at Allah's help. He helps whoever He pleases: He is the Mighty, the Merciful.' (*ar-Rum*: 1-5)

Even though they did not believe in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they believed in the Lord *Glorified is He* of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Thus, prejudice in favour of Allah *Glorified is He* is greater than the prejudice in favour of the Messenger who conveys on behalf of Him.

Then He says: '...May Allah be exalted above what they describe.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91) The word 'describe', here indicates that they lie. However, this is expressed by the word 'describe' meaning: if you want to recognise falsity then consider their speech, for it is a precise description of it. He says in another verse: '...their own tongues utter the lie...' (*an-Nahl*: 62). Their speech is falsity itself. This is the most truthful description of them because falsity is that which contradicts reality, and they do not say but that which contradicts reality.

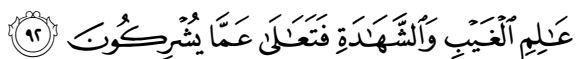
It is like when you ask: what is stupidity? I say: look at the conduct of so and so. His conduct is the true description and clear translation of stupidity. It is as if he has reached a point in this description whereby he embodies the meaning which you are looking for.

The statement: '...May Allah be exalted...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91) refers to the verbal noun *tanazuh* (de-anthropomorphism) which existed before the existence of the Messiah *peace be upon him*. It is an eternal attribute of Allah *Glorified is He*, since His de-anthropomorphism was established before He created anything. When Allah created the heaven and the earth, they both glorified Him: 'Everything in the heavens and earth glorifies Allah. *He is the Almighty*, the Wise.' (*al-Hadid*: 1) The glorification has never discontinued since then. The True Lord says: 'Everything in the heavens and earth glorifies Allah. He is the Almighty, the Wise.' (*al-Jumu'a*: 1)

Since they all glorify Allah, then, you, O Muhammad, also glorify Him: '[Prophet], glorify the name of your Lord *the Most High*.' (*al-A'la*: 1)

How can it be that while the entire universe glorifies, you do not, when you (human being) are the master of the universe?

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says regarding His lofty essence:



**He knows what is not seen as well as what is seen;
He is far above any partner they claim for Him [92]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 92)**

Knowledge is to perceive an issue or a relative event that is definitive and has an evidence of it. One does not reach knowledge except through these conditions. If some issue is definitive and has occurred but cannot be proved, such as when a child says: 'Allah is one', then this is considered blind following just as a child follows his father or teacher. For a child keeps following others in this issue until he becomes able to apply study and discretion to it, on his own, and can consequently, prove it.

If an issue is definitive but has not occurred, then this is ignorance. Ignorance is not as some people think to not know. Ignorance is: when you

are definitive about an issue which contradicts reality. This is why you find the ignorant one more difficult and tiresome for the people of da'wah (calling) and teachers than the empty-minded who knows nothing; who does not have initial background, and so waits for you to teach him. As for the ignorant, he needs you to firstly remove the wrong perception from his mind, then, replace it with the truth.

The unseen here, means the unrestricted unseen, that which cannot be seen by you or by others, can be seen by those who attend this gathering, we are only absent to those who haven't attended. This is a limited unseen. Electricity, gravity, and things like them are of this kind because they were unseen to those who came before us although they were present. When we reached understanding of their backgrounds, they became perceivable to us. This is why Allah says: '...but they do not comprehend any of His knowledge except what He wills...' (*al-Baqara*: 255). He affirms their ability to attain, but on the condition that He wills it. If He wills, He will show them the unseen and give them knowledge of it when its time comes.

Hence, what is known to someone else but absent to you is not from the unseen. Likewise, what is absent to you, yet has the background which leads you to it is not from the unseen, too. The unseen is the unrestricted unseen which is absent to you and to others. It is that of which Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'He is the One Who knows what is hidden.* He does not disclose it except to a messenger of His choosing...' (*al-Jinn*: 26-27).

Al-shahadah means (what is seen). If the True Lord *Glorified is He* has knowledge of the unseen, then he most definitely has knowledge of the seen realm. Why then does He mention it? They said this indicates that He knows the unseen which has been made unseen to me and knows what is seen to other than me.

On the other hand, since Allah is unseen and concealed from us, when the universe, which is unseen, exists, some might think that the concealed and unseen only has knowledge of the unseen. So the True Lord wants to confirm this issue. He is unseen, but He knows the unseen as well as the seen.

We see certain people who try to bring down the veil of the unseen and attempt to discover what has been concealed from them. They would go to

fortune-tellers, augurs and the like not knowing that the unseen is one of Allah's the greatest blessings. The unseen is the essence of building the earth and harnessing its resources. Through the unseen, human interaction takes place. This is because humans are susceptible to change. If each one of us was to know what his brother had and the secrets of his brother were revealed to him, people would sever their relations and nobody would benefit from the other.

Therefore, they say: if you were to reveal each other's secrets you would refrain from burying one another. That is if that which is in your brother's heart was revealed to you, you would hold back from him even in burying him after his death.

For this reason, the True Lord willed that these affairs be unseen to soften the hearts and to spread good amongst people causing them to benefit from one another. Otherwise, if you were to know the bad deeds of someone and knew his stance of enmity towards you, you would even dislike the good he does to you and turn your heart towards him in hatred. You would not benefit from his good actions.

Therefore, we say to those who search for the hidden affairs of others: if you want to know someone else's hidden affairs, then, give him permission to know yours. However, you will never allow this. Thus, leave the affair as Allah *Glorified is He* has intended and do not search for the unseen of others such that your life becomes stable.

Your Lord *Glorified is He* continuously turns your attention to the opposite. In a Qudsi Hadith Allah says: 'O son of Adam, you prayed against the one who wronged you, and the one whom you wronged prayed against you. If you wish we will answer the prayer for you and the prayer against you. If you wish I will leave you both until the hereafter wherein my pardon will encompass you both'.⁽¹⁾ The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to purify

(1) Narrated by Al-Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali 3/183 from the statement of Yazid ibn Maysara: If you begin to pray against the one who has wronged you then (The Quran, know that) Allah *Glorified is He* says: someone else prays against you because you have wronged him. So if you wish, We will respond to your prayer and the prayer against you, or if you wish, we will leave you till the Day of Rising wherein my pardon will encompass you both.

the souls of humanity and wants people to stop at the boundaries which Allah has determined for the knowledge He has revealed to them. Do not search for the concealed or else you will cause yourself trouble. Do this and you will face the challenges of life with a soul that is pure and content with you and people or else you will cause yourself trouble. Then He says: ‘...He is far above any partner they claim for Him.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 92) This is because all the ones whom you ascribe as partners to Allah *Glorified is He* do not have knowledge of anything of this; neither the seen nor the unseen: therefore, it will not benefit you if you were to worship them, nor will it harm you if you did not worship them.

Then, the True Lord says to His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*:

قُلْ رَبِّ إِمَّا تُرِيْنِي مَا يُوعَدُوْنَ ﴿٩٣﴾ رَبِّ فَلَا تَجْعَلْنِي فِي الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِيْنَ ﴿٩٤﴾

**Say, Lord, if You are going to show me the punishment
You have promised them [93] Then Lord, do not include me
among the evildoers! [94] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 94)**

‘Say...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 93) is a command from Allah *Glorified is He* to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Rabbi ‘...Lord...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 93) is a calling (originally: *ya rabbi*) from which the particle of calling *ya* is omitted. ‘...if You are going to show me the punishment You have promised...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 93), then ‘Lord, do not include me among the evildoers!’” (*al-Mu'minun*: 94). That is if you have decreed to punish them in my lifetime, then do not punish them, whilst I am amongst them.

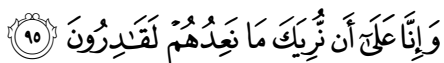
This is from the softness of Muhammad’s heart. When the disbelievers’ abuse and opposition became severe in the beginning of his mission, Allah *Glorified is He* sent angels to him who presented him the opportunity to punish the disbelievers of his people. However, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* refused this and said, ‘O Allah, guide my people, for verily they do not know’⁽¹⁾

(1) Narrated by Ibn Abu Shayba, by Ahmad in Az-Zuhd, by Abu Nu’aym and Ibn Asakir through Mujahid on the authority of ‘Ubayd ibn ‘Umayr who said: When Noah’s people struck Him until He fainted. When he became conscious He said: Guide my =

and He, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Perhaps Allah will let them beget children who will say: There is no deity but Allah.' In addition, his stance on the day of the conquest of Mecca is also clear and well known. This is because He, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent as a mercy to the worlds.

Did the Messenger make this supplication because he believed that Allah would make him amongst them when the punishment comes down to them? We say: no, because he did not say this sentence from himself, it was Allah who commanded him to do so. The Prophet would not have held such a belief. Thus, the issue is of revelation from Allah *Glorified is He* which he must convey and say as Allah had said. This implies mercy towards him so he does not see those who are being punished. Alternatively, the meaning might be what this verse refers to: 'Beware of discord that harms not only the wrongdoers among you...' (*al-Anfal: 25*).

This supplication by which the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed averts any thought that may occur to him and reassures him that it will not happen. His statement: '...if You are going to show me...' (*al-Mu'minun: 93*) includes the word *ummah* which consists of *im* and *ma*. Together, they express the meaning of condition and time. It is as if He says: when the punishment descends upon them, say: do not, O my Sustainer, let me be one of those evil-doing folks.



We certainly are able to show you the punishment We have promised them [95] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun: 95*)

That is We are able to show You something of the punishment that We have promised them. However, punishment is not that of extermination

= people for verily they do not know. Shaqiq said that 'Abdullah said: I saw the Prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wiping blood from His face while saying what one of the Prophets said: 'O Allah *Glorified is He* guide My people for verily they do not know'. (*The Quran, Narrated by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr Al-Manthur 3/481*). Look to the Book of asceticism by Ahmad ibn Hanbal 278, 280

because Allah has honoured your nation—even the disbelievers amongst them—such that He has excused them from this type of punishment, since with such a punishment He would not leave a soul of them; and this would prevent any of their progeny becoming believers in Allah. Suppose, then, that an exterminating punishment was to befall them on Badr, could we see the believers amongst them as well as their progeny who would come after Badr?

