

vol. [16]

REFLECTIONS

EL SHA'RAWY
الشعر اوان

فواطـر

المجلد [16]



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

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the chapter of

an-Nur

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

سُورَةُ أَنْزَلْنَاهَا وَفَرَضْنَاهَا وَأَنْزَلْنَا فِيهَا آيَاتٍ بَيِّنَاتٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿١﴾

This is a *Surah* We have sent down and made obligatory: We have sent down clear revelations in it, so that you may take heed [1] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 1)

The name of this chapter is *an-Nur*⁽¹⁾ (literally, light)⁽²⁾ and on examining the subject named or addressed by the chapter of *an-Nur*, you will find light pervading it from every side. I am not saying its verses, nor am I saying its words, but rather light pervades its every letter. Why? They said because *an-Nur* (light) is among the [onomatopoeic] words whose pronunciation points to their meaning, and defines them more than any other definition. Consequently, people recognize *an-Nur* simply through the pronunciation of this word. Light is not defined except by the true nature of that which it performs, namely being that by which visible things become apparent, and by which creation is revealed. If not for this light, we would see nothing.

Therefore, light is known by its characteristic property which grants you the ability to see visible things, as proven by the fact that you would not be

(1) The chapter of *An-Nur* is number twenty-four in the order of the Noble Quran; in the eighteenth part. It was consensually agreed that it was revealed in Medina, as stated by *Al-Qurtubi* in his *Tafsir* (vol. 6, p. 4693). It was revealed after the chapter of *An-Nasr*, and before the chapter of *Al-Hajj*. It is chapter number seventeen in the chronological order of the Medinan revelations. See: *Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an* by *As-Suyuti* (vol. 1, p. 27). The number of the verse of this chapter is sixty-four.

(2) *Al-Qurtubi* said in his *Tafsir* (vol. 6, p. 4693): 'The main objective of this chapter is to mention the rules of chastity and moral safeguards for honor.' 'Umar ibn *Al-Khattab* Allah be pleased with him also wrote to the people of *Kufa*, saying: 'Teach your women the chapter of *An-Nur*.'

able to see them if they were in a dark place. Thus, light is not seen, but through it we see things. Likewise, Allah *the Exalted* is the Light of the heavens and earth, illuminating them for us, but we cannot see Him *the Exalted*.

But are all things visible? Are there not among them things that can be heard, smelled, and tasted? Yes they say, but visible things constitute the first proof of all these experiences and the occurrence of events. Since all the proofs of existence are visible; we see them first; then when you hear, or smell, or feel, or distinguish heavy from light, or near from far, these are all derivative of what exists in you after embracing that belief that Allah is the One Who created you and created all things for you. So whenever you look at the light, you will find that light is a sensory perception, by which you see all things.

In the past, people used to believe that a human being sees things by means of rays emanating from the eye and then falling on the object and so you see it. This was what people believed until the Islamic scientist, Al-Hasan ibn Al-Haytham, came and disproved this theory. He said that the rays come out from the visible object to the eye, and then you see it, and not the other way around. As proof of this, he pointed out that if the object was in darkness and you in the light, you still would not see it. Thus if the rays truly emanated from you, you would have seen it.

In light of this theory, we can understand Allah's Words: '...and made the daylight for seeing...' (*al-Isra'*: 12). It allows seeing because the rays come from there, so it is what makes things visible.

But what is the utility of this sensory light to the human being, the vicegerent (*khalifa*) of Allah on the earth? When you see things, you are able to interact with them in a useful manner that provides you with their benefits and protect you from the harm they contain. If you could not see things, you would not be able to interact with them; otherwise, how could you walk in a dark place filled with harmful things, such as snakes or broken glass?

Without physical light, you do not know where to place your feet, or to take the good aspects of a thing and avoid its bad aspects. Similarly, if you walk into a dark place, without guidance, you would inevitably collide with someone stronger than you, who would then knock you down, or someone weaker than

you, whom you would knock down. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* called the law and way that guides you along the path of life a light.

In absence of the Allah-given natural light, people devise sources of light according to their varying capacities and environments, beginning with lamps and gas lanterns. People vary widely even in this area – up until the era of electricity, florescent and neon bulbs, and various other lighting sources. This is at night. But once the sun rises, everyone extinguishes his lights and lanterns. Why? This is because the Lamp of Allah has shined and thus everyone equally receives its light without distinction. Likewise with the spiritual light which is the light of the law that Allah provides regarding any issue that requires guidance; turn off any lamps of human guidance besides it. It is not fitting that you should seek the aid of any light when the light of your Lord is available. Rather, you ought to seize the initiative and take as much as you can from the light of your Lord. For just as you take the sensory light provided by Allah and with it dispense with all other lights, follow the Light of Allah in moral values, follow the Light of Allah in your traits of character and in your transactions and in your behaviour, and this will allow you to dispense with any man-made lights and laws.

Do you not see how Nimrod was left dumbstruck when Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* cut short his dispute and confronted him with the irrefutable evidence when he told him: “Allah brings the sun from the east; so bring it from the west.” The disbeliever was dumbfounded...’ (*al-Baqara*: 258).

The True Lord *the Exalted* pours forth His Light and His Attributes of Perfection upon His creation whom He has appointed as His vicegerents on earth. So He says: ‘...I am putting a successor on earth...’ (*al-Baqara*: 30). The vicegerency on earth (*khilafa*) is not intended to be a single generation which Allah has created and appointed as His representatives on earth until the occurrence of the Final Hour; rather, the vicegerent is generations and descendants following upon one another, one dies and another is born in continuous chains of offspring, not the self-same persons.

The vicegerent will not succeed in his vicegerency unless he proceeds in it in accordance with the intention of the One Who appointed him to this role. The main failing that people show in exercising their role of vicegerency on

earth is that they consider themselves to be the original leaders rather than appointed vicegerents. For a true vicegerent of Allah should keep this post of vicegerency upmost in his mind and should always look back and refer to the original source, and learn exactly what the One who appointed him as vicegerent desires of him.

The True Lord *the Exalted* established for Himself a vicegerent on earth to manifest through him the signs of His Power and the attributes of His Perfection. Allah *Glorified is He* is the Powerful, Allah is the Knowledgeable, Allah is the Wise, Allah is the Self-Sufficient, Allah is the Merciful, Allah is the Forgiving, etc. Allah gives of His Attributes and freely bestows some of them upon His creation and His vicegerents on His earth. He gives you power of His Power, mercy from His Mercy, and sufficiency in all things from His Abundance. Yet, the quality itself remains in His Hand; if He wills, He can take it away. Do you not see how the strong can become weak and how the rich can become poor? This is so that we might know that we are not self-endowed with these qualities, and that these gifts are not innate in us; rather, they are bestowments from Allah *the Glorious and Exalted*. For this reason, we are obliged to use them in accordance with His Intention. So when your Lord has given you power, He has poured it forth on you so that you may pour it forth to others. He has given you knowledge so that you may disperse it among people. He has given you wealth so that you may look after the rights of the poor.

Since Allah *Glorified is He* has bestowed upon you a portion of His Attributes of Perfection and has preserved for Himself the ownership of these attributes – and if He wills, He can strip them from you – it is incumbent upon you to seize the opportunity and make the most of the attribute which have been bestowed upon you, and to exploit it in the way that Allah desires from you before you are stripped of it. Then when it is stripped from you, it will be granted to you through someone else.

So give in charity while you are rich to receive the charity of others if you are afflicted by poverty. And be magnanimous toward the orphan to find someone who will be magnanimous toward your orphans after you. For if you approach the events of life with this perspective, your heart will be at peace, and you will be secure from the mishaps of time and will face the events of

life with contentment. And how could you be distressed when you are in a society that takes care of you as you have taken care of it, and which assumes your burdens as you have assumed its burdens, and cooperates with you as you have cooperated with it?

Truly Allah speaks the truth when He says: ‘Let those who would fear for the future of their own helpless children, if they were to die, show the same concern (for orphans); let them be mindful of Allah and speak out for justice.’ (*an-Nisa*: 9)

Hence, the True Lord *the Exalted* desires of His vicegerents on His earth that they embrace the Qualities of Divine Perfection which bring happiness to mankind through having within them the imprints of their Creator. This indeed is the true viceregency.

The chapter of *an-Nur* came to convey the light of moral ideals, the light of values, the light of dealings and transactions, the light of manners, the light of management and comportment. And as long as Allah *Glorified is He* has established this light for us, mankind must not establish other laws for themselves because as Allah says: ‘...the one to whom Allah gives no light has no light at all.’ (*an-Nur*: 40) And if the sun did not exist, no one would ever be able to produce light for himself.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wills from His vicegerent on His earth that he be pure, noble, generous, and honourable; it is for this reason that He established laws which support this objective. The first and most important of these laws is the law governing the union between man and women, that it be a sound union in broad daylight so that a pure offspring will result from this union, worthy of the viceregency of Allah on His earth. Therefore, the first matter which the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks about in this chapter is that of adultery.

It is amazing that this chapter comes after chapter *al-Mu'minun* at the beginning of which Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘Successful indeed are the believers.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 1) Then He mentions who these successful believers are ‘And they who guard their private parts.’ (*al-Mu'minun*: 5) And here in the present chapter, He said: ‘The adulteress and the adulterer’ hence, providing the opposite of those who are mindful of their chastity.

We understand from this that no man and woman have sexual intercourse except based on light from Allah and guidance from his wise system of legal rulings. This is because He *Glorified is He* is the Creator of man, and He knows best what is good for him. He is the Creator of His offspring, and He knows how to harmonize these offspring with each other. Furthermore, He *Glorified is He* is the Creator of the dispositions of the soul, and He knows how these dispositions can co-exist without clashing.

Naturally, if you wanted to install a vicegerent in the universe contrary to the intent of Allah and based on other than the qualities of the True Lord, the universe will be disturbed and the dispositions of the soul will be at odds with each other. Then, what do you expect from this vicegerent if he appears in darkness? At that moment, ailments of procreation will arise such as burying children alive and killing them even in the bellies of mothers. Similarly, a man may have doubts about the fathering of his child, and then come to detest, neglect, and abandon him to a life of homelessness.

Hence, this matter will never be set aright except when the vicegerent complies with the specifications of his Lord, and when a couple has sexual union on the basis of what Allah has ordained. But when each of them schemes against the other in the darkness of sin, then the forbidden occurs by which genealogies get all mixed up, and the bonds of society disintegrate.

Surely among the cruellest experiences in the life of a man is to doubt the relationship of his child to himself. This thought should oppress him, leading him to neglecting his child and his own blood, wasting his money on this and that, while depriving his child. As opposed to pure offspring where the father is full of concern for his child going hungry so that the child can eat, going naked so that the child can be clothed.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* desires that offspring should be lovingly cared for by two parents in a proper state of lawful fatherhood and lawful motherhood who have come together on the basis of Allah's ordainment.

Consequently, if you make a comparison between a woman who is pregnant by fornication and another who is pregnant with a lawful, pure pregnancy, you will find that the first woman carries her child unwillingly, under coercion, and wishes to get rid of it while it is an embryo in her belly. And if

she braces herself until the time of its birth, she will get rid of it that same day, even by casting it into the middle of the road. As for the woman who is in a state of lawful pregnancy, she yearns for a child; and if the pregnancy should be late in coming, she becomes anxious and goes from one doctor to the other. Then, if Allah grants her a pregnancy, she bursts with happiness and pride, and she is mindful of the foetus until the time of giving birth; then she bears the pains happily, embraces the child and breastfeeds it, and lives her life in its service and protection.

Allah desires that His vicegerent on His earth comes from a pure fertilization under the spiritual light of Allah; He desires that the father takes the lawful means and avoid the unlawful ones.

Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives a stern warning of punishment to the one who violates this prescribed path and who wishes to pollute the nobility of the vicegerency which Allah desires to be pure, and who desecrates offspring and causes people to boil over with malice and enmity, and who plants doubts in souls of people. The damage of such crimes against honour is not limited to personal enmities, but rather go beyond these to damages to society as a whole.

Consider the current threat of AIDS to societies which is a result of this unlawful sexual union; the danger is not limited to the two parties involved, but rather, it extends to others. Hence, it is in the best interest of all of society to impose the legal punishment for fornication so that this disease will not spread.

We are astounded by those who attack the Islamic law in the matter of prescribed legal punishments when it ordains the stoning of the married adulterer to death. Do these people not know that we sacrifice one in order to protect the safety of millions in their health and well-being? Are they unaware of what happens, for example, in an epidemic of the plague over which scientists are powerless until today -and they have not discovered a cure for it- and how the Islamic law commands us not to travel to a land where the plague has broken out, and commands those who reside there not to leave? Why? To contain this epidemic so that it will not spread further among people.

Such is the same situation with regard to fornication because the harm of the adulterer is not limited to himself only, but rather, it extends to the entire

society. It should be noted that the Islamic law differentiates between the married man who commits adultery and the unmarried man who engages in fornication. The same is true for the female fornicator. Thus, in the case of fornication of a married woman, sperm from multiple sources accumulate in a single place.

Thus, we were asked in San Francisco: 'Why do you [Muslims] permit men multiple wives, but do not permit women multiple husbands?' For those who asked the question, this was by way of comparing man and woman: Why can a woman not marry and have four men?

I said, 'Ask them, do they not have places wherein the youth can placate themselves sexually, that is to say, brothels.' They responded, 'Yes, in some states.' I said, 'Then by what means do you protect the health of society and its welfare?' They replied, 'We conduct periodic inspections on them every few weeks.' I commented, 'And does this periodic inspection include everyone? Or is it merely random examinations?'

'Hence,' I continued, 'it is possible for disease to spread among these youths. Imagine that you conducted your inspection on one of these ladies on Sunday, for example, and on Monday she was exposed to disease. So how many people will this disease infect until the following Sunday comes along? So this is an issue, for you are unable to control disease by such a method.'

'Another thing, do you conduct these examinations on married men and married women? And have you discovered among them such diseases?' They answered, 'No, it has never happened that we have discovered this between married couples.' I remarked, 'Then you should have perceived the cause of these diseases being the result from multiple sources of men's sperm in a single place; since every sperm has its own flow in which microbes combat each other; if they combine in a single place, then disease will be produced from it.'

'However,' I continued, 'when a wife has a single husband, we do not witness such diseases in society. And this is where the role of religious restriction comes in. If the religious restriction is lost, then material restriction will be needed to restrain the like of such people, and to hold them to the limits of Allah in spite of themselves, even if they do not believe in such laws.'

Thus, these issues, problems, and diseases increase proportionally with the increase of fornication, and violate the sacred proscriptions of Allah. Just

look, for example, at the person who is obliged to travel to such countries, how precautious and frightened he is when he stays in a hotel, for example, he takes his own personal belongings, as he fears to make use of things belonging to others. He cares for the cleanliness of the place, and changes the bed sheets before he sleeps, etc. All of these are precautionary measures.

Now when the Islamic law orders the killing of the male or female adulterer, it does this only to keep society as a whole safe and sound. We frequently face such objections from those possessed of foolish mercy and futile sentiments. Are they more merciful with mankind than the Creator is? Are they not aware of earthquakes and automobile and aeroplane accidents which reap thousands of souls? So why all this fuss when we amputate the sick limb from society?

In His statement: '[This is] a sura/chapter which We have sent down and We made it compulsory' (*an-Nur*: 1) *Surah* is a group of the instalments of the Quran or its verses enclosed within a beginning and an end, which contain rulings. They may be long, like the chapter of *al-Baqara*, or short like that of *al-Ikhlās* and of *al-Kawthar* since a *surah* has no specific quantity because it is fixed by Divine command.

'Which We have sent down' is a phrase meaning it came down from above to one who is lower than him. This is comparable to an employee, who for example, writes a complaint to his superior: I raise such-and-such unto you; then the superior says: I have sent down such-and-such a decision. So, the lower sends up to the higher, and the higher sends down to the lower.

Therefore, He *Glorified is He* says, 'We sent down', even for a thing which is not sent down from heaven, as He *Glorified is He* said: 'And We sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people.' (*al-Hadid*: 25) Thus, iron, even if its source is in the earth, would not exist except for the power of the Most Exalted.

And '...We made it compulsory.' Something which is compulsory means it is obligatory to do because the Law-Giver has said so, and has enjoined it. In the same vein is His saying: 'then [give] half of what you specified' (*al-Baqara*: 237). In other words, it is half of that which you have decreed. Thus, everything has a ruling in the Islamic law, for verily Allah *Glorified is He* has ordained it by a judicious determination based on His Divine Decree.

In this chapter, there are many rulings, such that the True Lord *Glorified is He* said in it ‘Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth.’ (*an-Nur*: 35) And, ‘light upon light!’ (*an-Nur*: 35) So as long as you have taken the light of the lower world and have decided that it is the best, and that when it appears it extinguishes all of your lights, then likewise take the light of divine legislation and act in accordance with it. Hence, you have two lights from Allah: perceptible light and spiritual light.

As for the words, ‘that you might remember’: After He *Glorified is He* said, ‘I have sent down such-and-such,’ He wishes to incite your sentiments to receive His verses with a good reception, and to apply His rulings in an exemplary way, saying, ‘I have sent down to you such-and-such, so that you might bear [them] in mind.’ This carries provocation and incitement for us to benefit from the legislation of the True Lord.

Subsequently, the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks of the first matter which He has imposed upon His servants:

الرَّانِيَةُ وَالزَّانِي فَاجْلِدُوا كُلَّ وَاحِدٍ مِّنْهُمَا مِائَةً جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَأْخُذْكُمْ بِهِمَا رَأْفَةٌ فِي دِينِ اللَّهِ
 إِن كُنتُمْ تُؤْمِنُونَ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ وَلَشَهِدَ عَذَابُهُمَا طَائِفَةٌ مِّنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢﴾

**Strike the adulteress and the adulterer one hundred times.
 Do not let compassion for them keep you from carrying out
 God’s law — if you believe in God and the Last Day — and
 ensure that a group of believers witnesses the punishment[2]
 (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 2)**

We remark: Verily the True Lord *Glorified is He* treats this subject in the desire to preserve the new generation, and the purity of this human being which Allah has established as His Vicegerent on earth. When we meditate upon the Quranic context of this verse, we find that the word adulterer signifies both female and male. Yet, the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions them both plainly in order to remove any possible difference of opinion which might arise among some people regarding which of the two of them is the cause of this crime. This is a controversy into which even great scholars and jurists have fallen. For there are those who say that the male adulterer is the

initiator of sexual intercourse and the prime actor, and the woman is the one dominated upon, so the action is attributable to the man and not the woman, thus he alone is the one who assumes this responsibility.

For this reason, Al-Imam Ash-Shafi'i narrates that a man went to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I had sexual intercourse with my wife in Ramadan.' Whereupon the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Make [the prescribed] expiation.'⁽¹⁾ Ash-Shafi'i deduced from this Hadith that the expiation should fall upon the man rather than the woman, otherwise the Messenger would have said to the man: 'Let the two of you make expiation.'

However, we must differentiate between forcing oneself upon someone sexually, and between having consensual sexual intercourse; the former is the act of the man even if the wife is disinclined and rejecting. As for consensual sexual intercourse, it is done in a state of pleasure and acceptance of both parties, and in this case the obligation of expiation falls on both of them together. Therefore, the True Lord *Glorified is He* explicitly states both the adulteress and the adulterer in order to remove this uncertainty and this difference of opinion. In my view, in this case it was the man who sought the legal ruling from the Prophet Muhammad; had it been the woman, he would have similarly told her the same, hence the judgement is particular to the person who sought the legal ruling.

One who reflects upon the verses concerning legal punishments will find, for example, in the punishment for stealing His saying, 'Now as for the man who steals and the woman who steals.' (*al-Ma'ida*: 38) Here He begins with the male, but regarding the punishment for adultery, He said, "the adulteress and the adulterer," beginning with the female. Why this difference in the Quranic expression?

(1) Narrated by 'A'isha may Allah be pleased with her that she said: "A man came to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'I am bound for Hellfire.' The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* asked, 'Why?' [The man] replied, 'I have had sexual intercourse with my wife in Ramadan during the day.' [The Prophet] said, 'Give in charity, give in charity.' [The man] said, 'I have nothing.' So he ordered him to sit down, then two fleshy bones upon which there was nourishment were brought to him and the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered him to give them away in charity." Related by Muslim in his (*Sahih*) (1112).

They say: Because the role of the woman in the matter of adultery is greater, as she is the one that tempts the man and rouses his emotions. Hence, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has commanded men to lower their gaze, and has commanded women to conceal their beauty; all of which in order to close the doors to this crime and to prevent its causes.

As for the case of stealing, the burden of maintenance and providing the necessities of life normally falls upon the man's shoulders, as he is the one who is charged with them. Therefore, the man steals. But as for the woman, she is normally on the receiving end in her house, and it is not her duty to provide for the costs of life. But nevertheless, there is nothing to stop the woman from stealing as well. For this reason, He begins the matter of stealing with the man.

By comparing verses of the Quran, you find the words carefully weighed and extremely precise. Every word and every letter has its evident meaning, for it is the speech of a judicious Lord. If the matter were simply one of normal legislation, you would not need to consider issues such as these.

Subsequently the deterrent punishment comes for this crime: 'lash each one of them with a hundred lashes.' Lash is an order, but to whom? He did not specify a governor or judge because the command here is for the entire ummah/nation. Now the command to impose punishments is entrusted to the ummah as a whole, but does the entire community in all its numerous members carry out a single act in every place?

They say: the ummah is like the general deputy of the governor whose duty is to choose whomever he feels is competent to exercise power in order to implement for him what he wants. Whoever appoints a judge, the same has made a judgement. And as long as this is the situation, then beware of appointing someone as a judge who is incompetent for the post because the responsibility will be upon you if he wrongs people or is unjust. Now the ummah is not able collectively to lash every adulterer and adulteress, but when its ruler assumes power with the oath of allegiance, and when he is chosen to impose the criminal punishments ordained by Allah, then it is as if the ummah itself is the one that imposes the punishments, and is the one that enforces them. Hence, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'Whoever delegates someone authority, and among the people there is someone who is

better than him, he will not smell the scent of Paradise.’⁽¹⁾ Why? Because when you delegate responsibility over the affairs of people to one who is not fit for it, while there is someone who is fit for it, you are thereby spreading corruption in society. Do not think that you can conceal something from the eyes of people, as they have sufficient awareness and attentiveness with which to differentiate between competence and its opposite. If they keep silent and are heedless, they will nevertheless ask themselves behind your back: why did he delegate authority to that person, and leave aside someone who is more competent than he is? He must have other qualifications thanks to which he entered through the back door, and why should we not do like him? At this point, chaos reigns and rights are lost, and frustration, laziness, and apathy spread, disorders occur in society, and the public welfare breaks down.

Yet, in spite of all this, we cannot blame the ruler when he selects someone who is not suited for his appointed duty; rather, we must blame ourselves first since we are the ones who chose him and were false in our oaths of allegiance to him. Hence, Allah placed him in a position of dominance over us so that he also might be false in his choice. However, if each of us performed his duty in the choice of a suitable person, he who deceives people would not reach the ranks of leadership. In this way, matters are set aright and only through hard work, sincerity, reliability, truthfulness, and self-sacrifice in serving society would be the proper qualifications for choosing someone in leadership.

It is through the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* to mankind that He casts sincerity and love of work, and plants mercy towards people into certain hearts. Thus, you find in every government bureau or in every office a humble employee who loves people, and who is intent upon serving their interests. As for lashing, it is beating in a particular manner, such that skin is not cut, nor bones broken. Since a blow is effected based upon its force and upon the instrument used in beating. There is a blow which breaks bones but does not

(1) *Related by Abu Bakr may Allah be pleased with him that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said: "Whoever assumes any power over the affairs of the Muslims and then appoints over them through favouritism, upon him will be the curse of Allah, and Allah will accept neither obligatory nor supererogatory prayers from him until he causes him to enter Hellfire." Related by Ahmad in his (Musnad) (1:6).*

cut the skin, just as there is a blow that cuts the skin, but does not break bones, and there is also that which causes pain without causing either of the above. Then He *Glorified is He* says: 'and do not be taken by pity for them in the religion of Allah.' This is a warning against foolish mercy, misplaced mercy. According to one poet:

He was harsh in order to restrain and he who is judicious,

Will be harsh at times to those he is merciful towards.

Hence, compassion has no place in the prescribed punishments of Allah. Show mercy towards them in your personal affairs between you and them. It is astonishing that you cry for mercy in matters of divinely prescribed punishments. Yet, on the other hand, some people beat and steal people's money, violate that which is sacred and stir up civil strife and wars between them, so where is compassion then? Therefore, there is no room for mercy or compassion regarding the prescribed punishments of Allah, for we are not more merciful unto human beings than the Creator is. The prescribed punishments were not laid down out of love for hurting people; rather, they were laid down and made stern in order to prevent falling into the crime which merits a punishment. Thus, severing a single hand prevents the severing of thousands of hands.

We ask those who accuse Islam of cruelty and offensiveness in the application of prescribed punishments if they have forgotten what they did at Hiroshima, the after-effects of which are still in evidence today. Have they forgotten the wars which they incited in various parts of the world, and which took thousands of lives? Is it a question of this foolish mercy which has no meaning? Or is it a hatred for the prescribed punishments of Allah?

We recall that in the past, a protective and guarding force of the army used to be sent out with the party of pilgrims, protecting them from highway robbers. This pilgrimage escort used to be called *al-mahmal*. Then when the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia established the law of Allah, and applied the prescribed punishments, the routes became safe, and people could dispense with these guards. This was in spite of the vastness of the land, and the diverging nature of its routes and the difficulty of its terrain between mountains, valleys, and huge deserts which cannot be governed or guarded by the eye of man. It required legislation of the Creator.

And yet, when the number of hands that were severed is counted, you find that they are very few, and most of them are of people from outside the Kingdom. I recall that once I said in the sermon of *'Arafa*: return to your leaders and tell them to sever the hand of the thief since he who does not sever the hand of the thief has the intention of stealing himself; therefore, he fears for his own hand, and when you mention to him the issue of severing the hand of the thief, his own hand begins to tremble. Those who oppose the application of the prescribed punishments of Allah proceed on the principle 'cut off the hand to save the body.' But yet, the prescribed punishments of Allah sticks like a lump in their throats.

Lashing with a hundred lashes is specific to the fornicator who is not married. But as for the fornicator, who is married, he is under a different ruling which is not mentioned in the Book of Allah, rather, it is mentioned in the *Sunna* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is because the Noble Quran is not only a book of procedure, rather, it is a book of procedure and miracle, and with it come principles. Among these principles is that He said in a verse: Verily we authorize the Messenger of Allah to establish legislation for people.

The law that is derived from oral utterance is liable to be disputed, opposed, and manipulated in terms of interpretation. However, if the law is derived from the action of the legislator, there is no doubt or possible dispute about it. It does not allow for interpretation because it is an act. And the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* indeed acted and stoned the married adulterer and adulteress in the account of Ma'iz and Al-Ghamidiya because he was authorized by Allah. It is necessary for us to differentiate between the two prescribed punishments in question. In the case of the prescribed punishment of the slave girl who fornicates, He *Glorified is He* says: 'then for them is half the punishment for free [unmarried] women.' (*an-Nisa'*: 25) Some have understood from the verse that it applies to both the prescribed punishment of stoning and of lashing. They said: 'in the case of lashing, you can be lashed with fifty stripes, but how can we divide up stoning? And as long as stoning cannot be divided up, she is not liable to stoning. But if those who say this would carefully examine the text of the verse, they would get out of this contradiction. For the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not say only 'then

for them is half the punishment for free [unmarried] women,' He specified, 'the punishment.' In this manner, He is specifically referring to the prescribed punishment of lashing since punishment as used here is living pain, whereas stoning is the annihilation of life, hence the two are opposite to each other.

Indeed, consider the statement of the Quran in the story of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and the hoopoe: '[If so,] I will punish him most severely or will kill him.' (*an-Naml*: 21) This proves that punishment is not the same as killing.

Therefore, it is only possible to divide up the prescribed punishment of lashing only, whereas it cannot be the same with stoning. So, if the married slave girl commits adultery, she is to be stoned.

Regarding His saying: 'if you should believe in Allah and the Last Day' this is a grievous statement, and a provocation to the ummah. It is as if Allah is saying: this then is the law, and this is the prescribed punishment ordained by Allah, so if you are believers in Allah, the final and eternal punishment, then implement the law of Allah --and if you do not, then re-examine your belief in Allah and in the Last Day because verily We doubt the sincerity of this faith.

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* is provoking us and stirring us up against those who are prone to commit this crime, so that we might withhold them and frighten them with what Allah has ordained of prescribed punishments.

Hence, the meaning is: If you believe Allah to be wise and law giving, that He created man, that He desires to protect man, and to purify him in order that he might be qualified for true vicegerency on earth, then let the Creator act in His universe and with man according to His Will. Know that the creation is not your creation in which to interfere. Then He *Glorified is He* says: 'And let a group of the believers witness their punishment.' (*an-Nur*: 2) It is not limited to the prescribed punishment of punishment and lashing; rather, it is necessary that a group of believers witness this punishment, at least four people. Why? They say: because a soul might bear a humiliation if it is carried out in secret, but it is totally different when it is done in public. Hence, other people's witnessing of the execution of a prescribed punishment is a humiliation for the person concerned, and it is also a vehicle of deterrence for the one who witnesses, a pragmatic preventive example. For this reason, they say: the prescribed punishments are

means of deterrence and means of restoration means of deterrence for he who witnesses them, that is to say, they restrain him from committing that which merits this prescribed punishment. And a means of restoration for the one punished, whereby his sin is amended and the punishment of the Hereafter is waived for him. Now, it is not possible to equate the person who confesses and upon whom the prescribed punishment is carried out with the person who does not confess. Since fornication is never proven by witnesses but rather by confession, this proves the law is correct by the confessor, and that he views disgrace in this world and its chastisement to be less grave than that in the Hereafter. Otherwise, he would not have confessed against himself.

If fornication could be proven by witnesses, then perhaps they might lie. Thus, we find that when a man came to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* confessing to fornication, he said to him ‘Perhaps you kissed, perhaps you fondled, perhaps you touched.’⁽¹⁾ In other words: you did not reach the stage which is called fornication; the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* wishing to avert the prescribed punishment based on doubt.⁽²⁾

Based on upon this tolerant Islamic principle, if you seized the adulterer and began stoning him, but he then attempted to flee due to the increasing pain, the Islamic law orders us not to pursue or catch him. Why? Because his fleeing from the prescribed punishment is viewed as if it were a recantation of his confession⁽³⁾.

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- (1) Related by Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*) (6824) and Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (1/238, 255, 270, 289, 325) on the authority of Ibn `Abbas who said: When Ma`iz ibn Malik came to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* he said to him: “Perhaps you kissed or fondled or stared?” [Ma`iz] said, ‘No, O Messenger of Allah.’ He asked, “Did you marry her?” - he did no marry her - [Ibn `Abbas] said, ‘Thereupon he ordered him to be stoned.’
 - (2) On the authority of ‘A`isha may Allah be pleased with her she said, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said “Avert the prescribed punishments from the Muslims to the degree that you can, and if there exists a way out for him, then let him be, for it is better that the community leader (imam) err on the side of pardon than to err on the side of punishment.” Related by At-Tirmidhi in his (*Sunnan*) (1424)
 - (3) Related by Imam Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (2:450), and At-Tirmidhi in his (*Sunnan*) (1428) that when Ma`iz felt the stones, he raced to escape until he passed by a man with the jawbone of a camel (a bone of its palate), then he struck him with it, and other people beat him until he died. Then this was mentioned to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* who said: “If only you had let him go.” At-Tirmidhi pronounced this Hadith to be “sound”.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* says⁽¹⁾:

الزَّانِي لَا يَنْكِحُ إِلَّا زَانِيَةً أَوْ مُشْرِكَةً وَالزَّانِيَةُ لَا يَنْكِحُهَا
إِلَّا زَانٍ أَوْ مُشْرِكٌ وَحُرِّمَ ذَلِكَ عَلَى الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

The adulterer is only [fit] to marry an adulteress or an idolatress, and the adulteress is only [fit] to marry an adulterer or an idolater: such behaviour is forbidden to believers[3] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 3)

‘The fornicator does not marry except a [female] fornicator or polytheist,’ because marriage can only be based on equality of status so that neither one of the pair is superior to the other. The adulterer/fornicator is possessed of vileness so the only fitting partner for him is a vile woman like him. In other words, an adulteress, or even more vile, a polytheist, this is because polytheism is viler than fornication since the latter is a violation of a guiding command from Allah, while polytheism is disbelief in Allah. Therefore, the polytheist is more impure than a fornicator is. And that which we say in regard to the

(1) *The occasion of the revelation of the verse: Several narrations were narrated concerning the reasons for the revelation of the verse; among them:*

- Ahmad related in his (Musnad) (2:109, 222) on the authority of `Abdullah ibn `Umar may Allah be pleased with them that a man of the believers sought permission of the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him regarding [possible marriage to] a woman called Umm Mahzul who was a whore and who imposed as a condition [of marriage] that she provide for him, so he sought the permission of the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him or mentioned to him the issue of this woman. The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him then recited this verse to him. This narraton was also related by Wahidi in his (Asbab An-Nuzul) (page 180).

- Related by At-Tirmidhi in his (Sunnan) (3177) and Abu Dawud in his (Sunnan) (2051); both related it on the authority of `Abdullah ibn `Amr ibn Al-`As may Allah be pleased with him who said: ‘There was a man called Marthad Ibn Abu Marthad who was one who transported captives of war from Mecca to Medina, and there was a female prostitute in Mecca called `Inaq. She was an intimate friend of his. He said to the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him ‘Should I marry `Inaq, should I marry `Inaq? But the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him held back and did not respond to [him] at all until this verse was revealed, whereupon, the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said, “O Marthad, the fornicator marries none but a fornicator or an idolater, so not marry her!”

marriage of a male fornicator (or adulterer), we also say in regard to the marriage of a female fornicator: ‘and none marries her except a fornicator or a polytheist.’

Some people object: What if the female fornicator is a Muslim? Shall a polytheist marry her? They say: the objective of the opposition here is to intimidate and repel only, not granting of permission because a Muslim woman is never allowed to marry a polytheist. Hence the verse serves as a rebuke to her.

In my opinion, the text of this phrase of the verse may be viewed from different angles since the woman who has committed fornication (or adultery) veers between two possibilities. On the one hand, if she has willingly engaged in fornication, knowing that it is forbidden, then she is disobedient, but remains a Muslim. On the other hand, if she has rejected the law against fornication/adultery and actively opposed it, then she is a polytheist. In this case, our understanding of the verse becomes correct.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And that has been made unlawful to the believers.’ When Allah forbids fornication, this is the cause of the purity of progeny. Then the vicegerent will be pure of birth and breed, embraced by father and mother, embraced by the warmth of the family, not allowing him to be exposed to any harsh elements because he has issued forth from a healthy, pure, and clean receptacle.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ ثُمَّ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَاجْلِدُوهُمْ ثَمَانِينَ
جَلْدَةً وَلَا تَقْبَلُوا لَهُمْ شَهَادَةً أَبَدًا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٤﴾

**As for those who accuse chaste women of fornication, and
then fail to provide four witnesses, strike them eighty times,
and reject their testimony ever afterwards: they are the
lawbreakers [4] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 4)**

Chaste women apply to a married woman because she has fortified herself by marriage from inclining towards fornication. It also applies to a free, noblewoman, since in the past there used to be slave-girls who were employed as prostitutes; something that free, noblewomen would never engage in.

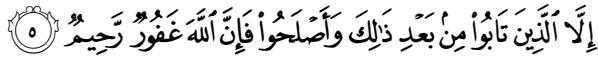
Hence, the case of Hind⁽¹⁾, whom we address with respect now after her embracing of Islam, and she is the one who chewed the liver of Hamza *may Allah be pleased with her* at the battle of Uhud, but we have no cause against her now because Islam erases what came before it. When Hind heard the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* forbid women from fornication, she said, 'Now really! Does a free noblewoman engage in fornication?'⁽²⁾ She said this because fornication was prevalent before Islam among prostitutes from among slave-girls; to such an extent that they even had banners which they would raise up on their houses to make themselves known.

The meaning is: they falsely accuse chaste women of what negates chastity, obviously implying fornication; '...and then do not produce four witnesses - lash them with eighty lashes.' This is what is called the prescribed punishment for defaming a free noblewoman of committing fornication, and accuse her of it. Now, in this case, you are obliged to bring four witnesses, testifying to what you accused her of. But if you fail, then the prescribed punishment for defamation of eighty lashes will be executed. But the issue does not end with lashing; rather, your testimony will henceforth never again be accepted: 'And do not accept from them testimony ever after.' Why? He is not deemed worthy of it because he becomes a disobedient. 'And those are the defiantly disobedient.' A disobedient person has no valid testimony. Thus, the Wise Law-Giver combines against the slanderer the prescribed punishment of lashing, followed by the abrogation of his status in society through the loss of his right of testimony. Finally, after this, He ascribes disobedience unto him, and he is thus fallen in social status and becomes undignified.

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- (1) She is: Hind bint 'Utbah ibn Rabi'a, the mother of Mu'awiyah ibn Abu Sufyan, and the wife of Abu Sufyan Ibn Harb *may Allah be pleased with him*. She is the one who chewed the liver of Hamza *may Allah be pleased with him* the paternal uncle of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* at the campaign of Uhud after Wahshi killed him under her direction.
- (2) Ibn Kathir related this in his (Tafsir) (4/353) in a commentary on the verse: "O Prophet, when the believing women come to you pledging to you that they will not associate anything with Allah, nor will they steal, nor will they commit unlawful sexual intercourse." (al-Mumtahana: 12) In his commentary, she is narrated to have said: O Messenger of Allah, and would a free noblewoman commit fornication? To this He replied: "No, by Allah, a free noblewoman does not commit fornication."

All of this is designed to restrain anyone whose soul might entice to question the honour of free noblewomen and make accusations against pure women. Hence, defamation is most commonly done hurriedly without evidence. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wishes to protect the *ummah* based on faith from the diffusion of sexual lewdness or merely the mention of it and conversation about it.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



Except for those who repent later and make amends — God is most forgiving and merciful [5] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 5)

Scholars have differing opinions about the meaning of exception here: is it exception from the ascription of disobedience? Or is it exception from not accepting their testimony?

We have already mentioned that the legitimacy of repentance is a gift from the True Lord *Glorified is He*. This is because, if repentance had not been made legally acceptable, whoever fell into disobedience once without his repentance, he would once again take the risk of disobedience and be frequent in it, And why not? For there is no motivation for him to refrain

Thus, when Allah gives legal sanction to repentance, he thereby protects society from the deprived who have sold their own souls, and have lost all hope of salvation. So, the legitimacy of repentance is a magnanimous favour and its acceptance is another magnanimous favour. Hence, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Then He turned to them so they could repent.’ (*at-Tawba*: 118) That is to say, He legitimized repentance for them so that they would repent and so that he could accept it from them.

As for His saying, ‘and reform,’ it signifies that he who sins is required to follow it with a good deed. It was narrated in a Noble Hadith: ‘And follow up a bad deed with a good deed, [the latter] will wipe out the [former].’⁽¹⁾

(1) This was related by Ahmad in his (*Musnad*) (5/153, 158) and by At-Tirmidhi in his (*Sunnan*) (1987), and by Darimi in his (*Sunnan*) (2/323) from the Hadith of Abu Dharr may Allah be pleased with him who said, He peace and blessings be upon him said: “Be fearful of Allah wherever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good deed, [the latter] will wipe out [the former], and treat people with kindness.” This is At-Tirmidhi’s wording.

Therefore, you will find that those who have wronged themselves in whatever aspect, when they grow older and ardently desire repentance, you see them passionately obsessed with the love of doing good and observing acts of obedience, desiring to make amends through this for past misdeeds. On the other hand, he who restrains himself from acts of disobedience; you find that he has a cold attitude towards such acts of piety, doing the good to the extent of his capacity. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were warning his servants: 'O my servants! Whoever takes from me stealthily or sets aside one of my laws, or wagers the risk [of my punishment] with an act of disobedience, will exhaust himself later. He will suffer through this sin because the bad deed will chase and strain him. I might, however, forgive him for it; and he will have need of many meritorious acts and good deeds with which to make amends for his negligence towards his Lord.'

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says⁽¹⁾:

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- (1) *The occasion for the revelation of the verse: On the authority of Ibn 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with them who said: "When the revelation descended: "And those who accuse chaste women and then do not produce four witnesses - lash them with eighty lashes," Sa'd ibn 'Ubadah, the chief of the Ansar, asked: 'Is this the way it was revealed, O Messenger of Allah?' Upon which He peace and blessings be upon him said: "O Assembly of Ansar, have you not heard what your chief says?" They responded: 'O Messenger of Allah, he is a very jealous man. By Allah, he has never once married a woman who was not a virgin, and never once has any man among us dared to marry a woman he has divorced, out of fear of the severity of his jealousy.' Then Sa'd said, 'By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, I acknowledge that the verse is the truth, and that it was sent down from Allah. But I was just astonished that if I were to find a man having intercourse with my wife, I would not be able to disturb him or agitate him until I came with four witnesses; for, by Allah, I would not go off to bring them and thus allow him to finish what he was doing!' It was not but a short time later when Hilal ibn Umayya came from his farmland in the evening and found a man in his household, and saw with his own eye, and heard with his own ear; but he did not disturb him until early the next morning when he went to see the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him and he informed him of what had happened. The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him felt disgust at what he was told and it was deeply distressing to him. Then Sa'd said, 'Now the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him is going to beat Hilal ibn Umayya and nullify his testimony among the Muslims.' Hilal then said, 'By Allah, I do hope that Allah will grant me a way out of this.' Then was revealed the verse: "And those who accuse their wives [of adultery] and have no witnesses except themselves." Whereupon the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him said: "Be of good cheer, O Hilal, for Allah has just provided you with relief and a way out." Hilal then said, 'I was truly hoping for this from my Lord.' And then the source relates the rest of the Hadith. Related by Wahidi in (Asbab An-Nuzul) (pages 180-81).*

وَالَّذِينَ يَزْمُونَ أَزْوَاجَهُمْ وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ شُهَدَاءُ إِلَّا أَنْفُسُهُمْ فَشَهَدُوا أَحَدِهِمْ أَرْبَعَ شَهَدَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ
إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٦﴾ وَالْخَامِسَةَ أَنَّ لَعْنَتَ اللَّهِ عَلَيْهِ إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٧﴾



As for those who accuse their own wives of adultery, but have no other witnesses, let each one four times call God to witness that he is telling the truth [6] And, the fifth time, call God to reject him if he is lying [7] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 6-7)

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* discusses those who falsely accuse free noblewomen, and makes clear the ruling for defamation, He wished to clarify the law of accusation [of adultery] when it is from a husband to his wife. This is because the issue here is different. Perhaps they have children either from him or from someone else. He is therefore obliged to be decent, observing the etiquette of the prescribed law, and not hurt the children by accusing their mother, and they are blameless. Hence the True Lord *Glorified is He* ordained a special law in this case which is mutual cursing (*al-mula'ana*); and this verse is called *al-ayat al-li'an*, (the verses of sworn allegation of adultery committed by either husband or wife).

'It is related that Hilal ibn Umayya went to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and told him, "O Messenger of Allah, I did indeed see someone having intercourse with my wife, and if I left him in order to bring four witnesses, he would finish what he was doing and depart; and if I killed him, I would have transgressed against him.' Hence: What is the solution to the riddle? It is necessary to realize that Allah *Glorified is He* does not reveal legislation and legal judgment from the very beginning; rather, He leaves in existence domains and events of life which are in need of this judgment, such that the judgment is revealed and it coincides with the need for it. As it is said: water falls where there is someone with a burning thirst, In other words, when a judgment is revealed, it will come at the right time so people will seize upon it, They will feel that it was revealed for their sake after having keenly sought for a judgment in a matter for which no judgment had yet come.

Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed the law of mutual cursing *hukm al-mula'ana* for singular situations, for the case in which the husband witnesses such an ugly deed done by his spouse, and though he might have intervened personally,

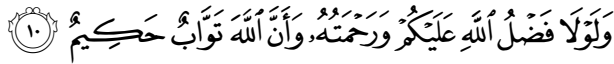
but he is unable to bring the required witnesses against the perpetrator in order to prove this case. For this reason, the Wise Law-Giver has established that the husband alone provides this testimony, and he is to repeat it four times in lieu of the four witnesses. He says: I call upon Allah as my witness that I am truthful in what I accuse my wife of, saying it four times. In the fifth time, he says: 'and may the curse of Allah be upon me if I am lying.' Thus, the role of the husband reaches its conclusion.

 وَيَدْرُؤُا عَنْهَا الْعَذَابَ أَنْ تَشْهَدَ أَرْبَعَ شَهَدَاتٍ بِاللَّهِ إِنَّهُ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ
 وَالْخُمُسَةَ أَنْ غَضَبَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهَا إِنْ كَانَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ

Punishment shall be averted from his wife if she in turn four times calls God to witness that her husband is lying [8] And, the fifth time, calls God to reject her if he is telling the truth [9] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 8-9)

The verb 'to avert' means to 'ward off' the punishment from the wife, by testifying in her turn four testimonies sworn by Allah, saying, 'I call upon Allah as my witness that he is a liar in that which he accuses me of.' In the fifth time, she says, 'may Allah's wrath be upon me if he is among those who say the truth.' If the wife refuses to make this oath, then she is proven guilty of adultery. But if she swears the oath, they are even, and neither of them is a suitable spouse for the other, At this point, legally speaking, definitive separation is a must, without any possibility of reunion, and she is forbidden to him forever.⁽¹⁾ This legislation is a blessing from Allah, as it brought this matter to the best possible end. Hence, He *Glorified is He* says after this:

(1) *In the narration, it is narrated that the wife of Hilal ibn Umayya, whom he accused of committing adultery with Sharik ibn Sahma', swore the four oaths that she did not do it, and upon the fifth required oath, she remained silent for a time, until people thought that she was going to confess. But then she said, 'I shall not disgrace my clan.' And then she went on to say the [required] words. So the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him separated them and said, "Now let us wait, and if she gives birth to a child with curly hair and skinny legs, then it belongs to Sharik ibn Sahma'; but if she gives birth to a fair-skinned child with straight hair and small eyes, then it belongs to Hilal ibn Umayya." She later bore a child with curly hair and skinny legs --in other words, verification and proof of the woman's perjury and of Hilal's truthfulness. Then =*



If it were not for God's bounty and mercy towards you, if it were not that God accepts repentance and is wise . . . ! [10]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 10)

That is to say, if it were not for this, you would be dishonoured and enmity would increase dangerously among you, but Allah's favour has safeguarded you through this wise legislation which is appropriate for this situation.

Defamation is a horrible crime against the right of the entire society, through which fornication spreads and by which bonds are severed. Such is the case for [falsely accused] chaste women, and it is even graver when it concerns one's own wife. But how would you react if such an utterance were made against a mother who is not the mother of just one, but rather a mother of all believers? This concerned the Mother of Believers 'A'isha *may Allah be pleased with her*. Here is an appropriate occasion to mention the context of in which 'A'isha *may Allah be pleased with her* was slandered, and which is called the incident of the slander (*haditha al-ifk*). Why? Because Allah *Glorified is He* wants to give us an example in prophethood itself, and He wills to console 'A'isha *may Allah be pleased with her* a woman of noble ancestry and Mother of the Believers, after what she was slandered. Hence, 'A'isha *may Allah be pleased with her* shall remain an exemplary model for every noblewoman whose honour is the object of slander, and whose enemies are attempting to defame her image. We say to such a woman: do not take it so hard, for similar things were said about 'A'isha.

The verses concerning the incident of the slander stand as proof of the sincerity of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* in the delivery of the Message of his Lord. It was mentioned that people falsely accuse chaste women, and that they accuse their wives, but even more abominable is that they slander the wife of the Prophet and the Mother of Believers. Hence He *Glorified is He* says:

= *He peace and blessings be upon him* said: "Were it not for that which was revealed of the Book of Allah concerning the two of them, it would be a serious matter for me and for her." This was mentioned by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* (3:268).

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ جَاءُوا بِالْإِفْكِ عُصْبَةٌ مِّنْكُمْ لَا تَحْسَبُوهُ شَرًّا لَّكُم بَلْ هُوَ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لِكُلِّ امْرِئٍ مِّنْهُمْ مَا أَكْسَبَ مِنَ الْإِثْمِ وَالَّذِي تَوَلَّى كِبْرَهُ مِنْهُمْ لَهُ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

It was a group from among you that concocted the lie — do not consider it a bad thing for you [people]; it was a good thing — and every one of them will be charged with the sin he has earned. He who took the greatest part in it will have a painful punishment [11] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 11)

The falsehood here was blatant and wilful which is the most heinous type of lie because it inverts facts and fabricates a counter-reality scenario. As for the phrase ‘are a group among you’, it is a group whose activity is bound together by a common objective. It is thus that we say: a group/gang of drug-dealers, a gang of thieves. In other words, it is a group which is agreed upon carrying out an activity for a single goal. In a related sense, and since the people involved in this slander are a gang, it is thus inevitable that they share a single objective in maligning and disparaging, and their leader was ‘Abdullah Ibn Ubayy ibn Salul, who was also the chief of the hypocrites. He is excused for being so since on the day that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entered Medina, its inhabitants were fashioning a crown for ‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy to choose as king over Medina⁽¹⁾. Hence, when the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* suddenly appeared and the people gathered around him and dispersed from around (‘Abdullah ibn Ubayy), this left its mark upon his soul. For this reason, he is the One who said: ‘They say, "If we return to Medina, the more honored [for power] will surely expel therefrom the humbler.’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 8) He meant thereby that he was the worthiest of honour. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* replied to him, ‘You are right, but honour will belong to Allah, His Messenger and the Believers, and thus the one to be driven out from it will be you.’ ‘Abdullah

(1) Ibn Hisham relates in (*As-Sirat An-Nabawiya*) (2:584): ‘That his people had collected pearls in order to crown him and establish him as king over them. As they were in this state, then Allah *Glorified is He* brought them His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, when his people left him for Islam, he came to bear a grudge, and he felt that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* had usurped him of a kingdom. Then when he saw that his people had refused everything but Islam, he himself became a Muslim, unwillingly and bent on hypocrisy and malice.’

Ibn Ubayy is also the one who said: ‘Do not spend on those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they disband.’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 7) And what is astonishing is that he acknowledged that Muhammad was the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* saying it openly, and yet he rejected it by his deeds and behaviour, with blatant confusion occurring between his thought and his spoken word.

Since the True Lord *Glorified is He* labelled this incident as slander against the due right of ‘A’isha *may Allah be pleased with her* the Mother of the Believers, then they must have inverted the facts and said that which contradicts reality.

The incident occurred during the campaign against Banu Al-Mustaliq. When [The Prophet] *peace and blessings be upon him* intended to go on a military campaign, he used to draw a lot between his wives and whichever of them won would go out with him. This is what His *peace and blessings be upon him* sense of fairness required. And for this campaign, he had them draw stakes between them, and the lot fell to ‘A’isha, so she went out with him. After the campaign, and during preparations for the return, ‘A’isha *may Allah be pleased with her* said, ‘I went to answer the call of nature in the barren wasteland, and then I returned to my camel litter, looking for a necklace of mine made of Yemenite onyx of the precious kind. [So, she went back to look for it.] When she returned [to camp], she found that the people had already departed, and she could not find her camel. So, she said to herself, ‘they will surely find me missing and will return.’ But how could the people raise up the camel litter of ‘A’isha [to secure it to the camel’s back] without her in it? They say, ‘because women were slim not obese and ‘A’isha was especially slender. Hence, the men raised up her camel litter, unaware that she was not inside it. Then ‘A’isha fell asleep at the spot where her camel litter had been, in expectation of someone coming for her. Among the habits of the people then was that one of them would delay after the departure to inspect the place and comb over it, on the off chance that he might find something forgotten by the others, or a person who had fallen behind the caravan.

The rear-guard in this case was Safwan ibn Al-Mu’attal⁽¹⁾, and when he saw the figure of a person sleeping; he approached, and there was ‘A’isha. So,

(1) According to (*Al-A’lam*) by Az-Zirikli (3/206) Safwan ibn Al-Mu’attal ibn Rahda As-Salami Adh-Dhakwani Abu ‘Amr was a Companion who participated in the battle=

he made his she-camel kneel down near her, and turned his face away so that she could mount and then went off with her without looking at her which reflects great virtue and decency. Proof of this is that the Quran termed what they said about him as slander, that is to say, contrary to reality, as Safwan did nothing but the opposite of what they said.

Subsequently, when Safwan approached leading his she-camel with 'A'isha, he was seen by some of the hypocrites, who then accused the two of them, saying against their due rights what is entirely unacceptable with regard to the Mother of the Believers. This campaign of slander was organized by the leader of hypocrisy in Medina, 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy, as well as by Mistah Ibn Uthatha, Hassan Ibn Thabit and Hamna bint Jahsh, the wife of Talha ibn 'Ubaydullah and the sister of Zaynab bint Jahsh, who then circulated this accusation and broadcast it among the people.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: 'Do not think it bad for you; rather, it is good for you.' But what is the good in such statements and in their broadcasting? When 'A'isha was accused and her innocence was revealed by the Quran from above the seven Heavens, this will be recited and employed in worship until the Day of Resurrection. Some people will be disgraced in the Quran [due to their shameful action] while others will necessarily take heed, and will be afraid if they perform an act of disobedience that they will be similarly disgraced. Hence, this situation came as a practical lesson to the society of faith.

Yes, this incident turned into good because it was a kind of support for the Messenger of Allah and his call to faith. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* assists His Messenger in things which are joyful in order to deplete the hope of his enemies in gaining victory over him, even if it be through falsification and deception, and even if it be in secret and through covert plotting. So, at the peak of the enmity of Quraysh towards the Messenger of Allah, people's belief in him was growing day after day.

They had previously conspired against him and plotted maliciously on the night of the [Prophet's] emigration, but they were not successful. Then

= of the Trench and all the other battles; he was present at the conquest of Damascus, and was martyred in Armenia. He narrated two Hadiths from the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him. He died in 19 AH. Hakim says in his (Mustadrik) that he died in the 60 AH.

they tried to cast an evil spell upon him, and indeed they did conjure a magic spell upon him comprised of a comb and brush which they put into the well of Dharwan. But Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* informed him of this, and the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* sent ‘Ali who brought it forth⁽¹⁾.

Hence, they were incapable of confrontation, incapable of evil scheming and plotting, and even incapable of making use of the jinn and securing their assistance. And in this case, they were incapable of defaming the image of Prophecy or of damaging his reputation. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were saying to his enemies, ‘Let your hopes be crushed, for you will never do harm to Muhammad.’ From this standpoint, the incident of slander was a good thing for the ummah.

Nevertheless, no one dared to inform ‘A’isha about what the hypocrites were saying against her. But the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* changed his behaviour towards her; no longer play with her as was his habit. He would enter her quarters and say ‘How goes it with you?’ ‘Aisha noticed this change, but she was unaware of any cause until one day she went somewhere with the mother of Mistah, one of those hypocrites, who stumbled and blurted out, ‘may Mistah be wretched!’ Whereupon ‘Aisha reproached her at the way she was speaking of her own son. The mother of Mistah, then, said, ‘Do you have no idea of what he is saying?’ At that, ‘Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* went to her mother and asked her about what people were saying and she informed her.

Therefore, when the innocence of ‘Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* was revealed in the Quran, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* told her, ‘Get up and go thank Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*’ to which she

(1) This is based on a Hadith related by both Al-Bukhari (3268) and Muslim (2189), that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said: “Two men came to me [in a dream], then one of them sat at my head, and the other at my feet. Then the one at my head said to the one at my feet, or the one at my feet to the one at my head, ‘What ails the man?’ [The other man] said: ‘[He has been] bewitched.’ [The other man] said, ‘Who bewitched him?’ [The other] said, ‘Labib ibn Al-A’sam.’ [The other] said, ‘By what means?’ [The other] said, ‘Through a comb, fallen hair and desiccated male semen.’ [The other] said, ‘And where is it?’ [The other] said, ‘In the well of Dhi Dharwan. ”

retorted, 'Rather, I thank Allah, the One Who pronounced my innocence.'⁽¹⁾ Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Every man of them shall have what he has earned of sin'. (*an-Nur*: 11)

Normally, the Arabic verb *kasaba* (to earn), without prefixes or infixes, is used in a positive sense, while the derivative stem of this same verb (*iktasaba*) (to come to possess, to commit) denotes misdeeds. Why? This is because a good deed is compatible with the nature of the soul, and is in harmony with its deepest nature. Thus, the person undertaking a good deed does not resist any of his innate desires, traits, or habits. This can be observed even in animals. You may notice, for example, that if you place a piece of meat down for a cat, it sits near you and eats it; but if it sneakily snatches the piece of meat from you, it will run away with it, and eat it far from you. Hence, in the very nature and make-up of a human being, and even in an animal, there is something which allows for the distinction between good and bad, between what is correct and what is wrong.

Accordingly, when you look at your daughter or your wife, you are naturally serene since your innate faculties find this natural and thus they do not feel any inconformity with you. But if you shift your gaze to what is unlawful for you, your glance becomes agitated and you steal it, and you try to conceal it so that no one will notice it. You may also feel confused and your colour may change. Why? This is because you are doing something unnatural, something which you do not have the right to do. Therefore, your own faculties feel a sense of incompatibility. This is a natural matter to which your soul reacts spontaneously. As for doing what is wrong and bad, this requires falsification (*iftial*) [this verbal noun is of the same structure as the verb (*iktasaba*) discussed here.] Consequently, the verb (*iktasaba*) implies cunning, plotting and scheming, which is similar to falsification (*al-iftial*).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and (as for) him who took upon himself the main part thereof, he shall have a grievous chastisement.' (*an-Nur*: 11) In Arabic, *tawalla kibra ash-shay* means for someone to undertake it with an

(1) *The story of the incident of slander is narrated in all its length in the (Sahih) of Al-Bukhari (4750) and in the (Sahih) of Muslim (2770), and by Ahmad in his (Musnad) (6 / 59, 60) on the authority of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her.*

ample share in it. Alternatively, we say the person is a leading partisan in something. The one alluded to here is 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy who undertook this campaign, and took the lead in its execution and its broadcasting. 'He shall have a grievous chastisement' (*an-Nur*: 11). In other words, a punishment which corresponds to this crime is to be inflicted on him.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

لَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ ظَنَّ الْمُؤْمِنُونَ وَالْمُؤْمِنَاتُ بِأَنفُسِهِمْ خَيْرًا وَقَالُوا هَذَا إِفْكٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٢﴾

When you heard the lie, why did believing men and women not think well of their own people and declare, 'This is obviously a lie'? [12] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 12)

Allah *Glorified is He* hereby directs us to the approach the believers should have in such situation of discordant intrigue. They should think the best of one another and restrain themselves from such accusations which are inappropriate for the community of believers. Accordingly, the first ears to hear this talk from the first tongue to utter it should have rejected it. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* would not cheat Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the chosen one out of all His human creatures, by making his wife the object of doubt and accusation, to say nothing of calumniating her with this heinous crime.

It should have been expected, even before the interdiction was revealed in the Quran, that it would come from the souls of the believers themselves, so they would reject this talk.

The phrase *lawla* 'if only' is a particle used for incitement and provocation. Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'the believing men and the believing women' (*an-Nur*: 12) since some men and women were engrossed in this discordant intrigue. Furthermore, the Quran does not urge them to think well of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or his wife, but rather to think well of their own selves. This is because this matter is inappropriate for ordinary believers, not to mention the wife of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

This verse states that they should have said that what was said about 'Aishah Allah *be pleased with her* was an evident falsehood, even before the Quran had revealed her innocence. That is to say, it is clear, blatant intentional

lie because it is against the Mother of the Believers whom Allah *Glorified is He* purified and chose to be the wife of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَوْلَا جَاءُوا عَلَيْهِ بِأَرْبَعَةِ شُهَدَاءَ فَإِذْ لَمْ يَأْتُوا بِالشَّهَدَاءِ فَأُولَئِكَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ هُمُ الْكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

And why did the accusers not bring four witnesses to it? If they cannot produce such witnesses, they are the liars in God's eyes [13] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 13)

The preceding verses have mentioned the legal ruling concerning slander and have prescribed that the one who accuses a married woman of this charge of adultery is obliged to produce four witnesses to prove the truthfulness of what he said, and if he cannot produce them, then he is the liar before Allah *Glorified is He* and the prescribed punishment for slander must be executed upon him.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ لَمَسَّكُمْ فِي مَا أَفَضْتُمْ فِيهِ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٤﴾

If it were not for God's bounty and mercy towards you in this world and the next, you would already have been afflicted by terrible suffering for indulging in such talk [14] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 14)

In the Quranic verse: '...the discourse which you entered into' (*an-Nur*: 14), the Arabic word in question *afadtum* signifies that one proceeds rashly with haste to do something. This implies that a major event takes less time than what one might imagine it would require. For example, a matter which is carried out in two minutes, when you rush in order to reduce the time, takes only one minute. So, in the incident under examination, it is as if they hurried in this talk when they initially heard it- as it is said: he hastened into it and was abased. But, why was Allah *Glorified is He* magnanimous and merciful to them that He did not punish, nor made them pay for their slander against the Mother of the Believers?

The scholars say: Allah *Glorified is He* took this affair to be a moral lesson and an admonition, making it a means of clarification for Muslims. Hence, the

objective was not to send down punishment upon them, but rather to teach and give them a lesson in protecting the honour and dignity of the believers.

Allah *Glorified is He* states:

إِذْ تَلَقَّوْنَهُ بِأَلْسِنَتِكُمْ وَتَقُولُونَ بِأَفْوَاهِكُمْ مَا لَيْسَ لَكُمْ
بِهِ عِلْمٌ وَتَحْسَبُونَهُ هَيِّنًا وَهُوَ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٥﴾

**When you took it up with your tongues, and spoke with
your mouths things you did not know [to be true], you
thought it was trivial but to God it was very serious [15]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 15)**

Look at the eloquent manner in which the Quran expresses their hastiness in spreading and broadcasting this talk without awareness, or careful thought. It is well known that, undoubtedly, receiving news is done by ears, not by tongues. But with quickness of the transfer of this talk, it was as if they were receiving it with their tongues, as if the stage of listening had been omitted, and as soon as they heard it, they repeated it.

Allah says, ‘...and spoke with your mouths what you had no knowledge of...’ (*an-Nur*: 15). This means that the talk was simply transmitted by mouths to others without investigating it. Therefore, He *Glorified is He* says after this: ‘...what you had no knowledge of...’ (*an-Nur*: 15). This talk is not trifling as they believed, rather, it is horrendous in the sight of Allah, as it involves the honour of a believer, and the dignity of the believer is inviolable. What would you think then when this is against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself?

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْلَا إِذْ سَمِعْتُمُوهُ قُلْتُمْ مَا يَكُونُ لَنَا أَنْ نَتَكَلَّمَ بِهَذَا سُبْحَانَكَ هَذَا بُهْتَنٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿١٦﴾

**When you heard the lie, why did you not say, ‘We should not
repeat this – God forbid! – It is a monstrous slander’? [16]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 16)**

It is with this that you should have encountered this gossip, that you should have said it is not permitted and not appropriate for us to spread such talk. The expression *subhanak* ‘glory be to Thee!’ is said at moments of amazement at

some occurrence; and the meaning here is: glorified be Allah; we honour, exalt and raise Him far above allowing such abhorrent lie against His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to be circulated among us. For this talk, it is not admissible that we should speak of it, even if only to deny it. Since if talk of it affirmatively is a crime, then talk of it with the purpose of negation implies a certain suspicion that this might happen.

It is as if one says: So-and-so is god-fearing, or so-and-so does not drink wine; hence, it is as if, despite the denial, you have made him the object of suspicion of it. Therefore, it is not admissible to attribute something bad to him, even by denial, as this is disparagement against the person, not praise.

Likewise, talking about this accusation against the Mother of the Believers, 'Aisha, is not appropriate, even if only by negation. The translation of the Quranic phrase '...a great calumny' (*buhtan azhim*) (*an-Nur*: 16) is that it is a lie which flabbergasts the one who hears it, and astonishes him for its repulsiveness and horridness. Thus, we ardently refrain from engaging in such talk, even if we are only denying it.

Allah states:

يَعُظُّكُمْ اللَّهُ أَنْ تَعُودُوا لِمِثْلِهِ أَبَدًا إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٧﴾
وَيُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمُ الْآيَاتِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿١٨﴾

**God warns you never to do anything like this again, if you
are true believers [17] God makes His messages clear to you:
God is all knowing, all wise [18] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 17-18)**

Al-w'az 'Admonition' means that one preaches others, stressing on the very important matters or issues. For example, When one feels that he is about to die, he admonishes his children and give counsel to them. In this case, one does not advise them on all the affairs of life, rather only on the very important matters which help people do the good with life. Allah *Glorified is He* out of His Benevolence and Mercy admonishes his slaves and gives them counsel because He does not want to punish them for their sins.

The verse ends with this condition: 'if you are believers' (*an-Nur*: 17) which is an incitement and provocation to the body of believers to refrain

from such talk, and not to fall into it again. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to them: if you revert to the like of this, then re-examine your faith because at that moment your faith will be deficient and open to doubt.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يُحِبُّونَ أَنْ تَشِيعَ الْفَاحِشَةُ فِي الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَهُمْ
عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ وَأَنْتُمْ لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٩﴾

A painful punishment waits in this world and the next for those who like indecency to spread among the believers: God knows and you do not [19] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 19)

Regarding the expression *yuhibun* ‘love...’ in this verse is an act of the heart, and speech is an act of the tongue and an applied translation of what is in the heart. Thus, the meaning is that this applies also to those who love this even if they do not speak of it because this matter entails phases, beginning with love, which is an act of the heart, then speaking, then listening without rejecting.

Given the repulsiveness of this crime, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions its first phase, and this is merely the act of the heart which has not been transformed into action and speech. Hence, this is a dangerous matter.

Some people may think that publicizing adultery is a disgrace only for the one who is accused. Yes, it is that for the accused, and may lead to his death, or declaring his innocence. However, what is worse is that it will be a bad example for society.

Now, this is a directive from Allah *Glorified is He* towards a general issue and precept that must be observed. When you hear a report which offends decency, violates honour, or breaks the laws of Allah *Glorified is He* then beware of spreading it among people because the diffusion of such things gives rise to a behavioural example for the listener. Upon hearing such news, one may find an excuse for oneself by saying to oneself: so-and-so did such-and-such, and so-and-so did such-and-such. This urges the person to engage in such an act. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* gives a stern warning to those who openly divulges lewd, foul acts and spreads and publicizes them among

people, saying: ‘...they shall have a grievous chastisement in this world and the hereafter...’ (*an-Nur*: 19).

Allah *Glorified is He* has not made anyone immune from disobedience and misdeeds, but even worse than a bad deed is its diffusion among people. It may be that the divulging is against the due right of a man who is respected and revered in his community, whose word carries weight and who has a position of high standing. So, if you hear something said against him, which is not permissible, it may be that what you hear against this person arouses your dislike, and causes you to deny his good deeds and his positive traits. Then, it is as if you had deprived the society of the good deeds of this man.

This is why Allah *Glorified is He* conceals the unseen things of people; their hidden acts of disobedience, from other people. Hence, concealment of the unseen things of people from other people is a great blessing which enriches good in society and causes it to flourish. Likewise, it causes you to interact with others and to derive benefit from them despite their defects. How true are the words of the poet who says:

So grasp hold of my knowledge and do not rely on my deeds

And harvest the fruit and leave the wood for the fire.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ وَأَنَّ اللَّهَ رءُوفٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٠﴾

**If it were not for God's bounty and mercy and the
fact that He is compassionate and merciful . . .! [20]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 20)**

Note how much benefit Allah *Glorified is He* has bestowed upon his slaves through this incident. There is a Divine Grace in every phase of the phases of this incident as expressed in Allah's words: ‘And were it not for Allah's grace on you and His mercy...’ (*an-Nur*: 20). This is a proof that what had happened was a blessing and good for the believers, even if they thought otherwise.

But where the apodosis to the clause mentioned in this verse the conclusion is understood from the contexts and its implication is that you would have

been afflicted with dishonour and destruction among many other evil things that you may think of. Allah, out of His Favour and Grace, protected you from all of this.

In another verse Allah *Glorified is He* makes clear the status of this favour affirming that it is in the Grace of Allah and in His Mercy- in that they should rejoice; it is better than that which they gather (*Yunus*: 58). Allah *Glorified is He* has laid down legislation and loves the one who acts according to it; but one's joy is not complete with mere deeds, rather, it is by Allah's Favour and Mercy that He accepts these deeds. Therefore, the Favour of Allah is what one really needs in case of any failure to follow His Guidance.

After relating the events of this incident, Allah warns the believers of following Satan by saying:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ وَمَنْ يَتَّبِعْ خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ
فَإِنَّهُ يَأْمُرُ بِالْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَوْلَا فَضْلُ اللَّهِ عَلَيْكُمْ وَرَحْمَتُهُ مَا زَكَا مِنْكُمْ مِنْ
أَحَدٍ أَبَدًا وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يُزَكِّي مَن يَشَاءُ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢١﴾

Believers, do not follow in Satan's footsteps – if you do so, he will urge you to indecency and evil. If it were not for God's bounty and mercy towards you, not one of you would ever have attained purity. God purifies whoever He will: God is all hearing, all seeing [21] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 21)

It is as if Satan has multiple footsteps, not a single footprint. Allah *Glorified is He* clarified to us the Satan's enmity towards the children of Adam. This enmity has its antecedent cause, and is not merely hypothetical discourse. When he disdained to prostrate himself to Adam, and disobeyed Allah's Command to him, and even divulged what was in his soul, contending that he was better than Adam as he was created of fire, while Adam was created of dust. (*al-A'raf*: 12) Satan also said: 'Shall I make obeisance to him whom Thou hast created of dust?' (*al-Isra'*: 61) Hence, he justified his refusal to prostrate to Adam on the basis that he was superior, as if his enmity to Adam *peace be upon him* is an enmity rooted in envy of his station and status with Allah.

When Allah *Glorified is He* informs us of the enmity of the Satan with reference to his refusal to prostrate, he is thereby warning us against him, alerting us to his danger, and cultivating in us immunity to him. This is because his enmity towards us is a focused antagonism, not an enmity which he applies in any which way, rather, it is enmity with a method and a line of action.

Hence, the beginning of this line of action is that he knew how to swear an oath, thereby gaining access to man through the door of Allah's Power over His creation. Thus, Satan swore by Allah's Might that he would surely make them all live an evil life. (*Sad*: 82)

Thus, if Allah *Glorified is He* had wanted to force us to be believers, Satan would have had no means against us. Instead, He *Glorified is He* left us to make a choice, and it is through this door that Satan has access to us. Therefore, he subsequently declares that he will mislead all except those who are devoted of Allah's servants (*al-Hijr*: 40). So, whoever has this quality; being devoted to worshipping Allah, then the Satan has no means of access to him. Hence, the issue of this enmity is not between Allah *Glorified is He* and Satan, but rather, between Satan and the children of Adam.

Now, Allah's Statement: 'O you who believe!' (*an-Nur*: 21) represents a summons to the believers in Allah. It is as if He *Glorified is He* is saying: 'pay attention to the honour of your faith in Him and stay away from what weakens this faith or undermines the strength of the believers in any way and know for certain that Satan has multiple footsteps.'

Allah *Glorified is He* orders the believers 'not to follow the footsteps of Satan,' (*an-Nur*: 21) for if he whispers to you from one direction and you resist him, and he finds that you have firmness on that side, he will come at you from another side, simultaneously causing you to see yourself in a favourable light. And in this manner, your enemy continues until he brings you down. For he knows that every person has a point of weakness; so Satan keeps enticing him until he attains to this point.

Shaytan 'Satan' refers to a subversive rebel of the Jinn. The Jinn are much like men, for among them are those who are obedient and those who are disobedient. The disobedient one among them is a demon, and the evillest among them is the devil (Iblis). Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* when speaking

of Iblis, says in the chapter of *al-Kahf* ‘...he was of the jinn, and he transgressed the commandment of his Lord,’ (*al-Kahf*: 50).

We have previously mentioned that you can distinguish between an act of disobedience enticed from within one's soul, and an act of disobedience enticed by the Satan. The soul urges you to commit the misdeed which fulfils to own needs only. However, Satan desires that you become sinfully disobedient in any form or fashion. So, if you resist him in one act of disobedience, he will pull you towards another, whatever it might be.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘and whoever follows the footsteps of Satan, then surely he bids the doing of indecency and evil...’ (*an-Nur*: 21). Here, it may be asked: where is the apodosis of this conditional sentence with the relative pronoun ‘whoever’? It is said: the apodosis is omitted because it can be understood from the context, and that it is signified by the mention of its reason and causes. You can surmise the apodosis to be: whoever follows Satan’s footsteps Allah will make him taste the punishment of hellfire. This is because Satan only enjoins deeds of abomination and indecency, so whoever follows his footsteps shall have nothing but punishment. Hence, the causer has taken the place, grammatically speaking, of the apodosis.

The language of the Quran is not that of people, rather, it is the Word of Allah, the Lord of the Worlds and its style is sublime, requiring attentive thought which gleans the meanings; it is not merely words and prolixity.

You may consider many examples of eloquence in the Quran. Consider, for example, the Quranic verse of the chapter of *an-Naml* as Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) orders the hoopoe to take his letter and hand it over to the people of Sheba, then turn away from them and see what answer they return. (*an-Naml*: 28)

In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* relates that the Queen of Sheba said: ‘O chief! Surely an honourable letter has been delivered to me. (*an-Naml*: 29)

Now, contemplate all that happened between these two occurrences which has been omitted because they are known to us. Hence the attentiveness of the reader and his intelligence do not require that we tell him: ‘then the Hoopoe went... etc.,’ for these events are automatically put in order by the mind.

In this way, Satan himself made these footsteps clear, and proclaimed them, elucidating his ways of seduction. Did he not say that he would lie in wait for them all along Allah's Straight Path? (*al-A'raf*: 16) So Satan has no need for those who pursue the crooked path, for they are his followers. Hence, he does not go to pubs, for example; instead, he goes to mosques in order to spoil the prayers of the worshippers. Therefore, some are bothered by the whisperings which afflict them in their prayer, while in reality they are healthy symptoms of faith. If you were not in a state of obedience and worship, Satan would not whisper to you.

Our great problem, however, is that Satan (Shaytan) gives us only the end of the thread and we follow him and keep following the line.⁽¹⁾ We should only, at the moment when the Satan whispers to us, seek refuge in Allah from him saying: *A'udhu bi-Allah min ash-Shaytan ar-Rajim* 'I seek refuge in Allah from the cursed Satan'. Allah *Glorified is He* commands us to seek refuge in Him if false imputations come to us from Satan. (*al-A'raf*: 200)

Therefore, beware of accepting the end of the thread, for if you take it, you will not have the power to resist him after that. Among the footsteps of Satan, as we find in the Quran, is that he certainly comes to us from before us and from behind us, and from our right-hand side and from our left-hand side. (*al-A'raf*: 17)

Thus, in tempting man Satan has a method and a well-laid plan, as he comes at man from his four sides: from in front of him, from behind him, from his right and his left. Yet, nothing was mentioned about coming at him from above or from below. This is because the former alludes to the exalted heights of Divinity, and the latter to the humility of worship and servitude, as exemplified by when you raise your hands upwards in supplication, and place your forehead on the ground in your prostration. Therefore, your enemy does not come at you from these two directions.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and were it not for Allah's Grace upon you and His Mercy, not one of you would have ever been pure, but Allah purifies whom He pleases...' (*an-Nur*: 21).

(1) In Arabic: *Nakurru fi Al-Khayt karra*.

We said earlier that the favour of recompense is affected alternatively by two factors: recompense based on justice when you get what you deserve, and recompense based on favour in which case Allah gives you above what you deserve. Hence, in supplication we should say: *Allahuma 'Amilna bi-l-Fadl la bi-l-'Adl wa bi-l-Ihsan la bi-l-Mizan* meaning 'O Allah! Judge us with gracious favour not with justice, and with magnanimity not according to the measuring scale, and with healing power not according to mathematical reckoning'. For, if Allah *Glorified is He* dealt with us according to justice, we would all be lost.

But in what manner does this favour manifest itself? Allah's favour manifests itself on this Muslim *ummah* in that He *Glorified is He* has not punished it with annihilation, as he did with previous peoples. In addition, He *Glorified is He* granted it resistance before it was exposed to incidents, and warned us long ago about Satan, before we fall into acts of disobedience, and before we are taken unawares by events. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies that He informed Adam of Satan's enmity to him and his wife (*Ta Ha*: 117). Otherwise mankind would have drowned in the whirlpool of sinful behaviour.

It is thus that warning of danger before it occurs cultivates the power of resistance in the soul. Allah *Glorified is He* does not abandon us to heedlessness so that we fall into disobedience, just as we fortify ourselves against diseases by taking the necessary immunization in order to resist them.

Concerning the Quranic phrase: '...not one of you would have ever been pure...' (*an-Nur*: 21), the verb (*zaka*) means to cleanse or to purify oneself; '...but Allah purifies whom He pleases; and Allah is Hearing, Knowing.' (*an-Nur*: 21) He *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah is Hearing, Knowing,' (*an-Nur*: 21) because it is stated in the preceding verse: 'Surely (as for) those who love that scandal should circulate respecting those who believe...' (*an-Nur*: 19). This marks the conclusion of the incident of slander (*hadithat al-ifk*) which shook the Islamic society, touching Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* his companion Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* his wife, the Mother of Believers, 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* and a group of companions. Therefore, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah is Hearing' (*an-Nur*: 21) i.e. of what was said, and 'Knowing' (*an-Nur*: 21) of what hearts conceal of love for spreading foul slander.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:⁽¹⁾

وَلَا يَأْتَلِ أُولُوا الْفَضْلِ مِنْكُمْ وَالسَّعَةِ أَنْ يُؤْتُوا أُولَى الْقُرْبَىٰ وَالْمَسْكِينِ وَالْمُهَاجِرِينَ
فِي سَبِيلِ اللَّهِ وَلْيَعْفُوا وَلْيَصْفَحُوا ۗ أَلَا تُحِبُّونَ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ ۗ وَاللَّهُ غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿٢٢﴾

Those who have been graced with bounty and plenty should not swear that they will [no longer] give to kinsmen, the poor, those who emigrated in God's way: let them pardon and forgive. Do you not wish that God should forgive you? God is most forgiving and merciful [22] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 22)

A group of eminent and good companions of Prophet Muhammad got entangled in the incident of the slander. But they were beguiled by what was said and were pulled along behind those who circulated this rumour. Among these was Mistah ibn Uthathah, the maternal cousin of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* who used to provide for and look after him, given his poverty. So when Mistah participated and got involved in talk denigrating 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* swore that he would no longer be charitable to him, though he and his family were able to live thanks to the wealth and magnanimity of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him*. It is thus that this divisive intrigue that caused some well-off people to become stingy.

This is an example of someone who ungratefully denies the good done unto him and does not give proper value to those who exercise benevolence. Such an act causes people to refrain from goodness and drives them away from acts of kindness. However, Allah *Glorified is He* wishes to set straight this issue for us, for this perspective does not concur with the nature of faith,

(1) *The occasion of revelation: Al-Qurtubi says in his Tafsir (6:4742): 'According to the most well-acknowledged of the narrations, these verses were revealed concerning the story of Abu Bakr ibn Abu Quhafah and Mistah ibn Uthathah. The latter was the son of the former's maternal aunt and one of the indigent emigrants who fought at Badr. Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him used to provide him with subsistence. But during the incident of the slander, when Mistah spoke ill of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her the daughter of Abu Bakr, Abu Bakr swore that he would never again assist him financially, nor benefit him in any other way.'*

because he who disobeys Allah in that which concerns you can only be recompensed by you obeying Allah in what concerns such a person.

When you leave the punishment of the one who has wronged you to Allah and pardon him yourself, you have thus left him to a more severe punishment, for if you were to punish him, you would do it according to your capacity and power, but if you leave his punishment to Allah, He would punish him to the extent of His *Glorified is He* Power and Capacity.

Hence, the one who forgives is harder of heart than the one who is vengeful. We have previously given an example of this in the brother who hits his younger brother and then his father comes and finds his young one ill-treated and wronged, so he embraces him and seeks to appease him and to compensate him for the injustice afflicted upon him by his brother. The same is the case with the situation under discussion and for Allah is the highest attribute.

Accordingly, it is imperative for you to be happy with those whom Allah has placed under your care, and to be benevolent towards him, not to return a wrong with its like. Thus, this verse was revealed concerning Mistah ibn Uthathah when Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* swore he would not dispense charity on him and his family, and to withhold from him his gifts and kindness. It was revealed to rectify this perspective on the part of As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* and to direct his attention to the side of eternal good that resides with Allah, not with people.

Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And let not those of you who possess grace and abundance swear...’ (*an-Nur*: 22). In Arabic, the verbs *ya’tali* and *ta’alla* means to swear. Here, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* using the expression *ulu* ‘...those of you...’ which signifies the plural, magnifying his importance in view of his precedence and status in Islam, for in every respect he has superiority. Therefore, Allah ascribed to him the same two descriptors which He *Glorified is He* ascribed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Hence, He says to As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him*: ‘...they should pardon and turn away...’ (*an-Nur*: 22), the same as He says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘...pardon them and turn away...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 13).

Moreover, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* was the second of the two in the cave, and second of the two in many affairs. Thus, he is the second of the two in emigration [to Medina], and the second of the two to accept the Message of Islam in the very beginning. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said of him, 'In pre-Islamic times, Abu Bakr and I were like two race horses.' That is to say, in competition in doing good. 'I preceded him to Prophet-hood and he followed me, and had he preceded me to it, I would have followed him.'⁽¹⁾

As Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* has many distinctions in multiple domains, Allah does not address him in the singular form, but rather in the plural form, out of honour and magnification. For example, Although Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* was known for his compassion and tenderness of heart, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* passed away and some tribes gave up Islam and revolted against Muslims, he stood his ground and said [concerning the rebels]: 'By Allah, if they withhold from me a camel's hobble due as obligatory alms (*zakat*) which they used to render to the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* I will fight them with the sword, even if I only find a tiny bit [missing].'⁽²⁾

Such was the standpoint of As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* tender-hearted, gentle, possessed of mercy and pity, of whom his daughter said, 'Verily he is given to weeping,' that is to say, he weeps frequently. While 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* on the other hand, despite what is known of his severity and harshness against the disbelievers, opposed him in the matter of war. Yet this

(1) *It was related by Abu Said Al-Khudri that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'The most benevolent of people towards me in his companionship and wealth is Abu Bakr, and if I were to take a bosom companion other than my Lord, I would have taken Abu Bakr, but instead there is the brotherhood of Islam and its bonds of affection. Let there not remain in the mosque a single (private) door but that it be sealed up, except for the door of Abu Bakr.'* Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih, (3654).

(2) *This Hadith is related by both Al-Bukhari (7284, 7285) and Muslim (20) on the authority of Abu Hurayra with the following wording: 'By Allah, I will surely fight those who make a distinction between prayer and obligatory alms (zakat), for obligatory alms are due on wealth. By Allah, if they withhold from me camels [of such alms] which they used to render unto the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him I will fight them for withholding them.'*

contradiction in the attitude of each of them stands as proof that Islam is not a disposition which takes possession of the Muslim, but rather a stance to which the Muslim reverts depending upon the situation. Now, the situation of apostasy is what turned As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* into a courageous lion of hard heart, and if ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* had been in his position of responsibility and had done what As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* did, one would say: this is the severity people were accustomed to from ‘Umar.

Hence, it is as if Islam does not wish to imprint the Muslim with a particular disposition which remains unchanged in him. Rather, it is the specific situation which imprints you through faith. And this is what we mentioned regarding the Quranic verse where Allah *Glorified is He* states that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah; those with him are forceful against the disbelievers, merciful among themselves. (*al-Fath*: 29)

A Muslim is not innately inclined to harshness alone, or to mercy alone. Instead, he should act in every situation according to what suits it in the light of the laws laid down by Allah.

Now, as regards the Quranic verse: ‘those of you who possess grace and abundance...’ (*an-Nur*: 22), Allah *Glorified is He* addresses As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him*: you are a virtuous devout man, and you have ample means, so do not succumb and do not give preference to yourself over others because of anger. It is not befitting for a virtuous man to sever the bonds of kinship for the like of this error which Mistah fell into, especially since he got the retribution as Allah legislated, and received eighty lashes under the prescribed punishment for calumny. It is not right that you punish him further after this.

Among the marks of forbearance of Islam is that whoever indulges in a crime with a prescribed punishment (*hadd*) and receives this punishment, it is not permissible to abuse him for his sin. This is because he has repented and Allah has purified him of the sin through the prescribed punishment, and the matter is closed and no one has the right to come between the slave and his Lord.

So, it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to Abu Bakr: go back to your state of virtue and benevolence and be a conduit of generosity and do not cut your ties of kinship. He *Glorified is He* thereby, desired to purify the souls of the effects of this divisive upheaval which shook the Muslim society in Medina.

It is not befitting for a virtuous and well-off person to treat people with simple justice. While it is true that Mistah deserved this rupture of relations and deprivation, yet meting out such a penalty is unfitting for As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him*, a man of virtue and wealth.

If you were to undertake a world survey of the number of believers and disbelievers in Allah, you would find that the believers are a minority and the disbelievers a majority. Now, does Allah *Glorified is He* say to those whom He assigned with the mission of distributing His Provision to all people: 'give to those who believe in Allah and pass over those who disbelieve'? It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* provides us with an example in Himself, since just as He gives to the one who disbelieves in Him and provides his sustenance indeed, he may even be in a better condition than one who believes so, you also should not withhold your giving from one who has wronged you.

Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* orders us in another verse not to make His Name an excuse in our oaths against doing good and acting piously, and making peace among mankind, for Allah is the All-Hearer, All Knower. (*al-Baqara*: 224)

So, if you are kind to a person and he should make some unexpected blunder, then do not swear by Allah that you will not be kind to him. For your rage against him may calm down, and you may want to show him kindness, but then you may use your oath as a pretext for not following through. Therefore, do not make Allah the object of an oath which restrains you from acts of benevolence.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...against giving to the near of kin and the poor and those who have fled in Allah's way...' (*an-Nur*: 22). It is correct that Mistah was among the near of kin to Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and among the needy, but Allah gave him another distinction that is, what he said does not deprive from the quality of being from among those who migrated and his sin does not exclude him from this great honour.

For among the favours of Allah *Glorified is He* unto His slaves is that a misdeed does not negate a good deed. On the contrary, a good deed erases a misdeed which comes before it. As He *Glorified is He* explains in the Quran that good deeds do away with misdeeds (*Hud*: 114).

So, in spite of what Mistah fell into, Allah maintained him in the affection and heart-felt sympathy of Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and preserved his status as one of those who migrated.

Concerning ‘...and they should pardon and turn away...’ (*an-Nur*: 22), *al-'Afw* (pardon) means waiving punishment for a sin. But you might pardon the sinner and then rebuke him; in other words, you grant him your pardon, but constantly remind him that he does not deserve it. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* urges us to turn away from blame following pardon. Turning away (*as-Safh*) means relinquishing the notion of having granted a favour and not recalling the mistake to the one who committed it such that he feels that punishment, would be lighter on him than your having pardoned him. This is because when Allah *Glorified is He* establishes the laws which regulate people's relations with one another, He takes into account all the various morals and characters of people. He does not enact laws taking into consideration people with higher moral only, but rather considers all levels of morals. This is in order to deal with each one of us according to the extent of his faith, and of his compliance to the commands of Allah.

In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* orders that if we punish, then we do it with the like of that with which we were afflicted. But if we are patient, it is better for those who are patient (*an-Nahl*: 126). If we examine the true nature of equivalence in responding to a wrongdoing, we would find that it is difficult to assess. Thus, if a person gave you a blow, do you have the capability to retaliate with its exact equivalent; with the same strength, with the same pain, such that you yourself would not be the unjust aggressor? Indeed, if you gave some serious thought to this question of exact equivalence, you would surely prefer granting pardon rather than stepping into these other labyrinths.

We have already mentioned the story of the usurer who stipulated as a condition upon the borrower that if he was late in repayment that a pound of flesh would be cut from him. When the man was late in repayment, the usurer brought legal action against him before a judge, informing him of the condition upon which the two of them had agreed. But the judge was clever, and said to the usurer: take a knife and cut a pound of his flesh, but if you take

more than that, we will take the same from you, and if you take too little, we will take the same from you. At this point, the usurer retracted his demand because he was unable to make a proper appraisal of the weight in question. Hence, if we abstain from retaliatory punishment, we thereby widen the scope of pardon, and the issue comes to its best possible conclusion. On another level, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions those who restrain anger and who pardon the people, for Allah loves the doers of good. (*Al- 'Imran*: 134)

Allah *Glorified is He* provides us with varying levels of response to bad deeds done against us: responding in kind is one level, restraining anger is another level, granting pardon is a third level, being forbearing is a fourth level, and above all of these is the level of doing good to the one who wrongs you, for Allah loves the doers of good. (*Al- 'Imran*: 134)

It is here where Allah *Glorified is He* sets an example by Himself for His slaves, hence He says: '...Do you not love that Allah should forgive you?' (*an-Nur*: 22) Just as you desire that Allah forgives your sins, why do you not yourself forgive the one who has wronged you? It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* wants to bring reconciliation between us. For this reason, when this verse was revealed concerning Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* said: 'I love O Lord, I love O Lord, I love O Lord!'⁽¹⁾ The particle (*ala*), translated above as: '...Do you not...' is meant to encourage and urge this good trait of character. Allah's saying, '...And Allah is Forgiving, Merciful' (*an-Nur*: 22) thus shows that whoever models himself based on the moral standards set by Allah shall have forgiveness and will have mercy on his side. Who is it that does not desire to be marked by some of the attributes of Allah? Then, let him be characterized as being forgiving and merciful.

Allah says:

(1) In his *Tafsir* (3/267), Ibn Kathir mentions that Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Indeed, by Allah, we do certainly desire that You forgive us our sins O Our Lord'. Then he reinstated the support he used to dispense on Mistah and said, 'I shall not withdraw it from him ever again', in contrast to that which he said previously: 'By Allah I shall not make him the beneficiary of any benefit ever again'.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَرْمُونَ الْمُحْصَنَاتِ الْغَافِلَاتِ الْمُؤْمِنَاتِ
لُعِنُوا فِي الدُّنْيَا وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُمْ عَذَابٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

Those who accuse honourable but unwary believing women are rejected by God, in this life and the next. A painful punishment awaits them [23] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 23)

The verses first discussed the legal punishment for slander and the ramifications of the incident of slander against ‘Aisha *Allah be pleased with her*. The preceding verse was about the rebuke for Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* for the question of sustenance. Then the thread of discourse returned to the fundamental issue, slander. So why did the question of sustenance enter in upon this topic?

Scholars say that this is because in every battle there is a conflict which may have repercussions relating to sustenance and Allah *Glorified is He* has assumed responsibility for sustenance for all people, for it is He *Glorified is He* who brought them into existence, both believers and non-believers. So, when you give to someone in need, it is then you who are the giver out of what Allah has bestowed on you and you who are the outstretched Hand of Allah with the means of His sustenance.

Allah *Glorified is He* respects the individual ownership of man, although He *Glorified is He* is his Provider and his Benefactor. Yet, as long as He gives him, the gift becomes his possession, but if He urges him to expend it in charity, He takes it from him as a loan. Hence Allah *Glorified is He* calls it a ‘loan’ (*al-Baqara*: 245).

Thus, if the wealthy spends upon the indigent, Allah deems it as a loan and takes upon Himself to repay it. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* does not take back His gift, for as long as He gives you sustenance, He does not take it from you except in the form of a loan.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says that Muslims are called upon to spend in Allah's way, but among them are those who are niggardly and whoever is niggardly is niggardly against his own soul. (*Muhammad*: 38)

In another passage, He *Glorified is He* says concerning possessions that if He should ask Muslims for it and urge them, they will be niggardly, and He

will bring forth their malice (*Muhammad*: 37). Since man works hard and exerts a great deal of strenuous effort to collect wealth, it becomes dear to him and therefore he becomes niggardly with it. So, Allah takes it from him as a loan, returned with augmentation. Sustenance and possessions have this importance being the first anchor of the fleet of man, as the establisher of civilization on earth. This is the reason why the discourse diverges from the main issue here and mentions this verse which relates to sustenance.

A similar example is also found in the Quranic verse urging Muslims to constantly attend to prayers and to the middle prayer. (*al-Baqara*: 238) This verse is mentioned in the middle of matters dealing with the prescribed waiting period following divorce (*al-'idda*), expiation of sins and the prescribed waiting period for a woman whose husband has died. So, what is the relationship between prayer and such other matters?

Scholars say that this is because angry disagreements which occur frequently alter the human soul and stir up rancour. However, once you perform ablution and offer prayers, your soul calms down and becomes serene and you face such issues of discord with a bit more acceptance and goodwill.

Let us to return to the Quranic verse: 'Surely those who accuse chaste believing women, unaware (of the evil)...' (*an-Nur*: 23). The Arabic word *al-muhsanat* translated here as 'chaste women' has three meanings: she is the married woman because fortification (*al-ihsan*) means protection, as if she has protected herself through marriage. Or it means she is modest and virtuous; even if she is not married, she is fortified in her own nature. Finally, the word *al-muhsana* also refers to the free noblewoman since the activity of prostitution and fornication was particular to slave girls.

Concerning the Arabic word *al-ghafilat*, translated here as 'unaware (of the evil),' it is the plural of *ghafilah*, and she is the one who has no idea of such matters and her mind is void of anything concerning this activity. Relevant here is the Hadith where Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was narrated to have asked Barira, the servant girl of 'Aisha Allah be pleased with her, 'What do you have to say about 'Aisha, O Barira?' She said, 'She prepares the dough and then falls asleep next to it and the household livestock

come and eat of it and she had no idea.⁽¹⁾ This is tantamount to unthinking carelessness because she was still young and had not yet reached the stage of mature puberty with which comes the maturity of certainty and faith.

You can notice this unthinking carelessness in a young girl when you say to her: would you marry so-and-so? She will say: No, I will marry so-and-so. This is because she has no idea of the meaning of marital relations. However, when she grows older and understands such things, if you mention marriage to her, she becomes shy and embarrassed that you are talking about it, since she is aware of the meaning of marriage.

Thus, when the legal law commands us to seek the permission of the girl for marriage, it equates her silence with her permission, for if she remains silent that is a sign of acceptance from her and a proof of her understanding of this relationship. However, if she says: yes, I will marry him because he is handsome, etc., then this means that she still has not yet grasped the meaning of marriage. Hence, *al-ghafila* is carelessly heedless even of marriage matters and marital relations, knowing nothing of such matters, so how could she think of fornication?

Then Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the punishment for of the crime of slandering such women: ‘...are cursed in this world and the hereafter, and they shall have a grievous chastisement.’ (*an-Nur*: 23)

And if the carelessly heedless female *al-ghafila* is the one who does not have such matters in her mind and knows nothing even about marriage and marital relations between man and woman, so how could we say that she thinks of such a criminal act?

The root of the Arabic word *al-l’an* translated above as ‘are cursed’, signifies expulsion and removal from Allah’s Mercy. It also means expulsion

(1) This is an excerpt of a long *Hadith* concerning the incident of slander related by *Al-Bukhari* in his (*Sahih*), and is commented upon in (*Fath Al-Bari*) (5:269-272) on the authority of Aisha Allah be pleased with her. An excerpt of this *Hadith* provides, ‘but ‘Ali said, “Allah has not put restrictions on you and there are many women other than her. Furthermore you may ask the slave girl who will tell you the truth.” So Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him asked Barira (his slave girl), “Have you seen anything that may arouse your suspicion?” She replied, “I have not seen anything more than that she is a little girl who sleeps, leaving the dough of her family (unguarded) that the domestic goats come and eat it.”

and removal from the realm of the believers, since the sentence of the slanderer is that the prescribed punishment be executed upon him, that his testimony is henceforth to be considered null and void and that his standing in the community in which he lives is abolished. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* combines against him dishonour in this world by means of the prescribed punishment and the nullification of his status, in addition to the punishment of the Hereafter. In this way, the punishment he receives in this world does not relieve him of the punishment of the Hereafter.

We say that '*azab* (chastisement) is causing pain and suffering to a living person. In the Quran chastisement is sometimes described as painful (*alim*), sometimes as humiliating (*muhin*), and sometimes as tremendous or awesome (*azim*)⁽¹⁾. These descriptions are determined according to the type of punishment and the status of the one who receives it. For there are among people those who do not feel the pain of flogging, but they feel disgraced in case of being flogged. For such people, the punishment is humiliating to their dignity. As for the tremendous or awesome chastisement, this is above what any person can imagine. This follows from the fact that painful punishment is from the punisher to the punished, and the one who is punished in this world is punished at the hands of men and to the extent of their strength. However, punishment in the Hereafter is effected through the Omnipotence and the Overwhelming Force of Allah, and for this reason it is described as tremendous or awesome (*azim*).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يَوْمَ تَشْهَدُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَلْسِنَتُهُمْ وَأَيْدِيهِمْ وَأَرْجُلُهُمْ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

**On the Day when their own tongues, hands, and feet
will testify against them about what they have done [24]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 24)**

We all know that the tongue is the organ of speech, so why is it added in this verse, although it can be known without mention?

(1) In the Quran, the description of chastisement as painful (*alim*) occurs in 72 passages, as humiliating (*muhin*) in 14, and as tremendous or awesome in 22 passages. In addition, there are eight other descriptors for punishment in the Hereafter mentioned with varying frequency.

Scholars say that in this world the tongue speaks and articulates, but in reality it is you who are the speaker, as it does not move except by your will, for the tongue is an instrument subject to your volition. Thus, it is only an instrument; however, in the Hereafter the tongue will articulate contrary to the will of its owner because its owner will then have no will-power.

To bring this matter within grasp, notice how an intelligent and eloquent man becomes mute and his tongue is held in check after being capable of fluent expression, due to an illness or similar cause, and henceforth he is incapable of speech, while he is still in the wide realm of this world. So, what happened? His faculty of speech has simply become dysfunctional. So likewise, is the situation in the Hereafter, your volition and control over all your faculties and limbs have been put out of action, and they articulate and move, not based on your will, but instead based on Allah's Will and Power.

Thus, 'On the day when their tongues... shall bear witness against them...' (*an-Nur*: 24) means testifying and articulating according to the Will of Allah and not according to the will of their owners. There is no cause to regard as far-fetched the articulation of the tongue in this manner since Allah *Glorified is He* states that His command, when He intends anything, is only to say to it: Be, so it is. (*Ya Sin*: 82) He *Glorified is He* has placed in human beings, an example which confirms the veracity of this matter. So, tell me: what would you do if you want to stand up now from some place? You need simply the volition of standing and you find yourself having stood up, without having to think about anything, and without having to collect your powers and thought and muscles. Instead, you stand up spontaneously without even being aware of the operational manner of this standing, nor which muscles you moved to execute it.

You should compare this spontaneous continuous movement with that of a mechanical digger or large cranes and how the driver has before him many control sticks and levers; each movement of the machine having its specific lever.

So, if you have this control and this domination over yourself and over your limbs, how can you think it improbable that Allah *Glorified is He* could have this control over his human creations in the Hereafter?

Hence, the tongue is the locus of speech and it is submitted to your will in this world, but in the Hereafter, this power of volition will be paralyzed and

falls, just as all creation, under the Sovereignty of Allah, the One, the Subduer of all (*Ghafir*: 16).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and their hands and their feet... as to what they did' (*an-Nur*: 24). Now, these limbs had no power of articulation in this world, but they will speak on that day. Scholars have attempted to clarify this concept saying: when a limb executes any action, an image of this is taken which records what it has done. Its articulation on the Day of Resurrection is that it will show this image which it has taken. It is more likely to say that the limb speaks in reality, as Allah *Glorified is He* states in a narrative about the limbs that when they are asked on the Day of Judgment by their owners of the wrongdoers as to why they testify against them, they shall say: 'Allah Who makes everything speak has made us speak, and He created you at first, and to Him you shall be brought back' (*Fussilat*: 21). The meaning of: 'Who makes everything speaks' (*Fussilat*: 21), is that everything in the universe has articulated speech conforming to it, just as He *Glorified is He* gave speech to the ant [in the story of Sulaiman (Solomon)] as it tells the other ants to enter their dwellings, (*an-Naml*: 18), and gave speech to the Hoopoe, which said that it encompassed in knowledge that which Sulaiman had not encompassed and came to him from Sheba with certain news. (*an-Naml*: 22)

Allah *Glorified is He* says about the articulated speech of these things that there is not a thing except that it exalts Him by His praise, but we do not understand their way of exalting. (*al-Isra'*: 44)

However, if Allah *Glorified is He* wants you to comprehend their speech, He would instruct you as He instructed Sulaiman *peace be upon him* at the time he understood the ant and smiled being amused of her speech (*an-Naml*: 19), just as he understood the Hoopoe, when it spoke to him on a matter of doctrine.

Now, while speech is normally understood by means of the voice, each creature has its means of communication which is understood by its species. It is thus, with the progress of science that we now hear of the language of fish, the language of bees, and so forth.

We have already mentioned that there are those who say that among the miracles of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is that pebbles glorified Allah in his hand. To this I say, you need to rectify this expression

and say, instead: Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard the glorification of pebbles in his hand; otherwise, the pebbles were glorifying in his hand *peace and blessings be upon him* just as they were glorifying in the hand of Abu Jahl. If you were to ask these facultative limbs: 'why did you testify against me, while you were the ones who did it?' They would reply: 'We did it because we were under your orders and subservient to you, but this day we have broken free of your volition and have escaped your subjugation and we will not say anything but the truth.'

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

يَوْمَذِيُؤْفِكُهُمُ اللَّهُ دِينَهُمُ الْحَقَّ وَيَعْلَمُونَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ هُوَ الْحَقُّ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٢٥﴾

On that Day, God will pay them their just due in full – and they will realize that God is the Truth that makes everything clear [25] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 25)

Concerning His utterance: 'On that day...' (*an-Nur*: 25), it means the day on which this testimony takes place, in other words the Day of Resurrection. At the end of the subsequent phrase, '...will Allah pay them in full their just due...' (*an-Nur*: 25), the Arabic word *ad-din* has three possible significations: it is applied to the path of Allah for the guidance of mankind; it is also applied to the Day of Resurrection, finally, it applies to recompense (*al-jaza'*). Hence, the meaning is: He will requite them the recompense which they merit. As regards '...just due...' (*an-Nur*: 25), for which the Arabic word *al-haqq* is used, this refers to justice in which there is no iniquity or variation. For recompense is not haphazard, rather, it is recompense according to the truth. This is because they did not repent, nor did they renew their faith. Therefore, it is inescapable that there should befall them that which we warned them about and of which they were informed concerning punishment. And there is no other god to alter this judgment or to give them a respite from it.

Hence, after He *Glorified is He* said: 'Doomed are the hands of Abu-Lahab⁽¹⁾, and doomed is he! What will his wealth avail him, and all that he has gained?

(1) *Abu-Lahab*: He was 'Abd Al-'Uzza ibn-'Abdul-Muttalib ibn-Hashim, of Qurayshi lineage, the paternal uncle of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him and among the most* =

[In the life to come] he shall have to endure a fire fiercely glowing, together with his wife⁽¹⁾, that carrier of firewood, [who bears] around her neck a rope of twisted strands!' (*al-Masad*: 1-5) He then said: 'Say: He is Allah the One: Allah the Eternal, the Uncaused Cause of All That Exists. He begets not, and neither is He begotten; and there is nothing that could be compared with Him.' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1-4) In other words, there is no other god to alter these words, so what You have said will most certainly occur.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: 'and they will come to know that Allah alone is the Ultimate Truth, manifest, and manifesting [the true nature of all that has ever been done]' (*an-Nur*: 25) and the '...Ultimate Truth...' (*an-Nur*: 24). *Al-haqq* (Ultimate Truth) is the enduring thing which does not change; thus, everything except Allah *Glorified is He* is susceptible to change. Therefore, Allah, with all the qualities of perfection in Him *Glorified is He* there is no change in him. Hence it is said: Allah certainly does not change for our sake, but it is we who must change for Allah's sake, for as He *Glorified is He* said: '...Verily, Allah does not change men's condition unless they change their inner selves...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 11).

So Allah is the unalterable Truth, and this is based on rational proofs (*al-barāhīn al-'aqliya*) and on reality. Surely, we are all aware of numerous rational proofs; and as for reality, until now no one has come forward and said I am Allah, and claimed this universe as his own. And whoever makes a claim is proven correct if no one stands up to contest this. And the meaning of '...manifest and manifesting...' (*an-Nur*: 25) *al-mubīn* is the self-evident *al-wādih*, the distinctly apparent *az-zāhir* whose claim encloses of existence.

= severe of people in antagonism to the Muslims; he was wealthy and arrogant, and he found it unbearable to follow a religion brought by his brother's son; so he insulted and hurt his supporters, and urged others against him and fought them; he was bright red of face and was thus nicknamed Abu-Lahab (the father of flame) in pre-Islamic times; he died a few days after the battle of Badr in the year 2 AH [Cited from Zirikli, (*Al-A'lam*), 4:12].

- (1) She is: Umm-Jamil, and her name was Arwa bint-Harb ibn-Umayya, and she was the sister of Abu-Sufyan; she helped her husband Abu-Lahab in his disbelief and his denial and his stubbornness, and therefore on the Day of Resurrection she will be a helper to him in his punishment in the fire of hell, carrying firewood and throwing it upon him to add to what he is already suffering. [Cited by Ibn Kathir in his (*Tafsir*), 4:563.]

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

الْخَبِيثَاتُ لِلْخَبِيثِينَ وَالْخَبِيثُونَ لِلْخَبِيثَاتِ وَالطَّيِّبَاتُ لِلطَّيِّبِينَ وَالطَّيِّبُونَ لِلطَّيِّبَاتِ
أُولَئِكَ مُبَرَّءُونَ مِمَّا يَقُولُونَ لَهُمْ مَغْفِرَةٌ وَرِزْقٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٢٦﴾

Corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men are for corrupt women; good women are for good men and good men are for good women. The good are innocent of what has been said against them; they will have forgiveness and a generous provision [26] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 26)

We have said concerning the exegesis of ‘The adulterer/fornicator marries none but an adulteress or an idolatress; and the adulteress marries none but an adulterer or an idolater...’ (*an-Nur*: 3) that marriage is based upon mutual equivalence *at-takafu*, so that one party does not dominate the other. Related to this mutual equivalence is His utterance: ‘corrupt women are for corrupt men, and corrupt men, for corrupt women – just as good women are for good men, and good men, for good women...’ (*an-Nur*: 26). Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘these...’ (*an-Nur*: 26), in other words those against whom the incident of slander was directed, and about whom people became absorbed in talk against their persons, and they are ‘A’isha and Safwan [who] ‘...are innocent of all that evil tongues may impute to them...’ (*an-Nur*: 26), this is to say, innocent of what was said about them. Proof is furnished by this mutual equivalence (*at-takafu*) which the verse mentioned, for who is better and purer (*atyab*) than the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*? And as we mentioned, that Allah *Glorified is He* would never deceive His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and make of one of his wives someone around whom suspicions hover.

Thus, it is imperative that ‘A’isha *may Allah be pleased with her* be good with a goodness that is equivalent to and corresponds to the goodness of the Messenger of Allah. Therefore, Allah declared her innocence of that which the calumniators were saying.