Hence, Allah would only exterminate them if He knew that there was no benefit in them or in their progeny after them; just like what had happened with the nation of Nuh *peace be upon him*. Consider what Nuh *peace be upon him* said of them: ‘if you leave them they will lead Your servants astray and beget only sinners and disbelievers.’ (Nuh: 27) Nuh *peace be upon him* would have never been able to say such a thing nor make such a judgment of his people except by revelation from Allah because only the Maker is able to make a judgment of such an enormous issue. For, we see the arrogant disbelievers and leaders of misguidance who then become good believers and did well in Islam. Take 'Ikrima, Khalid and 'Amr ibn Al-'As *may Allah be pleased with them* for example, and how much the believers pained and were saddened when they did not attain martyrdom. However, Allah had other plans. In fact, He was saving them for serving Islam and protecting the *da'wa* (propagation).

'Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl⁽¹⁾ *may Allah be pleased with him* showed a rare example of bravery at the battle of Yarmuk where he was given a strike of death. He leaned to 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* while giving His spirit in the cause of Allah saying: ‘does this death make Allah and His Messenger pleased with me?’ This took place on the day of Khandama⁽²⁾ about which the poet⁽³⁾ said:

If you were to have witnessed the day of Khandama

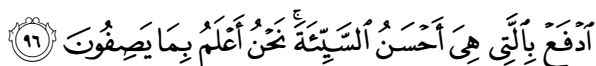
When Safwan and Ikrima both fled

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- (1) The story of martyrdom of 'Ikrima ibn Abu Jahl *may Allah be pleased with him*.
 - (2) Ibn Al-Athir said: it is a known mountain in Makka. Ibn Barri said: there was a skirmish there on the day of the conquest of Mecca on the day of Khandama. Khalid ibn Al-Walid *may Allah be pleased with him* met the polytheists and defeated and killed them. (The Quran, Lissan Al-Arab: kh-n-d-m)
 - (3) It is mentioned in Lissan Al-'Arab that Ibn Sayyid Al-Batalbusi attributed this poetical meter to Ar-Ra'ish Al-Hadhali. Ibn Barri mentioned that it is Hamas ibn Qays ibn Khalid Al-Kanani. It is also said that this poetical meter is by Harim ibn Al-Hatim.

And we were met with the swords of the Muslims
 Tearing asunder every forearm and skull
 With a strike such that nothing but battle cry could be heard
 And their screams around the neighing of horses
 Not the slightest word of blame was uttered⁽¹⁾

As for 'Amr ibn Al-'As and Khalid ibn Al-Walid *may Allah be pleased with them* we all know of their affair.

Then, the True Lord says:



Repel evil by what is best. We are well aware of what they attribute to Us [96] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 96)

'Repel...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 96) indicates staving off, i.e. there is an opponent facing you and attacking you wishing to cause you harm and you ward him off to defend yourself. However, repel with what is best, i.e. in a way or state which is better. So if he deals with you with force, meet him with leniency. This is the way which makes the people unanimously agree on your call and brings them closer to you. As it is mentioned in His statement: '...had you been harsh, or hard-hearted, they would have dispersed and left you...' (*Al-'Imran*: 159). If you wish to draw them closer to you, then repel them with what is best. In the same vein, Muhammad's stance on the day of the Conquest of Mecca; the day on which Allah gave him power over the necks of His enemies. He, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stood facing them and said, 'O Quraysh, what do you think I will do to you?' They said: 'good; for you are a noble brother and the son of a

(1) Ibn Mandhur mentioned these lines in (The Quran, Lissan Al-Arab: kh-n-d-m) from the speech of Ar-Ra'ish Al-Hadhali to his wife after she blamed him after his defeat. Before this he had said:

*If they come forward today I have no excuse
 This is a complete weapon and tool
 With two cutting edges it is quickly drawn*

noble brother. He, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said 'Go, for you are all free' ⁽¹⁾.'

We notice that they spoke to him in a way that would cause His heart to soften to them and be compassionate towards them. They reminded him of their relationship and kinship to him. They said what would soften his heart and informed him of that which they would benefit from him: you are a noble brother and the son of a noble brother. They did not say, for example, you are a victorious general and, thus, you are able to do whatever you wish with us.

Truly, there were amongst these people and their progeny those who gave victory to Islam and were helpers in spreading Muhammad's call.

There is also the story⁽²⁾ of Fudala⁽³⁾ who used to hate the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He*, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* such that he said before the conquest: 'By Allah, there is no one more hated by me than Muhammad.' His rage towards the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* increased when he saw him entering Mecca and destroying the idols. He wanted to break through the lines of fighters in order to kill him. Afterwards he said: 'by Allah, the moment I placed my hand upon Him, He became the most beloved of Allah's creation to me'.⁽⁴⁾

(1) *Ibn Ishaq said: some of the people of knowledge have narrated to me that the Messenger of Allah Glorified is He, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him stood at the door of the Ka'ba during His address and said: 'There is no Allah Glorified is He but Allah Glorified is He, He is alone with no partners. He has fulfilled His promise, given victory to His servant, and has defeated the confederates by Himself...what do you think I will do to you?' they said: 'good, a noble brother the son of a noble brother'. He said: 'Go for you are (The Quran, all) free' (The Quran, As-Sira An-Nabawiyya by Ibn Hisham 4/412)*

(2) *The story of Fudala trying to assassinate the Prophet, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him.*

(3) *Fudala ibn Umayr Al-Laythi Al-Isaba 6988*

(4) *Ibn Abd Al-Barr mentioned in ad-Durar: that the Prophet, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him passed by him (The Quran, Fudala) on the day of the conquest while he was on his way to assassinate Him. So He said to him: 'what were you speaking to yourself about?' He said: 'nothing, I was remembering Allah Glorified is He'. The Messenger of Allah Glorified is He, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him laughed and said: 'I will seek your forgiveness from Allah Glorified is He' He then placed His hand on his chest. (The Quran, After this) Fudala would say: 'By Allah Glorified is He He did not raise His hand from my chest until there was nobody on the face of the earth more beloved to me than Him'. Ibn Hajar Al-Asqalani mentioned it in Al-Isaba entry no. 6988.*

However, what do we repel? We repel evil. We notice here that our Lord *Glorified is He* calls us to repel evil with what is best, not with what is good. The opposite of evil is good, yet, the True Lord wants you to rise up in this field and says to you: repel evil with what is best.

In another verse, He gives us the fruit (good outcome) of this faith-based transaction: ‘...he between whom and you was enmity would be as if he were a warm friend.’ (*Fussilat*: 34) If you were to reflect upon the meaning of this verse, you would find that recompense is from Allah *Glorified is He* not from the one you dealt with in such a way because Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...as if he...’ (*Fussilat*: 34) and did not say: he becomes a true friend to you.

This is because when you repel with what is best, it makes your companion shy of you; it makes him regret the evil he did to you, and he will try to repay you and not repeat the action ever again. Despite all of this, he is not called *waleyan hamiman* (a devoted friend). He is called *waleyy* (a friend) and *hamim* (a devotee). This is because he was the reason by which your Lord *Glorified is He* brought you closer to Him, took care of you His friend, and defended you.

Therefore, when someone cursed Al-Hasan Al-Basri⁽¹⁾ in a gathering during the season of dates, Al-Hasan sent a tray of dates and said to his servant: take this to so and so and say to him: ‘my master did not find anything more valuable than this to present you as a gift, for it has reached him that you presented your good deeds as a gift to him yesterday, and they are without a doubt greater than this gift of mine.’⁽²⁾

In essence, it is a folly to be a slanderer and a backbiter to others. For, by doing so it is as if you present your enemy with your good deeds, and given the greatest thing that you possess to the most hated of people to you.

(1) The story of Al-Hasan Al-Basri *may Allah be pleased with him* offering a plate of dates to the person who insulted him.

(2) Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali 3/154 mentioned that a man said to Al-Hasan: so and so has backbitten you. So he sent a tray of dates and said: ‘it has reached me that you gifted me your good deeds, so I wanted to recompense you. Pardon me for I cannot recompense you fully.’

Do you not see the stance of a father when he gets angry at his son, and the latter submits and humbles himself to his father; or the stance of a person whose brother wrongs him yet he bears with and does not respond similarly. At this point, the father becomes more affectionate and compassionate towards his son and is avid to please him. Similarly, in this way does Allah treat His servants when they act like this to one another—and to Allah *Glorified is He* is the loftiest example. Therefore, we said: if a tyrant knew what Allah has prepared for the wronged one he would hold back his tyranny because he would be wronging him from one angle but Allah *Glorified is He* would be pleasing him from another.

It is said⁽¹⁾ that there was a man whom a king would use to relieve his worries. If he got angry, he would summon this man and curse and slander him in front of the people until he calmed down. When the man wanted to leave, he would take him to the side and give him a pouch of money. One day this man needed money for something and tried to get to the king and said: do not you need me today to curse me?

Likewise: all you have to do is repel by what is best. If you met purity from your companion then, this is fine; otherwise, the reward of Allah *Glorified is He* is vaster and His giving is greater. How beautiful is the statement of the poet⁽²⁾ who expressed this meaning:

O you who are annoyed by the actions this or that

Repel—may I sacrifice myself to you—with ‘what...’ until you see ‘he between whom and you was enmity...’, i.e. if you want to make the one with whom you have enmity a true friend, then repel with what is best. Then, He says: ‘...We are well aware of what they attribute to Us.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 96)

The meaning is: O Muhammad! You would be able to punish them if We did not know what these people had done to you! But, in fact We do know all about it and keep account of it, and We prepared an appropriate recompense for them. So, leave this matter to Us and do not busy yourself with it. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to elevate His Messenger

(1) The story of the king with the man used to get in order to insult him

(2) The Sheikh may Allah have mercy upon him and pardon him

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* above feeling angry; and for him not to be preoccupied with reacting emotionally. When someone does evil to you, O Muhammad, and you wish to respond; especially if this response goes against your good nature and beautiful character, it would be as if He is burdening you with something of which you are not capable.

Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* wishes to have mercy upon His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and comfort him. It is as if He says to him: 'leave them and their affair to Me, for We know better what they attribute, i.e. what lies they tell about you.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ أَعُوذُ بِكَ مِنْ هَمَزَاتِ الشَّيَاطِينِ ﴿٩٧﴾

And say, Lord, I take refuge with You from the goading of the devils [97] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 97)

Why was refuge sought from the 'goading' of the devils in this issue? Some said: because the devil wishes to interfere and show you that he is with you; that he wants to provoke you and spur you on against them and drive you to taking revenge against them and having power over them. *Hamazat* (goadings) is the plural of *hamaza* which is the insinuation by which the devil incites the human. From this is His statement: 'If Satan should prompt you to do something, seek refuge with Allah ...' (*al-A'raf*: 200).

Then, He says:

وَأَعُوذُ بِكَ رَبِّ أَنْ يَحْضُرُونِ ﴿٩٨﴾

I seek refuge with you, Lord, so that they may not come near me [98] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 98)

This means: if Satan comes to you with a prompting or whispering say: 'I seek refuge with Allah from the promptings of the devils'. More than this, be cautious with Satan and say: 'I seek refuge with Allah that they should even be present with me; even if they do not prompt me, for I do not even want them in my presence nor do I wish to sit with them.'

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءَ أَحَدَهُمُ الْمَوْتُ قَالَ رَبِّ ارْجِعُونِ ۝١٩

**Until when death comes to one of them, he cries, My Lord,
let me return [99] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 99)**

Then, when the pangs of death approach one of them and he is certain that he is dying, Allah's truths become evident to him; and he sees what we are not capable of seeing, as in His statement: '...but today We have removed your veil and your sight is sharp.' (Qaf: 22)

At that time, a Human being will wish to return to this life while he is dying. Why? Because he has seen the truth which he used to deny and belie. Those that witness the state of the dead at the time of death see indications which show that they see things we cannot see; each according to his state and his ending.

I remember when my father was dying, while reclining on my chest⁽¹⁾, he said to me, 'O Amin—I am known by this name in my town—how come that you build all these palaces without informing me of them?'

The soldiers who cry in the battle: 'blow O winds of heaven', it must be that they saw them and smelt their scent. Otherwise, what else would have made them yearn for death and martyrdom other than the fact that they saw the more virtuous state that awaited them?

From amongst these people is the great companion⁽²⁾ to whom the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke of the reward of martyrdom with Allah. He had dates either in his hand or in his mouth which he was chewing and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, is the only thing between me and paradise not that I enter this battle and be killed in the cause of Allah?' He said: 'yes'. So he spat out the date that was in his mouth and proceeded towards the battlefield.⁽³⁾ It is as if he considered it too long

(1) *The story of the death of the father of Sheikh ash-Sha'rawi.*

(2) *The story of the Companions who throw away the dates to enter heaven speedily at his martyrdom.*

(3) *On the day of Uhud a man came to the Messenger of Allah Glorified is He, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and said: 'if I am killed where will I be?' He said: 'In paradise' So he threw the dates that were in his hand, and fought until he was killed. Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih 4046 and Muslim 1899 in his Sahih from the Hadith of Jabir ibn 'Abdullah.*

to sit and chew on that date from seeking paradise. The certitude of these men in Allah *Glorified is He* and in the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* reached such a degree.

We notice in this verse: ‘...until when death comes to one of them...’ (*al-Mu'minun: 99*) *Ahadahum* (one of them) is in the singular. Then, the verse reads: ‘...he cries, ‘My Lord, let me return...’ (*al-Mu'minun: 99*) *Irji'un* (let me return): this is addressing Allah in the plural form, out of reverence. He did not say ‘O My Lord, let me return in the singular form as in His statement.

He also says: ‘We have sent down the Quran Ourselves, and We Ourselves will guard it.’ (*al-Hijr: 9*) Here, the True Lord *Glorified is He* reveres Himself. However, in the verse we are studying, the dying person reveres Allah. By contrast, he previously disbelieved in Him when he was enjoying the comfort and ease of life.

Alternatively, *irji'un* might mean that he repeated the request: let me return, let me return, let me return and Allah *Glorified is He* gathered them into the plural form. Another meaning can be that he sought Allah's help and said: *rabbi* (my Lord), and then addressed the angels: ‘let me return to the world’.

However, why does he seek to return?

لَعَلِّيْ أَعْمَلُ صَالِحًا فِيمَا تَرَكْتُ كَلَّا إِنَّهَا كَلِمَةٌ هُوَ
قَائِلُهَا وَمِنْ وَرَائِهِمْ بَرْزَخٌ إِلَى يَوْمِ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿١٠٠﴾

**So as to do the good in that which I have left behind' Never!
This will not go beyond his words: a barrier stands behind
such people until the very Day they are resurrected [100]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun: 100*)**

That is I failed in doing many acts of good. Perhaps if I was to return after having witnessed the truth, I would make up for what has passed me from righteous deeds. Or perhaps I will do good with what I have left behind, for I held back my wealth, efforts and excess from people, I hoarded much wealth. I left it behind and I am still held to account for it. If I was to

return I would put it forward and spend it for that which is stored for me on the day of resurrection.

Then the response comes: '...Never! This will not go beyond his words...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 100), i.e. his statement: 'let me return, let me return (to life) so that I might act righteously in whatever I have failed!' It is merely a word that has no reality to it. It is a word which he utters in a time of constraint and extremity. Allah *Glorified is He* will not let them return; if He was to let them return, they would not act. This is why he negated it with His saying: 'Never' which refutes those things of which you want affirmation. Allah *Glorified is He* wishes to refute these things as is mentioned in the chapter of *al-Fajr*: '[The nature of] man is that, when his Lord tries him through honour and blessings, he says, 'My Lord has honoured me,'* but when He tries him through the restriction of his provision, he says, 'My Lord has humiliated me.' (al-Fajr: 15-16) So, the True Lord responds with 'never'; none of you is truthful. Money and wealth are not a proof of nobility, nor is poverty a proof of dishonour. Both assumptions are wrong. The proof being that, if Allah gave you money and you did not fulfil the rights of Allah and His servants with it, nor did it help you to fulfil that which is incumbent upon you, then this wealth has become a dishonour for you, not an honour. What good is wealth to you if you are included in His statement: 'No indeed! You [people] do not honour orphans.' (al-Fajr: 17) At this moment your wealth will be a proof against you.

Such is also the state of the one who thinks that poverty is dishonour. If Allah takes away from you the wealth that has turned you into an aggressor, then He has honoured you even if you do not perceive this honouring.

Then He says: '...a barrier stands behind such people until the very Day they are resurrected.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 100) How can they hope for return when there is a barrier between them and the earth which prevents them from returning to it? This is why the period of time between the life of this world and the hereafter is referred to as the intermediary life. It is neither of this life nor of the hereafter.

In another verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* creates the imagery of this scenario in His statement: '...Even if they were brought back, they would

only return to the very thing that was forbidden to them—they are such liars! ...' (*al-An'am*: 28) That is if we were to send them back from the hereafter they would return to the disobedience of Allah *Glorified is He*. This is not merely an intellectual argument, then, reality has confirmed the truth of this statement. Read the statement of Allah *Glorified is He* regarding them: 'When We favour man he turns arrogantly to one side...' (*al-Isra'*: 83).

Thus, he received the bounty of Allah *Glorified is He*, revelled in it and then shirked from the obedience of Allah *Glorified is He*. In this vein He also says: 'When trouble befalls man he cries out to Us, whether lying on his side, sitting, or standing, but as soon as We relieve him of his trouble he goes on his way as if he had never cried out to Us to remove his trouble.' (*Yunus*: 12)

Thus, the issue is that of compulsion. Every time they became desperate they called upon Allah *Glorified is He* and turned to Him and invoked. 'Take from an actual event in their lives that which indicates the truth of My judgment of them if they were to return from the hereafter.'

Barzakh is (a barrier between two things). A barrier between two things takes its strength from the one who built it. Since this barrier is of His work *Glorified is He* no one can penetrate it. From this is His statement: 'He released the two bodies of [fresh and salt] water. They meet,* yet there is a barrier between them they do not cross.' (*ar-Rahman*: 19-20) Since they meet, what is the purpose of the barrier? They said: yes, they meet. However, neither of them transgresses the other. It is neither an issue of a dam nor a feat of engineering. It is a special barrier which none other than the unrestraint of the divine power which created natural laws is able to do. It (the divine power of Allah) made liquid water like a mountain, when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* struck it with his staff each side became like a great mountain. It is the unrestraint of the divine power which caused springs to gush out of stone.

Thus, it is not an issue of mechanics as some believe. The barrier between freshwater and salty water is one of the immense signs of Allah, for us to see. Each and every one of us can check the validity of this phenomenon. However, this barrier is in front of them. Why, then, did He say: '...a barrier stands behind such people until the very Day they are resurrected' (*al-Mu'minun*: 100)?

They said: because one word can have several meanings. This kind of word is called a *mushtarak* (joint). For example, the Arabic word '*Ayn* refers to eye, spring, spy, gold and silver and a notable person amongst his people. It is the context which defines the exact meaning which is being intended. Therefore, the listener must be fully aware in order to refer the word back to its meaning according to the context.

Such is also the Arabic word *najm* which refers to stars as well as plants which have no stalk such as grass upon which animals graze. From this is the statement of the poet:

I follow the star on my way towards you
And my horse grazes upon it in a desert

(*Najm* is an Arabic word that has two meanings mentioned here: a star and a plant without a stalk.)