Regarding His utterance: ‘forgiveness of sins shall be theirs, and a most excellent sustenance!’ (*an-Nur*: 26), forgiveness descending from Heaven before the Resurrection, and a most generous sustenance. It is true that sustenance

in its entirety comes from Allah with magnanimity, but here is meant spiritual sustenance for noble-heartedness for dignity and eminence, not material sustenance for the body such as food, drink and the like.

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

يَتَأْتِيهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لَا تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ بُيُوتِكُمْ حَتَّى
تَسْتَأْذِنُوا وَتُسَلِّمُوا عَلَىٰ أَهْلِهَا ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَذَكَّرُونَ

Believers, do not enter other people's houses until you have asked permission to do so and greeted those inside – that is best for you: perhaps you will bear this in mind [27]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 27)

Regarding the Arabic word for house (*al-bayt*), we understand from it that it is that which is set up for spending the night in (*al-baytutah*) such that a human being takes shelter in it in the evening, and takes rest in it from the toil of the day. It is also called *ad-dar* because it encircles *tadur* a place which belongs to you. Hence, in the past people lived only in private, independent dwellings, without partnership in their living space like the buildings of today. Thus, the expression: the house is from its door, such that no one goes in or out without your being aware of it. A dwelling of this type is protection from suspicion since it is your private house, with your family alone, with no one else sharing it with you.

However, there are matters which require that people enter into other people's houses. For this reason, the True Lord *Glorified is He* spoke here of the etiquette of seeking permission, and of the principles and organization which govern this issue. Because entering houses without this etiquette and without observing these prescribed arrangements causes things which arouse suspicion and doubt. Hence, among country folk even today, if they see an unknown person entering a self-contained residential quarter (*hara*) and he has no relation to it, they will inevitably ask: why did he enter here?

Therefore, the law of Allah does not forbid the members of society from meeting one another, but rather imposes limits and etiquette on these mutual encounters thereby eliminating suspicion and doubt which may arise in such matters.

Hence, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says concerning the etiquette of asking permission: ‘O you who have attained to faith! Do not enter houses other than your own unless you have obtained permission and greeted their inmates...’ (*an-Nur*: 27).

As regards the expression: ‘...unless you have obtained permission...’ (*an-Nur*: 27), the Arabic verb *tasta’nisu* derives from the word *uns* meaning ease and familiarity, and is related to reassurance *al-itmi’nan*. Thus, when you and your family are sitting in your house and a stranger whom you do not know approaches you, if he does not proffer you words that put you at ease or seek your permission, you will of necessity feel alienation and aversion for him. So, the one asking permission to enter should speak with a voice that puts the owner of the house at ease. As we say, O people of Allah, or we knock at the door or we converse with a child to be informed as to who is in the house. This is because houses have their inviolability (*hurma*). In addition, every house has its peculiarities which the owner does not wish anyone to look at, either out of respect for the owner of the house, or out of respect for the visitor himself. Hence, seeking permission to enter enables everyone to avoid what might offend him. This is why He *Glorified is He* says after this: ‘...This is [enjoined upon you] for your own good...’ (*an-Nur*: 27).

In other words, better for all, for the visitor and the visited. Seeking permission to enter prevents anyone from spying on anyone and prevents that someone should look upon something which may offend him. Suppose that the father of a married woman wishes to visit her, and he enters into her house unexpectedly and finds her in an argument with her husband. Then he might witness things that displease him, and he might further aggravate the dispute.

The verse ends with His utterance: ‘...so that you might bear [your mutual rights] in mind’ (*an-Nur*: 27). That is to say, be on your guard lest you neglect these points of prescribed etiquette, or lest you underestimate their importance; as people say: we are family or relatives; there are no formalities between us. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* who prescribed these behavioural codes for you is more aware of what is in your souls, and more aware of what is suitable for you.

Indeed, this Islamic etiquette goes beyond the stranger to encompass the owner of the house himself. Thus, in a Noble Hadith we find that The Prophet

peace and blessings be upon him 'forbade that the traveller should return to his family at night'⁽¹⁾. Instead, he should inform them of his coming so that he does not catch them unaware, and so that each of them can get ready to meet the other.

Then the True Lord says:

فَإِنْ لَمْ تَجِدُوا فِيهَا أَحَدًا فَلَا تَدْخُلُوهَا حَتَّى يُؤْذَنَ لَكُمْ وَإِنْ قِيلَ
لَكُمْ ارْجِعُوا فَارْجِعُوا هُوَ أَزْكَى لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٨﴾

If you find no one in, do not enter unless you have been given permission to do so. If you are told, 'Go away', then do so – that is more proper for you. God knows well what you do [28] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 28)

So if you seek permission to enter a house in which there is no one, do not go in; for you have come to an established abode (*makin*) not a mere location (*makan*). That is, unless you intend to enter in order to stealthily intrude upon people's affairs and to spy on them.

Regarding His utterance: '...until you are given leave...' (*an-Nur*: 28), how can this be while there is no one in the house? Perhaps the owner of the house is outside of it, and when he notices you seeking permission to enter, he calls out to you from afar: Please go in. It is thus necessary for the owner of the house, or someone delegated by him, to grant you permission, for he would not give you permission unless the path was ensured to be void of what might offend you, or what might offend the inhabitants of the house.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: '...and if you are told, "Turn back," then turn back. This will be most conducive to your purity...' (*an-Nur*: 28). This is because, if you persisted in entering after you were told to turn back, you would arouse suspicion in [the owner's] soul. Therefore, you must submit to and respect the desire of the person concerned, for this is purer and preferable.

(1) Based on a Hadith narrated by Al-Bukhari (#5244) and Muslim (3:1528) on the authority of Jabir ibn-'Abdullah.

Indeed, consider the utterance of the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Leave what causes you doubt for that which does not cause you doubt.’⁽¹⁾

Regarding the final phrase of the verse ‘...and Allah has full knowledge of all that you do...’ (*an-Nur*: 28), it means: He *Glorified is He* is aware (‘*alim*’) of the most innermost secrets of souls and the inner whisperings of hearts. So if the owner of the house tells you to turn back, but you nevertheless remained standing at his door and did not go away, then you would certainly cause suspicions and misgivings to arise around you. But your Lord *Glorified is He* wishes to protect you from suspicions and the concealed affairs of souls.

Subsequently, the True Lord says:

لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَدْخُلُوا بُيُوتًا غَيْرَ مَسْكُونَةٍ فِيهَا مَتَعٌ لَكُمْ وَاللَّهُ
يَعْلَمُ مَا تُبْدُونَ وَمَا تَكْتُمُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

**You will not be blamed for entering houses where no one
lives, and which could provide you with some useful service.
God knows everything you do openly and everything you
conceal [29] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 29)**

Abu-Bakr As-Siddiq *may Allah be pleased with him* asked the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘O Messenger of Allah, we are a people who practice commerce, and we go to a region in which we have no houses or family, and we are obliged to settle in places (public ones like hotels) in which we store our effects and in which we spend the night’. Thereupon, this verse was revealed.⁽²⁾

Concerning the Arabic word (*junah*) translated here as sin means misdeed or prohibition. This verse applies specifically to public places which no individual person inhabits, and a public place has laws governing entering it that are different from the laws concerning houses and privately owned places. Hence, do you ask permission to enter a hotel or a place of commerce

(1) This Hadith was narrated by Abu-Dawud (1178), Imam Ahmad (1/200) and At-Tirmidhi (2518).

(2) The context of the revelation of this verse was narrated in As-Suyuti’s (*Asbab An-nuzul*) (p. 127, Dar At-Tahrir edition, 1963).

or a bathhouse, etc. There is no restriction on you in entering these places without asking for permission.

The expression 'uninhabited...' (*an-Nur*: 29) means by a particular group of people. As for the phrase '...which serve a purpose useful to you...' (*an-Nur*: 29), it means such as sleeping, eating, drinking in it, or putting your effects in it. Hence, the word *al-mata'* in the verse meaning utility is not to be taken in its broadest sense, but rather, it is tied to what Allah has made permissible and commanded. Thus, forbidden things are not included in the notion of utility.

It is for this reason that He says after this: '...but [always remember that] Allah knows all that you do openly, and all that you would conceal.' (*an-Nur*: 29) In other words, in the delimitation of making use of a place, So do not take it in its general significance, and thereby include in it what is forbidden (*al-haram*). Otherwise, be aware, that prostitutes often frequent places such as these. Therefore your Lord fortifies you and gives you the necessary immunity to assure your protection.

Following thereon, the Lord of Supreme Power (*rabb al-'izza*) says:

قُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنِينَ يَغُضُّوا مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِمْ وَيَحْفَظُوا فُرُوجَهُمْ
ذَٰلِكَ أَزْكَىٰ لَهُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَيْرٌ بِمَا يَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

[Prophet], tell believing men to lower their glances and guard their private parts: that is purer for them. God is well aware of everything they do [30] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 30)

From its beginning, the chapter of *an-Nur* spoke of the question of adultery and slander and fortification from temptation (*al-ihsan*), and it warned about following the footsteps of Satan (Iblis) which lead to this crime; then it spoke of mutual equivalence (*at-takafu'*) in marriage and that an adulterer is fit only for an adulteress and an adulteress for an adulterer, and that vile men are for vile women, and goodly men for goodly women.

This integral path guarantees the safety and integrity (*salama*) of society and of the Vicegerent of Allah on His earth. For Allah *Glorified is He* desires a society in which lofty values shine forth, a society free of agents of 'ugly

wrinkles', dispute, enmity and hatred. Hence, if only we would implement the procedural method (*manhaj*) of Allah which He sanctioned for us, all of us would be at ease in its shade.

The issue of lowering one's gaze which our Lord *Glorified is He* commanded us to observe in this verse is a safety valve which protects us from slipping into these repulsive crimes, and blocks the way before them. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Tell the believers to lower their gaze...' (*an-Nur*: 30).

And we have said: the human being certainly has numerous means of perception, and every instrument of perception has its objects. Thus the ear hears voices, and the nose smells, and the tongue is for speech and for tasting flavours, and the eye for seeing visible things. But the most seductive thing which affects a human being in terms of sex is the sense of sight.

Therefore, The Wise Lawgiver has placed the necessary restraint on the two sides of sight: on the eye of the beholder and on the thing which is beheld. Hence, He ordered the believers to lower their gazes and He ordered the believing women not to display their concealed beauty (*az-zeenah*). In this manner, He established immunity for both sides.

Now, when we investigate the issue of lowering the gaze, in terms of rational divisions, we find that it revolves around four possible situations (*halat*). The first is that he lowers his own gaze and that she does not reveal her own concealed beauty, thereby the line of temptation is severed between the sender and receiver. The second is that he lowers his own gaze, but she reveals her concealed beauty. The third is that he himself gazes, but she does not reveal her concealed beauty. And there is no danger to society or temptation in these three situations, since if one side fulfils the conditions, the other is negated. However, the danger lies in the fourth situation, and this is that he stares and does not lower his gaze and that she strives to make herself attractive and reveals her concealed beauty. It is in this situation only that danger exists.

Hence, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has forbidden one situation out of four situations. This is because forbidden things (*al-muharramat*) are always fewer in number, and this is due to Allah's mercy upon us. A proof of this is found in His utterance: 'Say: "Come, let me convey unto you what Allah has

[really] forbidden to you...' (*al-An'am*: 151). For forbidden things are limited and few, whereas permissible things (*al-muhallalat*) are beyond limitation and infinite, since the original state of things is to be permissible. And if the True Lord *Glorified is He* desires the prohibition (*tahrim*) of a thing, He stipulates it. So, just marvel at this benevolent treatment from your Lord *Glorified is He*.

Just as the man was ordered to lower his gaze, the woman, too, was ordered to lower her gaze, since a glance might also be towards a man possessed of good-looks or charm (*al-wasama*), etc. So, if the good fortune of a woman over a man is that her eye is capable of overwhelming him, then perchance she may look at someone else. Thus, what holds for men also holds for women in this case. This precaution and these limits which Allah *Glorified is He* has ordained and made incumbent upon us are there only to prevent this repulsive crime with which this chapter began. For the glance is the first of the means leading to adultery, and it is a message to what follows. Just take note of what the poet Shawqi *may Allah grant him mercy* says in speaking about the phases of flirtation (*al-ghazal*):

A glance, then a smile, then a greeting

Then conversation, then a rendezvous pledge, then a private meeting.

Hence, the command to lower one's gaze is in order to close the accesses to corruption of honour, and a means of preventing the causes of the pollution of offspring. This is so that Allah's Vicegerent on earth will come forth pure in a pure society, clean and noble, in which no one assumes superiority over anyone else, because one has a proper lineage (*nasab*) and nobility, while the other has no lineage.

This is so that every human being can be reassured that those who follow him in vicegerency (*al-khilafa*) from among children and grandchildren will undoubtedly issue forth through the lawful noble way. So let every human being strive to engender his children in a manner that guarantees the presence of affection, of tenderness and mercy. This he will do because he is confident that the child is his, not the object of some intrigue against him. It is most probable that those who neglect their children and do not look after their interests have doubts about their kinship relationship to them.

Society will not attain to this purity except if you guarantee it adequate preservation, so that sexual instincts would not break loose from it allowing every glance to transgress to that which is forbidden to it. For the glance is a missive to hearts, and hearts are a missive to sex, so the sexual organs will never be chaste except through chastity of the glance.

In His utterance: ‘Tell the believers to lower their gaze...’ (*an-Nur*: 30), we should note the precision of the Messenger’s conveyance of the message of his Lord *Glorified is He* and his fidelity in transmitting the expression as it was revealed to him. As in this verse it would have been sufficient for the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to say: lower your gazes; however, he adhered to the precise wording of what was revealed to him. This is because the Quran was not only revealed for the sake of laws; rather, the Quran is the speech of Allah descended upon His Messenger, the recitation of which constitutes worship. Therefore, it was imperative for the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* to convey it just as it came to him from his Lord.

Therefore, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* says in conveying the message on behalf of Allah: ‘Say’ (*qul*) and in the Arabic verb *yaghuddu* (to lower their gazes) there is the significance of the immediate present implied by the imperative ‘say’, as the verb in the present imperfect tense, but despite the fact that it is not preceded by an apocopate particle, the expected final *nun* (an Arabic letter) has been omitted. This is because He made the verb ‘say’ to indicate the immediate present in literary style. And the meaning is thus: if you tell them to lower their gazes, they will lower their gazes; with the verb being in the apocopate form *majzum* in response to the imperative ‘say’ (*qul*).

Hence, the first word of the verse, ‘Say...’ (*an-Nur*: 30) illustrates the fidelity of the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* in conveying the message, and that the Quran was not revealed only for establishing laws, but rather, it is the inimitable speech of Allah. It is for this reason that we note this here, and in every word in it. It is as if the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* is saying: I have not come to you with something from myself, and my duty is to convey unto you what Allah has said to me.

As regards His utterance: ‘...the believers...’ (*an-Nur*: 30), as long as they believe in a wise God, and have entered the realm of faith of their own choice,

without it being forced upon them by anyone, then they must adhere to that which their Lord has ordered them, and to implement it as soon as they heard it.

The verbal root of the Arabic word for lowering (*al-ghadd*) means decreasing, diminishing (*al-nuqsan*). One says: so-and-so diminishes the power of so-and-so; that is: he diminishes him. But how can there be diminishing of sight? Is it to look with one eye only? It is said: Sight has an assigned duty, and through it visible things make themselves manifest; so, do not give it absolute freedom to look at everything; rather restrain it based on the commands of Allah concerning what may be seen and what may not be seen.

The Arabic preposition (*min*) as found in His utterance: '...their gaze...' (*an-Nur*: 30) is viewed by some scholars as referring to a portioning (*at-tab'id*) such as in the expression: eat some of this food (*kul min hadha at-ta'am*); in other words a portion of it. Thus, the meaning is: let them lower part of their gaze because some of it is permissible, not requiring a lowering of the gaze, while part of it is forbidden, not to be gazed at.

Another view is that the Arabic preposition (*min*) in this context is for confirmation of totality in its most insignificant phase, and we have already spoken of (*min*) in this sense. It is inevitable that the more deeply we penetrate into exegesis we will come across things which we have mentioned previously, and here we pass this aforementioned discussion on to the reader again.

We noted that the difference between your saying: I have no money (*ma 'indi mal*), and, I have nothing of money (*ma 'indi min mal*). In the first expression it is probable that you have a trifling amount of money, hardly worth taking into consideration. Whereas in the second expression it is tantamount to a complete negation of possessing anything in the category of money, however small, in this context, the preposition (*min*) in this context means the starting point of what is called money.

So, here the meaning of, 'Tell the believers to lower their gaze...' (*an-Nur*: 30), employing the Arabic phrase (*min absari-him*) signifies the beginning of what might be termed gazing, including the furtive glance, prohibiting you from intent regarding prolongation of looking.

We said that the ordained law does not intrude into the inclinations of the heart and thoughts, but rather, it intervenes in preparatory acts which give rise

to action. If, for example, you pass by a garden and see a beautiful rose in it, and you marvel at it and the depths of your soul are delighted and filled with pleasure by it, all of this is permissible for you, and there is nothing standing in your way in doing this. But if the matter goes beyond this, and you reach out your hand to pick it, this is where the ordained law tells you: stop, for you have no right to this because it does not belong to you.

This is a general rule governing all acts, with sight alone being the only exception. It is as if our Lord *Glorified is He* were seeking our indulgence in it, this matter, for our sake, for our proper own good, and for our comfort; indeed as a mercy on us, and out of solicitude for us from the consequences of looking and what it leaves behind in the soul of torments and passionate sentiments.

For, as regards the look of a man towards a woman, we do not say: look as much as you like and admire your sweetheart as you wish, but if you proceeded on to a hug or a kiss, this would be forbidden. Why? Because the issue here is totally different, as the relationship of a man and a woman is made up of phases, one of which can never be separated from the other.

The moment you look at a woman, this is perception; and she pleases you and the depths of your soul take joy in her, then this is emotion. This will unavoidably leave in your constitution a chemical reaction which cannot be calmed; and before long you will yearn [to satisfy your natural inclination], and if you submit to your soul in proceeding to fulfil your yearning (*an-nuzu*) you will have transgressed. On the other hand, if you repress this emotion, you will be afflicted by psychological complexes which will summon you to seek other means for fulfilling your yearning. Therefore, your Lord has been merciful to you from the very beginning, by avoiding perception through lowering the gaze.

Consequently, after He *Glorified is He* commands us to lower our gaze, He says: ‘...and to be mindful of their chastity...’ (*an-Nur*: 30) as you are incapable of separating the desire to fulfil yearning (*an-nuzu*) from emotion (*al-wijdan*), nor emotion from perception (*al-idrak*), even if this is possible in other domains. Thus, when we prevent you from plucking the rose which you found so attractive, this restraint did not leave any trace or emotion in your soul. This is opposed to what happens if you are restrained from a woman whom you are attracted to, as your emotions arouse you to desire her.

Safeguarding chastity (*hifzh al-furu'*) is affected when we restrict them [i.e., sexual organs] to that which Allah has permitted and ordained by law, so that access to it [i.e., the sexual organ] is not allowed to one for whom it is unlawful, regardless whether it be of the man or the woman. Another manner of understanding this is: I safeguard it and defend it from being seen because seeing it rouses unto evil and unto temptation (*al-fitna*). Regarding '...this will be most conducive to their purity...' (*an-Nur*: 30), the Arabic word denoting more pure (*azka*) means more chaste or cleaner (*at-har*) and sounder or healthier (*aslam*) and more conducive (*ad'a*) to peace of mind. For either one gives free reign to yearning and commits something forbidden, and thereby penetrates the honour of people; or one does not submit to yearning, and then the soul is vexed and is tormented by seeking to be patient with what cannot be endured.

Subsequently, He *Glorified is He* says: '...[And,] verily, Allah is aware of all that they do.' (*an-Nur*: 30) For He *Glorified is He* is the Creator of this human soul, and the One who put into place the matter of carnal desire and sexual instinct. This latter is the most powerful of instincts in order to bind man and woman together, and thereby actualize through it the process of procreation and the continuation of vicegerency on the earth. And if this relationship were not linked to pressing carnal desire, many would abstain from marriage and from begetting children and all that would follow from this in terms of consequences.

Imagine all the pain and toil a woman goes through in the phase of pregnancy, and while giving birth, she thinks death would be preferable, until she swears that she will never go through it again. But after she sees her child and forgets her pain, soon the longing to give birth once again returns to her. This is an instinct which Allah has planted in the human soul so that its continued survival is assured.

There are some who have a philosophical view of instincts, especially the sexual instinct as Allah made it the most powerful of instincts and linked it to a pleasure more effective than the pleasure of food, drink, smell, hearing, etc. For it is a pleasure which embraces every organ and limb (*jawarih*) of man and all of his dispositions (*malakat*) and this is only out of desire for the survival of the species and the continuation of the vicegerency on earth.

Thereafter, the True Lord says to His Messenger:

وَقُلْ لِلْمُؤْمِنَاتِ يَغْضُضْنَ مِنْ أَبْصَارِهِنَّ وَيَحْفَظْنَ فُرُوجَهُنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا مَا ظَهَرَ مِنْهَا وَلْيَضْرِبْنَ بِخُمُرِهِنَّ عَلَى جُيُوبِهِنَّ وَلَا يُبْدِينَ زِينَتَهُنَّ إِلَّا لِبُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ آبَائِهِنَّ أَوْ
 آبَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ أَبْنَاءِ بُعُولَتِهِنَّ أَوْ إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ بَنِي إِخْوَانِهِنَّ أَوْ
 بَنِي أَخَوَاتِهِنَّ أَوْ نِسَائِهِنَّ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُهُنَّ أَوِ التَّابِعِينَ غَيْرَ أُولِي الْإِرْبَةِ مِنَ الرِّجَالِ أَوِ
 الطِّفْلِ الَّذِينَ لَمْ يَظْهَرُوا عَلَى عَوْرَاتِ النِّسَاءِ وَلَا يَضْرِبْنَ بِأَرْجُلِهِنَّ لِيُعْلَمَ مَا يُخْفِينَ مِنْ
 زِينَتِهِنَّ وَتُوبُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ جَمِيعًا أَيُّهَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٣١﴾

And tell believing women that they should lower their glances, guard their private parts, and not display their charms beyond what [it is acceptable] to reveal; they should let their headscarves fall to cover their necklines and not reveal their charms except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers, their brothers' sons, their sisters' sons, their womenfolk, their slaves, such men as attend them who have no sexual desire, or children who are not yet aware of women's nakedness; they should not stamp their feet so as to draw attention to any hidden charms.

Believers, all of you, turn to God so that you may prosper [31]

(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 31)

Here He explicitly mentions the other side of the equation, commanding women with what he commanded men, then He adds here the issue of charms or beauty (*az-zeenah*). Now, *az-zeenah* is the added element which exceeds the bounds of innate beauty; hence one says of a woman who is naturally beautiful, and who has no need to beautify herself, that she is self-sufficient in beauty (*ghaniya*). That is to say, through her own beauty, she is able to dispense with beautification (*at-tazayyun*). So she does not need to put mascara on her eyes, nor rouge on her cheeks. She has no need to veil her own innate jewellery with bracelets, nor her chest with necklaces, etc.

But if a woman is beneath this level, she requires a bit of beautification. Yet, it is astonishing how they exaggerate in this beautification until they become like neon signs on a tilted wooden stall. Hence one sees elderly

women putting on these colours, and these powders appearing in an image that is not suitable. For artificial beauty and forced beautification is what they call 'polish' (*tatriya*). In this vein, the poet Al-Mutanabbi said in describing the beauty of a Bedouin woman and the beauty of an urban woman:

The beauty of a city woman is procured with polish

And in a Bedouin woman beauty is not procured.

It is among the mercies of Allah to women that He after this says: '...and not to display their charms [in public]...' (*an-Nur*: 31). He said: '...beyond what may [decently] be apparent thereof...' (*an-Nur*: 31). In other words: Those aspects which are necessary. Thus, a woman needs to walk in the street, and her eyes will show, perhaps with a bit of mascara, for example; and her hand will show, and on it is a ring or henna. There is no objection that she displays such kinds of necessary beautification.

However, she should not let her earrings show, for example because the head-covering (*al-khimar*) covers them; nor should she wear clothing with a low-cut collar (*ad-dikultih*), or a necklace, or arm-bangles or bracelets, nor anklets. For all of such beautification should not show. Hence, the ordained law permits natural beautification on the condition that it remains within certain limits, and that its display is restricted for whose sake it was put on.

Now, we should note that in His utterance: '...and [they are] not to display their charms [in public] beyond what may [decently] be apparent thereof...' (*an-Nur*: 31) the intended meaning is the covering of beauty. In this respect, the lower body part is the foremost consideration. Since charming beauty envelops this body part, and Allah has commanded charming beauty to be concealed, then this body section is the first to fall into this category.

Regarding His utterance: '...hence, let them draw their head-coverings over their bosoms...' (*an-Nur*: 31) the Arabic term employed for head-coverings (*khumur*) is the plural of (*khimar*) being the covering of the head which hangs down to cover the back of the neck and chest. The Arabic word (*al-juyub*) translated here as bosoms is the plural of (*jayb*) which is the upper opening of a garment, called the collar (*al-qabba*) and the intended meaning is that the head covering veil the upper opening of the body garment and the area of the chest so that nothing of it shows.

It is astonishing that women have abandoned this obligation; indeed, among the mind-boggling phenomenon, they even wear necklaces upon which they hang copies of the Quran. This is an amazing contradiction, indicating an absence of awareness and an absence of knowledge of the ordained law of Allah, the one who sent down this very Quran.

Contemplate the precision of Quranic expression in His utterance: ‘...let them draw...’ (*an-Nur*: 31) utilizing the Arabic verb (*yadribna*). Now this verb (*al-darb*) has the significance of striking or dropping something with force. Hence, the intended meaning is not that a woman simply places the head-scarf (*at-tarha*) and leaves it like that vulnerable to the winds. Rather, she must arrange it carefully on her head and chest and fasten it securely.

For this reason, when this verse was revealed, ‘A’isha *may Allah be pleased with her* said: may Allah have mercy on the ladies who have emigrated (*al-muhajirat*), when the verse was revealed, they did not own head-coverings (*khumur*), so took up lower body wrapping cloths (*al-murut*) and split them and made head-coverings of them.⁽¹⁾

Hence the wise ordained law takes the clothing of women into consideration from the top, so He said: ‘...let them draw their head-coverings over their bosoms...’ (*an-Nur*: 31) and from the bottom, so He said: ‘...they should draw over themselves some of their outer garments [when in public]...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 59).

Subsequently He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...And let them not display [more of] their charms to any but their husbands...’ (*an-Nur*: 31) that is their spouses, because beauty was made for their sake; ‘...or their husbands’ fathers...’ (*an-Nur*: 31), the father of the spouse, unless there is fear of seduction from him, then the wife should now display her beauty in front of him.

Regarding the meaning of ‘...or their womenfolk...’ (*an-Nur*: 31), this refers to women which work with her in the house, as maids or servants; ‘...or those whom they rightfully possess...’ (*an-Nur*: 31); here the intended meaning is slaves owned by the woman who are also women excluding male slaves.

It is obligatory that these women be Muslims, for if they are disbelievers, such as those brought from other countries, it is not permitted for the woman

(1) *This Hadith was narrated by Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) (4757, 4759).*

to show her beauty in front of them, and to consider them in this domain like men. This is because they are not Muslims and not to be trusted in matters concerning a Muslim woman, for one of them might go and describe what she saw of her employer or mistress to a disbelieving man resulting in his thoughts becoming preoccupied with her.

Among scholars are those who believe that owned slaves (*milk al-yamin*) in this context does refer only to females, but also to male slaves. And that a woman has the right to show her beauty in front of them. They say this because in the human soul there is an emotional opposition (*istiqlbal* 'atifi) and emotional abstention (*imtina* 'atifi); thus, the servant is in a state of inadequacy (*fi al-qasr*) and would not look at his mistress or employer, nor at her daughters, since he would not deem himself worthy of this status. The exception to this would be if they encourage him, and open the door to him, but this is another matter.

Regarding His utterance: '...or such male attendants as are beyond all sexual desire...' (*an-Nur*: 31), the Arabic word (*at-tabi'in*) refers to servants of the house and those who live off of its leftovers (*fadalat*). The life of such a subordinate (*at-tabi'*) derives from the life of the person whom he owes service and obedience to. Since he does not have a house to shelter him, he sleeps anywhere; and since he has no food, therefore people feed him and so forth. Hence he is wretched (*da'i'*), without any goal, nor any independence in his life. You see such as these eating table scraps and wearing patched garments, and sleeping even on the sidewalk.

Like the dim-witted or demented person whom people feel sorry for, and who has no craving for women, nor does he even understand this matter; so one has no fears for women on his account, since he has no need of them; nor would he deem himself worthy of looking at the members of the household.

As for '...[men] beyond all sexual desire...' (*an-Nur*: 31), this can refer to those who are elderly, of feeble strength, without possessing the capacity for these matters. It also refers to those who are castrated, no longer possessing required organs. In both cases, such men pose no danger to women.

Then comes His utterance: '...or children that are as yet unaware of women's nakedness...' (*an-Nur*: 31).

We note here that the Arabic word (*at-tifl*), translated as children, is in the singular form, although the description that follows is indicative of the plural, literally ‘...[those] (*al-ladhina*) who are as yet unaware of women’s nakedness...’ (*an-Nur*: 31). Why? It is said that this is a feature among the features of Arabic language, and it comprises precision of expression, in which the singular of the word is utilized to signify the dual or the plural.

As we say: this judge is impartial (‘*adl*), these two judges are impartial (‘*adl*), and these judges are impartial (‘*adl*); we do not use the dual (‘*adlan*) or plural form (‘*udul*) of the descriptor. So if the quality (*al-wasf*) is unified for all without exception, then the quality is like a single thing. For one judge does not apply the law according to his humour or whim, and another according to his humour and whim, instead they all pronounce judgement based upon a single law and a single measure. Hence, the quality of impartiality is one, and does not call for doubt; furthermore, each one of the judges does not have an impartiality that is particular to him, impartiality is one.

Similarly in the case of ‘...the child (*at-tifl*)...’ (*an-Nur*: 31) although the intended meaning is children (*al-atfal*), He nevertheless said ‘child’ because his natural dispositions (*ghara’iz*) are common to all children. He does not possess passionate whims, so all children, thus, are as if they were a single child since not one of them formulates a thought particular to him. All of them love fun and games, with no ulterior motives. So the plurality here is not evident due to the commonality of natural dispositions and inclinations.

As evidence of this, when children grow up and move on to the stage of puberty, and passionate desires, thoughts and inclinations begin formulating in them, the Quran says of them: ‘Yet when the children among you attain to puberty...’ (*an-Nur*: 59). Hence, the focus here is on the plural in the absence of unifying commonality (*at-tawhhid*) as found in the phase of early childhood.

Also, along similar lines is His utterance: ‘Has the story of Abraham’s honoured guests reached you?’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 24) In this instance, ‘guest’ (*ad-dayf*), in the singular form, is qualified by a plural adjective ‘honoured’ (*al-mukramin*). This is because the word (*dayf*) also signifies the plural, for a guest is one who is added to the house, and he is due certain rights and obligations which the host must proffer, and which add to the requirements of

the house. In terms of these obligations, the guest is one, regardless if this be a single person or a group. Hence, the singular is used to signify the plural.

As regards His utterance: '...[Those] who are as yet unaware of women's nakedness...' (*an-Nur*: 31), the Arabic expression utilized (*yazharu 'ala kadha*) (to be cognizant of or to overcome such-and-such) has two meanings in language. The first: carries the meaning of knowing, as in His utterance: 'for, behold, if they should come to know of you (*yazharu 'alaykum*), they might stone you to death...' (*al-Kahf*: 20), in other words, if they become aware of you and find out your location

The second: carries the meaning of gaining the upper hand over or conquering of triumphing over, as in His utterance: 'And thus [the rampart was built, and] their enemies were unable to scale it, and neither were they able to pierce it.' (*al-Kahf*: 97)

That is to say, the dam or rampart (*as-sadd*) which was built by *Dhu Al-Qarnayn* with the meaning that they were unable to ascend it or get on top of it.

And here '[those] who are as yet unaware of women's nakedness' (*an-Nur*: 31) signifies their being cognizant of and taking notice of women's private parts, or having the capacity to fulfil their requirements since they have no knowledge or acquaintance with such matters.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: 'and let them not swing their legs [in walking] so as to draw attention to their hidden charms'. (*an-Nur*: 31) The True Lord *Glorified is He* uncovers here the dalliances and stratagems of women in attracting attention. So if she does not draw the attention of your sight to her, your attention will be attracted by the sound which is made by her walking. As if she is saying to you: O dummy, listen, O you who cannot see, listen! In the past women used to wear anklets which would make a sound while walking, and today they put things on the bottom of their shoes which make a similar sound while walking, and the first to make use of this stratagem were dancers in order to attract glances towards them. It is obvious that the way a woman walks displays much of her hidden charm which people do not see, and causes much temptation. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* says after this, and in concluding these matters: '...And [always], O you believers – all of you – turn unto Allah in repentance, so that you might prosper' (*an-Nur*: 31).

The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not say: O you who committed these sins which we have previously talked about; instead, He said: ‘...all of you...’ (*an-Nur*: 31). He thereby urges everyone to repentance (*at-tawba*) to signify that every descendent of Adam *peace be upon him* is prone to error. For regardless of how firmly devoted (*mutamassik*) or strictly adherent (*multazim*) a Muslim is, he is not secure from the occasional lapse of error or sin. Allah *Glorified is He* the Creator is the Supremely Aware of those whom He has created. He has, therefore, opened for them the door of repentance and has urged them towards the Omniscient, as if saying: no harm done if you must repent, and the rest is up to me.

The True Lord says:

وَأَنكِحُوا الْأَيْمَىٰ مِنكُمُ وَالصَّالِحِينَ مِن عِبَادِكُم وَإِمَائِكُم إِن يَكُونُوا
فُقَرَاءَ يُغْنِهِمُ اللَّهُ مِن فَضْلِهِ وَاللَّهُ وَاسِعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٢﴾

Marry off the single among you and those of your male and female slaves who are fit [for marriage]. If they are poor, God will provide for them from His bounty: God’s bounty is infinite and He is all knowing [32] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 32)

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks of the issue of protecting chastity, and summons to the preservation of purity of kinship lineage, He now wishes to speak of those men or women for whom the matter of marriage has not been made easy. In this manner, He treats the subject from diverse aspects, for it is necessary for the Lawgiver to appropriate through legislation every vulnerable gaps of life, as He cannot deal with one side and ignore the other.

Concerning the word ‘...single...’ (*an-Nur*: 32), the Arabic word (*al-ayama*), which is the plural of (*ayyim*), it refers to both men and women without spouses. We should note that the imperative form of ‘...marry...’ (*an-Nur*: 32), in Arabic, (*ankihu*), begins with the disjunctive hamza (an Arabic letter, *hamzat al-qat’*) form of the, pronounced as a glottal stop, even though the imperative form for the singular would be (*’nkih*) with a conjunctive hamza (*hamzat al-wasl*) not pronounced when preceded by a vowel. This is because the imperative command here (*ankihu*) is not addressed to a single person who will

marry another single person. Instead it is up to someone else to facilitate his marriage. Hence, the intended meaning is a command to the legal guardians (*awliya' al-umur*) and those men under their authority who have no wives, or women without husbands: expedite the marriage of these, and facilitate this matter for them, and do not be inflexible in regard to the costs of marriage so that you maintain the chastity of your sons and daughters; and if you do not assist them [materially], then at least avoid inflexibility and exaggerated expenses.

In a Noble Hadith, we find: 'If any of you are approached by someone [seeking marriage] whose religion and character please you, then [allow him] to marry [a girl under your authority]; if you do not do this, there will be temptation in the earth and great corruption.'⁽¹⁾

Yet, in spite of this, there are in our societies customs and traditions which place obstacles in the way of the marriage of youth, the gravest of which is the exaggerated cost of dowries, and in the expense [of the wedding] and the focus on outward appearances, etc. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were saying to the legal guardians: facilitate the matter of legal sexual union for the youth, and smooth for them the path to chastity.

The Quran provides us with an example of how a legal guardian should act in this respect, when He *Glorified is He* says to Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him*: '[After some time, the father] said: "Behold, I am willing to let you wed one of these two daughters of mine..." (*al-Qasas*: 27). This is because Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was to be a paid labourer with him, and perhaps he might aspire to ask for the hand of his daughter. Hence, he offered her to him, and proposed marriage to him on her behalf, and encouraged him to accept to marry her. In this way he removed from him any hesitation due to shyness. This is the manner in which the father of a girl should behave if he finds a suitable match for his daughter, so he should not hesitate when it comes to her chastity.

Then comes His utterance: '...as well as such of your male and female slaves as are fit [for marriage]...' (*an-Nur*: 32). This should be considered in

(1) This Hadith was narrated in slightly different versions by At-Tirmidhi (1084) and Ibn-Majah (1968).

light of The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘A woman is married for four things: for her wealth, for her beauty, for her noble descent and for her [pious adherence to] religion, so aim to get the pious woman, may you be blessed.’⁽¹⁾

When *Al-Hasan may Allah be pleased with him* was asked about the matter of marriage, he told the father of a girl who had come to seek his counsel: marry her off to someone whose religion reassures you. Then, if he loves your daughter, he will treat her with magnanimity; and if he dislikes her, he will not do her wrong. What more could a man wish for in the marriage of his daughter?

Hence, devoutness in religion, character, high moral values, these are the basis upon which the choice is made. As for wealth, it is a secondary thing, and an ephemeral display. Therefore, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...If they [whom you intend to marry] are poor, [let this not deter you;] Allah will grant them sufficiency out of His bounty – for Allah is Infinite [in His mercy], All Knowing.’ (*an-Nur*: 32)

Poverty may be a cause for rejecting a girl [for marriage], or for the family of the girl to reject a marriage offer. But how could Allah abandon us while we fear him and seek chastity and purity? It is not possible that Allah would be stingy to a couple which had joined on the basis of these values and has come together on the basis of these morals of decency. And who knows, perhaps material provision will come to both of them together, and that their union in this lawful relationship will itself be the door of material provision which opens for them?

‘For Allah is Infinite [in His mercy], All Knowing’ (*an-Nur*: 32) as the giving of Allah is continuous, and does not cease because his reserves of provision (*khaza'in*) are never exhausted nor decreased. Whereas man withholds from giving because he is afraid of poverty, Allah *Glorified is He* on the other hand, gives generously because that which He has never runs out.

(1) *This Hadith was narrated by both Al-Bukhari (5095) and Muslim (1477). In his (Fath Al-Bari) (9/136) Ibn-Hajar cites from Al-Qurtubi: ‘the meaning of the Hadith is that these four qualities are those which are the motivating factors in seeking marriage to a woman, so it is information on what exists in these terms, not that the issue actually always comes down to this. Indeed, it is plain that it is permissible to marry with an aim to all of these, but the goal of seeking [a woman possessed of] piety has priority.*

Subsequently, the True Lord says:

وَلَيْسَتَعَفِيفَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَجِدُونَ نِكَاحًا حَتَّى يُغْنِيَهُمُ اللَّهُ مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَالَّذِينَ يَبْتَغُونَ
الْكِتَابَ مِمَّا مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ فَكَابِتُوهُمْ إِنْ عَلِمْتُمْ فِيهِمْ خَيْرًا وَءَاتُوهُمْ مِّنْ
مَّالِ اللَّهِ الَّذِي ءَاتَاكُمْ وَلَا تُكْرِهُوا فَتِنَتَكُمْ عَلَى الْبِعَازِ إِنْ أَرَدْنَ تَحَصُّنًا لِّتَبْتَغُوا
عَرَضَ الْحَيَوةِ الدُّنْيَا وَمَن يُكْرِهْنَهُنَّ فَإِنَّ اللَّهَ مِنْ بَعْدِ إِكْرَاهِهِنَّ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٣٣﴾

Those who are unable to marry should keep chaste until God gives them enough out of His bounty. If any of your slaves wish to pay for their freedom, make a contract with them accordingly, if you know they have good in them, and give them some of the wealth God has given you. Do not force your slave-girls into prostitution, when they themselves wish to remain honourable, in your quest for the short-term gains of this world, although, if they are forced, God will be forgiving and merciful to them [33] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 33)

In the case when we do not enable unmarried persons to get married, and do not assist them to do so, and they themselves are incapable of meeting the costs associated with it, then the True Lord *Glorified is He* describes to them an appropriate remedy, this being virtuous abstinence (*al-ist'faf*). Allah *Glorified is He* has requested of the Islamic society, whether represented in legal guardians or in the general society, to take resolute action in the matter of unmarried persons, and to help them with marriage. But if the community does not assume its role and these unmarried persons do not have their own means to get married, and then each one of them should strive for virtuous abstinence until Allah enriches them. This goes to show that ordained legislation builds up its laws, which take every situation into account, regardless of whether everyone complies or disobeys.

Concerning His utterance: ‘...let them live in continence...’ (*an-Nur*: 33), this means they should earnestly attempt abstinence and strive for it and seek its supporting causes (*asbab*), and to make a serious endeavour to be chaste and virtuous. Now, the first means for attaining abstinence is for him to lower his gaze when he sees a desirable member of the opposite sex, thus, he will

not be exposed to causes of agitation and excitement. And if he finds in himself manly vigour (*futuwa*) and strength, he should reign them in, and weaken them by lawful means as the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘O you people of youth, whoever among you has the necessary means (*al-ba’a*), that is, to provide for married life, then he should get married, and whoever cannot find [such means], then he should fast, for this is a way of reducing sexual desire.’⁽¹⁾ Fasting works to abate this sensual craving and to calm the intensity of the instinct. This is because he eats only the bare minimum to sustain himself, and his body is rid of what excites sensual craving, as reflected in the Noble Hadith: ‘Small morsels [of nourishment] for a man are adequate to maintain his backbone straight...’⁽²⁾.

Another approach would be for the youth to apply himself fully to useful, profitable work which will pre-occupy him and drain his capacity and strength. If the latter is not directed towards the good, it will be directed towards the bad. It is through work that a youth consolidates his personality, and develops self-confidence, and earns lawful wages, which with the passing of time will encourage him to get married and to assume his responsibilities. For this reason, He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...let them live in continence...’ (*an-Nur*: 33), but He did not say: let them be continent. For the meaning of the Arabic word (*yasta’fif*) is to pursue the path of chastity and abstention for himself, and to strive towards it. This man does by preventing arousal through looking and calming the intensity of the instinct with fasting, or with work, so that his time is pre-occupied and he returns home at the end of the day exhausted wishing only to sleep in order to get up the next morning for work energetically. And in this way, he will find no opportunity for something which might anger Allah.

Concerning: ‘...those who are unable to marry...’ (*an-Nur*: 33), it means they cannot find within themselves the capacity, or from their community the necessary assistance to do so.

(1) This Hadith was narrated by both Al-Bukhari (5065) and Muslim (1400).

(2) This Hadith is excerpted from a longer Hadith narrated by Ahmad ibn-Hanbal (4/132) and At-Tirmidhi (2380) with slightly different wording, but same meaning in the context of the fault of overeating.

As for His utterance: ‘...until Allah grants them sufficiency out of his bounty...’ (*an-Nur*: 33), it signifies that virtuous abstinence (*al-ist’af*) is one of the means of self-sufficiency. This is because virtuous abstinence arises from the will to be Allah-fearing (*iradat at-taqwa*), and He *Glorified is He* has said in a Quranic passage: ‘...And unto everyone who is conscious of Allah, He [always] grants a way out [of unhappiness], and provides for him in a manner beyond all expectation...’ (*at-Talaq*: 2-3). So, through this door the riches of Allah come to him.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘...And if any of those whom you rightfully possess desire [to obtain] a deed of freedom, write it out for them if you are aware of any good in them: and give them [their share] of the wealth of Allah which He has given you’. (*an-Nur*: 33) Concerning the Arabic word (*al-kitab*) [translated here as: a deed of freedom], it is well known that it comprises a variety of things which are written on paper. The intended meaning here is a mutually agreed upon contract (*al-mukataba*) consisting of a written contract between you and an owned slave in which you stipulate conditions that he work for you for such-and-such a period, after which is to be granted his freedom, if he has fulfilled what was stated in the mutually agreed upon contract.

As for the statement: ‘...write it out for them if you are aware of any good in them...’ (*an-Nur*: 33), this means that if their freedom will lead to good, it is as if you are removing from them the servility (*dhilla*) of slavery, and permitting them to work actively in life pursuing an activity that corresponds to their talents.

It is for this reason that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has rendered this mutual contract a channel of the channels of obligatory alms (*az-zakat*), hence He *Glorified is He* said: ‘...and spends his substance...for the freeing of human beings from bondage...’ (*al-Baqara*: 177), that is to say, the owned slaves whom we wish to release their necks from the chains of slavery and its humiliation (*dhull*) by granting them freedom. And if the money of obligatory alms (*az-zakat*) is given to the poor and indigent, etc., then in the case of slaves (*ar-riqab*), the money is paid to the master so that he will grant freedom to his slave.

Similarly, Islam made the freeing of slaves a means of amends for certain sins between the slave, in the sense of piously devoted servant, and his Lord. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* wishes to abolish this phenomenon.

With regard to: ‘...and give them [their share] of the wealth of Allah which He has given you...’ (*an-Nur*: 33), the True Lord *the Exalted* is the Provider (*Ar-Razaq*), and wealth is in truth the wealth of Allah. However, if he gives you ownership and asks you to give to your poor brother, he respects your ownership and He *Glorified is He* does not aim to take back his gift to you. Hence he takes from you charity and alms (*as-sadaqa*) as if it were a loan which the impoverished person does not repay, but rather, your Lord *the Exalted* assumes responsibility for repaying it. Thus, He says: ‘...Who is it that will offer up unto Allah a goodly loan...’ (*al-Baqara*: 245), and He *Glorified is He* did not say: give a loan to someone; instead, Allah is given the loan. For He *the Exalted* is the Creator, and among the rights of His slave whom he brought into existence is that He provides for him, and that He guarantees him his sustenance.

Respect for private ownership causes the human being to feel assured about the effects of his life’s activity and the fruit of his toil, and that these will revert unto him. Otherwise, what would be the point of working and exerting efforts if its fruit were lost and he who earned them was deprived of them? In such a case, many interests would be hindered, and the individual would work only according to the extent of his need, and he would produce no surplus for charity.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...And do not, in order to gain some of the fleeting pleasures of this worldly life, coerce your [slave] maidens into whoredom if they happen to be desirous of marriage; and if anyone should coerce them, then, verily, after they have been compelled [to submit in their helplessness], Allah will be Forgiving, Merciful!’ (*an-Nur*: 33)

A male owned slave (*mamluk*) is called a youth (*fata*) and a female owned slave is called a maiden (*fatah*) as the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* specifically forbade that a man should say: my slave (‘*abdi*’)⁽¹⁾ and my slave

(1) A Hadith to this effect was narrated by Al-Bukhari (2552) and Muslim (2249) as related by Abu-Hurayra.

girl (*amati*), but instead, he should say my youth (*fataya*) and my maiden (*fatati*), for these appellations are more honourable for these, and more refined. The Arabic word (*al-fata*) is related to virility (*al-futuwa*) and strength, as if you were saying: this is my strength which helps me and assists me in the affairs of life. Thus, the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* wished to raise their standing. From such slaves came the group of Mamelukes (*al-mamalik*) who ruled Egypt at one time and they were of the offspring of kings, sultans, and noblemen.

Prostitution was a phenomenon which was widespread at the coming of Islam. A man who owned a group of slave-girls would put up a banner for them, to signify their presence, and young men would come to them, and he would take the price for himself. Among [these owners of houses of prostitution] was 'Abdullah ibn-Ubayy ibn-Salul, the chief of hypocrisy, and he had two [such slave-girls] called Miskina and Mu'adha, and it was concerning him that this verse was revealed.⁽¹⁾ The interpretation (*ta'wil*) of the verse is this: Do not force slave-girls into prostitution, as they may weep and refuse this act, and they may be harmed and subject to offensive taunting (*ghamz*) and defamation (*lamz*), and they may suffer insolence on the part of people. Among these slave-girls were ladies of good, noble lineage, but whom fate led to captivity through wars and other occurrences. At the same time a free, chaste noblewoman could go about without anyone causing her any harm or insult.

As regards the meaning of: '...if they happen to be desirous of marriage...' (*an-Nur*: 33), here the Quran is speaking of the reality since if they did not desire to be chaste, then they would not have been coerced. Concerning: '...in order to gain some of the fleeting pleasures of this worldly life...' (*an-Nur*: 33), it means seeking a small amount of transient money. Finally, the end of the

(1) [The famed early Hadith scholar] Zuhri said: 'Abdullah ibn-Ubayy ibn-Salul had a slave-girl called Mu'adha whom he forced into fornication, then Islam came and [the verse] was revealed "And do not... coerce your [slave] maidens into whoredom..." (*an-Nur*: 33). This was narrated by Al-Bazzar in his (*Musnad*) (cited by Ibn-Kathir in his *Tafsir* 3/288). According to another Hadith scholar Al-A'mash, whose narrations corroborates the context of the revelation of the verse in question, the name of the slave-girl was Miskina.

verse: ‘...and if anyone should coerce them, then, verily, after they have been compelled [to submit in their helplessness], Allah will be Forgiving, Merciful!’ (*an-Nur*: 33), it is to be understood that they are in a state of being coerced into prostitution and, therefore, have lost the condition of choice. Therefore, they do not bear the sin of this crime, based on the Noble Prophetic Hadith, ‘My community of believers is absolved of unintentional error, forgetfulness, and that which they are forced to do.’⁽¹⁾

Hence, the True Lord *the Exalted* reassures those who desire protection (*at-tahassun*) and virtuous chastity but are forced by their masters into whoredom, compelling them by any means, as if Allah were telling them: rest assured for you have committed no sin in this case, and you will be forgiven, and Allah is forgiving, and Most Merciful.

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

وَلَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا إِلَيْكُمْ آيَاتٍ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ وَمَثَلًا مِّنَ الَّذِينَ
خَلَوْا مِن قَبْلِكُمْ وَمَوْعِظَةً لِّلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٣٤﴾

**We have sent verses down to you [people] clarifying the
right path, examples of those who passed away before
you, and advice for those who are mindful of God [34]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 34)**

The meaning here is: you have no excuse because Allah *the Exalted* has sent down to you manifestly clear verses which guarantee you nobility and probity of life, and the purity of the offspring of the vicegerent of Allah on earth. There is not a thing of the affairs of life, but these verses have addressed it and have revealed a regulation concerning it. You may have had an excuse had there been any issue or affair in your life that is not encompassed or regulated by this divinely ordained legislation (*at-tashri*’).

For this reason, Imam ‘Ali *may Allah honour him* said about the Quran: in it there are laws governing your interaction, and information on what happened

(1) This Hadith was narrated with slightly different wording by Ibn-Majah (2045), *Al-Darqutni* (4/170) and *Al-Hakim* (2/198).

before you, and prediction of what will happen after you; it is the ultimate criterion of discernment (*al-fasl*) without any jest (*laysa bi-l-hazl*); whoever of the haughty and tyrannical abandons it, Allah will shatter; and whoever seeks guidance in other than it, Allah shall lead astray.⁽¹⁾

Time continues to confirm the veracity of this utterance. Look around and you will find conflicts of views, schools of thought (*al-madhahib*), political parties (*al-ahzab*) and countries which are all based on principles against Islam, whether they be malicious capitalism or malicious communism, etc. All of them have collapsed, no longer heeded by anyone. Yes, whoever of the haughty and tyrannical abandons it, Allah will shatter, and whoever seeks guidance in other than it, Allah shall lead astray because He is your Creator, and He is more aware of what is good for you. So, therefore, it is not fitting that you should take possession of the creation of Allah and then display arrogance towards Him and lay down laws based on your own whim and design.

We have previously said: the Arabic word (*ayat*) is used with three significations: the cosmic signs which draw your attention to the Unique Maker *the Exalted* and with reference to the miracles (*al-mu'jizat*) which come to prove the veracity of the Messenger in his conveyance of the message from Allah. Finally, the term applies to verses bearing laws, and these are the verses of the Noble Quran, and in the Quran there are all of these.

And in His utterance: '...and [many] a lesson from [the stories of] those who have passed away before you, and [many] an admonition to the God-conscious.' (*an-Nur*: 34) Allah provided you with admonition and moral lesson in the peoples who came before you. They reached the summit of civilization, and yet did not possess the constituent elements for survival, and did not fashion for themselves the immunity (*al-mana'a*) to preserve it, so it collapsed. And nothing remains of them except vestiges, such as those we see now of the ancient Egyptians who had attained a level of civilization which astonishes the advanced modern scholar. These latter come now full of wonderment: how did the ancient Egyptians achieve this civilization?

(1) Cited by Ibn-Kathir in his (*Tafsir*) (3/289)

Even greater than the civilization of the Pharaohs was that of ‘Ad about which Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘Are you not aware of how your Lord has dealt with [the tribe of] ‘Ad, [the people of] Iram the many-pillared, the like of whom has never been reared in all the land?’ (*al-Fajr*: 6-8), in other words, it has no parallel in the entire world, ‘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: and therefore your Lord let loose upon them a scourge of suffering for, verily, your Lord is ever on the watch!’ (*al-Fajr*: 10-14) That is to say, not one of the transgressors shall escape, and the disbeliever shall not be saved from the punishment of Allah.

The parable is the same in the question of adultery and slandering chaste, virtuous women, like the incident of the calumny which has already been discussed, as it was an example and moral lesson. Similarly, the story of Maryam *peace be upon her* was an example, as her people had wrongly accused her, saying: ‘O sister of Aaron! Your father was not a wicked man, nor was your mother a loose woman!’ (*Maryam*: 28)

Likewise, was the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* and the wife of Al-‘Aziz, all of them being issues related to honour, and there was no avoidance of slandering virtuous chaste women or the upright and pure Yusuf son of Ya’qub (Jacob) *peace be upon them*.

These verses are evident proofs of higher existence (*al-wujud al-a’la*) in cosmic verses, clear proofs of the veracity of the Messenger (*al-muballigh*) from Allah concerning miracles, clear proofs of the laws which regulate the activity of life in the verses of the Quran. Then we have shown them the final end of previous peoples (*al-umam as-sabiqa*) whether of those who approached Allah with obedience, or those who turned away from Him in disobedience. And none derives benefit from these admonitions and moral lessons except the righteous who fears Allah and in whom the admonition bears fruit.

اللَّهُ نُورُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ مِثْلُ نُورِهِ كَمِشْكُوفٍ فِيهَا مِصْبَاحٌ الْيَصْبِاحُ فِي زُجَاجَةٍ
 الزُّجَاجَةُ كَأَنَّهَا كَوْكَبٌ دُرِّيٌّ يُوقَدُ مِنْ شَجَرَةٍ مُبَارَكَةٍ زَيْتُونَةٍ لَا شَرْقِيَّةٍ وَلَا غَرْبِيَّةٍ
 يَكَادُ زَيْتُهَا يُضِيءُ وَلَوْ لَمْ تَمْسَسْهُ نَارٌ نُورٌ عَلَى نُورٍ يَهْدِي اللَّهُ لِنُورِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
 وَيَضْرِبُ اللَّهُ الْأَمْثَلَ لِلنَّاسِ لِلنَّاسِ وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ

God is the Light of the heavens and earth. His Light is like this: there is a niche, and in it a lamp, the lamp inside a glass, a glass like a glittering star, fuelled from a blessed olive tree from neither east nor west, whose oil almost gives light even when no fire touches it – light upon light – God guides whoever He will to his Light; God draws such comparisons for people; God has full knowledge of everything [35] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 35)

We have said that Allah *the Exalted* has given us sensory light by which we see perceptible things, and has made it a vehicle of spiritual light. We have also said that when the world becomes dark each one of us makes light for himself according to his capabilities and possibilities for making light, and that as soon as the sun rises and Allah lights up existence, each of us extinguishes his light, since the light of Allah is sufficient. So, just as the light of Allah is sufficient for material things, likewise is His light sufficient for moral and spiritual things (*al-ma'nawiyat*).

So if Allah has ordained a moral law which regulates the activity of life, then you should beware of rejecting it on the basis of something of your own design. Just as you have put out your sensory lanterns before His lanterns, likewise you should also extinguish your moral lanterns before His laws and commands. This matter is evident in cosmic verses.

‘Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). As we say, to Allah belongs the highest allegory (*al-mathal al-a'la*): so-and-so has lit up the room with his presence. The verse does not provide us with a definition of God; instead, it makes us aware of His influence upon us. For He *Glorified is He* is the Illuminator (*al-munawwir*) of the heavens and the earth, and these are the vastest things we can imagine, inasmuch as all things in them are clear, not hidden.

Then our Lord *the Exalted* gives us an explanatory allegory for His light, saying: ‘...The parable of His light is, as it were, that of a niche containing a lamp...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). That is to say, the parable of His illumination of the heavens and the earth ‘...is, as it were, that of a niche...’ (*an-Nur*: 35) and this is an alcove which people in former times used to set in walls, a non-piercing aperture in which they used to place a lantern or lamp. This niche confined the light and concentrated it in an area so that it would become strong and no shadow was cast in front of the flow of light.

As for the lamp: this was a small container in which oil and in later times kerosene was placed, and in the middle of it was a wick which absorbed the oil and thus remained lit. But if the wick were exposed to drafts of air, [they] would play with it and its light would dissipate, and this would cause smoke, since it would get more air than it needed for combustion. For this reason, they put a barrier of glass around the wick, to keep drafts from it, and then the light coming from it would be clear without smoke.

In this way the oil lamp evolved and its light was enhanced and its efficiency increased. Related to this is His utterance: ‘...the lamp is [enclosed] in glass...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). However, this is not ordinary glass, rather, it is glass ‘...[shining] like a radiant star...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). In other words, a star of pearls (*ad-dur*), and pearls give off light of themselves.

Likewise for its oil, it is no ordinary oil, rather, it is oil of a blessed olive tree. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...like a glittering star, fuelled from a blessed olive tree from neither east nor west...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). If a tree is in the east or the west, it must experience darkness when the sun sets in either direction. This olive tree is neither from the east nor from the west; it belongs to both, so nothing blocks light from it. This continuous light affects its oil; so, in terms of its purity and lustre, it: ‘...almost gives light even when no fire touches it...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). It is the oil of a tree that is never blocked from the light of the sun. The light it produces befits its unique status and magnificence. The sun lights the world, and this olive tree derives its light from this unending source, for the light of the sun never leaves it.

Such is the likeness of Allah’s illumination of the heavens and earth, as perfect as this depiction. Just think of a lamp with such qualities. Now think

of the heavens and earth in the same way: would there be any dark spot in or on them? It is important to underline that this parable is not set forth to portray the Light of Allah, but only to portray His illumination of the heavens and earth. As for His Light, that is another thing beyond description. The parable here is only meant to bring the matter closer to the human mind for easier comprehension

We have previously mentioned the poet Abu Tammam who extolled the caliph in the following remarkable verses:

Brave as Amr, generous as Hatim,
Lenient as Ahnaf, shrewd as 'Iyas.

The poet eulogised the caliph by likening him to the most famous Arabs who were known for those noble traits. However, since no one is safe from criticism, one of Abu Tammam's hate-filled rivals said, 'How can you compare the caliph to the wandering idlers of the Arabs? The prince is above the ones you have mentioned!' To this criticism, Abu Tammam made this witty addition to the previous verses, in the same metre and rhyme (in the original Arabic verses):

Blame me not for comparing him to his inferiors
Even though he is matchless in worth and power,
For Allah has drawn a parable for His Light
With some of His creatures: a niche and a lantern!

Allah is the Light of the heavens and earth; He is the One who illuminates them. The light of the sun, the moment it rises upon the world, is so overwhelming that no other light appears alongside it. The lights of the other planets and stars disappear, vanquished by the light of the sun. A poet⁽¹⁾ once said in his eulogy of someone:

You are like the sun while other kings are planets!
Your splendid light blocks all their lights!

(1) This poet is An-Nabigha.

After drawing that parable, Allah says: ‘...light upon light...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). Besides the material light by which Allah illuminates the world, He has also sent down to us His guidance, the light which illuminates the soul. He has revealed to us through His Prophets His ordinance by which to set our lives to rights. Thus, He has sent to us light upon light: the material light and the spiritual light. Just as the former is essential for life on earth, the latter is likewise essential for the life of our hearts. Is it plausible to put out the sun and replace it by man-made sources of light? Similarly, no one who has sound understanding would find it reasonable to replace the perfect Law of Allah with imperfect man-made laws.

Allah says after that: ‘...Allah guides whoever He wills to His Light...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). The word “Light” here refers to the spiritual light, the light of the Straight Path He has revealed to us. The light which illuminates the material world is available for everyone, but the light of Divine Guidance is granted only to those who choose faith. The disbelievers have no share in this light. They closed their eyes, ears and hearts, so did not receive the Light of Allah. They should have understood that this spiritual light is no less important than the material light that illuminates the world. It is impossible to do without it. Companion ‘Ali ibn Abu Taleb said about Divine Guidance, ‘Whoever abandons it out of haughtiness, Allah will rout him, and whoever seeks guidance in other than it, Allah will lead him astray’.

The more one gives himself over to devotion to Allah, the more the light increases in his soul. Allah says: ‘Believers, if you remain mindful of Allah, He will give you a criterion [to tell right from wrong]...’ (*al-Anfal*: 29), He also says: ‘While as for those who accept guidance, He increases their guidance and bestows on them their piety’ (*Muhammad*: 17).

Back to the verse we are examining; Allah then says: ‘...Allah draws such comparisons for people...’ (*an-Nur*: 35). Allah means to teach us moral lessons and give us admonitions through such parables, for ‘...Allah has full knowledge of everything’ (*an-Nur*: 35).

Allah says in the following verse:

﴿ ٣٦ ﴾ فِي بُيُوتٍ أُذِنَ لِلَّهِ أَنْ تَرْفَعَ وَيَذْكُرَ فِيهَا أَسْمُهُ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ فِيهَا بِالْغُدُوِّ وَالْآصَالِ

Shining out in houses of worship. God has ordained that they be raised high and that His name be remembered in them, with men in them celebrating His glory morning and evening [36] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 36)

The verse begins with an adjectival clause: ‘Shining out in houses of worship...’ (*an-Nur*: 36). There has to be a noun, therefore, that is modified by this clause. By looking into the structure of the verses, this clause modifies the light described in the previous verse. This light shines out in houses of worship which Allah has commanded to be raised high. A house is one’s private place on which one depends for living a settled life. It is where one seeks shelter after the toil of the day. In it, one has ample opportunity to separate oneself from others and enjoy personal privacy. It is an essential need of life, as no human being would be content to live in a public place with other unrelated people. Everyone necessarily needs to seclude themselves in a place that belongs to them, a place where all the noise of life is hushed. This need is intrinsic to the natural human disposition. Not only does a family need seclusion from society, but every member of a family would also desire at times to lock himself up in his own room. A home is a covering, like one’s clothes. Everyone has things which he does not want anyone to know about.

The ‘houses of worship’ mentioned in the verse are the houses of Allah. He has taken up a house on earth, the first house of worship established for people, as Allah says: ‘the first House [of worship] to be established for people was the one at Mecca.’⁽¹⁾ It is a blessed place...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 96). This is the House of Allah by the choice of Allah. Then, the houses of Allah, chosen by His servants, multiplied. Mosques are the houses of worship ‘...Allah has ordained that they be raised high and that His Name be remembered in them...’ (*an-Nur*: 36).

Since all of us are the servants of Allah, anyone of us would find comfort in His house just as he would find comfort in his own house, even though

(1) The original reads *Bakka* which was an old name for Mecca.

nothing can be compared to the tranquillity and peace that overwhelms the soul at the houses of Allah. The comfort in your house stems from material luxury, a comfortable living room, or a kitchen well stocked with food. As for the comfort in the house of Allah, it is purely spiritual. Allah cannot be seen, but we are sure He is there, and so is comfort in His houses: it is based on non-material things that cannot be seen, but felt. Whenever he faced a momentous matter, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would betake himself to *salat* (prayer)⁽¹⁾ to lay his burdens before his Lord. What would you say about a machine which is displayed for examination before its maker once every day? Would there remain in it any defect or imperfection? How, then, about one who stands before His Lord and Creator five times a day? Would there remain in his soul any impurity?

Allah calls us to His houses in order to give us comfort and relieve us of our worries. He wants us to stand before Him in *salat* (prayer) to mend that which has been broken in our souls and put peace in our hearts. Hence, this light upon light referred to in the verse cannot be found except in the houses of Allah, which He has ordained to be raised high and His Name to be remembered in them through observing the acts of worship He has prescribed. What elevates the houses of Allah is the obedience of His servants manifested through the acts of worship they observe therein. Any other houses are apt to witness acts of disobedience to Him, but the houses of Allah are made to witness only devotion to Him by His pious servants. Allah has made His houses exalted so no one is ever permitted to desecrate them by sinning or even wasting his precious time in them by engaging in frivolous matters or anything but worship. It is incumbent on one, therefore, to leave the mundane world at the door of the mosque, just as he leaves his shoes, and let nothing dissuade him from worship.

For example, Islam forbids that we conduct business transactions in the houses of Allah or exploit them to publicize a commodity, look for something lost (by using the microphones of a mosque to announce loss of that thing or a reward for whoever finds it, etc.), or to fulfil any such worldly gains. Allah would not bless any such attempts at seeking the gains of the life of this world

(1) *A Hadith to this effect is cited by Ahmad (5/388) and Abu Dawud (1319).*

in His houses that should be strictly confined to displaying devotion to Him through worship. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered us to say to whoever exploits the mosque to find an object he has lost, 'May Allah not return it to him'.⁽¹⁾

Allah has made the entire earth a place fit for observing *salat* (prayer) and a means of attaining ritual purity – through *tayammum* (dry ritual cleansing using dust) – for all Muslims. Still, there is a difference between praying at a mosque and praying in any other place. The mosque is particularly made for worship, a place where we should not engage in worldly matters. As for other places, they are generally suitable for praying and also for the pursuit of worldly affairs. We already give most of our time to managing businesses and affairs of our worldly lives. Can a few minutes, then, be too much for worship? Can we not dedicate the short time we spend at the mosque only to showing devotion to Allah? The houses of Allah are established only for worship, so should we not be mindful of this? A believer should leave the mundane world outside the mosque and direct his intention only to showing obedience to Allah through performing acts of worship. One's time at the mosque should be fully dedicated to glorifying Allah by remembering Him and worshipping Him. It is not appropriate to be in Allah's house and be occupied with other than Him.

Whoever bears in mind these rulings pertaining to the houses of Allah is the one who receives from Allah '...light upon light...' (*an-Nur*: 35). These are the ones who are granted relief from worry and distress, and Allah spares them the trouble of this life.

Allah has made faith innate in the natural human disposition. Everyone is born with faith already established in his soul. This is the nature Allah has created in us, however much most people may try to deny it. One may reject faith, or even deny the Existence of Allah. However, the moment he is

(1) *It is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayrah that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'If you see someone selling or buying at the mosque, say, "May Allah efface your transaction". If you see someone exploiting the mosque to announce a lost property, say, "May Allah not return it to you."'* [Cited by An-Nasa'i in his 'Amal Al-Yawm wa Al-Laya (p.73), Ad-Darimi (1/326) and At-Tirmidhi (1321)].

exposed to trouble and finds no one to help, he would spontaneously turn to Allah and implore His assistance. He would not deceive himself in such a situation or persist in his defiance of the truth, but he would invoke the One Who can truly help him and save him. In this regard, Allah says: ‘When man suffers some affliction, he prays to his Lord and turns to Him, but once he has been granted a favour from Allah, he forgets the One he had been praying to and sets up rivals to Allah...’ (*az-Zumar*: 8).

So observance of worship has priority over worldly matters. Allah conveys this meaning to us with absolute precision in His words: ‘Believers! When the call to prayer is made on the day of congregation, hurry towards the reminder of Allah and leave off your trading...’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 9). The original Arabic text of this verse uses the word *bay*’ (here rendered as ‘trading’) which literally means ‘selling’. Forbidding selling necessarily entails forbidding buying as well, but why does Allah mention selling in particular? One might be reluctant to buy a thing. Buying means spending money, but selling means earning money. Selling concludes most activities designed to earn wealth in this world... Commerce, agriculture, manufacturing, or any other activities are concluded by the sale of the product. Once the prayer is finished, Allah commands us to resume our worldly activities: ‘Then when the Prayer has ended, disperse in the land and seek out Allah’s bounty...’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 10).

One needs to go to the mosque to get what we may call ‘spiritual recharge’, to renew one’s energy to resume his activities and boost his productivity to promote his life. When your Lord orders you to leave off everything and devote yourself to the observance of the prayer, He does not mean to obstruct you from the activities of life. Rather, this is meant to refuel your soul so you can resume those activities in compliance with the commands of Allah. The time dedicated to worshipping Allah at His House is so similar, in its effect on the heart and soul of a believer, to recharging a battery. When you connect a battery to the charging device, this is not taking it out of service, but it increases its efficiency in performing its function.

A believer goes to the house of Allah driven by faith and keenness to respond to the call to prayer. At the mosque, Allah bestows on him ample light out of His bounty and such is the immediate reward of those devoted to

Him. Allah has drawn for us a parable of His Light with a lamp whose light grows and ascends because it is in a glass which intensifies its light. It is like a pearly star whose light shines more brightly, for it is lit by the oil of an olive tree that is neither of the east nor the west. Hence, we have before us many hues (of meaning) in the parable, and likewise for the light in the houses of Allah which He bestows on those devoted to Him. It has been said that just as people of the earth see sparkling stars in the sky, the angels in the sky see sparkling stars on the earth: these are the houses of Allah. This is not surprising, since they are the lights of Allah sparkling in His houses. The light of the sun is so great that it reflects on the surface of the moon and casts light upon the world, and these are only things created by Allah. How then about the Light of Allah which shines in His houses? Would He not give use that radiance which surpasses the radiance of full moons? Allah then says: ‘...with men in them celebrating His glory morning and evening’ (*an-Nur*: 36). Mosques have been established for exalting Allah and glorifying His Name. At one time, it was the habit of pious men that when one of them wanted to travel somewhere, he would strive to reach it before the appointed time of any of the five daily prayers. Once he arrived at his destination, he would go to a mosque: if he found it full of people exalting the Name of Allah, he would know that they were devoted to the ordinance of Allah, for they were sitting at the mosque before the time of the prayer, glorifying Allah and waiting for the call to the prayer to be proclaimed. If he found the mosque almost empty, he would depart from that place, knowing that it was a town in which there was no good.⁽¹⁾ The verse says: ‘...morning and evening...’ (*an-Nur*: 36) which means the mosque is never void of people remembering Allah and celebrating His glory. Those who thus fill the houses of Allah with His remembrance are described as being:

(1) *In his Quranic Exegesis (6/4812), Al-Qurtubi narrated, ‘Salim ibn Abdullah saw people of market places as they eagerly went to the prayer, so he said, “These are those whom Allah refers to in His words: “Men who are not distracted, either by commerce or profit, from remembering Allah...” (an-Nur: 37).”’ Then, Al-Qurtubi said, ‘Scholars have differed regarding the description of those who glorify Him. They said they are those who carefully observe the commands of Allah, seek to please Him, and are not distracted from the prayer and remembrance of Allah by anything of the affairs of the world.’*

رِجَالٌ لَا لُتْهِمِهِمْ تِجَارَةٌ وَلَا بَيْعٌ عَنْ ذِكْرِ اللَّهِ وَإِقَامِ الصَّلَاةِ وَإِيتَاءِ
الزَّكَاةِ يَخَافُونَ يَوْمًا تَتَقَلَّبُ فِيهِ الْقُلُوبُ وَلَا تَبْصُرُ

**Men who are not distracted, either by commerce or profit,
from remembering God, keeping up the prayer, and paying
the prescribed alms, fearing a day when hearts and eyes will
turn over [37] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 37)**

We have already pointed out that selling is tempting and it is the conclusion of almost all production or work activities. In any field, a product is released for sale for profits to be made. Those described in the verse are men who are making profits through selling without being distracted them from the remembrance of Allah because they are aware Allah will bless their time and whatever works they are engaged in because of the time they devote to His remembrance and worship in His houses.

The verse may also be interpreted in another way. The men described in the verse are not distracted by trading from remembering Allah, for even when they are busy doing their work, they are not neglectful of the remembrance of Allah. When we were young, we would hear merchants in market places, in the midst of their conversations with customers, reiterating prayers like, ‘There is no god but Allah’, ‘Peace and blessings be upon Prophet Muhammad’, etc. Rarely now do we hear such forms of remembering Allah repeated among people at markets. Everyone is immersed in his trade and focused only on making money however he can. Most traders depend on eye-catching displays and publicity, some even on cheating and swindling. We almost no longer hear the Name of Allah mentioned in this context among traders and customers. At one time, even when the sale was not concluded, you would hear the merchant still praise Allah and invoke a blessing on His Prophet. This in itself is profit, even if no material profit was made through selling.

In the verse, Allah says: ‘Men who are not distracted... from... keeping up the prayer, and paying the prescribed Alms...’ (*an-Nur*: 37). Five mandatory prayers are ordained daily which take some time to observe. Some are too preoccupied by their jobs and businesses that they begrudge any time given to observing their duty to Allah. They think performing the prayers would waste

their time and affect the progress of their work. Similarly, some view obligatory Alms (*zakat*) as something which decreases one's wealth, but this is a faulty understanding. When a farmer takes a measure of wheat seeds from his store in order to plant them in his land, is it plausible to say that his seed stock has been diminished by a measure? No, for this measure will be multiplied at harvest time many times over.

A believer who is constant in observing the prayer receives light from Allah Who blesses his time so that he will accomplish more work than someone who abandons the prayer. Allah will open for him channels that yield far more profits than he expects. Allah's blessings come in different forms. Sometimes they are manifested in ample provisions that He grants to His servant. Sometimes Allah deprives His servant from a thing he desires out of His Wisdom, and this is also a blessing from Him, although in disguise. All of these are lights that Allah showers on those who adhere firmly to His Straight Path.

Allah concludes the verse by describing the state of those who are never distracted from remembering Him, saying: '...fearing a Day when hearts and eyes will turn over' (*an-Nur*: 37). People who care only about the life of this world immerse themselves in commerce aiming at maintaining their material gains. As for those described in the verse, they engage in commerce with Allah, a transaction that never fails to be profitable, both in this life and in the Hereafter.

If you compare the time of your temporal life with the time of your Afterlife, the former is sure to be found like dust without value, as if it were only an imagined period of time of an imagined life. No one knows when death will surprise him. As for the Hereafter, it is a certain life, an eternal one. Enjoyments here are transient, but in the Hereafter, eternal happiness awaits the righteous. So they work for the Hereafter: '...fearing a Day when hearts and eyes will turn over' (*an-Nur*: 37). Let me comment on the structure here. The verse says 'fearing the day', yet it means, 'fearing what will happen on that day'. This is like when a student says, 'I was afraid of the examination day' which means he was afraid of the examination itself. Thus, the word 'Day' is used, while what is meant is the events of the Day. As for this verse we are reflecting on, it is punishment on that Day which these men fear.

Allah says that on that Day: ‘...hearts and eyes will turn over’ (*an-Nur*: 37). This refers to the violent trembling of the heart and its powerful palpitation on that Day. Events in this life may be terrifying enough to cause heart palpitations,; what about the Day of Judgement, then? The terror of the Hereafter is unimaginable. Likewise, eyes are thrown into disarray. A man will shift his gaze from here to there; when he sees a terrifying thing which strikes fear in him, he will jump about, looking here and there that he might see something to reassure him and relieve him of what he has seen. However, he will only see another terrifying sight, more ominous and more grievous. ‘Downcast will be their eyes...’ (*al-Qalam*: 43). ‘On that Day will [men’s] hearts be throbbing [and] their eyes downcast’ (*an-Nazi‘at*: 8-9)? There will be no escape and no security. On that Day, none will find security except those who have prepared for it by doing righteous deeds. On examination day, a diligent student is confident and hopeful. The idle lose themselves in fear and bewilderment.

Having described those who are never distracted from remembering Allah, Allah describes their reward in the following verse:

لِيَجْزِيَهمُ اللَّهُ أَحْسَنَ مَا عَمِلُوا وَيَزِيدَهُم مِّن فَضْلِهِ
وَاللَّهُ يَرْزُقُ مَن يَشَاءُ بِغَيْرِ حِسَابٍ



**God will reward such people according to the best of
their actions, and He will give them more of His bounty:**

God provides limitlessly for anyone He will [38]

(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 38)

On that Day, Allah will recompense them on the basis of the best that they had done in life. How marvellous is the Mercy of Allah! What about their misdeeds? This is left to the Mercy of Allah and His Forgiveness: ‘...He will give them more of His bounty...’ (*an-Nur*: 38). Allah does not recompense the righteous based on His Justice; He does not give them what is exactly equivalent to their good deeds. Rather, He treats them based on His Bounty. He grants them ample reward out of His Bounty. Among reported supplications is this one, ‘O Allah, treat us with Your Bounty, not Your Justice. Treat us

with Your Beneficence, not based on our scales (of good and bad deeds).' No one would have any hope of salvation were it not for Allah's Mercy and Bounty. Allah says: 'Say [Prophet], "In Allah's grace and mercy let them rejoice: these are better than all they accumulate"' (Yunus: 58).

Allah concludes the verse by saying: '...Allah (provides) limitlessly for anyone He wills' (*an-Nur*: 38). Allah grants *rizq* (from which *yarzuqu* is derived) to whoever He chooses. This Arabic word has a far wider and more profound meaning than the usual English translation: 'provision'. It includes everything in which there is benefit to you. Accordingly, health is *rizq*; knowledge is *rizq*; forbearance is *rizq*; courage is *rizq*, etc. it is not confined to money or material gains only, but includes all that is advantageous to you. It is part of showing gratitude to Allah that we give out of whatever *rizq* He bestows on us. If Allah grants you knowledge, teach the ignorant. If He gives you power, help the weak. If He endows you with discernment and forbearance, be patient with fools. If He grants you talent and skill, use them to perfection and let them be in the service of those who are wanting in them. Your Lord grants you blessings limitlessly and provides you with abundance out of His Bounty. Give, then, to those in need and give out of what you have to the destitute. All blessings come from Allah; we are only recipients, not makers of blessings. When Allah grants you ample blessings, always remember that you are only the Hand of Allah stretched out for His servants. You are a means by which He means to provide for others. When you give, you give from treasuries that are never exhausted. There is no reason, then, to be miserly, for what you possess must be used up, and what Allah possesses is endless, everlasting.

When a mortal gives to others, he has to calculate what he has in his possession to know how much he may give. When it comes to Allah, His Treasuries are abundant. Therefore, He gives His servants limitlessly. He may grant us things we do not seek, reach for, or even deserve. Have you never seen someone who stumbles and finds a treasure under his feet?

On the other hand, Allah describes the deeds and final fate of the disbelievers. He says:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَلُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ يَفِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْآنُ مَاءً حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءَهُ لَمْ
يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا وَوَجَدَ اللَّهَ عِنْدَهُ فَوَفَّاهُ حِسَابَهُ وَاللَّهُ سَرِيعُ الْحِسَابِ ﴿٣٩﴾

But the deeds of those who disbelieve are like a mirage in a desert: the thirsty person thinks there will be water but, when he gets there, he finds only God, who pays him his account in full – God is swift in reckoning [39] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 39)

This is meant to attract the attention of those who give themselves over to the life of this world to the detriment of the Hereafter; they do many good deeds, but do not devote their intention in doing them to Allah. What makes good deeds fruitful is that they are done only for the aim of pleasing Allah. Those who forget this truth will have to face it on the Day of Judgement. It will be said to each of them, ‘You did it so people would say... and it was said’.⁽¹⁾ They have done those good deeds so people would praise them, and they did praise them, perhaps erected statues in their honour, and immortalized their memory in history. The Quran draws this image for them to take heed, for their deeds will be fruitless unless they do them for their Lord and Creator: ‘As for those who disbelieve, their deeds are like a mirage in a desert. The thirsty one thinks it to be water, until he comes up to it; he finds it to be nothing...’ (*an-Nur*: 39).

They imagine their deeds to be good and anticipate reward for them. A mirage is what appears in the desert at midday, as if it were water. This phenomenon is the result of the refraction of light. Only a thirsty person would yearn for it as he is in need of water. If he were not thirsty, perhaps he would not have paid attention to the mirage, but because of his thirst, he runs after water. He will not find anything, but the matter will not end in a futile

(1) This is part of a Hadith cited by Muslim (1905), Ahmad (2/322) and An-Nasa'i (6/23, 24), on the authority of Abu Hurayra. It tells, ‘The first to be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who fell martyr in a battle. He will be brought forward and faced with the blessings of Allah he received in life, and he will acknowledge them. Then it will be said to him, “What did you do with them?” The man will say, “I fought in Your cause until I fell martyr in a battle.” It will be said, “You are a liar! You fought so that it would be said you were courageous, and this was said.” Then he will be dragged on his face and thrown into Hellfire.’

pursuit because: ‘...he finds Allah with him, Who will pay him his due (Hell)...’ (*an-Nur*: 39). He will be confounded to unexpectedly find that there is God of Whom he was never mindful when he performed any of his good deeds. He will find that there is God in whom he did not believe. Only then will he become aware of the truth that his deeds have been in vain. Thus, he faces two calamities together: the calamity of extreme thirst which he finds no means of quenching, and the calamity of punishment which awaits him from Allah. Similarly a poet⁽¹⁾ once said:

A cloud would come, flashing with lightning.

When they see it, it disperses and vanishes.

We have previously drawn a comparison in this regard to a thirsty prisoner. The guard brings water and puts it just at his lips, and the poor prisoner aspires to quench his thirst, the guard then spills the water on the ground. Despair is much harder when it follows hope.

Allah draws for us such parables to warn us against dedicating our good deeds to people. One will do good to others who show ingratitude in the end. This is a lesson to everyone to never dedicate their good deeds to people and direct their intentions to pleasing Allah only.

Allah draws a parable for those who give money to charity to show off among people; this is like throwing water on a smooth rock: no plants can be brought forth: ‘...like someone who spends his wealth only to be seen by people, not believing in Allah and the Last Day. Such a person is like a rock with earth on it: heavy rain falls and leaves it completely bare. Such people get no rewards for their works: Allah does not guide the disbelievers’ (*al-Baqara*: 264).

Allah concludes the verse by saying: ‘...Allah is Swift in taking account’ (*an-Nur*: 39). Therefore, do not think death and resurrection are so far. When one dies, he does not feel the passage of time, so when the Day of Judgement comes: ‘...It will seem they lingered [in this life] an evening [at most] or its morning’ (*an-Nazi‘at*: 46). Allah has willed that no mortal would know the cause or the time of his death. This concealment is wisdom and guidance, for

(1) This poet is Kathir ibn Abd Al-Rahman Abu Sakhr Al-Khuza’i (died: 105 A.H.).

it urges one to continually strive to do righteous deeds to prepare for the Hereafter, for death is expected at every moment. The instant your eyes close, they are not sure to reopen as they usually do. Death comes in the blink of an eye. Given this truth, Allah's Reckoning is so near and so swift. It has been reported, 'When one dies, it is as if his own Judgement Day came.'⁽¹⁾

After the parable of the mirage, Allah gives another parable describing the deeds of the disbelievers:

أَوْ كَظُلُمَاتٍ فِي بَحْرٍ لُجِّيٍّ يَغْشَاهُ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ مَوْجٌ مِّنْ فَوْقِهِ سَحَابٌ ظُلُمَاتٌ بَعْضُهَا
فَوْقَ بَعْضٍ إِذَا أَخْرَجَ يَدَهُ لَمْ يَكْذِبْهَا وَمَنْ لَّمْ يَجْعَلِ اللَّهُ لَهُ نُورًا فَمَا لَهُ مِن نُّورٍ ﴿٤٠﴾

**Or like shadows in a deep sea covered by wave
upon wave, with clouds above – layer upon layer of
darkness – if he holds out his hand, he is scarcely
able to see it. The one to whom God gives no light
has no light at all [40] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 40)**

Imagine the darkness of a sea, vast and large, in which waves clash, one upon the other, and above all this are clouds. Overwhelming gloom! This darkness has reached such a degree that one cannot see even his own hand if he holds it out! '...He is scarcely able to see it...' (*an-Nur*: 40). He is not even close to seeing it. This is because he has no light from Allah with which to be guided, for '...the one to whom Allah gives no light has no light at all' (*an-Nur*: 40). Just as he does not have enough light to even see his own hand, his heart is void of the Divine Light, and his own deeds will be of no use to him in the Hereafter.

(1) This Hadith is cited by 'Ajaluni in *Kashf Al-Khafa*' (Hadith number 2618), on the authority of Anas ibn Malik, and its full version is, 'Remember death often, for verily if you remember it in a state of prosperity, it will guard your heart against its lure, and if you remember it in a state of distress, it will alleviate it. Death is the herald of resurrection, so whoever dies, it is as if his own Judgement Day came.' Another version of this Hadith is cited by Ad-Daylami in *Musnad Al-Ferdaws* (Hadith number 1117), on the authority of Anas, too, with the wording: 'When any one of you dies, it is as if his own Judgment Day came, so worship Allah as if you see Him, and implore forgiveness every hour.'

Allah says in the following verse:

الْمَرَّةَ أَنْ اللَّهَ يُسَبِّحُ لَهُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَالطَّيْرِ صَفَّتٍ
كُلُّ قَدْ عَلِمَ صَلَاتَهُ وَتَسْبِيحَهُ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ بِمَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

[Prophet], do you not see that all those who are in the heavens and earth praise God, as do the birds with wings outstretched? Each knows its [own way] of prayer and glorification: God has full knowledge of what they do[41] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 41)

Allah directs our attention to the signs of His Oneness, Perfection of His Control over creation and His Power. This verse follows on from several earlier verses in this Quranic chapter of *an-Nur* where Allah reveals some commands and prohibitions. This is meant to reassure us that He has prepared this universe to receive us even before the creation of Adam *peace be upon him*. He has made the sky and the earth, the sun and the moon, water and air. Allah means to convey to us the message that we should rest reassured, for nothing of this universe will deviate from our service, for He has made it subservient to humankind and no part of it may ever rebel against the commands of Allah.

Allah says: ‘...Do you not see that all those that are in the heavens and earth praise Allah...’ (*an-Nur*: 41)? It is worthy of notice that the verse uses the verb ‘see’ instead of ‘know’. We find this also in the verse: ‘Do you [Prophet] not see how your Lord dealt with the army of the elephant?’ (*al-Fil*: 1) We know Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was born in the Year of the Elephant and did not see that event the above mentioned verse speaks about. Why then has Allah addressed him with the words ‘Do you not see’ instead of, ‘do you not know’? Some would say this is imprecision and the verb ‘know’ would have been more appropriate. However, using this verb is meant to convey the message that what Allah tells us about the Unseen is more trustworthy even than what our eyes inform us of as a direct witness. Knowledge coming directly from Allah is sure to be true. Eyesight can be afflicted with illness so that vision becomes defective, such as those who have colour blindness, myopia etc. Thus, even eyesight- which is the most reliable source of perception- may deceive you.

The Arabic word *tasbih* usually translated as ‘praising/glorification of Allah’ denotes a significant meaning not accurately conveyed in the translation. It means elevating Allah above any description of Him that can ever cross your mind. For example, Allah has existence and we have existence, but the Existence of Allah is by no means like ours. Allah has a Self and Attributes, but these are not like ours, and so on. Everything that belongs to Allah is in a manner that befits His Majesty and Perfection.

His Description is very far from anything with which we are familiar. We are beings that Allah has granted existence. As for the Existence of Allah, it has not been bestowed by other than him. No one has created Him *the Exalted*. The same applies to the actions of Allah: they are incomparably different from our actions.

We have previously dealt with this issue in our reflections on the verse: ‘Glory to Him Who made His servant travel by night from the sacred place of worship (in Mecca) to the furthest place of worship (in Jerusalem)...’ (*al-Isra*: 1). Certainly, those who refused to believe the news of the Nightly Journey and deemed it impossible did so on the basis of measuring the Power of Allah by the power of human beings; they failed to differentiate between the actions of Allah and those of His servants. Prophet Muhammad did not say he transported himself at night from Mecca to Jerusalem; rather, he said he was transported at night by Almighty Allah.

The objection raised against the possibility of the journey is quite illogical and groundless. It would have taken a month at that time to travel this distance by camel, if we consider the powers and capacities of people. As for Allah, he says to a thing: ‘Be!’ And it is. He has no need for time, for He has created time. Nothing is hard for Him, for He is the Creator of everything. True faith and true discipline with Allah necessarily entail that we never compare anything related to Him with anything related to His limited creatures. His Existence Attributes and Actions are all above anything that may cross our minds.

We glorify Allah and praise His Name. However, Allah has forever been glorified and has forever been elevated above every imperfection even before He created anyone to exalt Him. He has forever been the One God *the Exalted and Almighty*: ‘Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him...’ (*Al-Imran*: 18).

Allah has already testified to His Divinity and Oneness before any mortal did, and before the angels did. Before Allah created humankind, the heavens and the earth have exalted Him ever since the moment He created them.

The verb *sabbaha* (glorified) which is the past tense of *yusabbihu* (to glorify Allah) is sometimes used instead of the present form, as in the verse: 'Everything in the heavens and earth *sabbaha* Allah...' (*al-Hadid*: 1). Using a past verb form in the Arabic language does not always refer to the past. Did the heavens and the earth glorify Allah once then refrained from glorification? No, they continue to do so in the present: 'Everything in the heavens and earth *yusabbehu* (glorifies Him)...' (*al-Jumu'a*: 1). In this verse, the verb is in the present *yusabbihu*.

Thus, the entire universe glorifies Allah, and there remains only you, O son of Adam. 'Glorify the Name of your Lord *the Most High*' (*al-A'la*: 1). By so doing, you are in harmony with the whole of creation that constantly glorifies Allah without reluctance.

Back to the verse we are reflecting on, Allah says: '...all those that are in the heavens and earth praise Allah...' (*an-Nur*: 41). The Arabic pronoun here translated as 'that' is used to refer to animate beings, not inanimate things. Some, based on this rule, argue that the verse refers to animate beings only and the heavens and earth themselves are not included. This is quite inaccurate, for other verses prove that the heavens and earth glorify Allah: '...Each knows its [own way] of prayer and glorification...' (*an-Nur*: 41). Allah also says: '...the thunder sounds His praises, as do the angels in awe of Him...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 13). All existence glorifies Him.

Others say they do not actually- that is, verbally- glorify Allah, but they all submit to His Laws, His Might and Majesty, so to say that they 'glorify' Allah is meant only in a figurative sense. They glorify Him by being obedient, not by uttering verbal praises of Him. A poet once said, alluding to this meaning:

In everything there is a sign

Signifying that He is one

However, this argument is refuted by Allah's words: '...There is not a single thing that does not celebrate His praise, though you do not understand

their praise...' (*al-Isra'*: 44). This verse proves that everything, even inanimate objects, do glorify Allah actually and verbally with languages human beings do not understand. Do you understand all the languages of your own species, so that you might understand the languages of other created things? If you have not learnt Arabic, for example, you will not be able to understand anything of it, even though it is a living language that has its grammar rules, vocabulary, etc. like your own language, not a totally different language system like those of other creatures. Therefore, it is quite groundless to argue that other creatures do not glorify Allah verbally. They do, but we do not understand them. Each kind of creature has its manner of articulation and communication. Let it suffice as evidence for this that Allah has made some of the languages of other kinds known to those He has chosen among human beings. He granted Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* the ability to understand what an ant was saying, as He tells us in the Quran: 'Sulaiman (Solomon) smiled broadly at her words...' (*an-Naml*: 19). He heard the speech of the Hoopoe and got from him news of the Queen of Sheba (Bilqis).

Contemplate the hexagonal cells bees make and their exemplary accuracy. Look at a bird's nest. A bird weaves pieces of straw, interlaces them, and makes the nest an enclosure that protects its young. If you touch the internal surface of a nest made of straw, you will find it feels almost as soft as silk. Think of a spider's web and how it catches moths with it.

I once saw a film about a fight between a bear and a bull. The bear saw that the bull's horns were long and sharp and knew that they were the weapons he would use to kill him. Understanding this, the bear attacked the bull, grabbed his two horns, and continued to bite the bull's head. The bull got so severely wounded that it fell to the ground and then the bear began eating it. Why, then, do we see it as a far-fetched idea that these creatures have languages with which they glorify Allah and no human being understands except one Allah has gifted with such knowledge? Furthermore, did man not learn from a raven how to bury the dead when Qabil (Cain) killed Habil (Abel)? Allah says: 'Allah sent a raven to scratch up the ground and show him how to cover his brother's corpse...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 31). Allah has taught man by that means to teach him not to be arrogant, for he is so helpless and has no reason to entertain any improper pride.

Zoologists have found that ants build integral colonies, a wonderful model of order and cooperation. Some researchers noticed a group of ants going hither and thither until they found a piece of food, which they then left behind and returned to where they had come from. Then, a troop of ants appeared, which gathered around the piece of food and transported it to their hole. The next time, the researchers put another piece of food, twice the size of the first one. A group of what we may very well call 'scouts' came across it and again left it without attempting to carry it. Afterwards a troop of ants, double the number of the first troop, came and carried the piece of food. It seems ants are capable of accurately identifying size, weight, and mass. A white crumb in front of the ants' colony was found. Through examination of it, it was found to be a seed embryo –the ants were inspired to realize the importance of cutting it up so it would not sprout and cause their colony to collapse. To this extent do ants know the laws meant to preserve their life and kind? Small as they are, they know how to protect themselves. In light of all of this, do we still think it far-fetched that ants or other creatures have their own languages?

So all that is in the heavens and earth glorify Allah, '...as do the birds with wings outstretched...' (*an-Nur*: 41). Why does Allah single out the birds for mention although they are already included in His words: '...all those that are in the heavens and earth...' (*an-Nur*: 41)? Birds are particularly mentioned, for they have a marvellous characteristic that point to a great thing. A bird is a body that has a weight. According to the law of gravity, the earth attracts anything that is suspended in the air. However, Allah has made birds an exception to this law, for they spread out their wings in the air without falling: 'Do they not see the birds above them spreading and closing their wings? It is only the Lord of Mercy who holds them up...' (*al-Mulk*: 19). Through this miraculous creation, Allah conveys a fundamental truth: '...He keeps the heavens from falling down on the earth without His permission...' (*al-Hajj*: 65). We do not see how Allah keeps the heavens from falling, but there is sufficient evidence for this truth in the creation of birds which He keeps from falling despite gravity. There are signs wondrous enough to let us believe the truths we do not perceive. Allah then says: '...Each knows its [own way] of prayer and glorification...' (*an-Nur*: 41). This translation conveys one interpretation of this part of the verse, but there is another interpretation. In the original

Arabic structure, the sentence starts with the verb ‘know’, yet the subject is omitted which is a common structure in the Arabic language. Some exegetes have the opinion that this subject is ‘each’ (as the above translation shows), yet others have stated that ‘Allah’ is the subject. The Arabic sentence literally translates: ‘...(He/Each) knows their way(s) of prayer and glorification...’. He is their Creator and the One Who has inspired them to the manner of glorifying Him. Every creature knows its manner of prayer and glorification through Divine Guidance just as we, human beings, know the Straight Path prescribed for us through Divine Revelations. All things and beings submit to what Allah ordains, for they have no freewill to choose whether or not to obey Him. Only human beings have deviated because they have been given the choice.

Everything goes right when it follows Divine Guidance, and so do our lives. Everything in the universe is perfect, and a defect is only found when man interferes. The sun has never revolted nor failed to rise, and neither did the moon, the stars, and the air. They all function with absolute perfection to the extent that people depend on them to calculate time, know directions, etc. Allah says: ‘The sun and the moon follow their calculated courses’ (*ar-Rahman*: 5). We would not depend on the sun and moon to calculate time unless they followed a perfect order that never fails.

Allah concludes the verse by saying: ‘...Allah has full knowledge of what they do’ (*an-Nur*: 41). This is a declaration of the fact that Allah has full control over His creation.

Allah says in the following verse:

وَلِلَّهِ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَإِلَى اللَّهِ الْمَصِيرُ ﴿٤٢﴾

**Control of the heavens and earth belongs to God: and to
God is the final return [42] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 42)**

This verse is a reassurance to those addressed by Divine Ordinance: the One Who has charged you with obligations, has also secured for you all the necessities of life you need to fulfil your duty to Him. Never a day will come when the air is cut off from you or the sun, the moon or the earth refuse to be of service to you. They are under the Control of Allah and, therefore, no one

may ever withhold them from you. Rest assured that they will fulfil their function in your service until the Day of Resurrection. No need to worry, for Allah has secured for you what you need.

Allah then says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّ اللَّهَ يُزْجِي سَحَابًا ثُمَّ يُؤَلِّفُ بَيْنَهُ، ثُمَّ يُجْعَلُهُ رُكَّامًا فَتَرَى الْوَدْقَ
يَخْرُجُ مِنْ خِلَالِهِ، وَيُنْزِلُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ جِبَالٍ فِيهَا مِنْ بَرَدٍ فَيُصِيبُ بِهِ مَنْ يَشَاءُ
وَيَصْرِفُهُ، عَنْ مَنْ يَشَاءُ يَكَادُ سَنَا بَرْقِهِ يَذْهَبُ بِالْأَبْصَرِ ﴿٤٣﴾

Do you not see that God drives the clouds, then gathers them together and piles them up until you see rain pour from their midst? He sends hail down from [such] mountains in the sky, pouring it on whoever He wishes and diverting it from whoever He wishes – the flash of its lightning almost snatches sight away [43] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 43)

We have come to understand the manner by which rain is formed through the evaporation and condensation process through which clouds are formed. Water comprises three fourths of the area of the earth which ensures the abundance of water necessary to produce rain. This process, for certain purposes, is sometimes applied to water through distillation. In hot weather, water in a glass will, after a while, decrease a bit, for some of it has evaporated. If water is spilled on the ground, it dries up far more quickly, for the area of the surface exposed to evaporation becomes wider.

So ‘Allah *yuzji* (drives) the clouds...’ (*an-Nur*: 43). This Arabic verb denotes moving a thing gently. A poet once said describing the manner in which his lady walked:

Her gait from the house of her female neighbour
is like a cloud’s movement, neither slow nor hasty.

Then, Allah compiles the clouds one upon the other, which inevitably leaves spaces between the compiled elements as they do not fuse completely with each other. Were it not for these inter-cloud spaces, rains would not fall from between them. If He so willed, He could make clouds a single piece, but

He joins them together and compiles one upon the other. In this way, spaces develop between the pieces of clouds. As a treatment for those suffering from the pain of frostbite, one places a glass upside down on the place affected by pain, and then inside of it one sets alight a piece of cloth, for example, to burn up the air inside the glass. In this manner, one prevents gaps in the juncture between the glass and the body. This phenomenon is the secret the ancient Egyptians used in construction, whereby the stones adhere to one another without any mortar to bind them.

The existence of air between two things creates a gap and prevents adhesion between them, and were it not for these gaps in the clouds, rain would not fall from them. Rain is a sign of which we are heedless. Just imagine what it takes to produce a glass of distilled water in a laboratory. What then should one think of the rain which waters the entire earth? So Allah drives the clouds, joins them together, piles them one over the other and then causes rain to fall from between the spaces which separate the clouds.

Through rain, Allah brings a dead land to life. It may also come as an affliction and a punishment, as He says: ‘...He sends hail down from [such] mountains in the sky, pouring it on whoever He wishes and diverting it from whoever He wishes...’ (*an-Nur*: 43). We have a lesson and an admonition in the story of the drowning of the people of Ma’rib [in ancient Yemen]. Water and fire are like two natural opponents, which are both difficult to resist. At one time, Arabs viewed huge waters as a terrible threat after the collapse of the Dam of Ma’rib. They therefore preferred to move to the desert and live there. Allah used the same water to rescue Prophet Musa (Moses) and drown his enemy, Pharaoh. With the same thing, He accomplished two opposing purposes.

Allah then says: ‘...the flash of its lightning almost snatches sight away’ (*an-Nur*: 43). The intense lightning which is caused by clouds nearly blocks sight. In the bolt of lightning, fire is generated from water. Electric discharge occurs in the midst of rain. Therefore, it should not surprise us that Allah says (describing the events on the Day of Resurrection): ‘And when the seas boil over’ (*at-Takwir*: 6). It should be easy to believe this will happen, for we have witnessed an example similar to it in the phenomenon of lightning.

Allah says in the following verse:

يُقَلِّبُ اللَّهُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَعِبْرَةً لِّأُولِي الْأَبْصَارِ ﴿٤٤﴾

**God alternates night and day – there truly is a lesson
in [all] this for those who have eyes to see [44]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 44)**

The night and the day are two signs following each other. Even though they are constant daily occurrences, their shifting is far from monotonous. In some seasons of the year, the night is longer, and in others the day is longer. Sometimes they are equivalent in time. Alternation of the night and day means shifting from cold to hot weather and from darkness to light. This is not mechanical routine. Rather, it is a manifestation of Allah's Power and Control. This is why Allah concludes the verse by saying: '...There truly is a lesson in [all] this for those who have eyes to see' (*an-Nur*: 44). The Arabic word for 'lesson' used in the original text of the verse is '*ebra*'. It means admonition, a lesson we learn which transforms us from one state, belief or conduct to another. Other related words are derived from the same root. One of them is '*abra*' (teardrop). It denotes the process by which feelings are transformed into a material thing. Another one is '*ubur*' (crossing) which means transferring from one place to another. There is also '*ta'bir*' (expression) which is transforming thoughts into words. All four words are derived from the same root and they all denote 'transformation' from one state to another or 'transferring' from one place to another.

The moral lesson here is intended for those who have eyes to see! The eyes meant in this verse are the eyes of awareness and not the eyes of perception. Man possesses organs of sensation that perceive his surroundings, as well as organs of cognition that filter these perceptions and deduce hypotheses and concepts from them. Most people can look at the world, but do not conceive or arrive at any thoughts from what they see. Others possess the skills of precise vision and discerning judgment. For instance, many people have watched pots of boiling water surging and pushing at their lids throughout the ages, but only a few inventors were able to realize and conceive the power of the steam engine.

Therefore, the ‘eyes’ that are intended here in this verse are those that analyse the sensed perceptions to understand their causes. They seek to derive benefit from the concepts they observe in their surroundings. If man insightfully studies the phenomena and signs that Allah *Glorified is He* has created in the universe, he will derive from them applications that will greatly enrich and promote his life.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَاللَّهُ خَلَقَ كُلَّ دَابَّةٍ مِّن مَّاءٍ فَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَمْشِي عَلَى بَطْنِهِ وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَمْشِي عَلَى رِجْلَيْنِ
وَمِنْهُمْ مَّن يَمْشِي عَلَى أَرْبَعٍ يَخْلُقُ اللَّهُ مَا يَشَاءُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ﴿٤٥﴾

And God created each animal out of [its own] fluid: some of them crawl on their bellies, some walk on two legs, and some on four. God creates whatever He will; God has power over everything [45] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 45)

The Arabic word *daaba* refers to all the creatures that make a sound (*yadubbu*) as they step upon the Earth, whether these be humans, domesticated animals or wild creatures. Even ants have a capacity for melodious stepping upon the Earth. Allah *Glorified is He* has created all these beings (that step upon the Earth) from water.

Indeed, the faculties that Allah *Glorified is He* has placed in the smallest creatures rival the faculties of the massive creatures. We may find it equally challenging to determine the splendour of both the massive and the microscopic beings in existence. One of the greatest wonders of creation is that a small insect can possess all the basic tools and components of life that a massive elephant possesses. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has created giant beings that surpass our perceptions due to their enormity, as well as miniscule beings that exceed our perceptions due to their minuteness.

The Big Ben clock is an outstanding sight due to its remarkable size. Watchmakers were able to manufacture other clocks that are the size of a ring stone, but have the same mechanisms found in the Big Ben clock. This concept is evident in Allah’s creation, where Allah *Glorified is He* created both the largest animals and the smallest insects from the same molecules in water.

You may find that a small mosquito can prevent an enormous elephant from getting a calm break. We also find that depriving living creatures from water can lead to their demise. Exalted is the Creator, Allah *Glorified is He*. We also find that these creatures do not follow a fixed shape or form. '(He has willed that) among them are (those) that crawl on their bellies, and others walking on two legs, and others walking on four legs,' (*an-Nur*: 45). The Arabic verb used in this verse is *yamshi* (walking or moving from one place to another). In the verse, Allah *Glorified is He* points out the varied types of living locomotion. Thus, there are living creatures that move on their bellies, while other creatures walk on two legs and still others walk on more legs.

This lexical simplification is in accordance with the distinctive brevity of Quranic description. For instance, the verse does not need to mention that certain creatures have tens of legs because the intended meaning is directing our attention to Allah's unlimited Power and Ability. This power is illustrated in the presence of variation in His creatures. Therefore, after this description, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah creates what He wills,' (*an-Nur*: 45) since the verse did not mention every possible type of walking.

Allah *Glorified is He* created human beings to offer their skills and services to other human beings. In the same manner, Allah *Glorified is He* created each group of animals to provide the necessities of life to other animals. Just consider the plover birds that consume the food remaining on the teeth of crocodiles, thereby also cleaning the crocodiles' teeth. The mouths of crocodiles are a source of nourishment for these birds; this results in harmony and cooperation between the two creatures. These birds even make sounds that warn crocodiles to escape when the birds notice hunters stalking them.

Incidentally, another usage of the word *mashi* (walking) in the Arabic language is the act of transmitting slander between people. Allah *Glorified is He* said in another verse: '(Or to) the slanderer that walks around (*masha* ') with defaming tales,' (*al-Qalam*: 11).

Thus, in the previous verses, Allah *Glorified is He* shows us that absolute dominion belongs to Him alone. All existing things exalt Allah with praise. To Him alone are all affairs traced back. The verses also informed us that all living creatures were created from water.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَقَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا آيَاتٍ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ وَاللَّهُ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ إِلَى صِرَاطٍ مُسْتَقِيمٍ ﴿٤٦﴾

We have sent verses that clarify the right path: God guides whoever He will to a straight path [46] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 46)

This verse directs our attention to the fact that Allah, the One Who reigns over this universe's dominion and created its wonders, also revealed clear rulings and commands. Therefore, you are obliged to adhere to His verses, obey His commands, and follow His righteous path because He has bestowed magnanimous favours upon you through the many elements that serve you in the skies and the earth.

These verses are described as being *mubayyinat* (clearly showing the truth). This means that they properly elucidate the necessary activities of life. In order for this life to flow without setbacks, each person should be actively engaged in accomplishing their own particular mission within it. When every person does that, these missions will complement each other without conflict. Trouble arises in the world when some people build constructions, while other people are destroying them.

Hence, it is necessary to have a moral measure that controls all of our activities. This measure should incite every worker to exercise their responsibilities with utmost excellence and sincerity. Typically, each individual may only achieve excellence in one domain in his life. Usually, this becomes their specialized occupation. Amazingly, they may not strive for the same excellence when performing the same job for themselves, since they earn no wages in such cases. That is the reason behind the Egyptian saying, 'A carpenter's door is always broken.' Yet, when the carpenter works for others, he may perform his craft with unsurpassed excellence and mastery. This happens because people work more proficiently when they receive proper pay for their efforts. We are required to carry out the jobs that we are responsible for with unselfish excellence. This will also mean that other craftsmen will magnanimously carry out their responsibilities towards you.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and Allah guides onto a straight path whom He wills,' (*an-Nur*: 46). A person might legitimately ask, 'If Allah did not

will for a person to be guided, what is that person's sin?' We have previously said that guidance is of two types. Firstly, there is the guidance of indication (*hidayat ad-dalala*). Secondly, there is the guidance of assistance (*hidayat al-ma'una*). Allah *Glorified is He* bestows upon everyone the guidance of indication, as He clarified to us all the causes of good, the paths of salvation, the ways of success and the most exemplary methods for managing the activities of our lives. Those people who listen to Allah's words, have confidence in His Directives and obey His indicative guidance, will be helped with Allah's assistive guidance.