The word *wara'a* refers to many meanings. It is the context that determines its intended meaning. It is used to mean 'after' as in His statement: '...We gave her good news of Ishaq (Isaac) and, after him, of Ya'qub (Jacob) ...' (*Hud*: 71). It is also used to mean 'exceeding' as in His statement: 'but anyone who seeks more than this is exceeding the limits' (*al-Mu'minun*: 7). It is also used to mean 'in front' as in His statement: '...coming after them was a king who was seizing every [serviceable] boat by force.' (*al-Kahf*: 79) The king was ahead of them waiting for every oncoming ship. It is the same in His statement: 'with hell awaiting him...' (*Ibrahim*: 16).

So His statement: '... a barrier stands behind such people until the very Day they are resurrected.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 100) means: in front of them.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَإِذَا نُفِخَ فِي الصُّورِ فَلَا أَنْسَابَ بَيْنَهُمْ يَوْمَئِذٍ وَلَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ

On that Day when the Trumpet is blown, the ties between them will be as nothing and they will not ask about each other [101] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 101)

As-sur (the trumpet) is the one which is blown by Israfil *peace be upon him*. What is intended here is the second blowing which is for the resurrection.

Ansab (the ties of kinship) means being connected by direct kinship such as the son with the father or the father with the son or an indirect kinship such as that with an uncle. Kinship is the first kind of relationship upon which shared interests connect people. It is a necessary convergence which everybody has. You may not have friends, or colleagues but you must have someone with whom you have kinship or relation. When the True Lord *Glorified is He* negates kinship He says: '...the ties between them will be as nothing...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 101). It is not the existence of ties of kinship that is being negated. When the trumpet is blown, effectiveness of the connection between fatherhood and son-hood will be eliminated. Yet, kinship will still exist. However, since kinship usually consists of mutual cooperation, whether to seek benefit or to ward off evil, the negation, here, serves the benefit since no one will be able to benefit anyone else. Kinship will be present but without its benefit. The benefit in worldly affairs is that the strong help the weak. As for this event, everyone will be weak.

As the True Lord says: 'The Day man will flee from his own brother,* his mother, his father,* his wife, his children* each of them will be absorbed in concerns of their own on that Day.' (*Abasa*: 34-37) And He says: 'Every soul is held in pledge for its deeds' (*al-Muddaththir*: 38). 'This is why when the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* related that we will be resurrected on the Day of Rising, bare-footed and naked, the Mother of the Believers A'isha *may Allah be pleased with her*, was surprised and felt embarrassed of such a state. The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed her that the matter will not be such; that everyone will be busy with themselves and it will be beyond anyone looking at another.⁽¹⁾ 'Thus, the negation is for the benefit of kinship, not of kinship itself. Since the benefit of kinship is of no avail at the formidable

(1) *On the authority of A'isha may Allah be pleased with her*¹ : The Prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Allah *Glorified is He* will raise the people on the Day of Resurrection bare-footed and naked.' A'isha *may Allah be pleased with her* said: 'O Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He*, what about nakedness?' He said: 'On that day everyone will have an affair that will preoccupy him' Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* 6/90, *An-Nasa'i* in his *Sunnan* 4/114 and *Al-Hakim* in his *Mustadrak* 4/564 who said: It is authentic according to the condition of Muslim although he did not narrate it.

event of the Hereafter, then a person can rise above, and refrain from seeking its benefit in this life, too. If, for example, he has relatives who are non-believers, Allah has struck a parable in the story of Nuh *peace be upon him* and his son. His Lord *Glorified is He* addressed him: '...he was not one of your family. What he did was not right...' (*Hud*: 46). So kinship was prevented even in this life. Thus, sonship is not of flesh and blood, rather, it is—especially with regards to prophets—of faith-based action and following Allah's way conveyed by His Messengers.

If you were to reflect upon the history of the first Muslims, you would find that they used to find honour in Islam not in their lineage. Religion and creed were their lineage. In essence, religion and creed are the strong bond which connects between someone and another, even if he may be lower than him by the standards of our worldly life.

We read in the story⁽¹⁾ of Badr regarding Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr⁽²⁾ *may Allah be pleased with him* who was a youth from the richest amongst Quraysh; he used to wear the finest clothes and live the best life. When his heart was given faith, he became ascetic from all these bounties and was deprived of the fortune of his family. When he migrated to Medina, the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saw him wearing sheep leather and said: 'Look at what faith has done to your brother'⁽³⁾.

(1) *The story of Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr's change of heart to asceticism after his conversion to Islam.*

(2) *Mus'ab ibn Umayr ibn Hashim ibn Abd Manaf Abu Muhammad. He performed the first and second emigrations to Abyssinia. (The Quran, The Prophet), Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him sent him to Madina to teach the Muslims the law and the Quran. He then came to the Messenger of Allah Glorified is He, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him with the seventy people who gave their allegiance at the second 'Aqaba. Mu'sab was of a mild complexion, neither tall nor short. He died at the battle of Uhud. (The Quran, Sifat As-Safwa 1/205, 206).*

(3) *On the authority of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab may Allah be pleased with him who said: The Prophet, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him looked at Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr may Allah be pleased with him while he was oncoming wrapped in a goatskin hide. So the Prophet, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: 'Look at this man whose heart Allah Glorified is He has illuminated. I have seen him being nourished by his parents with the finest food and drink. The love of Allah Glorified is He and His Messenger has called him to what you see now'. Narrated by Ibn Al-Jawzi in Sifat As-Safwa 1/206. Referenced by Abu Nu'aym in Al-Hilya 1/108. Al-'Iraqi has said in his referencing of the Hadiths of the Ihya' 4/295 that its chain is sound/ hasan.*

During the battle, Mus'ab *may Allah be pleased with him* saw his brother Abu Uzayz⁽¹⁾ taken prisoner by the *ansari* Companion Abu Al-Yasar⁽²⁾ *may Allah be pleased with him* to whom Mus'ab *may Allah be pleased with him* said: 'be firm with your prisoner (i.e. do not let him flee) for his mother is a rich woman and will give you much wealth in exchange for him.' Abu Uzayz looked at Mus'ab and said: 'Is this your counsel regarding your brother?' Mus'ab *may Allah be pleased with him* said: 'He is my brother over you.' Thus, there are no ties of kinship between them. Even in this life before the Hereafter.

During the battle of Uhud, Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr *Allah be pleased with him* was martyred and they could only find a short cloth with which to shroud him in. If it covered his head, his feet would show; and if it covered his feet, his head would show. So Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Cover his head and put *Izkhar* (a sweet-smelling grass) leaves to cover his feet'⁽³⁾

Another instance is when Umm Habibah *Allah be pleased with her* the daughter of Abu Sufyan became a Muslim and emigrated to Abyssinia with her Husband. She was accused of making the emigration for the sake of her husband, rather than for the sake of the religion. Then Allah *the Exalted* willed to show her innocence, and so it happened that her husband 'Ubaydullah ibn Jahsh became a Christian while she remained a believer. When Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* learned about her situation, He wished to compensate her and so proposed to her for marriage. He did not wait for her to

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- (1) He is Zurara ibn 'Umayr, the brother of Mus'ab ibn 'Umayr *may Allah be pleased with him*. He accompanied and listened to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The historians of battles have agreed that he was imprisoned on the day of Badr. See *Al-Isaba* by Ibn Hajar entry 753 Kunyas.
 - (2) His name is Ka'b ibn Amr Al-Ansari. He was present at Al-Aqaba and Badr of which there are many accounts regarding him. He was the one who imprisoned Al-Abbas ibn 'Abd Al-Muttalib. He was short with a large stomach. He died in Madina in the year 55 AH. (*The Quran*, *Al-Isaba* entry 1243). Al-Hafiz ibn Hajar has specified the vowel of his kunya Abu Al-Yasar 5/307 and 7/218.
 - (3) Agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim. It was narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (1276) and by Muslim in his *Sahih* (940) based on the Hadith of Khabbab ibn Al-Art *Allah be pleased with him*.

come in order to contract the marriage, rather, He commissioned the Negus, the king of Abyssinia, to conclude the marriage contract on his behalf.⁽¹⁾

After her marriage to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* her father Abu Sufyan came to visit her while she was arranging the mattress of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Abu Sufyan wished to sit on it; she put it aside and prevented him from sitting on the mattress of the Messenger of Allah while he was still a disbeliever. He said to her: 'Do you hold the mattress back from me?' She replied: 'Yes.'⁽²⁾

Thus, the benefits of kinship are denied in this life before it is denied in the Hereafter. But out of his grace and kindness, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has kept the obligations of blood relationships and enjoins us to maintain them even with disbelievers. This is because He *the Most High* has made Himself available even to the disbelievers; so, with greater reason, a believer should open up to them. If you know of a disbeliever in hardship and you can help him, you should do so. Regarding this, read Allah's Words: 'But if they (both parents) strive with you to make you join in worship with Me others that of which you have no knowledge, then obey them not, but behave with them in the world kindly...' (*Luqman*: 15). Not only are they disbelievers, but they also want you to be a disbeliever. Despite this, maintain their rights of kinship and do not sever your relationship with them.

It was narrated that Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* whom Allah elected as his close servant and described him with the words: 'And of

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- (1) *Ibn Al-Jawzi said in Sifat As-Safwa (vol. 2, p. 31): 'The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him sent 'Amr ibn Umayyah Ad-Damari to the Negus, the King of Abyssinia to propose to her (Umm Habibah) on his behalf. So the Negus married her to him and gave her a dowry of four hundred dinars and sent her (to the Prophet) in the company of Shurahbil ibn Hasanah. It was said that she commissioned Khalid ibn Sa'id ibn Al-'As who married her off. This occurred in the year 7 A.H.*
- (2) *It was narrated by Ibn Al-Jawzi in Sifat As-Safwa (vol. 2, p. 33): 'Abu Sufyan said to his daughter Umm Habibah after she had folded up the mattress that belonged to the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him 'O my daughter, are you trying to keep me away from the mattress or keep the mattress away from me?' She replied, 'It is the mattress of the Messenger of Allah; and you are an impure polytheist.' So he replied, 'O my daughter, evil have befallen you after leaving me.' It is well known that Abu Sufyan became a Muslim after the Conquest of Mecca.*

Ibrahim, who fulfilled his duty' (*an-Najm*: 37) and tried with Commands, which he fulfilled; one night a traveller was passing by. Before letting him in and hosting him, he asked him of his religion. When he informed Ibrahim *peace be upon him* that he was a disbeliever, Ibrahim turned away from him; and so he let him depart. Then Allah revealed to him: 'O Ibrahim, I have put up with him although he is a disbeliever in Me, and you want him to change his religion for a night's hospitality?' So Ibrahim *peace be upon him* hastened after the man until he caught up with him. He informed him of the reproach that he received from his Lord because of him. The man said: 'What a Good Lord He must be Who reproaches His loved ones regarding His enemies,' and he testified that there is no god but Allah and that Ibrahim is the Messenger of Allah.

Knowledgeable people even elevate the concept of kinship and see that relationship ties goes beyond the biological cause of your existence, which is your father and mother. Although kinship is the birth or branching out of one from another, there is a higher kinship, not to the one who brought you into existence through a cause, but to the One Who gave you the initial existence without a cause. It is incumbent upon you to take care of this kinship that brought you into existence from nothing. Allah has affirmed the rights of the parents because they are a cause of your existence, so how about the Supreme Originator?

Regarding Allah's statement: 'On that Day when the Trumpet is blown, the ties between them will be as nothing and they will not ask about each other,' (*al-Mu'minun*: 101), the Arabic verb *tasa'la* (mutual asking) is of the form *mufa'ala*, which denotes an action involving two actors, as opposed to *sa'ala* which means to ask. Thus every single one of them will ask and be asked. Just as when you say: Mohamad (*sharaka*) mutually participated or (*qatala*) fought with 'Amr etc.

However, some orientalists have objected to this verse claiming that Muslims treat the Book of Allah with excessive awe and reverence that hinders their minds from thinking over what it says. Although Allah says about the Quran: 'If it (the Quran) had been from anyone other than Allah, they would have found much inconsistency in it.' (*an-Nisa*': 82) These people say that although the Quran negates the occurrence of mutual asking in this verse, it

affirms it in the following verse, in the dialogue between the people of paradise: 'And they will approach one another, inquiring of each other' (*at-Tur*: 25).

There is another mention of mutual asking between the believers and the disbelievers: 'Every soul is held in pledge for its deeds, but the Companions of the Right will stay in Gardens and ask about the guilty. "What drove you to the Scorching Fire?" (they will ask) and they will answer, "We did not pray; we did not feed the poor; we indulged with others (in mocking the believers); we denied the Day of Judgement until the Certain End (death) came upon us."' (*al-Muddaththir*: 38-47)

At another place there is mutual asking between the believers themselves: 'And they will approach one another, inquiring of each other. They will say, "Indeed, we were previously among our people fearful (of displeasing Allah). So Allah conferred favour upon us and protected us from the punishment of the Scorching Fire. Indeed, we used to supplicate Him before. Indeed, it is He who is the Beneficent, the Merciful."' (*at-Tur*: 25-28)

So how, after all this, can it negate mutual asking by saying: '...when the Trumpet is blown, the ties between them will be as nothing, and they will not ask about each other.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 101) The answer is that what they consider here a contradiction is only a seeming one. There is a difference between people hearing about something and actually being confronted with it while being essentially a non-believer. According to the Quran, they said: 'There is only the life of this world: we die, we live, but we will never be resurrected.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 37)

But when startled by the blowing of the Trumpet and overtaken by the Resurrection, which the disbelievers used to deny, they will be completely dumfounded and shocked. The severity of the event will render their tongues speechless. All of a sudden what they used to deny is occurring before their eyes. Then they will move on from this state to accepting it as an inescapable reality. They will then start talking and asking one another about it and what has befallen them.

Consequently, their asking has a specific time (in which it will occur) and their inability to ask has a specific time. It is the sort of issue described as having separate parts. So when you hear a statement attributed to a wise

and consistent person, which affirms something one time and negates it another time, know that the issue concerned is multi-sided.

Similarly, the orientalist have also raised objection to the questioning of sinners, where Allah *the Exalted* says in affirmation of their questioning: 'And stop them; indeed, they are to be questioned.' (*as-Saffat*: 24) and says in negation of their questioning: 'On that Day neither mankind nor jinn will be asked about their sins.' (*ar-Rahman*: 39) How can He *the Most High* affirm and negate an action regarding the same persons?

Their objection stems from a lack of understanding of the language of the Quran and Arabic eloquence. Or it may be that they merely want to criticize the Book of Allah and provoke doubts about it. However, many a harmful thing turns out to be beneficial; their doubts have caused the Muslim scholars to rise and refute their false claims and expose their intentions. Our case is similar to the one who prepares against a disease by taking the appropriate vaccination which gives the body immunity against this disease.

'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* – who had the unique merit of having his views confirmed by the Quran – would see the people kissing the Black Stone and expected that some people might question this issue, since Islam forbade them from the worship of idols, which were stones, and then commanded them to kiss this stone. So when kissing the Black Stone, he would say: 'By Allah, I know that you are only a stone that neither benefit nor harm. If it were not that I saw the Messenger of Allah kissing you, I would not have kissed you.'⁽¹⁾

So he alerted people's attention to the basic rule in the law of Islam: stones are not to be worshipped. However, we have Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is our legislator and we are obligated by

(1) *It was narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (1597) and Muslim in his Sahih (1270) from the Hadith on the authority of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him. At-Tabari said: 'Umar said this because the people had very recently been worshipping idols, so he feared lest some ignorant people should think that touching the Black Stone was derived from a principle of revering some stones just as the Arabs used to do in the Jahiliyyah (pre-Islamic time). 'Umar Allah be pleased with him wanted to inform the people that his touching it was out of following the action of the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him not because this stone could bring benefit or harm in and of itself, as they used to believe regarding idols in the Jahiliyyah.' It was transmitted by Ibn Hajar in Al-Fath (vol. 3, p. 462).*

Allah to follow him. This was 'Umar's response to those who tried to stir doubt about this matter.

Also, when 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* spoke of the high cost of dowries, a woman corrected him, saying: 'You have erred O 'Umar. How can you forbid the high cost of dowries when Allah *the Exalted* says: "If you wish to replace one wife with another, do not take any of her bride-gift back, even if you have given her a *Cantar* (a great amount of wealth)..." (*an-Nisa'*: 20). 'Umar thus permitted the dowry to be a great amount of gold (or wealth) and because of his great character, he said: 'A woman is correct and 'Umar is wrong'⁽¹⁾ to clarify that no one is above Allah's Law.

These are well-delineated and firmly established issues which we need to know to respond to people who ask us about the affairs of our religion.

We return to the issue of questioning the sinners which the Quran negates in one place and affirms in another. Our answer to this is that the Quran came consistent with the style and way of the Arabs. A question in the Arabic method of language is either posed by an ignorant person seeking information, such as when a student asks his teacher; or is posed by a knowledgeable person who asks an ignorant person, not in order to learn something, but rather to make him admit something.

So when Allah *the Exalted* negates the questioning, do not think that He is asking you in order to learn something from you, rather, He is asking in order for you to affirm your guilt. Therefore, He *the Exalted* says: 'Read your book. You yourself are sufficient as a reckoner against you this Day.' (*al-Isra'*: 14)

The affirmation of the questioning has a specific meaning, and its negation serves another meaning. When Allah uses negation, He negates questioning to obtain knowledge from them. And when He uses affirmation, He affirms questioning to obtain admittance on their part, so that the proof against them be more binding, since confession is the master of evidence.

(1) *It was transmitted by Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir (vol. 1, p. 467) with the wording: 'A woman is correct and a man is wrong.' It was also narrated by Az-Zubayr ibn Bakkar but Ibn Kathir said: 'Its chain is disconnected.' He also transmitted a similar narration to this and sourced it to Abu Ya'la. Ibn Kathir said: 'Its chain of narrators is good and strong.'*

We have clarified this issue with the example of a neglectful student who pretends to study in front of his father, so he opens his book and lowers his head as if he is reading. But when his father asks him a question, he will find that he has learned nothing, so he tells him: 'You have studied, but you have not really studied'.

This is similar to Allah's saying to His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...and when you (Prophet) threw (sand at them) it was not your throw (that defeated them) but Allah's...' (*al-Anfal*: 17). This is how an action of the same subject is negated and affirmed in the same verse. The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* took a handful of pebbles and cast them towards the enemies,⁽¹⁾ but was it within his power to make this handful reach the eyes of all the enemies? So, the effort and the action of casting are attributed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* while the result and aim is attributed to Allah *the Glorious and Exalted*.

Then the True Lord says:

فَمَنْ ثَقُلَتْ مَوَازِينُهُ، فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿١٠٢﴾ وَمَنْ خَفَّتْ
مَوَازِينُهُ، فَأُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ خَسِرُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ فِي جَهَنَّمَ خَالِدُونَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

**Those whose good deeds weigh heavy will be
successful, [102] But those whose balance is light
will have lost their souls for ever and will stay in
Hell [103] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 102-103)**

Heavy and light refer here to good deeds; they shall weigh heavy or light. It is possible for us to say: 'His scales were heavy with bad deeds.'

(1) It was narrated on the authority of `Ali ibn Abu Talhah from Ibn `Abbas Allah be pleased with them both who said: 'The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* raised His hands, that is on the Day of Badr and said: 'O my Lord, if this group (of believers) were to be destroyed, You would never be worshipped on the earth.' So Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* said to him: 'Take a fistful of dust and cast it in their faces.' So he took a fistful of dust and cast it into their faces such that there was not a single man of the mushrikin (those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity or worship) except that the dust from that fistful hit his eyes, nostrils and mouth, and they fled away.' It was transmitted by both Abu Nu'aym (p. 404) and Al-Bayhaqi (vol. 3, p. 79) in *Dala'il An-Nubuwwah*. It was also mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* (vol. 2, p. 294).