Therefore, the verses: '...for Allah does not guide iniquitous folk,' (*al-Ma'ida*: 108) and the verse: '...for Allah does not guide the transgressing people,' (*al-Baqara*: 258) are related to the people who declined indicative guidance. Allah *Glorified is He* only withholds the assistive guidance from them, without withholding indicative guidance, religious directives, or evident Divine clarification (*al-bayan*).

We have remarked that the Arabic expression *anzalna* (We revealed) should cause us to hold the revealed message in the highest regard, since revelation entails the descent of a message from a higher being to a lower entity. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is elevating us from the lowly earthly level to the sublime heights of heaven. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in another passage: 'Say (O Muhammad), "Let me convey unto you what Allah has (really) forbidden,"' (*al-An'am*: 151). We are not to fashion our own laws according to our opinions and ideas. Instead, we should follow Allah's way in all aspects of our lives.

Subsequently Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَقُولُونَ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ وَبِالرَّسُولِ وَأَطَعْنَا ثُمَّ يَتَوَلَّى فِرْقٌ مِّنْهُمْ
مِّنْ بَعْدِ ذَلِكَ وَمَا أُولَٰئِكَ بِالْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

**They say, 'We believe in God and the Messenger; we obey,'
but then some of them turn away: these people are not true
believers [47] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 47)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'Whenever they are told, "Obey that which Allah has bestowed upon you and unto the Apostle," you see these

hypocrites turning away from you with aversion,’ (*an-Nisa*’: 61). This verse is describing the hypocrites. Hypocrites are frustrated because they are possessed with conflicting psychological traits, as their tongues testify belief, but their hearts deny the truth. Typically, each individual has numerous traits that are complementary when a person has a righteous heart. On the other hand, these traits become contradictory in states of disobedience. Hence, a man finds it perfectly natural to gaze at his own wife because his innate disposition is in harmony with this act. However, if he commits the sin of gazing at someone else’s wife, his glances are stealthy and he tries to cover the sin from other people’s eyes because his innate disposition is disturbed during this shameful deed. Hence, it is said that righteousness improves a person’s appearance and dignity.

Therefore, a man should protect his dignity while being alone in order to have true respect among the people. Some people perform good deeds in order to impress others despite being aware of the evil in their own souls. Winning all the treasures of the world or gaining the trust of all people will never compensate a person if they lose their own self-respect. People only accompany an individual for brief periods of time, but the soul accompanies the person at all times. Thus, people should not strive to be great in the eyes of other people while being contemptible in their private moments. A person living in that despicable manner is revering the opinions of other people more than being concerned with the real condition of their own selves. On the other hand, a righteous person always strives to have a positive opinion of himself.

Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding this matter: ‘Are you not aware of those who claim (*yaz’umun*) that they believe in what has been revealed to you (O Muhammad,) and what was revealed before you. They are willing to obey the rules of the false powers (*al-taghut*), although they were ordered to deny these (false) rules, and Satan (Iblis) only wants to lead them astray,’ (*an-Nisa*’: 60).

Allah *Glorified is He* describes these people’s testimonies of faith as empty claims. The Arabic word used is *yaz’umun*. *Az-za’m* (‘claiming’) is the platform of lying. The proof that their words are merely claims is that they tend to seek the rulings of false powers (*al-taghut*), rather than the one true God, Allah *Glorified is He*. If they were truly believers in the message that was

revealed to Prophet Muhammad and the messages that were revealed before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon them all* they would not seek the mediating judgment of false gods. In this manner, these hypocrites exposed their own misguidance, as their action divulged the falsehood of their former claim.

This is the reason why scholars consider the disbelievers to be better than the hypocrites because the disbeliever's innate emotions are in greater harmony than a hypocrite's emotions. Disbelievers' hearts are in concordance with their disbelieving tongues. This is the reason why hypocrites will be punished in the lowest depths of the Hellfire.

Allah *Glorified is He* illustrated an image that urges us to be cautious when making judgments concerning other people's verbal statements. Allah *Glorified is He* says concerning the hypocrites: 'When the hypocrites come to you, they say, "We bear witness that you are indeed Allah's Apostle!" Indeed, Allah knows that you are truly His Apostle, and, indeed, He (Allah) bears witness that the hypocrites are liars (in claiming to have faith)' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). In this verse, the words uttered by the hypocrites: 'We bear witness that you are indeed Allah's Apostle' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1) are essentially truthful words, as Prophet Muhammad is truly Allah's Apostle. However, the hypocrites were indeed lying because they did not believe the true statement they were uttering.

This verse⁽¹⁾ was revealed in relation to one of the hypocrites whose name was Bishr⁽²⁾. This hypocrite had a dispute with a Jew⁽¹⁾ and the Jew sought

(1) *In the opinion of the editors, the intended verses are the two following verses (an-Nur: 48-49) from the chapter of An-Nur.*

(2) *This story was cited as the cause of revelation of another verse: 'Are you not aware of those who claim (yaz'umun) that they believe in what has been revealed to you (O Muhammad,) and what was revealed before you. They are willing to obey the rules of the false powers (At-taghut), although they were ordered to deny these (false) rules, and Satan (Iblis) only wants to lead them astray,' (an-Nisa': 60). It was narrated by Wahidi in Asbab An-Nuzul (p. 92) on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him who said, 'It was revealed concerning a hypocrite who had a dispute with a Jew. The Jew said, "Come with me to Muhammad." The hypocrite said, "Rather, let us go to Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf." Ka'b was the man whom Allah Glorified is He called Al-taghut (false power). The Jew refused to bring their dispute before anyone except Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him. When the hypocrite finally accepted this, they placed their dispute before Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him=*

the mediating judgment of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The hypocrite, on the other hand, sought the mediating judgment of another Jew named Ka'b ibn Al-Ashraf. However, the Jew rejected the judgment of Ka'b, due to Ka'b's history of falsehood and lack of trustworthiness. Thus, the Jewish man, even if his beliefs were false, only wanted the judgment of a person who is trustworthy and impartial. This person was Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The Jew won the argument and they both went to Prophet Muhammad, who judged in favour of the Jew. Indeed, the Jewish man was wise and intelligent, as he was aware of the status of Prophet Muhammad and that he was a truthful judge.

On the other hand, the hypocrite was not satisfied with Prophet Muhammad's judgment. Their argument continued until they told 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* about their story. When he learned that the hypocrite had rejected the judgment of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Umar got up and came back with a sword. He unsheathed it in the face of the hypocrite and said, 'This is my judgment concerning anyone who is not satisfied with the judgment of Allah's Messenger'.

Hence, some people say: 'We believe in Allah and in the Apostle, and we pay heed (to their orders),' (*an-Nur*: 47). These are fine words, and we pray that Allah *Glorified is He* bless them for these words, but this verbal utterance

= who judged in the Jew's favour. When they had left the Prophet's presence, the hypocrite said to the Jew, "Let us go to 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab." So they went to 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him*. Then the Jew said, "This man and I sought to settle a dispute through Muhammad, and he pronounced a judgment against my opponent, but he was not content with the judgment. He then wanted to seek your judgment in the dispute, and he held me fast so I came to you with him." Thereupon, 'Umar said to the hypocrite, "Is it so?" The hypocrite answered, "Yes." 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* told the two of them to wait for a moment. He then went into (his house) and wrapped a sword in cloth. He came out to them and beat the hypocrite with it until he ('Umar) cooled down. He then said, "In such a manner do I judge those who are not satisfied with the judgment of Allah *Glorified is He* and the judgment of His Messenger." Thereupon, the Jew ran away and this verse was revealed. Angel Gabriel (Jibril) *peace be upon him* said, "Verily 'Umar has made a firm distinction between truth and falsehood." Thus, he was called Al-Faruq.'

- (1) The story of the conflict between the Jewish man and the hypocrite, Bishr, and the arbitration of Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* between the two.

is still not supported by practical actions. True faith means that the physical deeds are in accordance with the articulated expressions of faith.

When the time for actions and responsibilities arises: ‘...some of them turn away (*yatawalla*) after this (verbal assertion),’ (*an-Nur*: 47). The Arabic verb *yatawalla* is used here to signify that they desist from an action and turn to its opposite action. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘These are not (true) believers,’ (*an-Nur*: 47). This is because they have turned away from the truth. They have not obeyed Allah’s commands and have not believed in the Divinity of His message.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَإِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ إِذَا فَرِيقٌ مِّنْهُمْ مُّعْرِضُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾
وَلَوْ كَانَ هَؤُلَاءِ لَأَكْثَرُ ۚ فَذَرْهُمْ ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ يُخَالِفُ بِمَا فِيهِمُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

And when they are summoned to God and His Messenger in order for him to judge between them, some of them turn away[48] If they were claiming their right, they would come willingly [to the Prophet] [49] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 48-49)

These verses are also in relation to the conflict between the hypocrite *Bishr* and the Jewish man, both of whom were opposed to the judgement of Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger. Although the opposition of the hypocrite was evident, the verse is not acquitting the Jew from wrongdoing. The Jewish man was only content with Allah’s judgment because he was confident that the ruling would be in his favour. He was also confident that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would only make a judgment on the basis of truth even if it were in the interest of a Jewish person. Hence, the Jewish man did not submit to the judgment of Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger willingly. His submission was not a result of love or belief in Prophet Muhammad’s message, but rather, his submission was out of personal self-interest.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

أَفِي قُلُوبِهِمْ مَرَضٌ أَمْ ارْتَابُوا أَمْ يَخَافُونَ أَنْ يَحِيفَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِمْ
وَرَسُولُهُ بَلْ أُولَئِكَ هُمُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

Do they have sickness in their hearts? Are they full of doubts? Do they fear that God and His Messenger might deal with them unjustly? No, it is they who are the unjust ones [50] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 50)

Here, the Arabic word *marad* (disease) implies that they deviated from a state of sound health. Each of your organs such as, the eyes and the ears, has a state of well-being and health. It is striking that people live without an awareness of this well-being when their organs are healthy. Then, if an ailment afflicts any of their functions, they suddenly become aware of Allah's blessings.

In the same verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Did they begin to doubt (that this is a Divine Message)?' (*an-Nur*: 50) Did these hypocrites start doubting Prophet Muhammad's message? 'Do they fear that Allah and His Apostle might deal unjustly with them?' (*an-Nur*: 50).

Then Allah *Glorified is He* answers these questions: 'Nay, it is they who are wronging themselves' (*an-Nur*: 50). They are wronging themselves before wronging anyone else. This is an example of ultimate foolishness, when a man wrongs himself without any benefit. If they had wronged someone else, we could have said, 'He did it to attain some benefits or rewards!' In addition, a person who wrongs himself is too thoughtless to be blamed for wronging others.

When Allah *Glorified is He* declares the punishment for the wrongdoers in these verses, it is for their own good. They may desist from wrongdoing and avoid the penalties that their sins will incur upon them, especially after Allah has given them hope of reward for their good deeds.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* declares the righteous actions that are a contrasting context when compared to the previous verses:

إِنَّمَا كَانَ قَوْلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ إِذَا دُعُوا إِلَى اللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ لِيَحْكُمَ بَيْنَهُمْ
 أَن يَقُولُوا سَمِعْنَا وَأَطَعْنَا وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

**When the true believers are summoned to God and His
 Messenger in order for him to judge between them, they say,
 ‘We hear and we obey.’ These are the ones who will
 prosper[51] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 51)**

You must realize that faith is only based on your own desire and choice without any coercion. Since it was your choice to believe in Allah *Glorified is He* you must respect your own choices by complying with their requirements. Otherwise, you are only deprecating your own decisions. Hence, the state of the believers is to adhere to and comply with Allah’s orders, when they are summoned to listen to the commands of Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

If you look at the universe around you, you will find that it is maintained with a certain principle. Everything in the universe of Allah *Glorified is He*, except human beings, follows ordained laws without free will. Originally, the universe was given a choice, but it chose to be directed with strict laws, thereby relieving itself from freedom and autonomy. Allah *Glorified is He* described this in the verse: ‘Verily, We did offer the choice (of reason and volition) to the heavens, the earth and the mountains: but they refused to bear it and were afraid of it,’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72).

The noble verse we are currently studying started with the Arabic conjunction *innama* (indeed/ but). Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Indeed (*Innama*), the only response of believers.’ This conjunction indicates that its following sentence is a contrasting opposite to the sentence before it. In this case, we know that the previous verses describe the hypocrites’ opposition and rejection of Allah’s rulings. On the other hand, this verse describes how the believers obeyed Allah’s commands with ease. The same conjunction is used, for instance, when you say, ‘That person is lazy, but (*innama*) his brother is diligent’.

The believers’ response is: ‘We have heard (Allah’s orders) and we pay heed (to them)’ (*an-Nur*: 51). This means that they have attentively listened to Allah’s Commands with awareness. These commands were not mere sounds reaching their ears without an appropriate effect on their actions.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in another passage: ‘And when they (the believers) listen to what was revealed to this Apostle (Muhammad), you can see their eyes overflowing with tears, because of the truth that they have recognized’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 83). Thus, they consider listening to be an obligation and a responsibility. Then, they respond appropriately to Allah’s commands, ‘We have responded, O Lord, and we are resolved to comply with this response.’ This verbal promise is then followed by execution and obedience. This is very similar to the words we utter in our prayers, ‘Allah hears responsively the one who praises Him (*Sami’a Allahu li-man hamida-hu*)’. This supplication means that Allah *Glorified is He* answers the prayers of those who praise Him.

Allah *Glorified is He* ends this verse with the sentence: ‘Indeed, it is they who shall be victorious (*al-muflihuun*)’ (*an-Nur*: 51). The Arabic word *al-muflihuun* means ‘the successful ones’. These are the people who will attain the rank of blissful salvation (*al-falaah*). It is notable that Allah *Glorified is He* uses the word *al-falaah* which is related to the Arabic word for agriculture and cultivation of the earth (*filaha*). This usage of the word is appropriate because cultivation of the earth is our source of nourishment in this world. Mastery of agriculture provides us with good fruits, increased bounties and multiplied yields. It is such that a grain of wheat produces seven hundred grains. So if the earth gives the farmer who plants it all these rewards, we can only barely imagine the reward bestowed by the Creator of the earth, Himself *Glorified is He*.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَنْ يُطِيعِ اللَّهَ وَرَسُولَهُ، وَيَخْشَ اللَّهَ وَيَتَّقْهُ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَائِزُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

**Whoever obeys God and His Messenger, stands in awe of
God, and keeps his duty to Him will be triumphant [52]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 52)**

Our great teacher and scholar Sheikh Musa Sharif *Allah rest his soul* used to teach us Quranic commentary. When we reached the interpretation of this verse, he says, ‘Listen carefully, as this is a message from Allah: “For it is those who obey Allah and His Apostle, fear Allah and are pious towards Him, who shall triumph (in the end)” (*an-Nur*: 52). This verse has included every

single Islamic injunction, in an abridged message that encompasses the prescribed righteous path (*al-manhaj*).⁽¹⁾

The meaning of the words: '...obey Allah and His Apostle,' (*an-Nur*: 52) is that they believe in Allah *Glorified is He* obey Him and acknowledge the truthfulness of His Messenger Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The words: '...(and) fear Allah,' (*an-Nur*: 52) mean that they are afraid of Allah *Glorified is He* on account of their previous sins. In addition, they: '...are pious towards Him,' (*an-Nur*: 52) in the rest of their lives. It is they '...who shall triumph (in the end)' (*an-Nur*: 52). In this manner, the verse brings together many concise and significant commands in a few words.

It is obvious that formulating concise expressions is more difficult than generating prolonged speeches. We have previously mentioned the story⁽²⁾ of the famous English orator who was asked, "'If you were to prepare a speech to be delivered in a quarter of an hour, how long would it take you to prepare it?' He answered, 'A week.' They asked, 'And if the speech were half an hour long?' He replied, 'I could prepare it in three days.' They asked, 'And if it were an hour long?' He responded, 'I could prepare it in two days.' They asked, 'And if it were three hours long?' He said, 'I could prepare it now.'

(1) *Al-Qurtubi mentioned in his Tafsir (6/4833) that while 'Umar Allah be pleased with him was standing in the mosque of Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him a man from among the notable people of the Romans appeared in front of 'Umar saying, 'I testify that there is no deity except Allah, and I testify that Muhammad is His Messenger.' Thereupon, 'Umar asked the man, 'What is your affair?' He replied, 'I have submitted to Allah Glorified is He.' 'Umar asked, 'Is there a cause for this?' The man said, 'Yes. Verily, I have read the Torah, the Psalms, the New Testament and many books of the Prophets. Then I heard a prisoner recite a verse from the Quran that brought together everything that is in the previous scriptures. So I knew that it was from Allah Glorified is He and I embraced Islam.' 'Umar then asked, 'What is this verse?' The man replied, 'Allah's words: "For it is those who obey Allah, " (an-Nur: 52) in the obligatory acts of worship (al-fara'id) "...and His Apostle," in following the traditional Prophetic practices (as-sunnah), "...and fear Allah Glorified is He" in what has passed of their lives, "and are pious towards Him," in that which remains of their lives. "It is they who shall triumph [in the end], " (an-Nur: 52) and the triumphant person is he who is saved from the Hellfire and granted entry into Paradise.' Thereupon 'Umar said, 'Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: "I have been granted comprehensiveness of speech (Jawami` Al-kalim)."'*

(2) *The story of the famous British orator who was asked about the time it takes him in order to prepare for a speech of 15 minutes.*

It is said that Sa'd Zaghul Pasha *may Allah rest his soul* sent a speech from France to a friend that was four pages long. He said in his letter, 'I apologize to you for the excessive length (*al-itnab*) of the letter. I did not have enough time for succinctness (*al-ijaz*).'

After the Quran described the speech of the hypocrites, followed by the contrasting speech of the believers, Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding these believers: 'It is they (the believers) who shall triumph (in the end)' (*an-Nur*: 52). Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the two opposing speeches because contrasting concepts define each other. A word of wisdom reads, 'Beauty is made evident by its opposite'.

After this, Allah *Glorified is He* returns to the description of hypocrisy and the hypocrites. He says:

وَأَقْسَمُوا بِاللَّهِ جَهْدَ أَيْمَانِهِمْ لَئِنْ أَمَرْتَهُمْ لَيَخْرُجُنَّ قُلْ لَا تُقْسِمُوا
طَاعَةٌ مَعْرُوفَةٌ إِنَّ اللَّهَ خَبِيرٌ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

[The others] solemnly swear by God that if you [Prophet] commanded them, they would march out. Tell them, 'Do not swear: it is reasonable obedience that is required, and God is aware of everything you do'[53] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 53)

The Arabic word for swearing an oath is *al-qasam*. It has various synonyms, including *al-yameen* and *al-halif*. A man swears an oath in order to confirm a concept and to reassure the person he is addressing that he is speaking the truth. In the case of these people mentioned in the verse, they did not swear an oath secretly within themselves, but rather pronounced their most solemn, exaggerated and earnest oaths. They did not swear by the lives of their parents, but swore an oath by Allah *Glorified is He* and this is the most binding of oaths. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says: 'Let he who swears an oath, swear by Allah's Name or else be silent.'⁽¹⁾

When they swore these stern oaths by Allah *Glorified is He* that they would leave their properties and families to engage in battle, supporting Prophet

(1) This Hadith is found in both *Al-Bukhari* (2679, 3836, 6108) and *Muslim* (1646).

Muhammad against his enemies, they were only lying. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* uncovered their secret thoughts. He removed the veils of their lies and disclosed the falseness of their intentions. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'And they say, "We do obey you," but when they leave your presence, some of them devise, in the darkness of night, (beliefs) other than (the words) they are voicing' (*an-Nisa'*: 81).

Examine the Quranic precision in the words: '...some of them devise' (*an-Nisa'*: 81). The Quran specified that it is only 'some' of them that shared in such plots. This is an important lexical precaution, as some of these hypocrites still have hearts that are attracted to Islam. Some of them may still have the desire to rectify their intentions for Allah *Glorified is He* and return to the true faith.

The Quran unmasks the affair of those who swear oaths without being truthful, and of those people who are accustomed to frequent perjury after swearing oaths. Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* forbade them from such oath swearing: 'Say (O Muhammad to them), 'Swear not!'" (*an-Nur*: 53) Generally, it is not always easy to forbid a speaker from oath-swearing, especially if the oath is for a good cause. However, in this case, these hypocrites are committing perjury that nullifies their oaths. They are only uttering the oaths with their tongues, while violating (the same oaths) with their hearts.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Your obedience (to Allah's message) is well-known' (*an-Nur*: 53). Allah *Glorified is He* is directing mockery and blame towards their perjury and false oaths. Certainly, their lack of obedience has blatant precedents, when they were compliant only with their tongues. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* confirmed this meaning when He says: 'Verily, Allah is aware of all that you do' (*an-Nur*: 53). That is the reason behind uncovering their lies and laying their intentions bare in these verses.

It is remarkable that these hypocrites did not take all the prior events into serious consideration. They did not derive admonition from their previous encounters with Allah's Commands. For instance, one of them was uttering mischievous plans to himself, and Allah *Glorified is He* disclosed these plans to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Prophet Muhammad informed them of what was circulating in their minds. We can see this in

Allah's words: 'And they (the hypocrites) say to themselves, "Why does Allah not punish us for what we are saying?"' (*al-Mujadala*: 8) Yet despite this, they did not learn the lesson or acknowledge that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is assisted by Allah *Glorified is He* in every aspect. Certainly, Allah *Glorified is He* did not abandon His Prophet and did not allow them to deceive him in any manner. However, they repeated their misdeeds of hypocrisy many times without cessation and many of them never sincerely declared their true faith in Allah *Glorified is He*.

After all of these descriptions, Allah *Glorified is He* ordered Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to continue advising these hypocrites closely without despair, so that they may repent one day. We can see this in the following verse:

قُلْ أَطِيعُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ فَإِن تَوَلَّوْا فَإِنَّمَا عَلَيْهِ مَا حُمِّلَ وَعَلَيْكُمْ مَا حُمِّلْتُمْ وَإِن تُطِيعُوهُ تَهْتَدُوا وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿٥٤﴾

Say, 'Obey God; obey the Messenger. If you turn away, [know that] he is responsible for the duty placed upon him, and you are responsible for the duty placed upon you. If you obey him, you will be rightly guided, but the Messenger's duty is only to deliver the message clearly' [54] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 54)

Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* does not wish to lock the door of repentance against them. He gave them a chance to renew their obedience to Him and His Messenger, and to grasp the real state of affairs in this world. This is because they are His creatures and servants. It is narrated in a Noble Hadith, that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Indeed, Allah is happier at the repentance of his servant than when one of you finds his camel after having lost it in a vast barren desert land.'⁽¹⁾

It is noteworthy that the command to 'obey' is mentioned twice in this verse, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Obey Allah and obey the Apostle' (*an-Nur*: 54). In other verses the command is mentioned only once for Allah and His Apostle

(1) This Hadith was narrated by both *Al-Bukhari* (6308, 6309) and *Muslim* (2744) on the authority of `Abdullah ibn Mas'ud.

such as in the previous verse: 'For it is those who obey Allah *Glorified is He* and His Apostle,' (*an-Nur*: 52), in the verse: 'Obey Allah and His Apostle...', (*al-Anfal*: 20) and the verse 'Whoever obeys the Apostle, thereby, obeys Allah *Glorified is He*' (*an-Nisa*': 80). In these verses, the order of obedience to Allah *Glorified is He* and His Apostle is a single command.

The explanation of this lexical usage is that the Quran is not essentially a book of legal jurisprudence like the previous scriptures. It is a book of inimitability that possesses a miraculous nature (*mu'jiz*). However, it also includes some foundations of jurisprudence and legal commandments. Many legal commandments are only detailed in the Noble Hadiths of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* gave Prophet Muhammad the right to establish laws. This concept is evident in the verse: '...and whatever the Apostle urges you (to do), then adhere to it, and whatever he forbids you from (doing), then refrain from doing (it)' (*al-Hashr*: 7).

When the Quran mentions legal commandments (*al-ahkam*), they are presented in a summarized form. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then provided the details of these commandments in his traditions. For instance, Allah's command to practice the obligatory Prayers is outlined in the Quran. However, the details needed to perform these prayers are found in the noble Prophetic practice (*as-Sunnah*). Hence, if you want the details of a particular Quranic commandment, study the narrated Hadiths/Ahadiths of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

For instance, a governmental law may state that a civil servant who is absent from his work without a formal leave for 15 days can be dismissed from a job. The country's constitution may not clearly state this detailed law. However, the constitution contains an article that generally addresses the rights and obligations of civil servants. The laws then lay down the specific regulations governing their work based on the constitution.

We have previously mentioned that Imam Mohammad 'Abdu was once asked by a scholar of oriental studies, 'The Quran says: "No single thing have We neglected in the book,"' (*al-An'am*: 38). So, can the Quran tell me how many loaves of bread can be made from a certain volume of wheat?' The Imam related the answer he had received from a professional baker indicating

the number of bread loaves that can be baked from a certain volume of wheat. The questioner objected, 'I want the specific answer from the Quran.' Thereupon, the Imam responded, 'Allah *Glorified is He* said in the Quran: "...and ask the people of knowledge (*ahl adh-dhikr*) if you do not know,"' (*an-Nahl*: 43).

Hence, there are matters for which a ruling is conveyed both from Allah *Glorified is He* and from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* like the obligatory nature of prayers, for example. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the Quran: 'Verily, for all believers, Prayer is indeed a sacred duty in the appointed times (of day)' (*an-Nisa*: 103). Similarly, we find this obligation in the Prophetic saying: 'Prayer is the pillar of religion'. In such matters, we can say, 'Obey Allah and the Messenger,' since the commands in the Quran and the *Sunnah* are successively complementary. However, we will find that detailed and specific matters regarding the number of units (*raka*'s) in each prayer, the obligatory sayings in each unit, or whether the prayers are uttered silently or audibly, are only clarified by Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in his Hadiths.

Therefore, in such cases, there is a broad act of obedience to Allah *Glorified is He* for the command that prayers are obligatory. Then, there is a specific act of obedience to Prophet Muhammad, *peace and blessings be upon him*, regarding the details of this legislation. For these cases, the command of obedience is repeated in the verse: 'Obey Allah and obey the Apostle' (*an-Nur*: 54).

We may also notice that there are other verses in the Quran in which Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and obey the Apostle,' (*an-Nur*: 56) without mentioning the command to obey Allah *Glorified is He*. It is said that this verse is related to the matters in which no legislation is conveyed. In such cases, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the lawgiver. This is one of the attributes that distinguished Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from Allah's other Messengers. All of the messengers were sent to convey Allah's Legislation to the people. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was the only messenger who was Divinely allowed to legislate for his people.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And if you (hypocrites) turn away (from the message), he (Prophet Muhammad) will have to answer (only) for the

commandments he has been made responsible for. You, (hypocrites) (will have to answer) for the commandments you are responsible for' (*an-Nur*: 54). This is because Allah *Glorified is He* knew how keen the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was to guide his people and his struggle to call them to Allah *Glorified is He*. To illustrate this point, we can see that Allah addressed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in another passage: '(Why) would you (O Muhammad), perhaps, torment yourself to death (with grief) because they (who live around you) refuse to believe (in it)?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3) It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to His Prophet, 'Speak to them and summon them a second time, if that will relieve your soul from the burden of their obstinacy.' Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Say (O Muhammad to them), "Obey Allah and obey the Apostle,"' (*an-Nur*: 54) although you do not have to repeat the message for them. You are only obliged to convey (the message) a single time.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And if you (hypocrites) turn away (from the message), he (Prophet Muhammad) will have to answer (only) for the commandments he has been made responsible for. You, (hypocrites) (will have to answer) for the commandments you are responsible for' (*an-Nur*: 54). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was made responsible for calling them to Allah *Glorified is He* (*ad-da'wa*) and with conveying the message (*al-balagh*). On the other hand, the disbelievers are responsible for being obedient and observant of Allah's Commands. Thus, every party is obliged to implement that which Allah *Glorified is He* has made them responsible for. Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'If you pay obedience to him (Prophet Muhammad), you will be on the guided path' (*an-Nur*: 54). Here, we note that the object of the verb is singular in 'If you pay obedience to him.' Allah *Glorified is He* did not say, 'If you pay obedience to them,' although this could have concurred with the beginning of the verse 'Obey Allah and obey the Apostle' (*an-Nur*: 54). This is because the obedience here is not divided, but rather, it is a single act of submission to Allah's commands through His Prophet. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'The Apostle is only obliged to deliver the message (entrusted to him) clearly' (*an-Nur*: 54). This means that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is only obliged to deliver the complete message that encompasses all the legislative details that order the activities of our lives.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ⁽¹⁾

وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا مِنكُمْ وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَيَسْتَخْلِفَنَّهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ
كَمَا أَسْتَخْلَفَ الَّذِينَ مِن قَبْلِهِمْ وَلَيُمَكِّنَنَّ لَهُمْ دِينَهُمُ الَّذِي
ارْتَضَى لَهُمْ وَلَيُبَدِّلَنَّهُم مِّن بَعْدِ خَوْفِهِمْ أَمْنًا يَعْبُدُونَنِي لَا يُشْرِكُونَ بِي
شَيْئًا وَمَن كَفَرَ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ فَأُولَٰئِكَ هُمُ الْفَاسِقُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

God has made a promise to those among you who believe and do good deeds: He will make them successors to the land, as He did those who came before them; He will empower the religion He has chosen for them; He will grant them security to replace their fear. ‘They will worship Me and not join anything with Me.’ Those who are defiant after that will be the rebels [55] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 55)

At the beginning of our discussion of the chapter of *an-Nur* (The Light), we said that this chapter was given that name because it resembles the perceptible light in the universe. The chapter correlates our physical light with the spiritual light present in the sublime moral values. Just as we turn off our artificial sources of light when the day’s sunlight appears, we should also extinguish our moral assumptions when prescribed law (*ash-shar’*) comes to us from Allah *Glorified is He*.

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- (1) *The reason for the revelation of this verse: Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him, and his companions resided for ten years in Mecca after Allah Glorified is He sent His message to him in a state of fear from the disbelievers’ wrongdoing. They used to call to Allah’s way, both in secrecy and openly. Then, Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him was commanded to migrate to Medina, where they were also afraid, waking in the morning in arms and retiring in the evening in arms. So a man of his companions said, ‘O Messenger of Allah Glorified is He! When will the day come in which we will feel safe enough to put down our arms?’ Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him, replied: ‘You will only wait for a short while until any man among you will find himself seated in a great gathering wrapped in his garment, in a relaxed manner, without any of them carrying a weapon.’ Then Allah Glorified is He revealed the verse in which He says: ‘Allah has promised those of you who have believed and did good deeds...,’ (an-Nur: 55) to the end of the verse. Then Allah Glorified is He made His Prophet victorious over the Arabian Peninsula, so they laid down their arms and entered a state of security. This Hadith was narrated by Wahidi in Asbab An-nuzul (p. 188) and Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir (3/3101) and Al-Qurtubi in his Tafsir (5/4835).*

No one should have an opinion alongside the prescribed law of Allah *Glorified is He*. This is because the Creator wishes for his created servants upon the earth to live in a way that is guided by perceptible and spiritual light.

Allah *Glorified is He* has guaranteed for mankind the elements that are necessary for the continuation of their lives, in the form of lawful food and drink. Thus, their cells will be built from lawful elements and their apparatus for the reception of Allah's messages will be sound. Similarly, the apparatus through which they can send their transmissions and prayers to Allah *Glorified is He* will be sound.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was narrated to have said: 'O you people, verily, Allah is good and pure (*tayyib*) and only accepts the good and pure offerings. Indeed, Allah has commanded the believers that which he commanded the envoys (messengers of his revelation), as He says: "O you Apostles! Consume from 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 also says: "O you who have believed, consume from the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance" (*al-Baqara*: 172).' 'Prophet Muhammad then mentioned the example of a man who travels extensively, with unkempt hair and covered in dust, stretching forth his hands to the sky (in supplication), asking, "O Lord," while his food is unlawful, his drink is unlawful, his clothing is unlawful and he is provisioned (*ghudhdhiya*) with unlawful elements. The Prophet asked, "Why should this man's supplications be answered?"⁽¹⁾

In this case, the man's instruments of reception and transmission are ruined, much like a radio which has poor reception that cannot grasp what broadcast stations emit. The transmission is ongoing and is received by others, but his reception alone is dysfunctional. Thus, if you assure the soundness of your body's consumption with lawful nourishment, Allah *Glorified is He* will grant you the definite answers to your supplications. It was narrated in a Prophetic Hadith that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Sa'd ibn

(1) *This Hadith was narrated by Muslim (1015) and Ahmad (2/328) on the authority of Abu Hurayrah may Allah be pleased with him*

Abu Waqqas *Allah be pleased with him* ‘Assure your food is pure and you will be a man whose supplications are answered.’⁽¹⁾

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* guaranteed for mankind the constituent laws for the survival of their species through marriage. This ensures the continuation of mankind’s purified and clean offspring and the maintenance of their succession upon the earth. Subsequently, the verses of this Quranic chapter warned the people, “Beware of the audacity to offend the honour of people, or to slander chaste women! Do not enter into houses without their owners’ permission, so that you do not see the imperfections of people.”

Allah *Glorified is He* desired the soundness of society and the soundness of their succession upon the land, through the legal prescriptions and meanings that are placed forth in the following verse: ‘Allah has promised those of you who have believed and done righteous deeds that, indeed, He will cause them to accede to power on Earth’ (*an-Nur*: 55). Hence, whoever follows these rules will be a qualified member of this succession that Allah *Glorified is He* has bestowed upon mankind.

Truly, this is a battle of trials and tribulations that separates the people who do good from those who do bad. Just consider how the Muslims of the earliest times were tormented and oppressed. No one dared to protect them until they were forced into emigration, firstly to Abyssinia and secondly to Medina. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Do men think that on their (mere) saying, “We have believed,” they will be left without a test (and a tribulation)?’” (*al-’Ankabut*: 2)

The companions were the ones who carried the beacons of guidance and conveyed the call of Allah *Glorified is He* throughout the world. Thus, it was necessary for them to undergo this rigorous training and they had to be tested by these arduous trials. Knowing well the price they had to pay and sacrifices they had to make, they expected the rewards from Allah *Glorified is He* alone. Indeed, the people of truth pay the price first, whereas the people of groundless principles seize the price first, even before they make a move towards these principles. These tribulations, which the earliest Muslims

(1) Narrated by Al-Haythami in *Mujama’ Az-Zawa’id* (10/291).

experienced, were a form of purification so that they would be qualified for power upon the earth.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah has promised...' (*an-Nur*: 55). A promise (*al-wa'd*) is an announcement of good that has not yet come so that people can prepare the means for acquiring it. Its opposite is a threat (*al-wa'eed*) or a warning (*al-indhar*) of evil that is yet to come so that people might take the necessary precautions and desist from falling into its causes. This promise is indeed truthful as it is from Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah says: 'And whose word could be truer than Allah's word?' (*an-Nisa'*: 122) and in another verse: 'And who could be more fulfilling to His covenant than Allah?' (*at-Tawba*: 111)

The reason that people's promises are undermined and broken by the lack of honesty is that people are naturally changing. A man may promise another man with a certain reward, but his heart could turn against him and so he does not fulfil the promise. On the other hand, the True Lord, Allah *Glorified is He* never changes and is capable of fulfilling all that He promises. There is no other power that could restrain Him, for He is One Lord and there is no deity worthy of worship except Him. Thus, His promises are always fulfilled. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah has promised those of you who have believed and done righteous deeds' (*an-Nur*: 55). We have said earlier that faith which is based upon purity of source and doctrine is not sought for its own sake. Rather, true faith should produce particular fruits. This faith must be followed by obedience and implementation of the Divine commands. As long as you do believe in Allah *Glorified is He* you should execute what He has commanded you to do.

There are people who do good deeds, but not from the starting point of faith. We can find an example of this in some people, whom Allah *Glorified is He* describes in this verse: 'Some Bedouins said, "We have believed." Say (O Muhammad unto them), "You have not (yet) attained to faith; you should (rather) say, 'We have (outwardly) submitted to Islam"' (*al-Hujurat*: 14). In other words, we have submitted to the external commands of Islam, but our deeds are not based on sincere faith. Hence, the value of faith is that you should implement its requirements. Another verse that is relevant in this context is

the verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Consider the flight of time! Verily, man is bound to lose himself, unless he be of those who attain to faith, do good deeds, and enjoin upon one another the adherence to truth, and enjoin upon one another patience in adversity’ (*al-’Asr*: 1-3).

What has Allah promised those who believe? Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘He will cause them to accede to power on Earth’ (*an-Nur*: 55). Their ascent to power upon the earth will not be a new phenomenon, as earlier ancestors preceded them in this regard, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...just as He caused (some of) those who lived before them to accede to it’ (*an-Nur*: 55).

Thus, granting the believers access to power is not a novelty. Rather, it is a phenomenon which we can easily witness in the procession of messengers and prophets. We can also see this in the earliest Muslims and companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who suffered harm and were tormented, persecuted and driven from their homes, children and possessions. At that time, they were not ordered to forcefully repel aggression. Finally, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* reached Medina with a group of his companions, the *Ansar* (Helpers-Medinian Muslims) welcomed them with reverence and affection. They embraced these Immigrants (*Al-Muhajirun*-Meccan Muslims) and treated them with the sublime morals of altruism that transcend any other example of social relations in human history. Is there any greater altruism than the *Ansari* man who offered to divorce a wife so that the *Muhajjir* may marry her? The *Ansari* said, ‘Choose one of my wives, and I will divorce her for you.’ Faith affected the souls of the *Ansar* to such a sublime degree.

When the disbelievers of Quraysh saw how the *Ansar* dealt with the Muslim migrants to Medina, they were infuriated, ‘How could the *Muhajirun* in Medina live such a pleasant life?’ The disbelievers joined forces and plotted against the exemplary model of this nascent religion. They wanted to attack it with a single blow in order to eradicate the religion that, in their eyes, posed a great danger.

Things reached such a state of danger for the *Muhajirun* and the *Ansar* that they would not go to bed nor rise in the morning except in arms. They

were in constant fear that their enemy would attack them at all times. One of the companions even asked his brothers, 'Do you think that we will live long enough to be secure and at ease, without going to bed armed and waking up likewise. Will a day come when we will fear none but Allah?' Another companion went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, shall we be forever in fear? Will there ever come a day when we lay down our war gear and sleep in security?' Prophet Muhammad answered with a truthful tongue that was confident in the promise of his Lord: 'You will only wait for a short while, (and soon) any man among you will find himself seated in a great gathering wrapped in his garment, in a relaxed manner, without any of them carrying a weapon.'⁽¹⁾ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* also said: 'Verily, Allah *Glorified is He* showed me the Earth, and I saw all its directions. The dominion of my community shall reach that which was shown for me from it.'⁽²⁾

During this early phase, the companions were longing for security and tranquillity. Allah *Glorified is He* says about them during this period: '...and so shaken were they that the Apostle, and the believers with him, would exclaim, "When will Allah's assistance come?"...' (*al-Baqara*: 214) In the midst of this hardship and at the peak of this anxiety, Allah *Glorified is He* revealed this verse to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '(Yet) this group (of disbelievers) shall be defeated, and they shall turn their backs in retreat (in flight)' (*al-Qamar*: 45).

The companions were astonished with this verse. Even 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* asked, 'Which group are these (that will be defeated)?' This verse was revealed when they were in Mecca under the most intense fear, not even being able to protect themselves. However, after (the battle of) Badr, they saw what had befallen the disbelievers. 'Umar said at that point, 'Allah *Glorified is He* has revealed the truth when He said: "(Yet) this group (of disbelievers) shall be defeated, and they shall turn their backs in retreat (in flight)" (*al-Qamar*: 45).

(1) Narrated by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* (3/301) as the context for the revelation of the verse.

(2) Narrated by Muslim (2889) and Ahmad (5/278, 284) on the authority of Thawban.

Subsequently, Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad a number of verses that reassured the believers and encouraged them to be patient. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Have, then, they (who deny the truth) not yet seen how We visit the earth (with Our Punishment), gradually depriving it of all that is best thereon? For, (when) Allah judges, there is no power that can repel His judgment' (*ar-Ra'd*: 41). This verse was to reassure the companions, that the land of disbelief will diminish and the land of faith will increase. These early difficult events were for their long-term benefit.

Then came the conquest of Mecca, with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* entering Mecca in a solemn procession while bowing his head in humility to Allah *Glorified is He*. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was manifesting his submissiveness and servitude to his Lord *Glorified is He*.

When Abu Sufyan, the leader of the Quraysh and the inveterate antagonist of the Prophet saw Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in this procession, he said to al-'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* Prophet Muhammad's uncle, 'The dominion of your nephew has become mighty indeed.' Al-'Abbas replied, 'It is Prophet-hood, O Abu Sufyan.'⁽¹⁾ This was not a mere issue of worldly dominion, but the promising sign that the religion of Allah *Glorified is He* was triumphing over the stronghold of the idols in Mecca.

Subsequently, Prophet Muhammad *him* marched to Khaybar, the stronghold of the People of the Scripture of Banu Qaynuqa', Banu An-Nadeer and Banu Qurayzha. There, he was victorious over them. Later, Bahrain and the adherents of the Magians of Hajar fell into his hands and were made to pay the poll tax (*al-jizyah*).

After this, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* sent his messengers to many kings and leaders, calling them to Islam. He sent such

(1) In his *As-Sira An-Nabawiya* (4/404), Ibn Hisham narrated that the armies of Muslims were shown to Abu Sufyan during the conquest of Mecca, while he was with Al-'Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* the uncle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, and he said, 'No one could have the power to stand in the way of these. By God, O Abu Al-Fadl (Al-'Abbas), indeed the dominion of your nephew has become mighty this morning.' Al-'Abbas replied, 'O Abu Sufyan, verily it is Prophethood. Abu Sufyan remarked, 'How good it is then'.

messages to Negus (King of Abyssinia), the Archbishop of Alexandria (al-Muqawqis), Heraclius (the Byzantine Emperor) and Khosrau (the Persian Emperor). He received gifts from these kings and emperors.

The Islamic expansion continued, as did Allah's promise to the caliphs who succeeded Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. While the Islamic expansion encompassed the whole of the Arabian Peninsula during the time of Prophet Muhammad, it went beyond the peninsula to various areas of the world in the age of the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Ultimately, Islam dominated the entire world, with Allah *Glorified is He* making it victorious over the two greatest civilizations at that time: the civilization of Persia to the East and the Byzantine civilization to the West. Thereby, Allah's promise was realized for those that believed He would give them power on the earth.

After the death of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* many other prophecies also came true. Among these prophecies was the case of Suraqa Ibn Malik who went out in pursuit of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* during his voyage of emigration (from Mecca to Medina). Suraqa wished to capture Prophet Muhammad in order to obtain the reward offered by the Quraysh for his capture. After Suraqa repented and became reformed, the companions were struck by the skinniness of his forearms. They used to describe his forearms in a manner that evoked laughter.

However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say about Suraqa's forearms, 'How would they look wearing the bracelets of Khosrau (the Persian Emperor)?'⁽¹⁾ Afterwards, the Muslims did indeed

(1) *Al-Bayhaqi narrated in his Dala'il An-Nabuwa (6/325) that 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him was brought the personal possessions of Khosrau which were laid before him. Among the people present was Suraqa ibn Malik. The bracelets of Khosrau Ibn Hurmuz were given to him. He put them on his arms and they reached his shoulders. When 'Umar saw them on the arms of Suraqa, he said, 'Praise be to Allah Glorified is He the bracelets of Khosrau ibn Hurmuz are on the arms of Suraqa ibn Malik ibn Ju'sham, the Bedouin of Banu Mudlaj.' Then he mentioned the Hadith. Imam Shafi'i Allah rest his soul said, 'Suraqa wore them because Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him had told Suraqa as he was looking at his two arms, "It is as if I were with you, and you had donned the bracelets of Khosrau."'*

conquer the domains of Khosrau. The bracelets of Khosrau fell to the lot of Suraqa and he wore them, with people seeing them on his arms. All of these were good tidings which Allah *Glorified is He* had promised that the companions would see themselves. ‘Allah has promised those of you, who have believed’ (*an-Nur*: 55). This meant that the promise would happen after a short while during their lives.

A similar prophecy that came true is found in the story of Umm Haram bint Milhan⁽¹⁾ who departed to take part in the Campaign of Dhat As-Sawari and who sailed the sea. She narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to take naps at her house, and then wake up laughing. So she asked him, ‘What is making you laugh, O Messenger of Allah?’ He answered: ‘People from my community sailing the foamy sea, like kings on thrones’. She said, ‘Ask Allah in prayer that I might be among them’. So Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed to Allah *Glorified is He* and Allah answered his prayer. She went out on a military campaign, and when they had sailed the Mediterranean Sea, she died.⁽²⁾ Hence, the glad tidings in this verse are not just words of empty optimism. Indeed, these glad tidings became a reality recorded in history.

However, what is the intended meaning of the word ‘earth’ in the verse: ‘He will cause them to accede to power on Earth (*al-ard*)’ (*an-Nur*: 55)? If the Arabic word *al-ard* appears in this manner, as a singular word without being in a genitive construction, then it refers to the entire Earth, as in Allah’s words: ‘And after that We said unto the Children of Israel, “Dwell now securely on the Earth (*al-ard*),”’ (*al-Kahf*: 104). In other words, they will separate and scatter in every region of it. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse, regarding the Children of Israel: ‘...but (remember that)

(1) *She is the sister of Umm Salim. Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him used to take an afternoon nap in her house and she was married to ‘Ubada ibn As-Samit, and her grave is in Cyprus.*

(2) *This Hadith was narrated in this version by Abu Nu’aym in Huliya al-Awliya’ (2/61). It was also narrated by Al-Bukhari (see: (Fath al-Bari), 6/102) with the wording, ‘The first army of my community to undertake military campaigns on the sea will indeed be rewarded with paradise.’ Umm Haram asked, “Am I among them?” He said: “You are among them”.*

when the promise of the Last Day shall come to pass, We will bring you forth as (parts of) a motley crowd' (*al-Kahf*: 104). This means that they will be gathered from many separate lands on the earth. This is the powerful hope which we live for.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...and that, indeed, He will firmly establish for them the religion which He has been pleased to bestow on them' (*an-Nur*: 55). Thus, beyond causing them to accede to power on earth, Allah *Glorified is He* shall firmly establish their religion for them. This means that their religion will gain dominance over all the activities of their lives so that all the issues of life are treated in its light and based on its guidance. Then, it shall not be a neglected religion, as we neglect it today. The firm establishment (*tamkeen*) of religion means its utilization and execution in organizing and maintaining the activities of our lives.

Allah *Glorified is He* said: '...and that, indeed, He will cause their erstwhile state of fear to be replaced by a sense of security' (*an-Nur*: 55). This was an answer to those companions who used to complain, 'We go to sleep in arms and wake up in arms.' Allah promised to substitute their state of fear for a state of security. When this occurred, it became incumbent upon them to safeguard this power in the servitude of Allah and to fulfil its duties.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: '(seeing that) they worship Me (alone), not ascribing divine powers to aught besides Me. But all who, after (having achieved) this, choose to deny the truth – it is they, they who are truly iniquitous!' (*an-Nur*: 55) This means that those who, after Allah has caused them to accede to power on earth, firmly establishing their religion for them and granting them security, chose to deny the truth, they are the truly misguided people.

There is a differentiation between firmly establishing Islam and firmly establishing those who ascribe to Islam. Some people claim that they are Muslims, with the sole role of becoming a well-established authority. This is not the true and firm establishment of religion that is meant in this verse. We do not desire to firmly establish the ruler unto the land, but only desire to establish the religion.

وَأَقِمْوُ الصَّلَاةَ وَآتُوا الزَّكَاةَ وَأَطِيعُوا الرَّسُولَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

[People], keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, and obey the Messenger, so that you may be given mercy [56]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 56)

The Quran continually pairs these two pillars. The verses usually mention the obligatory prayers (*as-salat*) followed by the obligatory alms (*az-zakat*). This is because prayers are the sole pillar which was made obligatory by Allah *Glorified is He* directly. As for the other pillars, these were made obligatory by Divine Revelation (*al-wahy*).

We have coined a similitude for this, and to Allah *Glorified is He* belongs the highest similitude. Consider a manager who traditionally assigns responsibilities to his subordinates by official written instructions or by telephone. However, if the matter is of utmost importance, he may summon the specific employee to his office and entrust him with the matter directly.

In a similar manner, Allah *Glorified is He* commanded all the legally prescribed obligations through Divine Revelation (*al-wahy*) except for prayer. He made prayers obligatory after summoning Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the journey of ascension (*rihlat al-mi'raj*). There, he assigned the Prayers to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* verbally without any intermediary (*wasita*). Allah *Glorified is He* knew the love of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* for his community (*ummah*). Allah *Glorified is He* told him: 'I have made Prayers obligatory upon you in close proximity, and likewise do I render it for the worshipper on the Earth (an act accomplished) in close proximity, so if he enters a mosque he will find Me.'

While the pillars of Islam are five in number, the Testimony of Faith and prayer are the two permanent pillars which never fall away from the believer under any circumstances. For it might be that you are unable to fulfil the conditions of fasting or prescribed *zakat* (obligatory alms) or pilgrimage, so then they are not obligatory upon you. On the other hand, prayer is the obligatory ritual act which is repeated five times over the course of the day and night. Through it, the Testimony of Faith in Allah is continuously

expressed. The True Lord *Glorified is He* has interspersed them over time, so that the believer remains in constant contact with his Lord, such that every time the world preoccupies him, he hears 'Allah is the greatest' summoning him.

Just contemplate the greatness of the Creator *Glorified is He* when he asks his creation to meet him and stand before him five times every day. It is He *Glorified is He* who demands this meeting and makes it obligatory upon you for your well-being. You can imagine a manufactured thing which is displayed before its maker five times every day; would any sort of malfunction ever affect it?

Your Lord is the one who is summoning you, and calling you to meet Him. He says: 'I weary not, until you become weary'.⁽¹⁾ Out of His Mercy towards you and His love for you, He leaves you the freedom to choose the time and the place, and leaves you the freedom to end the meeting whenever you want. Though if you desire to stay in His house with Him, then you are more than welcome.

Because of the importance of prayer and its status in Islam, it encompasses all the other pillars; you repeat the Testimony of Faith during prayer; *zakat* (obligatory alms) also exists in prayer since you give of your time, and prayer takes time itself. Likewise, fasting is featured in prayer inasmuch as you abstain during it from what you abstain from in fasting, and even more. The same goes for pilgrimage since you face the *Ka'ba* in your prayer.

In short, prayer takes the place of all of the pillars in a continuous fashion. For this reason, it is the main pillar of the religion, from which the believer is not excused under any circumstances. Even if he is unable to perform the prayer standing, he can pray sitting or lying down, even if he can only gesture with his fingers or his eyes, or even simply envisage it in his mind. This is, surely, sustainability of faith in worshipful servitude to Allah, the worshipped One.

Prayer also preserves values, as it equalises people, the rich and the poor, the president, and those presided over stand in a single line. Everyone sits

(1) *Al-Bukhari (1970) and Muslim (782) both related a Hadith narrated by 'A'isha Allah be pleased with her in which she said that the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him used to say: 'Do of pious acts that which you are capable of, for verily Allah does not weary until you become weary'.*

according to his arrival, and this brings about open access to worship in society, for prayer is a domain in which all are equal.

If prayer is the guardian of values, then prescribed *zakat* (obligatory alms) is the guardian of material possessions for those who do not have the capacity to earn or to work. Hence, we have before us laws for life, and for the continuity of people as vicegerents on the earth. The guardian of values is prayer, and the guardian of material possessions is prescribed *zakat* (obligatory alms).

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And establish prayer and give *zakat* and obey the Messenger - that you may receive mercy’. Here, in the matter of prayer and prescribed *zakat* (obligatory alms), He singles out the Messenger for obedience. This is because he is the one entrusted with the clarification of and the details of that which the True Lord *Glorified is He* has summarised in the obligatory acts of prayer and *zakat* (obligatory alms), inasmuch as the details of both of them are found in the purified *Sunnah* (Prophetic teachings). Subsequently, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

لَا تَحْسَبَنَّ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا مُعْجِزِينَكَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا لَهُمْ فِي النَّارِ وَلَيْسَ الْمَصِيرُ

Do not think [Prophet] that the disbelievers can escape God on earth; the Fire will be their final home, an evil end [57]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 57)

Do not presume that the disbelievers, however high their status and whatever they have acquired through tyranny, will escape the punishment of Allah. For they will never be able to inflict failure upon Allah; Rather, He *Glorified is He* grants them a pleasant life and respite, until when He seizes them, He seizes them with a mighty and powerful grasp. And He *Glorified is He* will catch them unexpectedly, without a doubt.

In the words of the jinn: ‘And we have become certain that we will never cause failure to Allah upon earth, nor can we escape Him by flight’ (*al-Jinn*: 12).

In His saying: ‘their refuge will be the Fire,’ the meaning is, do not think that those who disbelieve can evade [Allah’s reckoning] on earth because their ultimate abode is hellfire.

As for the final exclamation 'and how wretched the destination,' it refers to the place of returning and destination.

Then the theme shifts to behaviour associated internally within society, particularly the family in its most delicate private attributes, having previously mentioned at the beginning of the chapter the laws specific to society from the outward aspect. He *Glorified is He* says:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا لِيَسْتَعِزَّذَنَكُمُ الَّذِينَ مَلَكَتْ أَيْمَانُكُمْ وَالَّذِينَ لَمْ يَبْلُغُوا الْحُلُمَ مِنْكُمْ
ثَلَاثَ مَرَّاتٍ مِنْ قَبْلِ صَلَاةِ الْفَجْرِ وَحِينَ تَضَعُونَ ثِيَابَكُمْ مِنَ الظَّهْرِ وَمِنْ بَعْدِ صَلَاةِ
الْعِشَاءِ ثَلَاثُ عَوْرَاتٍ لَكُمْ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ وَلَا عَلَيْهِمْ جُنَاحٌ بَعْدَھُنَّ طَوْفُوتٌ عَلَيْكُمْ
بَعْضُكُمْ عَلَى بَعْضٍ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٨﴾

Believers, your slaves and any who have not yet reached puberty should ask your permission to come in at three times of day: before the dawn prayer; when you lay your garments aside in the midday heat; and after the evening prayer. These are your three times for privacy; at other times, there is no blame on you or them if you move around each other freely. In this way God makes messages clear: God is all knowing, all wise [58] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 58)

This verse teaches us the etiquette of asking permission within a family made up of two parents and children, in addition to subordinates such as servants and others. Now, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wishes to raise this family in the best possible manner, and He singles out those who believe for appeal here. In other words, O you who believe in Me as a wise, law-giving Lord for you, desiring your well-being, listen to these instructions: 'let those whom your right hands possess and those who have not [yet] reached puberty among you ask permission of you [before entering] at three times'. It means teach those to ask permission of you. This etiquette is a commandment from Allah *Glorified is He* with which He charges every believer within the family. Although the command here is for those who are not charged since those ordered to ask permission are servants and children, Allah commands the adults to teach the young. This is similar to what is cited in a Hadith:

‘Teach/order your children [at the age of] seven to pray, and punish them [if they were reluctant to perform] it [at the age of] ten’.⁽¹⁾

Hence, it is not the young who are given responsibility for this, but rather adults who are charged. This is because children have not yet reached the age of legal accountability for commands from their Lord; instead, it is adults who have reached the age of being held accountable. Therefore, it is they who should give the order and punish.

Ordering a child to pray or to ask permission is to inculcate in him the habit and the regularity of something which might be very hard for him when he grows older. However, if you accustom children to it now, it will be easy for them when they reach the age of being obligated [to adhere to religious prescriptions], and the regular habit on their part will become worship they will be able to maintain. Allah *the Almighty* laid down the etiquettes of seeking permission because there are certain personal affairs that are only known to man’s relatives, unlike the foreigners who only know about those affairs which are apparent to them. In other words, one’s relatives know about him/her more than anyone else. Now there are social regulations for general society, and social regulations for private society, which is the family. The freedom of a person in his family is broader than his freedom in general society, and when he is in his own private quarters, his freedom is broader than his freedom among his family.

So, there must be moral precepts which protect these private domains, and which regulate the relations between the members of a single family, just as the preceding moral precepts which regulate the relations between individuals outside of the family.

With regards to: ‘your right hands possess,’ these are servants who perform services for certain people, without taking wages in return because they are not free people. In other words, they are under the full control of their masters, thus cannot escape from them.

Concerning, ‘and those who have not [yet] reached puberty among you,’ these are young children who have not yet reached the age of legal responsibility.

(1) *This Hadith is related by Ahmad (2/187) and Abu Dawud (495).*

They perform errands, so you see them coming in and out of the room without any restriction. But are we to leave them in this manner, taking cognisance of our most intimate affairs? Household servants by nature tend to enter and exit our rooms, and likewise for children. However, there are three times of day during which they are not permitted to enter without asking for permission: 'before the Dawn Prayer' because this is the time associated with sleep, and a person asleep has freedom of movement and of dress: 'and when you put aside your clothing [for rest] at noon' as this is the time of afternoon napping, a time of relaxation during which a person removes some of his clothes 'and after the night prayer' since sleep comes after the night prayer. These are the three times during which no one should come into your room except by your explicit permission.

Look at this precaution which your Lord Glorified is He provides for you so that your freedom will not be restricted in your personal matters and your private affairs. It is as if these times, O Believer, were your personal possession in which you can find relaxation and enjoy your privacy. The requirement of asking for permission gives you the opportunity to prepare yourself to meet the person requesting permission. As for all other times, everyone else, even your wife, [should] ask for permission.

'The occasion of the revelation of this verse is that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to see 'Umar Allah *be pleased with him* for some matter, so he sent a servant boy from the *Ansar* (Helpers-Medinian Muslims) to him. When the boy had gone, he pushed the door and called out, "O 'Umar!" But he did not respond because he was sleeping. So, the boy went out and sat outside, then knocked on the door, but 'Umar Allah *be pleased with him* did not wake up. So what did the servant boy do? He raised his hands to the sky and said, "O Lord, wake him up!" Then he pushed open the door and went into his room, and there was 'Umar asleep in a posture that was not proper for anyone to see him in. 'Umar Allah *be pleased with him* then woke up and noticed that the servant boy had seen him in that position. Then, when he went to the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* he said, "O Messenger of Allah, we desire that our children ask permission to enter upon us in our private quarters as well as our women and our subordinate dependents

(*mawali-na*) and our servants, for such-and-such has just occurred with the servant boy [you sent].” Thereupon this verse was revealed.⁽¹⁾

Allah *Glorified is He* terms these three times of privacy (*‘awra*): ‘[These are] three times of privacy for you.’ It is to be noted that the Arabic word (*al-‘awrah*) also connotes the private parts of a person’s body, and these, whether of a male or female, should not be seen by anyone, as this is a kind of harmful breach of privacy, and Allah does not want anyone to see you in a manner that you would dislike.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘There is no blame upon you nor upon them beyond these [periods].’ In other words, outside of these times, there is no sin or prohibition on you or on servants or on young children if they enter your private quarters. Apart from these three times, a person should be prepared to carry on with a normal life, and there is no objection to his receiving servants or young children without their asking for permission. This is because the nature of life in houses cannot do without the continual entering and exiting.

He *Glorified is He* says after this: ‘for they continually circulate among you – some of you, among others.’ This signifies that their movement about in the house is constant, entering and exiting [from one room to the next], so how could we restrict it at other than these times?

There follows: ‘Thus does Allah make clear to you the verses;’ which signifies an obvious clarification so that contradictions will not happen in society later; ‘and Allah is Knowing,’ about everything which promotes the welfare of people as the vicegerents on the earth; ‘and Wise,’ in His establishment of laws and His Commands. He does not lay down a law without wisdom.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

(1) This explanation for the cause for the revelation of the verse is cited along with a different one by Al-Qurtubi in his (*Tafsir*) (6/4840).

وَإِذَا بَلَغَ الْأَطْفَالُ مِنْكُمُ الْحُلُمَ فَلْيَسْتَأْذِنُوا كَمَا اسْتَأْذَنَ الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ
كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ آيَاتِهِ وَاللَّهُ عَلِيمٌ حَكِيمٌ ﴿٥٩﴾

**When your children reach puberty, they should [always] ask
your permission to enter, like their elders do. This is how
God makes His messages clear to you: God is all knowing,
all wise [59] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 59)**

When the child was still a child who had not reached puberty, he would enter [into your private quarters] outside of these proscribed times, but if he has reached the age of puberty, then he is obliged to ask permission [before doing so]. We do not say: he has become accustomed to asking permission only during these times. No, rather, he must ask permission at all times, for he has become an adolescent and has grown up, and the previous state [of innocence] has come to an end in this regard.

Reaching the age of puberty signifies that a person has matured enough that he is capable of having children. Now this is a sign of the consummation of his physical development, and this does not arise except with the completion of the sexual impulse which is itself the cause of procreation. We have compared this to a fruit which is not sweet until it ripens, which, if left after ripening falls of its own accord. This is a miracle from Allah for the survival of the species, since, if we were to eat the fruit before it ripened, its seed would not sprout, and its species would become extinct. Hence, part of the wisdom of Allah in his creation lies in the fact that a fruit does not become sweet until after it has ripened.

Similarly, when the child reaches puberty, he becomes capable of begetting offspring, and we say to him: the concession granted to you by the prescribed law has ended, and you must now request permission [to enter the private quarters of adults] at all times. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘or children who are not yet aware of the private aspects of women’ (*an-Nur*: 31).

For a child of this age, the [sexual] impulse is not formed, and they do not have these tendencies or desires. As for His saying: ‘as those before them have done’. In other words, from among adults who ask for permission at all

times. ‘Thus,’ that is, just as we have made a clear proclamation in the matter of the first seeking of permission; ‘does Allah make clear to you His verses’ because Allah *Glorified is He* is ‘Knowing’ regarding your welfare; and ‘Wise,’ not laying down laws except on the basis of wisdom.

Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالْقَوَاعِدُ مِنَ النِّسَاءِ الَّتِي لَا يَرْجُونَ نِكَاحًا فَلَيْسَ عَلَيْهِنَّ جُنَاحٌ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ
ثِيَابَهُنَّ غَيْرَ مُتَبَرِّجَاتٍ بِزِينَةٍ وَأَنْ يَسْتَعْفِفْنَ خَيْرٌ لَهُنَّ وَاللَّهُ سَمِيعٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٠﴾

No blame will be attached to elderly women who are not hoping for sex, if they take off their outer garments without flaunting their charms, but it is preferable for them not to do this: God is all hearing, all seeing [60] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 60)

We know that the Wise Law-Giver has ordained rules for the Muslim woman to follow in her dress, comportment, and manner of walking for her protection and to safeguard society from disruptive temptation, and so that those possessed of sick souls do not crave her. Thus, He made incumbent upon her to wear a covering (*hijab*), which is non-transparent and modest, to shield her and conceal her beauty. As He said: ‘bring down over themselves [part] of their outer garments’ (*al-Ahزاب*: 59).

But women of post-menstrual age and the elderly among them are under a different rule. Women such as these no longer have desire or passion, and for this reason there is no objection to them lightening somewhat the clothing which was obligatory upon them when they might have been the cause of seduction, and they have the right to take off the headscarf, for example.

However, this issue is mentioned with misgivings, since there are women who reach menopause when they are elderly, but they remain beautiful and seductive. For this reason, our Lord *Glorified is He* has laid down a precautionary rule ‘there is no blame upon them for putting aside their outer garments [but] not displaying adornment’. Then, He directs them to what is better than that ‘But to modestly refrain [from that] is better for them’. The intended meaning of laying down garments is a slight reduction of outer garments, with the condition of ‘[but] not displaying adornment’. It is, thus, not permissible for a

woman to take off her outer garments based on this concession, and then to adorn herself and make a display of her beauty. We are apprehensive about teaching women this rule, and then having them not utilise it so that we will not say of them: they are too old to be interested in men!

It is amazing to see a woman when she has reached this age, and to find her piously reserved in her dress, piously reserved in her appearance and piously reserved in her behaviour. For she is increased in beauty, radiance and even more captivating, This is in contrast to the woman who does not respect her age, putting powders and lurid make-up on her face, thus appearing disfigured and deformed.

As for 'to refrain,' it means to retain their garments and not to remove anything of them, for this is more conducive to modesty.

لَيْسَ عَلَى الْأَعْمَى حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْأَعْرَجِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى الْمَرِيضِ حَرَجٌ وَلَا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ أَنْ
تَأْكُلُوا مِنْ بُيُوتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ آبَائِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أُمَّهَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ إِخْوَانِكُمْ أَوْ
بُيُوتِ أَخَوَاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَعْمَامِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ عَمَّاتِكُمْ أَوْ بُيُوتِ أَخَوَالِكُمْ أَوْ
بُيُوتِ خَالَاتِكُمْ أَوْ مَا مَلَكَتْهُم مَفَاتِحُهُ أَوْ صَدِيقِكُمْ لَيْسَ عَلَيْكُمْ
جُنَاحٌ أَنْ تَأْكُلُوا جَمِيعًا أَوْ أَشْتَاتًا فَإِذَا دَخَلْتُمْ بُيُوتًا فَسَلِّمُوا عَلَى أَنْفُسِكُمْ تَحِيَّةٌ مِنْ عِنْدِ
اللَّهِ مُبَارَكَةٌ طَيِّبَةٌ كَذَلِكَ يُبَيِّنُ اللَّهُ لَكُمْ الْآيَاتِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

No blame will be attached to the blind, the lame, the sick.

Whether you eat in your own houses, or those of your fathers, your mothers, your brothers, your sisters, your paternal uncles, your paternal aunts, your maternal uncles, your maternal aunts, houses you have the keys for, or any of your friends' houses, you will not be blamed: you will not be blamed whether you eat in company or separately. When you enter any house, greet one another with a greeting of blessing and goodness as enjoined by God. This is how God makes His messages clear to you so that you may understand [61] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 61)

The word '*constraint*' also means sin [in this context], thus the *constraint* which is removed from those mentioned in the verse under study is constriction

or sin which is related to the rule that follows concerning the issue of eating, as indicated by His saying: ‘nor upon yourselves.’

The blind person avoids eating with people out of embarrassment since he does not see his food, and perhaps his hand reaches out to the most savoury food and he eats it and leaves its less desirable portions. The lame person has need of special comfort in his manner of sitting, and perhaps others will be bothered by this. The sick person might be met with the disgust of people. So Allah *Glorified is He* has lifted this constriction (or sin) from His servants, saying: ‘There is no blame upon you whether you eat together or separately.’

Hence, it is fit that you eat together, since the True Lord *Glorified is He* wishes to establish integration of souls, not physical appearances. Yet, it can happen that if you see a youth afflicted with some disease, and then treat him in a special manner, you might hurt his feelings, even if what afflicts him is congenital from Allah, and he can do nothing about it. For [among the disabled] are those who reject having been created by Allah in a form with which they are not pleased.

For this reason, in the countryside, we hear people say, ‘the one who gives the blind man his due, [the blind man], he, then is endowed with sight. Why? Because [the blind person] is content with this affliction, and interacts with people based on his being this way, and thus asks them for assistance. Hence, one sees all people out-racing one another to assist him and take his hand, for if he has lost an eye, Allah has compensated him for it with a thousand eyes. However, the one who is averse [to his own state] and refuses to recognise his impairment, and wears dark glasses to conceal his defect, he will proceed with difficulty, wandering around bumping into things with no one to assist him.

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted those afflicted by these ailments to be in harmony with society, for them not to assume a [negative] attitude with regard to it, and for society not to assume a [negative] attitude with regard to them.⁽¹⁾ Therefore, the passage ‘nor upon yourselves’ means, in

(1) *Ibn `Abbas said: When Allah Glorified is He revealed ‘And do not consume one another’s wealth unjustly,’ (al-Baqara: 188) Muslims felt constrained sharing their meals with the blind, the chronically ill, and the lame. They said, ‘Food is the best of possessions, and Allah has forbidden us to eat possessions in vain, and the blind do not see the=*

other words, they are just like you, so there should be no impediment between you and them in anything.

‘For when you eat from your [own] houses’ The *Ansar* (Helpers-Medinian Muslims) were possessed of a certain shyness such that if one of them was sitting in someone else’s house, they would not eat [food] from it unless the owner of the house gave them express permission. A man among them might go on a journey and leave a dependent subordinate at his house without giving him leave to eat of the food of his house. Then he would return and find the food untouched, or find that it had spoiled without the dependent subordinate having eaten anything of it. So the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to lift this constriction from people, hence He says: ‘There is not upon the blind [any] constraint nor upon the lame constraint nor upon the ill constraint nor upon yourselves when you eat from your [own] houses...’

One may argue, what sort of constriction or sin would there be for a person to eat from his own house? It is said: if you strive to thoroughly examine the relatives mentioned in the verse, the answer would become clear to you. For the verse mentions your fathers, your mothers, your brothers, your sisters, your paternal uncles, your paternal aunts, your maternal uncles, and your maternal aunts, but it does not mention anything about offspring, though they are at the top of this sequence. Why?

The answer is because the houses of offspring are the houses of parents, and that when you eat from the house of your child, you are eating from your house. This is based on the notion that the child and all that he possesses are the property of his father. Thus, one can – outside the Quran – replace ‘your houses’ with the houses of your children. This is because the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not wish to make a separate reference to the houses of children alongside those of parents, since they are one and the same thing.

Consequently, there is no restriction upon you to eat from the house of your son, or your father, or your mother, or your brother, or your paternal

= location of tasty food, and the sick do not eat their full share of food. Thereupon Allah *Glorified is He* revealed this verse: ‘There is not upon the blind [any] constraint nor upon the lame constraint.’ [This is cited by Al-Wahidi in (*Asbab An-Nuzul*), page 189.]

uncle or your paternal aunt, or your maternal uncle, or your maternal aunt. ‘Or [from houses] whose keys you possess or [from the house] of your friend.’ That is to say, the owner of the house gives you the keys to it,⁽¹⁾ and in this is permission for you to dispose of or eat of its food if you want to.

With regards to ‘or [from the house] of your friend,’ the word ‘friend’ is singular. The reason is that even if friends were a group, they will inevitably be of one heart otherwise they would not be friends.

Concerning His saying, ‘But when you enter houses, give greetings of peace upon each other- a greeting from Allah, blessed and good’ Islam wishes to render the community of faith a single unit, bound firmly together. The very greeting of Islam requires both parties to respond to each other, so it is as though one greets himself.

Another connotation is that if you enter into houses in which there is no one, greet yourselves. And when you enter mosques say: greetings of peace upon the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and upon us from our Lord. The angels hear and they respond.

As regards His saying ‘a greeting from Allah, blessed and good,’ in another verse He *Glorified is He* says: ‘And when you are greeted with a greeting, greet [in return] with one better than it or [at least] return it [in a like manner]’ (*an-Nisa*: 86). Beyond its being from Allah, He describes this greeting as being ‘blessed’. A blessed thing is that which gives over and above what is expected from it. ‘Thus does Allah make clear to you the verses [of ordinance] that you may understand’?

In other words, surely the One Who charged you with these rules is a Lord who ardently desires good for you, though He is self-sufficient of any

(1) *Sa‘id Ibn Al-Musayyab [one of the great second generation scholars of Medina] used to say of this verse, ‘It was revealed in connection with people who, when they went out on a journey or military campaign with the Prophet, used to leave the keys of their houses with the blind, the lame, the sick or with their kinfolk. They would tell them to eat from what was in their houses if they had need to do this. But [these guardians of the keys] would refrain from eating from [these houses], saying, “we fear that [the owners] may not have sincerely meant this”. Thereupon, Allah Glorified is He revealed this verse.’ [Cited by Al-Wahidi in (Asbab An-Nuzul), page 190.]*

need of this. Instead, he commands you to do things, so that their benefit rebounds upon you. So if you obey Him in that which He has commanded you to do, you will derive benefit from His commands in this world, then His recompense and reward await you in the Hereafter.

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

إِنَّمَا الْمُؤْمِنُونَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ وَإِذَا كَانُوا مَعَهُ عَلَىٰ أَمْرٍ جَامِعٍ
لَّمْ يَذْهَبُوا حَتَّىٰ يَسْتَأْذِنُوهُ إِنَّ الَّذِينَ يَسْتَأْذِنُونَكَ أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ يُؤْمِنُونَ
بِاللَّهِ وَرَسُولِهِ فَإِذَا أَسْتَأْذَنُوكَ لِبَعْضِ شَأْنِهِمْ فَأَذَنَ لِمَن شِئْتَ
مِنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُم ۚ إِنَّ اللَّهَ غَفُورٌ رَّحِيمٌ ﴿٦٢﴾

The true believers are those who believe in God and His Messenger, who, when they are gathered with him on a communal matter, do not depart until they have asked his permission – those who ask your permission [Prophet] are the ones who truly believe in God and His Messenger. When they ask your permission to attend to their private affairs, allow whoever you see fit and ask God to forgive them. God is most forgiving and merciful [62] (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 62)

The believer is one who believes in Allah and in the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveying messages from Allah. Now, inasmuch as you have affirmed your belief in the Messenger conveying messages from Allah, then it is necessary for your actions to be subject to His commands, and your own deepest self must belong to Him. Hence, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* views a matter as affecting the entire community – uniting the Muslims in a situation, or in peace or war – and he then summons all of you for consultation, so that each one of you might express his opinion or experience, thereby expanding the domain of deliberation in the community, this is in order that the resulting decision be sound and correct, in accordance with the common good.

Thus, when the true believer is summoned to participate in the discussion of such a matter affecting the entire community, he does not get up from his place of sitting until he has asked permission of the Prophet Muhammad *peace*

and blessings be upon him who is under no obligation to grant him this permission because the matter bringing together all the Muslims may well be more important than the matter which concerns an individual.

With regards to His saying: ‘Indeed, those who ask your permission, [O Muhammad] - those are the ones who believe in Allah and His Messenger.’ Their request for permission here is among the signs of faith. [The believer] does not get up and depart from a council stealthily, sneaking out without anyone noticing him. It is necessary to ask permission of the Messenger of Allah in order that the common good does not elude the believers, for it may be that he has an opinion from which benefit can be derived.

The Messenger surely seeks the counsel of his companions in order to be enlightened by their opinions and experience. Hence, when he summons them to [participate in] a matter of important communal concern, this must be understood within the context of the Messenger’s status as part of his communication from Allah to the *ummah*. When some individual calls upon another individual for counsel, the two of them are deliberating a personal matter concerning the person in question. However, when the Messenger of Allah summons them, he is not summoning them for [deliberation about] a single personal affair, but rather about a specific matter concerning the community as a whole. Allah has willed that this community of believers be the best brought forth for mankind, and the individual shall also derive benefit from this summons. It may be that the benefit he derives from responding to the general summons which encompasses all people is better than the benefit he derives from his own personal summons. The summoned person must give proper value to this distinction.

In spite of this distinction, Allah did not forbid some people who have their personal concerns from requesting permission of the Messenger of Allah in order to leave to attend to them. That is why He ordained seeking permission for them. Nevertheless, they should bear this distinction in mind, and remember that they departed to take care of some personal affair, while the Messenger assumes the responsibility for the affairs of the entire world until the Final Hour arises.

Hence, if a person participates in this gathering, he will benefit as an individual and his community of fellow believers will benefit those living at that time and those to come until the Final Hour arises. But if he should give preference to his personal affairs over these affairs, then he has behaved badly, and has done that which is not suitable for a believer. For this reason, the Messenger of Allah was commanded to give permission to whomever he wishes, and then to ask for Allah's forgiveness for him. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'when they ask your permission for something of their affairs, then give permission to whom you will among them'. So, the matter is left up to the Messenger of Allah to assess it based upon the general welfare of the Muslims, free to give leave or not to give leave.

Hence, it is imperative to ask permission of the Messenger of Allah, then he can give leave to whomever he wishes such as those whose presence and opinion he feels can be made up for by those who remain. Consequently, if someone, whose opinion might be critical to the Muslims, asks for permission, he will not be granted it.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'and ask forgiveness for them of Allah,' suggesting that seeking leave and departing from the council of the Messenger of Allah is something which Allah *Glorified is He* does not approve of.

This is true even if you asked leave for a matter of importance to you, and even if the Messenger of Allah grants you leave, for it is better not to request permission to leave in the first place. When the Messenger of Allah summons to a matter of communal urgency, no one should allow their concerns to divert them from what they have been summoned to nor should they give precedence to anything above the welfare of the Muslims and the council of the Messenger of Allah. In the case of a matter of communal importance, everyone should pool together their talents and thoughts on the subject at hand, and the moment you ask for permission to attend to a personal affair, you are pre-occupied and taken away from the community, abandoning them.

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

لَا تَجْعَلُوا دُعَاءَ الرَّسُولِ بَيْنَكُمْ كَدُعَاءِ بَعْضِكُمْ بَعْضًا قَدْ
 يَعْلَمُ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ يَتَسَلَّلُونَ مِنْكُمْ لِوَاذًا فَلْيَحْذَرِ الَّذِينَ
 يُخَالِفُونَ عَنْ أَمْرِهِ أَنْ تُصِيبَهُمْ فِتْنَةٌ أَوْ يُصِيبَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٣﴾

Do not make [your] calling of the Messenger among yourselves as the call of one of you to another. Already God knows those of you who slip away, concealed by others. So, let those beware who dissent from the Prophet's order, lest Fitna [unrest or rebellion] strike them or a painful punishment [63]
 (The Quran, *an-Nur*: 63)

There are two possible interpretations. The first of these is that you summon each other with regard to personal matters, but the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* summons you to a general matter related to the activities of life of all people until the Final Hour arises. The other interpretation is that it means calling out. That is to say, the Messenger calls out to you or you call out to him. This is because there is a particular etiquette which must be observed in addressing the Messenger, as he is not like one of you that you can call out to him: O Muhammad! The Quran found fault with a group who did not adhere to the etiquette of addressing the Messenger of Allah, as Allah says: 'Indeed, those who call you, [O Muhammad], from behind the chambers - most of them do not use reason' (*al-Hujurat*: 4). They have done wrong when they said, O Muhammad! Even if they had said, O you Messenger, they would still have done wrong since it is not proper that they should rush the Messenger of Allah. Instead, they should leave him at his ease, if he should find time to meet them, then he will come out to them. Hence, they misbehaved in two respects.

It is not fitting to address Him *peace and blessings be upon him* by his name: O Muhammad. Since what binds the Messenger and his community is not that he is Muhammad, but rather, what binds them is that he is the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, it is imperative that we address him with this title. And why not, given that his Lord *Glorified is He* his Creator and the One Who chose him, and has distinguished him from all his fellow

messengers, and of those possessed of unflinching resolution, by addressing only the other messengers by their names:

‘O Adam, dwell you and your wife in this garden’ (*al-Baqara*: 35).

‘O Noah! Disembark in peace from Us’ (*Hud*: 48).

‘O Abraham you have already fulfilled [the purpose of] that dream-vision!’ (*as-Saffat*: 104-105)

‘O Moses! Verily, I am Allah’ (*al-Qasas*: 30).

‘O Jesus, son of Mary! Did you say unto men?’ (*al-Ma‘ida*: 116)

‘O David! Behold, We have made you a [prophet and, thus, our] vicegerent on earth’ (*Sad*: 26).

However, He never addressed the Messenger of Allah by his name. Instead, He addressed him using the vocative compound ‘O you!’ (*ya-ayyu-ha*) and one of his titles, such as ‘O you Messenger’ and ‘O you Prophet’. Hence, if the True Lord *Glorified is He* did not render His calling out to the Messenger the same as His calling out to His other messengers, shall we, then, call him by his name? We must say, O you Messenger, O you Prophet, O Messenger of Allah, O Prophet of Allah; for this is the fitting, elevated description.

Just as we distinguish addressing the Messenger of Allah when we call out to him, similarly when we address one another, we should give proper value to this form of address; and we should be aware that this form of address is for the common good, with its benefit rebounding upon everyone.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Already Allah knows those of you who slip away, concealed by others. So, let those beware who dissent from the Prophet’s order, lest *Fitnah* [unrest or rebellion] strike them or a painful punishment.’

There is no doubt that those who ask leave of the Messenger of Allah have faith, for they respectfully attend the council and do not get up to leave except with his permission. But there are others who depart without asking for leave: ‘slip away’. They exit gradually and in a secretive manner, as if they are shuffling from one place to another until they leave. Or they delude you into thinking that they wish to speak to another person in order to get up, and then slip out of the council secretly.

Allah warns these people saying: ‘so, let those beware who dissent from the Prophet's order’; this warning of bad consequences follows withdrawing from the council of the Messenger of Allah. It is as if He were saying to them – compare between your withdrawing from the council of the Messenger and what awaits you of punishment for doing so.

‘Dissent from the Prophet's order’ bears the meaning of turning away from the Prophet. In other words, pay attention to what the Messenger of Allah says, and do not contradict him and do not oppose him. Although he is a human being like you, yet surely, he receives Divine revelation. For this reason, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* defines his station as a human being and as a Messenger, saying: ‘[Divine] inspiration comes upon me – that is, from the True Lord *the Exalted* – whence I say: I am not like one of you; and [Divine inspiration] is taken from me, whence I say: I am not but a human being like all of you.’ Hence, the companions understood this concept, and they interacted with the Messenger of Allah on this basis, with suitable etiquette. They would ask him concerning something he offered: Is it from Allah’s revelation or is it a suggestion and open to deliberation? Consequently, if the issue was based on revelation from Allah, then no one would have the right to add or offer anything. But if he had not received any revelation from Allah concerning it, then each of them was at liberty to express their opinion or offer counsel.

This actually occurred during the battle of Badr when the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* settled at a campsite which some of the companions thought was inferior to another one. ‘So they asked the Messenger of Allah, “Is it Allah who instructed you to settle at this campsite, or is it a matter of opinion and deliberation?” Whereupon he said, “No, indeed, it is a matter of opinion and deliberation.”’⁽¹⁾ So they informed him that it was not suitable, and that the suitable place was such and such.

(1) *Al-Habbab ibn Al-Mundhir ibn Al-Jumuh said, ‘O Messenger of Allah, have you seen this campsite in a vision? Is it a campsite which Allah instructs you to settle at, there being no possibility for us to move it forward or backward; or is it an opinion, and [a question of] war and strategy?’ He replied, ‘No, indeed it is an opinion, and [a question of] war and strategy’. Whereupon [Al-Hubbab] said: ‘O Messenger of Allah,=*

Regarding His saying: 'lest *Fitnah* [unrest or rebellion] strike them,' that is to say, in this world; 'or a painful punishment,' in the Hereafter. Hence if they manage to evade the trial of this world, they will not escape the punishment of the Hereafter.

Finally, the chapter concludes with Allah saying:

أَلَا إِنَّ لِلَّهِ مَا فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ قَدْ يَعْلَمُ مَا أَنْتُمْ عَلَيْهِ
وَيَوْمَ يُرْجَعُونَ إِلَيْهِ فَيُنَبِّئُهُمْ بِمَا عَمِلُوا وَاللَّهُ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٤﴾

**Everything in the heavens and earth belongs to God:
He knows what state you are in – on the Day when all are
returned to Him, He will tell them everything they have
done – God has full knowledge of everything [64]
(The Quran, *an-Nur*: 64)**

The word 'unquestionably' attracts the listener's attention in case he was distracted. The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not want you to miss a single letter of his words, so He alerts you. So, take heed of what He says to you. He says: 'to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth'.

The heavens and the earth are a container which encompasses everything in the higher and lower reaches of the universe. So unto Allah belongs that which is in the heavens and the earth; in other words, that which is contained in them, normally, the container is of less value than that which it contains. For example, that which is inside of a treasure chest is more precious than the chest itself; and that which is inside of a bag is more valuable than the bag. The same is true for the greatness of the heavens and the earth, with all that they contain of created things. For this reason, beware never to utilise a bound copy of the Quran as a container to safeguard something of importance to you. For nothing is as valuable or precious as the Book of Allah. Hence it is not fitting that you make of it a holder for your money, or for your important papers because things which are stored away for safekeeping are normally more valuable than the object which holds them.

= then this is not a [suitable] site, so move on with the people until we get nearer to the water than the group [of our enemies], and settle there'. [This is related by ibn Hisham in (*As-Sira An-Nabawiya*) (2/620) as cited from Ibn Ishaq.]

All that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth is the possession of Allah alone, with no one sharing in its ownership with Him. And despite the multitude of false claimants to divinity, not one of them has ever laid claim to possessing dominion over anything of it.

Even Nimrod (Namrud) who argued with our forefather Abraham (Ibrahim) *peace be upon him* saying, ‘I am the one who gives life and death, when Abraham (Ibrahim) said to him: ‘Verily, Allah causes the sun to rise in the east; cause it, then, to rise in the west!’ (*al-Baqara*: 258) He was unable to do anything and was dumbfounded, and the issue was settled.

His dominion is not limited to the creation such that He created everything and then left it to perform its function by itself. Rather, He created it and He has Stewardship over what He created and administration over everything. Therefore, do not think that the universe around you serves you as an instrument, but rather, it is subservient to the will of Allah and His regulation.

Hence, water which flows for you from rains and rivers can be held back from you and your land will be afflicted by drought; or it can exceed its bounds, and become torrents, drowning and destroying. Therefore, it is not a question of the monotonous regulation of creation. Created things are not mechanical instruments; instead Allah has dominion, stewardship and free control over all that He has created.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: ‘He knows that upon which you [stand]’. In order to understand this verse, we must grasp that the relationship of the True Lord *Glorified is He* with events is not like our own relationship. With regard to Allah, events are not bound by past, present, or future. This is not logical according to the human intelligence, but nevertheless it is logical according to the Divine.

Following on Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘and [knows] the Day when they will be returned to Him and He will inform them of what they have done. And Allah is Knowing of all things’. In another verse, we find: ‘And not absent from your Lord is any [part] of an atom's weight within the earth or within the heaven or [anything] smaller than that or greater but that it is in a clear register’ (*Yunus*: 61).

Therefore, take care not to mistakenly believe that Allah's perception and vision of various positions in various places is fragmentary, that it faces one thing and does not see the other. On the contrary, it is an inclusive vision, as if all things are encompassed in a single view. This is evident in His saying: 'Then is He who is a maintainer of every soul, [knowing] what it has earned' (*ar-Ra'd*: 33).

For He *Glorified is He* is not One Whose hearing [of one thing] distracts Him from the hearing [of another thing], nor whose sight [of one thing] distracts Him from the sight [of another thing], since His perception is all-embracing, and His cognisance is rigorously subtle. For this reason, His requital will be veracious in accordance with the meticulous accuracy of His cognisance. So beware, then, of being heedless of this truth, for your Lord is watching over you, looking at you; no secret of yours is concealed from Him.

Hence, a person who slips away secretly on false premises is to be warned. There is nothing more important than sitting in council with the Messenger of Allah. The Messenger of Allah himself was intently desirous of seeing his companions in his council on a continuous basis; and Allah *Glorified is He* made this incumbent upon him, saying to him: 'And let not your eyes pass beyond them' (*al-Kahf*: 28). This is illustrated in the following incident. Among the companions who used to pray behind him was a man who would make the final greeting of the prayer and then depart hastily. [The Prophet] would thus see him at the beginning of the prayer, but not at its end. 'On the occasion of one of the subsequent prayers, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* caught hold of him and asked him, 'Is this out of indifference to us?' It is as if it were hard on the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad to find one of his companions not present in his company or renouncing his assemblies; for such a man would be deprived of the benefits and spiritual graces which descend upon the council of the Messenger of Allah, and be deprived of the radiance of his penetrating insight and of his looking at him. The man was embarrassed and began to explain to the Messenger of Allah what pushed him to rush out after every prayer, and that it was not due to his indifference to the presence of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or the assembly councils of the Messenger. He said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I have a wife at home waiting for this garment of mine to pray in it.'

In other words, he only had a single outer garment in his house. Thereupon, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* prayed for his welfare. When he returned to his wife, she asked him why he had been gone so long. He told her what had happened with Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: that he had stopped him and the discussion they had had. So, she said to her husband, are you complaining about your Lord to Muhammad?

Later, when she was asked about this incident, she said, ‘My husband was absent for one hundred *tasbihah* (one recitation of exaltation of Allah).’ Just contemplate the clock by which she regulated her time.

‘Unquestionably, to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth. Already He knows that upon which you [stand] and [knows] the Day when they will be returned to Him and He will inform them of what they have done. And Allah is Knowing of all things’ (*an-Nur*: 64). Ending with this verse clarifies the overwhelming power, might and kingdom that belong to Allah *Glorified is He* and makes evident that the return will be to Him on the Day of Rising for the Judgement.

the chapter of

al-Furqan

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

The chapter of *al-Furqan*⁽¹⁾ begins by highlighting the fact that this kingdom is not a kingdom of enslavement and subjugation, but rather one of mercy that organises life in such a way that enables you (humans) to live in its guidance and light. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي نَزَّلَ الْفُرْقَانَ عَلَى عَبْدِهِ لِيَكُونَ لِلْعَالَمِينَ نَذِيرًا ﴿١﴾

**Exalted is He who has sent the Differentiator down to His
servant so that it may be a warning to all people [1]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 1)**

Tabarak: the root letters ‘ba’, ‘ra’ and ‘kaf’ generally indicate a meaning relating to *baraka* (blessing). *Baraka* is when something gives out more benefit than the amount of benefit you think that it possesses. This is evident when you find that the food enough only for three persons feeds ten, and you say, ‘this food is blessed’, or, ‘this food is full of *baraka*.’

(1) A chapter the entirety of which is Meccan according to the opinion of the majority, although *Ibn ‘Abbas* and *Qatada* said, ‘It is Meccan except for three of its verses which were revealed in Medina. These three verses are the words of Allah *Glorified is He* ‘and who never invoke any (imaginary) deity side by side with Allah *Glorified is He* and do not take any human being’s life – (the life) which Allah *Glorified is He* has willed to be sacred – other than in (the pursuit of) justice, and do not commit adultery...’ (*al-Furqan*: 68) until His Words, ‘...seeing that Allah is indeed much-forgiving, a dispenser of mercy.’ (*al-Furqan*: 70); and *Ad-Dahak* said, ‘It is Medinan, although it contains a Meccan verse.’ Tafsir of *Al-Qurtubi* 6/4863. The chapter *Al-Furqan* contains 77 verses. In terms of its order in the Quran, it is the 25th chapter of the Quran; and in terms of its order with respect to revelation, it is the 41st chapter of the Quran, having been revealed after the chapter of *Ya Sin* and before the chapter of *Al-Mala’ika/ Fatir*.

One of the meanings of *tabarak* is 'may His rank be exalted;' so *tabarak* 'Exalted...' (*al-Furqan*: 1) is a declaration of Allah's exalted state and is far from having any resemblance to anything other than Him. *Tabarak* also means, 'His blessings and gifts are great and magnificent.' As you see, these three meanings complement each other.

One of the amazing things about this word *tabarak* is that it is miraculous both in terms of the way it is written and in terms of its etymology. If you were to examine this word, you would find that it appears nine times in the Quran, seven times written with the *alif*, as it appears here: *tabarak*, and twice without the *alif*⁽¹⁾. Yet, why is it not written with the *alif* in all instances, or without the *alif* in all instances? The reason for this is to show you that the script of the Quran is *tauqify* – depending only on what is stated in the Quran or *Sunnah* and not simply decided mechanically. It is like the statement at the beginning of the chapter of *al-Alaq* when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Read! In the name of your Lord who created.' (*al-'Alaq*: 1): (name) is written with an *alif*, here, but without an *alif* in the rest of the Quran.

So, the Quran is not ordinary in matters of script and the way it is written, nor is it ordinary when it comes to the way it is read and recited. You can read any other book in whatever state you find yourself in, but to read the Quran, you must be in a state of *wudu'* (pure after making ablution) along with all the other courtesies that we all know of as being due to the Quran.

Concerning etymology (in the Arabic language), we all know that from verbs are derived their past tense, their present tense, their imperative, their active participle and so on. However, the word *tabarak* is only ever mentioned in the Quran in this particular form. It is as if Allah wanted to make this a special term for declaring His exaltedness above everything. *Tabarak* is very much like the word *subhan* Allah (glory to Allah; He is perfect). This is why, despite the huge numbers of tyrants and despots who have come and gone

(1) In *Al-Itqan fi Ulum Al-Quran*: It appears in seven places in the Quran with the *alif*: (*al-A'raf*: 54), (*al-Mu'minun*: 14), (*al-Furqan*: 1), (*al-Furqan*: 10), (*al-Furqan*: 61), (*Ghafir*: 64) and (*az-Zukhruf*: 85); and it appears twice without the *alif*: (*ar-Rahman*: 78) and (*al-Mulk*: 1). *As-Suyuti* said in *Al-Itqan fi Ulum Al-Quran* 2/188, it is a verb that is only ever used in the past tense and that is only ever used with Allah *Glorified is He*.

throughout history and have forced their peoples to praise them and submit to them, we have yet to see anyone, no matter how deviant they are in terms of faith, saying ‘*subhanak* – glory be to you’ to any of them.

This is why we say ‘*subhanak* (glory be to you)’ when we glorify Allah, and it is not said for any other but Him. No apostate – no matter how shameless he could be – has ever uttered this word while addressing anyone other than Allah.

So, the word *tabarak* revolves around three meanings: His rank being exalted, His being far from having any resemblance to anyone or anything other than Him and His blessings and gifts being magnified. Part of His gifts being magnified is His having no one like Him: neither in terms of His Rank, nor of His Essence, nor of His Attributes, nor of His Actions. All of this is in our own best interest: there is none Great but Allah; none Almighty but Allah and none Rich and without need but Allah.

The Quran is also called *Furqan* (the Differentiator) because it differentiates truth from falsehood. The Quran was sent down to bring people out of the darkness and into the light so that they might go through their lives in guidance and with insight. Thus, the Quran differentiates, for them, what is good from what will bring about their ruin and destruction. Differentiation has its part to play in every aspect of the religion, for in the religion, the true Lord *Glorified is He* is the only summit. Moreover, the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the one who conveys from Him. The believers are those to whom he, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is sent. The Quran came to separate truth from falsehood with respect to these three things.

With respect to the summit, there are those who deny the existence of a deity that created this universe. There are others who say that there are many gods. These two points of view are diametrically opposed to one another since there is no chain of thought, whatsoever, that links them. So, the Quran came to distinguish truth from falsehood in this matter, and say that the truth of the matter lies somewhere in the middle: a deity exists, but there is only one Deity and He has no partner. So, it brings differentiation in the matter of the summit.

Similarly, it also brings differentiation in the matter of the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is a human being sent to his

people. When some people opposed him and became envious of this status when he was but one man among them, Allah *Glorified is He* supported him by giving him a miracle that corroborated his message and showed that he was being truthful with respect to what he was conveying from Allah. Indeed, the miracle of the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was in a field in which his people excelled – the field of eloquence, linguistic composition and rhetoric. The Arabs are a people of eloquent expression – that is their most saleable commodity – and so Allah *Glorified is He* challenged them with this miracle and they were unable to rise to the challenge.

Likewise, the Quran also brings differentiation in the matter of the creation, with respect to the elements and constituents that make up their lives. It clarifies the lawful and the unlawful. With respect to the preservation of their species, the Quran makes evident for them what is lawful, legislated marriage and prohibited fornication, in order to preserve the progeny of Allah's vicegerents upon the earth.

As such, the Quran brings differentiation in every matter: with respect to Allah; with respect to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and with respect to the mainstay of the lives of everyone to whom he was sent. Since it provides differentiation in all these matters, there can be no name better for it than to be called *Al-Furqan* (the Differentiator).

There is no doubt that the words that are spoken by the true Lord have rays of light and contain meanings that are only perceived by people of reflection and understanding with which Allah endowed them. The closest possible comparison to these words would be to diamonds. This is because what makes a diamond valuable is the fact that every single one of its molecules contains rays of light that are not found in any other stone. So, from whichever angle you look at it, rays of light are reflected back at you, emitting brightness and lustre that makes it glitter and sparkle. The same is true with respect to the words of the Quran.

One of the meanings of *Furqan* (Differentiator), according to some scholars, is that it was revealed in separate portions, as is mentioned in His statement: 'It is a recitation that We have revealed in parts...' (*al-Isra'*: 106), that is, We revealed it in parts, not all at once as the previous Books had been revealed. There was wisdom in revealing the Quran in separate parts. This

gave an opportunity for each revealed instalment of the Quran to be fully understood by people; since it was surely connected to a particular event. Moreover, this allowed for the gradual progression required for revealing the laws. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘it is a recitation that We have revealed in parts so that you can recite it to people at intervals; We have sent it down little by little’ (*al-Isra*: 106).

The first Muslims who lived in the period in which the Quran was being revealed were a people who liked to ask questions. They would ask the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about all the matters relating to the creed, as is indicated by Allah when He says:

‘They ask you [Prophet] about crescent moons...’ (*al-Baqara*: 189). He also says: ‘They ask you [Prophet] about intoxicants and gambling...’ (*al-Baqara*: 219). He also says: ‘They ask you [Prophet] about [distributing] the battle gains...’ (*al-Anfal*: 1). Thus, instalments of the Quran were revealed to respond to their questions, and to legislate for them. That would not have been possible had the Quran been revealed all at once. The Words: ‘...has sent the Differentiator down...’ (*al-Furqan*: 1) supports this meaning since the word *nazzala* (sent down) implies repetition, unlike *anzala* which only implies the action of the verb being done once.

As for Allah's words, ‘...to His servant...’ (*al-Furqan*: 1), it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying that the reason for sending the revelation to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was because of his being a servant of Allah – that he is the slave that is trusted to receive the Quran sent down to him. We previously stated that servitude is a hateful term when it is used in connection with anyone other than the true Lord, but servitude to Allah is a way to obtain honour and glory and is a desirable expression that indicates the servitude of the creation to their creator. While servitude to creation entails that the master takes for himself the best that the servant has to offer, servitude to Allah *Glorified is He* entails that the servant takes the best that the Master has to offer. That is why Allah makes servitude the reason for the heavenly ascent to Him during the Night Journey, when He says: ‘Glory to Him who made His servant travel by night...’ (*al-Isra*: 1). Thus, the ascent, here, came about because of the servitude to Allah *Glorified is He*.

Then He says: ‘...so that it may be a warning to all people’ (*al-Furqan*: 1). *Al-alam*, (worlds) is the plural of *alam*. *Alam* refers to everything that is other than Allah. Among these different worlds are; the world of angels, the world of humans, the world of jinn, the world of animals, the world of plants and the world of the inanimate. However, some of these worlds were not visited by warners or bearers of good news because they had not been granted free will or the ability to choose for themselves – warnings and good news can only be given to those who have free will and the capacity to choose for themselves.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘We offered the Trust to the heavens, the earth, and the mountains, yet they refused to undertake it and were afraid of it; mankind undertook it – they have always been inept and foolish’ (*al-Ahzab*: 72).

If you were to remove, from these worlds, all of those who do not have freedom of choice, the only ones that would remain would be the jinn and humans. It was to them the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent as a bearer of good news and a warner. However, why does Allah say here: ‘...so that it may be a warning to all people’ (*al-Furqan*: 1), and not say ‘a bearer of good news and a warner’? It was said that the true Lord, here, will talk about those who insolently speculate about the divinity. Such people warrant warnings, not good news. That is why Allah in the verse that follows this one says:

الَّذِي لَهُ مُلْكُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَلَمْ يَتَّخِذْ وَلَدًا وَلَمْ يَكُن لَّهُ
شَرِيكٌ فِي الْمُلْكِ وَخَلَقَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ فَقَدَرَهُ تَقْدِيرًا

**It is He who has control over the heavens and earth and has
no offspring — no one shares control with Him — and who
created all things and made them to an exact measure [2]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 2)**

At the end of the chapter of *an-Nur*, the true Lord says: ‘Surely, to Allah belongs whatever is in the heavens and earth...’ (*an-Nur*: 64), mentioning His possession of the contents. In the verse we are discussing He says: ‘it is He who has control over the heavens and earth...’ (*al-Furqan*: 2) mentioning His possession of the container, that is, the heavens and the earth.

Then, the true Lord *Glorified is He* talks about the matter of the summit which they had had the insolence to speculate about, saying: ‘...and has no offspring – no one shares control with Him...’ (*al-Furqan*: 2).

We have previously talked a great deal about the issue of begetting an offspring and the wisdom behind it. People love sons, for they either perpetuate one’s name, provide support to parents in their debility and old age, or increase the number of family members and thus enlarge the family. The true Lord, however, is the Ever-Living, the All-Sustaining who does not die and does not need someone to immortalise His name. He is the Strong who does not need anyone else. So, why then would He beget a son?

As for His words: ‘...no one shares control with Him...’ (*al-Furqan*: 2), that is a matter that is upheld by reality since the first thing to which Allah *Glorified is He* bears witness is to Himself; He says: ‘Allah bears witness that there is no god but Him, as do the angels and those who have knowledge...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18). In other words, when the angels were created, they bore witness to Allah *Glorified is He* then those who are endowed with knowledge bore witness to Him based upon the evidence. So, the testimony of the true Lord for Himself was the testimony of the Essence for the Essence, the testimony of the angels was an eyewitness testimony and our own testimony was one based upon proof and evidence.

The true Lord gives us the proof that shows the truthfulness of this testimony when He says: ‘Allah has never had a child. Nor is there any god besides Him – if there were, each god would have taken his creation aside and tried to overpower the others...’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 91). He also says: ‘Say, “If there were other gods along with Him, as they say there are, then they would have tried to find a way to the Lord of the Throne.”’ (*al-Isra*: 42) This is the logical rational detailed explanation by which we refute the position of those people; for if there were to have been another god with Allah *Glorified is He* each one of them would have gone apart with his portion of creation and set up his own private domain; and each of them would have sought to gain dominance over the others and would have fought against them. If there had been other gods with Him, they would have joined together against the one who took the Kingdom from them to judge Him or to ingratiate themselves to Him.

We say that someone's claim is affirmed if no one else lays claim to the same thing; and this is something that no one else has ever claimed. Therefore, it is affirmed and will remain affirmed as being Allah's until someone else comes and claims all of the creation for Himself. We, previously, highlighted this with the example we gave of a group of people gathered in an assembly during which one of them had lost his wallet. Then, when they had all left, the owner of the house found the wallet and asked those who had been there about it, but none of them laid claim to it. Then, one of them got in contact with him and said that it was his. There would be no doubt that it was indeed his unless someone else also came forward claiming it; in which case we would decide between them.

Then, the True Lord says: '...and who created all things and made them to an exact measure' (*al-Furqan*: 2). Allah *Glorified is He* does not create things randomly or haphazardly, but He creates things in a considered manner by His wisdom and design. He *Glorified is He* creates things in accordance with the task they are designed to fulfil, which is why He says elsewhere in the Quran: 'Who created [all things] in due proportion. Who determined their destinies and guided them' (*al-A'la*: 2-3).

وَاتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِهِ ءَالِهَةً لَا يَخْلُقُونَ شَيْئًا وَهُمْ يُخْلَقُونَ وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ
لأنفسهم ضرًا ولا نفعًا وَلَا يَمْلِكُونَ موتًا وَلَا حيوةً وَلَا شُورًا ﴿٣﴾

**Yet the disbelievers take as their gods things beneath Him
that create nothing, and are themselves created, that can
neither harm nor help themselves, and have no control over
death, life, or resurrection [3] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 3)**

In other words, they made up gods other than Allah *Glorified is He*. These gods, according to their own admission, testimony, and viewpoint are incapable of creating anything. Not only are they incapable of creating anything, but they are themselves created. So, both deficiencies are combined in this issue.

This is one of those verses that the orientalists comment upon and claim that it is contradictory. They say: 'Allah says: "...glory be to Allah, the best of creators!" (*al-Mu'minun*: 14). Thus, He affirms that there are others, besides Him, who have the ability to create; since He added them to Himself, and

declares Himself to be the best of them. In another verse, He says: “He will send him as a Messenger to the Children of Israel: ‘I have come to you with a sign from your Lord: I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay, then breathe into it and, with Allah's permission...’” (*Al-‘Imran*: 49).’

In response to these people, we say, ‘let us first understand what “creating” is’. ‘Creating’ is giving existence to something that was non-existent. A previous example we gave of this was that of creating a glass cup by melting some other material. The glass cup was non-existent until a human brought it into existence. Yet, he created it from something that was already existent. Moreover, the glass will always be inanimate and will remain fixed in the state in which it was made. However, the true Lord creates things from absolute non-existence. He creates from nothingness; brings existence from non-existence, and creates it in a form that has life and is capable of growth and proliferation, on its own. It is as the true Lord Himself says: ‘And We created pairs of all things so that you [people] might take note’ (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49).

There are those who create artificial roses, these days, trying their hardest to make them as close as possible to the natural roses that Allah has created, putting the scent of the rose on them so that they can have both shape and scent. Their artificial roses are permanently in bloom, never wilting, but, in truth, the greatness of the natural rose lies in the fact that it does wilt; since its wilting is what shows it to be alive.

That is why Allah *Glorified is He* describes man as being a creator, giving him his due and affording him respect for bringing existence to what had not existed before. Yet, Allah is the best of creators. The superiority of His creation lies in the fact that He creates things from nothing, while you create from things that already exist. Allah *Glorified is He* creates things that have life and are capable of growth and can multiply themselves, while you create things that are inanimate and always remain in their initial state and form. Despite this, your Lord still gives you your due.

In Allah’s words: ‘...I will make the shape of a bird for you out of clay...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 49), it is clearly shown that it is in the capacity of every human being to fashion a bird out of clay and bake it so that it remains in that form, but could it be said that he has created a bird by doing this? Does the

greatness lie in shaping the bird into its form? No, rather, the greatness lies in bringing it to life, and it is only by Allah *Glorified is He* that this can happen. That is why Jesus *peace be upon him* says: ‘...then breathe into it and, with Allah's permission, it will become a real bird...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 49).

Even if we accept that these gods are capable of creating things, they are still, at the same time, themselves, created. What is more is that those gods are not even capable of protecting themselves or putting themselves upright, after they have been knocked over by the wind. If the arm of their god were to be broken, they would take him to be fixed – the god is fixed by the hands of a worker! What an astonishing situation! Such is the mentality of the foolish!

That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says about their gods: ‘...those you call on besides Allah 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’ (*al-Hajj*: 73).

Then, the true Lord says (in the verse we are discussing): ‘...that can neither harm nor help themselves...’ (*al-Furqan*: 3); it does not benefit them if they worship them, nor does it harm them if they reject them. ‘...And have no control over death, life, or resurrection’ (*al-Furqan*: 3) – they have no control over the death or the life of anyone else. They do not have the power to do any of these things since these are all attributes of The True Lord *Glorified is He* who gives life and causes death, then, resurrects humankind in the Hereafter. Thus, man goes through a number of different stages. After being non-existent, Allah *Glorified is He* brings him into existence. Then, the time of his death comes upon him and he dies. Allah then resurrects him and grants him life in the Hereafter.