That is, his bad deeds were copious. However, the Quran spoke from the perspective that the basis is good actions.

Scales are made up of two sides one of which holds the weighed object, and the other holds the measured weights. There are three rationally possible outcomes of the balance: either the weighted object is light, or the measured weights are lighter or they weigh the same. The noble verse has mentioned two of these scenarios: the weight of deeds is light or heavy in the balance, as in Allah's statement: 'Then as for him whose balance (of good deeds) will be heavy, he will live a pleasant life (in paradise). But as for him whose balance (of good deeds) will be light, His refuge will be an abyss. And what will make you know what it is? (It is) a hot blazing Fire!' (*al-Qari'a*: 6-11)

As for the scenario in which the scales are equal, this is symbolically referred to in the chapter of *al-A'raf*: 'A barrier divides the two groups with men on its heights recognizing each group by their marks: they will call out to the people of the paradise, 'Peace be with you!' They will not have entered it (paradise), but they will be hoping, and when their glance falls upon the people of the Fire, they will say, 'Our Lord, do not let us join the evildoers!' (*al-A'raf*: 46-47)

So whoever's good deeds outweigh his bad ones shall go to paradise, and whoever's bad deeds outweigh his good ones shall go to hellfire. The people of *Al-'Araf* (the Heights) are those who shall wait between paradise and hellfire because their good deeds will be equal to their bad deeds. They are neither from the people of paradise nor from the people of hellfire. They shall be upon the heights which is a barrier between paradise and hellfire from which they will look at the two groups. Then Allah says regarding them: '...they will not have entered it (paradise), but they will be hoping' (*al-A'raf*: 46); (they keep hoping) because Allah's Mercy precedes His Wrath and His Pardon precedes His punishment.

The heaviness or lightness of actions indicates that actions will have weight and size, or that Allah *the Exalted* will assign a mass for every action; this kind of deed will be of such and such a weight and so on. Also, the word balance denotes the precision of counting.

You can notice in the noble verse: 'Then, those whose scales (of good deeds) are heavy, - these and they are the successful,' (*al-Mu'minun*: 102) that the scales are mentioned in the plural form and not in the singular. Why? Because it is possible that every type of action has its own balance such that the prayer has its own balance; money has its own balance; the pilgrimage has its own balance etc. Then all these balances are counted together to give the plural.

As for Allah's statement: 'And those whose scales (of good deeds) are light, they are those who lose their own selves...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 103); this is because they have taken the petty short-term gains and relinquished the greater long-term gains, and have hurried to the perishable pleasures and abandoned the everlasting ones. The term of this word is limited and finite, its life span is uncertain and the good, attainable things in it are restricted by the ability of its people.

As for the Hereafter, its term is certain, its life span is eternal, and the good things in it will be according to the Ability of the Benefactor *Glorified is He*. Thus if you were to compare between the two, the extent of their loss would become clear to you. This is why the outcome is that: '...in Hell will they abide.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 103)

Then the True Lord gives us a picture which shows the horrors and punishments of Hell. He does this out of mercy in order for us to fear it and work intensely to save ourselves from such an end and its abominable consequences. Just like when the law says from the outset: 'We shall cut off the hand of the thief'; it does not desire to cut off people's hands, rather, it works on preventing them from and warning them of the consequent penalty. Therefore, Allah says about the wisdom behind the law of just retribution (*qisas*): 'Fair retribution saves life for you, O people of understanding...' (*al-Baqara*: 179).

The law of just retribution has often been attacked by the enemies of Islam. They say: It is enough that someone from the society has been killed, how can we then kill another? In fact, the Noble Quran did not legislate the law of retribution in order to kill two persons instead of one, rather, it did so in order to prevent killing and to save the lives of any potential murderers and subsequent victims. For when a murderer knows that he will be killed through retribution, he will refrain out of fear. If he does stop himself from

killing, then we have kept both the murderer and the victim alive. Some have expressed this meaning by saying: Killing (justly) puts an end to killing (unjustly).

Allah *the Most High* says in regards to the horribleness of Hell:

تَلْفَحُ وُجُوهَهُمُ النَّارُ وَهُمْ فِيهَا كَالِحُونَ ﴿١٠٤﴾

The Fire will scorch their faces and their lips will be twisted in pain [104] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 104)

The word *al-lafh* (scorching) is used to describe fire when it touches something and its heat burns it out. Similar to it is the Arabic word *an-naafh*. The word *kalih* (sullen, gloomy, dismal) in the part stating: '...and their lips will be twisted in pain (*kalih*)...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 104) is even used in colloquial Arabic: so and so has a scowling (*kalih*) face; that is, his face distorts in a detestable, discomforting manner. A scowling face has been compared to a grilled goat's head which the fire has deformed. It is thus grilled and scowling with its upper lip meeting its forehead and lower lip meeting its chest which gives its teeth a repulsive appearance.

The True Lord then addresses the disbelievers with blame and places upon them the responsibility for where they have ended up. He does not punish them from the outset; rather, He only punishes them after having warned them, and after having sent to them a messenger with a methodology that explains the reward of the obedient and the punishment of the disobedient. He has alerted them to everything. Despite this, they have disobeyed and disbelieved. They have not started to do new actions in accordance with what Allah has commanded. Thus they are the ones who fell short in their duties.

أَلَمْ تَكُنْ ءَايَتِي تُلَىٰ عَلَيْكُمْ فَكُنْتُمْ بِهَا تُكَذِّبُونَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

Were My *Ayat* not recited over and over to you and still you rejected them? [105] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 105)

That is, you are the cause of this punishment. People will have no excuse before Allah after the coming of the Messengers. Nobody will have

an excuse after the conveyance of the message. This is why when the people of the fire will enter the fire, their Lord will address them: 'Those who rejected the Truth will be led to hell in their throngs. When they arrive, its gates will open and its keepers will say to them, "Were you not sent your own messengers to recite the revelations of your Lord to you and warn you that you would meet this Day?"...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 71)

The noble verse affirms that they are the ones who have wronged their own selves: '...We did not wrong them; they wronged themselves...' (*an-Nahl*: 118). Allah has not brought upon them a sudden punishment without prior clarifications warnings. Indeed, Allah has sent to them a messenger who commanded them, forbade them, gave glad tidings to them, and warned them.

Giving warning of a bad thing before it occurs is a blessing in itself; just as we said in the chapter of *al-Rahman* regarding Allah's statement: 'A flash of fire and smoke will be released upon you and no one will come to your aid. Which, then, of your Lord's blessings do you both deny?' (*ar-Rahman*: 35-36) Are the fire and its smoke blessings? Yes. Here the blessing lies in being warned of them before they occur, while you still have a very ample chance on the earth to make things right again.

The word *ayat* (signs or Quranic verses), as we have previously mentioned, refers to the universal signs which turn the attention of people to the existence of the High Creator Who brought about this universe with exquisite architecture and design; or to the miraculous signs that affirm the truth of the Messengers with regards to conveying the Message from Allah. The term also refers to the Quranic verses which carry the laws and rulings.

Allah has brought you all these *ayat* which are recited to you and which you can hear and see. Despite this you have denied their truth. The meaning of '...recited over and over to you...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 105) is that Allah has alerted you of them in advance and turned your attention to contemplating them so that no people can say: 'We have failed to notice them.'

قَالُوا رَبَّنَا غَلَبَتْ عَلَيْنَا شِقْوَتُنَا وَكُنَّا قَوْمًا ضَالِّينَ ﴿١٠٦﴾

They will say, ‘Lord, our waywardness overcame us and we went astray [106] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 106)

The attitude ‘...our wretchedness (*shiqwatuna*)...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 106) derives from *shaqawah* which is misery that encompasses the entire soul, not leaving any part of it. When it is said: So and so is miserable, it implies that he is straitened and troubled in all the areas of his life, and cannot find comfort in anything. It is as though by them saying: ‘...our wretchedness overcame us...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 106); they want to distance themselves from blame and shift it to Allah *Glorified is He*. So they say: ‘O Lord, You have destined us to be miserable from the beginning of time, so we are free of guilt. How can we make our fate a happy one?’ They mean to say: ‘If our Lord had so willed, we would not have done this.’ Our answer to them is: ‘Allah has destined this for you from the beginning of time because it is the outcome of your own choices.’

رَبَّنَا أَخْرِجْنَا مِنْهَا فَإِنْ عُدْنَا فَإِنَّا ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٠٧﴾

Lord, take us away from this and if we go back to our old ways, then we shall really be evildoers [107] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 107)

They attribute wrongdoing to themselves; just as Allah *the Exalted* says of them in another noble verse: ‘...even if they were brought back, they would only return to the very thing that was forbidden to them— they are such liars!’ (*al-An'am*: 28)

Therefore, the True Lord says afterwards:

قَالَ اخْسُوا فِيهَا وَلَا تُكَلِّمُونِ ﴿١٠٨﴾

He will say, ‘Away with you! In you go! Do not speak to Me! [108] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 108)

The expression *ikhsa'u* or ‘...away with you...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 108) is an eloquent expression for rebuke; it means to put to silence disgracefully and

ignominiously. This is why it is said to dogs. To a friend you would say: 'Be quiet,' out of honouring him if, for example, he wished to speak of your favours upon him. You would say this because you wanted to honour him and spare him from placing himself in a position of weakness before you.