Then, the true Lord says:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا إِنَّ هَذَا إِلَّا إِفْكُ افْتَرَاهُ وَأَعَانَهُ عَلَيْهِ
قَوْمٌ ءَاخِرُونَ ۖ فَقَدْ جَاءُوا ظُلْمًا وَزُورًا ﴿٤﴾

The disbelievers say, ‘This can only be a lie he has forged with the help of others’ — they themselves have done great wrong and told lies[4] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 4)

After the *Furqan* declared and brought differentiation in the matter of the summit, and divinity, begetting of a son and having partners; and after having

differentiated the true Deity from the false deity, Allah *Glorified is He* now wants to talk about differentiation with respect to the Message. So, He relates what the unbelievers say about the Quran: 'This can only be a lie...' (*al-Furqan*: 4) meaning this Quran which Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveys '...can only be a lie...' (*al-Furqan*: 4). *Ifk* is the deliberate telling of a lie that inverts the truth. We, previously, said that when a verbal proportion (utterance that follows a mental proportion) corresponds to reality it is the truth, and when it goes against reality it is a lie. *Ifk* is turning reality upside down. It is saying that what exists does not exist, and what does not exist does exist, as was the case in the episode of the *ifk* when they accused Aisha *Allah be pleased with her*, the mother of the believers, of what was contrary to the real state of affairs. The reality of the matter was that Safwan⁽¹⁾ bade his camel kneel down so she could mount it without him seeing her – something which indicates the highest levels of virtue and protection – however, by means of their *ifk*, they turned purity and virtue into adultery.

It is amazing that those who accused the Quran of being a lie were the very same people who said about it on another occasion: 'Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

It is clear that they acknowledged the Quran for what it was and bore witness to it, but they were troubled and disturbed by the fact that the person to whom it was revealed was Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. If it were to have been revealed to someone other than him, they would have believed in it.

Another sign of their foolishness is shown by them saying: 'Allah, if this really is the truth from You, then rain stones on us from the heavens, or send us some other painful punishment' (*al-Anfal*: 32). It was logical for them to say, 'then guide us to it.' Instead, their obstinacy and arrogance held sway.

As for Allah's Words '...he has forged...' (*al-Furqan*: 4), they mean 'which he has claimed to be Allah's words.' These people are very strange: if they accuse the Quran of being a fabricated lie, then why do they – a

(1) He is Safwan ibn Al-Mu'attal ibn Ar-Rahda As-Sulami Adh-Dhakwani, Abu 'Amr, a Companion who took part in the battle of the Ditch and all the other battles. He was present at the conquest of Damascus and was martyred at Arminiya in 19 AH, Al-'A'lam of Az-Zirikli 3/206.

nation gifted with unsurpassed eloquence and linguistic expression – not, themselves, fabricate something like it?

In another part of the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘We know very well that they say, “It is a man who teaches him,” but the language of the person they allude to is foreign, while this revelation is in clear Arabic.’ (*an-Nahl*: 103)

In ancient times, they would say, ‘If you must be a liar, then make sure you have a good memory.’ If not, then how can you accuse Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of having a non-Arab man to teach him the Quran when the Quran is in Arabic?

The True Lord says: ‘...with the help of others’...’ (*al-Furqan*: 4). The one who uttered these words was An-Nadr ibn Al-Harith. When he said them, others like him, such as Addas, Yassar and Abu Fukayha Ar-Rumi took to repeating them, so the Quran refuted all these accusations As follows: ‘they themselves have done great wrong and told lies’ (*al-Furqan*: 4) because they judged unjustly.

Zhulm (injustice), is to judge without recourse to truth, and *zur*, here, is the argument and evidence behind this unjust judgement. So, *zhulm* (injustice) should thus, come after *zur* since the judge first listens to the testimony and then makes his judgement based on that. Hence, if the testimony is a false testimony, then the judgement will be an act of injustice.

However, the true Lord says: ‘...great wrong and told lies.’ (*al-Furqan*: 4) which is a proof that they made the judgement first and then looked for evidence to back it up.

Then the true Lord says:

وَقَالُوا أَأَسْطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ أَكُتِبَ عَلَيْهَا فِي ثَمَلٍ عَلَيْهِ بُكْرَةً وَأَصِيلًا ۝

And they say, ‘It is just ancient fables, which he has had written down: they are dictated to him morning and evening’[5] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 5)

Asattir (fables) is the plural of the word *usturah* (fable), like *a‘ajib* (wondrous actions) being the plural of *u‘jubah* (wondrous action) and *ahadith*

(speeches/talks) being the plural of *uhduthah* (a speech/a talk). The meaning is that they used to say about the Quran that it was tales and fables of previous peoples that ‘...which he has had written down...’ (*al-Furqan*: 5) – which he has commanded to be written down. This statement is indicative of their indecisiveness and muddled-thinking: for Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was unlettered and could neither read nor write. As for their words: ‘...they are dictated to him morning and evening’ (*al-Furqan*: 5), they mean that they were read out to him repeatedly so that he might memorise them.

The Quran responds to them with the following:

قُلْ أَنزَلَهُ الَّذِي يَعْلَمُ السِّرَّ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٦﴾

**Say, ‘It was sent down by Him who knows the secrets of the heavens and earth. He is all forgiving, all merciful’ [6]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 6)**

‘...It was sent down by Him...’ (*al-Furqan*: 6), that is the Quran was sent all at the same time from the Preserved Tablet to the lowest heaven. By He ‘...who knows the secrets of the heavens and earth...’ (*al-Furqan*: 6) – do not think that, merely by being created, you are able to reveal Allah’s secrets in His creation. Rather, you will remain until the final hour, grasping one secret and falling short of grasping another.

Why is this? This is because the true Lord wants to refute their claims and make mention of unseen things that would have never occurred to the minds of the contemporaries of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Then, these things become clearer as the centuries pass, despite the fact that the Quran was sent down in an illiterate community, and Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to whom it was sent was an illiterate man. Despite these things, the Quran keeps revealing new signs from Allah to us on a daily basis. It is as Allah says: ‘We shall show them Our signs in every region of the earth and in themselves, until it becomes clear to them that this is the Truth...’ (*Fussilat*: 53).

The true Lord revealed some unseen matters to His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that his contemporaries might see them and shut the disbelievers’ mouths. Thus, He revealed some secrets, such as what

happened at Badr when the Prophet Muhammad having learnt that the Quraysh had sent their own lords and their own flesh and blood into battle, he stood in the battle field pointing with his stick to the places where the disbelievers would meet their demise, saying, 'This is where Abu Jahl will fall, that is where 'Utba ibn Rabi'a will fall...' ⁽¹⁾ and so on and so forth, mapping out the points on the earth where each of the enemy would meet their end.

Who possessed such an ability to judge before a battle even started what would happen – a battle in which there was advance and retreat, fighting and withdrawal and movement of forces – and accurately state the place in which someone would die?

Then, there was Al-Walid ibn al-Mughira, the one about whom the Quran ⁽²⁾ says: 'We shall brand him on the snout...' (*al-Qalam*: 16); he will be struck on his nose with a blow that will leave a permanent mark on it. After the battle, the people searched for him and found him to be branded in that way.

All of these things are secrets of existence about which the true Lord informed His Messenger, Muhammad. The Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* then informed his community about them when there is no way he possibly could have had knowledge of them.

An example ⁽³⁾ of this is what has been narrated with regard to the two daughters of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who had married the two sons of Abu Lahab. When enmity sprang up between him and the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he commanded

(1) *It is transmitted by Muslim in his Sahih 1779; and by Ahmad in his Musnad 3/219 & 285 as part of a Hadith from Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him who said, 'None of them were any distance away from where the hand of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad indicated that they would be.'*

(2) *Ibn Hajar said in al-Fath 8/662, 'There is a difference of opinion with regard to whom the verse was revealed about – it is said that it was about al-Walid ibn al-Mughira, as was mentioned by Yahya ibn As-Salam in his Tafsir (Explanation); it is said that it is about Al-Aswad ibn 'Abd Yaghuth, as was mentioned by Sunayd ibn Dawud in his Tafsir (Explanation); and it is said that it is about Al-Akhnas ibn Shurayq, as was mentioned by As-Suhayli from Al-Qutaybi. Both these positions were transmitted by At-Tabari.'*

(3) *The story of the sons of Abu Lahab divorcing the two daughters of the Prophet, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him cursing Abu Lahab's son after he spat towards him.*

his sons to divorce the daughters of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Later on, one of the sons saw the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* walking, so he spat in his direction. When Muhammad saw that, he said to him, 'May one of the wild rapacious animals of Allah *Glorified is He* eat you.'⁽¹⁾ When Abu Lahab heard of that supplication, he said, 'I fear for my son on account of the supplication of Muhammad.'

It is astonishing how this unbeliever was afraid of the supplication of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he was the one who accused him of sorcery and lying and denied him and his Message.

When this son of his went out on a trading mission to the Levant, he assigned people to guard him and to place the luggage and merchandise around him as a fence to protect him, fearing that the supplication of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* might come about. These words of his were completely illogical! He knew Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to be truthful and that he had been sent by Allah *Glorified is He*, but he was prevented from believing in Muhammad by his spite and envy of him, as well as by his overbearing arrogance towards the truth.

So, the son went out on his trading mission and despite the great care they took to protect him, one night he was attacked by a wild animal and snatched away from his companions. However, they were amazed that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had said, 'One of the rapacious wild animals literally *kilab* (dogs of Allah)', and that which had attacked him was a lion, not a *kalb* (dog). However, the people of knowledge said that as long as

(1) *This came about because 'Utba ibn Abu Lahab, when he split from Umm Kulthum Allah be pleased with her the daughter of the Messenger of Allah came to the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and said, 'I have rejected your religion and split from your daughter – she does not love me and I do not love her.' Then he laid hands on the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him and ripped his shirt. So the Prophet Muhammad said, 'As for me, I ask Allah Glorified is He to set his wild rapacious animals on you.' Al-Bayhaqi narrated it in Dala'il An-Nubuwwa 2/338 & 339 and Al-Haythami narrated it in Majma' Az-Zawa'id 6/19 and attributed it as a mursal statement of At-Tabarani, saying, 'Zuhayr ibn Al-'Ala' is in the chain of transmission and he is weak.' Al-Hakim transmitted it in his Mustadrak 2/539 as part of a Hadith from Abu 'Aqrab and he considered it sahih (authentic). Ibn Hajar considered it hasan (good) in Al-Fath 4/39.*

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ascribed the *kalb* to Allah *Glorified is He* the *kalb* of Allah can be nothing but a lion.

So, the meaning is – Say, Muhammad, in response to them and to refute their claim: ‘It was sent down by Him who knows the secrets of the heavens and earth...’ (*al-Furqan*: 6), and the True Lord will expose you and refute your lies against the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and your accusing him of lies, fabrication and telling fables of previous peoples. Allah will abase you in front of absolutely everyone.

In the era of the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a battle took place between the Persians and the Byzantines in which the Byzantines were defeated. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was saddened by the defeat of the Byzantines because they were people of the Book who believed in Allah and in His Messengers *peace be upon them*. As for the Persians, they were unbelievers who did not believe in Allah and worshipped fire and other things. Despite that both of them were united when it came to their rejection of the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The fact that the Byzantines believed in Allah made the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* side with them despite their disbelief in him. So, taking their side was on account of no one but his Lord.

When the Messenger of Allah, felt sad on account of that, Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the following verse to him: ‘*Alif. Lam. Mim.* 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).

What mind is it that can pass judgement on a battle that is going to take place a few years later? If a battle were due to take place tomorrow, you might be able to predict its outcome, taking into account the numbers and preparedness of the opposing forces, as well as their respective military capacities; but how can one pass judgement on a battle that is not going to take place for seven years? Moreover, who would dare to make that prediction in a Quran that is going to be recited and used in acts of worship until the Day of Rising? If that period of time had passed and that which Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had

predicted had not come to pass, then, all of those who had believed in him would have rejected him and all of those around him would have scattered and gone away.

Therefore, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not have said anything in a Quran that is going to be recited and used in acts of worship unless he was absolutely sure of the truthfulness of the One Who had informed him of that; since the One Who informed him of it was his Lord; He Who knows all the mysteries of the heavens and the earth. That is why the true Lord says here: ‘Say, “It was sent down by Him who knows the secrets of the heavens and earth...”’ (*al-Furqan*: 6).

One of the most amazing things is that the Byzantines gained victory over the Persians on the very same day that belief gained victory over disbelief at the battle of Badr, on that day about which Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...in a few years’ time. Allah is in command, first and last. On that day, the believers will rejoice. At Allah’s help’ (*ar-Rum*: 4-5).

Since the one who sends down the Quran is the One Who knows all the mysteries of the heavens and the earth, there will never be any contradictions between that which the Quran says and that which things in existence say; since their Creator is one and the same. So, how could any contradictions or differences come about?

Then, He says: ‘...He is all forgiving, all merciful’ (*al-Furqan*: 6). What is the relevance of Allah’s speaking about forgiveness and mercy here? Because, they say, Allah wants to leave those people whom He is rebuking here with room to repent, and a way back towards Him and towards the arena of faith.

That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to those who advised him to kill the disbelievers, ‘Perhaps Allah will bring out from their loins people who will worship Allah alone and associate nothing with Him.’⁽¹⁾

(1) It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* 3231 & 7389; and also by Muslim in his *Sahih* 1795 as part of a Hadith from ‘A’isha Allah be pleased with her that Gabriel (*Jibril*) *peace be upon him* said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Allah *Glorified is He* has heard what your people said to you and the response they gave you, so Allah *Glorified is He* has sent the angel of the mountains to you so that you =

The Muslims would feel the most acute pain whenever one of the leaders of the disbelievers escaped death on the battlefield, like what happened with Khalid ibn Al-Walid *Allah be pleased with him* and 'Amr ibn Al-'As *Allah be pleased with him* before they became Muslims. They did not know that Allah *Glorified is He* was preserving them for the sake of the faith; a truth that was to follow.

So, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...He is all forgiving, all merciful' (*al-Furqan*: 6) so as not to block the way back for those who used to reject Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to return to believing in him. So, He is saying to them, 'despite all that you have done, if you come back to the main road and enter into the confines of belief, Allah's Forgiveness and Mercy will be waiting for you.'

The true Lord clarifies this matter for us even in cases where significant emotions are involved. Take Hind bint 'Utba⁽¹⁾, for example, the woman who incited Wahshi⁽²⁾ to kill Hamza *Allah be pleased with him* the paternal uncle of the Messenger of Allah Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the lion of Allah and of His Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. She did not stop there. Rather, she even mutilated his body after his death and chewed his liver. Despite all of that, after she became Muslim and pledged allegiance to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that act of hers was totally forgotten and it was as if she had never done it.

= *can command him to do whatever you want to them.'* So the angel of the mountains called out to me and gave me his greetings. Then he said, 'Muhammad, if you want, I will crush them between the two mountains.' So the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Rather, I hope that Allah *Glorified is He* will bring out from their loins a people who will worship Allah *Glorified is He* alone and not associate anything with Him.'

- (1) She is Hind bint 'Utba ibn ar-Rabi'a Al-Qurayshyya, the mother of Mu'awiyya ibn Abu Sufyan. She was present at Uhud on the side of the idolaters and did what she did to Hamza *Allah be pleased with him*. She became Muslim on the day of the Conquest of Mecca and died during the Caliphate of 'Uthman *Allah be pleased with him* *Al-Isaba fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba* 8/206.
- (2) He is Wahshi ibn Harb Al-Habashi, the client of the Banu Nawfal. He was the killer of Hamza *Allah be pleased with him* the uncle of the Messenger of Allah, killing him at the battle of Uhud. The Messenger of Allah commanded him to keep out of his sight. He took part in the apostasy wars and participated in the killing of Musaylama. He was present at the battle of Yarmuk and then settled at Hums and died there. He lived until the Caliphate of 'Uthman *Al-Isaba*, biography 9110.

When someone said to ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* ‘This is the killer of your brother,’ referring to Zayd ibn Al-Khattab⁽¹⁾ *Allah be pleased with him*. Yet, ‘Umar made no response except to say, ‘what should I do to him when Allah *Glorified is He* has guided him (Wahshi) to Islam?’

Then, the true Lord says:

وَقَالُوا مَالِ هَذَا الرَّسُولِ يَأْكُلُ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشِي فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ
لَوْلَا أَنْزَلِ إِلَيْهِ مَلَكٌ فَيَكُونُ مَعَهُ نَذِيرًا ﴿٧﴾

They also say, ‘What sort of messenger is this? He eats food and walks about in the marketplaces! Why has no angel been sent down to help him with his warnings? [7] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 7)

The conduct of these obstinate people is amazing. They object to the fact that the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* eats food and goes about in the market-places in order to earn his living, but have they ever seen any Prophet that did not eat food or go about in the market-places? If there had been, then, there may have been some significance to their objections, but there had not. So, their statement: ‘Why has no angel been sent down to help him with his warnings?’ (*al-Furqan*: 7) was a statement that had no real-life evidence for them to find fault with. Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or for them to respond in such a way to what he said to them.

So what is it that they wanted? They said, ‘Why has no angel been sent down to help him with his warnings?’ (*al-Furqan*: 7) It is true that angels do not eat, but the meaning of: ‘Why has no angel been sent down to help him...’ (*al-Furqan*: 7) is that an angel comes to help him. In such circumstances nothing would change. The words of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would still be what they are and would not change at all. So, the angel would

(1) He is Zayd ibn Al-Khattab ibn Nufayl al-Adawi, the brother of ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* on his father’s side. His mother was Asma’ bint Wahb from Banu Asad. As for the mother of ‘Umar, she was Hantama bint Hashim Al-Makhzumiyya. Zayd *Allah be pleased with him* was older than ‘Umar and became Muslim before him. He was present at Badr and all the other battles and was martyred at Al-Yamama Tamyiz As-Sahaba 3/27.

not add anything new to the message whatsoever. This means that these words of theirs are nothing but sophistry and meaningless argumentation.

Saying: 'to help him with his warnings' (*al-Furqan*: 7) without adding, 'and a bearer of good news' indicates their quarrelsome and argumentative attitude. Moreover, it indicates that they will not embrace the faith. That is why warnings will always be their lot.

أَوْ يُلْقَىٰ إِلَيْهِ كَنْزٌ أَوْ تَكُونُ لَهُ جَنَّةٌ يَأْكُلُ مِنْهَا وَقَالَ
الظَّالِمُونَ إِن تَتَّبِعُونَ إِلَّا رَجُلًا مَّسْحُورًا ﴿٨﴾

Why has he not been given treasure or a garden to supply his food?' and the evildoers say, 'The man you follow is simply under a spell' [8] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 8)

We notice here that, in their quarrelsomeness, they back down from the initial demands they made, for after having requested an angel, they then say: 'Why has he not been given treasure?' (*al-Furqan*: 8) Why has it not been sent down to him so that he can live by means of it: 'or a garden to supply his food' (*al-Furqan*: 8) that is, *Jannah* is an orchard. Then, they said: 'The man you follow is simply under a spell' (*al-Furqan*: 8). *Mashour* (under a spell) is one whose mind has been taken away by means of magic. The mind enables man to choose between alternatives and keep his actions and movements in order. It is not possible for someone who lost his mind to be logical in terms of what he does or in terms of what he says. However, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not like that. The disbelievers knew his character and his trustworthiness. Moreover, they called him 'the truthful and trustworthy one' and admitted his conduct and wisdom to be sound, so how could they call him 'mad'?

That is why the true Lord says in response to their accusations: '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 strong character' (*al-Qalam*: 1-4).

A person's *khuluq* (his morality) regulates his behaviour and makes it helpful and not corrupting. Then, how could one who possesses such character

possibly be mad? So, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could not have been bewitched.

Elsewhere, it is narrated that they said he was a sorcerer. If we suppose that he was a sorcerer, why did he not bewitch them in the same way that he bewitched the believers? Their argument is that of one who has totally lost touch with the truth and a sign of derangement and total confusion when it comes to debate.

Then the true Lord says:

أَنْظِرْ كَيْفَ ضَرَبُوا لَكَ الْأَمْثَلَ فَضَلُّوا فَلَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ سَبِيلًا ﴿٩﴾

See what they think you are like! They have gone astray and cannot find the right way [9] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 9)

‘See’ (*al-Furqan*: 9) this speech is directed to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in order to soothe him and set him at ease. ‘What they think you are like’ (*al-Furqan*: 9), – when they accuse you of all those myriad things, such as when they say ‘sorcerer’, ‘bewitched’ ‘poet’ or ‘soothsayer’ ‘They have gone astray and cannot find the right way’ (*al-Furqan*: 9) because their words are nothing but lies, senseless prattle and full of contradiction.

‘They have gone astray’ (*al-Furqan*: 9), they are far away from drawing a true likeness of you that would cause the believers to abandon you, and cause those who do not believe to persevere in their disbelief. They proved incapable of coming up with a single reasonable likeness. They said you (O Muhammad) are a sorcerer and are lying. Then, they said that you are bewitched and are lying. They ‘...cannot find the right way’ (*al-Furqan*: 9), to sustain their arguments against you.

Then, the true Lord⁽¹⁾ says:

(1) Reason for the revelation of the verse: Ibn Abbas Allah be pleased with him said, ‘When the idolaters found fault with the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* on account of his poverty and said, “What sort of apostle is this (man) who eats food (The Quran, like all other mortals) and goes about in the market-places?” The Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was saddened. So Gabriel (Jibril) *peace be upon him* came down to him from his Lord in order to comfort him and said, “Peace be upon you, Messenger of Allah. The Lord of Might extends His greetings towards you and says to you, ‘And (even) before thee, (Muhammad) We never sent as Our message-bearers any but=

تَبَارَكَ الَّذِي إِنْ شَاءَ جَعَلَ لَكَ خَيْرًا مِنْ ذَلِكَ جَنَّاتٍ
تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ وَيَجْعَلُ لَكَ فُصُورًا ﴿١٠﴾

Exalted is He who can, if He wishes, give you better things than these: Gardens graced with flowing streams, and palaces too [10] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 10)

Tabaraka 'Exalted...' (*al-Furqan*: 10) as we said before, means, 'exalted above anything being like Him and His blessings being magnified'. This is because these words also contain a gift which represents the blessings which Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed upon His Messenger. Allah's gifts are continuous and do not ever come to an end, inasmuch as His blessings don't stop with the gifts being given, but remain giving out blessings and goodness on a continuous basis. If He gives you something today, you know that what He will have for you tomorrow will be better than what He gave you yesterday.

Then, the true Lord says:

بَلْ كَذَّبُوا بِالسَّاعَةِ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِمَنْ كَذَّبَ بِالسَّاعَةِ سَعِيرًا ﴿١١﴾

It is actually the coming of the Hour that they reject: We have prepared a blazing fire for those who reject the Hour [11] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 11)

There is a change from the previous topic and the speech returns to the issue of their rejection of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and disbelief in him, since belief was not in their best interests. It is because belief

= (mortal men) who indeed ate food (like other human beings) and went about in the market-places...' (*al-Furqan*: 20)." And then Gabriel (*Jibril*) *peace be upon him* said, "Rejoice, Muhammad, for here is Ridwan, the guardian of the Garden, bringing your Lord's pleasure to you." Whereupon Ridwan came up to him, greeted him and said, "Muhammad, the Lord of Might extends His greetings towards you, and there is a basket of light with him about which your Lord says to you, 'These are the keys to the treasure-houses of this world (The Quran, and they are yours) without what will be yours from Him in the next world being decreased in any way, not even by a gnat's wing.'" The Prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, "Ridwan, I have no need of them – poverty is more beloved to me and I would prefer to be a steadfast and thankful slave." This account has undergone a certain amount of abridgement and alteration. From 'Asbab an-nuzul of Al-Wahidi *An-Nisaburi*, pp. 190-191, and Tafsir of Al-Qurtubi 6/4869.

entails accounting and requital, and they wanted to continue with their falsehoods, worthless prattle, ridiculing, and disobedience. That is why they even deceived and lied to themselves, so that they could remain doing exactly what they were doing.

Therefore, you see those who allow themselves to go to excess in this world – the materialists, unbelievers, and philosophers – wish that the premise of religion is baseless and false and reject it with every means they have at their disposal. In their view, religion is totally nonsensical and unintelligible because, if they were to accept it, they would be faced with a great calamity.

The meaning of *a'tadna* 'We have prepared' (*al-Furqan*: 11) is we have prepared and readied for them a blazing flame because it is their lack of belief in the Last Hour that brings the punishment down upon them. If they were to have believed in it and in their meeting with Allah, in the reckoning and the punishment or reward, they would have been guided, kept to the Straight Path and would have been saved from this blazing fire.

As for *sa'ir*, it is the name of the *mas'urah* (enraged and heated) fire that burnt up everything in front of it, just like we say, *Kalbun Mas'ur* (enraged or mad dog).

Then the true Lord says as a description of this fire:

إِذَا رَأَوْهُمْ مِنْ مَكَانٍ بَعِيدٍ سَمِعُوا لَهَا تَغِيْظًا وَزَفِيرًا ﴿١٢﴾

**When it sees them from a distance, they will hear it
raging and roaring [12] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 12)**

The true Lord wants, here, to imbue the Fire with a personality, so it sees those who are destined for it from afar and becomes enraged on account of them, wanting by its fury to reach out and grab them before they even reach it.

Taghayyuzh (raging) is an emotional pain that a man feels in his psyche that causes him to feel tightness as a result of what he experiences. For example, in Egypt we hear a person saying, 'I am going to explode out of my two flanks.' In other words, as a result of the rage I am holding back inside me, my interior is no longer wide enough to contain it. As long as a person's

rage is more than he is able to endure and contain, he is certain to feel tight and constrained and as if he is about to explode.

Therefore, the True Lord says about the Fire in another part of the Quran: 'almost bursting with rage' (*al-Mulk*: 8). The word *tamayyaz* here means 'with its parts on the point of separating from each other'.

One would ask, why is the fire bursting with fury? Because, they say, creation in its entirety glorifies Allah and praises and thanks its Lord: therefore it is pleased with those who obey Allah *Glorified is He* and loves them, and, by contrast, is displeased with those who disobey Allah *Glorified is He* and hates them. Do you not see that the whole of creation rejoiced at the birth of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* – the inanimate objects, the plants and the animals. All were delighted and all rejoiced at his birth because he had come to bring mankind back into harmony with the rest of existence that had been created man, and to put things back into balance.

Despite this, we see humans of sound mind, beings granted the freedom of choice, rejecting their Lord and disbelieving. Therefore, the Fire feels such great fury against those people who stand outside the rows of those praising and glorifying their Lord and content themselves with being lower than the inanimate things, the plants and the animals. It is for that reason that they say, 'The places found them distasteful on account of their disbelief.' In other words, the different parts of the earth rejected them and felt irritated and constrained on account of their presence there, just as the earth rejoices when those who obey Allah *Glorified is He* occupy it and warmly greets them. This is because the obedient are in harmony with the whole of existence: the place and its inhabitants are in tune with one another, both parts of the same organisation dedicated to glorification of, and obedience to, the Creator.

Imam 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* drew our attention to this matter, saying, 'when a believer dies, two places weep for him: one place in the sky and one place upon the earth. As for the place on the earth, that is where he used to pray since it is now deprived of his prayer; and as for the place in the sky, that is where his good deeds used to be raised up.'⁽¹⁾

(1) *Ibn Kathir mentioned this in his Tafsir 4/142 and ascribed it to Ibn Abu Hatim who narrated that 'Ali Allah be pleased with him said, 'There is no slave except that he has a place on the=*

The true Lord, further, develops this picture for us by His words: ‘We shall say to Hell on that day, “Are you full?” and it will reply, “Are there no more?”’ (*Qaf*: 30) So, the Fire longs for its inhabitants like one who eats without ever feeling satisfied or full, so whenever wrongdoers are thrown into it, it says: ‘Are there no more?’ (*Qaf*: 30)

As for *zafeer* (hiss) ‘...and roaring...’ (*al-Furqan*: 12), it is a sharply-exhaled breath. In another part of the Quran, Allah says: ‘They will hear it drawing in its breath when they are thrown in. It blazes forth’ (*al-Mulk*: 7) mentioning that it has both an indrawn breath and an exhaled breath, and it is in a tight space.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَإِذَا أُلْقُوا مِنْهَا مَكَانًا ضَيِّقًا مُقَرَّرِينَ دَعَوْا هُنَالِكَ ثُبُورًا ﴿١٣﴾

**And when they are hurled into a narrow part of it,
chained together, they will cry out for death [13]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 13)**

Allah *Glorified is He* gathers against them so many different forms of punishment that as soon they encounter a punishment, they will say: ‘If only I were dust!’ (*an-Naba*: 40) Here, they pray for extinction, saying, ‘O would that there were woe! O would that there were extinction!’ In other words, ‘O my death, come and take me! This is your time to come and extricate me from the punishment in which I find myself! Nothing can save me from this punishment except for my utter destruction!’ That is why they say that worse than death is the one, who asks for death, for as the poet says,

= earth where he prays and a place in the sky where his actions are raised up. As for the people of Pharaoh, they did not have any good actions on the earth or any actions which were raised up into the sky.’ And it is narrated by Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him that the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, ‘There is no slave except that he has two gates in the sky – one gate from which his provision comes and another gate into which his actions and words go. When that slave dies, they both miss him and weep on his account.’ Al-Haythami said in *Al-Majma*’, ‘Abu Ya’la narrated it, but Musa ibn ‘Ubayda Ar-Rabadhi is in the chain of transmission and he is weak.’

It is enough of a malady for you to see death as your only cure

And it is enough of a death that it is that which you wish for.

You must try to imagine how unpleasant a punishment must be to make the one who is undergoing it to wish and pray for death!

Then, the true Lord says:

لَا نَدْعُوا الْيَوْمَ ثُبُورًا وَاحِدًا وَادْعُوا ثُبُورًا كَثِيرًا ﴿١٤﴾

Do not cry out this day for one death, but for many [14] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 14)

The true Lord reproaches and rebukes them, ‘What a failure and what a loss! It will not benefit you to pray for one single death. Rather, you should pray for a death, then another and then another. It is something that never ends: one punishment will pass you on to another punishment until you cry out: ‘they will cry, “Malik/ if only your Lord would finish us off,” but he will answer, “No! You are here to stay”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 77). It is a punishment that is renewed again and again: ‘When their skins have been burned away, We shall replace them with new ones so that they may continue to feel the pain...’ (*an-Nisa*: 56).

Then, the true Lord mentions the opposite so that that might be more hurtful to the people of evil and enrage them further. After mentioning their punishment, He mentions the huge reward for doing good and obeying Allah *Glorified is He*. This sort of pairing of opposites happens frequently in the Quran, like in Allah’s statement: ‘The good one will live in bliss. And the wicked will burn in the Fire’ (*al-Infitar*: 13-14). The True Lord says: ‘Let them laugh a little; they will weep a lot in return for what they have done’ (*at-Tawba*: 82).

After mentioning the fire and its hisses and indrawn breaths, the True Lord says:

قُلْ أَذَلَّكَ خَيْرٌ أَمْ جَنَّةُ الْخُلْدِ الَّتِي وُعدَ الْمُتَّقُونَ كَانَتْ لَهُمْ جَزَاءً وَاصِيراً ﴿١٥﴾

Say, ‘Which is better, this or the lasting Garden that those who are mindful of God have been promised as their reward and journey’s end?’ [15] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 15)

‘Say...’ (*al-Furqan*: 15) is an instruction to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to say (the statement that follows). Those, to whom he is instructed to say it, are of his contemporaries who rejected his Prophethood, and who were so lost and confused when it came to these matters that it was as if they had no knowledge of reality. Their only aim was to raise objections to the Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with respect to what he was calling them to. It is only natural for prophets to be subjected to objections and resistance by their contemporaries with respect to that to which they call those people. This is because Messengers are only sent to a people when corruption and wickedness has come to the fore.

We have previously mentioned that the true Lord, first, places in every self a faculty that enables its owner to do a thing and then places in it a secondary faculty by which it reproaches him for that. At that moment, there is said to be an impregnable strength in that person. This impregnable strength is called the self-reproaching self. Yet, this faculty can easily become wiped out in a person, leaving all his faculties to work together for evil, thereby leaving his self to become *ammara bis-su’a* (commanding of evil) with all its faculties. This word *ammara* (commanding) is an intense form of the word, not just the ordinary active participle form *amirah*. In other words, this commanding of evil has become the profession of the self.

So the meaning of (*ammara*) is that his self no longer has any capacity to prevent him from doing evil, rather, it constantly strengthens and reinforces all the impulses to evil in the self, and these impulses become so deeply-ingrained that they become the profession of the self. So what is the position then?

Allah *Glorified is He* must place in the selves of other people a capacity for good by which they may confront those who possess these selves that command to evil, meet them with good counsel, right guidance and exhortation,

and divert them away from evil and back to good. But if a society in its entirety becomes so corrupted that not even a single self remains to hold them back from evil, then heaven must intervene by sending down a new messenger.

And it is a part of Allah's mercy to the world that He *Glorified is He* has guaranteed to the community of Muhammad that there will always be self-reproaching selves among them, and that He *Glorified is He* has guaranteed that their societies will always enjoin the good and forbid the wrong. And that is why there is no need for any messenger after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So, that preventative strength is present in the community of Islam. And if this strength were not present firstly in the self and secondly in society, then heaven would have intervened after Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by sending a new messenger and a new miracle through which mankind could be brought back to right guidance.

There is no doubt that, in society, there is a faction of people who benefit from this corruption and live in luxury on its account. So it is only natural for them to rush to its defence, and it is only natural that they resist the call of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* – who came to redress the balance in society – and try to ambush him since his call threatens their interests and brings an end to the preferential status they had enjoyed.

Although previous Messengers had been subjected to persecution of this sort, the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was subjected to levels of persecution many times greater than that to which they had been subjected. And the reason for that was so that his persecution is equivalent to the magnitude of the task with which he had been entrusted. All the Messengers before him were only sent to their own people and were only sent for a limited period of time. But his Message was for the entire human race, and is valid for all places for all of time, right up until the Final Hour. So, it is inevitable that his task will be more difficult than theirs.

Those powerful men who benefit from the corruption of society think that if money and the comforts of life were to be waved in front of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he could be made to give up his call and leave the arena open to them. And that is why the leaders of Quraysh joined together against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*

came to him and offered him wealth, fame and sovereignty in order to dissuade him from his call and make him turn aside from it. It was these people that our professor, Sheikh Musa, called, ‘the evil dozen’ since they were twelve men in number, namely: Abu Al-Bukhtari⁽¹⁾, Abu Jahl, Abu Sufyan, Al-Aswad ibn Al-Muttalib, Umayya ibn Khalf, Al-‘As ibn Wa’il, ‘Utba ibn Rabi’a, Munabbih ibn Al-Hajjaj, Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira, An-Nadr ibn Al-Harith, Shayba ibn Rabi’a and Nabih ibn Al-Hajjaj⁽²⁾.

These men⁽³⁾ went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying, ‘We are a delegation to you from your people. We have come to provide ourselves with an excuse so that no one can come and blame us for what we do after this point. If you want wealth, we will gather together our wealth for you; if you want pre-eminence and nobility, we will make you a master over us; and if you want a kingdom, we will make you king over us.’

There is a difference between wealth and nobility: wealth is what makes a person rich, but a person can be rich without having any nobility or standing with people. And a person can have nobility and mastery without having any wealth.

(1) *Abu Al-Bukhtari: His name was Al-‘As ibn Hisham ibn Al-Harith. This is what Ibn Ishaq said. Ibn Hisham said that he was Al-‘As ibn Hashim. (As-sira an-nabawiyya, 1/264).*

(2) *Ibn Hisham mentioned in As-sira an-nabawiyya (1/264) that they were nine in number and excluded from among those mentioned by the Sheikh: Umayya ibn Khalf and An-Nadr ibn Al-Harith.*

This delegation went to Abu Taleb and said, ‘Abu Taleb, your nephew has abused our gods, insulted our religion, called us stupid and pronounced our forefathers to be misguided. You must either make him desist or open the way for us to deal with him ourselves. You are like us in terms of the fact that you differ with him, so let us rid you of him.’ Abu Taleb responded to them with gentle words and turned them away with courtesy, so they left him. Ibn Hisham mentioned this in As-sira an-nabawiyya (1/265) and mentioned it in another place as well (1/295).

(3) *(The one who said this) was Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira. In another incident, it is narrated that he said to Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him ‘My nephew, if what you want from this matter you have brought us is wealth, we will gather parts of our own wealth together and give it to you so that you become the wealthiest man amongst us; if what you want by it is pre-eminence and nobility, we will make you master over us and do nothing without consulting you first; if what you want is kingship, then we will make you king over us; and if what has happened to you is that you are beset by visions that you cannot rid yourself of on your own, we will search for a remedy for you and will spend our own money for that until we have found you a cure.’ Abridged from As-sira an-nabawiyya of Ibn Hisham (1/293 & 294).*

We notice, here, that they progressed upwards in their bargaining with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from wealth to nobility and mastery and then to kingdom. But what was the position of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*? His position was that which Allah *Glorified is He* set out for him – when Gabriel (Jibril) *peace be upon him* offered that Allah *Glorified is He* make all of the mountains of Mecca gold for him, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘Rather, I would be full for one day so that I can be thankful, and hungry for three days so that I can make humble entreaties.’⁽¹⁾ And on another occasion, Gabriel (Jibril) *peace be upon him* said to him, ‘Your Lord has given you the choice between being a Prophet and king and being a Prophet and slave.’ He replied, ‘I would be a Prophet and slave.’⁽²⁾

A Prophet is one who holds possession of the programme of heaven, while a king is one who has power and dominion such that no one is able to stand against him, like Solomon (Sulaiman) *peace be upon him* to whom Allah *Glorified is He* granted a kingdom not suited to anyone after him. But, despite that, that kingship was not itself what Solomon (Sulaiman) *peace be upon him* sought. And that is proven by the fact that he would eat nothing but *khawshikar*, a type of brown bread made from unsifted flour (bran), while his slaves and freedmen would eat bread made from superior sifted flour⁽³⁾. So Solomon (Sulaiman) *peace be upon him*

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- (1) *From Abu Umama Allah be pleased with him that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, ‘My Lord offered to turn the valley of Mecca into gold for me, so I said, “No, my Lord. Rather, I would be full for one day and hungry for one day” - and it is said that he said three days or something like that - “When I am hungry, I can entreat You humbly and remember You; and when I am full, I can thank you and praise you.”’ It is transmitted by At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan (2347) and Ahmad in his Musnad (5/254), and At-Tirmidhi said that it was a hasan (good) Hadith.*
- (2) *It is transmitted by Ibnul-Mubarak in az-Zuhd (265); and by At-Tabarani in Al-Mu’jam Al-kabir (10686). Al-Haythami said in Majma’ Az-Zawa’id (9/20), ‘The isnad [chain of narration] includes Baqiyya ibn Al-Walid who is a mudallis (a Hadith transmitter whose credibility and reliability are impugned as he used to add extra parts to the Hadith or even remove parts from it).’ He traced it back to At-Tabarani in Al-Awsatt and said (10/315), ‘It includes Sa’dan ibn Al-Walid whom I do not know. The rest of its narrators are the same as the narrators in the Sahih [authentic Hadith].’*
- (3) *It is transmitted by Ahmad in Az-Zuhd (p. 141 in the version printed by Dar Al-Kutub Al-‘Arabiyya in Beirut) from ‘Atta’ who said, ‘Solomon (Sulaiman) peace be upon him used to knit baskets with his hands and eat barley bread while feeding the tribe of Israel.’ As-Suyuti transmitted this in Ad-Durr al-Manthur (7/189) in his Tafsir of verse 35 of the chapter of Sad. Hawari is sifted white flour.*

did not want the kingship for itself, but rather wanted it as a means of strengthening his call, so that there would be no one to oppose him. And that is why, when the Queen of Sheba (Bilqis) sent him a present to try and win him over and persuade him to turn aside from what he had resolved to do, Solomon (Sulaiman) *peace be upon him* responded to her: ‘Now when [the Queen’s messenger] came unto Solomon (Sulaiman), he said: “Do you people mean to add to my wealth? But that which Allah has given me is [so much] better than all that He has given you! Nay, it is [only such as] you that would rejoice in this gift of yours!”...’ (*an-Naml*: 36)

And that is why she came to him humbled, saying: ‘...“O my Lord! I have been sinning against myself [by worshipping aught but you]: but [now] I have surrendered myself, with Solomon (Sulaiman), unto the Lord of all the worlds!”...’ (*an-Naml*: 44).

So, this issue of money was presented to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* even before the unbelievers of Mecca suggested it to him. And if he refused it from the One Who has possession of it, how could he then accept it from those who possess nothing? And that is why he said to them, ‘By Allah, I have no need of what you offer me I am not one who seeks money, kingship, or pre-eminence. Rather, I am the Messenger of Allah who has been sent to you, and I have brought a Book in which there is a programme for you. My Lord has commanded me to be a bearer of good news and a warner to you. If you come into line with what I want, you will have guaranteed for yourself a portion of this world and the Hereafter, but if you throw back my words in my face, I will stay patient and wait for Allah *Glorified is He* to judge between us, for He *Glorified is He* is the best of judges.’⁽¹⁾

So they resorted to approaching the uncle of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the hope that he might be able to win him over. But when his uncle spoke to him, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* gave his famous response, ‘By Allah, if they were to place the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand in return for me setting this matter aside, I would not. I will never set it aside until Allah has brought it victory or I have perished in the attempt.’⁽²⁾

(1) *The like of this has been transmitted by Ibn Hisham in As-sira An-Nabawiyya (1/296).*

(2) *It is transmitted by Ibn Hisham in As-sira An-Nabawiyya (1/266), attributed to Ibn ‘Ishaq, that the Quraysh said to Abu Taleb, ‘Abu Taleb, you are one of our elders and have a=*

In the next part of this verse Allah says: ‘...this...’ (*al-Furqan*: 15) is the sort of punishment you are in now better or is it’ ... the lasting Garden that those who are mindful of Allah have been promised...?’ (*al-Furqan*: 15). You yourselves are the ones to judge in this matter and we will abide by your judgement. It is in order to infuriate the people of the Fire that Allah *Glorified is He* allows them to see the people of Paradise and the blessings that they enjoy at the same time as subjecting them to the harshest of punishments. If they were subjected to the latter alone, it would have been enough, but they are in their punishment when the people of paradise come up to them and reproach them, saying, ‘Look at the blessings you have foregone!’ This is also a way of rebuking them, since there is no point of comparison between Paradise and the Hellfire. For instance, you would never say that honey is sweeter than vinegar since that is something that is self-evident and plain to see.

We talked previously about *as-Siratt* (the Bridge) – about why it was built over the surface of Jahannam (hellfire) and why everyone must pass over it – and said that it was because Allah *Glorified is He* wants to make the sight of the Hellfire which you are passing over while you are on the bridge another blessing for you, since it reminds you of being saved from the fire before you come into contact with the blessing of paradise. And that is why Allah *Glorified is He* does not only grant us the boon of entering paradise, but also that of salvation from the fire. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...whereupon he that shall be drawn away from the Fire and brought into Paradise will indeed have gained a triumph...’ (*Al-Imran*: 185).

Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the fire to us and mentions some of its attributes that it is like this and like that. But in the Hereafter, we will see it first hand with our own eyes, as Allah *Glorified is He* Himself says: ‘In the end you will indeed, most surely, behold it with the eye of certainty’ (*at-Takathur*: 7), and that takes place when you are on the Bridge (*as-Sirat*). So praise Allah *Glorified is He* for granting you your Islam which saved you

= position of pre-eminence and high standing among us. We have asked your nephew to desist and leave us alone, but he has not done so. We are losing patience with this man who curses our forefathers, calls us stupid, and insults our gods. Either he stops or we will come against both of you until one of the two parties is completely destroyed.’ So Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him gave this response to his uncle.

from the Hellfire and granted you access to Paradise. Each one of those blessings is greater than the other.

In Allah's Words: 'Say: "Which is better this, or the lasting Garden?"...' (*al-Furqan*: 15) There is the word (*khayr*) which linguistically is used in two different ways: the first is to indicate the 'good' which is opposed by evil; and the second is to indicate the 'good' which is opposed by something better than it, like in the divine Hadith, 'The strong Muslim is better and more beloved to Allah *Glorified is He* than the weak Muslim, although both are good.'⁽¹⁾ So both are (*khayr*) 'good' even though the strong Muslim is 'better'. As for the (*khayr*) that is opposed by evil, an example of its usage is found in Allah's Words: '...it is they, they who are the best of all creatures' (*al-Bayyina*: 7).

In terms of the way it is used in this world, the word *jannah* (paradise) is used to designate a place full of trees and plants which overlook those who walk there and spare those who own them the need of going outside, since all their life requirements are to be found therein – they spare them from needing anything else. And that is why Allah *Glorified is He* follows it up with: '...“the lasting Garden”...' (*al-Furqan*: 15).

So the gardens which you see in this world, no matter how spectacular, will never be the paradise of life abiding since they will disappear and fade away – their lifespan is a life span based on this worldly nature. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to every person who owns a garden in this world, 'Do not be deceived by your garden for it is eventually going to fade away and disappear.' And the greatest sorrow that the possessor of happiness can have is that feeling of certainty that it will go away. It is as the poet said,

For me, the greatest sorrow in terms of happiness is when

He who possesses it knows with certainty that it will go away.

And that is why Allah *Glorified is He* reassures His believing slaves that the Garden which He *Glorified is He* promised them is a garden of life abiding that will remain forever – its blessing will never cease and its happiness will never

(1) It is transmitted by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2/366 & 370); Muslim in his *Sahih* (3664); and Ibn Maah in his *Sunnan* (79) in a Hadith from Abu Hurayra.

be disrupted. Its pleasures are constant and permanent – they will never be cut off nor forbidden.

As for Allah's Words: '...that those who are mindful of Allah have been promised' (*al-Furqan*: 15), the promise that is mentioned is made by Allah *Glorified is He* the One Who has all the means at his disposal to fulfil such a promise. A 'promise', is giving someone the good news of something good before that good has come about, so that he can get himself ready in order to be one of those who merit it. The opposite of 'promise' is warning, which is threatening someone with something bad before that bad has come about so that he can set himself right and avoid those things that will bring it down upon him.

As for the words 'mindful of Allah', at its root it means placing a barrier between oneself and that which is evil, as in Allah's Words: '...then be conscious of the fire...' (*al-Baqara*: 24) that is place a barrier between it and yourself. It is amazing indeed that Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...remain conscious of God...' (*al-Baqara*: 194) and '...then be conscious of the fire...' (*al-Baqara*: 24), but the meaning is, place a barrier between yourself and the attributes of Allah's overwhelming majesty, since you will not be able to endure the attributes of His overwhelming force. The Fire is one of the soldiers of Allah *Glorified is He* in His attributes of majesty, so it is as if Allah *Glorified is He* is saying, 'have God-consciousness of the soldiers of the attributes of Allah's majesty.'

As for Allah's Words: 'as their reward' (*al-Furqan*: 15), this means 'as a reward for the actions you have sent forward from this world. This meaning is clear from Allah's words: 'Eat and drink with good cheer in return for all [the good deeds] that you have sent ahead in days gone by!' (*al-Haqqa*: 24) This is the reason for the bliss they find themselves in – the fact that they so often tired themselves out and suffered such torment and oppression. The reward for those who are tortured on account of Our religion is that We will make them happy now in the Hereafter.

The meaning of '...and journey's end' (*al-Furqan*: 15) is that where they will end up. So do not look at where you are now and what you are suffering, but rather look to where you will most certainly end up. Reflect on your existence in this world and the fact that it is temporary and presumed, and

then reflect upon your existence in the Hereafter and the fact that it is constant, permanent and will never come to an end. That is why they say, ‘Never get into anything unless you first know the way out.’

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لَهُمْ فِيهَا مَا يَشَاءُونَ خَالِدِينَ كَذَلِكَ وَعَدَّا مُسْتَوْلاً ﴿١٦﴾

**There they will find everything they wish for, and there they will stay. [Prophet], this is a binding promise from your Lord [16]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 16)**

In the previous verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...the lasting Garden...’ (*al-Furqan*: 15), while here He *Glorified is He* says: ‘...abiding [in it]...’ (*al-Furqan*: 16). This is one of those places that superficialists think is an example of repetition in the Speech of Allah *Glorified is He* despite the fact that the difference between the two is clear – the first ‘abiding’ describes paradise, while the second describes its inhabitants. So it means that paradise will never end and that they will never leave it.

As for Allah’s Words: ‘They shall have therein [paradise] what they desire’ (*al-Furqan*: 16), this means that you will have whatever you want when you enter paradise. So, in it you will have whatever blessings you want, although you will only want the limited blessings about which you know. And in paradise, there are things that no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard and no human mind has ever thought of.

This promise to the believers will be fulfilled only in paradise. As for this life, no one gets everything that they want, not even the Prophets. Do you not see that Noah (Nuh) *peace be upon him* asked his Lord that his son might be saved, saying: ‘...Verily, my son was of my family...’ (*Hud*: 45), and yet he was not given what he wanted.

And Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* despite all his efforts, was unable to guide his uncle Abu Taleb. But that is only true in this world, so know that when Allah *Glorified is He* denies you something you want in this world, He only does so in order to store it up for you in the way that He wants in the Hereafter. And that is despite the fact that so many think they are being

deprived of something. But Allah *Glorified is He* forbids that He deprives one of His slaves of anything!

There are other gifts inherent in Allah's Words: 'They shall have therein [Paradise] what they desire' (*al-Furqan*: 16), but Allah *Glorified is He* only gives you according to the knowledge you have of His blessings. It is like your Lord gives you a 'remote control' by means of which you make your request, and then He *Glorified is He* gives it to you and stores up in the Hereafter something that is better than that which He *Glorified is He* gave you.

The faculties and attitudes by which a person wants in the Hereafter will be different from the faculties and attitudes by which he wants in this world since people's spirits in the Hereafter will be pure and clear and will desire nothing but good, as opposed to this world where they have a natural inclination towards evil. And that is because one's natural faculties here are sometimes governed by compulsion and sometimes by free choice: they are compelled in things from which they have no escape such as illness and death, and are free to choose in some other things.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: '... it is a promise which it is proper to be prayed for from your Lord.' (*al-Furqan*: 16) A 'promise' as we mentioned earlier, is giving someone the good tidings of something before its time has actually come. Some of the people of knowledge, however, consider the promise that is mentioned here to mean 'right', but does anyone have rights over Allah *Glorified is He*? Elsewhere, Allah *Glorified is He* calls it a reward, so is it a promise or a reward? We say that as soon as Allah *Glorified is He* made His promise part of His Law, it became a reward since Allah *Glorified is He* never goes back on His promises and lets nothing that He has promised pass by without fulfilling it.

As for Allah's Words: 'prayed for' (*al-Furqan*: 16), who is it who is doing the praying and the asking here? They say Allah *Glorified is He* is teaching us to ask Him. As an example of that, read Allah's Words: 'Our Lord! Bestow upon us all that You have promised us through Your messengers....' (*Al-Imran*: 194) We ourselves have asked for it.

And the angels have also asked it, as is mentioned in Allah's Words, when He quotes the angels as saying: 'and admit them, Lord, to the lasting

Gardens You have promised to them...’ (*Ghafir*: 8). So, paradise is prayed for and asked for by those concerned with it as well as by the angels who ask forgiveness for us.⁽¹⁾

وَيَوْمَ يَحْشُرُهُمْ وَمَا يَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ فَيَقُولُ أَأَنْتُمْ
أَضَلَلْتُمْ عِبَادِي هَؤُلَاءِ أَمْ هُمْ ضَلُّوا السَّبِيلَ

On the Day He gathers them all together with those they worship beside Him, He will say, ‘Was it you [false gods] who led these creatures of Mine astray, or did they stray from the path by themselves?’ [17] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 17)

In Allah’s Words: ‘the Day He will gather them’ (*al-Furqan*: 17), the word ‘gather’ refers to when all of mankind, from the time of Adam *peace be upon him* until the coming of the Hour, will be gathered together in a single place, and for a single purpose. If we are screaming now about how crowded things are and complaining that the earth is not big enough for all of its inhabitants – and we are but one single generation – then what do you think that place is going to be like where all of mankind from the time of Adam *peace be upon him* until the coming of the Hour are gathered together?

‘True worship’, is when the worshipper obeys the commands of the worshipped, so each of us should look at those whose commands we obey and see whether they are the direct source of those commands or whether they have been conveyed to them by one higher than them, be that a messenger or a god. If they are the direct source of the command, then you must look at whether it is something permissible they have commanded you with or whether it is something that goes against the Laws of Islam. If it is something

(1) It is transmitted by Ibn Abu Hatim and Al-Bayhaqi by way of Sa’id ibn Hilal that Mohammad ibn Ka’b Al-Qurazzi said about Allah’s Words: ‘it is a promise which it is proper to be prayed for from your Lord.’ (*al-Furqan*: 16), ‘The angels pray for that for them when they say, “...bring them into the gardens of perpetual bliss which You have promised them...”’ (*Ghafir*: 8). Sa’id said, ‘And I heard Abu Hazim say, “On the Day of Rising, the believers will say, ‘Our Lord, we have done what You have asked of us, so bring about that which You promised us.’ That is Allah’s Words: “...a promise... prayed for?”’ (*al-Furqan*: 16) It is also transmitted by *As-Suyuti* in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthusr* (6/241).

permissible, then there is nothing wrong with you obeying them, but if it is something which goes against the Laws of Islam, then by obeying them it is as if you are worshipping someone other than Allah *Glorified is He*.

So, when a commander commands you to pray, pay *zakat* (obligatory alms) or fast, you have, before even obeying him, obeyed the One Who entrusted him with that task. But as for those who obey those who command them to do things that go against Allah's programme for us, they are in fact worshipping them instead of Allah *Glorified is He* and setting them up as gods to be obeyed. It is as Allah says about the devils: 'And, verily, the devils whisper unto those who have made them their own that they should involve you in argument' (*al-An'am*: 121).

And others worship false gods, or worship the sun or the moon or the stars or idols and other inanimate things. It is well known that worship of these inanimate objects is a false and mistaken form of worship since worship is obeying commands and have inanimate objects ever given a command to anyone. Worship, if it were to have been correct in this sense, would have to be to someone who possessed command or at least some sort of temporal authority, such as priests, or devils or angels or Jesus (Isa) *peace be upon him* whom some have claimed to be divine, or Uzayr (Ezra) or someone similar. Inanimate things are only included along with these others in a general sense.

And that is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[But as for people who are oblivious of the Lord's oneness] one Day He will gather them and that which they worship besides Allah...' (*al-Furqan*: 17). In other words, He will gather the one who misguidedly worships with the one he has misguidedly worshipped together in the same place. Why? Because when the worshipper finds himself being punished, he will look for the one he worshipped to rescue him, but he will find him in the Fire with him, having preceded him there, and so he will lose all hope of ever being saved.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...“Did you mislead these, My servants, or did they [themselves] stray from the way?”...’ (*al-Furqan*: 17) This question is directed to those among them who are capable, although there is nothing to say it should not be addressed to everyone since we are only able to talk according to the laws of which we are aware and Allah *Glorified is He* has made it clear to us that everything has its own language. So why should

we consider it farfetched that this address is directed at both those capable of rational thinking and those incapable of it. And the proof of the possibility of that is found in Allah's Words: '...and there is not a single thing but extols His limitless glory and praise: but you [O men] fail to grasp the manner of their glorifying Him!' (*al-Isra*: 44)

And Solomon (Sulaiman) *peace be upon him* was one of those who were able to understand their glorification, said: '...“O my Lord! Inspire me so that I may forever be grateful for those blessings of Yours with which You have graced me”...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). When he heard the ant saying to its people in warning: '...“Get into your dwellings”...' (*an-Naml*: 18), Solomon (Sulaiman) *peace be upon him* smiled and referred to what it said as 'words'. And this serves as a rebuttal to those who claim that the glorification of the ant here was internal monologue rather than articulated utterance. And that statement contradicts the text of the Quran itself, since Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...but you [O men] fail to grasp the manner of their glorifying Him!' (*al-Isra*: 44) So Allah has ruled that you will not be able to understand this glorification. If you were to say it is simply glorification by means of tacit indication, then that would imply that you have understood it, and Allah *Glorified is He* has ruled that you will not understand it unless He *Glorified is He* Himself allows you to and teaches you the languages by means of which those created beings glorify.

And why should we consider such matters so farfetched when modern science has established that every species in existence has its own special language? Do we not now speak to one another in languages that are not voiced, such as the sign language that the navy uses to communicate amongst itself?

Allah *Glorified is He* asks those who are worshipped: '...“Did you mislead these, My servants, or did they [themselves] stray from the way?”...' (*al-Furqan*: 17) Allah *Glorified is He* knows already whether it was them who led them astray or not. And that is why Jesus (Isa) *peace be upon him* responds to a question of this sort as in 'And [beware the Day] when Allah will say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, did you say to the people, 'Take me and my mother as deities besides Allah?'" He will say, "Exalted are You! It was not for me to say that to which I have no right. If I had said it, You would have known it. You know what is within myself, and I do not know what is within

Yourselves'...' (al-Ma'ida: 116). The question Allah *Glorified is He* asks of the worshipped is a means of rebuking the worshippers in front of those whom they worshipped, since if they had had any right to worship them, the ones they worshipped would have defended them in front of Allah *Glorified is He*. And that is why Jesus (Isa) *peace be upon him* says in his response to Allah *Glorified is He*: 'Nothing did I tell them beyond what You did bid me [to say]: "Worship Allah [who is] my Lord as well as your Lord"...' (al-Ma'ida: 117).

As for the others, they say, 'We did not lead them astray; rather, they strayed from the path themselves.'

And as for the Words: '..."My servants"...' (al-Furqan: 17), the meaning of 'a servant' is one who submits to the commands of his master and has no freedom to do as he wills. If you view it in this light, then every single one of Allah's creations are slaves, since with respect to non-volitional acts nobody is able to escape the will of Allah *Glorified is He* for example the form with which one is born, or the onset of an illness or the timing of one's death. And that is why we say to those who become accustomed to contravening the Commands of Allah *Glorified is He* and rebelling against Him, 'You may rebel against having faith in Him by disbelieving in Him, you may rebel against having faith in His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by denying His Message, and you may rebel against one of His legal rulings by contravening it. You have the courage and the boldness to go against Him in these matters and have become accustomed to rebelliousness. But if you have made a habit of doing that, then you must also rebel against Him when it comes to illness by refusing to get ill, or when it comes to death by refusing to die. But that will never happen, for these are matters in which everyone is a slave to Allah *Glorified is He* totally subjugated to His Will, both believers and unbelievers, the obedient and the disobedient.'

There are other matters in which Allah *Glorified is He* allows us to have a choice: those for whom the Best from Allah *Glorified is He* is pre-ordained and who have been inspired to have success, give up their own free choice in favour of the choice and Will of their Lord. Such people are Allah's slaves when it comes to matters in which they are compelled and matters in which they are not compelled. They are those who are worthy of being termed the

‘servants’ of Allah. As in His Words: ‘For, [true] servants of the Most Gracious are [only] they who walk gently on earth, and who, whenever the foolish address them, reply with [words of] peace’ (*al-Furqan*: 63).

Some of those who are not qualified to understand Allah's intents failed to grasp the function of interrogation in Allah's Words: ‘...“Did you mislead these, My servants, or did they [themselves] stray from the way?”...’ (*al-Furqan*: 17) We say to these people, ‘Your grasp of the Arabic language is not strong enough to understand the Quran: you ask about the action when that action is not done in your presence, so you might ask someone for example, ‘Did you build the house you told me you were going to build?’ and he would then reply to you that he built it or he did not build it. But when you ask, ‘Did you build this house?’ The question is no longer about the action but about the doer of the action – was it you or someone else – since the building in question is there in front of you.

So, there is a difference between a question about an action and a question about the doer of that action. In the case of this verse, the action of misguidance is present, so the question is about the doers of that action: ‘...“Did you mislead these, My servants, or did they [themselves] stray from the way?”...’ (*al-Furqan*: 17) And He *Glorified is He* calls them ‘my servants’ here, despite the fact that they are astray, because these words take place in the Hereafter where people no longer have any free choice. Free choice is only something that is granted in this world since they are all compelled and none of them have any free choice whatsoever.

قَالُوا سُبْحَنَكَ مَا كَانَ يَنْبَغِي لَنَا أَنْ نَتَّخِذَ مِنْ دُونِكَ مِنْ أَوْلِيَاءَ وَلَكِنْ
مَتَّعْتَهُمْ وَعِيبَاءَهُمْ حَتَّى نَسُوا الذِّكْرَ وَكَانُوا قَوْمًا بُورًا ﴿١٨﴾

They will say, ‘May You be exalted! We ourselves would never take masters other than You! But You granted them and their forefathers pleasures in this life, until they forgot Your Reminder and were ruined’ [18] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 18)

The word ‘Exalted’ means ‘may Allah be praised above His Essence being like other essences, and His Attributes and Actions being like any other attributes

and actions.' Allah *Glorified is He* has Hearing and you have hearing, Allah *Glorified is He* has Existence and you have existence, Allah *Glorified is He* has Life and you have life, but is your life like the Life of Allah *Glorified is He*? Allah *Glorified is He* is a Compeller and you may also be a compeller, Allah *Glorified is He* is Wealthy (beyond need) and you may also be wealthy, but is your wealth like that of Allah? Allah *Glorified is He* has Actions and you have actions, but are your actions like the Actions of Allah? So, there is a difference between inherent attributes and attributes which are given and may be taken away by the One Who gave them at any time.

Subhanallah may also be uttered with the intention of expressing amazement: when you hear something amazing, you say *subhanallah* meaning 'I deem what has been said here as being above having actually happened.'

And that is why they say here: *subhanaka*, '..."Exalted are You!" ...' (*al-Furqan*: 18) meaning, 'It is amazing to think that we might actually go astray. How could we who worship You make others worship us?' In other words, their meaning is, 'This would not be right for us. How could it be when we call on others to worship You? It would not be rational for us to call others to worship You and then turn aside and set ourselves up for others to worship us: '..."Exalted are You! It was not for us to take besides you any allies!"...'' (*al-Furqan*: 18)

You are our Protector to whom we seek to get close. You sent us to perform a task for You, so the fact that You never err in Your choices prevents us from doing this thing. If that were not the case, then we would not have been entrusted with this task. So (*subhanaka*) means, 'You are exalted above choosing someone to carry out a task who was not worthy to carry it out – he takes the command from You himself.'

As for the Words: '..."It was not for us to take besides You any allies"...' (*al-Furqan*: 18), they mean: it was not conceivable/proper for us to do such-and-such, like in Allah's Words: 'And [thus it is] We have not imparted to this [Prophet the gift of] poetry, nor would [poetry] have suited this [message]...' (*Ya Sin*: 69).

Poetry is a talent – it is the gift of composition and eloquence of expression – and the Arabs used to vie with one another to see who was best

at making use of this gift. So, whenever a poet came to prominence amongst them, they would take tremendous pride in him and speak of him in glowing terms. This talent was one which Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* possessed. If Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* were to have become a poet, he would have been an exceptional one, but that was not proper or suitable for him since poetry is based upon imagination. And that is why Allah *Glorified is He* kept him away from poetry so that people would not think that the Quran that Muhammad brought was no more than the imaginings of a poet. It was not that the character of the Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* was so rigid so as not to be suited to poetry. Rather, his senses were sharp and finely attuned. If it had been destined for him to be a poet, he would have been a great one.

Allah *Glorified is He* has said about poets: ‘And as for the poets – [they, too, are prone to deceive themselves: and so, only] those who are lost in grievous error would follow them. Are you not aware that they roam confusedly through all the valleys [of words and thoughts] And that they [so often] say what they do not do [or feel]?’ (*ash-Shu’ara’*: 224-226) And they say about poetry, ‘The sweetest poetry is that which is most untruthful.’ And that is why the Prophet Muhammad did not enter into this field at any point throughout his life.

So, they said (*subhanaka*) in response to the question: ‘...“Did you mislead these, My servants, or did they [themselves] stray from the way?”...’ (*al-Furqan*: 17) Then He mentions the evidence that ‘...“or did they [themselves] stray from the way?”...’ (*al-Furqan*: 17) In His Words: ‘They will say...“But you provided comforts for them and their fathers until they forgot the message and became a people ruined”...’ (*al-Furqan*: 18), – when you allowed them to enjoy the pleasures of this life, O Lord, they became overwhelmed by luxury and the blessings and comforts they enjoyed distracted them from the One Who bestowed them upon them and they deviated from the Straight Path.

The verse reminds believers that they should not feel despair when they miss out on a blessing, since that blessing may be a temptation for you and turn you away from the One who bestowed it. Therefore, it is a good thing that Allah *Glorified is He* held it back from you, since you are unable to safeguard yourself when you receive blessings.

As for Allah's Words: 'until they forgot the message' (*al-Furqan*: 18), they forgot the Bestower of blessings, and it is the right of a blessing that it not make the Bestower of blessings be forgotten. And that is why we previously said that if a healthy person can be said to enjoy the blessing of good health from the Bestower of blessings, then the sick person who has been denied that may not be enjoying the blessing of the Bestower of blessings, but he is with His Lord and in His Company. And it was for this reason that one of the pious men when he fell ill, used to grow angry when people made supplications for him to get better. He used to say to those who visited him when he was ill, 'Do not deprive me of my intimacy with my Lord.'

And, in a Qudsi Hadith Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Son of Adam, I was ill and you did not visit Me,' he replied, 'How could I visit You when You are the Lord of all the worlds?' Allah *Glorified is He* replied, 'Do you not know that my slave, so-and-so, was ill and you did not visit him? If you were to have visited him, you would have found Me with him.'⁽¹⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* is too embarrassed to feel anxious or worried. As for the Words: '... "and became a people ruined"...' (*al-Furqan*: 18).

فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ بِمَا تَقُولُونَ فَمَا تَسْتَطِيعُونَ صَرْفًا وَلَا
نَصْرًا وَمَنْ يَظْلِم مِّنكُمْ نُنْفِئْهُ عَذَابًا كَبِيرًا ﴿١٩﴾

[God will say], 'Now your gods have denounced what you say as lies: you cannot avoid the punishment; you will not get any help.' If any of you commits such evil, We shall make him taste agonizing torment [19] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 19)

After Allah *Glorified is He* asked them – and He knows best about them: '...“Did you mislead these, my servants?”...’ (*al-Furqan*: 17), and they replied: '...“But You provided comforts for them and their fathers until they forgot the message and became a people ruined”...’ (*al-Furqan*: 18), having been violently shaken by the question they were asked, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to declare their blamelessness and innocence, so He *Glorified is He*

(1) It is narrated by Muslim in his *Sahih* (2569) in (*Kitab Al-Birr wa As-Sila*) as part of a Hadith from Abu Hurayra.

says: ‘So they will deny you, [disbelievers], in what you say, and you cannot avert [punishment] or [find] help. And whoever commits injustice among you— We will make him taste a great punishment.’ (*al-Furqan*: 19) In other words, ‘I know that you have spoken the truth, but they denied you with respect to what you say,’ ‘...and you cannot avert [punishment] or [find] help’ (*al-Furqan*: 19) to make Him turn towards them. ‘Avert’ is for you yourself to defend yourself from the evil that anyone subjects you to, while ‘find help’ is when you are unable to defend yourself, for someone else to come and defend you.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And whoever commits injustice among you – We will make him taste a great punishment’ (*al-Furqan*: 19). Someone might ask here, ‘Why does Allah *Glorified is He* address His devoted followers so harshly?’ Because in reality this harshness is not used as a means of reproaching Allah’s devoted followers, but rather as a means of grabbing the attention of others and rebuking them. If Allah *Glorified is He* can address those who are obedient to Him with this harshness, how do you expect His harshness to be towards His enemies and those who act outside the bounds of His Methodology?

When those people hear this address, it is inevitable that they will say, ‘Despite the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* chose them and brought them close to Him, that still did not prevent Him from directing His attention towards them and rebuking them!’

Did Allah *Glorified is He* not say about His beloved Prophet Muhammad: ‘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’ (*al-Haqq*: 44-46)? Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* in this way in order to put fear and dread into the hearts of those others (who oppose him). ‘So they will deny you, [disbelievers], in what you say, and you cannot avert [punishment] or [find] help. And whoever commits injustice among you – We will make him taste a great punishment’ (*al-Furqan*: 19).

‘Injustice’ is taking a right that belongs to another, and as long as Allah *Glorified is He* has prohibited that, that means that He wants each person to enjoy the fruits of his own endeavours. And that is because the affairs of life will never be in order when one man takes for himself the fruit of another

man's endeavours or becomes accustomed to living off the tears and sweat of others. And that is why we see in today's society certain criminals and deviants (people totally devoid of scruples) who live off the sweat of others and never ever sweat themselves.

When a right is taken from the one to whom it is due, and he can find nobody to obtain justice for him or help him recover that right that was snatched from him, he will develop a propensity for laziness, forsake work, and stop expending any effort. It is well known that the fruits of a person's labour do not just benefit him, but many others as well since his activity helps promote the interests of others and the activity of the society as a whole.

We previously said that the difference between the believer and others when it comes to work is that the unbeliever works for himself, while the believer works to obtain what suffices himself and then strives to help others. And that is why you must not limit your work according to what you need, but rather according to what you are able to do. So you give as much of your capacity as you need to fulfil your needs, and then use what reserves you have left to help fulfil the needs of those who are unable to work and have little or no capacity themselves.

In terms of the battle that rages between the unbelievers and believers, and at their head, the Messengers, Allah *Glorified is He* will decide its outcome. He *Glorified is He* says, 'None of my creation is able to wrong me, since the oppressed have within them a drop of weakness while oppressors have within them a drop of strength. And that is why He *Glorified is He* says: 'It was not Us they wronged [by their sinning] (*al-Baqara: 57*), that is, no one is able to do that but '...they wronged themselves' (*al-Baqara: 57*). They wrong only themselves, not the believers.

So Allah *Glorified is He* protects human beings from wronging themselves, since human beings have many capacities, including one for short-term greed and one for long-term planning. The hard-working student chooses to have comfort and ease in the future, while the lazy one chooses to have his comfort and ease right now. Both love ease for themselves, but there is a great difference between the love of the one who is awake and attentive and the love of the one who is a fool. The first endures difficulties in order to obtain

the highest grades at the end of the course, while the other is seduced by the prospect of ease right now, but then all too soon finds himself living in the community as a beggar and vagabond. So the enjoyment of the first is more durable and better lasting while the enjoyment of the other all too soon comes to an end. This is a general principle that may be said about both the work of this world and that of the Hereafter. Allah *Glorified is He* created man and does not want one capacity of his self to wrong another. Moreover, He *Glorified is He* does not want man's capacity to speedup things, to wrong his capacity to reflect and deliberate, since the capacity to speedup things brings him immediate good that soon comes to an end, while the capacity to reflect and deliberate brings him endless lasting good.

So, Allah *Glorified is He* wants His creation, regardless of whether they are believers or unbelievers, to not wrong themselves. And that is because Allah *Glorified is He* has honoured mankind and created the rest of creation to serve them – He *Glorified is He* has made everything work on their behalf and that is why He *Glorified is He* says to them, 'You will not be able to wrong Me and you will not wrong the believers. Rather, you will only wrong yourselves.' A Lord who punishes mankind because of the fact that they wrong themselves is the best type of Lord!

And that is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in a Qudsi Hadith, 'Son of Adam, I love you, and that is proven by the fact that I punish you when you wrong yourself, so by My right over you, be one who loves Me.'⁽¹⁾

And when Allah *Glorified is He* magnifies the punishment: 'And whoever commits injustice among you – We will make him taste a great punishment' (*al-Furqan*: 19), He only does so to deter His slaves from it, and make them keep away from what leads to it so that it does not come to pass.

The enemies of Islam all too often object to Allah's Words: 'There is no compulsion in religion...' (*al-Baqara*: 256) saying, 'Why do you kill those who apostatise and leave Islam?' These people do not know that this ruling is an obstacle that we place in the way of those who want to have faith as a word of

(1) It is narrated by Imam Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali in (*Ihya 'Ulumi Ad-Din*) (4/296), where he said, 'In some books, it is written, 'My slave, I, by the right that you have, love you, so by My right over you, be one who loves Me.'

caution to them that they must think very carefully about what they are about to embark upon if they choose to become Muslim. This ensures that they do not enter Islam except after having been completely and fully satisfied that it is the truth. After learning about this ruling, they take special care and only enter Islam of their own free accord with full understanding of the implications. Islam does not want rushed and hasty abundance, but rather wants careful thought and reflection. And that counts as something for Islam and not against it. Islam is an expensive commodity, and the one who possesses it has absolute confidence in its quality. It is like, for example, when you go to a silk merchant and he lays out his wares, demonstrating their quality and trying them out in front of you because he has complete confidence in the quality of his merchandise.

And it is on account of this that many of the verses of the Noble Quran end in the way they do, with the Words: ‘so that you reflect’, ‘so that you use your intellect’, ‘so that you take heed’. This is a proof that if you were to use your intellect or reflect or take heed, you would be guided to that which was brought by the Quran.

So, by Allah’s Words: ‘...And whoever commits injustice among you – We will make him taste a great punishment!’ (*al-Furqan*: 19), what is understood from the Quran or from Allah *Glorified is He* is that when a wrongdoer wrongs someone, he only punishes himself, since something is taken from him, but nothing is taken from Allah *Glorified is He*. Rather, He, by means of the Attributes of Perfection which He possesses, creates you and then you wrong nobody but yourselves.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says about His Messengers and Prophets:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَا قَبْلَكَ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ إِلَّا إِنَّهُمْ لَيَأْكُلُونَ الطَّعَامَ وَيَمْشُونَ فِي الْأَسْوَاقِ وَجَعَلْنَا بَعْضَكُمْ لِبَعْضٍ فِتْنَةً أَتَصْبِرُونَ ۚ وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ بَصِيرًا ﴿٢٠﴾

No messenger have We sent before you [Muhammad] who did not eat food and walk about in the marketplace. But We have made some of you a means of testing others – will you stand fast? Your Lord is always watching [20]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 20)

We previously talked about Allah’s Words: ‘They also say, “What sort of messenger is this? He eats food and walks about in the marketplaces! Why

has no angel been sent down to help him with his warnings?’...’ (*al-Furqan*: 7) But the truth is that this attribute is shared by all the Messengers – Muhammad was not an innovator when it came to that. So, if they say that the fact that he ate food detracted from him being a Messenger, and that they wanted a Messenger who did not eat food, we say to them in response, ‘By Allah, if the fact that he ate food prevents him, in your eyes, from being a Messenger, then how can they say that the one who ate food was a god? How can you say that when you were not content with him as a Messenger? Allah *Glorified is He* made Messengers eat food and go about in market-places because it is necessary for them to be examples to the rest of mankind of how to act and conduct oneself in every situation. And that is why the circumstances of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were so poor when it came to the material matters of this world such as food, drink and clothing, since it was necessary for him to be an example to all people. And that is why we also find Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to have been so keen for the members of his household to be just like him in that respect, and so the poor among them were not assigned a portion of the *zakat* (obligatory alms) as other poor people were.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘We, the Prophets, do not leave inheritance. Everything that we leave behind is *sadaqa* (charity).’⁽¹⁾

And anyone who had a debt from among the Muslims, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* bore his debt for him. And if all of this proves anything, it proves that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had full confidence in his Hereafter, and so did not want to partake of any part of that in this world.

And that is why we said, ‘If you were to see the fundamental concepts of truth and those of falsehood placed in front of you in this world, you would see that the fundamental concept of falsehood is that you pay the price first; so for example, in order to be a socialist, you must pay the price first. But as

(1) *It is related by Ahmad in his Musnad (2/463), with the wording, ‘We, the Prophets, do not leave inheritance. What I leave behind after feeding my workers and supporting my wives is sadaqa,’ as part of a Hadith from Abu Hurayrah. It is also transmitted by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (4033) in Kitab Al-Maghazi in a Hadith from ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab; as well as by Muslim in his Sahih in Kitab Al-Jihad.*

for the fundamental concept of truth, you pay the price in advance – you get tired, and are wronged, tortured, starved, become a fugitive and are exiled from your family, lands and wealth; and then await your reward in the Hereafter. And it is by means of this standard that you are able to separate truth from falsehood.'

As for Allah's Words: 'and walks about in the market-places' (*al-Furqan*: 20), they mean that messengers frequented them in order to carry out their business and buy whatever it was they needed to buy, as a proof of their humility and the fact that they were not arrogant and did not deem themselves as being above doing such menial tasks. And that is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* carried his own everyday commodities himself. And whenever one of his Companions offered to carry something for him, He *peace and blessings be upon him* would say, 'He who owns a thing has more right to carry it.'⁽¹⁾

As for: 'But We have made some of you a means of testing others – will you stand fast?' (*al-Furqan*: 20), which 'some' is a test for which 'others'? Similarly, in Allah's Words: '...and raise some of them by degrees above others...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) which 'some' are raised up and which 'some' have others raised above them?

We notice in matters such as this that people only look at things from a single angle – they say, 'this one is rich and that one is poor', but if they were to take all the different sides of a human being into account when making their comparison, they would see that Allah *Glorified is He* has given every human being unique gifts. Every one amongst us has qualities not enjoyed by our fellow human beings, and that is so that we stand shoulder to shoulder and so that creation is an integrated and unified whole. If the world were made of a single form, copied again and again, no one would ever have need of anyone else and no one would ever ask anyone else for anything. But when

(1) Al-Haythami transmitted it in Majma' Az-Zawa'id (5/122) in a Hadith from Abu Hurayra, and said, 'Abu Ya'la and At-Tabarani narrated it in Al-Awsat, but Yusuf ibn Ziyad Al-Basi is in their chain of narrations and he is weak.' Al-'Ajalunisaid in Kashf Al-Khafa' (2/25), 'Qadi'Iyad mentioned it in ash-Shifa' without tracing its chain of narrations back and that is weak. Indeed, Ibn Al-Jawzi went as far as to classify it amongst the forged Hadith. And Al-Mulla' Ali Al-Qari declared it to be wrong in 'Al-Asrar Al-Marfu'a' (Hadith 553).

gifts are varied and numerous with you being given something different to what your brother has been given, the whole society is linked together by mutual need, not by the granting of favours.

If we were to imagine that everyone had graduated from university and become doctors, who would sweep the streets? If that were to happen, one of us would volunteer to perform that task for a day. So, need would become the reason for volunteering and doing favours. But when things are done out of grace, then no one is compelled to do any work, and things that are required in a society fall into disuse. But when it is need that drives you, you are then the first to rush out and look for work.

Do you not see those who do the hard jobs going out early in the morning searching for work? Do you not see how angry they become when they find no job opportunities in the course of that day, despite the hardship and pain that carrying out that job causes them? Why? It is because of need. One who works in the sewers, for example, and endures the discomfort that that brings, with respect to the power he has over himself and the contentment he feels with the destiny that Allah *Glorified is He* has written for him, is better than me in this matter for I am not able to do that work and he is. So, if Allah *Glorified is He* were to leave jobs such as this to people's better nature, no one would ever step forward to do it. There is wisdom then in Allah *Glorified is He* making things subservient.

Some consider jobs of this sort, or jobs that harm those who carry them out, to be lowly, but that is a mistaken way of viewing the matter, for no job which brings benefit to society may be considered lowly. There has never been a job that was lowly; there have only been lowly workers.

As for Allah's Words: 'We have made some of you a means of testing others' (*al-Furqan*: 20), they mean that every one of us is a test for others – the rich man is a test for the poor man, and the poor man is a test for the rich man and so on and so forth. When the rich man considers himself above the poor man and looks down upon him that is when the poor man is a test for him. And when the poor man resents the rich man and feels jealous of him that is when the rich man is a test for the poor man. Similarly, the healthy

man is a test for the sick man, Messengers are a test for those who deny them and unbelievers are a test for the Messengers.

People flee from the trials themselves, but that is not the correct thing to do, for trials are simply a means of testing us. Rather, what we should do is to flee from what results from those trials and tests, not the trials themselves. An exam is a trial and a test for students – if they succeed then that trial was a good thing for them, and if they fail, then that trial was a bad thing for them. So the trial itself was not blameworthy in any way.

And that is why the word *fitna* (trial) is derived from a word that means the smelting of gold – it is well known that gold is the best form of mineral there is, even if there are other things that are more precious than it is. Why is that? Because it never oxidises nor rusts and is not affected by anything else, and it is also easy to shape, which is why they say, 'Like good people, precious metals are slow to break and quick to fix.' Take gold, for example, when it breaks it is easy to return it to the way it was, unlike glass.

So a trial is a means of testing someone, and the skilled person is the one who succeeds in it. So, if he is rich, he is grateful and carries out the duties that wealth brings – he is humble and searches for poor people to whom he can show compassion. A poor person is one who is unable to earn a living, not those for whom parasitism becomes a profession and who consume others wealth with lies and falsehood.

And since trials require those who are tried to endure and be patient, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'will you stand fast?' (*al-Furqan*: 20) To meet any trial, you need patience, so can you be patient in the face of this one? In order to indicate the importance of patience, Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *Al-'Asr*: 'I swear by the time. Most surely man is in loss' (*al-'Asr*: 1-2), meaning mankind in general is in loss except for those who are described with the following characteristics: 'Except those who believe and do good, and enjoin on each other truth, and enjoin on each other patience' (*al-'Asr*: 3).

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes this verse with the Words: 'Your Lord is always watching' (*al-Furqan*: 20) in order to alert us to the fact that every movement you make while you are being tried is seen by Us, and We do not

look at those movements simply to know about them, but rather to repay people for those actions in a manner commensurate to their worth.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَرْجُونَ لِقَاءَنَا لَوْلَا أُنْزِلَ عَلَيْنَا الْمَلٰٓئِكَةُ ۖ أَوْ
نَرَىٰ رَبَّنَا لَقَدْ اسْتَكْبَرُوا فِيۢ أَنْفُسِهِمْ وَعَتَوْا عُتُوًّا كَبِيرًا ﴿٢١﴾

Those who do not fear to meet Us say, ‘Why are the angels not sent down to us?’ or ‘Why can we not see our Lord?’

They are too proud of themselves and too insolent [21]

(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 21)

The meeting that is referred to here is the resurrection. We have believed in Allah *Glorified is He* Who is unseen, and we believe in Him in the Hereafter as One Who is seen. 'With whom will sovereignty rest on that Day?' (*Ghafir*: 16) Even those who did not believe in Him in this world will believe in Him in the Hereafter. That is why He *Glorified is He* says elsewhere in the Quran: '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; and Allah is swift in account.' (*an-Nur*: 39)

If only he had come and not found his actions there, but he found his actions there in full and found Allah *Glorified is He* there taking him to account for them. But the fact that any of that would come to pass never even occurred to him in this world and that is why he will be so surprised by it there.

As for Allah's words: '...who do not expect the meeting with Us say,' they mean that neither expect it nor believe in it, and that is why they did not prepare for it. Why? Because they preferred well-being now over well-being later - they saw appetites and pleasures in front of them and could not muster the patience to wait. They were heedless of the final goal.

What is 'meeting'? Meeting is contact and encounter, but can there be contact and an encounter between the True Lord *Glorified is He* and creation? This is a matter about which there has been much debate, and which has been

the cause of a great hubbub that has instilled doubt among Muslims when it comes to a great number of issues.

Some say, 'The fact that we meet Allah *Glorified is He* means that He *Glorified is He* must have a body and that is forbidden.' Others say, 'Meeting does not necessarily entail contact; it could mean that we simply see Him, since seeing the Lord at first does not mean actually meeting Him,' and that is the position of the *Ahl as-Sunna*.

As for the *Mu'tazilites* (the Rationalists), they reject even the possibility of seeing Allah *Glorified is He* and say, 'They will not meet Him by making contact with Him nor by seeing Him, since the one who sees something encompasses and defines it by means of his sight, and that is impossible with respect to Allah *Glorified is He*.'

We say to the Rationalists, 'You look at matters with respect to Allah *Glorified is He* in the same way that you look at matters with respect to beings created by Him. Why do you not view Allah *Glorified is He* in the light of the verse: '...there is nothing like unto Him.' (*ash-Shura*: 11) If your meeting with one another requires contact, your meeting with Allah *Glorified is He* does not; and if your seeing something defines and limits it, your seeing of Allah *Glorified is He* does not; you hear and Allah *Glorified is He* hears, but is your hearing like that of Allah's? So why do you want Allah's meeting to be like your meeting and thus necessitate His having a body? And why do you want His seeing to be like your own seeing?'

That is why when Moses *peace be upon him* [wanted to] see his Lord, he said: 'My Lord, show me [Yourself] that I may look at You,' (*al-A'raf*: 143) asking his Lord to show Himself to him because he was not capable of seeing him on his own. Such a sight would not be right for him, unless Allah *Glorified is He* was the One to show Himself to him. So, the matter is not one which relates to the one who is seen but rather to the one who does the seeing. Did Allah *Glorified is He* rebuke Moses for making a request such as this or say that he was overly proud of himself or had rebelled against His Will with utter disdain as He said here? No, on the contrary, He said: 'You will not see Me,' (*al-A'raf*: 143) and did not say, 'Never will I be seen.' Obviously, there is a huge difference between the two expressions.

It is why Allah *Glorified is He* then offers him the proof of that, saying: '...but look at the mountain; if it should remain in place, then you will see Me.' (*al-A'raf*: 143) Are you stronger or is the mountain? ' But when his Lord appeared to the mountain, He rendered it level, and Moses fell unconscious.' (*al-A'raf*: 143)

Notice what Allah *Glorified is He* says here: '...when his Lord appeared to the mountain,' He *Glorified is He* makes Himself manifest to part of His creation, but are they able to withstand that manifestation? The mountain is not more honoured in the sight of Allah *Glorified is He* than the human being to whom He *Glorified is He* made the mountain and everything else in existence subservient.

So, mankind is the most honoured, but his nature and the way he has been created render him unsuitable for seeing a sight such as this - he does not have the propensity or capacity to receive Divine Lights and that is because Allah *Glorified is He* created him for the earth. But in the Hereafter, things are different, and that is why Allah *Glorified is He* will alter this creation so that its very reality will change and it will gain the capacity to see Him. If Moses fell into a swoon upon seeing that which had been on the receiving end of the manifestation - the mountain - then how would it have been for him if he had seen The Manifester Himself? For that reason, it is one of the Blessings that Allah *Glorified is He* reserves for His servants in the Hereafter: '[Some] faces, that Day, will be radiant, Looking at their Lord.' (*al-Qiyama*: 22-23)

He *Glorified is He* says about the disbelievers: 'No. Surely, they (evildoers) will be veiled from seeing their Lord that Day.' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 15) So what separates the believers from the disbelievers is the fact that they will not be veiled from seeing their Lord after their form has been changed in the Hereafter and they have become capable of seeing what they were incapable of seeing in this world. If mankind today, with the scientific progress they have made, are able to make things for the partially-sighted that allow them to see better, then why should we consider this so far-fetched when it comes to Allah *Glorified is He*?

You find those who have wronged against themselves arguing with you with what frees them of responsibility, so you see them denying the resurrection and banishing that thought from their minds. They know what an evil outcome

awaits them if they were to know with certainty that the resurrection is coming and acknowledge that fact.

There are even some who believe in Allah *Glorified is He* among those who wrong against themselves. Some of those people say, 'As long as Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed disobedience for me, why should He then take me to account for it?' We are amazed that these people do not mention the opposite situation and say, 'As long as Allah *Glorified is He* has decreed obedience for us, why should He *Glorified is He* reward us for it?' So, the position they have adopted is unsound and illogical. The first situation will bring evil to them and so they mention it, but the second will bring them good and so they neglect mentioning it.

Regarding the question: 'Why were angels not sent down to us, or [why] do we [not] see our Lord?': it is indicative of their arrogance and their objection to the fact that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a human being. Indeed, elsewhere, they said: 'Shall human beings guide us?' (*at-Taghabun*: 6) So, all that really aggrieves them is the fact that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a human being, and that indicates their stupidity; if the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were to have been an angel, it would not have been right for him to be an example to them, and no messenger has been sent except to be an example, a teacher of the Divine Way and a model of how we should conduct ourselves. Yes, if he were to have been an angel, it would have been possible for him to teach us the way of Allah, but it would not have been right for him to have been a model of how we should conduct ourselves, since if he, as an angel, were to command you to do something, you could object by saying, 'You are only able to do that because you are an angel. As for me, I am only human and I am not capable of doing it.'

So the True Lord *Glorified is He* is saying, 'You will notice that the Messengers have two tasks - that of conveying the Message and that of being a model for us of how we should act. If their nature were to have been different to that of human beings, it would definitely have been possible for them to have conveyed the Message, but it would not have been possible for them to have been a model or an example that people could have followed.'

If the Messenger were to have been an angel in its truest sense, you would not have been able to see him and would have required him to appear in human form. But if that were to happen, then you would never know if he was an angel or a human being. So, in the end, it would inevitably come back to him being a human, and that is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: '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)

One of the things the disbelievers suggested to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was that he ask his Lord to send down angels to be with him. This indicates that they wanted some proof of the authenticity of the Prophethood of Muhammad. But he had already brought them a miracle in a field in which they themselves excelled and they had proved incapable of matching him in that, thus proving that what he brought had come from their Almighty Lord.

The meaning of a miracle is to take the place of Allah's Words, 'My servant has spoken the truth in everything that he has conveyed from Me.' And so long as a miracle has come down to affirm the truthfulness of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* can there then be another miracle that is preferable to that one?

The miracle of the Quran was enough in itself to prove the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with respect to what he had conveyed from Allah. In addition to that, he told you of unseen matters that no human being could possibly have told him about, both things that happened before his birth and things that happened after his birth and had not yet then come to pass.

The proof of the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was already there, so why do you suggest to him that he come with other miracles?

As for their words: '... or [why] do we [not] see our Lord?' if there had been a god whom it was possible for you to see, it would not have been correct to term him a god, since the one who is seen is encompassed by the pupil of the one who does the seeing. And if he is encompassed, then that means he is limited and his being is limited and hence this contradicts his being a god.

Take those [abstract] concepts such as truth and justice about which people speak, and to which they fanatically cling and fall upon to solve their problems and make their lives easier for them: can such concepts be perceived with senses? Then how can you make a request to perceive your Creator with your senses?

The True Lord *Glorified is He* concludes this topic with His Words: 'They have certainly become arrogant within themselves and [become] insolent with great insolence.' To be arrogant and proud of oneself is to try to place oneself above one's worth. But the worth of every man among us is defined.

And that is where the proverb, 'Allah *Glorified is He* has mercy on men who know their own self-worth', comes from. So why then do human beings become arrogant? If you were a sound human being, you would feel happiness when you are protected against theft, assault or your private life was safeguarded, so why then do you get angry when we prevent you from doing something similar?

The rational approach would be for you to balance the benefits against the drawbacks: Your hand is prevented - and it is but a single hand - from stealing, but in return everybody else's hands are prevented from stealing from you; the same goes for protecting privacy. So why do you rejoice at the one and become angry at the other? You must judge yourself according to the same logic - if you love what is done for you but hate what is done for others, you are then far-removed from what is right and just.

An example of their arrogance was their opposition to the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he first started calling them to Islam and their saying to him: 'And they said, "Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) So the Quran was irreproachable in their eyes and that is the actual judgement they made of it, for they were a nation gifted with great eloquence and could see that the language and eloquence of the Quran was of the ultimate degree. What really stuck in their throat, though, was the fact that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a man drawn from the general populace. They wanted him to be someone whom they viewed of as being great, so that the one whom they followed would be someone whose social standing made him worthy of being followed.

So, arrogance is considering yourself to be above following someone else whom you see as being below you. But we reject this because they did not view Muhammad as being below them before he became the Messenger. Rather, they raised him up upon a pedestal and called him the truthful trustworthy. So, when was it then that they looked down on him? It was that gift that Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed upon him. It was the Message that caused you to take from him what you used to give him before he became a Messenger.

Did you ever before hear from a Messenger whose Lord accompanied him, saying to his people, 'This is my Messenger'? As long as Allah *Glorified is He* addresses you directly in this way, there is no need for a Messenger, since Allah *Glorified is He* Himself is the One Who personally charges you with what you have to do and so ends the matter. But it is well known that such a thing never happened, so you are asking for something you have never before heard of which proves that you are backward and too proud to accept faith. And because of that, you came with a request you knew was impossible.

So, questions and requests made by the disbelievers stem from their stubbornness and their arrogance to accept the plain truth. They had already, prior to this point, demanded signs and miracles of this sort, but when Allah *Glorified is He* answered them and gave them what they asked for, they rejected it.

Despite the fact that signs and miracles do not appear simply because those to whom they have been sent demand them, rather, it is out of the grace of Allah, Who gave them the Message that they appear.

The arrogance referred to here refers to the kind where one does not have any qualities making him worthy of being great, and yet still seeks to be great. So, the meaning of 'They have certainly become arrogant,' has nothing to do with their own reality or the way they view their own beings. Rather, 'They have certainly become arrogant within themselves' to follow the Messenger. In other words, it is too big a thing for them to follow a man when they see others as being richer than him or better than him (according to what they claim).

So, for example, we see bullies before whom everyone bows and submits, when someone stronger than them comes along, they cower and humble themselves before him because the pride they took in themselves was based

on something they did not have in sufficient quantity and was not their own. So, the one who is arrogant without due cause is heedless of the grandeur of his Lord. If he had been aware of the grandeur of Allah, he would have felt too embarrassed to be arrogant.

We see the people of gnosis and obedience always humbled and broken. Why? That is because they live in constant awareness of the grandeur and greatness of Allah. A human being can never be until he sees everything as being beneath him and nothing remains which is greater than him. So no human being should feel proud of anything unless it is something that is his alone and cannot be taken away from him. If you were to feel proud on account of your wealth, it may be that you will become impoverished; if you were to feel proud on account of your good health, it may be that you will be afflicted by illness; and if you were to feel proud on account of your knowledge, you will not be safe from its being taken from you so that, after having knowledge, you may then know nothing at all.

Part of Allah's Kindness and Mercy to His creation is that He *Glorified is He* alone truly has greatness, and He alone has exaltedness and grandeur. The True Lord *Glorified is He* proclaims, 'Grandeur is my cloak and greatness is my waist-wrapper, and if anyone attempts to wrest one of them from Me, I will put him in the Hell-fire.'⁽¹⁾

The True Lord *Glorified is He* does not do this in order to inflict oppression upon His creation, but rather as a mercy for them. And that is because within creation there are strong people, bullies and rich people - and when these people come to know that absolute greatness and omnipotence is Allah's and Allah's alone, each of them will come to know his own standing and worth (and recognise his own faults). So Allah *Glorified is He* is the sole Great and all of us are equal.

Even if it were conceivable for those who possess the necessary qualifications, such as being strong or wealthy, etc., to be arrogant, it is utterly inconceivable

(1) It is narrated by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2/376, 414, 427 & 442); Abu Dawud in his *Sunnan* (4090); and Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* (4174) in a (Hadith) from Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him.

for arrogance to be found in those who are weak or poor. That is why we find in a (Hadith), 'I hate three things, but my hatred for three others is greater: I hate an arrogant rich man, but my hatred for an arrogant poor man is greater; I hate a miserly poor man, but my hatred for a miserly rich man is greater; and I hate a disobedient young man, but my hatred for a disobedient old man is greater.'⁽¹⁾

As for Allah's Words: '...and [become] insolent with great insolence,' the word *insolent* means that they went to extremes in terms of their wrongdoing and transgression. It is as if these were not enough of a description of them, Allah *Glorified is He* emphasises their rebelling 'with great insolence.' Why does He use so much emphasis in one single expression? Because, they say, they were not simply insolent to each other, but also to the Messenger Muhammad and even to Allah *Glorified is He* Himself. For this reason, they merited such a description and deserved to be described in such emphatic terms.

The insolent or rebellious one is the one whose wrongdoing reaches such a level that he is like a tyrant that swells in size when people fear him, keeps on going, and grows in strength. A tyrant is one whom nobody else is able to oppose or hold his head up firm in his presence.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

يَوْمَ يَرَوْنَ الْمَلَائِكَةَ لَا بُشْرَىٰ يَوْمَئِذٍ لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ وَيَقُولُونَ حِجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا ﴿٢٢﴾

There will be no good news for the guilty on the Day they see the angels. The angels will say, 'You cannot cross the forbidden barrier' [22] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 22)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks here about those who demanded signs from the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked that

(1) From Abu Dharr may Allah be pleased with him that the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, "Allah loves three people and hates three people: He hates an old man who fornicates, a poor man who is conceited and a rich man who is miserly; and He loves three: a man who is part of a battle squadron and lays in wait for the enemy then fights them until either he is killed or Allah has granted him victory; a man who travels with his people by night and then when they make camp at the end of the night..." until the end of the (Hadith). It is narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad and Ibn Hibban. Al-Muttaqi Al-Hindi mentioned it in Muntakhab Al-Kanz (6/387).

angels be sent down with him whom they might see so that those angels might bear witness to the truthfulness of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. So Allah *Glorified is He* says to them, 'You desire to see the angels and you will indeed see them, but somewhere else-not under circumstances where they will be bearing you good news and bringing you good, but under circumstances of humiliation, regret and punishment.'

It will be a fearsome and terrifying sight when you see them on the day they come to collect your souls, or you will see them on the Day of Rising - on that day when they give the news of the punishment that is coming your way.

On the day that they receive the believers with the Words: 'A glad tiding for you today gardens through which running waters flow,' (*al-Hadid*: 12) the disbelievers will long to hear such words, but there will be no way, for 'there will be no glad tiding for those who were lost in sin.' (*al-Furqan*: 22) These beloved words which they had hoped and waited for will be denied, and they will instead be greeted with other words that better befit them.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَدْ مَنَّآ إِلَىٰ مَا عَمِلُوا مِنَّ عَمَلٍ فَجَعَلْنَاهُ هَبَاءً مَّنْثُورًا ﴿٢٣﴾

**And We shall turn to the deeds they have done and
scatter them like dust [23] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 23)**

When you look at those who are not believers, you find amongst them people who act righteously and do good action, and people who are endowed with praiseworthy qualities of character, like those who joined together to form a pact to help the oppressed or those who were endowed with generosity and fed food to the poor. Indeed, among them was one who had such a huge cooking-pot that the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was able to take shelter in its shade on a scorching day. That meant that it was huge, broad, erected, and set in place like a building, and that not just the poor and destitute used to be fed from it, but even the birds and wild animals. Even until the present day we consider Hatim at-Ta'i to be the absolute model of generosity.

And among them were those who maintained their ties of kinship and helped those who were in distress, etc. But these people and those like them

did what they did for the glory of this world - it never even occurred to them that there was Allah *Glorified is He* whose pleasure they should be seeking. Workers only take their wage from those for whom they do the work, as is mentioned in a Qudsi Hadith, 'You did it so that it might be said, and indeed it was said.'⁽¹⁾

The True Lord *Glorified is He* makes this matter most clear when He says: '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; and Allah is swift in account.' (*an-Nur*: 39) And when He says: '...their deeds are like ashes which the wind blows forcefully on a stormy day.' (*Ibrahim*: 18)

These people did many good actions, but they gave no thought to Allah *Glorified is He* when doing so. Rather, they only did what they did out of humanity and so that they might become well known and people might speak of them. So we see those living lives of luxury and abundance, enjoying myriad forms of blessing. But why is that? That is because they have taken hold of the means that Allah *Glorified is He* has created and made use of them with precision and finesse, and Allah *Glorified is He* does not deny any servant the fruits of his own labour, even if he is a disbeliever. Similarly, if a servant becomes lazy and leaves aside the means, Allah *Glorified is He* will deprive him even if he is a believer. There is a huge difference between blessings entailed by Allah's Lordship that extends to both believers and disbelievers alike, regardless of whether they are obedient or disobedient, and blessings entailed by Allah's Divinity.

(1) *It is narrated by Imam Ahmad in his Musnad (2/322); Muslim in his Sahih (1905); and an-Nasa'i in his Sunnan (6/23 & 24) in a (Hadith) from Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him that he heard The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him saying, 'The first man to be judged on the Day of Resurrection will be a man who died a martyr. He will be brought before his Lord where the blessings he received will be made known to him and he will acknowledge them. Then Allah will say, "What did you do with them?" and the man will reply, "I fought for Your sake until I was martyred." So Allah will say, "You lie. You only fought so that it might be said that you were brave and indeed it was said." Then He will command him to be dragged on his face and thrown into the Fire.' And he continued to narrate the (Hadith) in its entirety.*

Among those who disbelieve, there are those who are experts when it comes to taking hold of the means, inventing things that benefit mankind and medicines that cure numerous sorts of illness. These people must receive some sort of recompense for their goodness, but that recompense is paid to them in this world. It takes the form of them being honoured, remembered, and achieving everlasting fame. It takes the form of statues being built in their honour, medals being awarded to them and books being written about them. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* has not rejected their deeds nor disregarded their rights.

Do you not see Abu Lahab who took up such a position of enmity against the Prophet Muhammad that Allah *Glorified is He* revealed about him: "May the hands of Abu Lahab be ruined, and ruined is he. His wealth will not avail him or that which he gained," (*al-Masad*: 1-2), but despite all that, Allah *Glorified is He* will lighten his punishment because of the fact that he freed his servant girl, Thuwayba, when she gave him the good news that Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah had been born; he was so overjoyed by the news she brought.⁽¹⁾

It is strange indeed that these people behave strangely when encountering a human invention merely used for entertainment to the extent of dedicating historical accounts on their inventors and the invention itself, but forget the Creator of the necessities of life that help and enable him to aspire to life's luxuries and conveniences!

Next is the word: 'dust.' Things are distinguishable to human beings because either they are very big in terms of size or because they are close by, but if they are small in size, then it is difficult to see them. So, the thing is hidden from sight because it is small in form - the eye is not able to perceive it. It is for this reason that microscopes and telescopes were invented. Sometimes

(1) *Hafiz ibn Hajr said in Al-'Isaba fi Tamyiz As-Sahaba (8/36), 'Ibn Sa'd said that Al-Waqidi told him that more than one of the people of knowledge said, 'Thuwayba was the nurse-mother of the Messenger of Allah (Muhammad) peace and blessings be upon him. He maintained his ties with her when he was in Mecca, and Khadija may Allah be pleased with her used to honour her when she was in the possession of Abu Lahab and asked him to sell her to her, but he refused. Then, when the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him emigrated, Abu Lahab set her free. The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him used to send her presents and clothing and continued to do so until he received word that she had died in the seventh year upon his return from Khaybar.'*

things are so far away from you that you cannot see them because of their distance from the cone of light, for light starts from a single point and gradually spreads out in the form of a cone. So if you were to look through the hole of a door whose diameter was a centimetre, you would be able to see an area much wider than that. So, when you want to see something small, you magnify it, and when you want to see something far away, you bring it closer.

'Scattered dust' means you are unable to assemble them together because they are scattered about and not stationary, for no matter how much you try to stop the air moving around, you will still see those particles in the light moving around because of how small they are.

If you were to say, 'We see them today manufacturing filters to contain these particles, amass them together, and purify the air. These filters take the form of the pores of a sponge to which the particles are drawn, and so it becomes possible to amass them together.' Then we would say, 'Even accepting the existence of such filters, the size of their pores limits them with respect to the size of the particles they are able to amass and contain. And even supposing that you had amassed them in this filter and then emptied it out and said to me, "These are the motes of dust," we would say in response, "Are you able to return every atom of it to the place where it came from?"'

أَصْحَابُ الْجَنَّةِ يَوْمَئِذٍ خَيْرٌ مُّسْتَقَرًّا وَأَحْسَنُ مَقِيلًا ﴿٢٤﴾

**But the companions in the Garden will have a better
home on that Day, and a fairer place to rest [24]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 24)**

After having described what results from the actions of the disbelievers, the True Lord *Glorified is He* now wants to speak about the recompense that awaits the believers, following His custom in the Quran of mentioning pairs of opposites, each one of which gives rise to the other.

This method of expression happens frequently in the Quran, like in Allah's words: 'Let them, then, laugh a little – for they will weep a lot.' (*at-Tawba*: 82) And: 'Indeed, the righteous will be in pleasure; and indeed, the wicked will be in Hellfire.' (*al-Infitar*: 13-14) In this way, the Quran shows the two opposites

so that you may distinguish between them. So the believer who is in bliss looks at the Hell-fire and its blazing heat and praises Allah *Glorified is He* who saved him from it, and, indeed, that is an even bigger blessing than the first. The disbeliever, on the contrary, when he looks at the bliss of paradise, he feels sadness and sorrow and will know that it is as a consequence of his disbelief that he is to be deprived of that bliss, which makes his punishment harsher. That is why they say that things are known best by their opposites.

As for Allah's words: 'The companions of Paradise, that Day, are [in] a better settlement and better resting place', it is as if paradise is in love with its inhabitants and they are in love with it - feelings of love and companionship have sprung up between them. So, just as you love the place, the place also loves you; and the same goes for hatred. The word 'companions' also indicates possession, since they are never going to leave it, and it is never going to fade away or come to an end.

As for the word 'settlement', human beings do not prefer one place to another to settle in except when one of those places is more peaceful or restful than the other. For example, we leave our rooms when they are very hot to sit in the garden or on the balcony.

And that is why we say, 'When a bit of the earth becomes narrow for you, leave it and go somewhere else, and thereby act in accordance with Allah's words: 'And whoever emigrates for the cause of Allah will find on the earth many [alternative] locations and abundance.' (*an-Nisa'*: 100) And in the words of a poet:

By your life, never has a land become too narrow for its people,

Rather, it is the feelings of its men that have been found narrow

As for the words: '...and better resting place', the Arabic equivalent (*maqil*) is that place where the Arabs spent their siesta time, which is the hour of midday heat when the sun is at its hottest. But can there be siestas in paradise when there is no heat, cold or frost? Resting place refers to a place in which a person occupies himself with matters that are private to him. Do you not see that the True Lord *Glorified is He* when He mentions in the chapter of *an-Nur*, the times in which one must ask leave to enter places at this time

amongst them? He says: '...and whenever you lay aside your garments in the middle of the day,' (*an-Nur*: 58) and commands the young to ask permission before entering at that time since it is one of the times of privacy.

So, a 'settlement' is one thing, and a 'resting place' of repose for personal and mental rest is another thing since you might well settle in a place in the company of another, whereas your resting place of repose is a private place that is specific to you. So, you will have two places in paradise: a public one and a private one. And that is why they say about Allah's words: 'But for he who has feared the position of his Lord are two gardens.' (*ar-Rahman*: 46) 'It refers to a public garden and a private garden, just like you have a place for receiving guests and a place for yourself and your family.'

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَوْمَ تَشَقَّقُ السَّمَاءُ بِالْغَمَمِ وَنُزِّلَ الْمَلَائِكَةُ تَنْزِيلًا ﴿٢٥﴾

**On the Day when the sky and its clouds are split
apart and the angels sent down in streams [25]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 25)**

Previously they had asked Allah *Glorified is He* to send them down some angels, and here the angels come down to them as they wished; only this time it was against their demands and thus they were in despair.