Also, one of the meanings of *khusu'* is being too weak to bear up a thing, as in Allah statement: 'Look again! And again! Your sight will turn back to you, weak (*khasi'an*) and defeated.' (*al-Mulk*: 4) That is, it is too weak to bear the light. And in Allah's statement: 'You know about those of you who broke the Sabbath, and so We said to them, "Be like apes! Be outcasts (*khasi'ina*)!"' (*al-Baqara*: 65); that is, go banished and distanced from the loftiness and honour of humanity; We see that apes are naked and swift-moving, which is unbecoming of the honourable status of humankind. Thus, it is not meant that they became apes, rather, they were downgraded to ape-like status. We see that even now they are not concerned with issues of honour or of uncovering nakedness.

Accordingly, the meaning of: '...away with you! In you go! Do not speak to Me! ...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 108) is: be silent in shame and disgrace. What you have done to the believers is a sufficient crime. The True Lord *the Exalted* then says:

إِنَّهُ كَانَ فَرِيقٌ مِّنْ عِبَادِي يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا آمَنَّا
فَاغْفِرْ لَنَا وَارْحَمْنَا وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ

Among My servants there were those who said, "Lord, We believe. Forgive us and have mercy on us: You are the most merciful of all" [109] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 109)

The people meant in the previous verse are the oppressed from among the believers the likes of 'Ammar, Bilal and Khabbab ibn Al-Art⁽¹⁾ Allah be pleased with them all. They used to make this supplication. Such a good supplication should not have been rejected; rather, it should be heard, followed, and taken as an example.

(1) *Tafsir Al-Qurtubi* (vol. 6, p. 4688), on the authority of Mujahid

فَاتَّخَذْتُمُوهُمْ سِحْرًا حَتَّىٰ أَنْسَوَكُمُ ذِكْرِي وَكُنْتُمْ مِنْهُمْ تَضَحَكُونَ ﴿١١٠﴾

But you kept on laughing at them: so intent were you on laughing at them that it made you forget My warning [110] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 110)

We have spoken of this issue in Allah's statement: 'The wicked used to laugh at the believers — they would wink at one another when the believers passed by them, joke about them when they got back to their own people, and say, when they saw them, "These people are misguided," though they were not sent to be their keepers— so today the believers are laughing at the disbelievers as they sit on couches, gazing around. Have the disbelievers (not) been repaid for their deeds?' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-36) The disbelievers treated the weak and oppressed believers as a source of mockery and ridicule. They took it to the extent of making it their only preoccupation. The mockery and ridicule preoccupied them even from reflection; it absolutely left no room in their minds for thinking about what these people believed in. This is the meaning of: '...so much so that they made you forget My Remembrance...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 110). Your mockery of the believers distracted you from having faith in the One Who created you and them.

If only the mockery had halted at this point. In fact, it went beyond just mockery to using the believers as a laughingstock to entertain themselves and their folks: 'But you took them for a laughingstock, so much so that they made you forget My Remembrance...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 110) and also in another verse: 'and when they returned to their own people, they would return jesting.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 31) The people of falsehood hurling derision and mockery at the people of truth are found at every time in human history. Even today we see those who mock and make fun of religious, righteous, and devoted people.

Then the True Lord says:

إِنِّي جَزَيْتُهُمُ الْيَوْمَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا أَنَّهُمْ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ ﴿١١١﴾

Today I have rewarded them for their patience: it is they who will succeed [111] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 111)

When the people of faith showed patience with their mockery and ridicule, Allah compensated them by conferring honours and bounties on them. This

is an issue that no believer should be heedless of when being mocked by his enemies. A believer should always remember the Generosity of his Lord and the recompense promised as a reward to those who observe patience. The mocker is merely a slave of limited power, while the One Who is always Generous and Beneficent to you is your Lord Whose Power is Almighty. You can, then, weigh the hardship of patience with their harm against the pleasantness of the blessings that you will receive as recompense for your patience.

قُلْ كَمْ لِيَشْتَرِ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَدَدَ سِنِينَ ﴿١١٢﴾

**He will say, 'How many years were you on earth?' [112]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 112)**

They shall be asked about the number of years they remained on the earth? But why do they ask this question? Because, as some said, this worldly life, with its splendour, attractions, and desires is what distracted you from the religion that guarantees for you an eternal life and an everlasting bliss. And on the assumption that you have enjoyed this in this world, does it compare to the endless delights that shall never pass away nor will you go and leave them behind, which have been stored up for the believers in the Hereafter?

When the Resurrection shall take place, it will be at a near time to those who will have died shortly before its occurrence. Thus their stay in the grave will be short, whereas the stay of the people who have died since the time of Adam *peace be upon him* will be long. The stay in the graves is, as they say, speculative. But do the dead know how long they have remained in the earth? It is known that they cannot perceive time because time can be perceived only through witnessing events. A dead person does not perceive time because he does not live through any events, just as the one asleep does not know how long he has been sleeping. So, every human being who will be asked this question will say: '...a day, or part of a day...' (*al-Baqara*: 259).

It was 'Uzayr (Ezra) who said this – the one whom Allah caused to die and then resurrected. The Sleepers of the Cave, whom Allah put to sleep for three hundred and nine years, also said the same. This is the longest period one can imagine to have slept for. The one who is asleep cannot be sure

about this because time is perceived through the alteration of events; when events disappear, perception of time also disappears.

This is the reason why Allah *the Exalted* says of all those who die – even if they have been dead since the time of Adam *peace be upon him*: ‘On the Day they see it, it will seem they lingered (in this life) an evening (at most,) or its morning.’ (*an-Nazi‘at*: 46)

And, in answer to this question, these people will utter the same response:

قَالُوا لَبِثْنَا يَوْمًا أَوْ بَعْضَ يَوْمٍ فَسْئَلُ الْعَادِّينَ ﴿١١٣﴾

**And they will reply, ‘We stayed a day or a part
of a day, but ask those who keep count’ [113]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 113)**

That is, those who are able to count because we have not been conscious to be able to keep count of the years we have stayed in our graves. What is intended by ‘those who keep count’ are the angels who count and calculate the days.⁽¹⁾

قُلْ إِنْ لَبِثْتُمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا لَوْ أَنَّكُمْ كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١١٤﴾

**He will say, ‘You stayed but a little, if you had only
known[114] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 114)**

However long you estimate the duration of your life on earth to have been – even for those who have died since the time of Adam *peace be upon him* – still it will be little compared to the time that lies ahead in the recompense of the Hereafter. That which you have lived in this world cannot be measured against the eternal, long-lasting punishment in the afterlife. ‘If you had only known...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 114), that is, known the length of the eternal punishment you are heading towards.

(1) *Al-Qurtubi* stated in his *Tafsir* (vol. 6, p. 4690) two opinions regarding who those are who keep count:

- According to *Qatada*, they are the counters who know this.
- According to *Mujahid*, they are angels who are with us in this life.

أَفَحَسِبْتُمْ أَنَّمَا خَلَقْنَاكُمْ عَبَثًا وَأَنَّكُمْ إِلَيْنَا لَا تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١١٥﴾

**Did you think We had created you in vain, and
that you would not be brought back to Us? [115]**

(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 115)

That is, what have you thought the reason and purpose behind Our creating you? As Allah says in another place: 'Do people think they will be left alone after saying "We believe" without being put to the test'? (*al-'Ankabut*: 2) The Arabic word *'abath* (absurd, idle, or vain acts) refers to a purposeless action without benefit. It is as when you say to someone who is doing something useless: 'What are you wasting your time on?' The opposite of *'abath* is *jadd* (seriousness or earnestness). Playing and jesting are part of life's actions; however, *jadd* (seriousness) constitutes any act done with a planned objective. As for *la'ib* (play), it is when you do an action which has no immediate objective apart from training oneself and engaging one's faculties and abilities so as to divert attention from causing damage or harm to something. This is similar to someone buying their child a toy by which he will be distracted from valuable possessions in the house, which, if he were to play with, would break. So you turn his energy towards something that keeps him from causing harm or to teach him a sport that will benefit him later, such as swimming or riding a horse. The word *lahw* (diversion, entertainment, distraction) signifies the same as *la'ib* in the sense that it is engaged in for a prospective purpose or in order to avert harm. Except that when you pursue play, it does not distract you from some other important things to do. *Lahw*, on the other hand, involves distraction from important issues. For example, when a seven-year-old child engages in play during the prayer times, his action is called *la'ib* (play), but if he is ten years old, his action is called *lahw* since it distracts him from the prayer which is obligatory for him.

Play trains you to do things that you may need in times of seriousness, and in turn facilitates their performance. As for *'abath*, it has no benefit at all. This is the reason why Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Did you think We had created you in vain...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 115). Allah negated the possibility of creation being frivolous without any purpose. Allah *the Exalted* created the

creation with a set purpose and placed for them a law and a way that specifies this purpose. It is only the Creator Who can lay down a law for the creation.

As we have said previously, the designer who designed this microphone did not make it and then leave it up to us to find its function. Rather, before designing it he defined its function and purpose, which is to transmit sound over long distances. The purpose is clearly set from the beginning and before the work.

The one who defines the purpose of a product is its designer and maker. He is also the one who defines its fitness to its purpose. He also lays down the safety criteria or essential requirements needed in order for it to function properly. You, O human being, are Allah's Design, so leave Him to define your purpose and to set the law of your living and the rules for your safety which are defined by the commands, 'Do this' and 'Do not do this.'

The corruption of the world comes when the designed thing itself wants to usurp the designer's right of defining its purpose, its law and safety regulations. This is not part of its role. When the Creator defines your purpose for you, He sets down for you a law which will assist you in fulfilling your purpose. A key question here is, when do you attain full perception and comprehension of things around you to set down your own purpose and safety laws? At the best estimate, you are unable to reach this stage before the age of twenty. Who then will assign for you your purpose and safety laws before this age? No one other than your Creator *the Most High*. The state of affairs will not be put right unless we leave the purpose, law and safety requirements of a design to its proper designer.

How can you believe that Allah *the Exalted* created you in vain without purpose, when it is He Who has summoned you to existence, and provided for you the necessities of life, and urged you to employ your intellect and abilities which He endowed you with to achieve well-being and enhance your life?