The sky is that preserved raised-up canopy that is erected above us, and which, when we look up at it, we see no gaps or fissures. Look up at the sky when it is clear and you will see that it is totally smooth without a single bulge. Despite its wide expanse with no support, you will see no crookedness therein.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* calls on you to look and reflect. He *Glorified is He* says, 'We will never deceive you - just look at the sky and reflect': 'Then return [your] vision twice again. [Your] vision will return to you humbled while it is fatigued.' (*al-Mulk*: 4) The sky which you see above you so strongly and firmly held together is held in place above you by none other than Allah. It is like when He *Glorified is He* says: '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.' (*Fatir*: 41) He *Glorified is He* says: 'And He

restrains the sky from falling upon the earth, unless by His permission.' (*al-Hajj*: 65) So, there is permission for the sky to fall upon the earth and for it to be split open and changed, as Allah *Glorified is He* Himself says: '[His promise will be fulfilled] on the Day when the earth shall be changed into another earth, as shall be the heavens.' (*Ibrahim*: 48)

He *Glorified is He* says about the sky splitting open in the Hereafter: 'When the sky is split asunder, obeying its Lord, as in truth it must.' (*al-Inshiqaq*: 1-2) Here, He *Glorified is He* says: 'And [mention] the Day when the heaven will split open with [emerging] clouds.' It will crack open and clouds will descend upon the earth out of its cracks. Clouds are also mentioned in Allah's words: 'Do they await but that Allah should come to them in covers of clouds and the angels [as well].' (*al-Baqara*: 210)

As for Allah's words: '...and the angels will be sent down in successive descent' (*al-Furqan*: 25), they indicate the power with which they descend to carry out their task of separating things on the occasion of the Resurrection.


 الْمَلِكُ يَوْمَئِذٍ الْحَقُّ لِلرَّحْمَنِ وَكَانَ يَوْمًا عَلَى الْكَافِرِينَ عَسِيرًا

**On that Day, true authority belongs to the Lord of
Mercy. It will be a grievous Day for the disbelievers [26]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 26)**

This world is set up in such a way that Allah *Glorified is He* grants some of His creation sovereignty over other parts of His creation, as He says: 'Say, "O Allah, Owner of Sovereignty, You give sovereignty to whom You will and You take sovereignty away from whom You will."' (*Al-Imran*: 26) Owner of sovereignty is that you possess or have power over those who themselves have possessions, and that is something that Allah *Glorified is He* only grants to those whom He *Glorified is He* wills from within His own kingdom; like when He *Glorified is He* granted it to the one who argued with Abraham *peace be upon him*: 'Have you not considered the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord [merely] because Allah had given him kingship?' (*al-Baqara*: 258)

This is the way things are in this world. As for the Hereafter, there is no ownership or kingship for anyone. They have been taken away from everyone

on that Day, as sovereignty and kingship belong to Allah *Glorified is He* alone: 'To whom belongs [all] sovereignty this Day? It belongs to Allah, the One, the Prevailing.' (*Ghafir*: 16)

So, the sovereignty that you possess in this world is a sovereignty that is not permanent or lasting, for it is all too quickly taken away from you. Once, a man said to the Caliph, 'If sovereignty were to have been granted on a permanent basis to another than you, you would never have got your hands on it yourself.' Sovereignty is not something that is inherently yours. No, your sovereignty falls totally within the sovereignty of Allah, the One to whom sovereignty belongs. His is the true sovereignty, for it is permanent and lasting, never fading and never being transferred to another.

Even if kingship in this world is transferred from one person to another, all kingships and sovereignty is concentrated together in the hand of the True Lord *Glorified is He* on the Day of Resurrection. The concentration of kingship and power in a single person is something that is abhorrent to us in this world, since we all dislike monopolies and dictatorships which place all the power in the hands of a single individual.

But even if such a thing is disliked in this world, it is praiseworthy with respect to Allah because when it is concentrated in the hands of a single person in this world, that person is controlled by his whims and desires, whereas, in the Hereafter, it is in the hands of Allah.

Mercy in this world is when sovereignty and power are divided up, while mercy in the Hereafter is when they are concentrated together into the hands of Allah: 'True sovereignty that Day, is for the Most Merciful.' All sovereignty being concentrated in Allah *Glorified is He* is one of the main ways in which His Mercy to us is made manifest, so do not take that as being an example of monopoly or tyranny, for it is in the hand of the Most Merciful.

It is as if the True Lord is seeking to set your mind at rest: 'Do not worry,' He says, 'On the Day of Resurrection, sovereignty will not be in the hands of anyone whose power you fear to be under. Rather, sovereignty on that day will be the right of the Most Merciful.'

It is something permanent and never changes, and as long as it remains constant and does not change, it can never be conflicting or contradictory. If a

man were to tell you about something that happened in his life and you were to ask him to repeat it to you, he would repeat it to you a thousand times without changing his story in any way. Why? That is because his words are guided by the realities that he has witnessed. But if he were to be lying, then there would be nothing to guide his words, and it is inevitable that his story would change from one telling to another. And that is why it is said, 'If you are going to lie, then make sure your memory is good.'

Additionally, on account of His being the Most Merciful, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And it will be upon the disbelievers a difficult Day.' He is thereby alerting us to the danger before it has befallen us. The fact that our Lord advises us and sets us right is a great mercy for us, since if He had not done so, it would have been very difficult for us when the punishment took us by surprise.

Then if you remember the reverse, you will say that it is easy on the believers. My dear fellow, aspire to be one of those for whom things are made easy and not one of those for whom things are made distressful and difficult.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَوْمَ يَعَضُّ الظَّالِمُ عَلَى يَدَيْهِ يَقُولُ يَلَيْتَنِي أَخَذْتُ مَعَ الرَّسُولِ سَبِيلًا ﴿٢٧﴾

**On that Day the evildoer will bite his own hand and say,
'If only I had taken the same path as the Messenger[27]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 27)**

There are a number of days which these verses mention: '[The day they see the angels - no good tidings will there be that day for the criminals,' and '... [mention] the Day when the heaven will split open with [emerging] clouds,' and 'True sovereignty, that Day, is for the Most Merciful,' and '...the Day the wrongdoer will bite on his hands.' They are all describing the same day - the Day of Resurrection.

A wrongdoer is one who takes what rightfully belongs to another. The True Lord *Glorified is He* clarifies for us what this evildoing is when He *Glorified is He* says: 'And they wronged Us not - but they were [only] wronging themselves.' (*al-Baqara*: 57)

They are unable to harm or do evil against Allah *Glorified is He* or against the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The word of Allah *Glorified is He* and His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will always be uppermost, and the religion of Allah *Glorified is He* will in the end be victorious. But despite that, Allah *Glorified is He* takes them to task for doing evil against themselves. What a tolerant God, doing that with those who disobey Him!

Even when disbelievers on the surface do evil to others, they are in fact doing evil to themselves since they place themselves in a position of responsibility for those evil acts they perpetrate. So, if mankind were to investigate evildoing, they would find that it always falls back on the wrongdoer himself. When a wrongdoer sees what the consequences of his evildoing will be, and sees first-hand the recompense he will receive for doing what he did, he will bite his hands in regret and despair. There are different levels to biting, depending upon the level of fright that a person feels. In another part of the Quran, He *Glorified is He* says: '...but when they find themselves alone, they bite their fingers in rage against you.' (*Al-'Imran*: 119)

Biting fingers in frustration or rage is something that people are known to do when they find themselves in places in which it is difficult for them to move around. People bite their fingers in a manner that is appropriate to the place or appropriate to the event that has befallen them. If what has happened to them is more serious than that, then it is more appropriate for him to bite his entire hand and not just his fingers, and if it is more serious still, then he bites both hands together; and that is what happens in the verse before us: 'And the Day the wrongdoer will bite on his hands.' The position in which they find themselves in this verse is one of despair and regret for opportunities they let slip and will never see again, sins they committed and will never be able to be set right. They punish themselves before the punishment has even come upon them. They bite both their hands together. The thing they have seen is terrifying in the extreme, and so they bite both their hands, and the only ones who punish themselves in a way such as this are those who despair of ever being saved.

Then He *Glorified is He* clarifies the reason for that: '...he will say, "Oh, I wish I had taken with the Messenger a way.'" Even though this verse was revealed about a particular event and a particular person, it still applies to everyone who does that. Hence, consideration is paid to the general way in

which it is worded and not the specific reason for which it is revealed. This is the recompense that every wrongdoer who strays from the right path receives.

This verse was revealed about an event that concerned two people⁽¹⁾: 'Uqba ibn Abu Mu'it⁽²⁾, who was a generous man – who used to feed people – and who had, on more than one occasion, invited the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to eat with him, although the Prophet had declined and said, 'I cannot come and eat with you until you bear witness that there is no god [worthy of worship] but Allah *Glorified is He* and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.' Then, after the man had borne witness to the two articles of faith, the Messenger of Allah visited him and ate his food. That angered Umayya ibn Khalaf, one of the companions of 'Uqba, greatly and so he said to him, 'You have turned, 'Uqba!' 'Uqba replied, 'I only said that because I wanted Muhammad to eat at my house like everyone else does.' So Umayya said, 'Nothing will absolve you in my eyes until you go to Muhammad in the House of Assembly, step on his neck and spit on him, etc.' So 'Uqba did what his companion had told him to do⁽³⁾ and that was when this verse was revealed. The 'way here means saying, 'There is no god [worthy of worship] but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.'

Then He says:

يَوَيْلَ لِيَ لَيْتَنِي لَمْ أَتَّخِذْ فُلَانًا خَلِيلًا ﴿٢٨﴾

Woe is me! If only I had not taken so and so as a friend [28] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 28)

'Woe' means destruction, so he is calling for his own destruction here. People do not ask for their own destruction except when the punishment to

(1) It is narrated by Al-Wahidi An-Nisaburi in *Asbab An-Nuzul* (p. 191). Ibn Kathir said in his *Tafsir* (3/317), 'Regardless of whether the reason the verse was revealed about 'Uqba ibn Abu Mu'it or some other wretched soul, it still applies to every wrongdoer.'

(2) The story of 'Uqba ibn Abu Mu'it's invitation to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to eat with him after he pretended to be a Muslim.

(3) Ad-Dahhak said, 'When 'Uqba spat in the face of the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* his spit bounced back into his face and split into two parts each of which burnt one of his cheeks. And those burn marks remained with him until the day he died.' Al-Wahidi narrated this in *Asbab An-Nuzul* (p. 192).

which they are subjected is worse than being destroyed. It is like one of them said: Worse than illness is that which takes illness away. And also like what a poet said:

It is enough of a malady for you to see death as your only cure
and it is enough of a death that it is that which you wish for.⁽¹⁾

Given that the matter was one that was greater than him and more than he could endure, he called out, 'O woe is me, come to me, [death] - it is time for you to release me from the torment in which I find myself.'

As for the words: 'I wish,' it is asking for something desirable that there is no way of ever getting. It is like the unattainable wish expressed by a poet when he said:

I wish the planets were brought close to me so that I could arrange them
into a necklace of praise, for words alone do not suffice to praise you.
And by another when he said:

I wish that my youth could one day come back to me,
so that I might tell it what old age has done.

As for the word '*one*,' you use it to allude to a person whose name you do not want to mention. So here, 'Uqba ibn Abu Mu'it did not say, 'I wish I had not taken Umayya ibn Khalaf as a friend, but rather said 'so-and-so' instead because he despised him so much that he could not even mention his name.

As for 'a friend,' its meaning is friendship that is mutual and requited. About this matter, a poet said:

When we met, longing made every effort to bring close
Two friends who have melted away with lovesickness and blame,
It is as if one friend, in the course of their embrace
were seeping into the cracks of the other and disappearing from sight.

(1) This line is from the famous poem of Al-Mutanabbi (in his Diwan, 4/281). Shihab Ad-Din Mahmud Al-Halabi in his book, *Husn At-Tawassul ila sana'at At-Tarassul* (252) in the section entitled *Husn Al-Ibtida'at*.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the reason for that saying:

لَقَدْ أَضَلَّنِي عَنِ الذِّكْرِ بَعْدَ إِذْ جَاءَنِي وَكَانَ
الشَّيْطَانُ لِلْإِنْسَانِ خَذُولًا ﴿٢٩﴾

He led me away from the Revelation after it reached me.

Satan has always betrayed mankind [29]

(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 29)

The meaning of 'deserter' is that someone forsakes you in some matter after first raising your hopes that he will be there for you. So, when the time comes that you are in need of him, he abandons you and leaves you to your own devices.

And that is exactly what Satan (Iblis) does to his friends, as has been mentioned in other verses, such as: '[The hypocrites are] like the example of Satan when he says to man, "Disbelieve." But when he disbelieves, he says, "Indeed, I am disassociated from you. Indeed, I fear Allah, Lord of the worlds."' (*al-Hashr*: 16) In another verse: 'And [remember] when Satan made their deeds pleasing to them and said, "No one can overcome you today from among the people, and indeed, I am your protector."' (*al-Anfal*: 48)

Furthermore, he says to his followers: 'It is not for me to respond to your cries, nor for you to respond to mine.' (*Ibrahim*: 22) Then, when they say to him you misguided us and led us astray, he replies: 'Yet I had no power at all over you.' (*Ibrahim*: 22) I had no proof with which I convinced you or any power to force or compel you to obey me. Rather, you were simply advised: 'I but called you – and you responded unto me.' (*Ibrahim*: 22) Then the True Lord says about his Messenger, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*:

وَقَالَ الرَّسُولُ يَرْبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي اتَّخَذُوا هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ مَهْجُورًا ﴿٣٠﴾

**And The Messenger has said, 'Lord, my people
treat this Quran as something to be shunned' [30]**

(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 30)

The (*people*) of a person are his family, close relatives and those who live with him and gather with him, either with respect to place or with respect to

religion. They are called '*people*' because they are the ones who stand together to command things. In Allah's words: '...my people have taken this Quran as [a thing] abandoned,' He *Glorified is He* used the possessive pronoun in 'my people' because he is from them - they know him and know where he comes from, and were witness to his truthfulness, honesty and good character before he received his mission. Therefore, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not strange or unidentified to his people. Even if they are not prepared to believe in him as a Messenger, they should, as knowing his prior history, have faith in him as a model of good character.

Accordingly, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* did not need a clue or a miracle confirming the prophethood of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Conversely, he merely believed in Muhammad's Messengership once he proclaimed it. Abu Bakr admitted that as long as Muhammad proclaimed Messengership, so he told the truth. This credibility was not due to any miracle, but rather, because of his good character and sublime traits. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has never been encountered lying to any creation ever before; hence, he would never lie about the Creator.

Likewise, Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* did not wait for a clue to prove his prophethood. On the contrary, just as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* proclaimed prophethood is just as she supported and believed him. Additionally, she allayed his fears and said: 'By Allah, He *the Exalted* will never desert you, for you maintain your ties of kinship, bear others' burdens⁽¹⁾ and help the destitute.'⁽²⁾

'... Be shunned ...' (*al-Furqan*: 30) means that the disbelievers cut the ties that linked them to the Quran. Thus, they cut themselves off from the Quran and from Muhammad's Message, as they denied and disobeyed all certain proofs related to matters of belief and to Divine rulings. Therefore, they rejected the Quran with respect to all these matters: doctrines of belief, acts of worship and verification of the prophecy of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

(1) 'Bear other's burdens' means to help those who are weighed down, by giving money to the weak, the orphan or to dependants. It is cited in an-Nawawi's commentary on Muslim (2/561) and Fath Al-Bari of Al-Asqalani (1/24)

(2) The Hadith is narrated in Sahih Al-Bukhari (3) and in six other places of his Sahih; as well as in Sahih Muslim (160), excerpted from the Hadith of 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her*.

If the Arabs had truly understood Allah's words: 'For it is a reminder for you and your people...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 44), they would have glorified the Quran and held fast to it. It is the Quran that has unified them, protected their Arabic language, and built up their reputation worldwide. But for the unifying language of the Quran, every Arabic country would have made its own particular national dialect to be a different language, and the Arabic language would have disappeared completely.

It is noticed that various peoples all over the Arabic nation speak in their own incomprehensible particular dialect. But for the unifying classical Arabic, the language of the Quran that linked all these dialects together, each of them would have segregated to a separate language, such as what has happened with the old Latin language that developed later on into French, Italian, Deutsch and English. Despite the fact that they all originated from a single language, each has its specific and distinctive rules since they had no Divine Book to unify them together.

For that reason, Allah *the Almighty* alerts the Arabs that the Quran is the source of might, honour and renown that will build up their fame and reputation. But without it, Arabs would have faded into obscurity just like all preceding unidentified nations and civilisations.

Consequently, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'If you believe in my Message, then you will be rewarded both in this world and in the Hereafter, but if you deny it, then I will wait patiently until Allah *Glorified is He* judges between us'.⁽¹⁾

وَكَذَلِكَ جَعَلْنَا لِكُلِّ نَبِيٍّ عَدُوًّا مِّنَ الْمُجْرِمِينَ وَكَفَىٰ بِرَبِّكَ هَادِيًّا وَنَصِيرًا ﴿٣١﴾

But We have always appointed adversaries from the wicked, for every prophet: Your Lord is sufficient guide and helper [31] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 31)

If messengers did not have enemies, they would not have been dispatched; if everyone was expected to believe in the messengers from the very beginning,

(1) This is mentioned by Ibn Hisham in *As-Sira An-Nabawiya* (1/296), excerpted from the speech of the delegation of the disbelievers of Quraysh to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

then why would they have been sent? Messengers were not dispatched except when corruption and depravity engulfed and pervaded the society, just as physicians who do not come except when illness or disease has struck the patient.

The people of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had enjoyed dominance and high social standing, but Islam came to make them equal to other brackets of the society and took away the supremacy that they enjoyed. Thus, it was inevitable for them to adopt the hostile attitude towards this religion. This habitual hostility continued as long as Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was living among them. Actually, hostilities towards prophets were regularly familiar; there has not been a dispatched prophet without enemies, even though all previous prophets, save Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were sent to a particular people for a limited period of time, whereas the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is universal, in terms of both time and place. Accordingly, hostility towards him corresponded to the prevalence and universality of his Message in both place and time, from then until the Day of Resurrection. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was equipped to be psychologically prepared to face that.

The Arabic singular word '*aduww*' is used to refer to one, two or even many adversaries, such as when Allah *Glorified is He* quotes the words of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: 'Verily, these [false deities] are my '*aduww* (enemies); not so the Lord of the Worlds' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 77).

Allah *the Exalted* also says in chapter of *al-Kahf*: '... Are you [people] going to take him and his offspring as your masters instead of Me, even though they are your '*aduww* (enemies)?...' (*al-Kahf*: 50) In both these verses, Allah *the Almighty* uses the singular form '*aduww*' referring to the plural meaning of 'enemies' instead of the Arabic plural form *a'daa*'.

In other verses, Allah *Glorified is He* uses the plural form *a'daa*', such as: '... Remember Allah's favour to you: you were *a'daa*' (enemies) and then He brought your hearts together...' (*Al-Imran*: 103) If this issue simply refers to a linguistic rule, then Allah *Glorified is He* would have used the singular form '*aduww*' in all the verses. In the last verse, why does the Arabic transcript of the Quran turn aside from using the singular form in favour of the plural one?

If the hostility represents one particular type of enmity, then the Arabic singular form '*aduww*' is used for one, two or even many enemies. However, if there are a number of different types of hostility such as if a person displays enmity against someone else on account of his nobility, another on account of his knowledge and a third on account of his wealth, then the Arabic plural form '*adaa*' is used in order to indicate the different causes of the enmity. To sum up, concerning matters related to belief or certainty in Allah *Glorified is He* the enmity of the disbelievers is of one particular type; however, in matters related to this world, there are various types of hostilities where each person could be an adversary for whatever reason contravening his whim.

Considering the verse: '... Whether you eat in your own houses, or those of your fathers, your mothers... or [the house] of your friend...' (*an-Nur*: 61), it is noted that everything is in the plural form except for the word 'friend,' which is singular. The friendship between believers should only be for the sake of one reference, i.e. for the sake of Allah *Glorified is He*.

As Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'Whoever embodies the following three qualities will have the sweetness (delight) of faith: that Allah *Glorified is He* and His Messenger are more beloved to him than everything else, that his love for other persons be solely for the sake of Allah *Glorified is He* and that he would hate to return to disbelief as much as he would hate to be thrown into the Fire'.⁽¹⁾ Accordingly, if all your friends love you for the sake of Allah *Glorified is He* then they are all considered one friend.

Afterwards, Allah mentions the obstinacy of the adversaries of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who regard this Quran as something that should be discarded and who adopt an attitude of stubbornness, offensiveness and scorn towards him.

In the verse under discussion, Allah refers to the wicked adversaries, i.e. those who commit sins, such as acts of disobedience and wrong actions. He *the Almighty* only discloses to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that his enemies are wicked and are great in number, to be spiritually prepared

(1) *The Hadith is narrated in Sahih Al-Bukhari (16), as well as in Sahih Muslim (43). Both of them transmitted it in their respective Book of Iman (Faith) from the Hadith narrated by Anas ibn Malik.*

to face them and to bear their abuse. This resembles the immunisations administered for people to counter diseases.

It is Just as Churchill, the British leader, who governed during the Second World War, used to exaggerate and overemphasise threats posed against his troops to spiritually prepare them to be able to face any probable severe hardships so that whatever difficulties came their way, they were anticipating greater difficulties to come, so that they were always ready.

As for Allah's saying: '... Your Lord is sufficient guide and helper' (*al-Furqan*: 31), it means that He *the Almighty* is going to guide the Prophet to the Right Path through which he will gain victory over all these wicked people. It was aforementioned that when Al-Faruq 'Umar Allah be pleased with him heard Allah's verse: 'Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee' (*al-Qamar*: 45), he exclaimed, 'What forces are these?' In fact, he was amazed how they would be able to defeat the disbelievers though they were not even able to defend themselves so that they were always armed with weapons even during sleep, fearing from any enemy who might come and snatch them away. As the Battle of Badr took place, the disbelievers were defeated and their leaders were killed, 'Umar said, 'Allah *Glorified is He* speaks the truth': 'Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee' (*al-Qamar*: 45).⁽¹⁾

This only happened as Allah *Glorified is He* guides his Prophet towards the means for victory. Allah grants victory by means of something, and also by its opposite. When the most ferocious, disbelieving leaders, the rich and the powerful people of Quraysh, gathered at Badr, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Mecca has sent you its flesh and blood (best beloved sons)!'⁽²⁾

(1) It is narrated in *Tafsir Ibn Kathir* on the authority of Ibn Abu Hatim (4/266) that 'Ikrima said, 'When 'Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee' (*al-Qamar*: 45), was revealed, 'Umar Allah be pleased with him said, "What forces are these!" Then 'Umar Allah be pleased with him said, "Then, on the day of the Battle of Badr, I saw the Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him leap into his armour and say, "Their forces will be routed and they will turn tail and flee" (*al-Qamar*: 45), and it was only then that I understood the meaning of that verse.'

(2) It is narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in *Dala'il An-Nubuwwa* (3/43), and mentioned by Ibn Hisham in *As-Sira An-Nabawiya* (2/617) on the authority of 'Urwa ibn Az-Zubayr.

All disbelievers went out in full readiness for war, whereas the believers were weak, few in number and ill equipped; however, Allah *Glorified is He* granted them victory. Allah *the Almighty* reassured Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the believers: ‘... How often a small force has defeated a large army with Allah’s permission!’ (*al-Baqara*: 249) Moreover, He says: ‘And the ones who support Our cause will be the winners!’ (*as-Saffat*: 173) He also says: ‘Do they not see how We come to [their] land and shrink its borders?’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 41) That is Allah gradually decreases the area of disbelief and increases that of belief on earth. He *the Almighty* tells about matters that require real-life events to take place, and then their occurrences serve to confirm these matters.

Successively, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لَوْلَا نُزِّلَ عَلَيْهِ الْقُرْآنُ جُمْلَةً وَاحِدَةً
كَذَلِكَ لِنُثَبِّتَ بِهِ فُؤَادَكَ وَرَتَّلْنَاهُ تَرْتِيلًا

The disbelievers also say, ‘Why was the Quran not sent down to him all at once?’ We sent it in this way to strengthen your heart [Prophet]; We gave it to you in gradual revelation [32]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 32)

This is another fallacious pretext for their disbelief; however, how could they ask for all of the Quran to be sent down in one go, while they were unable to even produce a single verse? This simply referred to their quarrelsomeness, sophistry and complete lack of evidence that caused them to object to the Quran being sent down in gradual revelation.⁽¹⁾

Consequently, they did not have any objections to the Quran *per se*. The only defect of the Quran was that it had been sent down specifically to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and that it had been

(1) ‘In gradual revelation’ means that it was revealed in separate individual parts, verse by verse, according to the events and the reasons of revelation of each verse. Ibn Kathir said in his *Tafsir* (3/318), ‘An-Nasa’i narrated on the authority of Ibn ‘Abbas Allah be pleased with him “The Quran was sent down all in one go to the Nearest Heaven on the Night of Glory. Then it was sent down gradually after that, over the course of twenty years.”’

revealed sporadically. They assumed that their belief could bear the Quran having been sent down in a single go!

As Allah *the Exalted* says: ‘... In this way...’ (*al-Furqan*: 32); He sent it down in this manner in parts according to circumstances and due to the wisdom mentioned in the same verse: ‘... To strengthen your heart [Prophet] thereby...’ (*al-Furqan*: 32). In the course of 23 years, the more the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would be subjected to various aggravated situations, the more parts of the Quran were sent down to console and strengthen him. This gradual revelation represented a continuous uninterrupted connection between the Prophet Muhammad and the Heaven. If the Quran were to have been sent down in one single go, then the Prophet Muhammad would have only been supported and reassured once, regardless of all other traumatic events affecting him and without any further strengthening accompanying them. Undoubtedly, the connection to the Heaven reinforces the Message and strengthens faith.

Furthermore, if the Quran were to have been sent down in one single go, then it could not have been able to answer their unceasing inquiries about various matters mentioned in the Quran. Hence, its gradual revelation was necessitated by the wisdom of Allah *the Almighty* in supporting the Prophet Muhammad in all hard times.

As for Allah’s saying: ‘... We gave it to you in gradual revelation’ (*al-Furqan*: 32), it means that the Quran is sent down gradually in parts; each part corresponds to a particular event. Whenever a revealed part was sent down, people were able to memorise and rehearse the part in the prayer.

وَلَا يَأْتُونَكَ بِمَثَلٍ إِلَّا جِئْنَاكَ بِالْحَقِّ وَأَحْسَنَ تَفْسِيرًا ﴿٣٣﴾

**They cannot put any argument to you without Our
bringing you the truth and the best explanation [33]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 33)**

‘Argument’ is their inconceivable presumptions mentioned in Allah’s saying: ‘... Why was the Quran not sent down to him all at once? ...’ (*al-Furqan*: 32) As well, their words quoted in the Quran: ‘... Why was this Quran not sent

down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) Thus, the ‘argument’ is the implausible things that the disbelievers ask for. If Allah *Glorified is He* were to have answered their requests, they would have denied and repudiated their own words, just as Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Jews: ‘The foolish people will say, “What has turned them away from the prayer direction they used to face?”...’ (*al-Baqara*: 142) Notwithstanding, they said the same as the Quran mentioned them as having said. Was there not any disbeliever who pays attention to the mention of his people in the Quran to warn them not to utter the same saying to put Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in an embarrassing situation? Thereby, but for their inattentiveness to the mention of their same-uttered words in the Quran, they could have alleged that the Quran is telling lies and this could have enabled them to refute its truthfulness.

الَّذِينَ يُحْشَرُونَ عَلَىٰ وُجُوهِهِمْ إِلَىٰ جَهَنَّمَ أُولَٰئِكَ سُوءُ مَكَانًا وَأَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٣٤﴾

**It is those driven [falling], on their faces, to Hell who
will be in the worst place – they are the furthest from
the right path [34] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 34)**

The pronoun ‘those’ refers collectively to a group of well-known persons who took up the position of enmity against Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Among them was the person who previously said: ‘... “If only I had taken the same path as the Messenger. Woe is me! If only I had not taken so and so as a friend”’ (*al-Furqan*: 27-28).

The word ‘driven’ refers to the people who are to be gathered for reckoning upon their faces. Thus, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was asked as this verse was revealed, ‘How can they walk on their faces?’ The Messenger replied, ‘The One Who empowers them to walk on their feet, makes them walk on their faces’.⁽¹⁾

(1) It was narrated by Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him that a man said, ‘O Prophet, will Allah gather (drive) the disbelievers on their faces on the Day of Resurrection?’ Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, ‘Is not Allah, He who makes them walk on their feet in this world able to make them walk on their faces on the Day of Resurrection?’ (Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* [4760 & 6523] as well as by Muslim in his *Sahih* [2806] in *Kitab Sifat Al-Munafiqin*.)

The person who walks on his face is just like the one who walks on his belly. Conceivably, he is being dragged along, whether on his face or on any other part of his body. However, in any case, it is improper for anyone to ask about matters related to Allah's Absolute Power. Allah *the Almighty* clarifies this in His saying: 'And Allah created each animal out of [its own] fluid: some of them crawl on their bellies, some walk on two legs, and some on four. Allah creates whatever He will; Allah has power over everything.' (*an-Nur*: 45)

Subsequently, the movement of creation is not limited to the known concept of walking on foot, but rather, it depends on Allah's Limitless and Absolute Power over everything.

Elsewhere, it is asked why the Quran does not mention the names of those wrongdoers hostile to Islam. The opponent is given free reins to have his full choice. The Arabic word for 'reins' has two meanings according to the diacritical mark on the first letter: it either refers to the clouds in the sky or the reins of the horse.

By loosening the reins of the horse, the horse rider enables it to choose whichever direction it wants. Likewise, Allah *the Almighty* gives the opponents free reins to express their thoughts freely and to be attracted to their viewpoints willingly. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* has taught His Messenger how to discuss with them calmly and in the kindest way. As they alleged that he was a liar and that the Quran was fabricated and made-up, Allah *the Almighty* says: 'Or do they say, "He has devised it?" Say, "Then produce a chapter like it"...' (*Yunus*: 38).

Afterwards, Allah *the Exalted* goes on with arguments against them: 'If [these disbelievers] say, "He has made this up," say [Muhammad], "If I have made this up, I am responsible for my own crime, but I am innocent of the crimes you commit."' (*Hud*: 35) Additionally, He *the Exalted* says: '... [One party of us] must be rightly guided and the other clearly astray.' (*Saba*: 24)

Did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not know which party was guided from those who were in misguidance? Unquestionably, he loosens the reins for his opponents. In such verse, he was telling them that they are diametrically opposed to him, as he speaks about one deity, whereas they deny this. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* told

them that they were at odds in this matter, while truth has only one face, so either he is or they are rightly guided, where he did not claim truth for himself. So, they are required to exercise their intellects to distinguish which of them is rightly guided and which is astray. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would not have left the judgement to them unless he was confident that they would know for certain that he was on the side of truth, if they got rid of their personal whims and caprices. Thus, despite the fact that the disbelievers of Quraysh stubbornly opposed and subjected Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to all sorts of abuses, the Quran only refers to them in general terms, using the word 'those' and abandoned alerting them from punishment. Thereby, this demonstrates the courteousness of the call of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to them. This is a way of winning the affection of the opponents and cutting away any grounds for being quarrelsome or obstinate.

Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* addresses His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'By an act of Mercy from Allah, you [Prophet] were gentle in your dealings with them...' (*Al-Imran*: 159). Allah tells the Prophet Muhammad that his gentleness with them was not merely an outcome of his innate character because their stubborn obstinacy and mistreatment would have made his kind nature turn hard against them. However, this kindness was due to the Mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* that encompassed and made him tolerant with them: '... Had you been harsh and fierce of heart, they would have dispersed from about you...' (*Al-Imran*: 159).

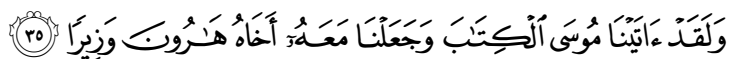
This means that any preacher calling others to Allah *Glorified is He* should be both openhearted and patient because he turns disbelievers away from their accustomed misguidance to the faith that they hate. Thus, he can never succeed in enticing them by an unpleasant aggressive manner because he, consequently, brings down upon them two hardships at the same time. Nevertheless, he should treat them kindly, just as Allah *Glorified is He* has commanded Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them*, to call the Pharaoh to the Right Path: 'Speak to him gently so that he may take heed, or show respect.' (*Ta Ha*: 44) The deeply entrenched stubborn and obstinate person, who not only sees himself as being greater than his fellow creatures, but also claims

divinity and considers himself as being greater than the Creator, should be tackled in a gentle and kind manner.

In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* teaches His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the technique to argue with the disbelievers. He *the Exalted* says: ‘Say, “You will not be questioned about our sins”...’ (*Saba*: 25). It is inconceivable that the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* would commit a sin! Moreover, Allah quotes the Prophet Muhammad’s saying: ‘...Nor will we be questioned about what you do,’ (*Saba*: 25) though the logical progression of the argument required him to say, ‘Nor shall we be questioned about the sins you committed.’ But instead, he ascribed the act of committing sins exclusively to himself alone, without ascribing it to the disbelievers. There is no greater kindness or gentleness attracting the sympathy of others than this.

Allah *the Almighty* brings up all these matters in order to prove that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spared no effort in trying to guide his people to faith and to believe in Allah. Indeed, he was so concerned about them that he shouldered a heavier burden than that imposed on him by Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘But [Prophet] are you going to worry yourself to death over them if they do not believe in this message?’ (*al-Kahf*: 6) Moreover, Allah poses a similar question on His Messenger: ‘[Prophet], are you going to worry yourself to death because they will not believe?’ (*ash-Shu’ara*: 3) It means that the Prophet Muhammad is completely exhausting himself in his attempts to guide the disbelievers, whereas his only task is to deliver the Message. Allah says this because He witnesses the huge concern and the intense desire of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* towards his people to be guided. Allah says: ‘... It is those... Who will be in the worst place— they are the furthest from the right path.’ (*al-Furqan*: 34) He *the Almighty* says ‘worst place’ rather than the comparative form, ‘more evil place’ to refute any connotation that the other side also had some evil. Moreover, this is another example of giving the opponent free reins.

Afterwards, Allah *the Almighty* relates the stories of the previous peoples:



**We gave Moses the Book and appointed his brother
Aaron to help him[35] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 35)**

As previously mentioned in Allah's saying: 'But We have always appointed adversaries from the wicked, for every prophet...' (*al-Furqan*: 31). Every prophet should have enemies. This refers to the fact that they came to maintain the balance of high moral standards that had been ferociously disturbed by the wicked autocrats and the corrupted vicious people who would be deprived from the fruits of their immorality. Accordingly, they were expected to stand up against the call of their prophets.

Hence, Allah *the Almighty* in the verse under discussion illustrates examples from the lives of previous messengers to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This verse infers that Allah *the Almighty* soothes and asks Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to endure appalling hardships in the course of his call to the disbelievers who deny the presence of a deity, whereas Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in his call to Allah, was hurt by people who fabricated that he himself is a deity. Therefore, Allah notifies Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that there are other prophets who have suffered greater hardships in the course of their call to the extent that made Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* despite being a Prophet and a Messenger, felt that it was so difficult for him to carry out his mission on his own.

In view of that, he says: 'My brother Harun (Aaron) is more eloquent than I: send him with me to help me and confirm my words...' (*al-Qasas*: 34). This means that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* knew the appalling hardship and the onerous task with which he was charged.

In all previous Messages, messengers were sent to a definite people for a limited time, yet they encountered all sorts of hardships. As for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who has been sent with a universal, everlasting, and unlimited Message, it is inevitable that the hardships faced will be equal to all those adversities of previous messengers put together.

فَقُلْنَا أَذْهَبًا إِلَى الْقَوْمِ الَّذِينَ كَذَبُوا بِآيَاتِنَا فَدَمَّرْنَاهُمْ تَدْمِيرًا ﴿٣٦﴾

**We said, ‘Go, both of you, to the people who have rejected Our signs.’ Later We destroyed those people utterly [36]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 36)**

The two persons addressed by Allah in this verse are; Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them*. In continuing the strategy of giving the opponents free reins, Allah *the Exalted* sends them both: ‘... To the people who have rejected Our signs’ (*al-Furqan*: 36) in spite of the presence of someone among them who claimed divinity for himself. The Pharaoh rejected Allah’s signs because he disbelieved in a single deity. The conclusion of the verse: ‘...Later We destroyed those people utterly’ (*al-Furqan*: 36) relates their unpleasant end due to the enmity against Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them*. Thus, a battle took place between them where Allah *the Almighty* helped the believers and destroyed the disbelievers utterly. Allah *the Almighty* is soothing and telling Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that if they swerve aside from the Right Path and disobey him, then their end will be the same as this one.

وَقَوْمَ نُوحٍ لَمَّا كَذَبُوا الرُّسُلَ أَغْرَقْنَاهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ
لِلنَّاسِ آيَةً ۖ وَأَعْتَدْنَا لِلظَّالِمِينَ عَذَابًا أَلِيمًا ﴿٣٧﴾

**The people of Noah, too: when they rejected their messengers,
We drowned them and made them an example to all people.
We have prepared a painful torment for the evildoers [37]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 37)**

Allah *the Almighty* mentions Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* after Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* because both of them have something distinctive in their call and both endured many forms of hardships. Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* came into confrontation with the Pharaoh who claimed divinity, whereas Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* ruled all existing people on the earth for a broad expanse of time. Nevertheless, this does not mean that Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was sent to all

mankind; but rather, he ruled his people who exclusively lived on the earth at that time, where he lived among them for 950 years.

In the chapter of Nuh, the insurmountable difficulties faced by Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* were shown. Despite his call for his people during all that long period of time, only a few believed in him; however, in the end, victory was his.

There was also a distinctive issue related to filiation, both in terms of legitimate ancestry and of the path of guidance. The biological son of Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was an obstinate disbeliever. Accordingly, he beseeched Allah to rescue his son: '... My son was one of my family...' (*Hud*: 45), while Allah rejected his request saying: '... Nuh (Noah), he was not one of your family...' (*Hud*: 46). He *the Almighty* reasoned His rejection: '... What he did was not right...' (*Hud*: 46). So, Allah teaches him that ancestry is based on righteous deeds and obedience, rather than biological lineage. Hence, the real son of the prophet is the one who follows his path, even if he is not of his blood.

Additionally, it is noticed that Allah *Glorified is He* as He seeks to console Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* mentioned Prophets Musa (Moses) and Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon them* together because they shared the same manifestation of a global phenomenon calling for reflection and contemplation. If people rationally, unhurriedly and definitively give heed to every existing global phenomenon, they would be able to discover things enriching their lives and bringing them happiness and luxury. Therefore, Allah *the Almighty* reproaches those people who refrain from contemplating in His Signs, saying: 'And there are many signs in the heavens and the earth that they pass by and give no heed to.' (*Yusuf*: 105)

As previously mentioned, all inventions bringing comfort and happiness to people's lives, lessening workloads and shortening working hours, have only come about as a result of people's reflection upon Allah's existing signs such as the invention of the wheel or the steam engine, etc.

Thus, the connection that links Musa (Moses) to Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon them* is that Allah *Glorified is He* destroyed and saved their respective peoples by the same existing substance, i.e. water. As water is used to save Prophets Musa

(Moses) and Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon them*, it drowned the Pharaoh and the disbelievers as well.

This distinction represents a way of consolation to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. When Allah *Glorified is He* sets His will to save people, He does, whereas if He *the Exalted* wills to destroy people, He does, even by the same substance.

The followers of Musa (Moses) faced the inescapable fact that they would be irrefutably caught when they saw the sea in front of them and the army of the Pharaoh approaching behind them. Allah states their saying: ‘... We shall definitely be caught...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 61). No one could possibly deny that; yet, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* refuted that they would never be overtaken. He assuredly rejected this because of his absolute confidence in Allah that He will never abandon him. As Allah says: ‘Musa (Moses) said, “No, my Lord is with me: He will guide me.”’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62)

Likewise, the story of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* went around the same idea but used a different means, i.e. the ark. The concept of the ship or the ark had not existed before Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*. No one has, by chance, ever contemplated upon this phenomenon of floating when he saw a tree thrown over the water surface and the reason that the tree does not just sink. Professional carpenters used to calculate the density of the wood by throwing it into water and measuring the immersed parts. By the means of this phenomenon, Archimedes constructed his theory of floating bodies and the fluid displaced by their immersed parts. The theory suggests that floating bodies are inversely proportional to their densities: if the density of an object increases, it gets heavier and sinks, but if its density decreases, it floats.

It is well noticed that when a metal coin is thrown into water, it sinks, but if it is flattened out to be much wider and thinner, then it would float despite its having the same mass. It is true that the mass of the coin is the same, but as the displaced amount of water in the second case is greater, it floats.

Allah *the Almighty* guides people to discover such phenomenon and to make ships that will carry them across water, since three quarters of the entire globe is made up of water. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* has provided mankind with a means to travel across three quarters of the earth just as they travelled

across the dry land quarter, thereby extracting the resources of the sea just as they extract the resources of the land.

Reflecting on Allah's saying: 'The people of Nuh (Noah), too: when they rejected their messengers...' (*al-Furqan: 37*), it is well-known that they only denied their Messenger Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* not all Messengers, so why does Allah *Glorified is He* use the plural form? It is recognised that prophethood does not bring mutually contradictory matters, but only consistent and congruous things. Therefore, the rejection of one messenger is the same as that of all.

Afterwards, Allah *the Exalted* mentions their penalty: '... We drowned them and made them an example to all people...' (*al-Furqan: 37*). This means that Allah led the disbelievers to drown and, also, saved the believers. This drowning was the first penalty of the disbelievers for ridiculing Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* as he was building the ark. Allah says in this concern: '... And whenever leaders of his people passed by, they laughed at him. He said, "You may scorn us now, but we will come to scorn you."' (*Hud: 38*)

But drowning was not the final stage of their penalty, but rather, it was the first. There is also the punishment that awaits them in the Hereafter: '... We have prepared a painful torment for the evildoers.' (*al-Furqan: 37*) Hence, Allah *Glorified is He* punishes them by combining drowning in this world and burning in the Hereafter.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* illustrates another example for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*:

وَعَادًا وَثَمُودًا وَأَصْحَابَ الرَّسِّ وَقُرُونًا بَيْنَ ذَلِكَ كَثِيرًا

As We did for the people of 'Ad, Thamud, and al-Rass, and many generations in between [38] (The Quran, *al-Furqan: 38*)

These are various examples of the hardships that the previous Messengers had suffered from their peoples. Similar examples are mentioned elsewhere in the Quran, such as: 'To the people of 'Ad We sent their brother, Hud...' (*al-A'raf: 65*) and: 'To the people of Thamud We sent their brother, Salih...' (*al-A'raf: 73*).

In the end, Allah *Glorified is He* ensures victory for His followers and messengers, and leads defeat to their opponents. Allah reassures Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he is not divergent from other messengers. If his people are obstinate and disbelieving, then he should be sure that Allah *Glorified is He* will grant him victory as He *the Exalted* says: 'Our word has already been given to Our servants the messengers. It is they who will be helped, And the ones who support Our cause will be the winners.' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173)

In this concern, Allah *Glorified is He* is not only talking about a historical event for the sake of documentation, but also for refining the human soul. If man seeks to be victorious, then he should be among the followers of Allah and carrying His flag. The believer will never be defeated unless he fails to fulfil the conditions of serving within His army. It should be noticed that the most important criteria for serving are obedience and self-discipline. If he is ever defeated in a battle, then he should look out for which condition has been breached.

Therefore, the cause of the defeat of the Muslims at the Battle of Uhud is that the Muslim archers went against the commands of their leader, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.⁽¹⁾ If they were to have been victorious after going against the commands of the Messenger, they would have developed the concept that it was not necessary at all to submit to or to obey the commands of the Messenger. Accordingly, this is an actual proof that it is

(1) *It is narrated that Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him appointed 'Abd Allah ibn Jubair as the commander of the archers who were fifty (in number). The Messenger said to him, 'Use your arrows to keep their cavalry away from us and prevent them from attacking us from behind. You must stay where you are regardless of whether the tide of battle is for us or against us so that we are not attacked from your direction.'* (Dala'il An-Nubuwwa 3/227). *It is narrated in another version (3/229) that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, 'If you see the birds are snatching at us, do not move from this place of yours until I send for you and if you see that we defeated the people (the enemy) and trod them down, do not move until I send for you. Allah then defeated them. He (narrator) said, 'I swear by Allah, I saw women ascending the mountain. The companions of 'Abd Allah bin Jubair said, "Booty, O People, booty! Your companions vanquished, for what are you waiting?" 'Abd Allah bin Jubair said, "Have you forgotten what the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him had told you?" They said, "We swear by Allah. We shall come to the people and get the booty." So they came to them. Their faces were turned and they came defeated.'*

obligatory to obey his commands, to ever be held to the army of faith and to avoid the concept that the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* only teaches Muslims as long as he lives among them because he will not live among them forever.

Moving on to a further point of discussion, Ar-Rass, which is the well or the trench believed to be found in Al-Yamamah. It is also called *Al-Ukhdud* (the trench), as mentioned in the chapter of *al-Buruj*.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... And many generations in between...’ (*al-Furqan*: 38). Allah *the Almighty* does not enumerate all previous nations, but rather mentions some of them. Elsewhere in the Quran, He *the Exalted* mentions them altogether: ‘And We punished each one of them for their sins: some We struck with a violent storm; some were overcome by a sudden blast; some We made the earth swallow; and some We drowned...’ (*al-Ankabut*: 40).

After that, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَكُلًّا ضَرَبْنَاهُ الْأَمْثَلُ وَكُلًّا تَبَرَّأْنَا تَنْبِيْرًا

To each of them We gave warnings, and each of them We destroyed completely [39] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 39)

Allah shows that there is no messenger left without being provided with lessons from what happened to other messengers before him. He *the Almighty* advises them to gain experience from the previous messengers who were rejected, opposed and fought by their peoples, but were finally granted victory over them. Allah *Glorified is He* tells every prophet with these experiences so that he would be able to have the necessary forbearance and energy to endure the hardships of delivering the Message and to refuse to surrender to the enemies or to fall into despair. Thereby, every prophet would certainly know that things will end up in his favour.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... And each of them We destroyed completely,’ (*al-Furqan*: 39) i.e. Allah has destroyed and annihilated everyone who rejected His messengers in many different ways by inflicting all sorts of punishment upon them. Some were punished by means of the sudden blast, swallowed by the earth, drowned and others were struck by the furiously raging storm.

Subsequently, Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَلَقَدْ أَنَوَّا عَلَى الْقَرْيَةِ الَّتِي أَمْطَرْنَا مَطَرًا سَوِيًّا أَفَلَمْ يَكُونُوا
يَرْوْنَهَا بَلْ كَانُوا لَا يَرْجُونَ نُشُورًا ﴿٤٠﴾

**These disbelievers must have passed by the town that
was destroyed by the terrible rain — did they not see it?
Yet they do not expect to be raised from the dead [40]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 40)**

These scenes are not merely a part of the history narrated in the Quran, but were also witnessed first-hand by the disbelievers of Quraysh who had passed by these dwellings in their summer journeys, as confirmed elsewhere in the Quran: ‘You [people] pass by their ruins morning and night: will you not take heed?’ (*as-Saffat*: 137-138) So, the history narrated in the Quran is authenticated by the existing historical remains.

For example, Allah refers to Sodom, the town of the people of Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* which was destroyed by the terrible rain: ‘... Did they not see it?...’ (*al-Furqan*: 40) He *the Exalted* asks the disbelievers if they have not seen it in the course of their travels.

Allah uses the word ‘yet’ as a digressive conjunction to negate what comes before and confirm what comes after: ‘... Yet they do not expect to be raised from the dead.’ (*al-Furqan*: 40) This means that they have certainly passed by and saw it, and that they know it well. However, they neither believed in the resurrection, nor acknowledged that they would stand before their Lord on the Day of Reckoning. Allah quotes their denial: ‘... “What? When we die and turn to dust and bones, shall we really be resurrected?”’ (*al-Mu’minun*: 82)

It is quite amazing that those disbelievers had no belief in the Resurrection or the Reckoning, whereas, they themselves, at the Treaty of Al-Fudul, stood against and prevented the oppressor from suppressing others. They punished the oppressor until he renounced it and returned the rights to the suppressed. However, they should have reflected on the oppressors who died without ever being punished or retaliated against by Allah in this life. Is it not fair enough

that there would be another life in the Hereafter where they would be reckoned and punished?

Hence, to refute the thesis of the socialists as they backed that there is no reckoning after death, they have punished their enemies among the landowners and the capitalists and have revenged themselves. But what about those who preceded them and lived before their time? Would it not be just for the socialists to acknowledge the existence of the Day of Reckoning where people will be gathered together and taken to task?

When someone alleged that no oppressor dies except after Allah *Glorified is He* takes revenge upon him, this is refuted by the fact that there are tyrants who died, whereas nothing happened to him. There is another abode after this one in which those who do good will be rewarded for their righteous deeds and those who do evil will be punished for their malicious deeds.

After giving Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a number of illustrated stances taken against the previous prophets to soothe him, Allah *the Almighty* clarifies that those unbelievers will not only cease at being obstinate and bothersome with nonsensical demands; they will also go even further and will try to mock and ridicule him. Allah *the Exalted* says:

وَإِذَا رَأَوْكَ إِن يَخِذُّونَكَ إِلَّا هُزُوءًا ۖ هَٰذَا الَّذِي بَعَثَ اللَّهُ رَسُولًا ﴿٤١﴾

**Whenever they see you [Prophet] they ridicule you:
'Is this the one God has sent as a messenger?' [41]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 41)**

This means that they will not do anything except ridiculing you. Then the verse mentions their mockery words: '... "Is this the one Allah has sent as a messenger?"' (*al-Furqan*: 41) Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah quotes their mockery: '... "Is this the one who talks about your gods?"...' (*al-Anbiya*: 36) As long as they viewed Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as being degraded, they asked for a dignified person to be a messenger, as mentioned in the Quran: '... "Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man, from either of the two cities?"' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) This means that they believed in the necessity of the existence of a deity, a messenger and

a divine Message. Their only objection was against the character of Muhammad to reveal the Message.

Afterwards, they contradicted themselves, saying:

إِنْ كَادَ لَيُضِلُّنَا عَنْ آلِهَتِنَا لَوْلَا أَنْ صَبَرْنَا عَلَيْهَا
وَسَوْفَ يَعْلَمُونَ حَيْثُ يَرَوْنَ الْعَذَابَ مَنْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٢﴾

He might almost have led us astray from our gods if we had not stood so firmly by them.’ When they see the punishment, they will know who is furthest from the path [42] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 42)

Their views are self-contradictory. They ridicule the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as being too degraded to reveal the Message, meanwhile they claim that he might almost have led them astray from their gods except for their obstinacy and pig-headedness. This is an evidence and a testimony from them that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was strong and up to the task of delivering the Message and that he spared no effort in calling them to Allah, to the extent that he might almost have led them astray from their gods.

The biggest proof that they were frightened of the inspiring effect of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was their warning to their followers not to listen to the Quran: ‘... “Do not listen to this Quran; drown it in frivolous talk: you may gain the upper hand”’ (*Fussilat*: 26). So, they wanted them to speak noisily during the recitation of the Quran because they knew perfectly well its effect on the person’s soul. They were a people of eloquence and fine language, so if they heard the Quran, it would inevitably have affected their hearts and attracted them.

The story of the conversion of ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* to Islam shows his previous cruelty and brutality. When the opportunity finally came his way, his listening to the Quran found in him a healthy nature and pure disposition. It brought him back from the brutal state that resulted in striking and wounding his sister to his good nature and senses. Accordingly, he rushed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and embraced Islam.

Therefore, their saying in this verse proves that Prophet Muhammad fulfilled the task for which he was sent and contradicts their mocking words.

Allah's saying: '... "If we had not stood so firmly by them"...' (*al-Furqan*: 42) shows that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did many righteous deeds that required them to stand against him steadfastly⁽¹⁾ by their misguidance. Allah's saying: '... When they see the punishment, they will know who is furthest from the path' (*al-Furqan*: 42) means that they will come to know their deviance from the Right Path, but too late when that knowledge would not benefit them anymore.

أَرَأَيْتَ مَنِ اتَّخَذَ إِلَٰهَهُ هَوَاهُ أَفَأَنْتَ تَكُونُ عَلَيْهِ وَكِيلًا ﴿٤٣﴾

**Think [Prophet] of the man who has taken his own
passion as a god: are you to be his guardian? [43]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 43)**

Allah *the Almighty* clarifies to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the issue that Islam only came to protect people from their desires and whims. Every human obeys his own desires, so no one will ever obey others' desires. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'But if the truth were in accordance with their desires, the heavens, the earth, and everyone in them would disintegrate...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71).

People's desires differ due to the nature of life which requires desires to be different. As fields of life are numerous, everyone's desire is directed towards a different area according to his needs. If two intimate and lifelong friends want to buy something, they would have differing requirements. Actually, various desires serve one another; so, for example, various designers appeal to different tastes and desires of people. Thus, it is said, 'Differences preserve accordance, while accordance leads to difference.'

This saying is illustrated by the following example: two persons went into a restaurant and both wanted chicken legs, but there was only one left. Undoubtedly, their initial accordance of desires leads eventually to disagreement

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi said, (7/4911) 'In other words, "we stood so firmly to worshipping them."'

with one another. Whereas, if they initially have different desires, this will lead to agreement in the end—someone will take the chicken leg, while the other will have the chicken breast.

Hence, Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘Think [Prophet] of the man who has taken his own passion as a god...’ (*al-Furqan*: 43). The word ‘passion’ is used when the truth is obvious, but still the person turns away, not due to ignorance, but in full knowledge.

Accordingly, men of knowledge say, ‘whim is the plague of the opinion.’ The man’s opinion might be correct, but ‘desire’ turns it away from the truth. For example, the disbeliever who used to travel around, as he found a new rock idol more beautiful than his rock that he used to worship, he threw away his old god, replaced it with the new one and made the latter his god. So, his desire for the beauty of the rock overcame and convinced him that it was a god.

Some Orientalists have raised objections against what Allah *Glorified is He* says about Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘He does not speak from his own desire.’ (*an-Najm*: 3) They exclaimed how Allah *Glorified is He* decrees that His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does not speak according to his own desire, while He *the Exalted* corrects him in many instances, such as: ‘Prophet, why do you prohibit what Allah has made lawful to you in your desire?...’ (*at-Tahrim*: 1) Moreover, Allah *the Exalted* also says: ‘Allah forgive you [Prophet]! Why did you give them permission to stay at home before it had become clear to you...?’ (*at-Tawba*: 43)

In response, the concept of ‘desire’ should first be broadly grasped. If there are two choices and truth is crystal-clear found in one of them, ‘desire’ takes the person in the direction of the other incorrect path. However, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke in this instance because there was no real-life matter about which he could know the truth. Definitely, he did not follow his desires; he simply arrived at a conclusion based on his intellectual discretion.

Referring to Allah’s saying to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with respect to his adoption of Zayd ibn Haritha *Allah be pleased with him*: ‘Name your adopted sons after their real fathers: this is more equitable in Allah’s eyes...’ (*al-Ahzab*: 5). This does not mean that his action was inequitable but that Allah’s action was more equitable.

Allah *the Almighty* does not say that He did anything wrong, but rather, He describes his action as equitable. However, the Messenger's action was a human form of justice in reward to the feeling of Zayd towards the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he preferred him to his own family. Accordingly, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could not find better compensation than adopting him.

In Allah's saying: '... Are you to be his guardian?' (*al-Furqan*: 43) 'Guardian' is the person who is responsible for guiding the disbelievers to abandon desires and follow the truth instead. Similarly, Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: 'You are not there to control them [to believe]' (*al-Ghashiya*: 22). '... So can you [Prophet] compel people to believe?' (*Yunus*: 99) And: '...Your only duty is to deliver the message...' (*ash-Shura*: 48).

Hence, Allah tells the Messenger that it is impossible to compel someone who takes his desires as a god, to believe because desires are different. There is someone who might want to enjoy other people's rights, so he steals their money; however, he would not be happy if someone else did the same with him. Thus, the desires clash with each other, but which one of them will win out? The winner will be the person who is able to make judgements without being affected, either by his or by others' desires. The intrinsic truth can only come from Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah *the Almighty* says:

أَمْ تَحْسَبُ أَنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ يَسْمَعُونَ أَوْ يَعْقِلُونَ ۚ إِنَّ
هُمْ إِلَّا كَالْأَنْعَامِ بَلْ هُمْ أَضَلُّ سَبِيلًا ﴿٤٤﴾

**Do you think that most of them hear or understand?
They are just like cattle – no, they are further
from the path [44] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 44)**

In this verse, 'hear' means listening with discernment and reflection. If they were to have listened and used their reason, things would never have come to such a pass: '... They are just like cattle...' (*al-Furqan*: 44). Despite the fact that cattle are subjugated, carry out their tasks without contradiction, yet, Allah *Glorified is He* likens the disbeliever to cattle because they are not asked to follow guidance as they have no choice. Whereas, the person who is asked

to follow guidance is the one who has the choice. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* said, “Do you think that most of them listen or use logical reasoning?”

The words: ‘...most of them’ (*al-Furqan*: 44) indicate that some of them did listen and had reasonable minds. This concept is based on the law of probability, as many of the disbelievers of Quraysh who had previously declared themselves enemies of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* embraced Islam eventually with full sincerity. Therefore, some of these disbelievers, who are referred to in this verse, listened and contemplated what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said using logical reason. Allah *Glorified is He* uses the words: ‘...most of them’ (*al-Furqan*: 44) to protect this verse from any incorrectness and to pave the way for their future guidance to Islam. This is an example of the exactness and the scrutiny employed by the Quranic words in order to convey reality truthfully.

We have talked previously about the sorrow that the believers felt at missing the opportunity to seize one of the leaders of disbelief in battle. They did not realize that Allah’s Wisdom chose to preserve these enemies’ lives as they would become believers at a later date. Indeed one of those disbelievers was Khalid ibn al-Walid *may Allah be pleased with him* who eventually became the unsheathed sword of Allah *Glorified is He*.

We have previously mentioned that animals of livestock are subjugated creatures that have no free will and are not responsible for the issue of guidance. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* used them in a verse to teach a lesson to the Jewish people. Allah says in this verse that the likeness of a disbelieving scholar: ‘...is that of a mule that carries a load of books (but cannot benefit from them).’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 5) In this case, the only responsibility that the mule has is to carry these books. On the other hand, a believer’s responsibility is to carry the scriptures and, essentially, apply their commands. Mules are not required to do that. Animals do recognize their masters, know the type of food they can eat and where they can go to drink. They recognize the habitual paths to their home and the places they are given to spend the night. If a person dies on the back of his horse, the horse would still be able to carry that person home. Thus, these animals of livestock are able to understand and use reason within the framework of the responsibilities for which they

were created. They also recognize the paths of religious guidance, but are not required to carry out any part of it, as Allah says: 'Verily, We did offer the responsibility (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 transgressing and foolish.' (*al-Ahzab*: 72)

These non-responsible beings chose to be governed and controlled by their natural impulses. Thus, they were initially given the ability to choose, but made their choice at the very beginning of their existence. Take, for instance, the hoopoe bird that served Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. The hoopoe said to Prophet Sulaiman: 'I have encompassed (with my knowledge) something that you have never yet encompassed (with your knowledge), for I have come to thee from Sheba with a sure tiding.' (*an-Naml*: 22)

Look at the level of independence that this hoopoe was granted under the rule of Prophet Sulaiman *peace be upon him*. Therefore, even animals recognize the matters of guidance, even if they are not required to do anything about it. Generally, animals only act within the capacity of their own natural impulses.

We previously gave the example of a mule's behaviour when it is being commanded to jump from one side of a stream to another. The mule will first look at the stream to estimate if the leap is within its capacity. If the leap is a further stretch than its abilities, the mule will step back. Even if it is violently forced by its owner, the mule will only follow its natural impulses. On the other hand, human beings often venture into impractical endeavours, thereby landing themselves in situations with unfortunate consequences. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَلَمْ تَرَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ كَيْفَ مَدَّ الظِّلَّ وَلَوْ شَاءَ لَجَعَلَهُ
سَاكِنًا ثُمَّ جَعَلْنَا الشَّمْسُ عَلَيْهِ دَلِيلًا ﴿٤٥﴾

Do you not see how your Lord lengthens the shade? If He had willed, He could have made it stand still – We made the sun its indicator [45] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 45)

Allah *Glorified is He* the Creator of all the signs in existence is drawing the attention of His creation to some of these wondrous and remarkable signs.

Naturally, the sound mind should have paid attention to these signs without being commanded. A person who sees one of the wonders of creation should essentially stop to reflect upon it with astonishment and humility. We have previously given the example of a man who finds himself alone in a broad and barren desert. Imagine the man being overcome by tiredness and sleep. Then, when he wakes up, he finds a table in front of him laden with the most delicious types of food and drink. Would it not be the natural course for the man to question the source of this surprising and abnormal sustenance, before reaching his hand out to consume it?

Therefore, there are signs in creation that must seize your attention and cause you to study them and to trace the origins of their existence. All of these phenomenal signs are higher than our basic level of understanding and beyond our natural capacity to recreate, such as the sun, the moon, the air, and the rain. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* did not leave us to comprehend those signs on our own, but actively alerted us and drew our attentions to them. Several remarkable signs and manifestations of existence are seen monotonously and overlooked by mankind every single day. These signs are seen by the versed philosopher as well as the illiterate person, who despite seeing them daily scarcely pay heed to them.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Are you not aware how’ (*al-Furqan*: 45) in the beginning of the verse. These words mean, ‘Do you not know of the following fact? Have you not looked at your Lord’s work in causing shadows to lengthen away from the light and towards the dark?’ Indeed, Allah could have made it stand still if He had so willed. Therefore, Allah made the sun a guiding torch for this shadow.

We know that these shadows occur when a massive object on the earth, such as a mountain, building, or tree, blocks the light coming from a source, such as the sun. We see this phenomenon clearly in broad daylight as a manifestation of the sun and the motion of the earth upon which we live. The earth is a rotating spheroid structure with a bright side that faces the sun and a nightly side that resides in dimness. However, in the Arabic language, we call that dimness a *zhalam* (darkness), rather than calling it a *zhil* (shadow). What is the difference between *zhil* and *zhalam*? If the earth itself blocks the

sunlight, then the dimness is called *zhalam*, but if that which blocks the light is an object on the earth, the darkness is known as a *zhil* (shadow).

We see shadows throughout our days. The phenomenon is mentioned in many verses in the Book of Allah *Glorified is He* such as when Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Indeed, the pious people shall dwell amidst (cooling) shades (*zhilal*) and springs.' (*al-Mursalat*: 41) Allah also says: 'There (in paradise) shall they have pure spouses and (thus) We will admit them into cool, refreshing shade' (*an-Nisa*': 57). He says in another verse: 'Have, then, they (who deny the truth) never considered any of the things that Allah has created, that grant their shades to the right and left (sides)?' (*an-Nahl*: 48)

Our Lord reminded us in these verses that shadows protect us from the stinging heat of the sun. Man continues to rise higher in terms of the way he uses shade, that he is able to produce several levels of: '...plenteous layers of layered shade (*dhilan dhaleela*).' (*an-Nisa*': 57) This means that the shade itself is shaded. So, for example, men are able to make ceilings that have two separate roofs, in order to ensure that the inside of the home is not affected by the heat outside.

Therefore, we find the shade of a tree more pleasant than the shade of a wall, for example, as the leaves of the tree shade each other in layers. In a certain manner, the shade of a tree resembles an air-conditioned room because the leaves block the heat of the sun while allowing the wind and air to pass through them. An Arab poet once said when describing a tall lofty tree:

It obstructs the sun whenever it confronts us,
blocking its rays, but permitting a gentle breeze.

Allah *Glorified is He* also mentions the word 'shadow' in another verse. He says: 'And (behold) when We caused the mount to rise above the Children of Israel as though it were a shadow.' (*al-A'raf*: 171)

When you reflect on this phenomenon of shadows, you will see that at sunrise, the shadows of solid objects stretch out for a long distance. The shadows then get shorter as the sun rises and reaches its zenith. Then the shadows move to the opposite direction as the sun sets into the horizon. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted us to notice this phenomenon and reflect upon it. He

says: ‘Are you not aware how your Lord has caused shadows to lengthen (towards the dark)’ at the time of sunrise. Then Allah says: ‘Had He so willed, He could indeed have made it stand still, and indeed, We have made the sun its guide.’ (*al-Furqan*: 45) The Power of Allah *Glorified is He* is capable of creating something and creating its opposite. He willed the shadow to change according to the time of day, but indeed, if He wanted otherwise, He could have made it stationary and unyielding.

The length of the shadow decreases at the beginning of the day and increases at the end of the day. Likewise, everything in nature that has the capacity to increase also has the capacity to decrease. These increments and decrements are forms of movement. Movement itself has different forms. One of them is the leaping discrete movement that resembles the movement of the faster (second) hand of a clock as it jumps around the dial. The clock’s pointer remains totally still for a brief moment in time before moving on.

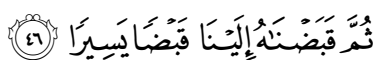
On the other hand, it is difficult to perceive motion in the slower (hour) pointer of a clock. This is because the motion is smoothly flowing, being evenly distributed over time. An example of this type of movement is the growth of a child, which is difficult to perceive over a short period of time. You would only notice this type of movement if you look at the child after a long period of absence. This is because his growth is evenly distributed and does not occur in sudden spurts. Humans are able to incorporate this slow linear movement in the mechanical components in a watch. On the other hand, Allah *Glorified is He* incorporated it in the movement of shadows through His Omnipotent Power over the sun and the earth.

The astonishing peculiarity of this phenomenon is not the only reason Allah *Glorified is He* directed our attention to it. Further than that, this phenomenon is a grand bounty that humans have taken advantage of and used for their benefits.

For example, the ancient Egyptians used to set up obelisks to accurately determine the time by means of their shadows. Likewise, the Arabs constructed sundials to determine the time according to the movement of the sun. Nowadays, we can see simple peasants telling the time by looking at objects’ shadows.

They learned how to estimate the time of day through the lengths of shadows, despite the innate inaccuracies in this method owing to the point of sunrise changing throughout the year. One of the ancient Egyptian temples has 365 apertures. The sunlight enters through a different aperture every day of the year. Nevertheless, shadows brought human beings immeasurable benefit, in terms of these ancient obelisks and sundials. Muslims moved on from this idea to make their own mechanical clocks. One of these inventions was a ticking clock that worked by utilizing the power of water. When the Muslims gave Charlemagne, the king of France, one of these mechanical clocks, he said, 'There is a devil inside it!' Thus, these were the early Muslims' wondrous scientific inventions.

Allah says: '...and indeed, We have made the sun its guide.' (*al-Furqan*: 45) This means that the sunlight directs the length of the shadows. Then Allah says:



But We gradually draw it towards Us, little by little [46]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 46)

Allah *Glorified is He* referred to the slow movement of these shadows by describing it as being gradual. Human eyes will never perceive the shadow's flow through time because they do not possess instruments with the necessary accuracy to perceive the delicacy of this movement. Allah says: 'We grasp it shorter in a gradual motion.' (*al-Furqan*: 46) This is also an indication that the process is directly sustained by Allah's Omnipotent Power. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* was saying, 'O my servants, sleep in tranquillity. Your Lord is the One Who sustains your interests and never sleeps.'

Some transcendent minds derive interesting concepts from these phenomena of shadows. They remark how the lofty objects on earth remain humbled, prostrating themselves upon the ground in the form of shadows. Allah says: 'And before Allah, prostrate themselves, willingly or unwillingly, all (things and beings) that are in the heavens and on earth, as do their shadows in the mornings and the evenings.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 15) Allah also says: 'Each (of them) knows indeed how to pray unto Him and to glorify Him.' (*an-Nur*: 41)

Therefore, shadows have a slow movement that is only encompassed by Allah's Power and Knowledge. We can never perceive the extent of its fineness. In the same manner, we are helpless in encompassing the very smallest fragments of dust. Allah then says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ لِبَاسًا وَالنَّوْمَ سُبَاتًا وَجَعَلَ النَّهَارَ نُشُورًا ﴿٤٧﴾

**It is He who made the night a garment for you,
and sleep a rest, and made the day like a
resurrection [47] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 47)**

Allah says that He: ‘...makes the night a garment...’ (*al-Furqan*: 47). This is the night in which the earth blocks the light. However, it is wrong to consider darkness as the evil opponent of light, as many people have tried to replace darkness with their own artificial light. One of the blights of modern civilisation is converting the night into artificial day. Indeed, scientists have recently become aware of the extent to which excess light can damage a person's health. That is why we find a Noble Hadith in which Prophet Muhammad *peace and the blessings be upon him* said, ‘Put your torches out when you go to bed.’⁽¹⁾ Light serves a purpose during the times when you are active, but it has no function, and in fact, may be harmful during the hours of your sleep.

Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed upon us the blessings of the night and day. He says: ‘Say (to them O Muhammad), “Have you ever considered that Allah may have willed daylight permanent for you, without break, until the Day of Resurrection? Is there any deity other than Allah that could bring you (the darkness of) night, wherein you might rest? Will you not, then, see (the truth)?”’ (*al-Qasas*: 72)

Therefore, night and day have distinct functions. Allah clarifies their functions in His words: ‘And He it is who makes the night a garment for you.’ (*al-Furqan*: 47) This means that the night covers us in the same way that a garment covers the body. Sleep is an automatic restraint that overcomes living beings, and is made beyond their choice. If you try to sleep at a non-habitual

(1) It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (5624) and Ahmad in his *Musnad* (3/388) from Jabir ibn ‘Abdullah may Allah be pleased with him. The wording is that of Al-Bukhari.

time, you will feel tired and overburdened. On the other hand, when sleep overcomes you of its own accord, you feel tranquil and sound. There is a word of wisdom that says, 'Sleep is a cumbersome guest. When you invite it, it causes you trouble and hardship, but when it invites you, it lets you rest easily.' Sleep can overcome you in any place, even if you were lying on a bed of pebbles and stones. It is as if sleep is commanding us to calm down when it is no longer appropriate for us to be moving around. There are some people who fight the natural impulse of sleep by taking pills to help them stay awake. Still, when they stay awake for a whole night, they sleep those hours on the following day. Moreover, those who combat sleep find that they lose their equilibrium and that their movements become increasingly muddled and confused. So, you must submit yourself to this natural impulse that Allah *Glorified is He* created in you. When it besets you, do not treat it with contempt. When you submit to sleeping appropriately during the night, you will feel active in your mornings, and you will assume your daily activities in a strong and responsible manner.

The Sufis have made a very fine observation about sleep. They referred us to the fact that the entirety of existence glorifies its Lord, as Allah *Glorified is He* says in the Quran: 'Each (of them) knows indeed how to pray unto Him and to glorify Him.' (*an-Nur*: 41) This means that even the particles that make up a disbeliever's body are in complete submission to Allah's laws. Indeed, they remain in disequilibrium while fulfilling the disbeliever's disobedience and disbelief. In fact, there will come a time when they will testify against him on the Day of Resurrection. Despite being subservient to his disbelieving will in this world, they will ultimately be free from this malevolent will in the Hereafter.

The tongue is subservient to its host. If the host wants to believe, it will utter the two testimonies of faith: 'There is no deity but Allah, and Muhammad is his Messenger (*Ashhadu an la ilaha illa Allah, wa ashhadu anna Muhammadan rasul-Allah*).' On the other hand, if its host wants to disbelieve in Allah, it will utter the words of disbelief. Thus, it only serves its host's will. Then, eventually, in the Hereafter, there is no will except Allah's Commandments *Glorified is He*.

During sleep, these limbs and particles of the body are able to rest from the sins and wrong actions that their host commits during wakefulness. They

are able to take a break from the host's disobedience of Allah. Sleep is a restraining force that comes into effect when a person is no longer capable of having a sound coexistence with his limbs. The limbs are no longer able to bear their actions, and therefore, sleep comes in to give them rest.

An example of this phenomenon is seen during the pilgrimage (*Hajj*) season, where pilgrims often find that they only need to sleep an hour or two every day. The reason is that people commit very few sins in that place and the limbs are in harmony with their hosts. Therefore, they do not force them into heavy sleep. On the other hand, disobedient people find long periods of sleep insufficient because their limbs are worn out and irritated by their actions.

This phenomenon explains why Prophet Muhammad's heart did not need to rest⁽¹⁾, despite his eyes resting. Prophet Muhammad's limbs accompanied him in the best possible way as they were permanently engaged in obedience. How could they induce his heart to sleep?

Allah deals with people in their general sense. Their selves are always inclined towards wrongdoing and this exhausts their energy and weakens their limbs. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to enforce an obligatory period of truce and peaceful coexistence between the people and their limbs, where they can sleep for some time to fuel their activity during the day.

Allah says in this verse: '...and (your) sleep a rest (*subat*).'⁽¹⁾ (*al-Furqan*: 47) The Arabic word *sabt* means 'to cut'. Therefore, the word *subat* in this verse means 'pausing one's movements for a given period of time'. This is meant as a process of rejuvenation so that the person can return to their activities in a healthier fashion. A person who spends much of his night awake will feel tired and perturbed in the morning, unlike the person who allocates the appropriate time for sleep at night.

Allah *Glorified is He* made the amount of sleep required at night related to the amount of activity you achieve during the day. So, if you want to engage in strong and balanced daily activities, sleep an amount that is proportionate to those endeavours.

(1) *An agreed upon Hadith: It is narrated by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (3569) and by Muslim in his Sahih (738) in 'Kitab Salat Al-Musafireen' that Prophet Muhammad said, 'O' A'isha. My eyes sleep, but my heart does not sleep.'*

Allah then says: ‘...and (He) causes every (new) day to be a resurrection (*nushoor*).’ (*al-Furqan*: 47) The Arabic word *nushoor* resembles the lexical form of the word *shukoor*. The word *shukoor* is the plural of the word *shukr* (gratitude) and is mentioned in a verse in which Allah says: ‘(These righteous people are saying, in their hearts,) “We feed you (who are in need of food) for the sake of Allah alone. We desire no recompense from you, or gestures of gratitude (*shukoor*).”’ (*al-Insan*: 9) Similarly, the word *nushoor* is the plural of the singular word *nashr* which means ‘moving freely about the earth’, as Allah says in another verse: ‘...disperse freely (*intashiru*) on earth and seek to obtain (sustenance) from Allah’s bounty.’ (*al-Jumu’a*: 10)

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا ﴿٤٨﴾

**It is He who sends the winds as heralds of good news before
His Mercy. We send down pure water from the sky [48]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 48)**

When Allah *Glorified is He* uses the word ‘winds’ in its plural form (*riyah*) in the Quran, it indicates forthcoming blessings and bounties. However, when Allah uses it in the singular form, *rih* (wind), it indicates an impending disaster. Grand skyscrapers and lofty constructions are held upright as long as the wind currents surround them from all sides. Together, these multiple currents give rise to harmony and equilibrium. On the other hand, wind that comes from a single direction brings about destruction, as mentioned by Allah in the verse: ‘And as for the (people of) ‘Ad – they were destroyed by a storm wind (*rih sarsar*)⁽¹⁾ furiously raging.’ (*al-Haqqa*: 6) Allah also says in another verse concerning their punishment: ‘Nay, but it is the very thing which you (so contemptuously) sought to hasten – a wind bearing grievous suffering.’ (*al-Ahqaf*: 24)

The word used in this verse to mean ‘glad tidings’ is *bushran* (recited without a *sukun* on the *sheen*) instead of the word *bushuran* (that has a

(1) A wind that is described as *sarsar* in the Arabic language is a wind that is exceedingly cold or exceedingly loud (Lissan Al-‘Arab: subject matter: sarara).

damma on the sheen). It is worth mentioning that the original lettering of the word is actually *bushur* which resembles the word *rusul*. The word was lexically shortened to become *bushr*, to be more like the word *bushra* which refers to the good news of forthcoming blessings. The Arabs did not use the verb *yubashir* except when the news is good. Incidentally, they were able to get such glad tidings, and estimating the time until rain, through the strength of the wind blowing upon their skin.

Allah uses the words: ‘...between the hands (*bayna yaday*) of His forthcoming grace...’ (*al-Furqan*: 48) in this verse. The Arabic phrase *bayna yadayk* means ‘in front of you’ or ‘before you’. Therefore, the phrase is used here to signify that these rains are a manifestation of Allah’s Mercy.

Then Allah says: ‘...and (thus, too,) We cause pure water to descend from the sky (*sama*).’ (*al-Furqan*: 48) In the Arabic language, the word *sama*’ has a linguistic meaning and a metaphysical meaning. Linguistically, the word *sama*’ refers to anything that is above you. However, religiously, it refers to the seven heavens we believe in.

Does rain descend from the seven heavens or does it fall down from the earthly clouds? Indeed, rain falls from the earthly clouds that originate from the condensation of water vapour in the strata of the air. Allah *Glorified is He* clarified this concept in another verse, when He says: ‘Are you not aware that it is Allah who causes the clouds to move onward gently (*yuzji sahaban*)⁽¹⁾, then joins them together, then piles them up in masses, until you can see the rain⁽²⁾ coming forth from their midst? And it is He who sends down hail from the mountainous masses (of clouds) from the sky.’ (*an-Nur*: 43)

(1) The Arabic verb *azja* means to drive something on gently. So, the phrase “*yuzji sahaban*” means that Allah drives the clouds wherever He wills (from the books, *Al-Qamus Al-Qaweem* [1/284] and the *Tafsir* of *Al-Qurtubi* [6/4825])

(2) There are two interpretations of the word *wadaq*: The first interpretation, which is mentioned by *Abu Al-Ash’ab Al-’Uqayli*, refers to lightening. The second interpretation which is mentioned by a majority of the scholars is that it refers to rain (*Tafsir* of *Al-Qurtubi*, 6/4826). *As-Suyuti* also mentioned the two opinions in *Ad-Durr Al-manthoor* (6/211). The first opinion was from *Abu Bujayla*, which he ascribed to *Ibn Al-Abi Hatim*. The second opinion was from *Ad-Dahak* and *Mujahid*, as he narrated from *Ibn Al-Abi Hatim* and *Ibn Abi Shayba*.

So, the mercy of Allah *Glorified is He* is manifested in this water from which He creates every living thing. In Allah's words: '...pure (*tahoor*) water...' (*al-Furqan*: 48), the Arabic word *tahoor* means that the water is pure in itself as well as being a purifying medium to other objects. For instance, water that is used for ablution (*wudu'*) has to be pure in itself, as well as being a purifying medium for the limbs. After this water is used in ablution, it is still pure in itself, but stops being a purifying medium for another person's ablution. According to this definition, rain water that falls from the sky is pure in itself as well as being a purifying medium for usage. This is because this rain water is refined and distilled, and distilled water is the purest form of natural water. In addition to water being a basic foundation of life, it also provides purity for our bodies.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

لِنُحْيِيَ بِهِ بَلْدَةً مَيِّتًا وَنُسْقِيَهُ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا أَنْعَمًا وَأُنَاسٍ كَثِيرًا ﴿٤٩﴾

**So that We can revive a dead land with it, and We give it as
a drink to many animals and people We have created [49]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 49)**

Allah described the barren land as being *mayt* (dead). Here, we have to point out that there is a difference between the Arabic words *mayt* and *mayyit*. The Arabic adjective *mayt* means that the object described is already dead, while the adjective *mayyit* means that it is a mortal being that will eventually die, even if it is still living at the time of the description. An example of that is found in the verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* addresses His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Yet, verily, you are bound to die (*mayyit*), (O Muhammad,) and, verily, they, too, are bound to die (*mayyitoon*).' (*az-Zumar*: 30)

Barren lands are desolate and devoid of vegetation. However, when rainwater falls on these lands, the soil is brought to life as plants start growing upon it. Allah describes this in His words: '...And (if you are still in doubt of resurrection, consider this:) you can see the (barren piece of) land dry and lifeless – and (suddenly,) when We send down water upon it, it stirs and swells and puts forth every kind of delighted plant.' (*al-Hajj*: 5)

Allah says: ‘And for the many (beings) of Our creation to drink from it (*nusqiyahu*), beasts as well as humans.’ (*al-Furqan*: 49) There is a difference between the Arabic verbs *saqahu* and *asqahu*. The word *asqahu* means ‘to give someone that which he can drink from’ even if he does not drink it instantly. This is clear in another verse talking about the rainwater, in which Allah uses the word *asqa*: ‘...and let you drink thereof (*asqaynakumuh*).’ (*al-Hijr*: 22) This means that Allah has prepared it so that they can drink from it when they so wish. On the other hand, the word *saqahu* means ‘to give someone that which he drinks instantly’. This word is used in Allah’s words: ‘And their Lord will give them to imbibe (*saqahum*) from a pure drink.’ (*al-Insan*: 21)

The word *anasiy* (humans) is the plural of the word *insan* (human). The original form of the word is *anaseen*, but was shortened to *anasiy* in this verse.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَقَدْ صَرَّفْنَاهُ بَيْنَهُمْ لِيَذَكَّرُوا فَأَبَى أَكْثَرُ النَّاسِ إِلَّا كُفُورًا

**Many times We have repeated this to people so
that they might take heed, but most persist in their
ingratitude [50] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 50)**

The Arabic word *sarafnahu* means ‘changing and altering’. This means that Allah has altered these warnings and signs in many ways, but despite that, most men still choose to disbelieve in them. The many people who reject Allah’s signs pay no heed to their significance, despite the great advancements of science, the swift progress of human civilisation, and the many natural phenomena that people have become aware of.

An example of altering these signs is when Allah *Glorified is He* gives abundant rainfall to a particular land, but then afflicts the land with drought and famine until its crops and livestock die out. This is to show us that eventual sustenance is not only a material matter of climate or plentiful rain. It is essentially a matter of what the Creator, Allah, wants and wills for His creation, Then, Allah said:

وَلَوْ شِئْنَا لَبَعَثْنَا فِي كُلِّ قَرْيَةٍ نَذِيرًا ﴿٥١﴾

**If it had been Our will, We would have sent a warner
to every town [51] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 51)**

Allah *Glorified is He* wants to show his favour to His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is as if Allah is telling him, 'It is not a lack of messengers that made Us send one single Messenger (Prophet Muhammad) to the whole of mankind for the end of time. We are perfectly capable of decreasing your responsibility by sending a messenger to every single town and village. However, We wanted to honour you with the struggle of the whole matter until the coming of the Hour.'

We can understand from this, that despite Allah's giving Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a universal message, this does not contradict His ability to send a messenger to every village. In fact, more than that, Allah did send one messenger and gave him the capacity to bear the entirety of the Message. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَا تُطِعِ الْكَافِرِينَ وَجَاهِدْهُمْ بِهِ جِهَادًا كَبِيرًا ﴿٥٢﴾

**So do not give in to the disbelievers: strive hard against
them with this Quran [52] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 52)**

Allah has placed the burden of the universal message on the shoulders of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, this verse is directing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he must adopt a stance that is appropriate to that profound task. 'Hence, do not obey the disbelievers.' (*al-Furqan*: 52) He was commanded to disobey the disbelievers if they offer him kingship, wealth, fame, or honour to abandon his message. He must know that what Allah *Glorified is He* has prepared for him is above all of that. Furthermore, when Allah *Glorified is He* ordered Prophet Muhammad: 'Hence, do not obey (the likes and dislikes of) the disbelievers.' (*al-Furqan*: 52) Allah excused His Messenger in front of the disbelieving folk, for a Messenger is always obliged to carry out the commandments of Allah *Glorified is He*.

This verse does not mean that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been obeying the disbelievers to start with. Rather, it is very much like the verse in which Allah says: ‘O you who believe, hold fast unto your belief.’ (*an-Nisa*: 136) In this verse, Allah demanded belief from those He addressed as being believers. In fact, in this verse, Allah is ordering the believers to maintain their faith, warning them from losing the bounty with which He has endowed them. Therefore, when someone requests something from you that you have already fulfilled within you, it simply means that you are being asked to maintain its presence.

Allah says: ‘...but strive hard against them, by means of this (Noble Book), with utmost striving.’ (*al-Furqan*: 52) Victory will only be attained over them through obeying the commandments of Allah *Glorified is He* in the Quran. Believers should not neglect their responsibilities towards the call to Allah by claiming that the trend towards polytheism or disbelief is stronger in this world. Allah addressed this claim in the following verse, by giving a natural example of His Power in relation to one of the basic foundations of life, which is water. Allah says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي مَرَجَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ هَذَا عَذْبٌ فُرَاتٌ وَهَذَا مِلْحٌ
أُجَاجٌ وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَهُمَا بَرْزَخًا وَحِجْرًا مَّحْجُورًا ﴿٥٣﴾

**It is He who released the two bodies of flowing
water, one sweet and fresh and the other salty and
bitter, and put an insurmountable barrier between
them [53] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 53)**

This verse continues to divert the attention of the obstinate opponents of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to Allah’s signs in the Universe. Allah has previously mentioned the shadow, the night, and the winds. Every time that Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned their obstinate denial, He also mentioned a universal wonder that shows how they have been heedless to His signs. However, they remained inattentive to these messages.

In this verse we are studying, Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned one of His clear and repeatable signs that everyone can see and that will remain until the Day of Resurrection. Allah says: ‘And it is He who has merged (maraj) two

great bodies of water (*al-bahrayn*).’ (*al-Furqan*: 53) The Arabic word *marj* refers to an open grazing ground full of common pastures in which a shepherd can allow his flocks of sheep to wander as they please. Thus, the meaning of the phrase *maraja al-bahrayn* (merged two great bodies of water) is that Allah allowed both the salt and the fresh water bodies to flow freely side-by-side, in whichever way they willed.

This is why we find the water currents in the salty seas and oceans, which are covering most of the planet, lacking any angled geometrical outlines. Instead, we find their waves curving and bending in turbulent patterns. Look, for instance, at the Gulf of Mexico or the Gulf of ‘Aqaba. You will observe the water flowing according to its own whims and desires, without assuming fixed geometrical shapes.

The same principle is true for the rivers that come from the rain falling on mountaintops. When a river starts to flow, it moves wherever it wills, wending and winding down the mountainside and over the land, making its way in the direction of easiest flow. So, when the water encounters a simple incline, it deviates in that direction in order to complete its course. For an example of this, look at the crookedness of the Nile River in the vicinity of Qina in Egypt.

So, water makes its way according to its own whims and desires, whether it is salty or fresh water. It does not follow regular routes like the artificial paths humans manufacture by digging canals and waterways. This is true of any water that flows freely by following the path of least resistance. When this free water encounters an obstacle in its path, it turns away according to its own nature.

The Arabic word *bahr* (sea) is used to describe any large body of water, whether it be salt or fresh water. The reason the word *sea* is used is that salt-water bodies are more prevalent upon the earth, just as the Arabic word *shamsayn* (the two suns) is assigned to the sun and the moon due to the larger size of the sun.

The freedom of movement of the two adjacent bodies of water is a sign that indicates the Power of Allah *Glorified is He*. Despite the well-known tendency of water to flow freely from the upper to the lower levels, salt water and fresh water exist side by side without ever mixing together. If they were to mix together, they would both be spoiled, since the fresh water will cease to be drinkable and the salt water will lose its appropriate degree of salinity protecting it from spoilage.

When fresh water is confined to a certain area, it becomes moribund and brackish. On the other hand, the salty seas were prepared by Allah as the natural storehouses of water and the sources of the vapour from which rivers are eventually formed. That is why Allah preserved this seawater and created this peaceful co-existence between it and its adjacent fresh water, where neither of them infringes upon the other's vicinity, despite flowing side-by-side.

Allah described the fresh water as being *furat*. This means that it is 'exceedingly sweet and pleasant to drink'. The name of the Euphrates (*Furat*) River was based on this meaning because of the sweetness of its waters. The word was assigned this meaning before the river was named. This is because the Quran is the Eternal Word of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Then, Allah described the salty water as being exceedingly bitter due to its saltiness. However, despite that, many fish and other marine animals live in these waters and derive nourishment in them, just as they derive nourishment from fresh water. Allah described this phenomenon in a verse in which He says: 'And yet, from either of them do you eat fresh meat, and (from either) you take ornaments which you may wear.' (*Fatir*: 12)

Allah then says in the verse we are studying: 'Yet, Allah has wrought between them a barricade (*barzakh*) and a forbidden barrier (*hijran mahjooran*).' (*al-Furqan*: 53) A *barzakh* is a barricade between two mediums. The word *barzakh* originally referred to the dry land that separates two bodies of water. On the other hand, when the body of water falls between two parts of dry land, it is called a *khaleej* (gulf).

Allah continues: '...and a forbidden barrier (*hijran mahjooran*).' (*al-Furqan*: 53) The *hijr* (barrier) is the obstacle that prevents the salt water and fresh water from mixing. Here, this barrier is described as being *mahjoor* (forbidden). This further emphasizes the fact that the two bodies of water are prevented from mixing with one another. This description resembles another description in the Quran of another barrier. Allah says in another chapter: 'But (thus it is:) whenever you recite the Quran, We place a concealed veil (*hijaban mastoor*) between you and those who will not believe in the life to come.' (*al-Isra'*: 45) Allah also described the shadows granted to the believers in paradise in a similar emphasized manner, where the believers are described as having: '...layered shadows (*dhilan dhaleela*).' (*an-Nisa'*: 57)

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي خَلَقَ مِنَ الْمَاءِ بَشَرًا فَجَعَلَهُ نَسَبًا وَصِهْرًا وَكَانَ رَبُّكَ قَدِيرًا ﴿٥٤﴾

It is He who creates human beings from fluid, then makes them kin by blood and marriage: your Lord is all powerful! [54] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 54)

In a general verse about water, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and (that) We made out of water every living thing.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 30) This means that water is a basic foundation in living things alone. This verse does not mean that water is a part of every object in existence. Therefore, according to that, water is an essential sign of life. That maybe the reason why drying up certain materials decreases the effects of many pathogens

Allah *Glorified is He* who honoured mankind and elevated them above other creatures, created them from water: ‘And it is He who created mankind out of this (very) water.’ (*al-Furqan*: 54) Allah also says: ‘Let man, then, observe out of what he has been created. He has been created out of effusing water, issuing from between the backbone and the chest-bones.’ (*at-Tariq*: 5-7) The water mentioned in this verse has special characteristics, being the effusing water of semen from which mankind is created. Allah says: ‘Was he not once a (mere) drop of sperm that had been spilt, and thereafter became a germ-cell – whereupon He (Allah) created and formed (it) in accordance with what (it) was meant to be.’ (*al-Qiyama*: 37-38)

After Allah created mankind, Allah has endowed them with lineage (*nasaban*) and marriage-ties (*sihran*). Allah divided mankind into males and females. The word *nasab* (lineage) refers to the concept of paternity and fatherhood that leads to successive generations of genes through the male line. This is because people are generally recognized through their names followed by the names of their fathers and forefathers. On the other hand, the word *sihran* (marriage-ties) refers to the links created through females. These links bring families together, as when a man marries the daughter of another man, he is referred to as a *sihr* (in-law). This is why the Arab poet said:

‘The mothers of people were the carriers of new offspring,
Whereas the lineage is through the fathers’

Scientists have stated that the male sperm, and not the female egg, determines the sex of the embryo. It is a profound aspect of the Creator's Omnipotence that He created both the male and the female from the same water, as He says in another chapter: 'And He (Allah) fashioned out of it the two spouses: the male and the female.' (*al-Qiyama*: 39) Allah described this process in the following verses: 'Was he not once a (mere) drop of sperm that had been spilt, and thereafter became a germ-cell – whereupon He (Allah) created and formed (it) in accordance with what (it) was meant to be, and fashioned out of it the two sexes, the male and the female?' (*al-Qiyama*: 37-39)

Both the males and the females are coded for in the sperms of the father, in what the scientists refer to as the XX and the XY sex-determining chromosomes. Therefore, the sperms that are produced by the male can produce either a male or a female foetus. Then, the strongest sperm that is best able to fertilise the egg determines the foetus's sex.

A similar selective phenomenon is clearly visible, for instance, in bees. When the queen lays her egg, she only accepts the strongest male to fertilise it. It flies at high altitudes to choose the strongest male. In the same way in other animals, only the strongest sperm will be able to fertilize the female's egg. If the fertilizing sperm has an XX chromosome, then the foetus will be a female. However, if the fertilizing sperm has an XY chromosome, the child will be a male.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '(Allah is the One) who created (everything), and thereupon moulded it (according to 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)

We refute the claims that man was created by chance through this existential sign. If mankind is composed of male bodies and female bodies that both share common characteristics and systems, except for the differences in their reproductive systems, how can their complementary reproductive connection be attributed to chance? One of the major enemies of chance is coincidence. Therefore, if males came to exist by chance and females came to exist by chance, is it also a coincidence that they can meet together in a complementary fashion, efficiently producing further males and females? Indeed, this is not a matter of chance, but rather, the deliberate design of the Creator *Glorified is He*.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says at the conclusion of the verse: ‘...for your Lord is ever infinite in His Ability.’ (*al-Furqan*: 54) Allah mentioned His Ability in this verse because this matter can only be brought through His Omnipotent Power.

Even before the Quran was revealed, Arabs had a natural inclination towards understanding this process. The wife of a man known as Abu Hamza criticised him for marrying another woman because she did not bear a son for him. She said:

‘Why does Abu Hamza not visit us,

Is he angry that we have not granted him sons?

By Allah, that is not something we can control.

We are like the earth in which farmers plant their crops,

We give them the like of what they have given us.’

This matter that was guessed by the ancient Arabs was not discovered by modern science until the twentieth century.

After mentioning this existential phenomenon, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the disbelievers again so that their hearts might soften to faith. Therefore, as we have seen in these verses, Allah *Glorified is He* counsels them regarding the true faith in some verses and directs their attention to His signs in creation in the other verses. Allah says:

وَيَعْبُدُونَ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ مَا لَا يَنْفَعُهُمْ وَلَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَكَانَ الْكَافِرُ عَلَىٰ رَبِّهِ ظَهِيرًا ﴿٥٥﴾

Yet instead of God they worship things that can neither benefit nor harm them: the disbeliever has always turned his back on his Lord [55] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 55)

After all of these signs have been made clear to them, does it befit them to worship deities other than Allah *Glorified is He* and wrongfully direct their worship to them? Indeed, it does not befit them.

Allah says in this verse that they worship things that can neither benefit them nor harm them. There are some people who think that these idols do not benefit them, but still believe that the false deities can do them harm. We say to these people that these false deities bring neither harm nor benefit. The only

one who can bring harm is the True Lord, Allah *Glorified is He* whom they have turned away from to worship their false deities. Indeed, these idols will not reward them for this worship, nor harm them if they abandon their worship.

The Quran called their actions towards these idols a form of worship, and these idolaters themselves said: ‘We worship them for no other reason than that they bring us nearer to Allah.’ (*az-Zumar*: 3) So, they admitted that they worshipped these idols. The reality of genuine worship is that the worshipper should obey the commands of the one whom he worships and should stay away from their prohibitions. What sort of commands can an idol possibly give? What can it possibly prohibit its human worshippers from doing? In fact, the only reason these pagans worshipped these false deities is that these idols gave them no commands. Therefore, these pagans did not have to make any genuine commitments or efforts. Their religion is a collection of mere fantasies, as it is certainly easy to worship a deity that gives no commands or prohibitions.

On the other hand, they will despise a religion that requires specific commitments and duties from them. This is because they do not believe in genuine servitude to their Lord.

People who transgress against themselves hope that the true religion of Islam is a lie because they had wanted to live according to their own whims and desires. Therefore, many imposters claimed prophet-hood in the early years following Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* such as Musaylima and Sajah⁽¹⁾. They attracted people to believe in them by reducing the number of religious obligations and making their commandments effortless. For example, when some people found it difficult to pay the purifying charities, these false prophets exempted their followers from paying such obligator charities.

(1) *She is Sajah bint Al-Harith ibn Suwayd At-Tamimiyya from Banu Yarbu'. Her epithet is Um Sadir. She was an educated poetess who had a comprehensive knowledge of previous nations. She claimed prophet-hood after the death of the Prophet Muhammad when she was with the tribe of Taghlib in the peninsula, and a large proportion of her tribe followed her. She came forth, seeking battle with Abu Bakr. She also met and married Musaylima, who was another impostor. Then she went back to rejoin her uncles in the peninsula where she heard of the killing of Musaylima. Then she became a Muslim and migrated to Basra where she died. Samurah ibn Jundub, Mu'awiyya's governor of Basra, prayed over her body. She died in 55 AH. (Al-A'lam of Az-Zirikli 3/78).*

Similarly, there are imposters in every age who suit the times in which they live. In the present times, there are imposters who make religious commandments easier by decreasing these commandments to match the whims and desires of the people. For instance, nowadays, they place no rules regarding the integration of the sexes, and they see nothing wrong with women wearing whatever clothes they want. They also have similar stances in many other religious matters.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in this verse we are studying: 'Indeed, the disbeliever does turn his back on his Lord (*zhaheera*).' (*al-Furqan*: 55) In the Arabic language, the word *zhaheer* is often used to mean a person who is a helper. Allah says in another chapter: 'And if you uphold each other (*tazhahara*) against him (Prophet Muhammad), (know that) Allah is his Protector, and (that,) therefore, (Angel) Jibril (Gabriel), and all the righteous among the believers, and all the (other) angels will come to his aid.' (*at-Tahrim*: 4)

In the past, before wheelbarrows were invented, people used to carry loads upon their backs (*zhahr*). And even today, we see porters carrying heavy loads upon their backs, while using certain garments to protect their backs from strain when they carry these heavy objects. When one of the porters wants another porter to give him help, he says to him, 'Please lend me your back (*zhahr*).' Therefore, the Arabic word *zhahr* (back) had this meaning that referred to support and help.

The word *zhahr* also implies height. It was used in this sense when Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the dam built by Dhu Al-Qarnayn: 'And thus (the rampart was built, and) their enemies (Gog and Magog) were unable to rise over it (*yazharuhu*), and neither were they able to pierce it.' (*al-Kahf*: 97)

Given that the Arabic word *zhaheer* used in this verse is interpreted to mean 'a helper', how can a disbeliever be a helper against Allah *Glorified is He*? This is because the disbeliever commits acts of disobedience and others follow his example of corruption and wrongdoing. If he were an obedient servant to Allah's orders, he would have been a guide for good deeds and a role model for righteous behaviour. However, the disbeliever chose to resemble the role of Satan, who disobeyed his Lord by refusing to prostrate to Adam *peace be upon him* and threatened his descendants when he said: 'O my Lord! Since You (O Allah) have thwarted me, I shall indeed make (all that is

evil) on earth seem goodly to them, and shall most certainly beguile them into grievous error.’ (*al-Hijr*: 39) All of these devils of the jinn and mankind empower the soul against its host until it causes them to slip into wrong action. When a human being listens to the call of a devil and obeys it by doing a wrong action, that devil has helped him to disobey Allah *Glorified is He*.

Another meaning of the word *zhaheer* refers to placing a person behind your back and paying no attention to them. An Arab proverb expressed this meaning by saying, ‘Do not place my request behind your back.’ This is when a person is asking you to place their request in close consideration.⁽¹⁾

Therefore, both meanings are possible. The word *zhaheer* could mean ‘a helper’. It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* were saying to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Know, O Muhammad, that the disbeliever is a helper against Allah *Glorified is He*. So, persevere and strive against them as much as you can.’ In this manner, Allah *Glorified is He* is encouraging His Messenger to adopt a stern position and to be on his guard against his enemies. On the other hand, the word *zhaheer* could mean inattention. In this manner, the verse was revealed to calm Prophet Muhammad’s heart, by telling him that disbelievers are insignificant and trifling matters in the eyes of Allah *Glorified is He* and that their schemes should not concern Him. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَا أَرْسَلْنَاكَ إِلَّا مُبَشِّرًا وَنَذِيرًا ﴿٥٦﴾

We sent you only to give good news and warning [56]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 56)

It is true that Allah *Glorified is He* says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘O Prophet! Strive hard against the disbelievers and the

(1) Ibn Manzur said in (Lissan Al-‘Arab: Subject matter: *zhahara*), ‘It is said about something to which no attention is paid. An example of this is saying, “I have placed this matter behind my back,” or “I have thrown it behind my back.” As for the saying, “Do not place my need of you behind your back,” it means, “Do not forget this request.” An example of that is found in Allah’s words: “...you regarded these commandments as objects that may be cast behind you (forgotten)!” (*Hud*: 92) It expresses your disdain for that person’s needs. In addition, the words, “He placed me behind his back,” mean that he neglected me.’

hypocrites, and be adamant against them.’ (*at-Tawba*: 73) However, this does not mean that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* should destroy himself in his attempts to call disbelievers to Islam, or feel great pain due to their lack of belief. The task of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is to simply convey the message. Prophet Muhammad was deeply saddened on account of the state of his people when his Lord addressed him with the words: ‘But (why) would you, perhaps, torment yourself with grief over them if they are not willing to believe in this message?’ (*al-Kahf*: 6)

Allah *Glorified is He* only commanded him to strive hard against the disbelievers and the hypocrites as a form of encouragement, so that he would leave no efforts unexpended in his attempts to guide them. Otherwise, Prophet Muhammad’s primary task was heralding good tidings and warnings of impending punishment to the people, as Allah says: ‘We have sent you only as a conveyer of glad tidings and a warner.’ (*al-Furqan*: 56) He was to give glad tidings of forthcoming rewards to direct the people towards the righteous means, and to warn people of the forthcoming punishments so that they can avoid their causes. Then, Allah directed Prophet Muhammad by saying:

قُلْ مَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ أَنْ يَتَّخِذَ إِلَىٰ رَبِّهِ سَبِيلًا ﴿٥٧﴾

**Say, ‘I am not asking for any reward for it, but anyone
who wishes should take a path to his Lord’ [57]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 57)**

Allah says to him in another verse: ‘Or is it that they are (rejecting your message, O Muhammad) in fear that you might ask of them a reward *ajr*, and that they would be burdened with debt (if they should listen to your message)?’ (*at-Tur*: 40) Did Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ask them for a reward in exchange for this guidance, that they are unable to pay, or are they miserly and stingy? The fact is that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not ask them for any wage for this guidance in the first place.

Does this verse mean that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was naturally allowed to ask them for a wage? The answer is, ‘Yes.’ When one person does something beneficial for another person, the giver should

expect a wage in the spirit of mutual exchange and compensation. He may then choose to abandon the wage, considering it a favour in good companionship.

What is a rewarding wage *ajr*? A wage is a payment that is given in return for work, while a price is a payment that is given in return for something that someone else owns. The sum of this payment varies according to the difficulty of the job, its duration, the skill of the worker and the risks the worker faces in the course of doing it. Each one of these elements we have mentioned raises the sum of the wage.

When you go travelling, for example, you will find yourself in need of a porter to carry your bags and will pay him a wage that is related to his efforts. However, if you were to hire a car and travel a certain distance with it, the amount you paid would inevitably be more since it took a greater amount of time and effort. If you need a welder to mend something for you, you would see the enormous degree of difficulty faced in that line of work and would not act miserly towards that worker. The job may appear to be easy and swiftly done in your view, but it still needed skill and expertise. That skill was not born in an instant, and indeed, took a long time, studying, and effort for the worker to acquire.

An architect may draw up plans for your house in one or two hours. Despite that, he may still ask for a large sum of money from you because his wage is proportional to the long years he had spent studying and working hard to obtain the necessary qualifications and skills needed for that job. Therefore, the sum of every wage is calculated according to the work that is done, and should be proportionate to the effort expended, the degree of risk and difficulty, as well as the skill level of the worker.

If that is how things are, then look at the work of a Messenger from Allah and how much he benefited the people by means of his message. Look at the Divine commandments that he brought forth to facilitate their own lives, the lives of their societies and their relationship with their Lord. Look at the way he freed them from the evils of themselves and the evils of people in general.

So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* has a huge job and expends an immense amount of effort. If you were able to calculate a suitable wage for that, you will find it to be considerably immense. Imagine that you

had to pay someone to guard you at night, how much would you pay? Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* however, brings you a program that guards and protects you, your property, your honour and every single thing you possess, and does not just protect you from one particular group but from everyone and everything. Indeed, the protection that you receive from the Divine program of Allah is not limited to this world but even extends to the Hereafter and lasts forever. If you were to work out an appropriate wage for such level of protection, how much would it be?

But, instead of that, he says to you that he does not want any wage, not out of any kind of disrespect but because you, fellow human being, will not be able to assess the value of this work nor the wage that it merits. The only one capable of assigning a value to that is Allah, the One who sent Prophet Muhammad to you. So, whatever you give him by way of payment in exchange for that, you slave of Allah, will always be too little.

We related the story⁽¹⁾ of the good man we met in Algeria: he was standing beside the road hitchhiking, so we stopped the car and opened the door so he could ride with us. But before he got in, he asked, 'How much?' He meant what price he would have to pay to ride with us. So, my companion said to him, 'It is for Allah,' and the man replied, 'Then, it is extremely expensive.' That is the meaning alluded to when the prophet says, as related by Allah, that his reward rests with none but Allah. (*Hud*: 29)

Elsewhere, Allah relays one of his prophets saying that his reward rests with none but Allah for he has been bidden to be among those who have surrendered themselves to Allah. (*Yunus*: 72) But what is the relation between being paid and between surrendering oneself to Allah? (*Yunus*: 72)

The relation is that the Muslim should not do his job for the sake of the one he is working for, but for the sake of Allah, and he should seek to get the wage the job truly merits directly from Him. If someone thinks that he gets his wage from the one for whom he is working, then he surely did what he did so it would be said that he did so-and-so; and once this purpose is served, this will be the end of it for him. Maybe he will not even be thanked for what he did!

(1) The story of the man who rode in sheikh's car and later asked him about how much he owed him for the ride.

That is why almost all the prophets said that they seek no reward from their people in return for what they convey. (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 109) Indeed, the only instances where a reward was demanded came in this verse which we are currently discussing: 'Say, "I am not asking for any reward for it, but anyone who wishes should take a path to his Lord..."' (*al-Furqan*: 57), and in another verse where the reward requested was nothing but the 'affection due to kin.' (*ash-Shura*: 23)

In the verse we are discussing, the reward means: seeking a way to requital by struggling in the way of Allah, or giving alms to the poor, etc. As for the phrase: '...anyone who wishes...' (*al-Furqan*: 57), it indicates that people have a choice when it comes to paying the reward because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does not take anything unless it is given voluntarily. The reward is: '...take a path to his Lord!' (*al-Furqan*: 57) by *jihad* in the way of Allah, or by doing right deeds. It is as if the reward of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will be the good deeds upon which the people will be rewarded by Allah, meaning that Prophet Muhammad took really nothing for himself. When discussing the 'reward,' we see it once coming as (*ajran*) like in the verse (*al-An'am*: 90), and another time (*min ajrin*)⁽¹⁾ as in this verse (*al-Furqan*: 57). Some think that *min* is redundant (*za'ida*), but that sort of thing should not be said about the Speech of Allah since it is unfitting to describe the Speech of Allah as being redundant as every single letter of His has a meaning.

We previously gave an example of the two statements: 'I do not have wealth' and 'I do not have any wealth.' We said that the first negates having wealth that is worthy of mention, although it may be a small wealth, while the second negates having any wealth whatsoever, starting from what is called wealth and going beyond that. So, which of the two is an unequivocally negative? Thus, the word *min* here indicates entirety.

That is why Allah says to Prophet Muhammad if he is seeking recompense then the 'recompense' coming from Him is the best. (*al-Mu'minun*: 72) Why?

(1) (*ajran*) appears in 6 verses: (*al-An'am*: 90), (*Hud*: 51), (*Ya Sin*: 21), (*ash-Shura*: 23), (*at-Tur*: 40) and (*al-Qalam*: 46), and (*min ajrin*) appears in 9 verses: (*Yunus*: 72), (*Yusuf*: 104), (*al-Furqan*: 57), (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 109), (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 127), (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 145), (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 164), (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 180) and (*Fatir*: 47).

This is because He will give you and recompense you according to His worth. He will give you a gift that reflects His unlimited generosity and munificence. Mankind, on the other hand, will only give you according to their worth and within the confines of their limited capacities.

Another indication regarding this matter comes in the chapter of *ash-Shu'ara'*, where the word 'reward' was mentioned a number of times in the course of relating the stories of eight of the prophets: Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron), Ibrahim (Abraham), Nuh (Noah), Hud (Eber), Saleh (Shelah), Lut (Lot) and Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon them all*.

We notice that every one of these messengers⁽¹⁾ said that their rewards rest with none but the Sustainer of all the worlds (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 109), except for Musa and Ibrahim *peace be upon them*; neither of them said these words. Why? Because when you ask a reward for something you did, this means that there was nothing enlisting you to do this thing for free. You would not, for example, demand a reward for something you did as a courtesy to a friend. The same was true with Ibrahim *peace be upon him* since the first person he called to Allah was his uncle Azar, and one does not ask a reward for doing a favour to such a close relative. Also, Musa *peace be upon him* the first person he called to Allah was Pharaoh who raised him as a child in his own house, and had he asked him for a reward the answer would have been, 'What reward would that be when I brought you up⁽²⁾?...etc.'

The second verse where a reward is mentioned is in (*ash-Shura*: 23) where the reward is 'affection due to kin'. It is as if our love of kin is the reward Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* receives in return for delivering his Message. But is it just the kin of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or our own kin?

(1) *Nuh peace be upon him* said it in (*Yunus*: 72), (*Hud*: 29) and (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 109). *Hud peace be upon him* said it in (*Hud*: 51) and (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 127). *Saleh peace be upon him* said it in (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 145). *Lut peace be upon him* said it in (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 164), and *Shu'ayb peace be upon him* said it in (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 180).

(2) *Despite the fact that Musa peace be upon him did not ask for any reward from him, nor wealth, kingdom or anything else, still Pharaoh expected gratitude from him on account that he had raised him, saying: '...Did we not bring you up among us when you were a child? And did you not spend among us years of your life?' (ash-Shu'ara': 18)*

There is no doubt that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings upon him* who made his reward to be the love and care of one's close kin and relatives, refers to the kin of all the Muslims, as indeed Allah says about him that he has a higher claim on the believers than they have on their own selves. (*al-Ahzab*: 6)

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْحَيِّ الَّذِي لَا يَمُوتُ وَسَبِّحْ بِحَمْدِهِ
وَكَفَى بِهِ بَذُنُوبٍ عِبَادَهُ خَيْرًا

**Put your trust in the Living [God] who never dies,
and celebrate His praise. He knows the sins of His
servants well enough [58] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 58)**

The True Lord sets the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at rest, saying, 'Muhammad, do not be worried from the large number of disbelievers that walk the earth nor the plots that they hatch against you nor their allies from the devils of men and jinn; the whole lot of them will fall down and die-either at your hands or by means of a punishment from Allah. Even supposing that they were to remain living, their strength and their stratagems would never stand a chance in front of Allah's strength and stratagems. If they place their trust in idols that neither bring harm nor benefit, then you place your trust in Allah': 'Put your trust in the Living (Allah) who never dies...' (*al-Furqan*: 58).

A wise man would not place his trust in anything except when he has total confidence in it, is assured of its aid and that it will consent to everything he wants. For what is the point in relying on someone to act in your interests when the next morning you might receive word of his death?

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to offer the following advice to His creation: 'If you want to rely on someone and place your trust in them, then place your trust in One Who will bring you benefit and will never leave you. Place your trust in the One Who will remain forever with you and never abandon you and the One who is not rendered powerless by anything in the heavens or the earth. That is real wisdom!'

But what is the point of placing your trust in one who is not living? Supposing that he were to possess eternal life, what is there to guarantee that his feelings towards you are not going to change?

In the statement '... and celebrate His praise...' (*al-Furqan*: 58), the word *sabbaha* means to declare something to be high or transcendent, and that transcendence may be understood in the light of the verse that says that nothing is like unto him. (*ash-Shura*: 11) Allah has existence and you have existence, but Allah's Existence is nothing like yours; Allah has attributes and you have attributes, but the Attributes of Allah are nothing like yours; and Allah has actions and you have actions, but the Actions of Allah are nothing like yours.

So, in terms of His Essence, Attributes, and Actions, Allah is higher than being like any of His creations, so you are placing your trust in a Deity who will never be susceptible to change.

This transcendence of Allah and His Greatness are in your best interests, O mankind! It is in your best interest that there is no one else akin to Allah, not in terms of His Existence, nor the fact that He will exist forever, nor in terms of what He can do. It is in your best interest to know that there is a One Who is more exalted than all and that all of creation is governed by His laws. That will ensure that you live amongst them in safety. So, the best thing is to have none like Allah, and for Him to be exalted above all.

When you declare Allah's transcendence, it is necessary that you do not just declare His transcendence but to: '...celebrate His praise...' (*al-Furqan*: 58) You praise Him on account of the fact that He is one without partner or peer, and that there is nothing like Him. For, under the doctrines governing our belief, the strong must not oppress the weak or the rich the poor, etc.

Then He says: '... He knows the sins of His servants well enough.' (*al-Furqan*: 58) We say, '*kafaka fulan*' meaning that this person suffices you, and you do not need anyone other than him. It is similar to saying, '*hasbuka-llah*' meaning that Allah suffices you from needing other than Him since He gives you everything that you need and prevents evil from reaching you, even when you think that evil might be good for you.

It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* has equipped you with a control that sets your life in order and guarantees your safety. That is why, when you call on Allah and He does not respond to you, you must never think that Allah is an employee at your beck and call, ready to answer your every whim and command. Rather, you must think that He is your Lord and the One in charge

of your affair and that He will choose for you what is best for you and bring you only good, even if you see it as something other than that.

As an illustration of this, we mentioned the mother who keeps calling Allah every time her son does something; at times to punish him and at times to reward him. How would it be if Allah answered each and every prayer!? So, it is from His mercy that Allah rejects some of her supplications and does not answer them. Indeed, His refusal to answer, in this case, is an answer.

The statement ‘...He knows the sins of His servants well enough’ (*al-Furqan*: 58) means, ‘If you rely on the Living One Who does not die, the effects of that reliance is His protection to you from the sins of His slaves and creatures. He alone is the One Who knows their sins. He even knows the thoughts that transpire inside them.

Did the True Lord *Glorified is He* not say to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to see how those who have been forbidden to hold secret conversations go back afterwards and hold them, and conspire with one another in what is sinful, hostile, and disobedient to him? So, when they come to Prophet Muhammad they greet him with words Allah has never used to greet him, and they say inwardly, ‘Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?’ But Allah vows that Hell will be punishment enough for them, an evil destination where they will burn there eternally. (*al-Mujadala*: 8) Those words were still inside them and had not yet come out, yet still Allah informed them of their inner thoughts. It is as if Allah were setting the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at rest. So, no matter how much they plan and plot against you, no matter how much the allies of jinn and men unite against you, fear not, for your Lord has knowledge of sins from which you yourself might not be able to perceive nor will you be able to protect yourself. It is enough for you that Allah knows the evils of your enemies. Allah tells us that they have always schemed, but He brought their scheming to nought; for He is above all schemers. (*al-Anfal*: 30) The *khafir* is the one who knows hidden matters. Even when it comes to our mundane affairs we say, ‘Summon a *khafir* ‘expert’, to resolve it,’ since laymen are not capable of resolving specialist matters. Elsewhere in the Quran, He *the Almighty* says: ‘Does He not know, Who created? And He is the Knower of the subtleties, the Aware.’ (*al-Mulk*: 13)

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* moves us to an existential cosmic sign that is attached to the signs mentioned previously. The reason why He mentions more cosmic signs is to trigger the emotions and inclinations of His bondsmen so that perhaps they might become attached to the Creator and turn their attention to Him.

الَّذِي خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا فِي سِتَّةِ أَيَّامٍ ثُمَّ اسْتَوَى
عَلَى الْعَرْشِ الرَّحْمَنُ فَسَلِّ بِهِ خَيْرًا

It is He who created the heavens and earth and what is between them in six Days, and then established Himself on the throne – He is the Lord of Mercy; He is the Best Informed [59] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 59)

Some think that the creation of the heavens and earth was something easy and that the creation of mankind was greater. But the True Lord *Glorified is He* says that the creation of heavens and earth was indeed greater than the creation of man. (*Ghafir*: 57)

Man is created by Allah, and then might die after a day or after a hundred years, and in the course of his life, he will be afflicted by trials or illnesses. But the heavens and the earth, Allah created them and engineered them with precision, following laws that never vary and never become defective no matter how much time passes. It is as if the True Lord *Glorified is He* were saying to man, ‘These heavens and this earth are My creation and My handiwork. If you were to think and reflect on them, you would find that their creation is greater than your own.’

As for the phrase: ‘...in six days...’ (*al-Furqan*: 59), we previously discussed this matter and said, ‘All of the verses of the Quran indicate that creation was completed in a period of six days except for a single chapter whose verses indicate that creation took place over a period of eight days.’

In the chapter of *Fussilat* the True Lord *Glorified is He* asks us how it is possible we disregard the One Who created the earth in two days, and how we set up other Gods as His equals, when He is the Lord of all the worlds! Then, Allah tells us how He placed solid mountains to settle the earth, how He blessed it, measured out its varied provisions for all who seek them - all in

four days. Then He tells us how he turned to the sky, which was smoke, and He said to it and the earth, 'Come into being, willingly or not,' and they said, 'We come willingly'. Then, in two days He formed the seven heavens, and assigned an order to each, and made the nearest one beautifully illuminated and secure. (*Fussilat*: 9-12)

The sum of all these days is eight. But, we need to go back to the detailed description of this 'sum' to be able to comprehend what it is made up of. The True Lord *Glorified is He* speaks here about creating the heavens and the earth and everything in between in six days. Then He speaks about the creation of the earth in two days; and then about placing the mountains as pegs towering over it, blessing it and measuring out its provision for those who seek it, in four days. These four days are mentioned as a supplement to the creation of the earth which means that they include the two days. So, there is an overlap here and Allah is saying that with respect to the four days, the creation of the earth lasted two days, while the creation of all the other things took up the remainder of the time until the four days were complete. Like when you say, 'I travelled to Tanta in one hour and to Alexandria in two hours,' meaning that the hour that it took to travel to Tanta is included in the two hours that it took to get to Alexandria. But what length of time do we assign to the 'day' that is mentioned here? Allah addresses us with those days which we know of and whose significance we readily understand, so the meaning is, 'in six of the days that you live and know.' Had it referred to a pattern of 'day' which we know nothing of, the verse would have made no sense to us.

Someone might ask, 'How could creation take that long when the True Lord *Glorified is He* simply has to say, 'Be!' to create something and saying 'Be!' takes no time at all?' In reply, they say, 'There is a difference between the actual process of creation and the time it actually needs for setting.'

If, for example, you want to prepare yogurt, you get the milk, some yogurt from a previously-made batch, you mix them and put them in the specified temperature. Once you do this, you will have actually made the yogurt, but you still can not eat it. The setting time needed for the yogurt is a few hours for all the elements to combine. So, you can never say that you prepared the yogurt in a few hours!

Similarly, when you, for example, go to a tailor to measure and get fit for a suit, he will say to you, 'I will have it for you in a month.' But does it take a full month to tailor a suit? No, this month is the time it will be at the tailor's shop.

When it comes to the True Lord *Glorified is He* He does things and creates things outside the border of time. He simply says to something, 'Be!' and it is.

As for the words: '...and then established Himself on the throne...' (*al-Furqan*: 59), we have discussed this matter previously. The verb (*istawa*) means 'He rose up', 'He was high', 'He was above' and 'He sat'. However, we declare Allah to be exalted above doing *istiwa* in any way that resembles our *istiwa* which alludes to the custom kings have of sitting on their thrones after getting full control over their kingdoms, and here it is symbolic of how Allah has full control over all affairs.

The statement '... He is the Lord of Mercy...' (*al-Furqan*: 59) indicates that the whole process of creation takes place within the framework of Allah's universal mercy. So '...ask about Him one well informed.' (*al-Furqan*: 59) This is because He created the heavens and the earth and created us, but despite that we do not know how this creation was brought about. We will never grasp the details of how this creation was done unless the Creator Himself tells us of them. If He does not tell us, then it is something that none of us saw first-hand. How come then some theorists claim things like: the earth was a piece of the sun which then got separated from it as the sun revolved around itself, or any similar theories that just come into their heads!

That is why the True Lord *Glorified is He* warns us against taking such theories for granted because creation is a matter that no amount of empirical knowledge can ever fathom. He tells us outright that He did not make us witness the creation of the heavens and earth, or ourselves, nor did he take as His helpers those who lead man astray. (*al-Kahf*: 51)

So, there are among us those who want to lead men astray, claiming that they are scientists who know what other people do not know. Beware of them, for they were not witnesses to the process of creation and neither were they Allah's helpers to know any factual information about creation. Hence, the influx of theories about how man was created or how the heavens and earth were formed proves that this verse is speaking the truth.

It is very much the same with those who like to side with the Noble Quran at the expense of the Prophet Muhammad's Hadith. They will say to you: 'Tell me what the Quran says.' Glory be to Allah! Do you side with the Quran against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* although it was him who conveyed the Quran to you and without him you would have had no knowledge of the Quran? They tend to call themselves 'Quran People,' i.e. they only acknowledge the Quran. But I say to these people, 'You pray three units (*raka's*) for Maghrib; whereabouts in the Quran did you find that?'

That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'There will come a time when a man, leaning on his couch, will say when being told a *Hadith*, "The Book of Allah stands between me and you: what we find in it to be lawful, we take as lawful and what we find in it to be forbidden, we take as forbidden." But indeed, what the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* has forbidden is identical to what Allah has forbidden.'⁽¹⁾

Why? Because, Allah commands us to uphold whatever Prophet Muhammad has commanded us to uphold, and to refrain from whatever he commanded us from which to refrain. (*al-Hashr*: 7) By Allah, if no one was around today uttering statements of that sort, what would have become of this Hadith? What would we have made out of it? This Hadith exposes them for all to see how superficial they are, for it would have been well within their capacity, after learning of this Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to refrain from siding with the Quran at the expense of disregarding the Prophetic Hadith. Indeed, they could not help but expose themselves as they truly are!

Let us now return to the topic at hand: we discussed two things now, the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the meaning of the Lord being established on the Throne. These two matters are ones about which only Allah Himself may be asked because He alone is the One Who knows the hidden things which nobody has seen or been privy to and so nobody can tell us about them. That is why the verse ends with: '...so ask about Him one well informed.' (*al-Furqan*: 59)

(1) Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (4/132), At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2664), Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* (12) and Ad-Daraqutni in his *Sunnan* (4/286). The wording is that of Ad-Daraqutni.

As for the meaning of the word (*sa'al*), a person does not ask about something unless he is ignorant of it. There are different levels of questions: you may be ignorant of a thing but have no interest in it nor have any desire to know it, so you are one of those who do not know it. Or, you may be ignorant of a thing and yet have an interest in it, and it is that interest that drives you to ask about it.

Sometimes we say '*is'al bihi*', and sometimes we say '*is'al'anhu*'. The meaning of the first is to ask out of interest. So, by reason of your interest, you should ask a well-informed person so he could tell you what you want to know. In this case, it is Allah alone who knows the hidden dimension of things and their particulars. He has the news of the creation of the heavens and the earth, and He knows what is meant by Him being established on the Throne. That is why when you ask Allah about these matters, you have only asked One Who is truly aware.

As for those who say that the phrase: '...so ask about Him one well informed...' (*al-Furqan*: 59) means asking those who know about Allah from among the people of the Book. We say that there is no harm in that interpretation since it reverts to Allah in the end.

وَإِذَا قِيلَ لَهُمْ اسْجُدُوا لِلرَّحْمَنِ قَالُوا وَمَا الرَّحْمَنُ أَنَسْجُدُ لِمَا تَأْمُرُنَا وَزَادَهُمْ نُفُورًا ﴿٦٠﴾

Yet when they are told, 'Bow down before the Lord of Mercy,' they say, 'What is the Lord of Mercy? Should we bow down before anything you command?' and they turn even further away [60] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 60)

We notice here that when the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the attribute that requires to submit to Him, He does not say, for example, 'Prostrate yourselves before Allah,' but instead He says: '...Bow down before the Lord of Mercy...' (*al-Furqan*: 60). He mentions His quality of universal mercy which He extends to you, thereby making it obligatory for you to obey Him and submit to Him. It is as we said earlier, 'Make your obedience to the one whom you cannot do without, and make your submission to the one whose kingdom you can never leave.' They ask: "...What is the Lord of Mercy? ...'" (*al-Furqan*: 60). It is as if they did not know this word and only

knew the (*rahman*) of Al-Yamama (the nickname which ‘Musaylima the Liar’ gave to himself).

Their question: ‘...Should we bow down before anything you command?...’ (*al-Furqan*: 60) shows that they did not refuse to worship because of who they were commanded to worship but because of the one who commanded them to worship. As we said previously, it is like when they asked why the Quran was not bestowed upon some great man from either of the two cities. (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) In other words they are saying that if Allah had commanded them to prostrate, they would have done it, but since the command comes exclusively from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* how can they simply obey? What is it that sets him apart and gives him the right to command them? That is why Allah says after that: ‘...and they turn even further away.’ (*al-Furqan*: 60) *Nufur* literally means recoiling oneself from something out of hatred for it.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

نَبَارَكَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ فِي السَّمَاءِ بُرُوجًا وَجَعَلَ فِيهَا سِرَاجًا وَقَمَرًا مُنِيرًا ﴿٦١﴾

**Exalted is He who put constellations in the heavens,
a radiant light, and an illuminating moon [61]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 61)**

The context goes back once again to cosmic signs, for the True Lord *Glorified is He* alternates in this chapter between verses requesting things from them and verses directing their attention to Allah’s power and immensity. This provides us with an indication of the extent of their obstinacy and stubbornness, and of the desire of the True Lord *Glorified is He* to bring them back to His path.

If He were to have wished, He could have listed the entire cosmic signs one after the other followed by their refutations, but He preferred to wed one with the other so that the lessons would be instilled profoundly into the hearts of the believers.

We have said before that: ‘Exalted...’ (*al-Furqan*: 61) *tabaraka* has the meaning of His being far-removed from everything, His rank being exalted

and His blessings and gifts being magnified. As for *buruj*, it is the plural of *burj* which is a towering stronghold that it is impossible to conquer. Nowadays, they use the word to describe tall buildings, saying the *burj* of Al-Ma'adi, the *burj* of the Nile and so on. It is with this meaning in mind that Allah vows in one verse by the sky and its towering constellations, (*al-Buruj*: 1) and in another He reminds us that, when it is our time, death will overtake us even if we took refuge in a high tower. (*an-Nisa'*: 78)

The '*buruj*' are also the astrological houses in the sky which people use to tell the time and which some have linked to horoscopes. Indeed, the first thing many of them do when they open their newspapers in the morning is to check the horoscope section. Many verses of the Quran indicate that Allah created these houses to make it easy for people to measure time, and Allah tells us that the sun and the moon run their appointed orbits (*ar-Rahman*: 5), and the same is also mentioned in (*al-An'am*: 96).

This means that it is by means of them that one measures time: the sun gives us day and night, while the moon allows us to know when a new month begins since the particular phases in which it appears clearly shows you when it is the beginning, the middle or the end of the month. Then, by means of the shadow, the sun allows us to calculate even smaller increments of time (such as hours and minutes).

It is well known that there are 12 astrological houses in the sky, all of which are gathered in these poetic verses:

The lamb, the bull and the twin of the crab,
With the lion guarding the balance's spike,
The scorpion, the bow, the goat, and the bucket,
And a fish are all we knew from the Syrian race.

These houses are Aries, Taurus, Gemini, Cancer, Leo, Virgo, Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces - the first is Aries and the last is Pisces. Each of these houses of the zodiac begins on the 21st of the month and ends on the 20th.

As for His words: '...He who put constellations in the heavens, a radiant light, and an illuminating moon' (*al-Furqan*: 61), a '*siraj*' is a lamp that we

set alight to provide us with self-induced heat and light. Here, the word refers to the sun, since its heat and its light are both self-induced, unlike the moon which provides light only when the rays of the sun are reflected off its surface. So, its light is not self-induced, and that is why its light is described as ‘illuminated’, since it is void of heat.

It is something quite amazing that the surface of the moon, as we have discovered, is made up of stones. But when they removed some stones from its surface to conduct experiments on them, was the light of the moon diminished in any way? No, because it is the entire body of the moon that reflects the light of the sun back to us, and so when stones are removed from its surface, the stones that lay beneath them will still reflect the rays of the sun.

Elsewhere, the True Lord *Glorified is He* makes this matter clear, when He tells us it is indeed He who made the sun a source of radiant light and the moon a source of reflected light. (*Yunus: 5*) *Diya*’ is light that is produced by a planet from within itself while ‘*nur*’ is light that is reflected from another body. In other words, light that is not self-induced.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُوَ الَّذِي جَعَلَ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ خِلْفَةً لِّمَنۢ أَرَادَ أَن يَذَّكَّرَ أَوْ أَرَادَ شُكُورًا ﴿٦٢﴾

It is He who made the night and day follow each other – so anyone who wishes may be mindful or show gratitude [62]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan: 62*)

We know that night is the absence of the sun from one-half of the planet earth, while day is the sun facing the other half. Day and night follow one another, hence: they ‘...follow each other...’ (*al-Furqan: 62*). The night comes and then the day succeeds it, each of them being the successor of the other. This matter is clear to us now, but how were things in the beginning when Allah created the earth? Was the sun in its place or was it absent?

If the True Lord *Glorified is He* created the sun facing the earth, then day came first. After that the sun set and the night followed the day; so the day was not preceded by night in that case. Similarly, if the sun was not in its place at the moment of creation, then night came first without being preceded

by day. In each of these cases, one of the two will not be following the other, whereas we need to understand the verse in such a way that the word 'follow each other' is true for both the day and the night.

The truth is that both of them have been successors to the other from the very start of creation. As we know - and it is something about which no doubt remains - the earth is spherical. So, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* first created the sun and the moon, the side of the earth that faced the sun was in daylight, while the side that faced the moon was in night. Then movement commenced, and so from the very beginning, they have both followed each other.

This theory could not possibly stand without positing that the earth is round, and that is further corroborated by Allah's confirmation that the night can never outrun the day. (*Ya Sin*: 40) Hence, the day can never precede the night, and yet Allah mentions the night because they used to believe that night was created first. Why? It is because for the Arabs the day starts by the eve of the preceding day. In *Ramadan* when we fast, do we start fasting first and then we see the new moon, or do we first see the new moon at the eve of the first day? So, the first day of *Ramadan* starts with the eve (night) preceding it. That is why they considered the night to precede the day. This was something they believed and something that none of them disputed. So, the Quran addresses them on the basis of these beliefs: 'You believe that the night precedes the day – and so the day is behind, but you should know that the night does not precede the day.'

If we were to have said that the earth was flat, then these words would have made no sense. But to which day and night are being referred? Is it my day or the day of the one on the opposite side of the globe? Every millionth of a second a day is born and a night begins because when the sun sets on me, it rises on others; and when it is midday where I am, it is mid-afternoon, sunset or even the middle of the night where others are. So, all the times are found every time. This difference when it comes to time means that the sound of the call of prayer '*adhan*' resonates with the words '*Allahu Akbar*' every moment in time. So, Allah is being worshipped in every single moment: while you say '*Allahu Akbar*' (Allah is the Greatest), someone else says '*la ilaha illa-Allah*' (there is no God but Allah), and so on and so forth.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* created the night as a time for resting, and the day as a time for toiling - that is the case for the vast majority. But that does not apply to all human beings, for some people have certain obligations that contradict this rule. Some jobs even require their holders to stay up at night, such as bakers, guards, nurses, etc.

So, what about these people who sleep at day and stay up at night? Would it not have been a contradiction, had not these people been given a justification by the Quran? That is specifically why, in another verse, Allah says that among His wonders is our sleep by night or by day. (*ar-Rum*: 23) This verse takes into account the circumstances of those who are forced to work at night and rest during the day.

As for Allah's words: '...so anyone who wishes may be mindful or show gratitude' (*al-Furqan*: 62) which mean, 'You, whose work during the day has kept you from remembering your Lord, take advantage of the night to remember Him. You, whose sleep during the night has kept you from remembering your Lord, take advantage of the day.' It is like what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah spreads open His hand during the day to turn in mercy towards the wrongdoers of the day, and spreads open His hand during the night to turn in mercy towards the wrongdoers of the night.'⁽¹⁾ So, anyone who misses something during the day should make up for it at night, and anyone who misses something at night should make up for it at the day. If Allah spreads open His hand during the night and spreads open His hand during the day, non-stop, this means that Allah's hand is always spread open.

As for: '...be mindful...' (*al-Furqan*: 62), it means to consider and reflect upon Allah's signs during the day and the night, and to try to capture the blessings of Allah for which you can thank Him, as opposed to the heedless ones who pay no attention to any of these things.

It is part of Allah's bounty and generosity to us to keep us mindful of these blessings and directs our attention to them, since we all tend to heedlessness.

(1) Narrated by Imam Muslim in his *Sahih* (2759) as part of a Hadith from Abu Musa Al-'Ash'ari Allah be pleased with him as well as by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (4/395 & 404).

As for Allah's words: '...or show gratitude...' (*al-Furqan*: 62), the word (*shukur*) is the hyperbole of (*shukr*).

وَعِبَادُ الرَّحْمَنِ الَّذِينَ يَمْشُونَ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ هَوْنًا
وَإِذَا خَاطَبَهُمُ الْجَاهِلُونَ قَالُوا سَلَامًا ﴿٦٣﴾

The servants of the Lord of Mercy are those who walk humbly on the earth, and who, when the foolish address them, reply, 'Peace'[63] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 63)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* provides us with a picture of true servitude and an example for those who follow the Divine program. It is as if He were saying to us, 'No need to talk of those who turn aside from the path of Allah and reject His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* and look instead at the qualities of those slaves of Mine who believe in Me, put My rulings into practice and affirm My Messenger.'

We say with regard to the two words ('*ibad*') and ('*abeed*') that ('*abeed*' - slaves) is the plural of ('*abd*' - slave), while ('*ibad*' - worshipers) is the plural of ('*abid*' - worshiper), just like (*rijal* - dismounted people) is the plural of (*rajil* - dismounted person) in the verse where Allah tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to proclaim pilgrimage to all people and they will come on foot (dismounted).... (*al-Hajj*: 27) So ('*abeed*') is not ('*ibad*').

We previously discussed the difference between ('*abeed*') and ('*ibad*'), pointing out that we are all ('*abeed*') of Allah, regardless of whether we are believers or disbelievers, obedient or disobedient. This is because things happen to us that we are unable to prevent despite our will; which proves that we are compelled. The disbelieving ('*abd*') is the one who rebels against belief in Allah, rebels against the affirmation of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and rebels against Allah's rulings by not doing them.

But can any disbeliever rebel against illness or affliction? Or, can he rebel against death when his time comes? All of this makes him a slave after all. All of us are enslaved when it comes to things over which we are compelled and have no power but other than that we are given a choice.

As for the believers, they relinquish the choice Allah gave them of belief or disbelief in favour of the Will of their Lord and are deserving of being called (*'ibad*) of Allah: 'The servants of the Lord of Mercy...' (*al-Furqan*: 63). But being servants to the Most Merciful Lord makes them masters. That is why Allah honoured His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by granting him the Night Journey because of his status as a servant of Allah, and Allah tells him it is by His limitless Glory that He made His servant travel by night. (*al-Isra'*: 1) Thus, his slavery to Allah was the reason Allah raised him up.

It was because of the purity and sincerity of his slavery to Allah that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* obtained proximity to Allah that no human being had ever attained. That is also why Allah describes the angels as being honoured servants. (*al-Anbiya'*: 26) When we did a thorough examination of all the verses where (*'ibad*) is mentioned, we only found one verse which on the surface appeared to contradict the meaning we have given for (*'ibad*), and that is when Allah talks about the Hereafter asking the false Gods if it was them who led these servants of His astray. (*al-Furqan*: 17) In this verse, He refers to the astray people as (*'ibad*), a term that is only normally used for those who are obedient. Why? Scholars explain that nobody has a free will in the Hereafter. All people in the Hereafter are (*'ibad*) because their free will is gone.

The people of knowledge say the word *'ibad* is derived from *'ibadiya* - state of worshiping, while the word *'abid* is derived from *'ubudiya* - servitude. Hence, the state of worship *'ibadiya*, is to obey the commands of Allah and abstain from His prohibitions out of a desire for His reward in the Hereafter and out of fear of His punishment. On the other hand, *'ibadiya* comes about so that a person can obtain the reward of the Hereafter and avoid its punishments.

As for *'ubudiya*, that is when a person is not fixated on what will happen in the Hereafter, but rather only looks to the fact that Allah has already shown kindness to His slaves beforehand by creating them out of nothing, providing for them out of nothing, bringing them up and subjugating the whole existence to serve them. So, because of all the blessings bestowed on us, they find Allah deserving of obedience regardless of whether He rewards or punishes us in the next life.

As for ('*ubuda*), it is when a slave is not fixated on the blessings that have come before nor the rewards or punishments that are yet to come. Rather, he sees that it is the Majesty of Allah that makes Him worthy of being obeyed, even if He had not ever bestowed any blessings upon him, and even if He had not set in store for him any reward or punishment.

As for '*ubudiya* to people, it is abhorred. A renowned politician once said⁽¹⁾, 'When did you enslave the people when their mothers brought them into this world as free human beings?' That is because in servitude to people, the master takes the best of his slave, whereas servitude to Allah is a source of honour and pride since the slave takes the best from his Master - it is servitude of mastery and not compulsion.

When you believe in Allah, Allah hands the reins over to you, saying, 'If you want Me to remember you, then remember Me.' In a Qudsi Hadith, Allah says, 'Whoever mentions Me to himself, I mention him to Myself. Whoever mentions Me to a group, I mention him to an even better group.'⁽²⁾

If He summons you to pray five times a day, He does that so you can come closer to Him. You are free to connect to Him any time you want without an appointment, and you can even specify the time you want the meeting to begin and end and what you want it to be about, etc. So, the reins are in your hands.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* acquired this quality from Allah; whenever he shook hands with one of his companions, he would not withdraw his hand until the other withdrew his hand first⁽³⁾. That is one of

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- (1) He is Ahmad 'Urabi, son of Muhammad 'Urabi, an Egyptian leader who has left his mark on recent events in the history of Egypt. He was born in the village of Harya Wazna, one of the villages of the Zagazig in Egypt, in the year 1841 CE, and lived in the vicinity of the Azhar for two years. Then he enlisted in the army in 1855 CE when he was only 14 years old and remained in it until he reached the rank of admiral during the rule of the Khedive Taufiq. He died in 1911 CE at the age of 70. See (al-'A'lam of Az-Zirikli 1/168).
- (2) Narrated by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (2/251, 354 & 405); Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (7405, 7505 & 7537); and At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (3603) as part of a (Hadith) from Abu Hurayra. At-Tirmidhi said that the Qudsi Hadith was (hasan sahih). Sheikh Sha'rawi gave an explanation of this Qudsi Hadith in the television series, 'The (Qudsi Hadiths)' (1/17-25) as edited by us.
- (3) Narrated by the father of Sheikh Al-Asbahani in his book, '*Akhlaq An-nabiy wa Adabih*' (p. 36 of the edition printed by 'Ad-dar Al-Misriyya Al-Lubnaniyya in 1993), that Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him said, 'When Prophet Muhammad shook a man's hand, =

the courtesies exercised by the True Lord *Glorified is He*. So being a slave to Allah means being a slave to One Who is Most Merciful, not being a slave to an oppressive tyrant.

The first thing we notice in this verse is that Allah adjuncts the servants to the Most-Merciful (*ar-Rahman*) to emphasize that being servants to Allah entails no humiliation; let us not forget that the Quran is the intricate speech of the Lord. Then He mentions the qualities with which these slaves are endowed - qualities with respect to themselves, qualities with respect to their relation with the society, qualities with respect to their relation with their Lord and qualities by means of which the society can be bettered and rectified.

When it comes to action, human beings are either sitting down or moving. We will exclude the state of sleep because it is a time of no-action. When one is sitting down, his movement is limited and restrained. So, the important state is that in which we are moving and walking - it is the state which we should direct our attention to.

That is why our Lord makes it clear to us how we should walk, saying: 'The servants of the Lord of Mercy are those who walk humbly on the earth...' (*al-Furqan*: 63), i.e. gently and with calm and tranquility without any arrogance or conceit. Why? Because it is walking that will bring you into contact with many different societies, and this divinely inspired way sets a humanitarian trait in the society that regards all human beings as equal.

Elsewhere in the Quran, the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us of other traits, like not to turn our nose up at people, nor walk about the place arrogantly... (*Luqman*: 18), and not to strut arrogantly about the earth, since we cannot break it open, nor match the mountains in height... (*al-Isra'*: 37).

The word *tas'ir* in the above verse, which means turning our nose up at people in pride and conceit, is derived from *sa'ar* which is a disease that afflicts camels and causes their necks to be twisted to the sides. If someone wants to walk haughtily and arrogantly upon the earth, he can do so on account of some subjective quality of his, but is there anything at all subjective that you can be sure you will continue to have?

= *he would not withdraw his hand until the man withdrew his hand first, and he would not turn his face away from him until the man had turned his face away first.*

If you are rich, you could easily become impoverished; if you are strong and healthy, illness might strike you down; and if you are mighty today, you could easily become weak and humiliated tomorrow. So, none of the things that give you cause to be arrogant are actually yours since they are given to you by Allah, so what then are you being arrogant about?!

Like the ongoing saying: 'He who stitches should stitch on his thigh', but how can you stitch on the thigh of another person? The background for this proverb is that a saddle maker used to make a child, who worked for him, stretch his leg out straight and he would place his saddle on the boy's thigh and start stitching it. A man saw this and he pitied the child, so he said to the man, 'The boy is weak and will not be able to endure that, if you want to do it like that, then place the saddle on your own thigh and stitch it!' The same applies here: he, who wants to act arrogantly, should only act arrogantly on account of something intrinsic to himself, not on account of something that has been given to him. An arrogant person is one over whose heart a veil has been placed, so that he no longer pays heed to his Lord *the Most High* and sees himself as being better than all the rest of Allah's creation. If only he were to have called to mind the greatness and grandeur of his Lord, he would have felt too embarrassed to act arrogantly towards Allah's creation. So, his arrogance is an indication of his heedlessness. That is why a poet once said:

Leave every tyrant to the mercy of time,
Time straightens out every neck twisted with pride.

In other words, there will come a time when his crookedness is straightened and his nose put out of joint.

As for: '...haughtily...' (*Luqman*: 18), the word *marah* means rejoicing accompanied by *batar* - ungratefulness. *Batar* is when you take a blessing and forget the one who bestowed that blessing upon you, and then enjoy that blessing fully while disobeying the one who gave it you. So, the type of rejoicing that is forbidden is that which is accompanied by ungratefulness and a rejection of the bountiful grace of the Bestower. As for the rejoicing that is accompanied by gratitude and thanks, it is praiseworthy, as Allah Himself tells us to indeed rejoice in His bounty and His grace. (*Yunus*: 58)

Elsewhere, He teaches us the proper etiquette of walking which is to go at a moderate pace and lower our voice.... (*Luqman*: 19) They say that walking humbly means walking calmly without arrogance or conceit, but it does not mean walking in humiliation or weakness. When ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* saw a man walking languidly, he struck him and forbade him from walking in such a broken manner. Thus, the believer should take the middle stance when it comes to walking, neither walking haughtily nor in infirmity.

After that, the verse talks about the qualities which set apart the slaves of the Most Merciful and their relationships with other people, saying: ‘...and who, when the foolish address them, reply, "Peace".’ (*al-Furqan*: 63) (*Jahil*) here means (*safeeh*) - or the foolish person who does not weigh his words before uttering them nor uses them in their correct contexts, the fool who has no true understanding of the way things are nor of the way one should act.

We previously laid out the difference between foolishness and illiteracy: the illiterate is the one whose mind is empty and knows nothing, and as a result is easy to convince of the truth; whereas the foolish is the one whose mind is full of facts that contradict reality, and so it requires a great deal more effort to convince him of the truth because first we must remove the misconceptions from his mind, then introduce in their place the true concepts.

As for, ‘when the foolish address them’, it means you should not act foolishly towards them as they acted foolishly towards you. Rather, you should rebuke them with good grace and say: ‘...peace’ (*al-Furqan*: 63), thereby showing them the difference between you and them. In another verse, the True Lord *Glorified is He* clearly describes the fruits one gets from acting in this way, and tells us to repel evil with what is better, and our enemy will become as close as an old and valued friend. (*Fussilat*: 34) In this regard, there can nothing be more beautiful than what Imam Ash-Shafi’i⁽¹⁾ *peace be upon him* said:

(1) He is Muhammad ibn Idris Ash-Shafi’i al-Matlabi, the father of ‘Abdullah, one of the four Imams, the founder of the Shafi’i *madhhab*, and it is to him that the Shafi’iyya is attributed. He was born in Gaza in Palestine in 150 AH and visited Baghdad twice. He made his way to Egypt in 199 AH and died there in 204 AH at the age of 54. His tomb is well-known in Cairo. (Al-’A’lam of Az-Zirikli 6/26).

When a fool says something to you, do not reply,
For your best possible response is silence.⁽¹⁾
If you speak to him, you bring him pleasure,
But if you leave him, he will die of grief.

If foolishness takes a turn for the worse, and the fool starts to oppress you and act haughtily towards you, then you must respond to his aggression equally. If you ingest his words with patience and clemency, he will think that your clemency is just a sign of your weakness. It is in circumstances such as this that you must show him the difference between weakness and good manners, just like the poet⁽²⁾ who composed the following words:

We pardoned the tribe of Dhuhl,
Said, 'The people are our brothers.'
The days might bring back,
A people like those who came before.
When evil was expressed openly,
That evening and it became clear,
When nothing was left but enmity,
We condemned them as they condemned us.
We walked with the gait of a lion,
That goes out in the morning angry,
Enraged by a blow that was debilitating,

(1) *This verse is mentioned by Abu Al-Hasan Al-Mawardi in 'Adab Ad-Dunya wa Ad-Din' (p. 226), but he ascribed it to 'Amr ibn 'Ali. See 'Diwan Imam Ash-Shafi'i', Ibn Sina library edition 1988, p. 37, in which these two verses are mentioned.*

(2) *He is Shahl ibn Shayban ibn Zimman Al-Hanafi, better known as Al-Find Az-Zimmani. He was from Banu Bakr ibn Wa'il and was a poet from the Jahiliyya period before Islam. He was the leader of Bakr in his time and its greatest horseman. He was originally from the people of Al-Yamama. He was present at the battle between Bakr and Taghlab when he was nearly 100 years old. He died some 70 years before hijra. He was called Al-Find because of his great constitution. (Al-'A'lam 3/179).*

Humiliating and unified.
A stab like the mouth of a water skin
That goes out in the morning full.
Salvation may be found in evil,
When you cannot be saved by kindness
Some clemency in the face of foolishness,
Means submitting to degradation

Also, the following verses which are attributed to Imam ‘Ali:

If you have need of clement self-control,
Then I have greater need at certain times of headstrong foolishness.
I have a horse of clemency that is bridled by clemency,
A horse of foolishness that is saddled by foolishness.
For those who desire that I set things straight, I will set them straight,
For those who desire that I make things crooked, I will make them crooked.

As for: ‘...reply "peace"' (*al-Furqan*: 63), they say that the type of peace that is meant here is to leave someone be, not like when we greet someone saying, ‘Peace be upon you.’ When you are exposed to someone who verbally abuses and assaults you, tell him, ‘Peace’ meaning leave him be and go your own way.

Some scholars think that the words: ‘reply with [words of] peace’ contain both these meanings: that of leaving someone be and that of greeting them and granting them safety. So, when you treat a fool with clemency, you should not be dragged to an unnecessary conversation with him lest you miss giving him the greetings of safety. An example of this is found in Allah’s words: ‘And when they hear ill speech, they turn away from it and say, "For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds. Peace will be upon you; we seek not the ignorant.”’ (*al-Qasas*: 55)

Did Abraham *peace be upon him* not say to his uncle Azar when he persisted in his disbelief: ‘Peace will be upon you. I will ask forgiveness for you of my Lord.’ (*Maryam*: 47) It means that ‘If I were to stand before you, I

might act aggressively towards you and so the problems that exist between us would get worse'

After having discussed the state of the servants of the Most Merciful with respect to themselves and with respect to other people, the verses move on to discuss the state of their interactions with their Lord:

وَالَّذِينَ يَبِيتُونَ لِرَبِّهِمْ سُجَّدًا وَقِيَمًا

**Those who spend the night bowed down
or standing, worshipping their Lord [64]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 64)**

Nighttime is when one returns home after the toils and endeavours of the day, and after having enjoyed all sorts of Allah's blessings. When he gets into the comfort of his home, he remembers the blessings of Allah *Glorified is He* that manifested themselves to him in the course of the day, blessings that did not come from within himself but rather were granted to him by Allah *Glorified is He*. This is why he turns to Allah *Glorified is He* in thanks, and spends the night in standing [in prayer] and prostration. It is as Allah says he is 'one who is devoutly obedient during periods of the night, prostrating, and standing [in prayer], fearing the Hereafter and hoping for the mercy of his Lord.' (*az-Zumar*: 9) And: 'They used to sleep but little of the night, and in the hours before dawn they would ask forgiveness.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 17-18)

But, does Allah *Glorified is He* actually require us to spend the night awake, given that He *Glorified is He* said in another verse: 'And made your sleep [a means for] rest' (*an-Naba*': 9)? They say the verse does not mean standing the whole night in prayer, but rather only that part when you find yourself with the vitality and energy to engage in worship. It is as the True Lord *Glorified is He* says when addressing the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'O you who wraps himself [in clothing], Arise [to pray] the night, except for a little - Half of it - or subtract from it a little, Or add to it, and recite the Quran with measured recitation.' (*al-Muzzammil*: 1-4)

Even Ibn 'Abbas *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'Whoever prays two rak'as or more after 'Isha' will be counted among those who spend the night

in prostration and standing in prayer⁽¹⁾.' So your Lord wants you to remember Him before you sleep, and reflect on the blessings He has bestowed on you and thank Him for them.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions two positions: that of standing and that of prostration: '...their Lord prostrating and standing [in prayer],' because some people find it difficult to prostrate while others find it easy, and some people find it difficult to stand. So the True Lord *Glorified is He* mentions both positions to even things out between the two types of people.

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا أَصْرِفْ عَنَّا عَذَابَ جَهَنَّمَ
إِنَّ عَذَابَهَا كَانَ غَرَامًا ﴿٦٥﴾

**Who plead, 'Our Lord, turn away from us the suffering
of Hell, for it is a dreadful torment to suffer! [65]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 65)**

This statement is in keeping with those servants of the Most Merciful who engage in good action out of a desire for reward and a fear of punishment; they are the ones who say: 'Our Lord, avert from us the punishment of Hell. Indeed, its punishment is ever adhering.' The punishment is necessary for them and binding upon them, and they will never separate themselves from the Fire because one's final outcome will be either paradise forever or Hellfire forever.

As for the words: '...avert from us the punishment of Hell,' it is as if they imagined that Hell was hurtling towards them and that there would be a violent dispute between them and Hell, as indicated by the fact that it says: '...is there yet more [for me]?' (*Qaf*: 30)

Then the verses go on to mention the reason they uttered these words:

(1) From Ibn 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him that the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, 'If anyone prays 'Isha' in congregation and then prays four rak'as before leaving the mosque, it will be equivalent to the Night of Al-Qadr.' It is related by Al-Mundhari in 'At-tarhib wa at-tarhib' (1/205), and he attributed it to At-Tabarani in Al-Mu'jam Al-kabir.

إِنَّهَا سَاءَتْ مُسْتَقَرًّا وَمُقَامًا ﴿٦٦﴾

**It is an evil home, a foul resting place! [66]
(The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 66)**

For a thing to be evil means for it to be foul and ugly. Its opposite is for something to be goodly, and that is why Allah *Glorified is He* says in the counterpart of this verse: 'Good is the settlement and residence.' (*al-Furqan*: 76) And that is why evil is always accompanied by ugliness, and good is always accompanied by beauty.

He *Glorified is He* says: 'settlement and residence,' so that they do not think that the fire will only burn for a period and come to an end, and that they will then come out of it. On the contrary, it will be their permanent abode, their station that they will never leave. On the other hand, it might be that by these words, the True Lord *Glorified is He* is referring to two different sorts of people: believers who exceed the bounds in committing certain wrong actions and who do not repent or whose repentance is not accepted by Allah. Such people will be in the Fire for a time. According to this interpretation, the word '*settlement*' refers to a temporary abode while the word (*residence*) refers to the long stay. So, the fire is an evil abode for those who exceed the bounds and do not repent or whose repentance is not accepted by Allah, but not a permanent abode. But as for the '*residence*,' it is for those who will remain in the Fire timelessly forever.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا أَنْفَقُوا لَمْ يُسْرِفُوا وَلَمْ يَقْتُرُوا
وَكَانَ بَيْنَهُمْ ذَالِكُمْ قَوَامًا ﴿٦٧﴾

**They are those who are neither wasteful nor
niggardly when they spend, but keep to a just
balance [67] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 67)**

Spending excessively is frittering away what you own in exchange for something for which you have no need. So, for example, we do not call someone who eats in order to preserve his life an extravagant. 'Umar *may Allah be pleased*

with him said to his son ‘Asim⁽¹⁾, ‘Eat until your stomach is half full, do not throw away clothes unless it has become totally worn out, and do not put all of your provision into your stomach and onto your body.’⁽²⁾

Being wasteful means spending one’s wealth in ways that are not lawful since there is nothing wasteful in spending it for what is lawful. Even when a person spends his wealth extravagantly on permissible luxuries—although he does bring luxuries to himself—he also fulfils a necessary function for society. For example, it would be possible for the one who wears ironed clothes—and it must be said that ironing clothes is a luxury—to wear them without ironing them, but that process of ironing is necessary for the ironer, since it is by means of it that he acquires his livelihood. It is also like the person who takes a taxi when it is in his capacity to walk, or like the one who sits in the café every day so that his shoes can be shined when it is in his capacity to shine them himself. All of these things are luxuries for you, but necessities for others; so they cannot be referred to as wastefulness.

As for Allah’s words: ‘...but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate,’ they mean between wasteful extravagance and niggardliness there is moderation. In other words, spending on others is what lies in the middle of both extremes. I remember when we were students, they taught us the principle of the lever: how to find the centre of a staff of wood whereby both arms were the same length and in perfect balance, neither outbalancing the other. When one end leans down, the other opposes it. It was as if it were saying to it, ‘We are here’. And when you hang a weight on one of the arms, it becomes necessary for you to extend the length of the other arm in order to counter that weight.

(1) He is ‘Asim ibn ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab Al-Qurashi Al-‘Adawi, a poet who was one of the best of people in terms of character. He was tall, stout and was the maternal grandfather of ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd Al-‘Aziz. He was born in 6 AH and died in Rabdhā in 70 AH at the age of 65 (Al-‘A‘lam of Az-Zirikli 3/248).

(2) Al-Qurtubi mentioned it in his *Tafsir* (7/4951), ‘And do not be one of those people who put what Allah Glorified is He provides them in their stomachs and on their backs.’ ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab may Allah be pleased with him was an example to his son in this respect, for Abu Nu‘aym related in *Al-Hilya* (1/53) that Al-Hasan Al-Basri said, ‘‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab gave the khutba while he was the Caliph, wearing a waist-wrapper that was patched up in 12 places.’

It is narrated⁽¹⁾ that when 'Abd Al-Malik ibn Marwan⁽²⁾ wanted to marry his daughter Fatima to 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz, he tested him by asking him this question in order to ascertain whether he was balanced in terms of the way he lived: 'Umar, what is your spending?' He replied, 'Prince of the believers, my spending is the good that lies between two evils.'⁽³⁾ Then he recited this verse: 'And [they are] those who, when they spend, do so not excessively or sparingly but are ever, between that, [justly] moderate.' When he heard that, the Caliph knew that the future husband of his daughter would follow a course that would guarantee the basic means of subsistence for himself and his wife, as well as guaranteeing the highest means of subsistence for the whole of society.

We previously mentioned that a person who spends his entire income is not able to bring about advancement neither in his life nor in that of his children since he has been extravagant in his expenditure and has not saved anything with which he might, for example, build himself a house or buy himself a car, etc.

The calamity that miserliness brings upon a society, however, is even greater, since a society's well-being lies in spending and saving, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And do not make your hand [as] chained to your neck or extend it completely.' (*al-Isra*: 29)

In this way, Allah *Glorified is He* has created for us a balance between extravagance and miserliness. And that is because wealth is that upon which life is built, and because the one who is miserly is miserly to both himself and other people. There is nothing he desires to buy which he can make use of in his own life or use to benefit the lives of others. These commodities, these products, and these workers—from where would those who are involved in these crafts and trades acquire their provision if their goods were not circulated

(1) *The story of 'Abd Al-Malik ibn Marwan asking 'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz may Allah be pleased with him about the source of his provision upon the latter's proposing to marry the former's daughter.*

(2) *He is Abu Al-Walid Al-Umawi, one of the greatest and shrewdest of the caliphs. He was born in Medina in 26 AH where he grew up as an extremely well versed jurispudent and worshipper. Mu'awiyya may Allah be pleased with him put him in charge of Medina when he was still just a boy of 16. The diwans were arabicised during his era, and the Arabic letters were given their dots and vowelisations. He was the first one to mint gold dinars in Islam and to emboss them with Arabic lettering. He died in 86 AH at the age of 61 (al-'A'lam 4/165).*

(3) *Al-Qurtubi mentioned it in his Tafsir (7/4951).*

or consumed? There is no doubt that miserliness would lead to economic depression and unemployment, and they are two of the worst possible diseases that could ever afflict a society.

If you were to look at a loaf of bread—one of the most basic of the necessities of life—and reflect on all the workers, manufacturers, farmers, engineers, mills, granaries, factories, and bakeries that are involved in getting it to you. Consider, if you were to abstain from eating, what would happen to all those people?

So, your Lord wants you to spend some of your wealth and also save some of it, for that will help you realise your goals and give you the means to bring about an advancement to it. The verse we mentioned previously concludes with the words: '...and [thereby] become blamed and insolvent.' (*al-Isra*: 29)

Blame is on you for frittering away your wealth in ways that bring no benefit to your dependents, and grief-stricken and destitute when you see others rising above you while you remain still and do nothing. So, man is blamed when he is extravagant and destitute when he is tight-fisted. His main support lies in taking the middle way between the two extremes. Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says⁽¹⁾:

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَدْعُونَ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ وَلَا يَقْتُلُونَ النَّفْسَ الَّتِي
حَرَّمَ اللَّهُ إِلَّا بِالْحَقِّ وَلَا يَزْنُونَ وَمَنْ يَفْعَلْ ذَلِكَ يَلْقَ أَثَامًا

Those who never invoke any other deity beside God, nor take a life, which God has made sacred, except in the pursuit of justice, nor commit adultery. (Whoever does these things will face the penalties [68] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 68)

At this point, someone might ask, 'After enumerating all those qualities possessed by the servants of the Most-Merciful, is it really necessary to mention

(1) Cause for the revelation of the verse: "‘Abdullah ibn Mas‘ud may Allah be pleased with him said, ‘When the Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him was asked what the worst sort of wrong action was, he replied, ‘Assigning a partner to Allah when He was the One Who created you.’ ‘Then what?’ he was asked. He replied, ‘Killing your child out of fear that he will eat food that was yours.’ ‘Then what?’ they asked. He replied, ‘Fornicating with your neighbor’s wife.’ ‘Abdullah said, ‘Then Allah *Glorified is He* revealed the following as an affirmation of that: “those who do not invoke with Allah another deity.” It is related by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir* (3/326), by al-Qurtubi in his *Tafsir* (7/4952), and Al-Wahidi in *Asbab An-Nuzul* (p. 192). The Hadith is in the two *Sahihs* of Al-Bukhari and Muslim and all the collections of the people of the Sunnan.

that they are people: 'who do not invoke with Allah another deity,' since they would never have taken on those other qualities unless they already believed in Allah? The answer is 'This particular matter is a doctrine of belief and a basis for the religion which must be emphasised by the Quran.' They mean that the people of means should not call on those who were directly involved in bringing them the means, since that is hidden polytheism. An example of this is the statement, 'I rely on Allah and on you.' We say to these people, 'Wake up! Nothing is due to me - the entire affair is in Allah's hands.' Rather, you must say, 'I rely on Allah', and when you want, then say, 'And then on you.'⁽¹⁾ We hear others say about important matters, 'This is down to me, and the rest is down to Allah', thereby making himself responsible for the important main part of the matter and assigning the rest of the affair to Allah. Is such a thing appropriate when, in fact, it all rests in the hands of Allah?

It is possible to interpret this verse as referring to those who are beguiled by the means, expecting them to provide them with their provision, and forgetting the Prime Causer. This is hidden polytheism.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...or kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed]. 'We talked previously about the difference between death and killing, saying that both of them brought an end to life, but in the case of death, one's life is ended first and then one's physical identity is wasted, while in the case of killing, one's physical identity is wasted first, and then one's soul leaves one's body. Therefore, death comes about at the hands of Allah, while killing might come about at the hands of a human being.

Here, we find a clear prohibition against that crime because, 'Whoever destroys what Allah *Glorified is He* has built is accursed.' Also, he has brought to an end the life that Allah *Glorified is He* granted to His servants.

As for Allah's words: 'except by right,' a right that makes it permissible to kill someone, like stoning adulterers to death, taking the life of a killer in retaliation for the life he took and killing apostates. When these people are killed, it is due to a right that demands their lives.

(1) *Ibn Majah related in his Sunnan (2117) in a (Hadith) from Ibn 'Abbas may Allah be pleased with them that the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him said, 'When you make an oath, do not say, 'What Allah wills and what you will', but rather say, 'What Allah wills and then you will.'''*

As for Allah's words: 'and do not commit unlawful sexual intercourse,' we spoke about this matter at the beginning of the chapter of *an-Nur*, saying, 'Allah wanted that same human being whom He *Glorified is He* honoured and made His vicegerent on earth to be pure and honourable, and to live his life according to the Laws of Allah. So He caused there to be no element within his vicegerency that went against these Laws. Allah *Glorified is He* wants the society of the believers to be based upon purity and built upon the raiser taking care of those whom he raises.

You find men taking care of their children, providing them with food, drink, and clothes and sacrificing themselves for them. Why? Because they are the children that they fathered and so they are held accountable for them. But if a man has doubts as to whether a child is his or not, then he tends to neglect him and sometimes even seeks to rid himself of him. Such a child is raised as a parentless orphan and is not worthy of receiving Allah's vicegerency upon the earth nor of bearing that honour.

This proves that it goes against healthy human nature for there to be people on Allah's earth whose parentage is not ascribed to their true fathers, and it was because of this that Islam forbade fornication and made it be one of the qualities of the servants of the Most-Merciful that they do not commit adultery.

يُضَعَّفُ لَهُ الْعَذَابُ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ وَيَحْلُدُ فِيهِ مُهَانًا ﴿٦٩﴾

Their torment will be doubled on the Day of Resurrection, and they will remain in torment, disgraced [69] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 69)

How can we understand what is meant by the punishment being multiplied here in this verse when Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: 'And the retribution for an evil act is an evil one like it.' (*ash-Shura*: 40) And: 'Whoever comes [on the Day of Judgement] with a good deed will have ten times the like thereof [to his credit], and whoever comes with an evil deed will not be recompensed except the like thereof; and they will not be wronged.' (*al-An'am*: 160) The reality is that there is no contradiction between any of the verses of the Noble Quran since the one who commits this wrong

action acts as an example to society and gives others the courage to commit the same deed. It is why he is held accountable for his own sin in doing the act, as well as the sin of those others who emulate him.

It is like what Allah *Glorified is He* says in the Quran stating the words of the disbelievers: 'Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are, in their footsteps, following.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 23) Thus, the existence of fathers as paragons of evil increases the levels of evil displayed by their sons as if they were participating with their sons in their evil acts. Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: 'That they may bear their own burdens in full on the Day of Resurrection and some of the burdens of those whom they misguide without knowledge.' (*an-Nahl*: 25) And: 'But they will surely carry their [own] burdens and [other] burdens along with their burdens.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 13) Their first sin lies in their own misguidance and their other sin lies in their misguiding others. This is why their punishment is multiplied.

'And he will abide therein humiliated.' The punishment is sometimes described in the Quran as being 'painful', sometimes as being 'terrible', and other times as being 'humiliating'. The one who looks at the hurt caused to the parts of the body calls it a painful punishment because it causes pain to every single one of them. Thus, the punishment is something tangible and physical. But as for humiliation, that is something intangible. Some people are hurt when words are spoken that detract from their honour, but are totally unaffected by being physically beaten.

The Creator created people and knows that they are the sons and daughters of other people, and knows that no one is protected against them apart from the Messengers. So, wrong action is passed on from them.

An example of the perfect mercy Allah *Glorified is He* shows in terms of the care He takes of us is that He *Glorified is He* leaves open the door of repentance for all His servants who sin, and that is because if the person who committed a wrong action were to have despaired of ever being forgiven, then matters would have gotten worse with him, and he would have slipped even deeper in corruption. But when you open for him the door of repentance and forgiveness, he returns to the straight path and becomes obedient once more. It is a mercy for both him and society in its entirety.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِلَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ عَمَلًا صَالِحًا فَأُولَٰئِكَ يُبَدِّلُ اللَّهُ
سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ حَسَنَاتٍ ۗ وَكَانَ اللَّهُ غَفُورًا رَحِيمًا ﴿٧٠﴾

Except those who repent, believe, and do good deeds: God will change the evil deeds of such people into good ones. He is most forgiving, most merciful [70] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 70)

Your Lord is both Generous and Merciful. If you turn to Him, He will turn to you and accept your good actions, and if you present Him with right actions reflecting deep repentance, He will transform your bad actions into good ones.

There are two issues that must be mentioned with respect to repentance: Allah *Glorified is He* permits it and that He *Glorified is He* then accepts it from those who do it. It is a double bounty from Allah to first permit it and then to accept it. He *Glorified is He* says: 'Then He turned to them so they could repent.' (*at-Tawba*: 118) The meaning of this is that He turned to them by legislating repentance so that they might not be too embarrassed to return to Allah.

As for Allah's words: '...except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work', those who do acts of disobedience that take them out of belief are being addressed by 'repent and attain to faith' since those who are disobedient do not do acts of disobedience except when they are heedless and have forgotten their belief, as is mentioned in the Noble Hadith: 'In the moment that a fornicator fornicates, he is not a believer; and in the moment that a drinker drinks wine, he is not a believer.'⁽¹⁾

If the one who is doing the act of disobedience were to call to mind the majesty of his Lord, he would not disobey Him. The act of disobedience would become so huge in his eyes that he would turn away from it. But, whenever his belief becomes absent, it becomes necessary for him to renew it,

(1) *An agreed-upon Hadith. It is related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (2475), as well as by Muslim in his Sahih (57) in Kitab al-'iman in a (Hadith) from Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him.*

and then to use that belief to do right action. And the reward for doing that is: 'For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good.' This does not mean that bad deeds are transformed and immediately turned into good ones, but rather that a servant's bad deeds are removed and replaced by repentance, and then, after having repented, Allah *Glorified is He* assigns a good action to him. Allah's mercy and forgiveness has caused some people to become greedy, so that a poet once said:

My Master, I have deliberately disobeyed You,

So that I may see You at Your most beautiful, as a Forgiver!

I committed the very worst of sins,

Avoiding the pardon You bestow when they are minor.

Some of them have gone so far that they commit as many wrong actions as possible, greedy for them to be replaced into good deeds. But who will guarantee that they will remain alive long enough to repent? Or that Allah *Glorified is He* will accept their repentance when they do?

The spiritual reason that the scholars talk about when it comes to this matter is that those who keep well from disobedience and never engage in it will never have tasted the sweetness of submitting to one's appetites, and so it will never occur to them to do so. But as for those who rush into them, taste their sweetness and sin excessively, they suffer greatly when they hold themselves back and keep well away from acts of disobedience to Allah *Glorified is He*; and it is that suffering that grants them this rank of theirs.

وَمَنْ تَابَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَإِنَّهُ يَتُوبُ إِلَى اللَّهِ مَتَابًا ﴿٧١﴾

**People who repent and do good deeds truly
return to God [71] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 71)**

The meaning of: '...turn to Allah with [accepted] repentance' is that he turns to Him with a sincere repentance, intending thereafter to never again commit any acts of disobedience, and not go back on his repentance like those who mock their Lord, saying, 'I will do such-and-such and then I will repent.' It is very dangerous for a person to do a wrong action, thinking that he can

always repent afterwards, for that person may well die while in the process of committing that wrong action before he ever gets the opportunity to repent.⁽¹⁾

Then the verses proceed to mention another of the characteristics of the servants of the Most-Merciful:

وَالَّذِينَ لَا يَشْهَدُونَ الزُّورَ وَإِذَا مَرُّوا بِاللَّغْوِ مَرُّوا كِرَامًا ﴿٧٢﴾

[The servants of the Lord of Mercy are] those who do not give false testimony, and who, when they see some frivolity, pass by with dignity [72] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 72)

To lie when bearing witness is to assert that a legal right belongs to one to whom it does not. The verse is applicable to accommodate more than simply lying when bearing witness in the courts. It applies to attending any setting where falsehood is dealt.

So, the meaning of: 'And [they are] those who do not testify to falsehood' is that they are never in the presence of falsehood of any type, be that in word, action or acknowledgment; they are never present at anything that is incompatible with truth. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: 'And when they hear ill speech, they turn away from it and say, "For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds. Peace will be upon you; we seek not the ignorant.'" (*al-Qasas*: 55) And elsewhere: 'And if Satan should cause you to forget, then do not remain after the reminder with the wrongdoing people.' (*al-An'am*: 68) And elsewhere: 'And it has already come down to you in the Book that when you hear the verses of Allah [recited], they are denied [by them] and ridiculed; so do not sit with them until they enter into another conversation.' (*an-Nisa'*: 140)

It is well-known that perjury and bearing witness to other than the truth turns realities on their head and harms society since when you bear false

(1) *Al-Qaffal* said, "It is possible that the first verse refers to those who repent from among the idolaters, and that is why He says: "Except for those who repent, believe". Then he mentioned in connection with them those who repent from Muslims and followed it with right action so that they also have the ruling of those who repent." (*Tafsir of Al-Qurtubi* 7/4956).

witness, you take what rightfully belongs to one person and give it to another, and that brings the movements of life grinding to a halt and causes people to feel that the fruits of their own sweat and labour are no longer secure. So, as long as matters turn out in the end to be false, people will stop striving or working hard.

The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Should I not tell you what the gravest of the major sins are? Associating others with Allah, being disobedient to one's parents and bearing false witness.' The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* was reclining. Then he sat up and repeated [the last one] until we said to ourselves, "We wished that he would be quiet."⁽¹⁾ Why? Because bearing false witness destroys all elements of truth in a society.

Then He *Glorified is He* says: '...and when they pass near ill speech, they pass by with dignity.' It is as if the meaning here is, 'Do not enter where people of low character congregate and engage in idle and false talk that counters truth and causes people to turn aside from it.' An example of that is what Allah *Glorified is He* relates about what the disbelievers used to say in order to try and stop people from listening to the Quran when it was recited: 'Do not listen to this Quran, but rather talk frivolously about it,' (*Fussilat*: 26) meaning make a disturbance so that people are unable to hear it properly.

This is an admission from them that were they to have left people to listen to the Quran unhindered, they would most definitely have been affected by it and believed in it. If the Quran had not had any effect on people's hearts, they would never have said these words.

As for their words: '...but rather talk frivolously about it,' they mean, 'if you do hear it being recited, then talk frivolously about it, and make a disturbance so that it does not reach anyone's ears unadulterated.' Why? Did 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* not believe as soon as he heard the verses recited in the house of his sister Faṭīma? But why did the Quran affect 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* on that particular occasion when he had heard it

(1) *It is related by Muslim in his Sahih (87) in Kitab al-'iman; Ahmad in his Musnad (5/37); and At-Tirmidhi in his Sunnan (3019) in a Hadith from Abu Bakra Nufay' ibn Al-Harith. At-Tirmidhi said, 'This is a (hasan sahih gharib Hadith).'*

on many previous occasions without being affected? That is because, they say, stubbornness and argumentation cause people to hear without hearing. But on this particular occasion, 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* heard it after having struck his sister and cut her open. When he saw the blood flowing from her wound, his heart was moved by the brotherly sentiment and concern, and that allowed him to shake off his arrogance and stubbornness. He was in a receptive state; his soul clear and his heart empty of vehemence against Islam, and he became a Muslim.

Do you not see that the disbelievers would say amongst themselves when they heard the Quran, as is stated in the Quran: 'And among them, [O Muhammad], are those who listen to you, until when they depart from you, they say to those who were given knowledge, "What has he said just now?"' (*Muhammad*: 16) They said these words to express their amazement and astonishment. The Quran responds by saying: 'Say, "It is, for those who believe, a guidance and cure." And those who do not believe - in their ears is deafness, and it is upon them blindness.' (*Fussilat*: 44)

The Quran is one, but the receivers are different: one receives it with a heart that is clear and willing, while another receives it with argumentation and a heart that is closed shut, as if he did not hear it at all. It is a matter of an action and the receiver of that action. The example we previously gave of this was of one who blows on his hands during the cold days of winter with the intention of warming them up and one who blows on his tea with the intention of cooling it down; the action is the same, but the receiver of the action is different.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ إِذَا ذُكِّرُوا بِآيَاتِ رَبِّهِمْ لَمْ يَخِرُّوْا عَلَيْهَا صُمًّا وَعُمْيَانًا

Who, when reminded of their Lord's signs, do not turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to them [73] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 73)

Allah's words: 'when reminded' are only said when the addressee whom you are reminding is intimately acquainted with whatever you are reminding him and has considerable knowledge of it. The verses with which you remind them have a first coming and a second coming: the first coming is the first

announcement of them, and the second coming is when you forget them; we will remind you of them. 'And those who, when reminded of the verses of their Lord,' in the Noble Quran: '...do not fall upon them deaf and blind.'

Another example of its being used in this way is what Allah *Glorified is He* says about the qualities of the believers: 'And they say, "Exalted is our Lord! Indeed, the promise of our Lord has been fulfilled." And they fall upon their faces weeping, and the Quran increases them in humble submission...' (*al-Isra'*: 108-109) because they fall down under the influence of an overpowering force, brought on them by their hearing the Quran. When they are reminded of the verses of Allah, they do not throw themselves upon them like the deaf and dumb, but rather, they throw themselves upon them with their ears and eyes wide open.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ يَقُولُونَ رَبَّنَا هَبْ لَنَا مِنْ أَزْوَاجِنَا وَذُرِّيَّاتِنَا
 قُرَّةَ أَعْيُنٍ وَاجْعَلْنَا لِلْمُتَّقِينَ إِمَامًا

**Those who pray, 'Our Lord, give us joy in our spouses
 and offspring. Make us good examples to those who
 are aware of You' [74] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 74)**

This is another of the qualities of the servants of the Most-Merciful, and in this prayer of theirs they ask for two things: '...grant us from among our wives and offspring comfort to our eyes.' Offspring only come into being through marriage and that is why the supplication mentions spouses first and then offspring.

The phrase '...comfort to our eyes' indicates the fact that the eye is the most valuable jewel in the human body; the True Lord *Glorified is He* takes special care of it and protects it by giving it a different temperature to the normal body temperature of the human being which is 37 degrees centigrade; if the temperature of the eye were to rise that high, it would explode. It is one of the great marvels of the Power of Allah *Glorified is He* that the temperature of the eye stays at 9 degrees and the temperature of the liver stays at 40 degrees, yet both reside in the same body.

So '...comfort to our eyes' means, 'Make there be in our wives what brings us joy', as is mentioned in the noble Hadith that lists the desired qualities of the right-acting wife: 'Apart from piety to Allah, there is nothing that brings a believer more benefit than a right-acting wife, a wife who obeys him when he commands her, pleases him when he looks upon her, fulfils his oaths when he makes them to her, and takes care of herself and his money when he is away.'⁽¹⁾

And grant us children from among our offspring who will hold firm to the path of Allah *Glorified is He* and never turn aside from it whose words and actions will not cost us more than we can bear. The reason we say that is because children who do not meet these criteria are one of the greatest trials and misfortunes that any parent could ever be forced to endure, as is proven by the fact that a man might do any number of wrongs and himself fall short with respect to the rights due to Allah, but would still feel great sadness if his son were to do the same.

A father might not pray but still he encourages his son to do so and feels great joy when he becomes upright and prays on a regular basis. Why? Because he wants to see in his son all those good and beautiful things that passed him by, and thereby be compensated for himself missing out on them. No man likes to see another better than him except for his son because he views him as an extension of himself and a means of compensating himself for all that passed him by.

If we consider: '...a comfort to our eyes' to mean clinging tight and holding firm, then the meaning is that the wife possesses good character, fine etiquette and beauty to such a degree that she pleases her husband and prevents his eyes from straying from her to other women. He is at peace with her because she has fulfilled all the conditions that he desires in a wife. It is in

(1) *It is related by Ibn Majah in his Sunnan (1857) in a Hadith from Abu Umama. Al-Busayri said in his Zawa'id, "'Ali ibn Yazid is in his chain of narrations, and Al-Bukhari said about him that his Hadis were munkar (weak).' 'Uthman ibn Abu Al-'Atika is also someone about whom they differ (with respect to his soundness as a narrator). The Hadith is related by An-Nasa'i as being a Hadith of Abu Hurayra may Allah be pleased with him and he said nothing about it although it is backed up by a Hadith of Ibn 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him.*

this light that Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Do not extend your eyes toward that by which We have given enjoyment to [certain] categories of the disbelievers.' (*al-Hijr*: 88)

In the same way, if he finds all these good qualities and manners and all this beauty in his children, his eyes do not turn longingly towards anything more than that, since he sees in his children everything that he wishes and strives for and has no inclination to strive for anything else. A child who is as blessed as this is a source of peace and rest for his parents in this world and the Hereafter, since a right-acting son's goodness to his parents does not cease upon their death, but continues after that by him making supplications on their behalf. Then, in the Hereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* gathers them all together in the abode of His Mercy: 'And those who believed and whose descendants followed them in faith - We will join with them their descendants.' (*at-Tur*: 21) Thus, the presence of all these good qualities in one's wife and children is a gift from Allah.

We notice that some husbands stay married to their wives unwillingly and reluctantly, forced into doing so by circumstances of life, or on account of the children or to maintain the stability of the family. If you were to say to such a husband, 'Your wife is going to be with you in Paradise,' he would reply, 'What! Even in the Hereafter?!' He does not think that Allah *Glorified is He* will purify her of the characteristics of hers that he had come to hate in this world. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'For those who fear Allah will be gardens in the presence of their Lord beneath which rivers flow, wherein they abide eternally, and purified spouses.' (*Al-Imran*: 15) And He *Glorified is He* says: 'Behold, those who are destined for paradise shall today have joy in whatever they do; in happiness will they and their spouses on couches recline.' (*Ya Sin*: 55-56)

As for Allah's words: '...and make us a leader for the righteous,' despite the supplication being made in the plural (i.e. us), Allah *Glorified is He* used the word 'leader' in the singular form to indicate that the ones who go through life following the path of Allah *Glorified is He* and not deviating from it are one person since they all follow one single Lord and all follow one single path. They are not governed by whims which would cause them to separate or part like.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

أُولَٰئِكَ يُجْزَوْنَ الْغُرْفَةَ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَيُلَقَّوْنَ فِيهَا سَلَامًا ۖ

These servants will be rewarded with the highest place in Paradise for their steadfastness. There they will be met with greetings and peace [75] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 75)

'Those' refers to the servants of the Most-Merciful whose qualities were mentioned just prior to this. Their reward is that they: '...be awarded the Chamber.' The word chamber is mentioned in the singular despite the fact that there are many of them, each of whom requires one of his own. Why? Because the chamber that is being referred to here is a high station that includes many rooms, as Allah *Glorified is He* Himself says: '...but it is [by being] one who has believed and done righteousness. For them there will be the double reward for what they did, and they will be in the upper chambers [of Paradise], safe [and secure].' (*Saba*: 37)

This reward is as a result of: '...what they patiently endured', i.e. they patiently endured the difficulties of carrying out acts of obedience. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made this matter most clear when he said, 'Paradise is surrounded by hateful things while the Hellfire is surrounded by appetites.'⁽¹⁾

Paradise requires me to patiently endure the difficulties of carrying out acts of obedience, assess the reward based on the action done, and call it to mind in the Hereafter. If you grow weary of acts of obedience and reject that you will be rewarded for them in the Hereafter, then why do anything?

The example we provided for that was of a student who works hard in his studies because he is well aware that the day of the exam is coming and, after that, the day on which he receives his results, and reflects on how he is going to do on that day. So, if a human being were to call to mind the rewards he would receive for obeying his Lord, the difficulties he would face in doing so would become easy for him. Similarly, if he were to call to mind the outcome of acts of disobedience and the punishments that await him, he would steer clear of them.

(1) It is related by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (3/153 & 254), Muslim in his *Sahih* (2822) and At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (2559) in a Hadith from Anas may Allah be pleased with him.

Carrying out the duties of the Islamic Law requires patience, as Allah *Glorified is He* Himself says: 'And seek help through patience and prayer, and indeed, it is difficult except for the humbly submissive [to Allah].' (*al-Baqara*: 45) Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants us not to isolate or separate duties from the rewards that they bring. Rather, you must always weigh the consequences of an action before embarking upon it.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked one of his companions, 'How are you this morning, Haritha⁽¹⁾?' He replied, 'I have become a true believer.' So Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Every truth has a reality, so what is the reality of belief?' He replied, 'My self has turned away from this world to such an extent that its gold has become much the same for me as its clumps of earth. It is as if I were looking at the inhabitants of paradise in Paradise being blessed, and the inhabitants of the hellfire in Hellfire being punished.'

In their view, the matter was not one of the unseen but rather one of direct witnessing. It was as if they could actually see it in front of them such was the strength of their certainty. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to Haritha, 'You have got the knowledge, so hold fast to it.'⁽²⁾

Imam 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'If the veil were to be lifted before me, it would not increase me in certainty one bit.' Why? That is because his certainty in the Unseen had reached the level of direct knowledge and witnessing.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and they will be received therein with greetings and [words of] peace.' From whom do the greetings come? In the Noble Quran, it comes from three different senders:

- (1) From Allah, as in Allah's words: '[And] "Peace," a word from a Merciful Lord.' (*Ya Sin*: 58)

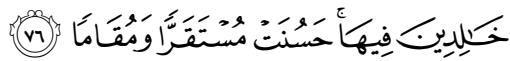
(1) *He is Al-Harith ibn Malik Al-Ansari Allah be pleased with him. You can read his biography in the book, 'Al-'Isaba fi tamyiz As-Sahaba', p. 1475 of Ibn Hajar Al-'Asqalani, and in that book, he mentions numerous narrations for this Hadith.*

(2) *It is narrated by Al-Haythami in Mujma' Az-Zawa'id (1/57), and he ascribed it to At-Tabarani in Al-Kabir, saying, 'It contains Ibn Lahi'ah and someone whose identity needs to be disclosed.'*

- (2) From the angels: '...and the angels will come unto them from every gate [and will say]: "Peace be upon you"' (*ar-Ra'd*: 23-24)
- (3) From the people of 'Araf, whose good actions and bad deeds weigh exactly the same, so that they neither enter Paradise nor Hellfire. Those people say: '...and on [its] elevations are men who recognize all by their mark. And they call out to the companions of paradise, "Peace be upon you." They have not [yet] entered it, but they long intensely.' (*al-A'raf*: 46)

So, the servants of the Most-Merciful will be met in paradise with a greeting from Allah, the angels and from the people of the 'Araf.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**There they will stay – a happy home and
resting place! [76] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 76)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says earlier in the verse about the hellfire: '...it is evil as a settlement and residence,' (*al-Furqan*: 66) because it is ugly. The reverse of that verse is mentioned here where Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Good.' It is well known that whoever enters paradise will remain therein timelessly forever. But as for those who enter hellfire, they might, at some point, come out of it if they are believers. So how can these two words *settlement* and *residence* be used for both of them? Because they say, when they come upon a particular blessing or reward, we tell them that it is not the everlasting blessing. Their temporary settlement is with each individual blessing, while their permanent residence is with all the other many blessings that continue to get better and better to the degree that the perfections of Allah's blessings never come to an end.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* brings the chapter of *al-Furqan* to an end with the words:

قُلْ مَا يَعْبُدُوا بِكُمْ رَبِّي لَوْلَا دُعَاؤُكُمْ فَقَدْ كَذَّبْتُمْ فَسَوْفَ يَكُونُ لِزَامًا ﴿٧٧﴾

[Prophet, tell the disbelievers], ‘What are you to my Lord without your supplication? But since you have written off the truth as lies, the inevitable will happen’ [77] (The Quran, *al-Furqan*: 77)

After the True Lord *Glorified is He* finishes speaking about the servants of the Most-Merciful, their qualities and the rewards that they will receive, He turns to those who do not embody those qualities and receive none of these blessings, saying to them, ‘Beware of thinking that Allah will concern Himself with you or pay you the slightest bit of attention or come to your aid; for Allah *Glorified is He* cares for no one except for those servants of Him who worship and obey Him duly. You went against the primeval nature with which you were brought into being, and did not truly understand the meaning of the vicegerency on earth for which Allah *Glorified is He* created us.

Just as you turned aside from the path of Allah *Glorified is He* and attached no value to it, just as you failed to worship Him and paid Him no regard, so too does Allah *Glorified is He* attach no value to you. As for Allah’s words: ‘...if not for your supplication,’ they mean, ‘were it not for your worship of Me’. But since it did not happen: ‘For you [disbelievers] have denied,’ you have rejected your primeval nature, which is that you were created to worship: ‘...so your denial is going to be adherent.’ Just as you clung firm to your disbelief, declined to worship Me and remained in your disbelief, so will your recompense be by means of the same type of action which you put forward; that action will cleave to you and will never ever leave you be.

the chapter of

ash-Shu'ara'

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

The chapter of *ash-Shu'ara'*⁽¹⁾ (the Poets):



Ta. Sin. Mim [1] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 1)

We have previously discussed the disconnected letters at the beginning of chapters. We also said that there are several meanings to the matter of disconnected letters. The simplest is that the Quran is the inimitable word of Allah, revealed in letters like those we use when speaking and words from our language. But what makes the Quran inimitable and superior to our use of language? We say that the difference is simply that it is the word of Allah, but the letters are the same.

If you considered the matter, you would see that the disconnected letters at the beginning of different chapters altogether consist of fourteen different letters, which are half the Arabic alphabets. One chapter begins with a single letter, another with two, another with three, another with four, and another with five letters. This is meant to tell us that the Quran is miraculous and inimitable, even though it is in the same letters and same words that we use ourselves.

Previously, we had shed light on this issue through an illustrative story. Suppose that you wanted to test a group of people's mastery at something like

(1) The chapter of the Poets, or the chapter of *Ash-Shu'ara'* is chapter number 26 in the arrangement of the Quran, and it is comprised of 227 verses. According to the majority of scholars, it was revealed in Mecca. It is the 46th chapter by order of revelation, coming after the chapter of *al-Waqi'a* and before the chapter of *An-Naml* [reference (*Al-Itqan fi 'Ulum Al-Qur'an*) by As-Suyuti, v.1, p. 27]. Ibn 'Abbas and Qutada take exception and claim that four of the verses in this chapter were revealed in Medina. Those four verses being 224-227. [Mentioned by *Al-Qurtubi* in his *Tafsir*, v.7, p. 4965.]

weaving, for example. If you gave one person wool, another person silk, a third person cotton and a fourth person linen, would you be able to judge the quality of each person's weave to determine whose was the most beautiful and elegant? No, of course not because silk is smoother and finer than cotton, cotton is finer than wool, and wool is finer than linen. If you want to be able to determine the quality and skill of each weaver, then you must provide them all with the same material.

Thus, the secret of the Quran's inimitability is that it is composed of the same material as other things that use Arabic letters and words. That is why after these disconnected letters the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

تِلْكَ ءَايَاتُ الْكِتَابِ الْمُبِينِ ﴿٢﴾

These are the verses of the Scripture that makes things clear[2] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 2)

In other words, the clear Book that shows the truth consists of letters like these. Allah *Glorified is He* has His own meanings with signification that only Allah knows. Perhaps time will reveal their import to us. The Quran is the word of Allah, and Allah's words are nothing but perfect and complete. The verses of Allah in His Divine Book which is clear and shows the truth, are the finite building blocks of the chapters in the Quran.

The meaning of 'clear' is that it is concise and all encompassing, just as Allah says in another verse: 'We have not neglected in the Register a thing.' (*al-An'am*: 38)

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

لَعَلَّكَ بَخِعٌ نَّفْسَكَ أَلَّا يَكُونُوا مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٣﴾

[Prophet], are you going to worry yourself to death because they will not believe? [3] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 3)

This is meant to comfort the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* because he was pressuring himself to convey the message more than was possible and beyond the degree of zeal that Allah asked him to have in

guiding humanity and bringing them back to the Path of Allah so that they would deserve being Allah's vicegerents on earth; for one of the conditions of true faith is that you must love for your brother what you love for yourself.⁽¹⁾

The True Lord *Glorified is He* is comforting His Messenger just as when He said to him in the chapter of *al-Kahf*: 'Then perhaps you would kill yourself through grief over them, [O Muhammad], if they do not believe in this message, [and] out of sorrow.' (*al-Kahf*: 6)

For instance, when one feels concerned about his child as he burns himself out on studying, he reproves his behaviour for his own good. Similarly, Allah *Glorified is He* reproves Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* out of compassion and concern for his well-being.

In Arabic, the word *bakhi'* translated as '...torment... to death...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3) is literally to slaughter or butcher by cutting not only the oesophagus jugular vein, but going so far as to tear apart the vertebrae until bone marrow comes out. The general meaning is to get deeply overwhelmed with sadness that it gets the best of you. This suggests the extent of the grief Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* felt as a result of his people's disbelief. In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not to let himself perish over them in regret. (*Fatir*: 8) This is a clear, definitive prohibition, following the Quranic verse wherein Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is exhorted not to kill himself with grief because they do not believe. (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3)

In many other verses, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is urged not to push himself beyond his endurance, for only the duty of delivery is upon him and upon Allah is the account of people. (*ar-Ra'd*: 40) Further, Allah *Glorified is He* notifies him that he is not over them a controller. (*al-Ghashiya*: 22) He *Glorified is He* also states that he is not to compel them. (*Qaf*: 45) Allah *Glorified is He* says to Prophet Muhammad *peace*

(1) Narrated on the authority of Anas ibn Malik who said, "The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'By the Being who has my soul in His hand, no one believes until he loves for his neighbor (or some say 'his brother') what he loves for himself'. This is a unanimously agreed upon Hadith related by Al-Bukhari his (*Sahih*) Collection (13) and Muslim in his (*Sahih*) Collection (45) in (*Kitab Al-Iman*).

and blessings be upon him: 'go easy on yourself and do not heavily burden it that you waste away.' Therefore, reproaching Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is regarded as a merit; it does not denote imperfection.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنْ نَشَأْ نُنْزِلْ عَلَيْهِمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ آيَةً فَظَلَّتْ أَعْنَاقُهُمْ لَهَا خَاضِعِينَ ﴿٤﴾

If We had wished, We could have sent them down a sign from heaven, at which their necks would stay bowed in utter humility [4] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 4)

The sign, mentioned in the verse under discussion, would not be sent down to convince people, but rather to force, humiliate and compel them to surrender with heart and soul. This is not merely a hypothetical sermon to the disbelievers, but a stark reality proven by the incidents that befell the children of Israel. It is stated in the Quran that the mountain of Sinai was raised above them as if it was a dark cloud and they were certain that it would fall upon them, and Allah says: 'Take what We have given you with determination and remember what is in it that you might fear Allah.' (*al-A'raf*: 171)

Accordingly, they took what Allah had given them with determination because of the sign that compelled them and subdued their hearts. However, Allah *Glorified is He* does not want belief to be superficial and external. He wants that hearts submit with certainty and conviction.

Had Allah so willed, every person on earth would have believed without exception. This is evidenced by the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* created the Angels who obey His commands unswervingly, sent down Messengers whom He guarded from committing sins and protected from Satan, and that He *Glorified is He* said to Satan, when he swore to mislead humankind, that he would have no power over them. (*al-Hijr*: 42) Satan himself swore by Allah's Might that he would surely mislead all people except the chosen ones among them. (*Sad*: 82-83)

Thus, if Allah *Glorified is He* had wanted, all people would have become believers; this is not difficult for Him. However, He *Glorified is He* wants faith to be a matter of choice so that one would turn to Him of his own accord.

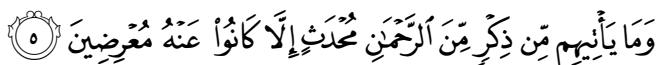
In this worldly life, there are bullies and despots who prosecute people, forcing them to comply with their orders. People might obey them outwardly, but can they subdue and conquer their hearts with tyranny? Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'to which they would bend their necks in humility.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 4) Allah *Glorified is He* specifically mentions the neck because a bowed neck is the sign of humility. Submission entails bowing necks in the first place. The word *a'naq* (necks) is used by the Arabs to refer to the elite and distinguished members of society. This is why it is said regarding serious matters: 'People will lose their necks over this.'

Only the necks of the *crème de la crème* people are intended, not those of the lower class, the weak or the infirm. Similarly, the Arabic word *sudur* refers to the front-line and most prominent people in society.

Hence, the general meaning is: you should not try to force or subdue people because if Allah *Glorified is He* had willed, He would have guided them to faith. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* maintains that: '...had He *Glorified is He* willed, those on earth would have believed, all of them entirely. Then, [O Muhammad], would you compel the people in order that they become believers?' (*Yunus*: 99) How could it be that you force people to believe when Allah *Glorified is He* their Sustainer, does not? Why should there be compulsion in religion in the first place? Basically, Allah *Glorified is He* sent down the Quran to them systematically, verse by verse, so that one of these verses may have a bearing on an open heart free of resentment and prejudice against Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* leading it to believe.

However, it is unlikely that people with such a stubborn and rejecting nature will be guided to faith. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies that they rejected His signs, while their inner selves were convinced thereof, out of injustice and haughtiness. (*an-Naml*: 14)

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:



Whenever they are brought a new revelation from the Lord of Mercy, they turn away [5] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 5)

The Arabic word *muhdath* (new) means that it was new only to their minds, for Allah *Glorified is He* had called their attention to a sign after sign and yet '...they turn aside from it'. (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 5) Each time a sign came to them, they denied it. This is evidence of the animosity which they harboured for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which clung to their hearts so fast that no part of the Quran found a pure heart among them. It was their enmity for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* which prevented them from believing in the Quran, despite their willingness to believe in the Quran had it been revealed to someone else. It was they who said, 'Why was this Quran not revealed to a man of importance in the two towns?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

Accordingly, violent disputes and quarrels are not directed at Allah's Guidance, but at the person of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* consoles and supports Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying that He *Glorified is He* knows that what they say certainly grieves him (*al-An'am*: 33), as they accused him of being an insane person or sorcerer, etc. To console him and relieve his pains, Allah *Glorified is He* tells him that it is not him whom they reject (*al-An'am*: 33), for they deem him truthful and trustworthy, but rather, it is Allah's revelation in which the unjust disbelieve. (*al-An'am*: 33)

Further, they turn away, as mentioned in the Quranic verse: '...but they turn aside from it' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 5) out of stupidity and animosity. They went so far in their hostility as to invoke Allah *Glorified is He* to rain down upon them stones from the sky or to bring them a painful punishment if this should be the truth from Him. (*al-Anfal*: 32) Much to their misguidance, they turned away instead of asking Allah to guide them to the truth.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

فَقَدْ كَذَّبُوا فَسَيَأْتِيهِمْ أَنْبَتُهُمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهٖ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٦﴾

They deny it, but the truth of what they scorned will soon hit them [6] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 6)

This indicates that whenever some reminder or a sign comes to them from Allah *Glorified is He* the Beneficent, they insist on denying the truth. 'Therefore the news of that which they mock shall soon come to them.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 6)

In other verses, it is stated that those who act unjustly shall know to what final place of turning they shall turn back. (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 227) Furthermore, it is also stated that the disbelievers will most certainly come to know about it after a time. (*Sad*: 88) These verses generally indicate that soon the disbelievers will know the consequences of their disbelief and denial of the truth. This is because every day the signs of Allah *Glorified is He* appear more vividly before them; the number of followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* increases and the number of disbelievers diminishes; the domain of faith expands and the territory of disbelief shrinks. Addressing the disbelievers, Allah *Glorified is He* explains that He sets upon the land, reducing it from its borders. (*al-Anbiya'*: 44) They could see such indications with their own eyes and should have paid heed to them, for it was clear that the call to Islam will succeed and prevail.

This is the general meaning of the verse: '...therefore the news of that which they mock shall soon come to them.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 6) If only they had limited themselves to their stubborn disbelief instead of going too far as to mock Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the Glorious Quran. Even more scornfully they said, 'Is this the one whom Allah has sent as a messenger?' (*al-Furqan*: 41). Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا إِلَى الْأَرْضِ كَمْ أَنْبَتْنَا فِيهَا مِنْ كُلِّ زَوْجٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٧﴾

Do they not see the earth, and what noble kinds of thing We grow in it? [7] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 7)

Neither did the new reminder nor the recurrent signs have a bearing on such obstinate people. Subsequently, Allah *Glorified is He* reminded them of

the physical signs that are manifestly apparent before them and which were created long before them. These signs can be observed in the heavens such as the sun, the moon and stars, and on the earth such as the seas, the deserts, the mountains, plants and animals.

All of such are physical signs that no human being can lay claim to, for they existed long before humans were brought into being. Further, these signs can be seen by the young and the old, men and women, the sane and the insane. Ought they not to contemplate these signs thoughtfully, wondering about their Creator?

For this reason, I once told you of the parable of a person who lost his way in a desolate desert until he was on the brink of death. Thereupon, he fell asleep. Though, when he woke up, in this faraway isolated place, he found a table provisioned with the finest foods and drinks. Should not he, then, before reaching for this food, ask himself who was it that prepared all this for him?

In just this way, humankind was brought to a world well prepared for him, a universe beyond his power and capacity. He cannot, for example, set the sun alight, nor can he claim to possess or have authority over these physical signs. Does that not bespeak of the Creator *Glorified is He* and the need to believe in Him? Accordingly, Allah *Glorified is He* maintains that if you asked them, 'Who created the heavens and earth?' They would surely say, 'Allah.' (*Luqman*: 25) Moreover, it is stated in the Quran that if they were asked who created them, they would surely say, 'Allah.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 87)

If one examines the small light bulb, he would find that it has an expiration date, not exceeding a few months, after which it is prone to smashing or malfunction. Though, a team of workers and engineers worked diligently to manufacture it. The same is true of many appliances, and yet the names of the inventors of the light bulb, the television and the radio are celebrated in the historical records, as well as the date and method of their manufacture.

It is wiser to contemplate and ponder over the creation of the sun, the magnificent star which illuminates the entire world, without the need for fuel supply or spare parts and without failing to rise even once since it was created.

However, when a Messenger comes, alerting people to their negligence and guiding them to the One Who created everything affirming that it is Allah *Glorified is He* they disbelieve and turn away from him.

Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'Do they not see the earth...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 7) which is a sign appearing clearly before their eyes. They see it as being barren and desolate, but when rain descends upon it, Allah *Glorified is He* seeds it with plants. Do they not look at the mountains and deserts after winter rainfall and see their brilliant green attire of plants? Should they not then ask themselves, who is it that transported these seeds and planted them in the mountains? Thus, it is stated in another verse that we see the earth barren, but when Allah *Glorified is He* sends down upon it rain, it quivers and swells and grows something of every beautiful kind. (*al-Hajj*: 5)

Allah *Glorified is He* states: '...how many of every noble kind We have caused to grow in it?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 7) 'How many' is a predicate that, in the form of a question, indicates a large amount. This is similar to asking a friend, 'How kind I have been to you!' It communicates the meaning figuratively instead of enumerating all the manifestations of your kindness to him. Such a question is only asked because one is certain that the answer is in his interest. To say it in the affirmative, though, would entail making a claim, but inducing an answer to a question indicates acknowledgement. Accordingly, the general meaning is that the vegetation of the earth is too abundant to be counted.

The Arabic word *zawj* (kind or pair) is used to refer to both genders, male and female. Some people mistakenly think that *zawj* (pair) signifies two items of the pair. Nonetheless, *zawj* refers to one thing that comes together and acts in concert with another, as stated in the Quranic verse that there are: 'Eight pairs; of the sheep two (male and female), and of the goats two (male and female). Say: "Has He forbidden the two males or the two females, or (the young) which the wombs of the two females enclose? Inform me with knowledge if you are truthful." And of the camels two (male and female), and of oxen two (male and female).' (*al-An'am*: 143-144)

In the Quranic verses, there are four species, comprising eight pairs when differentiated by sex. Thus, a *zawj* is any individual member which has a

pair of its own likeness. In Arabic, it is incorrect to say *zawj* of shoes, but should rather say '*zawja*' of shoes, that is, literally, two pairs of shoes. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* alludes to male and female of His creation as pairs. (*an-Najm*: 45)

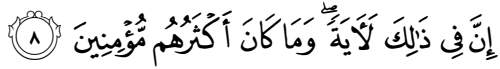
Similarly, there must be male and female parts in plants, even if they are not self-evident, as is the case with date palms; male date palms yield flowers that pollinate the flowers of the female palm tree so it can bear fruits. Similarly, there are male and female sycamore trees, but we do not see male and female guavas or lemons. Why is that?

It is believed that, in some plants, pollens and gynoecium exist together, such as in the corn stalk which before its fruit sprouts, ears of corn at the top of which hold male pollen. Then, when the wind shakes it, the pollen falls on the tassels of the cob of the corn, thereby completing the pollination process. This may not be recognized in some plants, as is the case with mango or apple trees, for instance. Allah *Glorified is He* makes clear that He sends the fertilizing winds (*al-Hijr*: 22), and that He created pairs of everything. (*adh-Dhariyat*: 49)

In the verse under discussion, Allah *Glorified is He* describes the *zawj* (kinds of everything He created) as being *karim* (noble). Why are they noble? This is because if you take a piece of fruit and examine it closely, you would find that it encompasses many attributes and blessings as Allah *Glorified is He* states that if we were to count Allah's favours, we would not be able to number them. [*Ibrahim*: 34] Even though a piece of fruit is deemed as a single blessing, it comprises many other blessings.

This is also because Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to realize that if we investigate the composition and constituent parts of one blessing, you will find it incorporating innumerable blessings. Accordingly, the word 'noble', in this context, signifies a surplus of benevolence and blessings.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* states:



**There truly is a sign in this, though most of them
do not believe [8] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 8)**

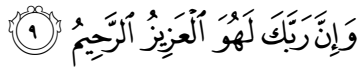
The Quranic verse: 'Indeed in that...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 8) indicates that in the signs of vegetation and noble kinds that the earth brings forth is 'a sign...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 8). That is to say, incredible and clear evidence of the Wise Maker Who creates everything for a purpose—this must inevitably draw our attention to the Omnipotence of the Creator *Glorified is He*.

In spite of all the signs shown to them: '...most of them were not to be believers.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 8) Only a few of them who believed as Allah *Glorified is He* clarifies how many a sign within the heavens and earth they pass over, while they, therefrom, are turning away. (*Yusuf*: 105) Pondering over only one sign is, though, more than sufficient to guide one to Allah *Glorified is He*.

In everything is a sign of His

as proof that He is the One and Only God

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:



**your Lord alone is the Almighty, the Merciful [9]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 9)**

Following the verse: '...most of them were not to be believers,' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 8) Allah *Glorified is He* mentions His Honourable attribute: '...the Exalted in Might...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 9). As such, it becomes clear that it is not against Allah's will that they disbelieved, but they only did so because Allah provided them with the ability to choose.

It is Allah *Glorified is He* Who allowed them to disbelieve, given their desire and insistence upon doing so. Had Allah *Glorified is He* deprived them of free-will, they would have never transgressed His Guidance. This can be proven by the fact that they are compelled to do many things in their lives without choice, yet they cannot interfere with such things.

Despite their obstinacy and rebellion against Allah's Guidance, they cannot resist sickness, death, or whatever fate befalls them. Can anyone of them choose the day of his birth, for instance, or the day he dies? Can they choose how tall, strong or clever one will be?

However, when Allah *Glorified is He* gave them the ability and freedom to choose, they chose to disbelieve and deny the truth. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* facilitated it for them as they pleased and sealed their hearts so that neither does belief enter therein nor does disbelief leave.

The Honourable Attribute of Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned in the verse: '...the Exalted in Might...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 9) means that He is the One Whom none can overcome nor subdue. This attribute, nonetheless, does not sufficiently do credit to Allah *Glorified is He* because it leaves room for the possibility that He *Glorified is He* has an equal counterpart. Hence, it must be added that it is He *Glorified is He* Who overcomes all. This is why Allah says that He is predominant over His affair. (*Yusuf*: 21) Allah *Glorified is He* is the Almighty, the Predominant Who overcomes all and none can subdue Him. Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* states that it is He Who feeds and is not fed. (*al-An'am*: 14) Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* states that He is the One in whose hand is the realm of all things, and He protects while none can protect against Him. (*al-Mu'minun*: 88)

Then, Allah's Honourable Attribute 'the Merciful' is mentioned. Even as Allah *Glorified is He* is the Almighty and the All-Powerful, He *Glorified is He* is also the Merciful as He subdues one and all. Did He *Glorified is He* not consecutively send sign after sign and call upon the disbelievers to think and reflect so that they might come to their senses and believe? Even when they persisted in their disbelief, He *Glorified is He* granted them respite and did not punish them by extermination as was the punishment of the earlier people who rejected their Messengers.

Prior to the coming of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, Prophets used to call people to Allah's Guidance, show them miracles, yet whoever did not believe was to be immediately punished by Allah *Glorified is He*. It is stated in the Quran that each of the disbelievers was seized for his sin and among them were those upon whom Allah *Glorified is He* sent a storm of

stones, those who were seized by a blast from the sky, those whom the earth swallowed, and those who were drowned. (*al-'Ankabut*: 40)

As regards the followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, Allah *Glorified is He* explains that He would not punish them, while Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is among them, and while they seek forgiveness. (*al-Anfal*: 33)

With the Quranic verse: 'And indeed, your Lord – He is the Exalted in Might, the Merciful' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 9), Allah *Glorified is He* reassures and consoles Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* giving him lessons from the Messengers who preceded him, for he was not something new among them. To affirm this fact, Allah *Glorified is He* says to him that it is regretful for mankind that there never came a Messenger to them but they used to mock him. (*Ya Sin*: 30) On that account, Prophets were mocked and ridiculed ever since they were sent down.

Accordingly, the following context narrates the stories of the preceding Messengers. Mentioning to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a portion of the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَإِذْ نَادَىٰ رَبُّكَ مُوسَىٰ أَنِ ائْتِ الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

**Your Lord called to Moses: 'Go to those wrongdoers [10]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 10)**

Allah *Glorified is He* relates to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the stories of the Prophets which are the best of stories to gain wisdom from. It is stated in the Quran that each story Allah *Glorified is He* relates to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from the news of the messengers is that by which He makes firm his heart. (*Hud*: 120)

As Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went through many hard times with the disbelievers, he was in need of continuous support at times of danger or uncertainty. For this reason, the stories of the Quran were repeated to him *peace and blessings be upon him* throughout the period of his messengership. The Quranic narrations are not intended to be a historical record of the lives of previous Messengers, but only to give Prophet Muhammad

peace and blessings be upon him lessons and morals. This explains why a story recurs in several Quranic chapters; wherein a specific scenario reflects the pressing events and circumstances of revelation.

In the Quranic verse: ‘And [mention] when your Lord called Moses...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 10), Allah *Glorified is He* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that He called upon Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. But why is it that the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is mentioned first? It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* mentions to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that even though the disbelievers of Mecca rejected him, he should not despair because others have been far worse than them to the extent that some even claimed divinity. For instance, Pharaoh said to his people that he had not known them to have a god other than him. (*al-Qasas*: 38)

The context of this verse does not mention where and when did Allah call him. Instead, the dialogue is related immediately. However, this is explained in other verses.

Then comes a direct command from Allah *Glorified is He* to Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: ‘Go to the wrongdoing people.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 10) The wrongdoing people are those who do evil unto themselves by attributing partners to Allah *Glorified is He*. It is the pinnacle of evil-doing to ascribe partners to Him. Indeed, associating others with Allah *Glorified is He* is a great injustice. (*Luqman*: 13)

The Quran does not clarify who these wrongdoers are because they are already infamous and well-known. Their transgression makes naming them redundant because once it is said ‘...the wrongdoing people...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 10), they come to one’s mind, such as Pharaoh and his people. He was the only one who dared to claim divinity. After describing them, Allah *Glorified is He* specifies who they are stating:

قَوْمَ فِرْعَوْنَ أَلَا يَنْفُكُونَ

The people of Pharaoh. Will they not take heed? [11]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 11)

Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is ordered to urge his people to fear Allah and be obedient to Him. He was asked to put this order in the form

of a proposal. Sometimes a request comes in the form of an outright command—‘Do this’—and other times it is more palatable in the form of a question and a proposition—‘Why do you not you do this?’

The verse generally means that they are supposed to fear Allah *Glorified is He* and not to wrong themselves by ascribing partners to Him because there is no God but Him. They wronged the children of Israel by slaughtering their children and sparing their women. Yet, why does Allah *Glorified is He* talk first about the people of Pharaoh, instead of broaching the topic of Pharaoh himself being the source of corruption among his people?

The answer to this question lies in the adage that says, ‘When asked, “O Pharaoh, why is it that you became so tyrant?” Pharaoh replied, “Because no one stood in my way.”’ Thus, if his people had resisted him, he would have been deterred, but they let him be. They must have fawned over him until he became a despot, and they were so supportive of him that he was able to become a tyrant.

Then, Allah stated what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said,:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ ﴿١٢﴾

**Moses said, ‘My Lord, I fear they will call me a liar [12]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 12)**

When Allah *Glorified is He* ordered Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to go to the people of Pharaoh, he was not quick to depart. Instead, he expressed his concerns and reservations, for he knew beforehand the hardships that his mission entailed. He had lived with Pharaoh and knew his disposition. Hence, he said: ‘Indeed I fear that they will deny me.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 12) How could it be that someone who claims divinity would listen to a Messenger from Allah *Glorified is He*?

It was told that during the reign of the Caliph Mamun,⁽¹⁾ someone claimed to be a prophet. He was imprisoned, but then another person claimed it, too. Mamun then said, ‘Bring them together so that they can confront each other.’

(1) The story of the two men who pretended to be Prophets at the time of the Caliph Ma'mun and the latter facing them to one another

When the two men were brought together, they told one of them that the other claimed to be a prophet. The man said, 'He lies. I did not send down anyone as a messenger.' Thus, he made a god of himself after he had first claimed to be only a prophet.

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* continues talking about his fears saying, as Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَيَضِيقُ صَدْرِي وَلَا يَنْطَلِقُ لِسَانِي فَأَرْسِلْ إِلَى هَارُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

**And I will feel stressed and tongue-tied, so send Aaron too[13]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 13)**

He feared that, when they would reject and deny him, he would feel constricted and vexed, which would cause him to be nervous and to stammer. Thereupon, he would not be so fluent as to convince them. This is because when he would witness clear falsehood being presented as clear truth, he could not help but feel more agitated. It is noteworthy that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had a history with the problem of speaking eloquently.

This is why he says, '...so send for Aaron.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 13) In another verse, he is mentioned to have said that his brother Harun (Aaron) is more fluent than him, and thus asked that he should be sent with him as support, verifying him because he feared that they would deny him. (*al-Qasas*: 34)

In other words, Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* wanted a proxy to help him with the talking in case his tongue was incapable of fluent speech. This suggests his sincere desire to convey the call of Allah *Glorified is He* to Pharaoh and his people.

Thus, Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* were both Prophets, even though the Quran once refers to them in the singular form, as a Messenger (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 16), and another time refers to them as two Messengers (*Ta Ha*: 47) in the plural form. A messenger is the one who is sent to convey something from one person to another, be him one person, two, or many people.

It goes without saying that human beings need food and drink in order to survive. More importantly, they need to stay alive and for that they must be

able to breathe. If one could endure hunger or thirst for a period of time, he cannot do so with breathing, otherwise he will breathe his last.

It was previously mentioned that Allah *Glorified is He* out of His Mercy, has ordained that food may be owned by people in most cases and sources of water also may be owned in some cases, but air cannot be owned in any way. Then why is this? This is because if your enemy were to have ownership or mastery over the air, he would be able to deprive you of it and you would die instantly. Moreover, air is the fundamental element of life and living beings. For instance, it can be noticed that if a person ascends to a high place, he pants, his heart beats rapidly, and he begins to breathe harder. This is because movement requires a great amount of air and if the air becomes insufficient, one's breast constricts as there is enough air only to sustain life but not enough for a person's external movements.

Allah *Glorified is He* continues telling us about Musa's (Moses') fears:

وَهُمْ عَلَىٰ ذَنْبٍ فَأَخَافُ أَن يَقْتُلُونِ ﴿١٤﴾

**besides, they have a charge against me, and I fear they
may kill me [14] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 14)**

Unfortunately, the issues between Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his people were not only limited to his speech impediment. In addition, there was an ancient grudge because long ago he accidentally killed one of them, as stated in the Quran that Musa (Moses) struck him and unintentionally killed him. (*al-Qasas*: 15) Subsequently, he feared they would kill him in retaliation.

To Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron), Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

قَالَ كَلَّا فَاذْهَبَا بِآيَاتِنَا إِنَّا مَعَكُمْ مُسْتَمِعُونَ ﴿١٥﴾

**[God] said, 'No [they will not]. Go, both of you, with
Our signs — We shall be with you, listening [15]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 15)**

The word 'No', translated from the Arabic word *kalla* is used to negate what precedes it. In this context, it is preceded by three sentences: '...I fear

that they will deny me' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 12), 'And that my breast will tighten and my tongue will not be fluent...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 13), and '...I fear that they will kill me.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 14) Then, to which of these does Allah's negation apply?

The negation here is intended for the issues related to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* but not to his concern that people would reject him. In other words, Allah *Glorified is He* told him not to worry, for none of this would come to pass. However, it is not negated that he would be denied and rejected because people would do that anyway.

Thus, it is noticed how precise the language of the Quran is inasmuch as the statements to be negated immediately preceded the negative particle, whereas the statement: '...I fear that they will deny me' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 12) comes at the end of the verse prior to the negated sentences.

In the chapter of *al-Fajr*, the usage of the negative particle *kalla* (no) is made clear. Allah *Glorified is He* states that when He tries man and thus is generous to him and favours him, he says, 'My Lord has honoured me.' But when He tries him and restricts his provision, he says, 'My Lord has humiliated me.' (*al-Fajr*: 15-16)

Then, in response, the negative particle *kalla* (No) is used to repudiate man's conception. (*al-Fajr*: 17) In other words, being given an easy life is not necessarily a sign of being blessed, nor is deprivation necessarily a sign of disgrace; instead, the intention is to test and try someone through either generosity or deprivation and hardship.

The matter is not as it seems because Allah *Glorified is He* gives to you generously, but you act stingily, loving money so excessively that you do not spend any of it on orphans and the unfortunate. Instead, you compete with each other to gather more and more of it so much that you consume inheritance and seize people's wealth. As such, it is not a blessing that Allah *Glorified is He* grants you wealth because you turn it into a curse once you withhold and do not give it away.