In the past, we would sit in the light of a lamp, but now we have neon and crystal lights. No matter how much your life becomes easy or the means of comfort become more available, do not forget that these are all from Allah. All materials, energies, and intellectual abilities are creations of Allah *the Most High*. You do not own any of them. The proof is that if Allah takes away your intellect, you become mad; and if He takes away your energy and

strength, you become weak and can hardly breathe. These are all bounties that have been gifted to you – they are not inherent in you.

Therefore, you must reflect upon your Creator *Glorified is He*, and the necessities of life that He has bestowed upon you so that you may know that this universe cannot be aimless. It must have a purpose which the Creator has assigned. You try, regarding yourself, to set your own subsidiary purpose which stems from the greater purpose for which Allah has created you.

Do you not see how you care for your little child? You teach him, spend money on him in all stages of his life until he reaches university. You attach yourself to a great hope that this son of yours will attain a status in society and among the people. This project in and of itself is a purpose. However, after he has attained status and a notable profession, this quest will ultimately end in death.

There must be another higher purpose. An imperishable purpose unsurpassed by anything else. This high purpose is meeting Allah and getting recompensed, by either paradise or Hell. It is in the light of this reality that we should approach all the affairs and concerns of our lives, knowing for sure that we have not been created out of frivolity. Rather, we have been created for a purpose appointed by Allah, and furnished as well with the means of achieving it.

Then Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘...and that you would not be brought back to Us?’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 115) in spite of you and against your will, as if driven by something, as in Allah’s Statement: ‘On that Day they will be thrust into the Fire of Hell.’ (*at-Tur*: 13) That is, they will be driven to it like animals being struck on the back of their necks.

فَتَعَالَى اللَّهُ الْمَلِكُ الْحَقُّ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْكَرِيمِ

**Exalted be God, the true King, there is no god
but Him, the Lord of the Glorious Throne! [116]
(The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 116)**

‘Exalted be Allah’ is an expression of transcendence and sanctification. The Arabic word *`uluw* (highness) refers to lofty status. When talking about people, we may say: ‘So and so is higher than so and so’; but when we say: ‘Exalted is Allah,’ we mean the highest and most exalted sublimity. The

high or special status that Allah accords to some human is just an inferior form of elevation which is changeable. The proof is that Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* may elevate you to a high position, and then, if He so wills, He may take it away. Thus, this elevated status is not inherent in you.

We know that the word *milk* (property) is used, for example, in reference to a piece of real estate owned by a proprietor who runs its affairs and has a flock. From this root comes the word *mallik* (proprietor). It can refer to the owner of anything. Even if he owns nothing beyond the clothes he is wearing, he is still considered to be an owner. As for the word *mallik* (king), he is the one who exercises sovereignty over all owners; he holds authority over the owners. Such a king does not derive his dominion from his own self; rather, Allah has granted it to him. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Say: O Allah, Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honour whom You will and You humble whom You will...' (*Al-Imran*: 26).

Were the sovereignty of those kings inherent in them, it would not be taken away from them. Do you not see how a king of this world enjoys extensive power and solid dominion, but despite this, he cannot maintain his sovereignty? In a moment, it can collapse at the hand of one of his soldiers. Or his own country may exile him and not even allow him to be buried therein, in which case another state may volunteer to inter his remains in its lands. What kind of dominion is this?

This is a verse that we see realized in every age, which stands as a proof of the truth of the verse stating: 'Say: O Allah, Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will. You honor whom You will and You humble whom You will...' (*Al-Imran*: 26). Thus if Allah gives you dominion, know that it is a bestowed dominion. No matter how firmly established it may become, do not rest assured of its continuity because Allah *the Exalted* has given you sovereignty for a purpose, and no one owns this purpose except Allah *the Most High*.

Therefore, the True Lord is '...the True King...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 116). In other words, He permanently possesses sovereignty and cannot be displaced or dispossessed of it. He is the One Who does whatever He wills in His

Kingdom, without opposition or rivalry. If He gives of His hidden dominion to some person, the reins of it remain in His Hand *the Exalted*. If He wills, He will extend it; and if He wills, He will strip it away. He alone is the True Sovereign. The dominion of anyone other than Him is only a conferred dominion and can be taken away at any time. If He gives dominion to certain people over others in this world, on the Day of Resurrection He will say: '...To whom belongs all sovereignty this Day? ...' (*Ghafir*: 16)

You will notice that His saying: '...You give sovereignty...' (*Al-'Imran*: 26) is easier and smoothers than '...You take sovereignty away...' (*Al-'Imran*: 26). Taking something away involves hardship and suffering because a person having dominion will try his utmost to hold on to it and will struggle to keep it. But can he struggle against Allah?

Allah's statement: 'Exalted be Allah, the True King...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 116) means that He is far exalted above having created you aimlessly and vainly, and above you escaping His Grasp, or breaking away from His Dominion, or living independent of His Authority. He is far exalted above you fleeing or resisting His Punishment. This is because He alone is God: '...there is no god but Him, the Lord of the Glorious Throne!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 116) The True Lord exercises sovereignty through the framework of: 'Say: He is Allah, the One God, the Self-Sufficient Master. He does not beget nor is He begotten, and nothing is equal or comparable to Him.' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-4) When He tells you something, know that there is no god besides Him who can contradict Him.

The word *'arsh* (throne) is a symbol of stabilized rule. This is because at the beginning a king is usually preoccupied with administering the affairs of his kingdom, fighting rebels, and disciplining his opponents. Once all these affairs have been settled, he sits on his throne. Thus, sitting on the throne indicates the stability and orderliness of the affairs of his kingdom. Hence, after having created the creation the True Lord established Himself on the throne.

The throne also betokens authority and sway. Unlike any other throne, the Throne of Allah is a Noble Throne. He has exalted Himself above you not to degrade or humiliate you, but rather to elevate you to Him and to give you of His Bounties. As we have previously said, it is for our good that Allah is *Al-Mutakabbir* (the Proud), and it is from the greatness of the True

Lord that all pride belongs to him alone. For as soon as everyone realizes that pride belongs to Allah alone, nobody will pride himself over others or be arrogant towards anyone else.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says: 'And to Him belongs all grandeur within the heavens and the earth, and He is the Exalted in Might, the Wise.' (*al-Jathiya*: 37)

And so the proverb says: 'Anyone who does not have a chief should seek one,' that is to live under his protection. The True Lord elevates Himself in the interest of His creation. Relevant to this point is what we have previously said regarding 'Ubudiyyah (worshipful servitude and obedience to Allah) that is reprehensible and burdensome to the soul if it is towards humans. This is because any master takes over the good of his slave. But it is beloved to the soul when it is for Allah because through servitude to Allah, the slave receives the good of his Lord.

The earthly thrones of the kings of this world are used for enforcing authority, manipulating destinies, and draining the blood and resources of the people, but the Throne of your Lord is a Noble Throne. Indeed, the Noble One is noble and lofty in all His Aims and Purposes. Read His statement: '(And so they perished: and) how many gardens did they leave behind, and water-runnels, and fields of grain, and noble dwellings.' (*ad-Dukhan*: 25-26)

Also when exhorting us regarding our parents, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...say not to them a word of disrespect, and do not repel them but speak to them a noble word.' (*al-Isra'*: 23)

Thus the noble throne is one that achieves the noblest aims of sovereignty. Sovereignty is not about authority and subjugation; rather, it should be exercised for the good of the people. When the True Lord created life, He apportioned the means of favour. He has made those who are strong and able and those who are weak and helpless, and then He commanded the strong to hold the hand of the weak and take care of them. In this sense, nobility is when the strong diffuse their benefit to the weak. Every good and righteous quality can be described as noble.

So beware of thinking that the Throne of your Lord is for authority, high-handedness, or oppression because it is absolutely a Noble Throne.

Then the True Lord says:

وَمَنْ يَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا بُرْهَانَ لَهُ بِهِ فَإِنَّمَا
حِسَابُهُ عِنْدَ رَبِّهِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿١١٧﴾

Whoever prays to another God alongside Him – a God for whose existence he has no evidence – will face his reckoning with his Lord. Those who reject the truth will not prosper [117] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 117)

‘And whoever invokes (or worships) besides Allah...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 117) means along with or instead of Allah. Worship is to obey the worshipped Lord in whatever He commands or forbids. But how can a human call upon a god that can neither benefit nor harm him and for whose existence or divinity he has no evidence? Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* threatens to punish whoever does this saying: ‘...then his reckoning is only with his Lord...’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 117); that is, his True Lord. Surely, ‘...the disbelievers will not be successful.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 117)

As a concluding aspect that inspires wonder is that the chapter begins with Allah’s Words: ‘Successful indeed are the believers’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 1) and ends with His Words: ‘... surely, the disbelievers will not be successful.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 117) That is, it ends exactly opposite of how it begins. This should lead you to reflect on that which lies between these two brackets. Since the issue is all about faith, where believers shall attain success and disbelievers will suffer failures, you must hold on to your Lord and adhere to His Law of ‘Do’ and ‘Do not do.’

And whenever you are overpowered by desires into sin, remember to say:

وَقُلْ رَبِّ اغْفِرْ وَارْحَمْ وَأَنْتَ خَيْرُ الرَّاحِمِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾

... Say [Prophet], ‘Lord, forgive and have mercy: You are the most merciful of all’[118] (The Quran, *al-Mu'minun*: 118)

If you fall into some error, keep mindful of this reality. Turn to your Lord for He is Oft Forgiving. He has allowed repentance for you to repent,

and allowed seeking forgiveness for you to ask for forgiveness. He *the Most High* is more Merciful to you than a mother is to her child. Indeed, He is the Most Merciful of the merciful.

The prayer 'My Lord, forgive...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 118) signifies past sins, whereas '...and have mercy...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 118) signifies asking mercy from falling into sin again, and protection from erring in our future lives. Thus, hold on to your Lord and His Law under all circumstances. Let nothing turn you away from it.

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