The word *kalla* (no) had a history with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* who learned it well from his Sustainer *Glorified is He*. When he and his

followers were trapped, with the sea in front of them and Pharaoh and his soldiers behind them, his followers were certain of doom, but Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said: 'Kalla! (No!) Indeed, with me is my Lord; He will guide me.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62)

The word 'signs' in the verse: '...Go both of you with Our signs...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 15) refers to the miracles with which Allah *Glorified is He* supported Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* as proof of the veracity of their Prophethood. The miracle intended in the verse under discussion is Musa's (Moses') staff.

The verse: '...indeed, We are with you, listening' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 15] is affirmed elsewhere in the Quran as Allah *Glorified is He* tells both of them that He is indeed with both of them hearing and seeing. (*Ta Ha*: 46)

Why is it that in one verse only listening is mentioned, whereas in the other it is both listening and seeing? It is because the attitude towards Pharaoh would initially be one of argument and debate, where listening is appropriate. Subsequently, there would be moments of action and doing sorcery and throwing down the staff. These moments necessitate listening and seeing because danger might be perceptible by listening alone at the beginning of the encounter and by listening and seeing later on.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

فَأْتِيَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَقُولَا إِنَّا رَسُولُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦﴾

Go, both of you, to Pharaoh and say, "We bring a message from the Lord of the Worlds [16] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 16)

The people of Pharaoh are mentioned before Pharaoh himself in the preceding verses: '...Go to the wrongdoing people, The people of Pharaoh....' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 10-11) This is because it was they who allowed him to go so far as to claim divinity when they listened to him and aided him. In the verse: 'Then come to Pharaoh,' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 16) Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* are reminded that they would be speaking to Pharaoh, the leader of disbelievers, whom when defeated, all those who supported him would fall as well.

‘...and say: Surely we are the messenger of the Lord of the worlds.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 16) Even as the word *inna* (we), in Arabic, indicates a dual form, the following word ‘messenger’ is used in the singular form, instead of the dual form. The reason is that the word *rasul* (messenger) signifies one who acts as an intermediary between a sender and recipient, regardless of whether it is one person or many people bearing the message.

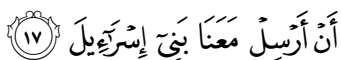
Furthermore, it was not likely that the word *inna* (we) would be pronounced by Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* at the exact same time. No, rather one of them would present and the other would listen, as an indication of confirming the words of his companion. When relating the problems facing Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and his people, the Quran clarifies the extent of Pharaoh’s might and arrogance to the point that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* prayed to Allah to obliterate the wealth of Pharaoh and his people and harden their hearts so that they would not believe until they see the painful punishment. (*Yunus*: 88)

In response, Allah *Glorified is He* informs Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* that their prayer is accepted. (*Yunus*: 89) In spite of the prayer being uttered by Musa (Moses) alone, it is referred to in the original text with the dual pronoun. This is because it is thought that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* prayed and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon him* said ‘Amen’ to his prayer, in which case the person who said ‘Amen’ is included in the prayer⁽¹⁾.

What was the demand of the Messenger of the Lord of the Worlds, i.e. Moses and Aaron?

It is as Allah *Glorified is He* states:

(1) *Abu Ash-Sheikh narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra that he said, ‘When Musa (Moses) peace be upon him made his prayer, Harun (Aaron) peace be upon him said ‘Amen’ to it.’ He also narrated on the authority of Ibn Abbas that he said, ‘Musa (Moses) peace be upon him made the prayer and Harun (Aaron) peace be upon him said ‘Amen.’ Ikrama was narrated to have said the same by Abd Ar-Razaaq, Ibn Jarir and Abu Ash-Sheikh. [narrated by As-Suyuti in Ad-Durr Al-manthur 4/380]*



**Let the children of Israel leave with us [17]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 17)**

The primary cause of Musa's (Moses') meeting with Pharaoh was to save the children of Israel from persecution, then to convey and lead them to Allah's Guidance. Calling upon Pharaoh to submit to faith and dispute his claims of divinity were secondary.

Elsewhere, they are told to ask Pharaoh to send the children of Israel with them and not to torment them! For indeed they brought to him a miracle from Allah *Glorified is He*. (*Ta Ha*: 47)

The stylistic variation in the Quranic narratives is meant to emphasize and illuminate different scenes and aspects of each story, even if the repetition seems redundant in synopsis. This is clear in the beginning of the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* as Allah *Glorified is He* tells that Pharaoh's family took him up that he might be an enemy and a grief for them. (*al-Qasas*: 8)

In the following verse, Pharaoh's wife maintains that he would be a refreshment of the eye to her and to him. (*al-Qasas*: 9) It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* indicates that they would take him to be a joy to the eye for them, but he will become their enemy.

Allah *Glorified is He* affirms that He intervenes between man and his heart.⁽¹⁾ (*al-Anfal*: 24) At the time Pharaoh was killing the sons of the children of Israel and sparing their daughters, this child came to him in this unusual manner. They ought to have known that such a child was surely put into a chest and cast into the waters in hopes of saving his life. If Pharaoh had in fact been a god, how could he have missed this simple ruse?

This goes to show that when Allah *Glorified is He* wants something done, He can dispossess intelligent people of their intelligence and intervene between a person and the desires of his heart. This also demonstrates the foolishness of

(1) This is to say that Allah *Glorified is He* is capable of turning aside a person's heart and changing what he intends to do however He wants. Thus, man is not a master over his heart, whereas Allah *Glorified is He* is.

the people of Pharaoh, for if they had given thought to this matter, they would have seen the falseness of Pharaoh's claims to divinity.

Replying to Musa (Moses), Pharaoh said as Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ أَلَمْ نُرَبِّكَ فِينَا وَلِيدًا وَلَبِثْتَ فِينَا مِنْ عُمُرِكَ سِنِينَ ﴿١٨﴾

**Pharaoh said, 'Did we not bring you up as a child among us? Did you not stay with us for many years? [18]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 18)**

Here, Pharaoh reminds Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* that he grew up in his house for several years until he was a young man, as if he was reprimanding him that he was opposing him in such a way.

Pharaoh further says to Moses, '...and you tarried among us for (many) years of your life' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 18). It is thought that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* remained in the house of Pharaoh until he was eighteen or thirty years old. Either way, the intended meaning is that Pharaoh raised him and he remained there several years afterwards.

Upon closer inspection of the logic Pharaoh used to be in his interest, one finds that it turns out to work against him and reveal his ignorance. If he was in fact a god as he claimed, he would have known that his demise would be at the hands of this very same child whom he took in and raised.

وَفَعَلْتَ فَعَلَتَكَ الَّتِي فَعَلْتَ وَأَنْتَ مِنَ الْكَافِرِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

And then you committed that crime of yours: you were so ungrateful [19] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 19)

The deed mentioned here alludes to the incident when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* struck and killed a man. Then Pharaoh tells Moses, '...And you are one of the ungrateful.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 19) The word 'ungrateful' here may refer to his rejection of the godhood of Pharaoh, or it could also mean that he was ungrateful for Pharaoh's generosity in raising him⁽¹⁾.

(1) Several opinions are provided regarding the explanation of the Quranic phrase: '...And you are one of the ungrateful.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 19) It could mean: because you =

People of wisdom know that if the children they raise grow up as they would be expected, it is only by the favour and help of Allah *Glorified is He*. Two children may be raised in the same environment, they might even be twins, only to find one of them is as good as the other is bad. Thus, the matter comes down to Divine intervention. One of the poets eloquently puts it:

If perchance attentiveness is not given to your child

He will deceive and disappoint the hopeful parent

For Moses whom Gabriel raised was an ingrate

And Moses whom Pharaoh raised was a messenger of Allah

Musa, the Samaritan, who made the golden calf, was born in the desert and his mother died in labour, so Allah *Glorified is He* sent the Angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* to take care of him. Such strange incidents could only occur by the intervention and attentiveness of Allah *Glorified is He*.

قَالَ فَعَلْتُهَا إِذَا وَأَنَا مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

**Moses replied, 'I was misguided when I did it [20]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 20)**

It is as though Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* says, 'I do not deny that I have killed, but this happened when I was still among the misguided, meaning those who are not aware of the ensuing repercussions, and I never once thought that one blow would kill the man.'

The word *dallin* (lit. misguided) does not imply lack of guidance, rather, in this context it has the meaning of 'losing one's path to guidance unintentionally.'

The word is used in the Quran several times to communicate meanings other than misguidance. For instance, it is used to mean error in the verse

= killed the Coptic man, when it was not permissible to take his life, and this is the opinion of Ad-Dahhak; or it could mean you were ungrateful for the blessings we bestowed on you when we raised you and were kind to you, which is the opinion of Ibn Zayd; or that, I, Pharaoh, am your god and you disbelieve in me, which is the opinion of Al-Hasan; or it could mean that you disbelieved in our god because you were one of us and belonged to our religion, and this is the opinion of As-Sidi. [Al-Qurtubi mentioned these opinions in his (Tafsir) 7/4973]

where Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding finding witnesses that if one of the two errs the second of the two reminds the other. (*al-Baqara*: 282)

Addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* says that He found him lost and guided him (*ad-Duha*: 7), meaning found him *peace and blessings be upon him* confused between the falsehood that his people were practicing and the truth for which he could not find any clear proof.

Then Moses further continues,

فَفَرَرْتُ مِنْكُمْ لَمَّا خِفْتُكُمْ فَوَهَبَ لِي رَبِّي حُكْمًا وَجَعَلَنِي مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

And I fled from you in fear; later my Lord gave me wisdom and made me one of His messengers⁽¹⁾ [21]

(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 21)

It means that Allah *Glorified is He* endowed him with wisdom and the gift of putting things in their proper place. That this verse is mentioned after: '...I did it then while I was of those unable to see the right course' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 20) suggests the meaning, 'I struck the man, it is true and he died, but that was an unintentional error and therefore it is wrongful to blame me for this. But Allah *Glorified is He* has given me the ability to tell right from wrong.' This was not only what Musa (Moses) said, for he added: '...then my Lord granted me wisdom and made me of the Messengers.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 21)

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَتِلْكَ نِعْمَةٌ تَمُنُّهَا عَلَىٰ أَنْ عَبَّدَتْ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿٢٢﴾

And is this – that you have enslaved the children of Israel – the favour with which you reproach me? [22]

(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 22)

This alludes to what Pharaoh bestowed upon Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* that he brought him up and let him stay in his house for many years. (*ash-Shu'ara*: 18-19)

(1) In his *Tafsir*, Al-Qurtubi says that it was a period of nearly 11 years between Musa's (Moses') departure and his return as a Prophet. [7/4973]

It is as though Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* were saying to Pharaoh, 'It is true that you made me these favours, but it is nothing compared to the torture and enslavement you inflicted upon the children of Israel, slaughtering their male children, sparing their womenfolk and subjugating them to your service.'⁽¹⁾

It was not out of mercy that he let the females live instead of killing them like the males. In fact, it was a source of humiliation and shame inasmuch as they did not have male relatives to protect and defend them. In the absence of men, the women then remained in shameful servitude to Pharaoh.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

قَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ وَمَا رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٣﴾

Pharaoh asked, 'What is this "Lord of the Worlds"?' [23] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 23)

Pharaoh means to say that this is a new matter that you have brought before us, O Moses. Who, then, is this Sustainer of the worlds that you speak of?

Then Moses replies, as Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ رَبُّ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ مُوقِنِينَ ﴿٢٤﴾

Moses replied, 'He is the Lord of the heavens and earth and everything between them. If you would only have faith!' [24] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 24)

The heavens with its planets and stars, the sun and the moon, celestial bodies and signs of the zodiac, as well as the earth with its seas and rivers, mountains and deserts, plants, animals and people both existed before you existed, O Pharaoh, false deity.

(1) *Ad-Dahhak said that these words are meant to censure and reprimand, which may or may not be in the form of a rhetorical question. The meaning is, 'If you had not killed the Children of Israel, then my own parents would have raised me, so what blessing is there that you have given me, for you have only bestowed upon me something that you should not have needed to.'* [narrated by Al-Qurtubi in his *Tafsir*, 7/4972]

Thus, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* responds to Pharaoh calling to his attention some of the innumerable things brought into being long before Pharaoh was even born. What Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* intends to say is, 'Tell me, O Pharaoh, who claims to be a god, in what way has your divinity added to this world? If all of it, the heavens and the earth, belong to the Sustainer of the worlds, what is it which belongs to you?

This is not limited to the heavens and the earth, rather, it also includes '...what is between them' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 24), i.e. the atmosphere and the birds flying through the sky. At that time, they had no idea of aeronautical science nor of transfer of air waves in the modern age. There are many mysteries that merit investigation in the atmosphere between the heavens and the earth.

Then, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* acts more gently, saying to them: '...if you would be sure,' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 24) meaning if only you are sure that it is Allah *Glorified is He* alone Who created these things.

Bringing up Pharaoh's argument, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

قَالَ لِمَنْ حَوْلَهُ أَلَا تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

**Pharaoh said to those present,
'Do you hear what he says?' [25]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 25)**

Pharaoh said to those around him, his followers who attested to his divinity: 'are you not listening to what he says?' Pharaoh was of course talking about Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and he would not have said this unless he sensed his people were receptive to Musa's (Moses') words as he was refuting Pharaoh's godhood and attributing true Divinity to Allah *Glorified is He* the Creator of the heavens and the earth.

It is as if Pharaoh had expected his people to rebel against Musa's (Moses') words, to rebuff and silence him, but none of this happened. This suggests that they were hoping Musa (Moses) would prevail over Pharaoh who constricted their freedom and stifled their opinions. They were well aware of his falsehood and were waiting for the moment when they could get rid of him.

This is supported by the story that the Quran tells of the believing man among the people of Pharaoh who was concealing his faith⁽¹⁾, and by those who tempted Pharaoh to call upon the sorcerers to challenge Moses, although they wanted him to be defeated before Moses.

Before anyone from the people of Pharaoh could respond, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said, as Allah *Glorified is He* states:

قَالَ رَبُّكُمْ وَرَبُّ آبَائِكُمُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٢٦﴾

Moses said, 'He is your Lord and the Lord of your forefathers' [26] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 26)

In this verse, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* shifts Pharaoh's attention from the physical environment surrounding him—the heavens, the earth and everything between them—to his own self. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* says to him, 'You have forefathers who existed before you were born, before you claimed to be a god, so who was their Lord and Sustainer?'

Musa's (Moses') arguments began to vex Pharaoh.. So, trying to salvage his position and evade the debate which he was losing, Pharaoh said, as stated in the Quran:

قَالَ إِنَّ رَسُولَكُمْ الَّذِي أُرْسِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ لَمَجْنُونٌ ﴿٢٧﴾

Pharaoh said, 'This messenger who has been sent to you is truly possessed' [27] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 27)

Pharaoh's statement betrays him, for he has just testified that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is a messenger. Thus, his words betrayed him without his knowing.

Then Moses replies,

(1) Regarding the story of the believing man, Allah *Glorified is He* states that a believing man of Pharaoh's people who hid his faith said, 'What! Will you slay a man because he says, "My Lord is Allah," and indeed he has brought to you clear arguments from your Lord? And if he be a liar, on him will be his lie, and if he be truthful, there will befall you some of that which he threatens you (with). (Ghafir: 28) The story continues in the following verses.

قَالَ رَبُّ الْمَشْرِقِ وَالْمَغْرِبِ وَمَا بَيْنَهُمَا إِنَّ كُنْتُمْ تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

Moses continued, 'Lord of the East and West and everything between them. If you would only use your reason!' [28]

(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 28)

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* responds to Pharaoh with a new argument; however, this time he closes his statement by saying: '...if you understand.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 28) In his previous statement, though, he said: '...if you would be sure.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 24). It is as if Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* were saying to Pharaoh, 'given that you have gone as far as accusing me of insanity, I will no longer respond by referring to your certainty, rather, I will allude to your reason as the exact opposite of the insanity of which I am accused.'

Yet, Pharaoh cuts the debate short, going to what he believes is the heart of the matter, saying:

قَالَ لَئِنْ أُتِّخِذَتْ إِلَهًا غَيْرِي لِأَجْعَلَكَ مِنَ الْمَسْجُورِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

But Pharaoh said [to him], 'If you take any god other than me, I will throw you into prison' [29]

(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 29)

This is a failure on the part of Pharaoh to make an argument. If he had had a response to what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said, then he should have answered him and refuted his argument. On the contrary, he could only gain the upper hand over his opponent by threatening to imprison or exile him. Imprisonment at that time was to serve a life sentence. Pharaoh did not consider that the people around him would witness the failure and foolishness of his response.

On the other hand, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* withheld the signs and miracles he had and continued the debate, saying:

قَالَ أَوْلَوْ جِئْتُكَ بِشَيْءٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٣٠﴾

And Moses asked, ‘Even if I show you something convincing?’ [30] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 30)

This means, ‘Since you are not convinced by all the previous arguments, Will you be then convinced if I bring forth a sign clearly demonstrating the truth of my Message, or will you still have me imprisoned?’

The Pharoah replies, as stated in the Quran:

قَالَ فَأْتِ بِهِ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِیْنَ ﴿٣١﴾

‘Show it then,’ said Pharaoh, ‘if you are telling the truth’ [31] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 31)

It is obvious that Pharaoh contradicts himself. As he heard Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* uttering such a statement, he should have insisted on imprisoning him. However, Allah *Glorified is He* wants this sign to be brought forth, and hence He *Glorified is He* makes Pharaoh himself demand it be produced: ‘Said he: Bring it then, if you are of the truthful ones.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 31) It was not for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to show them a sign, unless demanded by Pharaoh.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَلْقَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ ثُعْبَانٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٣٢﴾

So Moses threw down his staff and – lo and behold! – it became a snake for everyone to see [32] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 32)

The act of throwing down the staff or rod occurs in three occasions as stated in the Quran. The first occasion took place when Musa (Moses) was selected to be a Prophet, as Allah *Glorified is He* asked him what was in his right hand. (*Ta Ha*: 17) Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* delayed the answer out of his desire to prolong this communion with Allah *Glorified is He*. Then, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* answered that it was his staff: on which he

reclined and with which he beat the leaves to make them fall upon his sheep, in addition to other uses. (*Ta Ha*: 18)

In Musa's (Moses) eyes the staff was just a wooden stick freshly cut from its source, a branch cut from a tree. However, with Allah *Glorified is He* it was a different story. When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* threw it down, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[Allah] said, "Throw it down, O Moses. So he threw it down, and thereupon it was a snake, moving swiftly"' (*Ta Ha*: 19-20).

Once it is cut from a tree, the staff loses the aspect of plant life and becomes inanimate and dead. If it had returned to its original state and become a tree again, that might have been reasonable, but instead it surpassed the level of plant life and transformed into an animal, which is a higher form of life. That is why Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was frightened until Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[Allah] said, "Seize it and fear not; We will return it to its former condition"' (*Ta Ha*: 21). On this occasion, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was trained to become familiar with this attribute of his staff, as if Allah *Glorified is He* wanted Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to perform this display in front of Him in order to be certain of the genuineness of this sign and throw down his staff before Pharaoh without any fear of failure.

The staff was thrown, for the second time, before Pharaoh and his retinue. Then, the third time in which the staff was thrown was before the sorcerers.

Allah's saying: '...It was an obvious serpent' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 31) means that it was obvious to everyone, i.e. it was a living, moving serpent. This is affirmed because they had perfected the art of fooling people into imagining things like this were true, making them move and slither. But the staff of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was different, no one doubted that it was truly and plainly a real serpent.

Following the different scenes of this incident as narrated in the Quran, one will notice that sometimes it is called a serpent *th'uban*, at other times a snake *hayya*, and at other times a little snake *jan*. Why is that? It is because it comprised the characteristics of all: in the quickness of its movements, it was like a baby snake, in its fearsome shape it was like a snake, and in its sinuousness it was like a serpent. In arabic, the word *jan* may be used to refer a baby snake.

Afterwards, Allah *Glorified is He* states:

وَنَزَعَ يَدَهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ بَيْضَاءُ لِلنَّاظِرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

**Then he drew out his hand and – lo and behold! –
it was white for the onlookers to see [33]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 33)**

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* refers to Musa's (Moses') hand. In another verse, nonetheless, He *Glorified is He* says: 'Insert your hand into the opening of your garment; it will come out white, without disease' (*al-Qasas*: 32) In this way, the different recurrences of the same story complement and complete each other; they are not mere repetitions as some may think.

Allah's saying: 'And he drew forth his hand...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 33) means that he put his hand forth. Thereupon, '...It appeared white to the onlookers.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 33) Despite the fact that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had a slightly dark complexion, i.e. his skin was tanned, when his hand emerged it was pure white, shining luminously to people's eyes.

Comparing this verse to the one mentioned above from the chapter of *al-Qasas*, one finds that the verse under discussion makes no mention of the bosom. The Arabic word *jayb* (bosom) means the upper opening of the robe, not the more commonly used meaning of the word, as in 'pocket', wherein one puts one's money for instance. In the past, they used to put their money purse inside their clothes in order to keep it safe. So if someone wanted to take something out from it, he would put his hand inside the upper opening in his robe. Thus it was called the *jayb*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ لِلْمَلَإِ حَوْلَهُ إِنَّ هَذَا لَسَاحِرٌ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٣٤﴾

**Pharaoh said to the counsellors around him, 'This man is a
learned sorcerer! [34] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 34)**

The word *al-mala'* (chiefs) signifies people of influence, the most prominent ones of a society, those who preside over government and parliament, for

instance. Pharaoh accuses Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* of being a sorcerer in order to escape from his own predicament and on account of the fact that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had only performed this feat once in front of Pharaoh. However, the chiefs around Pharaoh were intimately familiar with sorcery and had many sorcerers of their own.

The difference between *sahir* and *sahhar* is that a *sahir* only executes an act of sorcery one time, whereas *sahhar* is a more emphatic form of 'sorcerer' indicating that the person has taken sorcery as a profession. Similar word patterns include *najir* and *najjar* (carpenter), and *khait* and *khayyat* (tailor).

Further, Pharaoh described Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* as '...skilful...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 34) meaning knowledgeable in sorcery.

Then Pharaoh continues his talk to his people, as Allah *Glorified is He* says:

يُرِيدُ أَنْ يُخْرِجَكُمْ مِّنْ أَرْضِكُمْ بِسِحْرِهِ فَمَاذَا تَأْمُرُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

He means to use his sorcery to drive you out of your land!

What do you suggest? [35] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 35)

In this verse, Pharaoh tries to turn his people against Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* warning them that he will cause mischief to the populace and will have the vast majority of people on his side, following and helping him exile the chiefs around Pharaoh. In order to gain support from the chiefs around him and arouse enmity against Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* the least that Pharaoh hopes to do is to incite these prominent elites from among his people against him.

It is unthinkable that Pharaoh, if he were indeed a god, would say '...what is it then that you advise?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 35) This, then, is false godhood which sinks down to the level of its servants, for when has a god asked the advice of its servants, turning to them for help and counsel? If he had been a god in truth, he would have had a solution and known how to respond.

When Pharaoh stepped down from his position of godhood to ask the elites among his people for help, they exposed the truth behind his lies and found a suitable opportunity to rid themselves of him. This suggests that most of them probably tolerated Pharaoh unwillingly and were biding their time to free themselves from his tyranny and falsehood. So, they said:

قَالُوا أَرْجِهْ وَأَخَاهُ وَأَبْعَثْ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

They answered, 'Delay him and his brother for a while, and send messengers to all the cities [36] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 36)

Arjih, a verb in the imperative meaning to put someone off; it is derived from *al-irja'* which means to postpone or put off someone. They are saying, 'Put him off and his brother for a while, and send gatherers to the cities.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 36) That is, send your summoners to gather the sorcerers from all corners of the city to fight using their sorcery against Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and (Aaron) *peace be upon him*.

يَأْتُواكَ بِكُلِّ سَحَّارٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٣٧﴾

To bring every accomplished sorcerer to you [37] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 37)

Sahhar means an expert sorcerer skilled in magical arts and tricks, and is an emphatic form of (*sahir*; magician or sorcerer).

فَجُمِعَ السَّحَرَةُ لِمِيقَاتِ يَوْمٍ مَّعْلُومٍ ﴿٣٨﴾

The sorcerers were [to be] assembled at the appointed time on a certain day [38] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 38)

Al-miqat translated above as 'a day appointed,' means at a specified point in time. It is mentioned in another verse which states: 'Your appointed meeting is the day of the festival...' (*Ta Ha*: 59). This day was a red-letter date among Pharaoh's people when young girls wore their most elaborate dresses. It was a day of festivities on which they selected a maiden to be the 'bride of the Nile' whom they threw into the river. So the day was set, but the time for the event was not left as the entire day; rather, it was specified to be at high noon: '...and let the people assemble when the sun has risen high (forenoon).' (*Ta Ha*: 59)

The location was also defined at another place in the Quran. Musa *peace be upon him* said about it: '... so appoint a meeting between us and you, which neither we, nor you shall fail to keep, in an open wide place where both shall

have a just and equal chance.’ (*Ta Ha*: 58) In other words, a place suitable for all attendants, by it being an open flat square that would allow all people to see this sorcery competition, or perhaps by it being situated at a middle ground between the cities from where the sorcerers would come. This way the choice of place would not prevent any of them from attending. Thus, all the different shots of this incident fit together to give us a complete picture of the story.

The counsel of the prominent men around Pharaoh suggest their keen desire to make this meeting happen before the eyes of all the people because they knew that the outcomes of this contest would be in Musa’s favour and would help reveal the falseness of Pharaoh’s claims to godhood.

وَقِيلَ لِلنَّاسِ هَلْ أَنْتُمْ مُجْتَمِعُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾ لَعَلَّآ نَتَّبِعُ السَّحَرَةَ إِن كَانُوا هُمْ أَغْلَبِينَ ﴿٤٠﴾

**And the people were asked [39] ‘Are you all coming?
We may follow the sorcerers if they win!’ [40]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu‘ara’*: 39-40)**

In other words, as if they were conducting a marketing campaign, and they began to summon supporters for Pharaoh or supporters for Musa *peace be upon him* who would be on his side due to their hidden resentment toward Pharaoh. Evidently, both sides were eager to attend this sorcery competition.

We see throngs of people gather just to watch a football match, so how many do you think would come for a match between the sorcerers of a man who claimed to be a god, and Musa *peace be upon him* who came with a new message and said his was a different God? Truly it was an event that shook the entire world, and it drew people from all over to see it.

Then the True Lord *the Exalted* says:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ السَّحَرَةُ قَالُوا لِفِرْعَوْنَ أَإِنَّا لَنَا أَجْرًا إِن كُنَّا نَحْنُ الْغَالِبِينَ ﴿٤١﴾

When the sorcerers came, they said to Pharaoh, ‘Shall we be rewarded if we win?’ [41] (The Quran, *ash-Shu‘ara’*: 41)

Look at how Pharaoh, ‘the alleged god,’ behaved toward his subjects. A true god provides food; it does not hunger for food; a true god provides succour and help; it does not seek succour or help; a true god gives, it does not take.

When the sorcerers gathered, they knew how much Pharaoh needed them as contestants in this match and so they were quick to impose conditions on him: 'Even though you force people to labour for your sake without pay, in this matter you will not be able to let it go without paying us.'

This suggests that they were familiar with Pharaoh and knew he was a usurping tyrant. So, they imposed the condition that if they prevailed, they should have an ample reward. For who knew? Someone else might come and threaten Pharaoh's godhood; Pharaoh reserved these sorcerers for just such an occasion.

قَالَ نَعَمْ وَإِنَّكُمْ إِذَا لَمِنَ الْمُقَرَّبِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

And he said, 'Yes, and you will join my inner court' [42] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 42)

Here Pharaoh ceded his lofty eminence and submitted to the conditions of his sorcerers. He even granted them more than what they demanded: '...and indeed, you will then be of those near....' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 42) They would be among his private, indispensable retinue whom he would turn to for aid in similar situations. They would become indispensable, since it was they who preserved the illusion of his false divinity

قَالَ لَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ أَلْقُوا مَا أَنْتُمْ مُلْقُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

Moses said to them, 'Throw down whatever you will' [43] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 43)

This is condensed language which we understand from the context of the narration. In the previous verse, Pharaoh was still talking to his sorcerers, but the Quran condenses some of the events, relying on the acumen of the reader or listener. This also recurs in the story of the hoopoe bird and our master Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. Sulaiman said to the bird: 'Take this letter of mine and deliver it to them, then withdraw and see what answer they send back.' (*an-Naml*: 28) Then after that the Quran says: 'The Queen of Sheba said, "Counsellors, a gracious letter has been delivered to me."' (*an-Naml*: 29) From the context, we can know what was cut out between the two events.

Musa's saying: 'Throw what you are going to throw!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 43) was the resulting conclusion of the dialogue with the sorcerers.

﴿٤٤﴾ قَالُوا جَاهِلْمُمْ وَعَصِيهِمْ وَقَالُوا بِعِزَّةِ فِرْعَوْنَ إِنَّا لَنَحْنُ الْغَالِبُونَ

They threw their ropes and staffs, saying, 'By Pharaoh's might, we shall be victorious' [44] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 44)

Their staffs and ropes were the instruments of their sorcery. 'By Pharaoh's might, we shall be victorious' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 44) was their oath. And what a false, empty oath it was! In their eyes, Pharaoh could never be conquered or subdued. We have previously explained that (*'izza*; might, power, honour, glory) signifies being invincible. However, Pharaoh's might was merely spurious. In other words, it was pride and grandeur without substance. He was so carried away by his puffed-up pride into more sin, typically like he of whom Allah says: '...and when it is said to him, "Fear Allah," he is led by arrogance to (more) crime...' (*al-Baqara*: 206). Allah *the Exalted* also says: 'Sad. By the Quran full of reminding, Nay, those who disbelieve are in false pride and opposition.' (*Sad*: 1-2) That is, they are driven by false ego and grandeur into transgression.

The same theme recurs in Allah's description of the hypocrites: 'They (hypocrites) say: "If we return to Medina, indeed the more honourable will expel therefrom the meaner...."' (*al-Munafiqun*: 8) The Quran agrees that the meaner will be driven out by those most honourable. However, the Quran adds: 'But honour, power, and glory belong to Allah, His Messenger (Muhammad), and to the believers'. (*al-Munafiqun*: 8) So long as you would continue to behave the same, you would be contemptible and ultimately driven out. This was what actually happened.

It was said that the magic tools of Pharaoh's sorcerers, namely their ropes and staffs, were hollowed out and full of mercury. So, when they threw them in the light and heat of the sun, they began to seem as if they were moving. This is one of the ruses of the sorcery that fools the eye through false tricks. The true reality of the object is fixed, but to the captivated watcher it seems to move.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَلْقَى مُوسَى عَصَاهُ فَإِذَا هِيَ تَلْقَفُ مَا يَأْفِكُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

But Moses threw his staff and – lo and behold! – it swallowed up their trickery [45] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 45)

Musa's throwing of his staff did not happen directly after the sorcerers threw theirs, rather, there were several events in between that are mentioned in other snippets of the story from other verses. For example, Allah says: 'You throw,' said Musa, and—lo and behold!—through their sorcery, their ropes and staffs seemed to him to be moving. Musa was inwardly alarmed, but We said, 'Do not be afraid, you have the upper hand. Throw down what is in your right hand; it will swallow up what they have produced. They have only produced the tricks of a sorcerer, and a sorcerer will not prosper, wherever he goes.' (*Ta Ha*: 66-69)

Such was the tableau. When Musa *peace be upon him* was afraid, his Lord reassured him and aided him with truth and irrefutable evidence. Allah was watching every step of Musa second by second in order to direct him, and give him steadiness, reassurance, and courage. The True Lord *the Exalted* would not send Musa *peace be upon him* as a messenger and then desert him. Previously, His Lord said to him: '...I showered you with My love and planned that you should be reared under My Watchful Eye.' (*Ta Ha*: 39) And in another verse, Allah says: 'Do not be afraid, I am with you both, hearing and seeing everything.' (*Ta Ha*: 46) The True Lord gave His Prophet Musa *peace be upon him* directions and the means to carry them out, and then He followed him with constant care and watchfulness. In the same vein, Allah *Glorified is He* said to His Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*: 'Build the Ark under Our [watchful] Eyes and with Our Inspiration...' (*Hud*: 37).

When you put all the different scenes together, you find that they complete one another and present the entire event. So, although some may think that the scenes are repeated, in fact they are not.

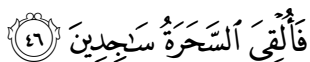
So, Musa *peace be upon him* threw his staff after renewed directions from Allah during the confrontation. 'Throw down what is in your right hand...'

(*Ta Ha*: 69). Also here in this chapter: 'Then Musa (Moses) threw his stick, and behold, it swallowed up all the falsehoods which they showed!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 45) The meaning of *talqaf*, translated as '...it swallowed up...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 45), is to devour quickly and vehemently; the quickness, rapidity and violence of the act indicates that it was performed with force. This is evidence that Musa engaged in the confrontation with strength; his strength continued undiminished to the end and did not abandon him when he saw the tricks of the sorcerers.

(*Ma ya'fikuna*), translated above as '...all the falsehoods which they showed...' derives from '*ifk*' meaning the inversion of facts, which is why one name for lying is '*ifk*' because to lie is to invert truths and change facts.

From the same root we get: 'And He destroyed the overthrown cities' (*an-Najm*: 53) where 'the overthrown cities' is a translation of a word from the same root as *al-'ifk* namely (*al-mu'tafika*), i.e. the ruined cities (of Sodom) that Allah destroyed and turned upside down.⁽¹⁾

We have previously explained that lying and inverting facts happens through speech, and speech has three bearings: on the mind, on the tongue, and on reality. So, if a speech act's import corresponds with reality, then you are truthful. If it is contrary to reality, then you are a liar. What the sorcerers did is called ('*ifk*') because they altered reality and blurred the true state of things in the eyes of the people.



**And the sorcerers fell down on their knees [46]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 46)**

The True Lord *Glorified is He* has not simply said, 'the sorcerers prostrated themselves', i.e. (*sajada as-sahara*). Instead, He says, '*(fa'ulqiya as-saharatu*

(1) Meaning the towns of the people of Lut (Lot) peace be upon him, which Allah turned upside down and rained upon them stones of baked clay. Qatadah said: 'The cities of the people of Lut comprised four thousand thousand persons (i.e. four millions) and the valley spat out fire, naphtha and tar on them like the mouth of a furnace.' [Tafsir Ibn Kathir vol. 4, p. 259]

sajidin),’ i.e. ‘And the sorcerers fell down prostrate.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 46) *Ulqiya* literally ‘they fell down,’ indicates the quickness of their response and that their prostration happened involuntarily, without thought. It was as if the augustness of the occasion and the fearful reverence for what they saw, threw them to the ground, prostrating to Allah, the Author of these dazzling signs. Therefore, when they declared their belief, they did not say, ‘We have become believers in the Lord of Musa and Harun,’ but they rather said:

قَالُوا ءَامَنَّا بِرَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾ رَبِّ مُوسَى وَهَارُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

Exclaiming, ‘We believe in the Lord of the Worlds [47]

The Lord of Moses and Aaron [48]

(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 47-48)

When we examine the reaction of the sorcerers, we see that they first fell down prostrate before Allah, and then declared their faith. It is well known that belief should precede action, and that prostrating oneself should come only after faith. How then did this happen? They say that there is a difference between the onset of belief and announcing your belief. The reaction which was late in coming was not their feeling of belief, but its announcement because the sorcerers would not have prostrated themselves without sufficient true belief to dispel all doubt. Belief gripped their hearts and made them throw themselves to the ground, prostrating themselves to Allah without pause to even declare their belief. Faith brought them back to their original spiritual state of natural belief in God, and in matters of inborn nature, there is no place for thought.

As if someone had asked them, ‘Why are you prostrating yourselves?’ and so they said, ‘We believe in the Lord of the Worlds, the Lord of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron).’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 47-48) They uttered ‘the Lord of Musa and Harun’ after saying ‘the Lord of the Worlds’ to first preclude Pharaoh and his followers from saying things like, ‘I am the Lord of all the Worlds.’ Then they removed any ambiguity by clarifying, ‘the Lord of Musa and Harun!’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 48)

Another example of this is what Balqis (the Queen of Sheba) said when she saw her throne placed before Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. She

did not say, 'I surrender to Sulaiman'; rather, she said '...I have surrendered myself, with Sulaiman (Solomon), to the Lord of the Worlds.' (*an-Naml*: 44) In other words, you and I submit ourselves to the one God Who is the Lord of all existence. Such was the Islam of kings and queens. In order that none would think she was submitting to Sulaiman *peace be upon him* she used carefully guarded speech to forestall any doubt.

قَالَ ءَامَنْتُمْ لَهُ قَبْلَ اَنْ ءَاذَنَ لَكُمْ اِنَّهُ لَكَبِيرُكُمُ الَّذِى عَلَّمَكُمُ السِّحْرَ فَلَسَوْفَ
تَعْلَمُوْنَ لَا قُطْعَنَ اَيْدِيكُمْ وَاَرْجُلَكُمْ مِنْ خَلْفٍ وَلَا صَلْبَتَكُمْ اَجْمَعِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

Pharaoh said, 'How dare you believe in him before I have given you permission? He must be the master who taught you sorcery! Soon you will see: I will cut off your alternate hands and feet and then crucify the lot of you!' [49]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 49)

Pharaoh did not doubt that what the sorcerers saw was an inevitable cause of belief, nor did he attempt to cast doubt on it. Rather, the whole issue was: '...before I give you leave...' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 49). He was still eager to maintain his godhood and tyranny even after his lies had been exposed and the elites around him had believed in the true God.

Then Pharaoh wanted to explain away the situation to the masses so that none of them would say that he was defeated and lost his prestige. So he said: '...he indeed is your chief who has taught you magic! ...' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 49) Although the people knew well that Musa *peace be upon him* had never consorted with a sorcerer in his life, Pharaoh nonetheless seized upon it as a pretext to rescue as much of his ruined godliness and prestige as he could, before being divested of them all.

Pharaoh's agitation and imbalance affected the way he threatened them. He was so shaken up that he said: 'So verily, you shall come to know (my revenge)' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 49), using the particle *sawfa* in Arabic which indicates that the action will happen in the distant future even though he wanted his threat to be immediately carried out, as evident by his saying: '...verily, I will cut off your hands and your feet on opposite sides, and I will crucify you all.'

(*ash-Shu'ara'*: 49) (*Min khilaf*) translated in the verse under study as 'on opposite sides,' means either the right hand and the left foot, or the left hand and the right foot. His saying: '...and I will crucify you all...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 49) is mentioned more specifically in another verse: '...and I will surely crucify you on the trunks of date-palms...' (*Ta Ha*: 71).

What was the response of those who believed in the Lord of the Worlds?

قَالُوا لَا ضَيْرَ إِنَّا إِلَىٰ رَبِّنَا مُنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿٥٠﴾

'That will do us no harm,' they said, 'for we are sure to return to our Lord [50] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 50)

In other words, it does us no harm if you kill us; everyone is fated to die. But if we meet our end at your hands, we will be glad to meet our Lord, whereas you will be made wretched by the retribution of your Lord. Like the tyrant who said to his enemy, 'I shall kill you.' His enemy laughed. So he said, 'Are you mocking me with your laughter?' His enemy said, 'How can I not laugh when what you would inflict on me will be a blessing from Allah to me and cause you only misery? Thus, it does us no harm if you kill us, because we will return to Allah, our Lord. We will be liberated from false gods to meet the true divinity. As if you had done us a favour or rendered us a service, for you sped us along to this meeting. What you think is evil for us is, in fact, goodness itself. The poet understood this meaning, when he said:

I pay no mind to being killed when I am a Muslim

in any form my death is for Allah.

It means that so long as I die for the cause of Islam, nothing else matters and I shall not mind by what form of death I will die. Here the believers are keen on two things: first, to ward off harm because averting harm takes precedence over securing some benefit; and second, to affirm the good that will come to them from this death.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّا نَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لَنَا رَبُّنَا خَطِيئَتَنَا أَنْ كُنَّا أَوَّلَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٥١﴾

We hope that our Lord will forgive us our sins, as we were the first to believe [51] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 51)

Because you, O Pharaoh, forced us to practice sorcery and to invent lies and deceptions, and caused us to spend all our lives thinking you were a god, hopefully, our rushing to faith and our becoming the first believers intercede for us with our Lord and He forgives us our transgressions. According to another place in the Quran, they said: 'We believe in our Lord, (hoping) He may forgive us our sins and the sorcery that you forced us to practice' (*Ta Ha*: 73).

In the previously mentioned verse, it is mentioned that they were coerced to practice sorcery while the verse currently under our consideration mentions the reason for their plea to be forgiven: '...as we were the first to believe' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 51).

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَسْرِ بِعِبَادِي إِنَّكَ مُتَّبَعُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

Then We revealed Our will to Moses, 'Leave with My servants by night, for you will be pursued!' [52] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 52)

We have said that the lexical meaning of the word *wahi* is secret inspiration; while in Islamic Law, it means Allah communicating a particular law or way to one of His Messengers that will bring good to His creation.

Concerning the general sense of (*wahi*, divine revelation, or inspiration), Allah says: 'And your Lord inspired the bee, saying: "Take you habitations in the mountains and in the trees and in what they erect."' (*an-Nahl*: 68) Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* also says: 'And do not eat of that upon which the Name of Allah has not been mentioned, for indeed, it is grave disobedience. And indeed do the devils inspire their allies (among mankind) to dispute with you...' (*al-An'am*: 121). And He also says: 'And We inspired to the mother of Musa (Moses), saying, "Suckle him; but when you fear for him, cast him into the river and do not fear and do not grieve..."' (*al-Qasas*: 7).

So with respect to *wahi* in general, we do not concern ourselves with the one who is inspiring, or the one who is receiving the inspiration, or the subject

matter of the inspiration. It could be evil insinuations of Satan, and the one receiving *wahi* could be anything: the earth, angels, or animals. On the other hand, *wahi*, from the perspective of Islamic Law, is specific, clear, and known.

Pharaoh had widely advertised this confrontation event with Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and the public gathered to witness the contest. This suggests that Pharaoh had thought he would win, but Allah foiled his expectations and the round was won in favour of Musa *peace be upon him*. The sorcerers ended up as believers in Allah, the Lord of Musa and Harun *peace be upon them* both. So Pharaoh began to menace and terrorize them, for he knew for sure that the spectacular signs that they had seen from Allah compelled them to believe.

Despite this, once Pharaoh was vanquished and had lost his air of eminence, ascendancy, and power, the masses remained silent. They did not call for him to be overthrown; rather, they contented themselves with listening for news of Musa *peace be upon him*. The status-quo continued for a long time, during which seven signs were sent down by Allah upon the children of Israel.

It was foolish of Pharaoh to leave Musa *peace be upon him* alone rather than try to rid himself of him after he had gained followers and supporters. Musa's followers would only increase and his power would only grow. It was as if the seven signs that Allah brought down upon them had shaken Pharaoh's very being and completely distracted him from thinking about the threat that Musa *peace be upon him* presented.

This was how Pharaoh lost control of the situation and Musa *peace be upon him* gained a strong majority and popular support. Even the Copts,⁽¹⁾ the followers of Pharaoh, were favourably disposed to Musa and his followers. Therefore, before they left with Musa *peace be upon him* the children of Israel borrowed jewellery from the Coptic women, with which the Samaritan later made the golden calf that they worshipped.

(1) The Copts were a people in Egypt; it was said that they were the original people of Egypt. (*Qubtiyyah*) is clothing of white, fine linen made in Egypt and named after the Copts [*Lissan Al-'Arab* – entry under (*qibt*)]. So the Copts were the people of Egypt before Musa *peace be upon him* came and Christianity appeared in Egypt. It follows that being Copt is an identity; it is unrelated to religion.

Here Allah *the Most High* says: ‘Then We revealed Our Will to Musa (Moses), “Leave with My servants by night, for you will be pursued!”’ (*ash-Shu'ara': 52*) His Lord had previously warned him to flee after having killed a man: ‘And a man came from the farthest end of the city, running. He said, “O Musa, indeed the eminent ones are conferring over you (intending) to kill you, so leave (the city); indeed, I am to you of the sincere advisors.”’ (*al-Qasas: 20*)

As for the current incident, the conspiracy was against Musa *peace be upon him* and the believers who supported him.

The verb *asr* translated in the verse under discussion ‘leave with My servants by night,’ means to walk or travel at night. ‘...for you will be pursued...’ (*ash-Shu'ara': 52*) means that Pharaoh’s soldiers would go after you.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَرْسَلَ فِرْعَوْنُ فِي الْمَدَائِنِ حَاشِرِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾
 إِنَّ هَؤُلَاءِ لَشِرْذِمَةٌ قَلِيلُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾ وَإِنَّهُمْ لَنَا لَغَائِظُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

**Pharaoh sent messengers into the cities, proclaiming [53]
 These people are a puny band [54] they have enraged us [55]
 (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara': 53-55*)**

The conjunction *fa* in the verb *fa-arsala* translated in the verse under study as ‘...then sent...,’ is used to denote succession in time and order. Allah inspired Musa *peace be upon him* to go with the children of Israel by night before Pharaoh could send out the heralds or gatherers to all the cities. It is as if Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* was taking measures to ensure that His Prophet Musa *peace be upon him* left before Pharaoh could wage psychological warfare against Musa *peace be upon him* and his people to deter them from leaving, or arouse the people of Egypt and gather them against Musa through what we may call ‘brainwashing’ in modern times.

Hashirin translated as heralds or gatherers, derives from the root word *al-hashr* meaning to gather. However, this time they were gathering soldiers, not sorcerers because the sorcerers were defeated in the contest of sorcery. This time they would use a different weapon, the weapon of brute force and military might. The first weapon failed; perhaps another would succeed. But

the True Lord *the Exalted* informed His Prophet Musa *peace be upon him* of what was being plotted against him and ordered him to leave with the children of Israel.

Pharaoh's saying: '...those are but a small band...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 54) was meant to belittle the stature of the children of Israel, and goad his own people into conflict with them. Nonetheless, he still warned them of the danger posed by the children of Israel, saying: '...and indeed, they are enraging us.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 55) So equip yourself, and do not underestimate them.

وَلِنَّا لَجَمِيعٌ حٰذِرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

**And we are a large army, on the alert [56]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 56)**

The phrase means we must be on our guard and prepare for the situation.
Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَاَخْرَجْنَاهُمْ مِّنْ جَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿٥٧﴾ وَكُنُوزٍ وَمَقَامٍ كَرِيمٍ ﴿٥٨﴾

**So it was that We made them leave their gardens and their
springs [57] their treasures and their noble dwellings [58]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 57-58)**

In other words, Pharaoh's preparations would do him no good and his precautions would avail him nothing, for caution cannot prevent divine decree. 'So, We expelled them from gardens...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 57). *Jannat* is translated as gardens and may also mean orchards. '...And springs...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 57) mean running springs of water. '...Treasures...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 57-58) refer to that which they had possessed. '...And every kind of honourable place...' means life of opulent luxury, with servants and attendants.

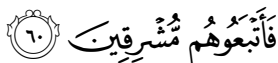
Next the True Lord *the Exalted* says:

كَذٰلِكَ وَاَوْثَنَهَا بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ ﴿٥٩﴾

**We gave [such] things [later] to the children of Israel [59]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 59)**

'Thus it was...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 59) simply means 'it was as I am describing it to you.' '...but [in the course of time] We were to bestow all these [things]

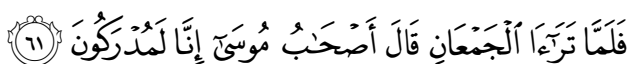
as a heritage on the children of Israel.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 59) In other words, Allah later bestowed these same blessings upon the children of Israel. Here someone might ask: how would such possessions be handed over as heritage when the children of Israel left Egypt without taking any of these blessings with them? They said that the intended meaning was that Allah bestowed upon them a land like Egypt, the territory promised to them in the Levant.



**Pharaoh and his people pursued them at sunrise [60]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 60)**

Meaning at daybreak. Traditionally, attacks on armies are launched in the morning; for instance, Allah says: 'When it descends on their courtyards, how terrible that morning will be for those who were warned!' (*as-Saffat*: 177) Normally, when a person wakes up from sleep he is lethargic and inactive. How could anyone battle his enemy effectively in such a state?

Next the True Lord *the Most High* says:



**And as soon as the two sides came within sight of one another,
Moses' followers said, 'We shall definitely be caught' [61]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 61)**

'As soon as the two hosts came within sight of one another...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 61) means that each group was able to see the other and the confrontation began. At this moment '...Musa's followers said, "We shall definitely be overtaken."' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 61) The situation was that the sea was before them and Pharaoh's soldiers behind them, so there was nowhere to flee. Musa *peace be upon him* had previously learned the power of the word (*kalla*; no) from his Lord *the Most Exalted*; when Musa *peace be upon him* said: 'And they have a charge of crime against me, and I fear they may kill me,' his Lord replied, 'No [they will not]...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 15). From that moment onward, Musa *peace be upon him* understood this word *kalla* so well and knew how and when to say it with confidence and certitude.

قَالَ كَلَّا إِنَّ مَعِيَ رَبِّي سَيَهْدِينِ ﴿٦٢﴾

Moses said, 'No, my Lord is with me: He will guide me' [62] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 62)

But how could Musa *peace be upon him* say loudly: 'No indeed!' when the matter was subject to the laws of the physical world and Pharaoh's army could overtake him before he even would finish speaking? The answer is in the rest of the glorious verse: 'My Lord is with me; He will guide me.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) Musa *peace be upon him* did not say 'No' relying on his own strength and preparedness for the situation. Rather, he said it relying on his Lord and Sustainer Who would watch over him and shield him with His protection.

So, the reality is that I do not know what to do or how to act, but that which I draw strength from is the fact that 'My Lord is with me; He will guide me.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 62) Therefore, the way out of this impasse came to Musa immediately:

فَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَضْرِبْ بِعَصَاكَ الْبَحْرَ
فَانْفَلَقَ فَكَانَ كُلُّ فِرْقٍ كَالطَّوْدِ الْعَظِيمِ ﴿٦٣﴾

And We revealed to Moses: 'Strike the sea with your staff.' It parted – each side like a mighty mountain [63] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 63)

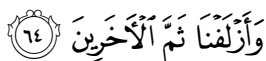
The sea was the barrier in front of them. The element in the sea is water which is subject to the unique physical laws of fluidity and capillarity. When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* struck the sea with his staff, it divided into two parts and each part of water became like a towering mountain.

However, after the water had turned to its opposite state (from liquidity to solidity) and hardened like a mountain, creating a path between the two mountains, would not there have been mud, silt and mires at the bottom in which a person could get stuck? We know that a person can barely lift a foot when walking in mud up to the knees. How then would they deal with mire at the bottom of the sea? That is the reason why his Lord assured him, saying: '...you will not fear being overtaken (by Pharaoh) nor be afraid (of

drowning).' (*Ta Ha*: 77) The One Who turned the water into a mountain for you would also make for you a dry path.

Regarding the parting of the sea, the True Lord *the Exalted* did not state for us in how many places the sea was split, but scholars say that it was divided into twelve different splits for the twelve tribes of Israel so that each tribe had its own path to pass through.

As the story informs us elsewhere, thinking like a human, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* wanted to strike his staff once more to restore the sea to its natural state and close the passageway to Pharaoh and his soldiers, but the True Lord forbade him to do so. '(Allah said), "Depart you with My slaves by night. Surely, you will be pursued. And leave the sea as it is (quiet and divided). Verily, they are a host to be drowned."' (*ad-Dukhan*: 23-24) Leave it as it is so that the dry path will tempt Pharaoh and his soldiers to proceed. That is why Allah then says:



**And We brought the others to that place [64]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 64)**

That is, we drew them into the middle of the sea. Then Allah caused the sea to crash over them by ordering the water to return to its liquid state. This way, and by the same means, Allah rescued some people and destroyed others. *Al-akharin* translated above as '...the others (i.e. the pursuers) ...' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 64) refers to the people of Pharaoh. *Thamma* translated above as '...to that place' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 64) refers to the middle of the sea.

The staff has a long history with Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* that began when His Lord asked him: 'What is that in your right hand, O Musa?' (*Ta Ha*: 17) Musa said what he knew about it: 'It is my staff', he said, 'I lean on it, and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep, and I also have other uses for it.' (*Ta Ha*: 18)

Musa's saying: '...and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep...' (*Ta Ha*: 18), or in Arabic (*ahushu biha `ala ghanami*) is not merely a reference to the sheep or hitting them with a cane. *Ahushu* means to strike the leaves of a tree so

they fall down and the young sheep who are not tall enough to reach the leaves can eat them, or the older sheep whose necks are not long enough to reach the highest leaves can have more to eat.

When Musa *peace be upon him* found himself elaborating on this issue, he said, '...and I also have other uses for it.' (*Ta Ha*: 18) such as defending myself at night if a dog or wolf attacks me, or sticking it in the ground and hanging my robe over it to give me shade when I take a nap; or laying it across my shoulders so I can hang my belongings on it as I walk.

These are the functions of the staff as Musa *peace be upon him* saw them. However, the staff had another function that he still did not know of: its role as the proof of his prophethood and as one of the signs given to him by Allah. With it he emerged victorious from the contest with the sorcerers, and with it he split the sea, emerging victorious from the confrontation with Pharaoh and his soldiers.

What is wondrous about Musa's staff is that he struck the sea with it and it became a mountain, and struck the stone with it and twelve springs gushed forth from it. These were dazzling miracles that only Almighty Allah could perform.

Musa's staff eventually became a standard symbol for victory in many situations. When Al-Khasib was the governor of Egypt and some bandits rebelled against him, and he had the power to subdue them, a poet said:

If any of the falsehood of Pharaoh lies among you

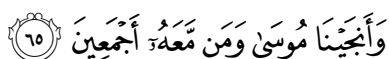
The staff of Musa is in the hand of Khasib

Regarding this meaning, another poet said:

When Moses came and cast down his staff

Sorcery and sorcerers were proven false.

So Musa's staff became an emblem of victory in any aspect of life.

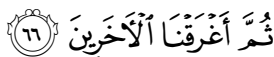


We saved Moses and all his companions [65]

(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 65)

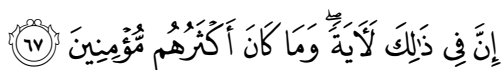
This confrontation was decided in favour of the party of Musa *peace be upon him* without spilling any of their blood and without losing a single fighter; victory

in normal battles necessarily entails some percentage of losses in lives and equipment. This was not the case in this battle.



**And drowned the rest [66]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 66)**

In other words, by the same means with which Allah saved Musa *peace be upon him* and his people, Allah also destroyed Pharaoh and his people. Allah alone is capable of saving and destroying with the same instrument.



**There truly is a sign in this, though most of them
do not believe [67] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 67)**

Allah's saying: 'In this (story)...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 67) means 'in what happened.' '...Sign...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 67) is a wondrous phenomenon or event, beyond what is ordinary or usual. It inspires the awe of people and demands their attention and reflection. Such a sign (from Allah) convinces the mind that it is Allah Who caused it to happen through Musa's hands. This sign also confirms the truthfulness of Musa's message and the revelations that he conveyed from Allah. In principle, it is an act beyond any human capacity to perform. Despite this, '...most of them are not believers.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 67) In other words, the final total of those who believed were only a few people⁽¹⁾ despite these signs. Even those who believed with Musa *peace be upon him* and followed him and were saved by Allah from the tyranny of the people of Pharaoh and from drowning, they too quickly regressed and slipped back into their old ways. The Quran says of them: 'We took the children of Israel across the sea, but when they came upon a people who worshipped idols, they said, "O Musa, make a god for us like theirs."' (*al-A'raf*: 138)

(1) *Al-Qurtubi said in his Tafsir (vol. 7, p. 4986): 'No one believed from among the people of Pharaoh except the believer from the family of Pharaoh, Hizqil, and his daughter Asia, the wife of Pharaoh, and the old woman, Maryam, who guided Prophet Musa to the grave of Prophet Yusuf peace be upon them.'*

Unbelievable! They distrusted and rejected Allah while their feet were still wet from crossing the sea and they were still in the euphoria of victory!

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿٦٨﴾

**Your Lord alone is the Almighty, the Merciful [68]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 68)**

In other words, after all the previously mentioned grounds, Allah is indeed *the Almighty*. It is He Who cannot be vanquished or subdued, for He is the Vanquisher and the Subduer of all. Allah *the Exalted* conquers and He cannot be conquered; He feeds and is not fed; He protects and cannot be protected from. Yet despite His Invincible Might and Power, He is also ‘...the Most Merciful...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 68). This is because Allah is the Lord of all creation and is full of mercy towards those who repent to Him. He accepts them as soon as they return to His fold, as depicted in the following noble Hadith that says:

‘Allah is more pleased with the repentance of a servant of His than one of you would be if he were to lose his riding camel, which carried his food and drink, in a barren desert. After he despaired of finding it, he came to a tree and laid down in its shade. Then, while in this desperate state, lo and behold, there it was before him, So he grabbed its reins and cried out in joy, ‘O Allah, You are my servant and I am your Lord!’ – making this mistake (in wording) out of his excessive joy.’⁽¹⁾

وَأَنْتَ عَلَيْهِمْ نَبَأُ إِبْرَاهِيمَ ﴿٦٩﴾

**Tell them the story of Abraham [69]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 69)**

This comes at the close of a simplified synopsis of the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and Pharaoh, which ends with Allah’s saying: ‘In this is indeed a sign (or a proof), yet most of them are not believers. And verily, your Lord! He is truly the All-Mighty, the Most Merciful.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 67-68)

(1) It was narrated by Imam Muslim in his *Sahih Collection* (no. 2747) on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him.

Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* talks about His Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: ‘And recite to them the story of Ibrahim.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 69) this demonstrates that the purpose of the Quran is not merely the narration of history, for Ibrahim came before Musa *peace be upon them* both. If it was intended for a recount of history, the story of Ibrahim would have come first. Instead, the purpose of the Quran is to capture moral lessons and exhortations, and provide role models from the history of previous prophets to encourage and bolster the heart of His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he would face trying situations.

Anyone who examines the messages of Ibrahim and Musa *peace be upon them* will see that Musa came to treat an issue of the utmost doctrinal importance: he came to confront a man who claimed divinity, saying, ‘I am a god instead of Allah.’ As for Ibrahim, he came to deal with the issue of ascribing partners to Allah and idol worshippers, who nonetheless had a degree of faith, for, if we were to beset the idol worshippers in an argument, they would say: ‘...we worship them only that they may bring us near to Allah...’ (*az-Zumar*: 3). That is why the story of Musa *peace be upon him* is first in order here.

‘And recite to them...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 69) signifies to read or explain or express. We use a word from the same root, *tilawah*, to mean reading and recitation because only what is written, known, and understood can be conveyed through *tilawah*. Concerning those who are designated by the pronoun ‘...to them...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 69), does it include everyone to whom Islam might be preached? Or does it mean specifically those who deny the truth? They say that it means specifically those who deny the truth, because those who believe the truth of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* do not need to hear such recitation. And if it were recited to them, it would only be as a reminder or to inform them of historical events. Consequently, the intended audience are the deniers and negators of the truth so that they may learn that victory and dominance are the end results of the mission of every Messenger of Allah, while the end of all opponents and deniers of the truth has always been loss and defeat.

It is as if the Quran was saying to them: Do not get deluded by your power or high standing, and do not be deceived by your mastery over the

Arabs. It is well known that the high standing which the Quraysh enjoyed among the Arabs was only due to their custodianship of the Holy *Ka'ba*. If it had not been for the holiness and sanctity of Allah's House, they would not have been secure in their trade routes.

If not for the *Ka'ba*, Quraysh would not have attained such a prominent status, as evidenced by Allah's saying: 'For the accustomed security of the Quraysh, their accustomed security during their winter and summer journeys.' (*Quraysh*: 1-2)

And if the *Ka'ba* had been destroyed during the Event of the Elephant, the Quraysh would not have had mastery or authority over the Arabian Peninsula, since Allah *the Exalted* cared for them with such kindness: 'So let them worship the Lord of this House, Who provides them with food to ward off hunger, safety to ward off fear.' (*Quraysh*: 3-4)

The Arabic word *naba'* in the part of verse saying: 'And recite to them the story *naba'* of Ibrahim' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 69) means important information that must be stated and listened to in order to gain from it wisdom and moral lessons. The word *naba'* is not used for everyday information of no importance.

If you trace the word *naba'* throughout the Quran, you find that it is said only in reference to important matters, as in Allah's saying: 'About what are they asking one another? About the great news (of resurrection).' (*an-Naba'*: 1-2) Also in the story of Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and the hoopoe bird: '...I have encompassed [in knowledge] that which you have not encompassed, and I have come to you from Sheba with certain news.' (*an-Naml*: 22)

Thus (*naba' Ibrahim*) translated as: '...the story of Ibrahim (Abraham)' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 69) means the essential or important news about him. Ibrahim *peace be upon him* was the father of the Prophets. He was highly praised by his Lord in many places throughout the Quran. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says of Ibrahim: 'Verily, Abraham was an *ummah* (a man who combined within himself all virtues), devoutly obeying Allah's Will, turning away from all that is false...' (*an-Nahl*: 120).

Ummah meaning community or nation is only used to mean a collective of people who identify themselves according to some specific traits and are

united by time, place and lifestyle. Likewise, the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was endowed by Allah with attributes of perfection that no ordinary human being could have.

That is why the Noble Hadith says: ‘Goodness will remain in me and in my *ummah* (followers or nation based on one creed) until the Day of Resurrection.’⁽¹⁾

Goodness lies exclusively in me; goodness in its general sense and with it different facets in his character as a father, a husband and as a caller to Islam, as well as the myriad attributes that he possessed, such as courage, gentleness, knowledge, generosity, etc. Goodness is also spread out among the individuals of my *ummah*, for each of them has some aspect and share of goodness. Although no one person can ever combine in himself the qualities of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or possess his perfection of character.

Similarly, our master Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was described as being an (*ummah* because the attributes of goodness are spread throughout the members of a community—this one is clever, that one is gentle, this one is knowledgeable and that one is wise, etc. However, Ibrahim *peace be upon him* contained within his person all the virtues that can exist in an entire community. This is not just excessive praise of the Prophet of Allah, Ibrahim *peace be upon him*; it is the truth based on his actual life experiences.

Read, if you wish what Allah says about Ibrahim *peace be upon him*: ‘And (remember) when the Lord of Ibrahim (Abraham) tried him with (certain) Commands, which he fulfilled. He (Allah) said (to him), “Verily, I am going to make you a leader (Prophet) of mankind.”’ (*al-Baqara*: 124)

Indeed, Ibrahim’s following supplication is alone sufficient to show his merit and goodness: ‘Our Lord, send among them a Messenger of their own who shall recite to them Your Verses...’ (*al-Baqara*: 129). Prophet Muhammad

(1) ‘Ajluni said in *Kashf Al-khafa*’ [vol. 1/p. 476], ‘It is mentioned in *Al-Maqasid* that our Sheikh said, “I do not know this Hadith, but its meaning is correct, in accordance with the Hadith: There will never cease to be a group from my *ummah* (followers) upon the truth until the Last Hour is established.”’ Ibn Hajar Al-Makki said in *Al-Fatawa Al-Hadithiya*: ‘There is no Hadith with such wording.’

peace and blessings be upon him was sent in fulfilment of this supplication of his forefather Ibrahim *peace be upon him*.

إِذْ قَالَ لِأَبِيهِ وَقَوْمِهِ مَا تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

When he asked his father and his people, ‘What do you worship?’ [70] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 70)

The first person Ibrahim *peace be upon him* called to Islam was his father, the closest person to him, not some stranger. A call that is first addressed to one’s closest relations rather than to distant people must be good and true because a person wishes that good things happen to himself first, then to those who are closest to him. If there is any doubt about the goodness of what he is bringing them, he would have first taken it to people who were strangers to him. The person intended as Ibrahim’s father was Azar. He is mentioned in another place in the Quran.

Ibrahim’s question to his father: ‘What is it that you worship?’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 70) is expressive of his disapprobation and rejection. It is a reasoning question that is meant to lay bare before his people the falseness of their worship. Worship, in essence, is a worshipper obeying the commands and prohibitions of that which he worships. In the case of idol worshippers, what exactly is it that they are commanded to do or not to do? Idols are gods without a law. How easy it is for mankind to worship gods like these who do not command them to do anything, nor prohibit them from doing anything. Such gods are totally incapable of requital and cannot hold their worshippers to account, for they can neither reward those who obey them, nor punish those who disobey them.

In fact, it is a mistake to use the word ‘worship’ in relation to idols. Despite this, people refer to them as gods. But why is that? Because the True God has commandments which the believers must carry out no matter how hard it is on them. He also has prohibitions that must be observed no matter how badly one desires or lusts for them. This is arduous worship. As for the worship of idols, there is nothing easier, for they give no commands or prohibitions and they offer no principles by which to govern life. That is why these people clung to idol worship and called their idols gods. This is pure madness.

When a true worshipper is caught in a tight spot and does not know what to do, or when circumstances demand more than he is capable of, he knows that he has a Lord to whom he can always turn for refuge and help, saying, 'O God.' But what about the worshipper of idols when he is exposed to similar difficulties? To whom should he direct his prayers and supplications? To these stone-made objects, or supposing that he turns to another human being like him who might listen, is there any certainty that this person will help him? This is the reason why Allah then says: 'They answered, "We worship idols, and we remain ever devoted to them." He (Ibrahim) said, "Do [you really think that] they hear you when you invoke them, or benefit you or do you harm?"' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 71-73) Thus worshipping anything other than Allah is utter foolishness and stupidity.

But did this inquiry on Ibrahim's part and this back-and-forth argument with his father and his people happen before or after he received the message from Allah? They say that Ibrahim *peace be upon him* was very enlightened and mature from a young age, so he rejected this false worship even before he became a Messenger of Allah. Therefore, Allah says of Ibrahim *peace be upon him*: 'And We had certainly given Ibrahim his sound judgement before, and We were of him well-Knowing.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 51)

Similarly, our Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* abhorred and rejected idol worship before he was made a messenger. He used to watch, astounded, as his people worshipped idols. He even saw how when the arm of one of the idols had broken off, his people sought the services of someone who could repair the idol's broken arm! The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* laughed and was amazed at what he saw: how could a worshipper repair the god he worshipped? After that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* isolated himself from them and withdrew to the Cave (of Hira') to reflect on the One True God worthy of worship.

It is as if no matter what religion the True God had commanded, if someone thought about it with clear-headedness, he would arrive at the truth without a messenger; This is because the religion of Allah is the religion of our innate, true nature. So if a person retains enough of his original pure nature, it will guide him to the truth.

This is substantiated by the successful views of `Umar *Allah be pleased with him*. He would give his opinion to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* regarding certain situations or problems, and then Quranic verses would come down to him from Allah, and in many instances they would concur with the viewpoints of `Umar⁽¹⁾. An element which Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* acknowledged in order to show us that a sound mind and an upright natural disposition can reach matters of religion without a messenger.

You can present any value of religion to a sound mind and you will find that it corresponds beautifully with good taste, common sense and proper thinking. For instance, lying is a behaviour that the sound mind and religion both reject. The same applies to bribery because it involves taking something that one has no right to possess in any sense. The person who is bribing you may also blackmail you and try to take what is rightfully yours, just as you have taken what rightfully belongs to the public.

If a person with a sound mind considers the rule against gazing at women who are prohibited to him, he would see that Islam has restricted his gaze as an individual, and also restricted the gaze of everyone else for his sake as an individual. Thus the religion demands obligations from you just as it demands obligations for your sake, such as the prohibitions against stealing, murder and other crimes.

Sometimes in our journeys abroad we might be asked about Allah's saying: 'He it is Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all religions, however hateful this may be to those

(1) *One example of such incidents was on the day of the Battle of Badr, when Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said: 'What do you say regarding these captives?' Abu Bakr Allah be pleased with him said: 'O Messenger of Allah, they are your people and your kinsmen, so spare them and ask them to repent. Perhaps Allah may accept their repentance.' `Umar Allah be pleased with him said: 'O Messenger of Allah, they accused you of lying and expelled you (from Mecca). Bring them forth and strike off their necks.' The Messenger of Allah peace and blessings be upon him accepted Abu Bakr's suggestion of releasing them for ransom, but the following Quranic verse was sent down from Allah: 'It is not right for a prophet to take captives before he has battled strenuously on earth. You [people] desire the transient goods of this world, but Allah desires the Hereafter [for you] – Allah is All-Mighty, All-Wise.' (al-Anfal: 67) See Tafsir Ibn Kathir [vol. 2, vol. 325].*

who associate others with Allah.’ (*at-Tawba*: 33) And: ‘They want to extinguish the Light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah refuses except to perfect His Light, however hateful this may be to the disbelievers.’ (*at-Tawba*: 32)

They say: ‘After fourteen centuries the Muslims are still a minority in the world and the true religion has not prevailed over all false religions. How then can we understand this Quranic verse?’ To the one who may ask this question, I say: If you had comprehended the previous Quranic verse, you would have known the answer concerning Allah’s saying: ‘They want to extinguish the Light of Allah with their mouths, but Allah refuses except to perfect His Light, however hateful this may be to the disbelievers.’ (*at-Tawba*: 32) The meaning is that Islam will overshadow other religions; however, not in the sense that these religions will cease to exist, but in the sense that the logical guidance of Islam will continue to project itself as the only source of answers. This can be evidenced by all the attacks we see on Islam, its laws and rulings, such as those related to divorce, for example, or polygamy or other affairs. Eventually, social conditions will make it necessary for them to resort to Islamic rulings, and they will find no other means to resolve their problems.

When the Bolshevik Revolution erupted in Russia in 1918, the first law they enacted was the prohibition of (*riba*; usurious interest) which had been acceptable among them. They outlawed interest even though they were not Muslim because their interests aligned with the Islamic values. This and similar other incidents are victories for the Religion of Allah and its prevalence over all other religions.

The meaning of ‘...to make it prevail over all religions...’ (*at-Tawba*: 33) is not that all humankind will become believers. Rather, each person will continue to adhere to his own religion, or his idolatry, or disbelief, but he will not find the solutions for his problems except in Islam. This is the true implication of Islam ‘prevailing over all other religions.’

Next the True Lord *the Exalted* relates the response which the people of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* gave to Ibrahim:

قَالُوا نَعْبُدُ أَصْنَامًا فَنَظْلُهَا عَنكِفِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

They said, ‘We worship idols, and are constantly in attendance on them’ [71] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 71)

So one of their own bore witness, for they themselves said: ‘...we worship idols...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 71). To worship implies obedience to something. What then did the idols say to them? What did they order them to do? Of course, they did not have an answer to this question.

If only it stopped at the level of worship, but it also entailed: ‘...and we remain ever devoted to them.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 71) In other words, they worshipped these idols day and night, and that is plausible because they were gods without commandments or laws and so their worship of them was without hardship or obligation. This was a kind of dissembling by which they gratified their attachment needs, and along with it did whatever they pleased.

But how did Ibrahim *peace be upon him* argue with them? With what did he reply to them?

قَالَ هَلْ يَسْمَعُونَكُمْ إِذْ تَدْعُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾ أَوْ يَنْفَعُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَضُرُّونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

He asked, ‘Do they hear you when you call? [72] Do they help or harm you?’[73] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 72-73)

Idols do not hear the supplications of those who turn to them, and they do not benefit those who worship them, nor harm those who disbelieve in them. That is why the idol worshippers had no reply or incontestable evidence except to say:

قَالُوا بَلْ وَجَدْنَا آبَاءَنَا كَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

They replied, ‘No, but this is what we saw our fathers doing’ [74] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 74)

So you did not really apply your minds to this matter, as they said in another place: ‘We found our fathers following a certain way and religion, and we will indeed follow their footsteps.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 23)

We say to them: since when have you followed the precedent set by your forefathers? If you had ever lived in imitation of your ancestors, then your lives and your standards of living would never have improved. So why do you insist on following in the footsteps of your ancestors in this matter particularly but not in any other?

قَالَ أَفَرَأَيْتُمْ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾ أَنْتُمْ وَأَبَاؤُكُمْ الْأَقْدَمُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾
فَإِنَّهُمْ عَدُوٌّ لِّي إِلَّا رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

Abraham said, ‘Those idols you have worshipped [75] you and your forefathers [76] I are my enemies; not so the Lord of the Worlds [77] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 75 -77)

So what Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* is saying is: ‘Do not pin the matter on your forefathers, and do not blame them for your errors.’ Then Ibrahim *peace be upon him* stated their errors clearly as a challenge to them. As if Ibrahim were defiantly saying: ‘Go ride your highest horse.’

‘... Indeed, they are an enemy to me. ...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 77) The word ‘enemy’ is singular here even though it is preceded by and refers to a plural pronoun, ‘...they (false deities)...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 77). Nonetheless, he did not say ‘my enemies.’ It is said that enmity in religion can only be of one form, whereas enmity and animosity in worldly affairs happens for many reasons, as in Allah’s saying: ‘...And remember the blessings which Allah has bestowed upon you: how, when you were enemies, He brought your hearts together, so that, by His Grace, you became brethren...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 103).

Here ‘...when you were enemies ...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 103) is in the plural form because it refers to worldly animosity, which is of many different causes. As for enmity in religion, it is all the same, as if it were all from one person.

Along these same lines is what we have said in the chapter of *an-Nur* regarding Allah’s statement: ‘No blame will be attached to the blind, the lame, the sick. Whether you eat in your own houses, or those of your fathers, your mothers, your brothers, your sisters, your paternal uncles, your paternal aunts, your maternal uncles, your maternal aunts, houses you have the keys for, or (in the house) of your friend, you will not be blamed...’ (*an-Nur*: 61).

Everything is in the plural form except ‘...or (in the house) of your friend...’ (*an-Nur*: 61) which is in the singular because true friendship is that which is sincerely for the sake of Allah. It does not have mutiple purposes, thus friendship is one of a kind.

Prophet Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) declaration of his opposition to the idols implies a challenge to them, as he openly declared his enmity to these idols, challenging them to harm him if they could. After declaring enmity to the idols, Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) call to Allah succeeded and he was not harmed.

الَّذِي خَلَقَنِي فَهُوَ يَهْدِينِ ﴿٧٨﴾ وَالَّذِي هُوَ يُطْعِمُنِي وَيَسْقِينِ ﴿٧٩﴾
وَإِذَا مَرِضْتُ فَهُوَ يَشْفِينِ ﴿٨٠﴾

**Who created me. It is He who guides me [78] He who gives
me food and drink [79] He who cures me when I am ill [80]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 78 - 80)**

Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* reveals that there are reasons for devoting worship to Him, and Ibrahim (Abraham) clarifies these reasons, saying Allah *Glorified is He*: ‘Who created me. It is He who guides me.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 78) This means that Allah created him from nothing, provided for him, established a law to guide him throughout his life and to ensure his well-being by enjoining certain commands. Allah *Glorified is He* does not gain any benefit from this, rather, the human being does. As idols cannot do any of the above-mentioned matters, only Allah deserves to be worshipped.

Allah’s saying: ‘...It is He who guides me.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 78) refers to the Divine Law as the user’s manual which people need to implement in order to ensure safety and good performance for their products. The purpose of every machine or product should be defined before creating it. For example, we have never seen a manufacturer creating a device without defining a certain purpose for it.

When this device fails to work correctly, you should refer to the user’s manual or take it to the technician for him to repair it. Similarly, you should follow the Divine Law because Allah is your Creator, and is the only One Who is entitled to establish a law for you. Therefore, it does not make sense

that anyone other than Allah establishes a law for people. For example, you never tell a butcher to make a user's manual for a television.

Then, Ibrahim (Abraham) mentions the essential elements necessary for maintaining one's life: 'He who gives me food and drink. He who cures me when I am ill.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 78-80) The Arabic pronoun *huwa* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse emphasises that Allah is the only One Who provides guidance, food, water and health. This is because some people may claim that they provide these four things as they may think that the doctor is the one who restores us to health or that the father is the one Who is responsible for sustenance because they provide for their families.

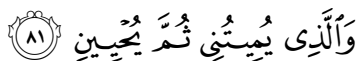
Guidance might be wrongly attributed to those who make rules determining human behaviour. For example, Communism, Capitalism, Existentialism, Ba'athism and others claim that they involve goodness and guidance of humankind. Therefore, Allah emphasises that He is the source of all these matters. He says: '...It is He who guides me.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 78) Hence, guidance comes only from Allah and His laws.

You may ask a question concerning Allah's saying: 'He who cures me when I am ill.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 80) Why do we go to the doctor although Allah is the One Who cures people? The answer is: The doctor prescribes medication and treats people, but Allah cures them. This is evidenced by the fact that a doctor may fall ill and become unable to treat himself, or may give a patient an injection that accidentally leads to the latter's death.

In the Arabic syntax, the word *maridtu* which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the verse, includes the verb *marida* in the past tense and the letter *ta* is the subject of the verb. In this case, is the person here the one who caused the illness? No. Similarly, in the sentence '*mata fulanun*' (someone died), 'someone' is the subject of the verb, but he did not cause death. Thus, one must be cognizant of when the subject is the one who did the action or the one who is described or characterized by the action. In the verse under study, the subject of the verb is not the doer of the action, rather, the subject is characterized by the action. Thus, Ibrahim (Abraham) says: '...I fall ill...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 80) out of good manners and respect for Allah *Glorified is He*.

He did not say, 'Allah makes me sick', rather, he said 'I fall sick' and attributed sickness to himself.

As for those things which no one but Allah can claim, they are stated without this kind of emphasis, like in the next verse:




**He who will make me die and then give me life
again [81] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 81)**

Ibrahim (Abraham) did not say, 'It is He who causes me to die and it is He Who brings me back to life,' because life and death are unquestionably in Allah's Hand, and no one else can claim them. Someone may ask, 'What about the person who kills another? Is that not considered death?' We have previously explained the difference between killing and death as demonstrated in Allah's saying: 'Muhammad is not but a messenger. [Other] messengers have passed on before him. So if he was to die or be killed, would you turn back on your heels [to unbelief]?...' (*Al-Imran*: 144) Death then is the departure of the soul when the body is still undamaged and its organs are intact, and only after the departure of the soul, the body decays. However, murder entails the destruction or damage of the body which results in the departure of the soul.

So no one claims to have the power of death, and when Nimrod claimed it for himself, Ibrahim (Abraham) argued with him and exposed the fraudulence of his claim, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Have you not considered the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord [merely] because Allah had given him kingship? When Abraham said, "My Lord is the one who gives life and causes death," he said, "I give life and cause death" ...' (*al-Baqara*: 258). All that he did was that he ordered a man to be condemned to death, then he pardoned him. Thus, Ibrahim (Abraham) found an appropriate way to put an end to this argument: 'Abraham said: "Indeed, Allah brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up from the west." So the disbeliever was overwhelmed [by astonishment], and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people...' (*al-Baqara*: 258). Ibrahim (Abraham) put an end to this sophistry and revealed the truth behind this stubborn and arrogant person.

Allah says: 'He who will make me die and then give me life again.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 81) The Arabic conjunction *thumma* (and then), which is used in the Arabic version of the verse, indicates a long interval between two incidents. The preposition *wa* (and) is not used because it indicates conjunction between things or incidents that are close to each other, whereas death and the afterlife are very far apart. Allah also says: 'Then He causes his death and provides a grave for him. Then when He wills, He will resurrect him.' (*Abasa*: 21-22)


 وَالَّذِي أَطْمَعُ أَنْ يَغْفِرَ لِي خَطِيئَتِي يَوْمَ الدِّينِ

**And He who will, I hope, forgive my faults
 on the Day of Judgement [82]
 (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 82)**

It is strange for this prayer to come from Ibrahim (Abraham). He is the father of the Prophets whom Allah describes as having all the virtues of a devout community. He was not an idol worshipper, and he was tested with commandments which he fulfilled. However, he *peace be upon him* said: 'And He who will, I hope, forgive my faults on the Day of Judgement.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 82) This is the highest degree of deference towards Allah and belittlement of his own deeds because no matter how many good deeds a person does in his life, it still does not match up to the amount of worship that Allah *Glorified is He* deserves. Therefore, Ibrahim (Abraham) hoped that Allah would forgive him. We should consider when Ibrahim (Abraham) supplicated to His Lord to forgive him, it was after stating the reasons for Allah's Divinity and acknowledging that all the previous blessings were granted by Allah. He created him from nothing, provided him with sustenance and provided him with all the essential necessities for life.

A servant's acknowledgment of Allah's bounties annihilates the haughtiness of his self and purifies his soul and body, making him eligible to supplicate Allah. If he acknowledges Allah's bounties, He will respond to his supplication for more bounties. As for the person who does not bear in mind or admit Allah's bounties, it will be more unlikely that his supplications will be answered. Therefore, a person should supplicate his Lord after devoting worship sincerely to Allah alone.

Therefore, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says, 'Whosoever works with what he knows, Allah will provide him with knowledge of what he does not know.'⁽¹⁾ Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...if you fear Allah, He will grant you a criterion...' (*al-Anfal*: 29). As long as a person acts according to his religious beliefs and spiritual values, Allah will give him guidance, enlightenment and success. He will enjoy drawing close to Allah and supplicating to Him. Ibrahim (Abraham), the father of all prophets, did not supplicate Allah before stating that all the previous blessings are bestowed by Allah, and thanking Him for them. This corresponds to Allah's saying: '...If you are grateful, I will surely increase you [in favour]...' (*Ibrahim*: 7).

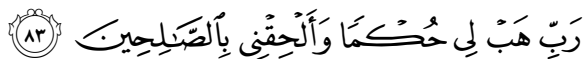
That is why scholars say that a believer supplicates Allah earnestly to give him what entails benefits for him, according to his understanding, logic, and limited information. It is desirable for him to admit that all graces are granted by Allah, and to have strong belief that Allah will grant him what is best for him because He gives according to His Ability and Wisdom.

The same message is clear in the Qudsi Hadith (Revelation from Allah in the Prophet Muhammad's words), 'I will give the person, who is preoccupied with remembering Me rather than supplicating, more than I give to those who ask me.'⁽²⁾

Undoubtedly, Allah's giving is greater and His choice for His servant is better than what the servant chooses for himself. For example, when you go on a trip abroad, and you ask your son to tell you about the gifts he wants you to bring from such-and-such country, and he mentions the things he wants. In so doing, he restricts the choices of the gifts which you will bring. However, if he leaves the choice up to you, it will be better than what he has chosen for himself.

(1) Related by Abu Na'im in '*Hilyat Al-Awliya'* [10/15] from a Hadith of Anas Allah be pleased with him and Shawkani defined it as a weak Hadith in '*Al-Fawa'id Al-Majmu'a* [pg 286].

(2) Related by At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* [2926] from the Hadith of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri, and he says, 'This is a good and yet Gharib (a Hadith with a single narrator usually at the beginning of the chain of narration) Hadith. It is related by Abu Na'im in *Al-Hayah* [5/106 and by Ad-Darimi in his *Sunnan* [2/441].

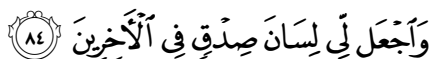


**My Lord, grant me wisdom; join me with the righteous [83]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 83)**

We notice that Ibrahim (Abraham) did not supplicate Allah for a worldly matter. The difference between *hukm* which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the verse, and *hikmah* is that *hikmah* (wisdom) entails the ability to put things in their proper place, whereas *hukm* (good judgement) entails knowing first what is good and then using what you know.

In his supplication, Ibrahim (Abraham) says: '...grant me...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 83) because *hiba* means a gift that entails no compensation, This means that he admits that he wants Allah to grant him good judgement as a gift, not as a due right. Join '... me with the righteous,' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 83) means that he wanted Allah to guide him to do good deeds in order for him to gain their rewards like righteous people.

Allah *Glorified is He* answered his supplication, as He says: 'And thus did We show Abraham the realm of the heavens and the earth....' (*al-An'am*: 75) The word *malakut* (realm), which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the verse, refers to intangible creatures that Allah showed to Ibrahim (Abraham) because he acted according to what he knew about the tangible things. Allah also says: '...verily in the Hereafter he will be among the righteous.' (*al-Baqara*: 130) So Ibrahim's (Abraham's) supplication was answered in this respect.

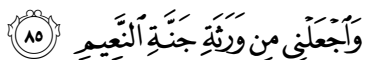


**Give me a good name among later generations [84]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 84)**

We know that the tongue is the organ for communication and expression. '*Lisan sidq*' which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the verse means 'good name' so that people remember him in a good manner and truthfully, unlike what happens nowadays, as they sometimes praise falsely, extolling them for what they did and sometimes for things they did not do. This is an untruthful remembrance that is contrary to reality.

We have previously explained that truthfulness is the speech that conforms to reality. This same meaning appears in five instances in the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And say, "My Lord, cause me to enter a sound entrance and to exit a sound exit."' (*al-Isra'*: 80) The verse means: cause me to enter a sound entrance that involves no deceit, and grant me a sound exit. Allah says: 'In a seat of honour near a Sovereign, Perfect in Ability....' (*al-Qamar*: 55) Allah also says: '... [That is] the promise of truth which they had been promised.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 16) These are the five verses in which the Arabic word *sidq* is mentioned.

The verse: '...among later generations,' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 84) means that he wanted his contemporaries as well as the following generations to make a good mention of him. He also wanted to leave a good effect on the following generations as well as whoever follows his footsteps. Allah answered his supplication, saying: 'And left for him [favourable mention] among later generations. Peace be upon Abraham.' (*as-Saffat*: 108-109)



**Make me one of those given the Garden of Bliss [85]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 85)**

After supplicating Allah for a worldly matter, Ibrahim (Abraham) supplicated Him for something after his death, and then he asked Allah to be among those admitted to Paradise, the Garden of Bliss. There is no doubt that his Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* answered his supplication, as Ibrahim (Abraham) will be granted the Garden of Bliss, as evidenced by Allah's saying: '...verily, in the Hereafter, will be among the righteous.' (*al-Baqara*: 130)

The meaning of 'inheritance of Paradise' is also mentioned in Allah's saying: 'Those are the inheritors, who will inherit Paradise and will abide therein eternally.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 10-11) The literal meaning of inheritance is taking possession of something from a person after his death. How, then, can one inherit paradise? Scholars said that the Creator *Glorified is He* did not create Heaven and Hell to accommodate only those who would end up there, rather, He created Paradise with the capacity to hold all people if they all believe, and He created Hell with the capacity to hold all people if they all

disbelieve. This is because Allah gives people the choice, either to believe or disbelieve. Therefore, inheriting paradise means that the believers will inherit the places in paradise allocated for the disbelievers if they believed.

The heir inherits the money and properties gained by the person who died after hard work, but does not ask about the means by which they were earned. However, the heir may return wrongly acquired possessions to their rightful owners in order to acquit the inherited. Thus, the heir receives the inheritance without paying anything in return, i.e., as a gift. Similarly, inheriting paradise means that Allah gives His obedient servants Paradise like a gift from Him not as compensation equal to their worldly deeds. Paradise is an inheritance that comes to the rightful heirs. This confirms the saying of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'There is none whose deeds alone would entitle him to get into Paradise.' It was said to him, 'And, Allah's Messenger, not even you?' Thereupon, he said, 'Not even I, but that my Lord wraps me in Mercy.'⁽¹⁾

The scholars say that paradise is an inheritance because a person is not entitled to be rewarded for his good deeds, as they should obey Allah's Commands which will result in good consequences in the worldly life. If these commandments are for your own good, how can you expect a reward for them? For example, when a father urges his child to study hard, the child, rather than the father, will benefit from following advice.

As long as a person observes Allah's Commandments which are for his own good, Allah will grant him paradise out of His Grace as a gift. This also may mean that we are granted paradise for our good deeds, but our rank in it is according to Allah's Grace. Thus, none of us can do without Allah's Grace. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Say, "In the bounty of Allah and in His mercy - in that let them rejoice; it is better than what they accumulate."' (Yunus: 58) This is the intended meaning of inheriting paradise. You should not count entirely on your deeds, your obedience of Allah and your diligence in worship, as salvation is only by the Mercy and Grace of Allah.

(1) *Agreed upon and related by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih [6463] and Muslim in his Sahih [2816] from the narration of Abu Hurayra.*

In the next verse, Ibrahim (Abraham) moves on from supplicating for himself to supplicating for his father saying:

وَاعْفِرْ لِآبَائِي إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الضَّالِّينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

Forgive my father, for he is one of those who have gone astray [86] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 86)

Ibrahim (Abraham) did not forget to supplicate for the person who raised him because the Creator *the Glorified and Exalted* made parents the direct means of giving birth. Therefore, Allah has made them the most deserving of obedience after Him. Sometimes, the parents give birth to a child, then abandon him and let someone else raise him, who takes the third position. Allah creates creatures from nothingness, parents give birth to children, and other people who raise and support children. This is clear in Allah's saying: '...say, "My Lord, have mercy upon them as they brought me up [when I was] small."' (*al-Isra'*: 24)

The rationale for supplication is not because they are the parents who gave birth to their child, but because they raised and cared for him when he was a child. So, if someone other than the parents raises the child, they take their position and deserve this supplication.

However, Ibrahim's (Abraham's) supplication was not answered in this matter because he supplicated Allah before he knew that his father was Allah's enemy. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And the request of forgiveness of Abraham for his father was only because of a promise he had made to him. But when it became apparent to Abraham that his father was an enemy to Allah, he disassociated himself from him...' (*at-Tawba*: 114).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تُخْزِنِي يَوْمَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٨٧﴾

And do not disgrace me on the Day when all people are resurrected [87] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 87)

What will cause a person to be disgraced in the Afterlife? This will be when his Lord reprimands him before witnesses on the Day of Judgment for

his shortcomings. Thus, the easy reckoning is the one that occurs only between a person and his Lord. Ibrahim's (Abraham's) supplication in his regard was answered, as Allah says: '...and indeed he, in the Hereafter, will be among the righteous...' (*al-Baqara*: 130).

يَوْمَ لَا يَنْفَعُ مَالٌ وَلَا بَنُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾ إِلَّا مَنْ آتَى اللَّهَ بِقَلْبٍ سَلِيمٍ ﴿٨٩﴾

**The Day when neither wealth nor children can help [88]
when the only one who will be saved is the one who comes
before God with a heart devoted to Him [89]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 88 - 89)**

Allah's saying: 'The Day when neither wealth nor children can help.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 88) puts forward the issue that preoccupies everyone's mind, for everyone wants to possess money and children, whoever is deprived of either money or children are deeply saddened. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Wealth and children are [but] adornment of the worldly life...' (*al-Kahf*: 46). Allah *Glorified is He* also says: 'Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire - of women and sons, heaped-up sums of gold and silver...' (*Al-Imran*: 14).

In fact, money and children are the adornment of worldly life. The literal meaning of 'adornment' is beauty that is not intrinsic to a thing. For example, intrinsic beauty is embodied in the woman who is naturally beautiful without adding something to her beauty like by wearing make-up or jewels. This type of beauty is called natural beauty, as it does not need any other adornment.

Allah's saying: 'When the only one who will be saved is the one who comes before Allah with a heart devoted to Him,' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 88-89) means that even though money and children are the adornments of the worldly life, this does not prevent them from benefitting their owner on the Day of Judgment if he makes good use of his money, spending some of his money for charity and raising his children as righteous people. This will be useless except: 'When the only one who will be saved is the one who comes before Allah with a heart devoted to Him.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 89)

In other words, all deeds must be based on sincerity, as hypocrisy makes one's deeds futile like scattered dust. If you do good deeds in this worldly life

but do not believe in Allah or worship him without any partners, your deeds will be futile and useless, and you will not be rewarded in the Afterlife. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We will regard what they have done of deeds and make them as dust dispersed.' (*al-Furqan*: 23)

In a Qudsi Hadith (Revelation from Allah in the Prophet Muhammad's words) Allah says, '...you acted so that your deeds would be praised and appreciated....'⁽¹⁾ Sometimes people do good deeds for them to be praised and honoured, to attain a specific goal, or for their names to be written on the door of the mosque. They attain only the objective behind their good deeds.

Allah's saying: 'The Day when neither wealth nor children can help.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 88) does not deny that wealth and children are useful as long as a person observes sincerity and his heart is devoted to Allah. This means that the person's heart remains in the original condition that it had when Allah created it. The heart is originally sound, but people spoil it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And when it is said to them, "Do not cause corruption on the earth," they say, "We are but reformers." Unquestionably, it is they who are the corrupters, but they perceive [it] not.' (*al-Baqara*: 11-12) If people reflect on things that trouble them in life, they will find that they are the results of the corruption they spread throughout the universe that Allah created and structured according to His Wisdom. Everything in which man does not interfere works properly and correctly, as man causes corruption, oppression, mistreatment of people as well as plants, animals and non-living things, although the Wise Lawgiver has forbidden all of this. This corruption happens when man acts contrary to the instructions of his religion. However, when he is guided by the religious instructions, matters will be set aright and sound.

Allah says in the chapter of *ar-Rahman*: 'The sun and the moon [move] by precise calculation. And the stars and trees prostrate. And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance.' (*ar-Rahman*: 5-7) Everything in the universe, such

(1) Related by Muslim in his *Sahih* [1905, Ahmad in his *Musnad* [3/222] and At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* [2382] from the Hadith of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him. At-Tirmidhi said that the Hadith is a good and Gharib (a Hadith with a single narrator usually at the beginning of the chain of narration). It is a long Hadith explained by Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi in his '*Al-Ahadith Al-Qudsiyya*' (1/135-151).

as the sun, the moon, the stars, the air and water, is balanced with Allah's Wisdom. All the elements of the universe work smoothly and properly in the integrated system of the universe, because man does not interfere with them.

The sound heart is a heart filled only with what Allah desires. A Qudsi Hadith says: 'My earth and My sky do not encompass me, but the heart of my believing servant encompasses Me.'⁽¹⁾ Thus, do not preoccupy your heart with worldly affairs, but let it be preoccupied with Allah, an action which entails soundness of heart because the heart is naturally disposed for this. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Allah has extracted you from the wombs of your mothers not knowing a thing, and He made for you hearing and vision and intellect...' (*an-Nahl*: 78). Why? So that '...you would be grateful.' (*an-Nahl*: 78)

Wealth and children should not be related to the soundness and sincerity of the heart, as Allah says: '...But the enduring good deeds are better to your Lord for reward and better for [one's] hope.' (*al-Kahf*: 46) Allah's verse: 'Beautified for people is the love of that which they desire...' (*Al-'Imran*: 14) ends with: '...That is the enjoyment of worldly life, but Allah has with Him the best return.' (*Al-'Imran*: 14)

Soundness of heart entails not attributing partners to Allah and being free of hypocrisy because the hypocrite does not sincerely believe in Allah. His heart contradicts what his tongue says and his heart is not free of evil. Therefore, his sin is more grievous than that of the sin of the disbeliever and Allah will cause him to be in the lowest level of Hellfire.

The hypocrite will be punished more severely than the disbeliever because the disbeliever's heart and tongue disbelieve, and he acts according to what he thinks. However, the hypocrite deceives Muslims and pretends to

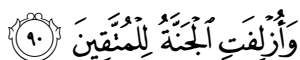
(1) In '*Al-Asrar Al-Marfu'ah fil Akhbar Al-Mawdu'ah*' (page 206) which was published by Dar Al-Kutub Al-'Ilmiyyah in Beirut, the Mullah 'Ali Al-Qari says, 'This Hadith is mentioned in '*Al-Ihya*', and Al-'Iraqi said, 'I have not found any basis for this Hadith.' Ibn Taymiya said, 'It is mentioned in '*Al-Isra'iliyyat*' and does not have any known chain of narrators going back to the Prophet Muhammad. In the appendix, it is as explained. It means: 'A believer's heart encompasses Me and My love.' Otherwise, the concept of *Hulul* (a Sufi term meaning indwelling) entails disbelief. Az-Zarkashi said that the Hadith was forged by the atheists. See also '*Kashf Al-Khafa*' [2/273] and '*Ad-Durar Al-Muntathira*', (page 366) by As-Suyuti.

be one of them. There were hypocrites who prayed in the first row behind Messenger Muhammad, though actually they were conspirers and deceivers. Similarly, dissemblance contradicts soundness of heart. The dissembler's deeds are for the sake of people, but not for the sake of Allah. However, he blames people who are ungrateful to his favours although he is ungrateful to Allah.

Therefore, this reward suits his actions because he has not done the good deeds for the sake of Allah, but for Allah's slave, so he should not expect to be rewarded by Allah. The dissembler's deeds are futile and useless. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...His example is like that of a [large] smooth stone upon which is dust and is hit by a downpour that leaves it bare. They are unable [to keep] anything of what they have earned...' (*al-Baqara*: 264). The people loath the dissembler and deny his aid in building a mosque, a hospital or a school. If he does his deeds for the sake of Allah, he will be remembered and praised by people.

It was narrated⁽¹⁾ that Messenger Muhammad went to Fatima Az-Zahra' and found her polishing a coin in her hand. When he asked her about this, she said, 'I am polishing it because I want to give it as a *Sadaqah* (voluntary charity). He said, 'So give it as it is.' She said, 'I know that it will be placed in the Hand of Allah before it is placed in the hands of the poor, and Allah is good, so He only accepts good things.'

Then Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* mentions the effects and rewards of sound heart and sincerity of one's deeds. He says:



**When the Garden is brought near to the
righteous [90] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 90)**

The word *uzlifat* mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse means that paradise will be brought near them. However, how will paradise be brought near the pious if they are already in paradise? They say that paradise will be brought near to them before they enter it while they are still experiencing the fright and duress

(1) The story of Fatima *Allah be pleased with her* polishing a *dirham* before offering it.

of Judgment and reckoning. Therefore, paradise will draw near to them in order to reassure them and give them ease during this difficult situation.

In another verse, Allah says: 'And Paradise will be brought near to the righteous, not far...' (*Qaf*: 31). They will see paradise and the blessing that will await them. Similarly, suppose you were invited to dine with some great personage who had prepared their table with the utmost care, part of the blessings would be to walk around it and see all the delicious dishes on it before the time came to begin the dinner.



**And the Fire is placed in full view of the
misguided [91] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 91)**

This is for those who do not worship Allah sincerely, and their hearts that have been corrupted by attributing partners to Allah in His Divinity, hypocrisy or dissemblance. In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And there is none of you except he will come to it...' (*Maryam*: 71). The Arabic word *wurud* does not mean entering; rather, it means coming to see. This is because the *Sirat* (the bridge over the fire) is over the hell. This word is mentioned in Allah's saying regarding the story of Musa (Moses): 'And when he came to the well of Midyan, he found there a crowd of people watering [their flocks]...' (*al-Qasas*: 23). Musa came to the well of Midyan, but he did not drink from it.

The wisdom of coming to see the hell is that the believer will realize the virtue of faith, as it saved him from hell which he will see. This is the greatest bounty which he will receive. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...So he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise has attained [his desire]...' (*Al-Imran*: 185).

The word *al-ghawun* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, refers to either the misguided or those who mislead others.

وَقِيلَ لَهُمْ أَإِنَّ مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٩٢﴾ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ هَلْ يَنْصُرُونَكُمْ أَوْ يَنْصُرُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

It will be said to them, ‘Where are those you worshipped [92] beside God? Can they help you now, or even help themselves? [93] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 92-93)

Allah’s saying: ‘...Where are those you worshipped beside Allah? ...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 92) includes an inquiry about the partners some people worshipped beside Allah.

In another verse, Allah says: ‘[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?"’ (*as-Saffat*: 22-25) Those partners will leave and renounce them. ‘[And they should consider that] when those who have been followed disassociate themselves from those who followed [them], and they (all) see the punishment, and cut off from them are the ties [of relationship].’ (*al-Baqara*: 166)

Then those who associated partners with Allah in His Divinity will say: ‘... "Our Lord, show us those who misled us of the jinn and men [so] we may put them under our feet that they will be among the lowest."’ (*Fussilat*: 29) It will be like a struggle, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Close friends, that Day, will be enemies to each other, except for the righteous.’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 67)

Allah’s saying: ‘...Can they help you now, or even help themselves?’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 93) means that those who have been worshipped besides Allah can neither help themselves nor their followers. The verse includes censuring and belittlement for those people and their deities.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَكُبْكِبُوا فِيهَا هُمْ وَالْغَاوُونَ ﴿٩٤﴾

And then they will all be hurled into Hell, together with those that misled them [94] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 94)

The verb *kubkiba* (hurled) means that those people will be thrown on their faces frequently. Every time they try to get up, they will be thrown on their

faces again. In addition, the morphological pattern of the word indicates repetition of an action like that of the word *naqnaqa* and *zaqzaqah*. The verse means that the idols will be thrown on their faces and precede those who worshipped them into hell. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Indeed, you [disbelievers] and what you worship other than Allah are the firewood of Hell. You will be coming to [enter] it.' (*al-Anbiya*: 98) Allah says: '...together with those that misled them.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 94) So, those who led others astray will precede those whom they misled so that their rescue from Hell will be hopeless. If their followers were to enter hell first, they would think that they will come to save them, but they find that those whom they worshipped will precede them into hell, as Allah says of Pharaoh: 'He will precede his people on the Day of Resurrection and lead them into the Fire...' (*Hud*: 98).

وَجُنُودُ إِبْلِيسَ أَجْمَعُونَ ﴿٩٥﴾

**And all Iblis's supporters[95]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 95)**

Satan has supporters from among humans and jinn who will be gathered together in hellfire.

قَالُوا وَهُمْ فِيهَا يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٩٦﴾ تَاللَّهِ إِن كُنَّا لَفِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٩٧﴾
إِذْ تُسَوِّىكُمْ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٩٨﴾

**There they will say to their gods, as they bicker among
themselves [96] We were clearly misguided [97] When we
made you equal with the Lord of the Worlds [98]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 96 - 98)**

This is a scene from the Day of Judgment when those who have gone astray will blame those who led them astray. The same act of laying blame is mentioned by Satan in Allah's saying: '...But I had no authority over you except that I invited you, and you responded to me. So do not blame me; but blame yourselves...' (*Ibrahim*: 22). It means that Satan does not have power over them to force them to obey him, nor any evidence to convince them.

Then those who have gone astray confess their misguidance and say: 'By Allah, we were clearly misguided.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 97) They will realise that they have been misled when 'We made you equal with the Lord of the Worlds.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 96-98) This means that they made their gods equal to Allah in terms of love, obedience, and worship.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [yet], among the people are those who take other than Allah as equals [to Him]. They love them as they [should] love Allah. But those who believe are stronger in love for Allah...' (*al-Baqara*: 165).

وَمَا أَضَلَّنَا إِلَّا الْمُجْرِمُونَ ﴿٩٩﴾

**It was the evildoers who led us astray[99]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 99)**

This means that these polytheists want Allah to show them those gods in order to take revenge from them and to put them under their feet. In this way, they will blame these gods for the result they will reach.

فَمَا لَنَا مِنْ شَافِعِينَ ﴿١٠٠﴾ وَلَا صَدِيقٍ حَمِيمٍ ﴿١٠١﴾

**And now we have no intercessor [100] And no true friend[101]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 100-101)**

Ash-Shafi'i (intercessor) is the one who supports you in something which you cannot gain by yourself, so he intercedes for you for the one in whose hand lies authority. Intercession in the Hereafter will be granted by Allah to those whom they will. Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and they cannot intercede except on behalf of one whom He approves...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 28). Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...they cannot intercede except on behalf of one whom He approves. And they, from fear of Him, are apprehensive...' (*al-Baqara*: 255). Thus, not everyone is eligible for intercession. Even in the worldly life, the one who intercedes should have a high status and a strong influence on people so that they may accept his intercession. The intercessor should be backed by good deeds and benevolence which exceed the needs of the one for whom he intercedes.

In the countryside, for instance, a man who has prestige and high standing among people might arbitrate over quarrels and give judgment about blood

feuds. Therefore, when he interposes between two enemies, everyone submits to him and defers to his ruling.

A similar principle is to be found in Islamic law in the kind of partnership known as a Partnership of Elites.⁽¹⁾ It is well-known that partnership needs money or labour, but a person may not have money and may not be able to work, yet has an excellent reputation among people, so we may make him a partner because of the advantages of having his good name attached to our enterprise.

In fact, his prestige and good standing among people was created through money, as he did not acquire it out of thin air; rather, it is the result of his efforts and considerate acts for other people, so they respect him. Therefore, when he no longer has money, having spent it for goodly purposes, he retains a good deal of love and respect among people, which one can use to gain a trademark reputation.

In Allah's 'And no true friend.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 101) there is a difference between an intercessor and a friend, as the intercessor has to be asked to intercede, whereas the friend, especially a true one, does not wait to be asked; rather, he hurries to ask his friend. The friend is described as a true friend because a normal friend will not suffice when every person is preoccupied with himself. Thus, when a person is not considered a true friend, he will not take his friend into account, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'On the Day a man will flee from his brother. And his mother and his father, And his wife and his children. For every man, that Day, will be a matter adequate for him.' (*Abasa*: 34-37)

The matter of intercession has provoked much controversy and clamour among orientalisists who want to find faults in the Quran. One of them said, 'You say that the Quran is a miracle of eloquence, but sometimes we see the same meaning rendered in two different styles within the Quran, one of which is perfect and the other is not.' Then the orientalisists say about these verses, 'This is redundancy.' We refute these statements, saying, 'You are looking at

(1) *Muwaffiq Ad-Din Ibn Qadama said in his book, 'Maghna' [5/122], 'As for the Partnership of Elite, it is when two people join in partnership to buy something by their good reputation and credibility instead of by money. As for how they divide up their purchase, it is in halves, thirds, fourths or in any other way, and then they sell it and get whatever Allah Glorified is He has foreordained, as this is their recompense.*

the general meaning, and you do not have the skill or gift for Arabic necessary to understand well the words of Allah. If you had this skill, you would not find faults in the Quran, as each verse that you consider as unnecessary repetition actually has something unique that could not be said in any other way.' The two verses that tackle intercession are in the chapter of *al-Baqara*, and are similar in the first part but differ in the second half. One of them is: 'And fear a Day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all ...' (*al-Baqara*: 48).

The second verse is: 'And fear a Day when no soul will suffice for another soul at all ...' (*al-Baqara*: 123). Therefore, the beginnings of the two verses are the similar; the first verse ends with: '...nor will compensation be taken from it, nor will they be aided.' (*al-Baqara*: 48) The second verse ends with: '...and no compensation will be accepted from it, nor will any intercession benefit it, nor will they be aided.' (*al-Baqara*: 123)

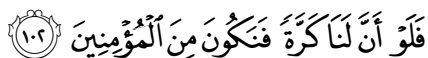
When we truly examine the first halves of the two verses, we think they are the same, but we find that there is also a difference between them. The pronoun mentioned in the Arabic version of the verses refers to two different things. In one verse, it refers to the intercessor and in another case, it refers to the one who receives intercession. When the pronoun refers to someone on whose behalf another intercedes, the Quran states that Allah will not accept any compensation from him and intercession will not aid him. However, when the pronoun refers to the intercessor, the Quran states that intercession will not be accepted from him – which is mentioned first - no compensation will be taken from him. Thus, there is no redundancy in these two verses as you may think, for each of them conveys some meaning that the other does not convey.

We have also explained the same issue regarding Allah's saying: 'And do not kill your children for fear of poverty...' (*al-Isra'*: 31). And in another verse, Allah says: '...and do not kill your children out of poverty...' (*al-An'am*: 151). The two beginnings are different, as are the endings. The second half of the first verse is: '...We provide for them and for you...' (*al-Isra'*: 31). The second half of the other verse is: '...We will provide for you and them...' (*al-An'am*: 151).

When we examine the two verses, we see that they each convey a unique meaning, and include no redundancy as some people think. The first verse

says: 'And do not kill your children for fear of poverty...' (*al-Isra'*: 31). There is no poverty, and the father fears of being poor due to his children, so he is preoccupied with his children's sustenance but not his own sustenance because he is not yet in dire need. Thus, in the second half of this verse, the children are referred to before the father. Allah reassures the father that He will provide sustenance for his children and him. As for the other verse: '...and do not kill your children out of poverty...' (*al-An'am*: 151), there is a state of poverty, and the father is concerned with his own sustenance and then with his children's. Therefore, the second half of the verse says: '...We will provide for you and them...' (*al-An'am*: 151). The father is mentioned before the children. Therefore, each verse has its own meaning and significance that the other verse does not convey.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that these sinners said:



If only we could live our lives again, we would be true believers! [102] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 102)

The word *karrah*, which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the verse, refers to returning to the worldly life so that they could begin a new life and believe in Allah, obey Him, follow His Path and do not have this end.

Other verses explain this issue: '[For such is the state of the disbelievers], until, when death comes to one of them, he says, "My Lord, send me back. That I might do righteousness in that which I left behind" No! It is only a word he is saying; and behind them is a barrier until the Day they are resurrected.' (*al-Mu'minun*: 99-100) These people will not return to life, and they merely say that hoping for salvation, but it is preposterous for them to return to the worldly life, as there is a tremendous barrier that separates them from it, and prevents them from returning. This barrier will remain until the Day when all people will be resurrected.

In another verse of similar import, Allah *Glorified is He* shifts the focus from death to resurrection. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'If you could but see when they are made to stand before the Fire and will say, "Oh, would that we

could be returned [to life on earth] and not deny the signs of our Lord and be among the believers.” (al-An‘am: 27) Their promises are merely lies that do not correspond to their actions. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* responds to them saying: ‘But what they concealed before has [now] appeared to them. And even if they were returned, they would return to that which they were forbidden; and indeed, they are liars.’ (al-An‘am: 28)

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُّؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠٣﴾

There truly is a sign in this, though most of them do not believe [103] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 103)

The word *ayah*, which is mentioned in the Arabic version of the verse, is the incredible sign that should not be skipped without giving due attention: ‘...though most of them do not believe.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 103)

Despite these clear signs, most of them will not be believers.

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٠٤﴾

Your Lord alone is the Almighty, the Merciful [104] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 104)

Although most of them did not believe, Allah *Glorified is He* is the Almighty who can subdue anything and cannot be subdued. Despite His Might, He is also Merciful to His servants and accepts repentance from those who return to Him.

The Quran moves from the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) to a story of another prophet: Nuh (Noah).

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ نُوحٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٠٥﴾

The people of Noah, too, called the messengers liars[105] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 105)

The word *al-qawm*, which is mentioned in the Arabic of the verse, refers to men only because it is men who oversee the most important affairs in their community. And the opposite of the word *Al-qawm* is ‘women’. This meaning

was previously explained in Allah's saying: '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).

Al-qawm (men) undertakes the most important affairs in the community, whereas women receive the fruits of their actions and make good use of them. An Arab poet clarifies this meaning in the following verses:

I do not know and I do not pretend to know,

If 'qawm' (people) of Al Hisn are women or men

We also know of man's status as a guardian for women from Allah's saying when He warned Adam about Satan: 'So We said, "O Adam, indeed this is an enemy to you and to your wife. Then let him not remove you from Paradise so you would suffer."' (*Ta Ha*: 117) Grammatically, the word *fatashqiya* would be used instead of *fatashqa* (suffer), but Allah uses *fatashqa* (suffer) because man is concerned with work and spares women hardships, although women sometimes want to bear hardships.

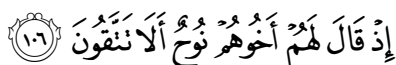
The verse says: 'The people of Noah, too, called the messengers liars.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 105) How can this happen when they belied Nuh (Noah) but believed in Adam and Ibrahim (Abraham)?

Some scholars said that the Messengers of Allah convey constant and fixed principles with regard to creed and morals. Therefore, to the one who belies his Messenger has also belied all Messengers. The believers often repeat: 'Say, "We have believed in Allah and in what was revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Descendants, and in what was given to Moses and Jesus and to the prophets from their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we are Muslims [submitting] to Him."' (*Al-Imran*: 84) Allah also says: 'The Messenger has believed in what was revealed to him from his Lord, and [so have] the believers. All of them have believed in Allah and His angels and His books and His messengers, [saying], "We make no distinction between any of His messengers"...' (*al-Baqara*: 285).

What about the differences of religious laws which were conveyed by different prophets? These differences are only those necessitated by the developing

changes among different societies, and they are only concerned with minor issues that are not relevant to the fundamentals of the creed.

Messengers always come in the plural form because the one who belies his Messenger concerning the creeds and morals that are preached by other Messengers has also belied the other Messengers.



Their brother Noah said to them, ‘Will you not be mindful of God? [106] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 106)

The word *akhuhum* (their brother) is meant to soften their hearts to Nuh (Noah) because he was closely related to them, not a stranger or a foreigner. They knew his origin, attributes, and morals.

Therefore, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* conveyed his message to people, the closest people to him were the first believers such as Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* who believed him without having heard a single verse. The same applies to Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and other earlier believers. Why? Because they depended on Prophet Muhammad's previous history before the advent of the message, and knew that the one who never lied to people would not tell lies about Allah.

Khadijah *Allah be pleased with her* is considered to be the first Islamic jurist and scholar. When Messenger Muhammad came to her complaining about what he experienced, as he feared that he was suffering from madness and that these revelations might be visions from Jinn or the delusions of a broken mind, Khadija *Allah be pleased with her* said, ‘By Allah, you maintain ties of kinship, welcome guests with hospitality, help the less fortunate and help people during their calamities. By Allah, He will never disgrace you.’⁽¹⁾

When Abu Bakr learned of the events of the Night Journey and Ascension, he believed Messenger Muhammad immediately without hesitation. When he was asked about this, he replied, ‘We believe him in matters revealed from Heaven, so

(1) Related by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* [3, and six other places in his *Sahih*]. Muslim also relates it in his *Sahih* [160] from the narration of ‘A’isha. For an explanation of this Hadith, see An-Nawawi's *Explanation of Sahih Muslim* [2/561] and Fat-h Al-Bari by Al-‘Asqalani [1/124].

how would we not believe him in this matter? If he said it, then it must be truthful.' Therefore, Abu Bakr's criterion for judging something as true is merely that Messenger Muhammad said it. Therefore, Abu Bakr deserved to be called 'The Truthful'. Messenger Muhammad said: 'In the pre-Islamic era, Abu Bakr and I were like two race horses (in terms of their positive attributes), so I preceded him and became a prophet while he followed me, and if he had preceded me to be a prophet, I would have followed him.' All these meanings can be grasped from Allah's saying: 'Their brother Noah said to them...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 106).

A similar meaning is contained in Allah's saying: 'There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves...' (*at-Tawba*: 128). Sending a Messenger from among his people indicates Allah's Wisdom. However, the stubborn people said, 'We want a messenger from among the angels.' They treated the Messengers as their enemies although they should have allowed him to spread his message and should have opened their minds in order to understand the Message and not to rely on mere bias.

What makes it difficult for people to accept the truth is that their hearts are preoccupied with falsehoods; the truth cannot exist with falsehood in the same place. Then, if you want to examine an issue, you must first purge your heart of falsehoods, and then make a judgment based on a fair intellect and clear heart.

We see this even in material objects. One space cannot contain two things. This is called 'mutually exclusive'. For example, when you fill a bottle with water, the air comes out first in the form of bubbles.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'But if the truth were in accord with their own likes and dislikes, the heavens and the earth would surely have fallen into ruin...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 71).

You can see, for example, that if you placed a cologne bottle with a small opening under water, the water is unable to enter the bottle. Why is that? Because the hole is too narrow to permit the air to come out and the water to enter at the same time.

The word *al-hawa* meaning capricious inclinations may be deriving its name from the word *al-hawa'* meaning air or atmosphere. For example, if air pressure were only present on one side of a building or one side of a mountain, it would incline to the opposite side. Why is that? This is because the ambient

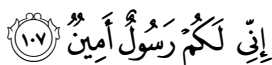
air pressure preserves the balance of these tall buildings and skyscrapers by surrounding them equally from all sides. Therefore, if air were vacuumed from one direction, the building would crumple in that direction.

Air is one of the powerful forces that people use and transform into energy. For instance, look at the powerful shaking that can be caused by vacuuming air. Or look at the massive trucks and vehicles which move on the air in their tires. Similarly, if capricious inclinations are based on falsehood, they can be extremely powerful and destructive. Therefore, falling down is called *huwiy* and we say a thing *hawa* in order to mean it fell down.

The holy statement: '...Will you not be conscious of God?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 106) is said by all messengers of God, or a messenger says it when he is first sent forth by God. It means you should fear God and protect yourselves from His punishment. The Arabic structure used in the words meaning 'Will you not be...' is a rhetorical tool to incite people to take some action, just like you might say to a negligent child, 'Will you not study?', or 'Why don't you study?'

When we analyse the rhetoric of this incitation, we see that it is in the form of astonishment that is based on negation of the verb. For instance, when you want to urge a child who does not pray to pray, you say, 'Will not you pray?' After having been asked a rhetorical question in the negative, the child might feel ashamed to answer. But in case the child prays, and you pose to them a positive question, 'Are you praying?' The child says with pride, 'Yes'. Thus, 'to incite' here means astonishment of *not* doing something and a question in the negative that has the connotation of a command.

So, the statement: '...Will you not be conscious of God?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 106) means that the Messenger of God denounces their being unconscious of God, but he calls upon them to be conscious of God; when someone disapproves of an action, they must want to approve the opposite of the denounced action.

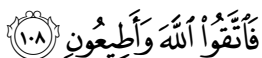


**I am a faithful messenger sent to you [107]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 107)**

The holy statement: 'Behold, I am an apostle [sent by Him] to you, [and therefore] worthy of your trust,' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 107) means that you might

have been ignorant of God, therefore, He has shown mercy on your unmindful carelessness and sent you a trustworthy messenger to warn you, teach you and convey to you the Order of God. The Messenger is worthy of your trust and will not deceive you in anything so that you will never have occasion to say, 'We erred out of inadvertent carelessness.'

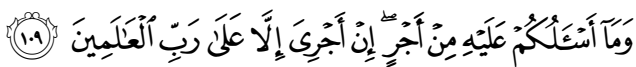
As long as I am the one who is sent by God to you, and I am trustworthy and true to my message, you should listen to me. Therefore, the command to be conscious of God is repeated:



**Be mindful of God and obey me [108]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 108)**

It is as if he is making peace with his listeners and lightens the rhetoric of his counsel so that the command to be conscious of God is plainly and directly addressed to them now after having first been in the form of a negative question, 'Will you not be conscious of God?' God consciousness leads us to obey God's Commands and Prohibitions, both of which we can know only through the trustworthy messenger who bears God's System and conveys His Message. The words of this verse have been repeated by many of the messengers of God: 'Behold, I am an apostle [sent by Him] to you, [and therefore] worthy of your trust: [107] be, then, conscious of God, and pay heed unto me! [108]' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 107-108)

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



**I ask no reward of you, for my only reward is with the Lord
of the Worlds [109] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 109)**

We do not hear the statement: 'And no reward whatever do I ask of you for it...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 109) from the Prophet Abraham *peace be upon him* nor from Moses *peace be upon him*. The first one to say it was Noah *peace be upon him*. When you say to someone else, 'I will ask no reward from you for this work', that means you deserved some recompense or reward for your work. You are

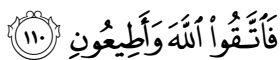
not actually renouncing your wage or reward; rather you know that if you took your reward from the person who benefited from your work, they will evaluate your recompense based on human standards. Therefore, the best thing is to take reward for your work from God.

It is as if Noah *peace be upon him* were saying, 'You, the human beings, could not truly assess the work I have done for you; I have been offering you the Path of Guidance that will bring you happiness in this world and save you from the eternal wrath in the Afterlife. You cannot fairly appreciate my deeds. My reward is with God, because human beings can only give according to their limited knowledge and ability.'

We have previously related to you the story of the man whom we met in Algeria. He had signs and bearing of a pious, respectable man, and he signalled for us to stop our car and for us to let him ride with us. When we stopped for him to get in, he leaned over to the driver and asked, 'How much?' meaning how much the fare was. The driver said to the man who was the local governor, and he said, 'We will take you where you are going for God.' And the man said, 'Good sir, you have just raised the price.' Yes, if one's wages are from God, then they are high indeed.

In another verse, God *Glorified is He* says: 'Or is it that [they who reject your message, O Muhammad, fear lest] you ask of them a reward, so that they would be burdened with debt [if they should listen to thee]?' (*at-Tur*: 40) Then, He says: '...my reward rests with none but the Lord of all the worlds.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 109) None but God *Glorified is He* is capable of truly rewarding me for my mission to call people to Islam, for it was He who charged me with it and it is He who is the Lord of all the worlds, He who made Creation out of nothing, who provides out of nothing sustenance and livelihoods for you and me. All of this is for your own benefit, because He *Glorified is He* does not derive benefit from this.

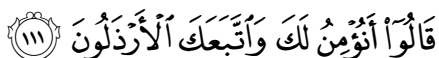
Godhood requires providence, spending, creation, and provision. It is the master of all these blessings and favours that will give me my reward.



**Be mindful of God and obey me [110]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 110)**

After explaining to them the generosity of God's reward to him for bearing His message and giving them an incentive to be conscious and heedful because they will benefit from the Messenger's message without any cost to them, he says: 'Hence, remain conscious of God and pay heed unto me!' This does not mean obey me, myself; rather, obey me because I am a messenger from God *Glorified is He*.

Then, concerning their response to Noah *peace be upon him*, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**They answered, 'Why should we believe you
when the worst sort of people follow you?' [111]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 111)**

The word *al-ardhalun*), translated above as 'the most abject', is the plural form of *ardhal* meaning someone or something that is vilest or worst. The *rudhal* of fruit is the discarded fruit which we call *niqada*. The question here expresses exclamation: 'Why would we believe in you when we are superior, and those who believe in you are only the most abject of people?' By this, they mean the poor and the labourers and other common people. These people are the most frequent soldiers of the Message because they are suffering most in a corrupt society, and it is natural for them to gather around anyone who tries to set society aright.

In another verse they say: '...We do not see in you anything but a mortal man like ourselves; and we do not see that any follow you save those who are quite obviously the most abject among us...' (*Hud*: 27).

Their saying, '... Shall we place our faith in you...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 111) demonstrates their inability to understand the true nature of faith because he did not say, 'Believe in me'; rather, he said, 'Believe in God.' Or, the meaning of 'Shall we place our faith in you...' is why we should give credence to what you

say. It is the same as the other verse saying, 'But none save a few of his people declared their faith in Moses...' (*Yunus*: 83), that is few people declared their faith in what Moses said. Here, when the Arabic past tense verb *amana* (believed) is followed by the preposition 'L', it takes on the meaning 'to believe what someone says. If it were followed by the preposition 'Bi', then it would mean to have faith in someone.

قَالَ وَمَا عَلِمَىٰ بِمَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١١٢﴾ إِنَّ حِسَابَهُمْ إِلَّا عَلَىٰ رَبِّي لَوْ تَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١١٣﴾

He said, 'What knowledge do I have of what they used to do?

[112] It is for my Lord alone to bring them to account – if only you could see [113] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 112-113)

The meaning is as long as the reckoning rests with my Lord, and they wanted to believe in Him, then they must have their reward, '...if you could but understand [this]!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 113)

وَمَا أَنَا بِطَارِدِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٤﴾

I will not drive believers away [114]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 114)

They had asked him to drive those believers out of his company in order to give them a place at his side instead. In another verse, God *Glorified is He* says to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*: 'Hence, repulse not [any of] those who at morn and evening invoke their Lord, seeking His countenance. You are in no wise accountable for them – just as they are in no wise accountable for you – and you have therefore no right to repulse them: for then you would be among the evildoers.' (*al-An'am*: 52)

إِن أَنَا إِلَّا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١١٥﴾

I am here only to give people a clear warning [115]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 115)

So, whoever hears my warning and tidings and joins my company, I swear I will remain beside them; God did not send me to keep only the company of the

rich and exclude the poor. Rather, He sent me to convey His message. Then, whoever obeys me, they will be blessed by God regardless of being poor.

قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ يَنْتُحِ لَتَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمَرْجُومِينَ ﴿١١٦﴾

So they said, 'Noah, if you do not stop this, you will be stoned' [116] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 116)

Thus, they declared war on the prophet Noah, saying, 'Your warning is useless, yet you insist on your preaching; '...if you desist not...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 116) in spreading your message, calling upon people to obey God and be conscious of Him, and gathering the most abject of people into your company to create supporters out of many inconsequential persons. Then, '...O Noah, you will surely be stoned to death!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 116), i.e. if you do not desist, we will stone you. It is a bald threat to the Messenger who came to them from God to call them to their welfare in both this world and the hereafter. Similarly, God *Glorified is He* says: 'O you who have attained to faith! Respond to the call of God and the Apostle whenever he calls you unto that which will give you life...' (*al-Anfal*: 24) Their threat to the Messenger of God indicates that they were powerful, influential people in their society.

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنَّ قَوْمِي كَذَّبُونِ ﴿١١٧﴾ فَأَفْضَحَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَهُمْ
فَتَحًّا وَنَجَّيْنِي وَمَنْ مَعِيَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١١٨﴾

He said, 'My Lord, my people have rejected me [117] so make a firm judgement between me and them, and save me and my believing followers [118] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 117-118)

It is worth pondering on Noah's civility here when he complains and reports his people's actions to God. He only says: '...Behold, my people have given me the lie...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 117), and he does not mention anything about their threatening of stoning him or declaring war on his message. Why is that? Because what concerns Noah *peace be upon him* first and foremost is to have his people believe him; this is the original objective of his mission. And his saying: 'Hence, lay You wide open the truth between me and them...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 118). To open something has either a physical or a moral

meaning. An example of the physical meaning is a door closed with a padlock; when we say, 'Open the door', it means undo its lock. Another example is a tied bag or pack that we open by untying it. This is clear in the story of Joseph *peace be upon him* where God *Glorified is He* says: 'Thereupon, when they opened their packs, they discovered that their merchandise had been returned to them...' (*Yusuf*: 65), i.e. they undid the straps on their packs. This is the literal meaning of 'to open'.

As for the moral meaning of 'opening', it is done by removing moral troubles in order for goodness and blessings to come forth. God *Glorified is He* says: 'Yet if the people of those communities had but attained to faith and been conscious of Us, We would indeed have opened up for them blessings out of heaven and earth...' (*al-A'raf*: 96). And in another verse: 'Whatever grace God opens up to man, none can withhold it; and whatever He withholds, none can henceforth release...' (*Fatir*: 2).

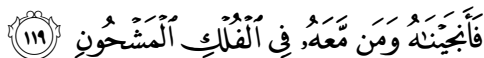
The blessings that God opens up onto people can be in the form of material blessings, or they can be knowledge; God says: '...Do you inform them of what God has opened up to you, so that they might use it in argument against you, quoting the words of your Lord?...' (*al-Baqara*: 76)

Here, the 'opening' is the knowledge of the Torah God imparted to the Jews. They are afraid that the believers will take this knowledge and use it in arguments against them when the believers are victorious. So, the verse: '...what God has opened up to you ...' (*al-Baqara*: 76) means those things that God has taught you, the Jews, and that they, the followers of the Prophet Muhammad, do not know then.

In addition, opening *al-fath* can also mean judgement or settling of a dispute by revealing the truth. God *Glorified is He* says: '...O our Lord! Lay You open the truth between us and our people – for You are the best of all to lay open the truth!' (*al-A'raf*: 89) It also means victory, as in the holy verse saying: 'When God's succour comes, and victory...' (*an-Nasr*: 1).

Then, Noah *peace be upon him* says: '...and save me...' from their cunning and threat of stoning me and save also '...those of the believers who are with me!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 118) because the disbelievers may cause harm not

only to him but also to the believers who are with him. The response of God comes immediately:



**So We saved him and his followers in the fully
laden ship [119] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 119)**

The story of Noah's ark was also mentioned in chapter of *al-A'raf* and the chapter of *Hud*. There is also a complete separate chapter named after Noah *peace be upon him*, namely the chapter of *Noah*, much like the chapter of *Muhammad*. This is because in the history of the Divine Missions, Noah has a period of 950 years. God *Glorified is He* rightfully named a chapter after him.

In our common conversation, when someone frequently repeats certain words or phrases to you, you may say to them, 'Ah, is it a chapter?' The speech of illiterate and uneducated people has roots in the language usage.

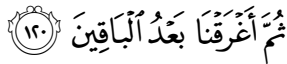
In another chapter, the True Lord *Glorified is He* relates the story of the building of the ark. He says: 'And [so Noah] set himself to building the ark; and every time the great ones of his people passed by him, they scoffed at him...' (*Hud*: 38). This suggests that it was the first ship that people had ever seen built. Noah *peace be upon him* built his ship under instruction, guidance and protection of God *Glorified is He*: '...but build, under Our eyes and according to Our inspiration, the ark.' (*Hud*: 37)

God would not command him to build the ark and then abandon him; rather, God tracked his progress and whenever he committed an error or mistake, God informed him early on. Much like His saying to Moses: '...and [this] in order that you might be formed under Mine eye.' (*Ta Ha*: 39) With verses like this, we respond to those who say that God *Glorified is He* ceased to influence this world and He left it to run according to natural laws after He created it. If matters were truly as such, we would have found that the entire world functions almost mechanically, but the miraculous and inexplicable aspects of the Universe point to His perpetual presence in His creation.

Thus, God tells them to sleep soundly and without fear. Why not when they have a Lord who does not sleep? If you hired a guard for your house, for instance, you would sleep comfortably knowing that you could rely on him to

be awake. Why then would you not sleep soundly when you have your Lord *Glorified is He* who does not become sleepy and does not slumber? Does that not corroborate His abiding presence? It is this abiding presence that breaks wills and nullifies natural laws. It is this abiding presence that says to fire, 'Be cold and peaceful' and it does, to water, 'Become solid like a mountain', and it does; and to stone, 'Break open' and it does. If the world functioned mechanically and automatically, as they say it does, then not a single natural law would be violated in the Universe.

A thing that is '...fully-laden...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 119) is something that is filled up until there is no longer any empty space in it. So, this ship was fully-laden with its load because it was constructed with such exactitude and attention to detail that it was exactly wide enough for those whom Noah was commanded to carry in it: eighty men, eighty women, and one pair, a male and a female⁽¹⁾, of every animal. The word *fulk* (The fully-laden ship) indicates both a singular ship and a group of ships as in the verse: '...And [behold what happens] when you go to sea in ships...' (*Yunus*: 22).



**And drowned the rest [120]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 120)**

The disbelievers who did not get on the ark with Noah were drowned after the believers had got on the ark and also after: '...We caused the gates of heaven to open with water pouring down in torrents, [11] and caused the earth to burst forth with springs, so that the waters met for a purpose pre-ordained [12].' (*al-Qamar*: 11-12)



**There truly is a sign in this, though most of them do not
believe [in it] [121] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 121)**

A message, or a 'sign' as in other translations, is a marvellous thing that cannot be ignored and that demands consideration or attention. But who will

(1) According to Ibn 'Abbas they were eighty people with their wives, according to K'ab Al-Ahbar they were seventy-two, and some say that they were only ten [said by Ibn Kathir in his (*Tafsir*), 2/445].

consider it after all the rest have drowned? The believers who went on board will pay heed to it after they have seen the consequences of disbelief and the fate of the disbelievers.

وَلِإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٢٢﴾

**your Lord alone is the Almighty, the Merciful [122]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 122)**

Despite their denying the Messengers, and even though most of them were not believers, God *Glorified is He* is the Almighty who subdues the others and cannot be subdued and He is the Dispenser of Mercy to His servants, and He forgives those who have returned to Him.

Then, the context shifts to another story of the series of the disbelieving peoples.

كَذَّبَتْ عَادُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٢٣﴾

**The people of 'Ad, too, called the messengers liars [123]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 123)**

Here again the Quran says: '...message-bearers' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 123) because giving the lie to one Messenger of God is to give the lie to all the Messengers of God because all of them are sent to convey the same rules and fundamentals in creed and ethics.

'Ad is the name of an old Arab tribe. The Arabs used to name their tribes after the most important of their fathers, the one who attains fame and brilliance among their people. So, 'Ad was the head of this tribe. They also used to call a tribe "the sons of so-and-so" or the "clan of such-and-such" person. Then, the Quran relates their story to us and when they disbelieved:

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ هُودٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٢٤﴾

Their brother Hud said to them, 'Will you not be mindful of God? [124] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 124)

We have previously said that 'Will you not be...?' is used to incite people to do something: when the negative structure is used as in '...Will you not be

conscious of God?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 124), it indicates the affirmative order, as if he had said, 'Be conscious of God.' The Quran says '...their brother...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 124) in order to make their hearts amenable to his message, to endear him to them, and to let them know he was not a stranger but one of their own kinsfolk, for he is their brother, and the role of a brother is to give advice and to show compassion and mercy. This established a certain level of familiarity and comfort with people.

إِنِّي لَكُم رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٢٥﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ﴿١٢٦﴾

I am a faithful messenger sent to you [125] Be mindful of God and obey me [126] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 125-126)

This is a standard statement to all the Messengers in their preaching. Noah *peace be upon him* said it in the previous verses:

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٢٧﴾

I ask no reward of you, for my only reward is with the Lord of the Worlds [127] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 127)

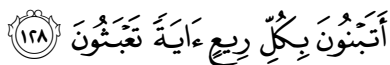
The first person to say this, as previously stated, was Noah *peace be upon him*. Then, the other prophets said it after him. But why did neither Abraham nor Moses say it?

The scholars answered that the first person that Abraham *peace be upon him* called to Islam was his uncle Azar. Why would he even think about asking his own uncle for a reward? Similarly, the first person that Moses *peace be upon him* called to Islam was Pharaoh who had raised him in his own home and who had done Moses many favours. Why then would Moses ask him for a reward when Pharaoh said: '...Did we not bring you up among us when you were a child? And did you not spend among us years of your [later] life?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 18) That is why this statement was not uttered by either of these two prophets.

Then, he says '...my reward rests with none but the Lord of the worlds.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 127) because it is the Lord who manages spending, provision and sustenance of the creation. We said before that refraining from taking a

reward is not abstaining from any reward; rather, it is done in hope of getting one's reward from God, not from people.

Hud then addresses a few issues that were particular to his people.



How can you be so vain that you set up monuments on every high place? [128] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 128)

Construction industry was a specific trait of the people of Hud. *Ar-ri'* is a name of every raised area of land. Some people ask about the height of a building saying, how many *ri'* is your building? This means how many meters it is, as if the height of a place is a standard of evaluating the plot of land. *Ar-ri'* is used to indicate the height of everything.

The word 'landmark' in other translations 'sign', 'monument', 'message', or something miraculous (*Ayah*, in Arabic), coming after '...build...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 128), means the lofty palaces that were considered miracles of architecture, innovation, decoration, splendour, vastness and height.

'Will you in your wanton folly...?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 128) because they built these palaces despite knowing that they would not permanently reside in them. They built them to remain for ages after them, which is considered foolishness because human beings can live in even the smallest, most humble building, for shelter, throughout their lifetimes. Or 'Will you in your wanton folly...?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 128) because they would sit on the ramparts of these buildings to divert people away from listening to Hud and his message which would have guided them to the Path of Truth.

In modern times, we can see nothing of the 'Ad civilization, not even their ruins, like the ruins of the Pharaoh's in Egypt. The 'Ad civilization was buried under sand. They used to inhabit the part of the Arabian Peninsula that we now call the Empty Quarter because it is a region of fine sand that makes it difficult to traverse the region. So, in order to know something about this civilization, we read the holy verses in chapter *al-Fajr*: 'Art thou not aware of how thy Lord has dealt with [the tribe of] 'Ad, [the people of] Iram the many-pillared, the like of whom has never been reared in all the land?' (*al-Fajr*: 6-8)

If there has never been the like of them reared all over the earth, then the 'Ad civilization must have been greater than the civilization of the Pharaohs, the ruins of which we can still see today; people come from every corner of the globe to see, for example, the pyramids, which were built only to serve as tombs. Despite progress of science in the age of technology, the construction of the pyramids still remains a mystery to scholars who have been unable to unlock all secrets of the pyramids so far.

A secret that they recently uncovered is how the pyramids were built using such huge blocks of stone without any mortar. They concluded that they were built by vacuuming air between the stones. You can observe this theory in action when you place a wet cup on a table, for instance, then leave it for a while until the water beneath the cup evaporates. If you try to lift the cup from its place now, you would find that it is stuck to the table.

It is not strange that a civilization, which was the greatest in the world, disappeared beneath layers of sand. When a sandstorm blows up, it devours everything in its path. The whole tribe of 'Ad with all their men and camels have been buried beneath sand in just a single storm. So, what do you think the effects of thousands of years of raging winds and great sandstorms might be?

I am certain that if they excavated beneath the sands in the Empty Quarter, they would find monuments and fertile land there; all the archaeological discoveries we witness nowadays are underground. In Vienna, while a sewage pipeline was being dug, they found the relics of palaces of ancient kings.

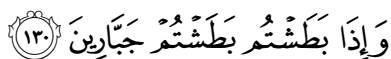
Inasmuch as God *Glorified is He* says of the people of 'Ad: '...Will you, in your wanton folly, build palaces on every height?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 128) Definitely, there are palaces and buildings buried beneath the sands.

وَتَتَّخِذُونَ مَصَانِعَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَخْلُدُونَ ﴿١٢٩﴾

Do you build fortresses because you hope to be immortal? [129] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 129)

Masani translated above as 'strongholds', is sometimes used to mean 'sources of water' as well as 'strongholds'. Why is that? According to scholars, this is because a 'stronghold' is built not only for protection against the

ordinary risks of life, but also for preventing inveterate enemies from ambushing a person. It seems that they made a fruitful industry of these buildings. Why? '...that you might become immortal?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 129) Are you building these mighty, armed fortresses in order to live forever? Are you immortal in life? The span of a person's life is so short that there might be no need for these fortifications and protections. It is as much as the shade of a tree which quite quickly fades away.



**Why do you act like tyrants whenever you attack
some- one? [130] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 130)**

Laying '...hand [on them] cruelly...' (*batsh* in Arabic) also means to punish violently. God *Glorified is He* says: 'Verily, thy Lord's grip is exceedingly strong!' (*al-Buruj*: 12] In it 'grip' is a translation for the Arabic word (*batsh*). He also says: '...and thereupon We took them to task as only *the Almighty*, who determines all things, can take to task.' (*al-Qamar*: 42) where 'to take someone to task' is the translation for the Arabic word *akhdh* which means 'to take' or to 'treat'. Taking or treating can be in different ways. You can take something with tenderness and compassion, or you can take something violently.

Then, in this verse, the word *batsh* reoccurs to emphasize this trait of the people of Hud⁽¹⁾: '...whenever you lay hand [on others], lay hand [on them] cruelly...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 130).

You might take your enemy by violence, but after that your heart might take pity on them and you would forgive whatever offense they caused you. But these tyrants do not take pity on anyone.

The three previously mentioned attributes of the Hud people: 'Will you, in your wanton folly, build palaces on every height, and make for yourselves mighty strongholds, [hoping] that you might become immortal? And will you [always], whenever you lay hand [on others], lay hand [on them] cruelly,

(1) Hud's people ('Ad)

without any restraint?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 128-130), strengthen supremacy, as if 'Ad wanted to reach the supremacy that brings them closer to godhood, for no one is higher than the True Lord *Glorified is He*. Then, they also wanted to make their loftiness last eternally and preserve their assumed godhood: '...that you might become immortal?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 129)

Moreover, they seek to set themselves apart from other human beings by cruel treatment and arrogance. The Quran says: 'As for that [happy] life in the hereafter, We grant it [only] to those who do not seek to exalt themselves on earth, nor yet to spread corruption...' (*al-Qasas*: 83).

So, if you want to carry out the duties assigned to you in this life, you should not seek arrogant supremacy because if you did so, you would attain your share of it in this world, and that is all. But, when you work on your mission in this life to please your Lord and to make life easy for others, you, then, promote your work and make it fruitful. In addition, as long as people benefit from your deeds, the rewards accrued to you will continue until the Day of Judgment comes when you will attain the best and the eternal reward. This is the greatest sublimation of the human work.

The people of 'Ad did not do anything of the sort. They sought arrogant supremacy on earth, and their treatment was extremely tyrannical. But did their Lord let them continue in this manner indefinitely?

It is a kind of mercy from God *Glorified is He* that He reminds His creatures of what they have forgotten and alerts them when they become heedless. He sends them successive messengers, for people are often forgetful of the ancient covenant to which they have committed themselves. 'And whenever thy Lord brings forth their offspring from the loins of the children of Adam, He [thus] calls upon them to bear witness about themselves: "Am I not your Lord?" To this question they answer: "Yea, indeed, we do bear witness thereto!" [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 God; 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)

We said before that the True Lord *Glorified is He* has given His vice-regent on earth the power to resist going astray and has guided mankind to the Path of the proper and prosperous life. However, people might neglect this Path or get overcome by worldly whims and evade the Straight Path. The human soul is naturally immunized against evil and falsehood, but if one's immunity is broken, the others must remind the wrongdoer and revive in them the reasons for good. Therefore, God *Glorified is He* says: '...and enjoin upon one another the keeping to truth, and enjoin upon one another patience in adversity.' (*al-'Asr*: 3) So, if you see your brother commit wrong actions or is thinking inappropriately, take his hand and lead him to the truth. The meaning of '...enjoin upon one another...' (*al-'Asr*: 3) is that each of you should exhort the other to do something. Every one of you is susceptible to occasional slip-ups and to straying from the Path, so if I were to err, you would exhort me to what is right, and if you were to err, I would exhort you. Now, in this case, our resistance to going astray is no longer an individual matter; it is a matter of a believing society where everyone tries to right the crookedness or deviance that one sees in the other.

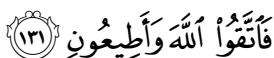
But, what if such immunity is corrupted in the individual as well as in the community? What if people did not follow good conduct and commit themselves to integrity, and they stopped condemning abominable deeds, as God *Glorified is He* says of the children of Israel: 'They would not prevent one another from doing whatever hateful things they did...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 79)? At this point it becomes inevitable that the Almighty Lord *Glorified is He* send a new messenger and a new miracle to revive the people and return them to the Path of their Lord.

Part of the honour of the Prophet Muhammad's *ummah* is that God *Glorified is He* has made such ethical immunity against aberration inherent in every individual; God has made them penitent and gives them pardon and peace. If one of them committed a sin, he or she would repent and go back on his actions, and if they did not go back and persisted in error, then, the faithful community would bring them back and remind them of the Path of God.

This unique characteristic will remain essential in this *ummah* until the Day of Judgment, as the Prophet Muhammad said in the Hadith: 'Goodness is

in me and in my community until the Day of Judgment.⁽¹⁾ That is why there will be no messenger in the Muslim community after the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* because the ethical immunity is essential in every individual, in the ever-blamer soul and in the faithful community where goodness never disappears. That is why God *Glorified is He* says: 'You are indeed the best community that has ever been brought forth for [the good of] mankind: you enjoin the doing of what is right and forbid the doing of what is wrong, and you believe in God...' (*Al-'Imran*: 110).

This characteristic is unique to the Muslim *ummah*, making it distinguished from all other people. Therefore, Hud *peace be upon him* gives notice to his people, saying:



**Be mindful of God and obey me [131]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 131)**

That is your Lord *Glorified is He* did not leave you to such deviance, building palaces and strongholds seeking immortality and laying hands on others in tyranny. He calls upon you: 'Be, then, conscious of God and pay heed unto me.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 131) So being conscious of and obedient to God will definitely clear your past and erase your sins, as well as will turn your sins into righteousness and good deeds, '...for, verily, good deeds drive away evil deeds...' (*Hud*: 114).

And when I exhort you to be conscious of God and to obey Him, I do not do so for my own sake. I did not say to you, 'Be conscious of me and obey me.' I will not benefit at all from your obedience. Similarly, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has no need for you or your obedience because He has had the attributes of complete perfection even before He created the Universe. God

(1) In (*Kashf Al-Khafa'*) [1/476] Majluni said that in *Maqasid Hasana Sakhawi* said, 'Our Sheikh, Ibn Hajr al-'asaqlani, said, "I do not know this Hadith, but its general meaning is true", i.e. there will always be a portion of my community that is clearly cognizant of the truth until the Day of Judgment begins. Ibn Hajr Al-Makki said in (*Fatawi Hadithiya*), 'This saying is irrefutable.'

Glorified is He is characterized by creation before He creates and by the power to decree before the existence of things decreed upon, etc.

Thus, your existence adds nothing to His attributes, and the divine missions were sent only for your own benefits. Then, why do not you obey the commands of God and follow His Path. He wants to benefit you. You should obey Him for the countless blessings that He has granted you. People were created in a world prepared to receive and support their lives.

The world in its entirety was created for humankind. The sky contains the sun, the moon, the stars, clouds, and rain, while the earth contains fertile soil, water, and air. All of these existed before you existed, so, your obedience to God is not a favour from you, rather it is due from you to Him for His blessings to you.

It is strange that many of the things created to be at your service live longer than you live. A person might die on the same day of their birth, or might live a few days or several years. But the sun, for instance, has lived millions of years and serves you, though you have no power over it and no control on its movement.

Then, God *Glorified is He* says:

وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ الَّذِي أَمَدَّكُمْ بِمَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣٢﴾

**Be mindful of Him who has provided you with everything
you know [132] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 132)**

This verse does not enumerate all the amenities that God has provided us. Rather, it leaves us to count them because we know them well. We live with them and perceive them with all our senses and faculties. Every sensory organ you possess directly treats with a blessing from God, or indeed several blessings. The eyes see things, the ears hear sounds, the nose identifies smells and the hand touches, holds, etc.

‘...who has [so] amply provided you with all [the good] that you might think of.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 132) So speak and bear witness to yourselves and count the blessings of your Lord to you.

أَمَدَّكُمْ بِأَنْعَامٍ وَبَنِينَ ﴿١٣٣﴾

**He has given you livestock, sons [133]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 133)**

An'am translated above as 'cattle', refers to sheep, goats, camels and cows. They are eight couples.

وَجَنَّاتٍ وَعُيُونٍ ﴿١٣٤﴾

**gardens, springs [134]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 134)**

One might say that we pass by the area where their houses are located, but we see nothing but emptiness through which the wind blows. Definitely, they once had gardens and springs, which are now beneath layers of sand. God says in another verse: '... [and] canst thou perceive any one of them [now], or hear any whisper of them?' (*Maryam*: 98)

إِنِّي أَخَافُ عَلَيْكُمْ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٣٥﴾

**For I truly fear that the torment of a grievous day will
overtake you [135] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 135)**

That is, being conscious of and obedient to God is not merely out of gratitude for His blessings, but it is also for your protection from punishment in the Afterlife. Do not think that you can take God's blessings then slip away from Him or escape meeting Him. Meeting God is an inevitable and inescapable fact, so if you do not fear God due to the blessings that have come before, fear Him for the punishment that will come after.

What was their reaction to the preaching of their prophet?

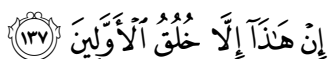
قَالُوا سَوَاءٌ عَلَيْنَا أَوَعَظْتَ أَمْ لَمْ تَكُنْ مِنَ الْوَاعِظِينَ ﴿١٣٦﴾

**They replied, 'It makes no difference to us whether you
warn us or not [136] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 136)**

Their saying, *aw'azhta* translated above as '... whether you advise ...' (*al-Furqan*: 136) shows that the truth must become evident, even in the words

of the arrogant. Preaching, *wa'azh* is only addressed to those who were aware of teachings then forgot them. So, the 'preacher' comes to remind them of the teachings. Thus, preaching is a second phase after the first phase of teaching. This phrase of theirs, thus, betrays that they knew what was expected of them, but they strayed from it.

They say to their prophet: '... "It is all the same to us whether you advise or are not of the advisors," (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 136) meaning 'save yourself the trouble, for it is all the same to us whether you preach or do not preach.' We note that they say: '...or are not of the advisors.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 136) And they did not say, 'It is all one to us whether you preach *or do not preach*,' because that would not negate his ability to preach; indeed it would affirm it. Rather, they said: '...or are not of the advisors' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 136); that is, you will never be able to preach. It is as if they do not want to be preached to at all; even in the future they will refuse to listen to him.



**For we only do what our forefathers used to do [137]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 137)**

In Arabic, the verse begins with the participle *in* which here functions as the negation, 'none', as in, what you have brought is none other than '...the custom..' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 137), *khulq* in Arabic, of those who came before, i.e. the same fabrications of the previous messengers. Similarly, they said: 'Indeed, we were promised this – we and our forefathers – in the past as well; it is nothing but fables of ancient times!' (*an-Naml*: 68) And they also said: '...You are nothing but mortal men like ourselves; moreover, the Most Gracious has never bestowed aught [of revelation] from on high. You do nothing but lie!' (*Ya Sin*: 15) They described their prophet and the Messengers who preceded him as liars who fabricated things that were not true and did not exist.

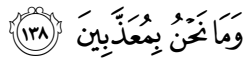
Al-khuluq translated above as 'custom', is a character rooted deep in the self from which actions spring spontaneously. The characters that one acquires do not reach the level of skills from the very beginning, but they develop into skills after frequent practice till they become as much as the automatic and effortless actions.

We had previously cited the example of a boy learning to sew, for example, and how his teacher trained him painstakingly to thread the needle until the boy mastered the process and could do it effortlessly, perhaps even with his eyes closed.

Another example is when you learn to drive a car for the first time; do you remember how much struggle and dangerous errors you have made? But after training and practice, you could drive skilfully, as if it were an automatic process for you. Acquiring morals is somehow like this physical automation.

Thus, ‘...the custom of those who came before,’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 137) means, as to the disbeliever, it is the same set of claims that all the Messengers have made.

There is another reading⁽¹⁾ of the word *khuluq* (custom) where it is read, *khalq* which means contrivance or concoction. Thus, they would mean, ‘We are no different from the peoples who came before us’: ‘...Behold, we found our forefathers agreed on what to believe – and, verily, it is but in their footsteps that we follow!’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 23) It was those forefathers who said: ‘...There is nothing beyond our life in this world. We die as we come to life, and nothing but time destroys us...’ (*al-Jathiya*: 24). This customary way of thinking has become firmly entrenched in ourselves, so do not try to convince us otherwise. We are like those who came before us: we do not believe in resurrection. Do not trouble yourself for your preaching is with no avail with us.



**We shall not be punished [138]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 138)**

They say this explicitly in response to his saying: ‘...for, verily, I fear lest suffering befall you on an awesome day!’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 135)

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

(1) This is the reading of Ibn Kathir, Abu 'Umar and Al-Kasa'i. Al-Harwa says the word refers to their lies and their fabrications. Arabs say, ‘So and so person spoke (*khalq*) to us,’ meaning the person told them fantastical stories [the (*Tafsir*) of Al-Qurtubi].

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَهْلَكْنَاهُمْ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ

They denounced him as a liar, and so We destroyed them.

There truly is a sign in this, though most of them do not believe [139] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 139)

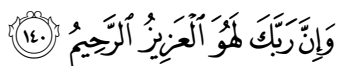
Before the mission of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*, the messengers were allowed to present their miracles or preach the Divine Path, but they were not required or allowed to chastise those obstinate people who resisted them. Punishment and annihilation of the disbelievers were executed by God.

The ummah of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was exempted from being punished by annihilation. Whoever gives the lie to the message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is not punished by God as were those previous peoples who gave the lie to their messengers. Rather, God *Glorified is He* says: 'Fight against them! God will chastise them by your hands, and will bring disgrace upon them, and will succour you against them...' (at-Tawba: 14).

The words '...thereupon We destroyed them...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 139) are truthful and have their evidence clearly seen in our reality. God *Glorified is He* also says: 'Art thou not aware of how thy Lord has dealt with [the tribe of] 'Ad, [the people of] Iram the many-pillared, the like of whom has never been reared in all the land?' (*al-Fajr*: 6-8) Yes, theirs was a great civilization. It was the apex of civilization and it had no similar. Nonetheless, it was unable to save itself and God took it away as only *the Almighty*, the Omnipotent can do. God *Glorified is He* says: '...and, verily, [to this day] you pass by the remnants of their dwellings at morning-time and by night. Will you not, then, use your reason?' (*as-Saffat*: 137-138) He also says: '...and [now] those dwellings of theirs are empty, [ruined] as an outcome of their evil deeds....' (*an-Naml*: 52).

That is their ruins are obvious before you when you pass by their area. You have not so far reached the level of that civilization, yet their civilization did not forestay the judgment of God *the Almighty and the Omnipotent*. So, you ought to be cognizant that you are weaker than they were and that which closed in upon these disbelievers is much like what befell other peoples.

That is why you find that all of the civilizations that followed one another passed into oblivion and you will not find a single civilization that was preserved from the beginning to the end of time. If these civilizations had been built upon sound values, then they would have possessed the power to resist annihilation. '...In this [story], behold, there is a message [unto men]...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 139) means that the destruction of these civilizations is a matter of great note warranting attention and consideration. '...even though most of them will not believe [in it].' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 139)



**Your Lord alone is the Almighty, the Merciful [140]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 140)**

The Quran says '...thy Lord...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 140), and not 'their Lord' to raise the rank of the Prophet Muhammad as the rank of an educated person is proportional to the status of the educator. It is as if God *Glorified is He* says, 'I am your Lord Who perfected your upbringing in the best of ways, so if anyone wants to see the power of divinity, let him witness it in your upbringing, for one attains the apex of development if the one who raised him is God the Most Great.

Thus, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'My Lord saw to my education; mine was the best of educations.'⁽¹⁾ It is a sign of the augustness of the True Lord *Glorified is He* that He gives us Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as a model example of the precision of His *Glorified is He* educating and the majesty of His creating. It seems that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the noblest creature to be raised on earth. Thus, even though the narrative is still on the subject of the disbelievers, the Quran says '...thy Lord...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 140) instead of 'their Lord'.

He alone 'is Almighty. A dispenser of mercy!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 140) We have previously said that *the Almighty* is He who subdues and cannot be subdued. However, we should not mistake this attribute for tyranny because He is the

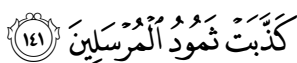
(1) In (*Kashf Al-Khafa'*) [1/72] 'Ajluni said that Ibn Taymiyya said, 'No reliable chain of narrators is known for this Hadith, but in (*Durar*) As-Suyuti says that Abu Al-Fadl ibn Nasir attested to its authenticity, and in (*Al-Lali*)', As-Suyuti says, 'Its meaning is correct, but it comes via unreliable sources.'

Dispenser of Mercy as well. It is part of the sublime Quranic style to combine these two attributes together: The Almighty and the Dispenser of Mercy. It directs us to an Islamic principle which shapes Islam and its followers, namely, balance. No single attribute, custom, or disposition will be predominant in you because every disposition in a person has its purpose.

Consider what God *Glorified is He* says about the attributes of the believers: '...humble towards the believers, proud towards all who deny the truth....' (*al-Ma'ida*: 54) A Muslim is not predisposed to humility or pride; rather, the situation makes him humble or makes him proud. A believer is characterized by modesty toward other believers and by pride toward disbelievers. In the same vein is the verse: 'Muhammad is God's Apostle; and those who are [truly] with him are firm and unyielding towards all deniers of the truth, [yet] full of mercy towards one another...' (*al-Fath*: 29).

However, it is known that mercy in the wrong circumstances can be a weakness. For example the father who, out of fear for his son, refuses to let his child undergo a surgery that would save the child's health. To him we would say, 'Mercy and affection are foolish in the wrong places.'

Then, the True Lord *Glorified is He* says,



The people of Thamud, too, called the messengers liars [141] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 141)

After mentioning portions of the stories of Abraham, Moses, Noah and Eber (Hud) *peace be upon them*, the Quran brings up the story of the Thamud, the people of Saleh (Shelah) *peace be upon him*. These portions of the stories have been repeated at various points in The Book of God because the Quran does not approach merely one community in one environment with one character; rather, the Quran addresses a world of many different environments, weaknesses, abilities, and inclinations. It is inevitable, then, that God bring stories of all the Messengers together and take from each of them some appropriate parable in order to convey one Path or System for all of humanity in every time and every place.

Those messengers whom God gathered together in one narrative context were not messengers for the whole of humanity; rather, each of them was for a specific community and a specific issue at a particular time and place.

But Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is sent as a messenger to unite the entire world under a single order, a single set of morals, and a single Path despite the disparity of their environments, their weaknesses and abilities. Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* has to tell His Messenger Muhammad portions of the lives of every messenger who preceded him.

That is why God *Glorified is He* says: ‘and [remember:] out of all the accounts relating to the [earlier] apostles We convey unto thee [only] that wherewith We [aim to] make firm thy heart...’ (*Hud*: 120).

The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* needed God to firm his heart more than once. Every time a situation required that his heart be made firm, God made it so and He said to him, ‘Remember what happened with Abraham, or what happened with Noah and Eber (*Hud*),’ etc. The repetition of the stories was to repeat the process of making his heart firm. So, even if the whole of a story is repeated in the Quran, every individual excerpt is different from the other, and each conveys a thematic meaning that the others do not.

Here, God *Glorified is He* says what He said of the previous communities: ‘[And the tribe of] Thamud gave the lie to [one of God’s] message-bearers’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 141) because all of the Messengers came with the same doctrine. No messenger’s message differed from the others’ messages and they all were sent from the same source, namely the True Lord *Glorified is He*. The difference between the messengers of God is only in issues of the social environments that were particular to each of them. That is why God *Glorified is He* says: ‘Behold, We have inspired thee [O Prophet] just as We inspired Noah and all the Prophets after him – as We inspired Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and their descendants, including Jesus...’ (*an-Nisa'*: 163).

He *Glorified is He* also says: ‘In matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Noah – and into which We gave thee [O Muhammad] insight through revelation – as well as that which We had

enjoined upon Abraham, and Moses, and Jesus: Steadfastly uphold the [true] faith, and do not break up your unity therein...' (*ash-Shura*: 13).

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

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ صَالِحٌ أَلَا تَتَّقُونَ ﴿١٤٣﴾ إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٤٤﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا

Their Brother Saleh: said to them, 'Will you not be mindful of God? [142] I am a faithful messenger to you [143] [be mindful of God and obey me [144] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 142-144)

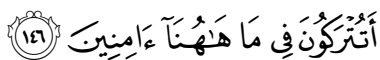
Here as well, The Messenger Saleh (Shelah) is referred to as '...their brother...' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 142] in order to soften their hearts and endear their prophet to them: '...Will you not be conscious of God?' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 142) We said before that this is a rhetorical question in the negative, meaning 'Be conscious of God,' and this type of question is a form of urging and incitement to be conscious of God, for when you deny the negation of a statement, you mean its affirmation.

Since being conscious of God requires the existence of a Path by which we can be conscious of Him, He, then, says: 'Behold, I am an apostle [sent by Him] to you, [and therefore] worthy of your trust.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 142) Because I am a trustworthy messenger, I will not deceive you. 'Be, then, conscious of God and pay heed unto me!' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 142) The issue of being conscious of God is repeated here and joined together with obedience.

وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٤٥﴾

I ask no reward from you, for my only reward is with the Lord of the Worlds [145] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 145)

The work I have done for your sake merits reward in terms of the common sense. A labourer who serves you a simple job gets their reward once they have finished it. As for me, I have performed a service for you that exceeds any material task in this world because it pertains to the Afterlife and will sustain your life with happiness in this world and that to come. My reward, then, must be great, which is why I do not ask it from you but from God.



[Do you think] you will be left secure for ever in what you have here [146] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 146)

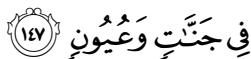
He means to rebuke them. 'Do you think that you will remain secure forever among these blessings? Or do you think to receive the blessings of God and then flee from being called into account by Him? God *Glorified is He* also said in another verse: 'Did you, then, think that We created you in mere idle play, and that you would not have to return to Us?' (*al-Mu'minun*: 115) Whoever thinks this is mistaken and short-sighted, because the things that serve you in this life do not do so by your command. You do not have power over the sun to order it to rise each day; you do not have power over the clouds to command them to send down rain; you do not have power to make the earth fertile for you to grow plants in it; you do not have power over the air you breathe, yet these are the fundamental necessities that you depend on to survive.

It was incumbent upon you to think and reflect: who subdued these things and made them to serve you? Like the man who is stranded in the desert on the brink of death and has lost his mount packed with all his drink and food. If he falls asleep, then wakes up to find before him a table set with drink and delightful foods, by Allah, before he reaches forth his hand, should not he ask himself, 'Who set this table for me in such a place?'

Similarly, you came into this world and all these blessings were prepared for you in advance, so you ought to wonder about it and about who prepared all this for you. And when a messenger comes to you from Allah to solve this riddle for you and inform you that he who did all this is Allah and that the attributes of Allah's perfection are such and such, you ought to believe him.

Either he is telling the truth and will lead you to the solution to this burning riddle, or he is lying—and refuge is with Allah, and Allah forbid that a Prophet lie to Allah—in which case whoever is the True Lord of this world would stand up and defend His creation. He would say, 'This messenger is a pretender and a liar. I am responsible for creating this world.' But if no one

stands up to claim creation, then the matter is affirmed to be attributed to Allah *the Exalted* until someone else appears to claim it for himself.



**Amidst [these] gardens and springs [147]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 147)**

Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Amidst [these] gardens and springs' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 147) as a continuation of the previous verse, meaning: do you think all of this will be yours forever? *Jannat* translated above as 'gardens,' is the plural of the word *janna* which is a place filled with blessings and everything that a person needs. Or it can also be a place where a person is covered by the shade of trees as he walks, for the verb *janna* means 'to cover,' as in Allah's saying *the Exalted*: 'Then, when the night overshadowed him with its darkness...' (*al-An'am*: 76) where overshadowed is translated from the verb *janna*.

Another word derived from *janna* is *junun*, i.e. craziness because it is a covering of the mind. Similarly a *janna* blots out all of existence because you will have no need to leave it, for it has everything you could want for yourself and everything you need in your life.

Likewise, what we call a castle a *qasr* allows you to do without (*yaqsaruka*) the outside world because everything you need is inside it.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and springs' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 147) because a garden is always in need of water, so He says: '...and springs' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 147) to ensure that the gardens can exist eternally.

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**Fields, palm trees laden with fruit [148]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 148)**

Palm trees could be included in 'fields', but they warrant individual mention because the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took an interest in them and compared them with believers in a Hadith. {There is

one tree whose leaves do not fall}.⁽¹⁾ The narrator of this Hadith says that people thought about the trees of the desert but could not come up with the answer. Then when 'Umar and his son 'Abdullah left, the son said, 'O father, it just occurred to me that it is the palm tree because it is like the believer. Everything about it is good.'

Yes, if you consider the palm tree, you will see that everything about it is useful and has purpose. You can make posts and ship masts from them, and you could cover your houses with them before concrete was invented. From the leaves you can make baskets, and from the broad part of the leaf, called the *qihf* which was unsuitable for making baskets, they used to make brooms to sweep homes.

From the fibres, they made rope and upholstering for chairs and other furniture. Allah even made the thorns that you see on the palm-tree with wisdom and purpose because they protect the palm tree from rodents while it bears fruit. And Allah made the fibres that grow between the bases of the leaves in order to protect the palm trees when they are first developing and are still tender sprouts and cannot protect themselves. Thus the palm tree is a blessing like the believer. And research has at last been completed that turns the part of the palm tree called the *qihf* into good soil so that from it they can plant a new tree.

{That is why when Ibn-'Umar said, 'It is the palm tree,' 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* went to the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and related what his son had said to him. The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said {Your son is right}, and 'Umar said, 'By Allah how happy I am that my son divined the answer. Indeed I am greatly blessed.'⁽²⁾}

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- (1) *This Hadith is agreed upon by consensus. Al-Bukhari cited it in his (Sahih) [61 and 9 other places], as did Muslim in his (Sahih) [2811, (Kitab Sifat Al-Munafiqin)], and Ahmad in his (Musnad) [2/61, 123]. It is a Hadith of 'Abdullah ibn-'Umar may Allah be pleased with them.*
- (2) *According to Muslim, Ibn-'Umar may Allah be pleased with them said of his father 'Umar, 'I said that to 'Umar, and he said, "If you had said 'It is the palm tree', it would have been more pleasing to me than such-and-such thing." A narration of Ahmad's [2/123] says that 'Umar may Allah be pleased with him said to his son, 'O son, what prevented you from speaking up? By Allah if you had said that it would have been more pleasing to me than such-and-such thing.'*

Those who grow palm trees see in it signs and miracles that point to the power of Allah *the Exalted*. '...with softened fruit?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 148) refers to the spadix of the palm tree. In the female trees it is the bract from which the stalks with the dates emerge, and in the male trees it is where the fertilizing agent emerges. Of the spadix Allah says: '...and out of the spathe of the palm tree, dates in thick clusters...' (*al-An'am*: 99).

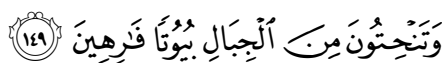
The male tree's bract produces the material that will fertilize a palm tree. The stalks or bunches of dates have stages of growth that we call (*al-khala*), and they continue to grow until they reach their end stage at which point they harden in this shape and cease to get any bigger. Then the process of coloration begins.

They say that a palm tree '*affara*⁽¹⁾ meaning its green is mixed with red or yellow.

When the red has turned completely red and the yellow has turned completely yellow, the date is called a *busr* next the *busr* turns into *ar-rutab* at which point the fruit softens and its shell cracks off, but if the climate is dry then the *rutab* dries out and turns into *at-tamr* wherein the date's water evaporates and the shell clings to it.

The word '...slender...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 148) suggests a fresh sprout, which demonstrates the fertility of the soil because it produces food that will be tender and succulent.

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**Carving your fine houses from the mountains? [149]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 149)**

If you were to go to Mada'in Saleh you would find that the houses there are hewed into the mountainside as tunnels are hewed through stone today, for example. They did not build them as we build our houses. 'With [the same] great skill' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 149) is from *al-farih* meaning with great dexterity and talent. They say, 'So-and-so is *farih* in something', meaning he is skilled at it and practices it energetically.

(1) *Al-'afar*: to pollinate or repair a palm tree. And to '*affara* a palm tree is to completely pollinate it. [*Lissan Al-'Arab*—entry: ('*afara*)]

فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا ۖ وَلَا تُطِيعُوا أَمْرَ الْمُسْرِفِينَ ۚ

Be mindful of God and obey me [150] do not obey those who are given to excess [151] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 150 -151)

Al-musrif translated above as one 'who is given to excesses' is someone who exceeds what is proper, and this excess exists at different levels. Allah *the Exalted* made some things legal, made other things illegal, and set down limits for both what is *halal* legal and permissible, and what is *haram* illegal and impermissible. So to be given to excess in matters of Allah's laws is to overstep what is legal and enter what is illegal.

Or this excess might come in one's earnings, in which case a person might make his earnings by illegal means. Or a person might force himself to keep his earnings legal, and the excess would occur in his expenditures if he spends his money on something prohibited by Allah. So excess can be of three types: through illegal earnings, illegal expenditures, or through something fundamentally illegal.

We notice that whenever the True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us about what is permissible and legal, He *Glorified is He* says: '...These are the bounds set by Allah; do not, then, transgress them...' (*al-Baqara*: 229).

As for those things that are impermissible and illegal, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...These are the bounds set by Allah: do not, then, offend against them...' (*al-Baqara*: 187). In other words stay away from them because you are not immune to them. Whoever circles around the fire courts falling into it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not say, for instance, 'Do not pray when you are drunk', rather, He said: '...Do not attempt to pray while you are in a state of drunkenness...' (*an-Nisa'*: 43). In other words, embrace what is permissible fully and do not transgress into what is prohibited. As for what is prohibited, do not even approach it because it has allures that will draw you to it.

Let us dwell a while on Allah's saying *the Exalted*: '...and pay no heed to the counsel of those who are given to excesses.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 151) He did not say, 'Do not give yourself over to excesses.' It is as if Our Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* wanted to rouse us to our negligence and warn us against those who propagate falsehood, casting the excesses of our lives in a favourable light and easing us towards the impermissible. They say, 'There is

no harm in this,' 'Nothing prevents you from this' and 'This is not prohibited.' Our Lord gives us the necessary power to resist these people so that we are not led astray by their deviance.

That is why a Noble Hadith says, {Consult your heart and consult your soul no matter what legal ruling they expound to you, no matter what they pronounce as law to you}.⁽¹⁾ This suggests that people will give ignorant religious legal opinions and convince others of that which is false by painting it in a positive light. The word *fatwa* or 'a legal ruling' comes from *futuwa* or 'youth', and *quwwa* or 'power,' such as in Allah's saying *the Exalted*: 'Said some [of them]: "We heard a youth speak of these [gods with scorn]: he is called Abraham."' (*al-Anbiya*: 60) And Allah's saying *the Exalted*: '...Behold, they were young men who had attained to faith in their Lord: and [so] We deepened their consciousness of the right way.' (*al-Kahf*: 13)

The *fatwa* entails power in religion and having influence in religious affairs. If it were merely material power in earthly affairs, there would be a limit to what one could do, but when the power is in religious affairs there is no limit because the scope of religion is vast; it is a sea without shorelines. We know of power in many forms, but the greatest power is power in religious affairs.

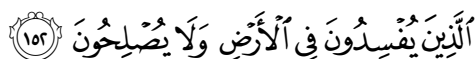
We say that someone is *fati*) or youthful, which means that he himself is strong. If we say that someone else *aftahu* then that someone else gave him strength or power (literally it means that they gave him a legal religious ruling), as if he had been weak in his knowledge of Islamic law, so he went to the *mufti*, that is someone who gives a *fatwa* in a religious matter. These derivative meanings of the root *fatiya* are similar in form to our use of the root *ghaniya*. Someone who is *ghaniy* is himself rich, and if someone *aghna* then they made him rich, as in Allah's saying: '...And they could find no fault

(1) *Imam Ahmad cites this in his (Musnad) [4/227, 228] and Darmi cites it in his (Sunnan) [2/246] as a Hadith of Wabissa ibn Ma'bad Al-Asda. The complete version is that the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, {O Wabissa, consult your soul, for that which is pious puts the heart and soul at ease, and that which is sinful knits up the soul and causes uncertainty in one's breast. No matter what legal opinion people render to you.} And Sufyan said it was, 'No matter what legal opinion they render to you.'*

[with the Faith] save that Allah had enriched them and [caused] his Apostle [to enrich them] out of his bounty!...' (*at-Tawba*: 74)

So it is the job of the *mufti* to strengthen my faith, not to lead me to excesses in any religious matter, nor to lead or encourage me to do that which Allah has prohibited. The *mufti* should take great care in giving a *fatwa*, particularly in controversial matters that some claim are permissible and others claim are impermissible. He should dwell carefully on these matters and keep in mind the Islamic viewpoint conveyed in the following Noble Hadith: {That which is permissible is clear and that which is impermissible is clear, but between them are opaque matters, so he who at the least refrains from that which is unclear to him rather than do what is unclear to him, he has kept his religion above suspicion if he is religious, and if he is not religious, he has kept his honour above suspicion}⁽¹⁾

Thus, whoever does not follow this principle and does not refrain from that which is unclear to him does not, then, keep his religion or his honour above suspicion. And any religious scholar who does not give his legal rulings on the basis of this principle weakens the religion rather than strengthens it. So instead of saying *afahu*, i.e. he made it strong, we would say *ad'afahu*, i.e. he weakened it.



And who spread corruption in the land instead of doing what is right [152] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 152)

Those who are given to excesses are described also as 'those who spread corruption on earth instead of setting things right.' The Creator *the Exalted* created the earth in a state where everything was right and pure, but humankind interfered and corrupted it. That is why we said previously, 'If you look at the world around you, you will find it in the best of conditions so long as it is untouched by the hand of humankind, for once humankind meddles in something, the signs of corruption appear. This does not mean that humankind should not

(1) This Hadith is agreed upon by consensus. Al-Bukhari cites it in his (*Sahih*) [2051] as does Muslim in his (*Sahih*) [1599]. This is a Hadith from No'man ibn-Bashir.

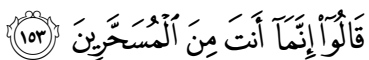
exert any influence in the world, rather they should do so only in accordance with the Path of He who created it, in which case the world would become even purer, or at least remain in its original uncorrupted state of purity. But if humankind interferes without following the Path, then inevitably they will cause corruption.

For example, if you were to pass by a well of drinking water, you should either improve it and make it of greater benefit to the people who use it, perhaps by building a low wall around it or by building a winch to help bring the water up, or you should at least leave it as it is and not pollute it or corrupt it. Thus Allah *the Exalted* says: '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*: 205)

Regarding these people, the Quran does not stop at calling them spreaders of corruption. They are also described as spreading corruption '...instead of setting things to rights!' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 152) That is because a person might corrupt something and then set it right again, but these people habitually spread corruption and do not ever set things right.

The catastrophes caused by inventors happen because they see purity and good in something they make, but it is in fact a source of corruption because they did not consider all of its relevant repercussions. Consider, for instance, the invention of pesticides, which they said were a scientific breakthrough and would be a big step towards exterminating the cotton worm and other agricultural pests. However, with the passing of time, these pesticides have become a curse upon all of humanity. They have poisoned the farmland, poisoned animals, and consequently human beings, even the water, the earth, and the birds to the extent that you might say they have corrupted Nature, which Allah created. Of such people Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Say: "Shall we tell you who the greatest losers in whatever they may do? [103] [It is] they whose labour has gone astray in [the pursuit of no more than] this world's life, and who nonetheless think that they are doing good works. [104]"' (*al-Kahf*: 103-104)

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**They said, 'You are bewitched! [153]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 153)**

'...the bewitched!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 153) or *musahharin* is the plural of *musahhar*. This is a hyperbolic word form which denotes that magic has been done unto him more than once. If we were to say he is *mas-hur* that would indicate that magic was worked upon him only once, while *musahhar* means it happened several times. Something similar occurs in Allah's saying *the Exalted* about the counsellors surrounding Pharaoh. They said to him: '... "Let him and his brother wait a while, and send unto all cities heralds [36] who shall assemble before thee all sorcerers of great knowledge." [37]' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 36-37) where 'sorcerers' is translated from *sahhar*. They did not say *sahir*; rather, they said *sahhar* meaning the person's profession is sorcery, like a person who works with wood is a *najir*, but a professional carpenter is a *najjar* and one who works with thread is a *kha'it*, but a professional tailor is a *khayyat*.

Some people said of their Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* '... "If you were to follow [Muhammad, you would follow] only a man bewitched!"' (*al-Isra'*: 47) Such people also said: '... "You are but one of the bewitched!"' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 153) Those who cling to falsehood are peculiar. They waver in their attacks upon their prophets, for sometimes they will say, 'He is a sorcerer,' and other times they will say, 'He is bewitched.' But a sorcerer cannot also be bewitched because at the least he would be able to defend himself against sorcery. Some say that what is meant by 'bewitched' is that he is not sound of mind, i.e. he is not aware of what he says.

Furthermore, if your Prophet Saleh *peace be upon him* is bewitched, then who bewitched him? Is it you or his followers? If one of you bewitched him, then you can annul his bewitchment and return him to normal to see what he is truly like. If some of his followers bewitched him, no doubt they will have done so to aid him in his mission, not restrain him from it.

Thus, when they say of their Prophet: '... "You are but one of the bewitched!"' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 153) they aim to deprive him of his followers.

They want a religion that is in keeping with their whims and desires, and they want worship without commands and without a Path like those who worship idols and are happy to do so. Why is that? That is because their deities do not order them to do anything and do not prohibit them from anything. Thus, every charlatan who claims prophethood eases what is commanded on his followers, which is why people strayed away from prayer long ago, and why recently scandalous mixing among the sexes became acceptable. Now nothing prevents a man from meeting with a woman, sitting with her, talking to her and even dancing with her in private. What of it when we are in the twenty-first century?

When they say 'he is a sorcerer', we respond to them, 'Yes, if he is a sorcerer, he has enchanted those who believe in him, but why has he not bewitched you and simply put an end to this controversy?' Thus, these accusations are groundless. He is no sorcerer and he is not bewitched. These are just lies and slander against the prophets of Allah, may peace and blessings be upon them, and against those who call for what is good in every time and every place.

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

مَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا فَأْتِ بِآيَةٍ إِنْ كُنْتَ مِنَ الصّٰدِقِیْنَ ﴿١٥٤﴾

You are nothing but a man like us. Show us a sign, if you are telling the truth [154] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 154)

Their saying: 'You are nothing but a mortal like ourselves! Come, then, forward with a token [of your mission] if you are a man of truth!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 154) is like Allah's saying in another verse: '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 apostle?"' (*al-Isra'*: 94) Even if Allah sent them an angel, it would come to them in the image of a man, and their objection would remain, for who would inform them that it was not a man but an angel? 'And [even] if We had appointed an angel as Our message-bearer, We would certainly have made him [appear as] a man – and thus We would only have confused them in the same way as they are now confusing themselves.' (*al-An'am*: 9)

In other words because the Messenger is a man, he is indistinguishable from us, so we want a sign from him, a miracle to prove to us that he is truthful is what he conveys to us from his Lord: ‘...if You are a man of truth!’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 154)

قَالَ هَذِهِ نَاقَةٌ ۖ لَهَا شَرَبٌ وَلَكُمْ شَرَبٌ يَوْمَ مَعْلُومٍ ﴿١٥٥﴾

He said, ‘Here is a camel. She should have her turn to drink and so should you, each on a specified day’ [155]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 155)

This is in response to them. They asked their prophet to bring forth for them from a boulder⁽¹⁾ a she-camel that would then give birth to a calf that would not be small like normal camel calves but of the same size as its mother. So: ‘Replied he: “This she-camel shall have a share of water...”’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 155), meaning one day let only the she-camel drink and do not let any of your livestock drink.

‘...and you shall have a share of water, on the days appointed [therefore].’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 155) In other words, you shall have your share of water. And during her appointed day the she-camel would drink as much water as all their livestock combined would drink on their appointed date, which is in and of itself a miracle.

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَمْسُوْهَا سُوًى ۖ فَيَاْخُذْكُمْ عَذَابٌ يَّوْمٍ عَظِيْمٍ ﴿١٥٦﴾

So do not harm her, or the punishment of a terrible day will befall you [156] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 156)

The True Lord *Glorified is He* informs His messenger of what will come to pass, that the people will not leave the she-camel be; rather, they will expose her

(1) Those who asked Saleh peace be upon him to show them a sign to prove himself proposed that he bring forth a she-camel from a massive stone that they selected themselves, which was an isolated boulder in the direction of Al-Hijr called al-Katiba. They asked him to bring forth a pregnant she-camel, so Saleh peace be upon him took oaths from them that if Allah answered their request they would believe in Allah and follow him. When they gave their word, Saleh peace be upon him prayed and supplicated to Allah, and the stone moved and a healthy she-camel emerged with an unborn camel in her womb. [The (Tafsir) of Ibn-Kathir, 2/228]

to harm. Allah said: '...and do her no harm...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 156), but they did more than harm; they slaughtered her cruelly. Then Allah *Glorified is He* promises them: '...lest suffering befall you on an awesome day!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 156)

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

فَعَقَرُوهَا فَاصْبَحُوا نَدِمِينَ ﴿١٥٧﴾

But they hamstrung her. In the morning they had cause to regret it [157] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 157)

The Quran says 'they' slaughtered her, in the plural. Then did the entire tribe participate in slaughtering her? No, only one of them did, and his name was Qadar Ibn-Salif. But everyone elected him for his task, aided him, and condoned his actions, so it is as if they all did it because he consulted them and they consented.

Then '... they had cause to regret it.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 157) And scholars say that regret is the precursor of repentance.

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَخَذَهُمُ الْعَذَابُ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥٨﴾

The punishment fell upon them. There truly is a sign in this, though most of them will not believe [in it] [158] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 158)

You might say, why did suffering befall them if regret is the precursor to repentance and they had regretted what they did? Yes, regret is the precursor of repentance, but their repentance was the type of which Allah says: '...repentance shall not be accepted from those who do evil deeds until their dying hour and then say, "Behold, I now repent...."' (*an-Nisa'*: 18) Thus they felt regret and repented when the time for repentance had already passed. Or perhaps they did not feel the regret of one who repents from his or her sins; rather, they felt only the regret of those who fear the suffering that Allah has threatened them with for their deeds.

Then this story ends with a closing that we are familiar with from other parables about disbelieving peoples:

وَلَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٥٩﴾

**Your Lord alone is the Almighty, the Merciful [159]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 159)**

The Almighty is He to Whom is subdued and is not subdued, and yet despite that He is also The Most Merciful.

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* moves on to another story from the procession of prophets' and messengers' stories.

كَذَّبَتْ قَوْمُ لُوطٍ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٦٠﴾ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ أَخُوهُمْ لُوطُ أَلَا نُنْقِونَ ﴿١٦١﴾

**The people of Lot, too, called the messengers liars [160]
Their brother Lot said to them, 'Will you not be mindful of
God? [161] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 160-161)**

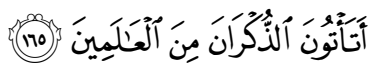
Here again the Quran says: '...their brother...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 161) because he is one of them, not a stranger to them, and the words are meant to soften their hearts to him: '...Will you not be conscious of Allah?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 161) This is a negative statement of Allah-consciousness, and the negation of a statement means its affirmation, as if he had said, 'Be conscious of Allah.'

إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِينٌ ﴿١٦٢﴾ فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوا أَمْرًا وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِنْ أَجْرِيَ إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٦٤﴾

**I am a faithful messenger to you [162] Be mindful
of God and obey me [163] I ask no reward from
you, for my only reward is with the Lord of the
Worlds [164] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 162-164)**

Thus were Lot's words akin to those spoken by his brethren, the Messengers who preceded him because they were all sent forth by the same source.

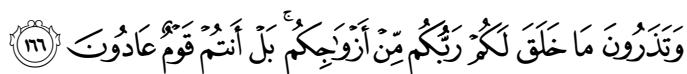
Then the True Lord *Glorified is He* singles out the people of Lot *peace be upon him* for that which they were infamous and that which was a cause of their destruction:



**Must you, unlike [other] people, lust after males [165]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 165)**

It is as if this were a characteristic that, among all the peoples of the world, was unique to them. That is why in another place Lot *peace be upon him* says: '... "Will you commit abominations such as none in all the world has ever done before you?"' (*al-A'raf*: 80]

Thus a thing had never happened before because it is a filthy habit for a man only goes to another man in a state of filthiness, but still they did it. So Lot's description of this is that they did what no one else in the world would do, making it truly abominable.



**And abandon the wives that God has created for you? You are
exceeding all bounds [166] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 166)**

In other words, Allah made your lawful spouses as an alternative to this reprehensible act, so you should have exercised your natural instincts in their rightful place, not transposed them elsewhere. Or rather should you have kept 'yourselves aloof from all the [lawful] spouses whom your Lord has created for you? ...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 166). In other words, they used to do this with women in the wrong spot as well. Allah *the Exalted* says: 'Your wives are your tilth; go, then, unto your tilth as you may desire...' (*al-Baqara*: 223). Some think that the words '...as you may desire...' (*al-Baqara*: 223) gives them free reign in doing this, but the verse restricts this to the spot of 'your tilth,' where a woman can be impregnated, and this spot is in the front, not in the back.

Thus Allah next says: '...Nay, but you are people who transgress all bounds of what is right!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 223) One who transgresses all bounds of what is right is someone who had some lawful and rightful means of consummating his desires, but he overstepped that means to something that was forbidden to him.

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

﴿١٦٧﴾ قَالُوا لَئِنْ لَمْ تَنْتَهِ يَلُوطُ لَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُخْرَجِينَ

But they replied, ‘Lot! If you do not stop this, you will be driven away’ [167] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 167)

So if you do not cease blaming us and opposing what we do then: ‘...you will most certainly be expelled [from this township]!’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 167) This is much like what they said in another verse: ‘... “Expel [Lot and] Lot’s followers from your township!”’ (*an-Naml*: 56) In other words, they have no place among us. But why is that? ‘...Verily, they are folks who make themselves out to be pure!’ (*an-Naml*: 56) Praise Allah! Their crime is that they are pure, and there is no place for purity among these wretched peoples.

Next Lot exclaimed:

﴿١٦٨﴾ قَالَ إِنِّي لِعَمَلِكُمْ مِنَ الْفَالِينَ

So he said, ‘I loathe what you do [168] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 168)

The difference between my not doing something and my abhorring one who does it is that I do not do it myself and I also hate that you do it. This is an emphatic rejection of them.

Next Lot *peace be upon him* said:

رَبِّ نَجِّنِي وَأَهْلِي مِمَّا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٦٩﴾ فَنَجَّيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ

أَجْمَعِينَ ﴿١٧٠﴾ إِلَّا عَجُوزًا فِي الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿١٧١﴾

Lord, save me and my family from what they are doing [169]

We saved him and all his family [170]

A except for an old woman who stayed behind [171]

(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 169 - 171)

Before his people’s obstinate insistence on this atrocious fornication, Lot *peace be upon him* could do nothing but call upon his Lord to save him and his family, and Allah *the Exalted* did so for: ‘...all but an old woman, who was among those that stayed behind.’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 171) The old woman meant

here is Lot's wife, of whom Allah says: 'For those who are bent on denying the truth Allah has propounded a parable in [the stories of] Noah's wife and Lot's wife...' (*at-Tahrim*: 10).

So Allah *the Glorified and Exalted* made of her an example for those who disbelieve — and refuge is in Allah! Thus she was not one of those who were saved and Lot's *peace be upon him* prayer did not apply to her. She was one of: '...those that stayed behind,' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 171) or one of the *ghabirin*⁽¹⁾ in Arabic, and so she died with the rest.

ثُمَّ دَمَرْنَا الْآخَرِينَ ﴿١٧٢﴾ وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ﴿١٧٣﴾

**Then We destroyed the others, [172] and poured a rain
of destruction down upon them. How dreadful that
rain was for those who had been fore- warned! [173]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 172-173)**

The '...others, ...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 172) means those who did not believe in Lot's message and did not desist from this atrocious fornication. Then the Quran clarifies the nature of this destruction: '...and rained down upon them a rain [of destruction]: and dire is such rain upon all who let themselves be warned [to no avail]!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 173) Before, the rain was a cause of blessing and a sign of Allah's mercy, as the rain would come down from the sky and bring life to the barren earth. Yet of this rain Allah says: '...dire is such rain upon all who let themselves be warned [to no avail]!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 173) So this rain is not a blessing or a mercy, rather, it is a punishment and an affliction. Similarly, another verse says: '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 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!"' (*al-Ahqaf*: 24-25)

This is called despairing after hope, which is the most intense form of affliction when one is on the cusp of good but instead evil takes you by surprise.

(1) According to Qatada it was said: She *ghabarat* in the punishment of Allah, i.e. she remained in it. [*The (Tafsir) of Al-Qurtubi*, 7/5013]

We previously explained this through the example of a prisoner who asks the guard for a drink of water to quench his thirst. If the guard were to deprive him of it from the outset, it would not be so bad, but instead he brings the cup of water for him only to pour its contents out onto the ground. This is far more hurtful because the prisoner is given reason to hope before, so this other torment is worse than mere thirst.

In another place, the Quran explains the essence of this rain, saying: ‘And so, when Our judgment came to pass, We turned those [sinful towns] upside down, and rained down upon them stones of hard-baked clay, one upon another, marked out in your Lord’s sight [for the punishment of such as are lost in sin]. And these [blows of God-willed doom] are never far from evildoers!’ (*Hud*: 82-83) The stones are: ‘...of hard-baked clay...’ (*Hud*: 82) i.e. they were clay fired to the point of hardening like stone, and they are ‘...marked out...’ (*Hud*: 83) because they are each marked with the names of the people they are destined to fall upon, each stone to its intended target.

And when the disparate scenes are gathered together, the outlines of the complete story become clear.

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٧٥﴾

There truly is a sign in this, though most of them will not believe [174] your Lord alone is the Almighty, the Merciful [175] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 174 -175)

This story closes with the same verses that closed the previous stories about obstinate disbelievers.

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* shifts our attention to another people who gave the lie to their messenger Jethro *peace be upon him*.

كَذَّبَ أَصْحَابُ الْفِئَةِ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿١٧٦﴾

The forest-dwellers, too, called the messengers liars [176] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 176)

Al-Ayka translated above as ‘wooded dales’, is a place so heavily forested that the trees close in on each other and the branches are thick as webbing.

Here the Quran also says ‘...message-bearers,’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 176) even though they only gave the lie to a single messenger because giving the lie to one messenger is tantamount to giving the lie to every messenger. In terms of doctrine and morality, all of them conveyed the same Path.

إِذْ قَالَ لَهُمْ شُعَيْبٌ أَلَا نَنْقُوْنَ (١٧٧) إِنِّي لَكُمْ رَسُولٌ أَمِيْنٌ (١٧٨) فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ وَأَطِيعُوْنَ (١٧٩)
وَمَا أَسْأَلُكُمْ عَلَيْهِ مِنْ أَجْرٍ إِن أَجْرِي إِلَّا عَلَى رَبِّ الْعَالَمِيْنَ (١٨٠)

**Shu'ayb said to them, 'Will you not be mindful of God? [177]
I am a faithful messenger to you [178] be mindful of God and
obey me [179] a I ask no reward of you, for my only reward is with
the Lord of the Worlds [180] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 177-180)**

We notice the rhetorical difference here, which points to the precision of the Quran's language, for it does not say, 'their brother Jethro' as was said of Nuh, Hud, Saleh and Lut *peace be upon them* because Jethro *peace be upon him* was not one of the people of the wooded dale; rather, he was a stranger to them.

The rest of the verses match up exactly with what was said about his fellow messengers who preceded him because the doctrinal unity of the Plan produces the same treatment and conveyance of the Plan. That is why we read these verses from all the previously mentioned messengers.

Then he begins to take up the details of their specific problem because every messenger sent from Allah to a community was sent to treat a specific malady that had spread among them. Communities at the time were isolated from each other and there were no means of contact by which these maladies might travel from one community to another.

The malady of 'Ad was their pride in building and their haughtiness towards people. So Hud *peace be upon him* came to say to them: 'Will you, in your wanton folly, build [idolatrous] altars on every height, and make for yourselves mighty castles, [hoping] that you might become immortal? And will you [always], whenever you lay hand [on others], lay hand [on them] cruelly, without any restraint?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 128-130)

And the malady of Thamud was negligence and separating their blessings from The Blessor, so Saleh *peace be upon him* came to them to say: 'Do you think

that you will be left secure [forever] in the midst of what you have here and now? Amidst [these] gardens and springs and fields, and [these] palm-trees with slender spathes? and that you will [always be able to] hew dwellings out of the mountains with [the same] great skill?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 146-149)

As for the people of Lut *peace be upon him*, they were marked by an abomination unprecedented in the world which was sodomy. So Lut *peace be upon him* came to restrain them and call upon them to repent: 'Must you, of all people, [lustfully] approach men, keeping yourselves aloof from all the [lawful] spouses whom your Lord has created for you? Nay, but you are people who transgress all bounds of what is right!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 165-166)

As for the people of the wooded dale, their malady was being stingy with the scale. So Shu'ayb *peace be upon him* came to them and said:

أَوْفُوا الْكَيْلَ وَلَا تَكُونُوا مِنَ الْمُخْسِرِينَ ﴿١٨١﴾ وَزِنُوا بِالْقِسْطَاسِ الْمُسْتَقِيمِ ﴿١٨٢﴾

[Give full measure: do not sell others short [181] Weigh with correct scales [182] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 181-182)

Al-Kail is a device for measuring quantities by volume. The unit of measure of *al-kail* is either *al-kaila* same as *al-qadah* or *al-ardab*. Similarly a balance is a device that measures things that can be weighed.

And 'be not among those who [unjustly] cause loss [to others].' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 181) *Al-mukhsirin* is translated here as '...those who [unjustly] cause loss [to others], ' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 181) i.e. to another party in a transaction involving a measure, by taking more or giving less than is just. And the weighing should be done '... with a true balance.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 182) This means that the weighing should be made with as much fairness and as close attention to the scale as is humanly possible with due consideration to the differences between the things being weighed. For example, gold weighs differently than apples, or sesame or lentils, so you have to inspect the scale's precision as much as possible in order to weigh with a true balance.

However, why are only the measure and the balance singled out as means of assessment? Why does the Quran not mention measurement of areas or length, by the meter or foot for example? They say it is because the people of

old in primitive societies did not have dealings in measurable things. They did not buy cloth, for example, because cloth has to be spun by a man or a woman and at the time there was no one to spin it or sell it—that only happened in later more civilized societies.

Long ago, people dealt with each other through barter and exchange. Under such circumstances there is no buyer or seller per se, for no one person could merely buy something and no one person could merely sell something, except when goods are exchanged for something of worth, as in Allah's saying: 'And they sold him for a paltry price – a mere few silver coins...' (*Yusuf*: 20).

But in a barter system you take some grain and eat it, and I take some dates and eat them so we benefit directly from the goods. If you choose to consider everyone in a transaction a seller or a buyer, you could say they bought and sold the goods. If you then consider things of worth that do not have any direct benefit from consumption like gold or silver or other precious metals that cannot be eaten, these are commodities of worth. As for items that are neither of these, they have the potential to be goods for consumption and also commodities of worth.

The Quran has set aside a sura especially for the matter of the measure and the scale. In the chapter of *al-Mutaffifin*, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Woe unto those who give short measure: those who, when they are to receive their due from [other] people, demand that it be given in full – but when they have to measure or weigh whatever they owe to others, give less than what is due!' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 1-3)

We say (*kala lahu*) meaning he gave something to someone, and (*iktala 'alaihi*) meaning he was given something. So the verse says that whenever he takes something, he makes sure he takes exactly what he is owed, but when he gives to someone else, he gives less than he owes. The Quran does not censure him for seeking exactly what is his due; rather, it censures him for being short with what is due to others even if it is a trivial amount.

The name of the chapter of *al-Mutaffifin* derives from the word *tafif*, i.e. something insignificant or trivial. So if woe befalls one who is unjust in something small and trivial, what then do you think will befall one who is unjust in everything?

Here rebuke goes to the person who does both of two things: takes extra and gives less. However, if someone were to give more than is due, there is no harm in it, and his reward is with Allah for he is one of the doers of good of whom Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...there is no cause to reproach the doers of good...’ (*at-Tawba*: 91).

With the advancement of societies human beings have begun to take an interest in evaluating the precision of the measure, the scale, and the measuring stick. There are institutions that specialize in investigating and researching the precision of these devices because with the passing of time they become susceptible to inaccuracies. For example the metal *sanja*, the weight against which we measure things, might begin to weigh more than it should if it is left in a place where it accumulates dust and grease on it or it might begin to weigh less than it should from excessive wear and tear over time just as a doorknob is worn down from excessive use and begins to bald. The smooth shining bald spot that you see is a sign that some of the doorknob has been worn off, if only a small portion of it.

In France, there is an ideal model for the yard and metre made from non-corrodible metal that is used as a reference to measure and calibrates other measuring devices. Now extremely precise equipment to measure weight and length guarantees you the utmost of precision, especially in weighing valuables. That is why we see them place delicate scales inside of glass boxes where air currents around it cannot affect the measurement.

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تَبْخُسُوا النَّاسَ أَشْيَاءَهُمْ وَلَا تَعْتَوْا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٨٣﴾

Do not deprive people of what is theirs. Do not spread corruption on earth [183] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 183)

Al-bakhs is to deprive someone of ‘...what is rightfully theirs...’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 183) which means those things that are owed to them. Thus depriving another person what is owed to him or her is a sin, or depriving someone might be taking too much of something by force, or using something that belongs to another person without his or her permission and in a way that might displease him or her.

All of these possibilities are contained in: '...and do not deprive people of what is rightfully theirs...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 183). So *al-bakhs* happens whenever you short someone by giving less than his right, or take more than your right by compulsion, or use what is his by right without his permission.

So whenever you are sure that something is someone else's due, you should be wary of misappropriating it. For example, your Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* says of charity: '...and in whose possessions there is a due share, acknowledged [by them], for such as ask [for help] and such as are deprived [of what is good in life].' (*al-Ma'arij*: 24-25)

Since Islamic law has specified what is due to the poor, you will not infringe upon it. When you reflect upon the nature of their due share, you will find that it has been wisely imposed in such a way as to preserve and encourage the efforts of the donor to increase his own capital even though some of it is owed to charity.

For inasmuch as your efforts to develop your own capital increase, the amount of charity owed from your money decreases. For example, income from land that is fed by rainwater is subject to a ten percent *zakat* tax, land that is watered mechanically is subject to five percent, and business and commercial efforts, which require the most effort, are only subject to a two and a half percent tax. This is because the Wise Lawgiver wants to exhort people to exert effort and make use of their money, that way no one will say, 'Why should I toil and let someone else reap the fruits of my labour?'

When the Lawgiver imposed this amount due to the poor, he was protecting the poor and the rich alike. He set forth this rightfully owed amount so that they would not give too little; especially in charity.

The Path of Allah wants to set the daily motions of people's lives aright; blood should only flow in a person's body by its sweat, i.e. its work and toil. And life must only be in a body that sweats in toil, otherwise society will be corrupted and those who are capable of effort will begrudge their labours because he will not be sure whether the fruits of his labours will go to him or to someone else who will seize them from him by some means.

This is what would corrupt society because the strong and the capable would renounce activity and those who take from others would accustom themselves

to idleness and sloth, for why should he work when the life that runs in his veins comes from the toil of others? As time goes on it will be harder for him to do any work and industrious activity will seem burdensome to him so he will become what we call a 'social parasite', living at the expense of others.

Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* wants to reassure everyone that the fruits of their efforts will return to them. So no one will wrongfully usurp the earnings of another because if he is unable to work, his Lord has guaranteed him a share of the earnings of others which will be brought to his very door, either in the form of charity, *zakat*, or alms (*sadaqa*). This way everyone's life functions smoothly.

This is why Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to give us precise scales and balances to uphold the integrity of our dealings with each other, so if you are owed something, the measurement is accurate, and if you weigh something for someone else, the scale is accurate. You can measure with a true balance and not short people what is rightfully theirs.

The issue of giving a person their due is not limited to these circumstances alone; rather, they are models for dealing with people in all aspects of life where something measurable or quantifiable is in question. Thus be wary of infringing on what rightfully belongs to others and be wary of depriving someone of what is theirs by force, thievery, fraud, or seizure.

We have previously said that among the forms of stealing *as-sariqa* is to take something from where it rightfully belongs when its rightful owner is not present, and *al-khatf* is to take something when the owner is present but you flee before he is able to grab hold of you, or if he does catch up to you, you overpower him and take it from him by force, which is *ghasb*. As for embezzlement, *al-ikhtilas*, it is when you steal money that you have been entrusted with but have no right to take.

So if every active person knew that the fruits of his activities would return to him, and every inactive person knew that he would die of hunger if he does not work so long as he is able to, then industry and activity would prevail in everyone, which is what Allah *the Exalted* wants, especially for his vice-regent on earth. He *Glorified is He* has given us a mind to think with, energy to work

with and materials to use in our endeavours. All we have to do is gainfully employ the abilities that Allah created for us.

If charity, or *zakat*, is a clearly acknowledged and delineated right due to others, there is another right due to others which is not clearly defined. Allah *the Exalted* says: '... a due share unto such as might ask [for help] and such as might suffer privation.' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 19) He did not say that this due share is *ma'lum*, or clearly known because the due share mentioned here is just almsgiving, or *sadaqa*. The True Lord *Glorified is He* left this due share unrestricted in order to give the donor free reign according to his or her inclinations and generosity. That is why this verse comes in the midst of talk about what characterizes doers of good. '[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: they would lie asleep during but a small part of the night, and would pray for forgiveness from their innermost hearts; 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*: 15-19)

It is because the due share here is done as an extra favour that the Wise Lawgiver has left without restriction. It is incredible to see rich people take out 2.5 % of their money, for example, and they do not give any thought to the remaining portion of their money, which is 97.5%. Instead they turn their attention to what is rightfully owed to the poor, a trivial 2.5%.

He tries to outwit his obligations, giving his *zakat* to his relatives or acquaintances, or using it in some way to relieve him of some other obligation, such as the person who gives his *zakat* to his female servant, for example, in order to please her mother so she does not persuade her daughter to leave his service. Some give their *zakat* to the construction of mosques, schools, or hospitals, which is unacceptable because the money belongs to those who are known to be deserving according to the Book of Allah. It is always wrong to channel one's *zakat* money towards something that will benefit the rich.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 183) To act wickedly is to spread corruption, so the meaning of 'do not act wickedly' is 'do not spread corruption on earth'. Why then does the Quran repeat itself, saying: '...by spreading corruption?'

(*ash-Shu'ara'*: 183) They say the meaning here is 'do not act wickedly on earth' even though you are currently spreading corruption or intend to spread corruption.

There is no redundancy in the verse because it is distinguishing between corrupting something intentionally and corrupting something unintentionally—i.e. your everyday actions caused corruption. This way people are not dissuaded from thinking and trying to discover what is best through their everyday actions because so long as you intended to do what is good and proper, it is not your fault if you erred. Your Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* will see to it that your error is remedied. Indeed, he will compensate you for it, for whoever exerts himself but errs will have a reward and whoever exerts himself and succeeds will have twice the reward.⁽¹⁾

So the meaning is do not spread corruption through the earth intentionally. But how does one spread corruption on earth? Corruption means to corrupt those who move and work on the face of the earth because the earth was created for humankind. 'And the earth has He spread out for all living beings.' (*ar-Rahman*: 10)

Allah *the Exalted* created the earth in a state of purity and it is humankind that corrupted it as is clear from the fact that you only see corruption in places where people are. As for the places where their influence does not reach, they remain pure and whole.

Human beings, whom Allah created as his vice-regent on his earth, are supposed to cultivate this earth and increase its purity in fulfilment of his Lord's saying: '...It is He Who hath produced you from the earth and charged you to cultivate and settle it⁽²⁾...' (*Hud*: 61).

We cannot settle the earth if it is in ruins, and when our descendants increase in number, there will be no corresponding increase in the earth's

(1) *On the authority of 'Amr ibn Al-'As may Allah be pleased with him the Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said, {Whenever a judge passes judgment and applies himself successfully, he will have two rewards, and if he passes judgment and applies himself but errs, he will have one reward}. Cited by Al-Bukhari in his (Sahih) [7352] and Muslim in his (Sahih). [1716, (Kitab Al-Aqdiya)]*

(2) That is He gave permission for you to settle it and draw out your potential from it, and he made you settlers on it. [*Lissan Al-'Arab*]. Entry: ('*amara*)

resources, so catastrophe will strike. But if the earth was cultivated and its resources increased in parallel with the increase in population, then the people would not feel the pressure of scarcity, and catastrophe would be avoided.

Now if you drive along a desert road, you see farms in the desert and new villages in which the barren earth has been transformed to lush, green earth. Where did this dramatic change happen? We were lazy and oblivious until hunger reared its head and we exceeded the limited fertile soil in the Nile Delta and River Valley.

So if humankind does not improve the earth's purity, at the least it should leave it in its original state as Allah created it. But we have seen human beings pollute the water by depositing their waste in it, corrupt the air with the exhaust from cars and factories, and corrupt the earth with chemicals and pesticides. All of this corruption is a deviation from the untainted nature that Allah created for us. This happens because we look for quick utility and neglect the long-term damages.

Allah *Glorified is He* created means of transport and transportation for us and made them without harmful side effects. 'And [it is He who creates] horses and mules and asses for you to ride, as well as for [their] beauty...' (*an-Nahl*: 8). And He says: 'And they carry your loads to [many] a place which [otherwise] you would be unable to reach without great hardship to yourselves...' (*an-Nahl*: 7). Yes, modern means of transportation are faster, and more comfortable than these animal mounts, but they also tire people when Allah created the entire world for their comfort. You might see a man driving his car and his sole preoccupation is to go faster in his car so he neglects the car's maintenance and whenever he takes off in his car, he leaves behind a cloud of noxious smoke that harms people while he is heedless to everything because the smoke is behind him and does not affect him. But take great care, Your Lord *the Glorified and Exalted* is All Sustaining. He does not forget and He does not sleep, and even as you condemn someone else, you are yourself condemned, or your children are. Also, before you can drive fast in a car, you have to pave the roads so that you do not raise dust in people's faces and impair their breathing or even do harm to nearby agriculture. All of these are forms of spreading corruption on earth because we look only to the expedient use of something and not the long-term harms of it.

So whenever you strive to do something, you should do so after making sound preparations in order to arrive at sound results so that you will not be one of those who spread corruption on earth.

Another form of spreading corruption on earth is highway robbery which is when a robber lays in wait at one place until his victim passes by. There is also burglary, wherein the burglar goes to the home of his victim and robs him of his money.

Bribery is also a form of spreading corruption on earth, and it is one of the most harmful catastrophes afflicting our society which gives birth to idleness and disorder, for when you see someone else taking advantage of you and seizing your money unlawfully, you are sure to treat him and others the same way, then matters of public interest turn to chaos of proportions that only Allah can know.

Next the True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَاتَّقُوا الَّذِي خَلَقَكُمْ وَالْجِيلَ الْأَوَّلِينَ

Be mindful of God who created you and former generations [184] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 184)

You must not think that Allah *the Exalted* created us without any reason or that He left us unattended to our own devices. He created us for a purpose in the world and He made us all servants equally to Him, so He does not prefer any of us to any other, and He does not have any centre of power, which is why He has never taken a companion and never had a son.

Because we are all equal before Him *Glorified is He* and He is our Creator, He has undertaken to provide our sustenance for us and see to our interests. So you must make the effort in the place of someone who has been paralyzed as a test from Allah and you must see to that person's well-being. Doubtless Allah will look to you with an eye of multiplied blessings.

So the truly disabled and impoverished—not those who take up poverty and begging as a profession by which to earn their livelihood—these disabled and impoverished people were created by Allah and their afflictions are from Him. So when you give them the fruits of your own labours and go to them to

see that they are comfortable and secure in their homes, by your deeds you are alleviating their Allah-given afflictions for Allah, for it is by you that Allah provides for them. In this case, it is inevitable that these less fortunate people will love you and pray for you to be blessed, in good health, and to receive great reward. And they will know that Allah did not forsake them.

But when the filthy rich are stingy with the destitute poor and wash their hands of those people whom Allah has tested, inevitably the poor will resent the rich, or even protest against Allah—and refuge is with Allah—because: by what fault of his own is he poor when others are rich in a merciless society?

It is astounding to see an afflicted person displaying his affliction to people and taking advantage of it to swindle them. He shows them his handicap as if he were complaining of the Creator to His creatures. If only he overlooked what Allah has afflicted him with and trusted that it was one of the blessings Allah has given him, then Allah would have put the health of someone healthy into their service and their sustenance would come to them at their door. If the afflicted are content, then Allah's gifts to them will be commensurate with their afflictions.

But 'be conscious of Him Who has created you...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 184) means, be mindful of his omnipotence, for He created you; He assures you of your livelihoods and makes sure your needs are met, even for the paraplegic, He puts an able-bodied person into his service to take care of him. And He sets a condition upon the rich. As part of their faith, they must give a portion of their labours towards the poor and take his offering for them to their houses at their ease.

Prophet Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* tells them to fear Allah, Who created them and the former generations. The word generation in Arabic comes from the word mountain. Mountains played an important role in Arab life and many of their idioms involve mountains as they represent the attributes of majesty, grandeur, firmness, and stability. Thus, they derived the word generation from mountain. This tells that generations are adhering firmly to something.

Similarly, we say a person is naturally disposed for goodness, i.e. he sticks firmly to what is good and never leaves it. In addition, we say that a person is like a mountain, that is, nothing affects him. Moreover, common people describe a person as a mountain, meaning he is heavy spirited. Some poets eulogise someone saying that they are firm as a mountain, even after their

death. One poet said of someone while carrying his coffin, 'I have never thought, prior to your funeral procession, that a mountain could be carried by the hands of men.' Likewise, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And certainly He led astray numerous generations from among you' (*Ya Sin*: 62).

Thus, those former generations referred to in the verse in question are those who stick firmly and obstinately to giving the lie to their messengers. Therefore, Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* was telling his people that Allah created them and those former generations, confirming meanwhile that they were fully aware of the punishment that afflicted those generations as a result of opposing their messengers, Allah decreed that His messengers are the victorious and those who give the lie to them are the losers. Those communities which preceded you were unflagging in their disbelief. They were stubborn in their disbelief and thus nothing deterred them from it. Thus, do not be like them lest what befell them also befall you.

What was their response after all? Allah *the Almighty* says:

قَالُوا إِنَّمَا أَنْتَ الْمُسَحَّرِينَ ﴿١٨٥﴾

**But they replied, 'You are bewitched! [185]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 185)**

They believed that somebody casted a spell over him, as we have said previously. Allah *Glorified is He* uses a hyperbole form to mean that they accused him of being bewitched several times, not just once. If they believed that he had been bewitched just once, Allah would not have used the hyperbole form of the word. Thus, they thought that there was something wrong with his mind and thinking and that he was crazy and thereby will not listen to him.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَمَا أَنْتَ إِلَّا بَشَرٌ مِّثْلُنَا وَإِنْ نَظُنُّكَ لَمِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿١٨٦﴾

**You are nothing but a man like us. In fact we think you
are a liar [186] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 186)**

They proclaimed that he was just a human being like them and is not distinguished in any way. Thus, they questioned his prophet hood? They

said that they thought that he is a consummate liar like those liars who preceded him.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَأَسْقِطْ عَلَيْنَا كِسْفًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ إِن كُنتَ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿١٨٧﴾

Make bits of the heavens fall down on us, if you are telling the truth [187] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 187)

They asked for bits of the heavens to fall on them if he was truthful. They call for chastisement and hasten it upon themselves just as Allah says in another verse: 'They said, "Have you come to us to turn us away from our gods; then bring us what you threaten us with, if you are of the truthful ones."' (*al-Ahqaf*: 22)

Surprisingly, when punishment descended upon them, they asked to be reprieved. Why shall they be reprieved while they are the one who were impatient?

Many disbelievers have asked for bits of heaven to fall down on them, as was the case with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when they said, 'And they say, "We will by no means believe in you until you cause a fountain to gush forth from the earth for us. Or you should have a garden of palms and grapes in the midst of which you should cause rivers to flow forth, gushing out. Or you should cause the heaven to come down upon us in pieces as you think, or bring Allah and the angels face to face [with us]."' (*al-Isra'*: 90-92) They also said, 'O Allah! if this is the truth from Thee, then rain upon us stones from heaven or inflict on us a painful punishment.' (*al-Anfal*: 32) They should have asked for guidance instead. This actually shows how foolish and obstinate they were.

Allah then says:

قَالَ رَبِّيَ أَعْلَمُ بِمَا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿١٨٨﴾

He said, 'My Lord knows best what you do' [188] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 188)

Here, Prophet Shu'aib (Jethro) told them that Allah *Glorified is He* is All Knowing of what they do. If they were amenable to repentance, regret, and

hope, then Allah's punishment would not befall them. However, if they were insistent on disobedience and giving the lie, the punishment of complete annihilation would descend upon them. In addition, he would not stand in judgment over them in anything because he is a mere mortal like them and he does not know their inner intentions. Thus, he will entrust their fate to their Lord Who knows their affairs and what they hide.

Allah says:

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَهُمُ عَذَابُ يَوْمِ الظُّلَّةِ إِنَّهُ كَانَ عَذَابَ يَوْمٍ عَظِيمٍ ﴿١٨٩﴾

They called him a liar, and so the torment of the Day of Shadow came upon them – it was the torment of a terrible day [189] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 189)

Indeed, they disbelieved in him and since he did not defer the matter to himself but rather to their Lord, they actually disbelieved in Allah. Thus, the punishment soon followed and the Day of Shadow seized them. It was a punishment of a witnessing day. Allah inflicted upon them a terrible hotness for seven days. They lived in scorching heat and Allah allowed just enough wind to keep the spark of life alive in them. Their suffering was all the worse. The sand beneath them burned and they began to beg for fresh air. They saw a cloud advancing towards them in the sky. They looked up at it and thought it would relieve them from the heat of the sun and send them a breeze. When they took shelter in the shade of the cloud and waited expectantly for ease and repose to come, the cloud began to rain fire upon them.

If only this cloud had dispersed and left them as they were! Instead it hurled fire and ashes upon them from above and added more pain to their suffering. Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse, 'When they saw it as a cloud appearing in the sky advancing towards their valleys, they said, "This is a cloud which will give us rain." Nay! it is what you sought to hasten on, a blast of wind in which is a painful punishment, destroying everything by the command of its Lord, so they became such that naught could be seen except their dwellings.' (*al-Ahqaf*: 24-25) Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* describes the suffering of this day as a torment of a terrible day. In what way is it terrible

when it is just a torment? Scholars say it is because it came after their happiness and having hope of finding repose. This surprise increased their suffering. This is what is called despair after hope. This is the worst form of suffering and more difficult to bear. Thereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً وَمَا كَانَ أَكْثَرُهُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٩٠﴾

**There truly is a sign in this, though most of them will
not believe [190] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 190)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says that what He told us in this account is a sign, i.e. an admonition for us. It is an admonition that moves a person from one state of being to another. Thus, if he is a disbeliever, he comes to believe, and if he is obstinate, he yields to the truth and obedience.

So far, the stories that Allah has related from the long line of messengers include seven of the messengers of Allah with their respective communities; Musa (Moses), Ibrahim (Abraham), Nuh (Noah), Hud (Eber), Saleh (Shelah), Lut (Lot) and Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon them all*. The procession of messengers proceeded according to a fixed, unwavering pattern from Allah, i.e. the messengers and those who believed are victorious, while the disbelievers and those who called their messengers liars are deserted.

Let you, *ummah* of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* take a precautionary warning from these stories. There is an admonition for you, which moves a person from one state of being to another. On hearing this admonition, if a person is a disbeliever, he comes to believe and if he is obstinate, he yields to the truth and obedience. In addition, you have seen that we have never given up one of our messengers to those who disbelieved in him and they were victorious all the way. Allah says, '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)

The Arabic word for admonition is derived from the verb meaning to cross from one side to the other. Through an admonition, one crosses from

disbelief, recalcitrance, denial, and arrogance to faith, belief, and obedience. Moreover, it is connected to shedding a tear as it moves down one's cheek.

It is worth noting that Allah said that most of them will not believe. He says so in order to give those who believed their right and do not infringe upon their rights.

Allah says:

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٩١﴾

**Your Lord alone is the Almighty, the Merciful [191]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 191)**

A Lord is someone who undertakes another's protection and care. All the previous stories ended with this same ending verse. Despite all the disbelief they manifested, their stories end with this same ending, which shows the Might and Mercy of Allah.

After presenting lessons and morals from the stories of Allah's messengers, the narrative context of the Quran moves to the last of those prophets sent with a Divine Message, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَئِنَّهُ لَنَنْزِيلُ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٩٢﴾

**Truly, this Quran has been sent down by the Lord of
the Worlds [192] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 192)**

To what does this pronoun '*hu*' refer? A pronoun should be preceded by something to which it refers. For example, when you say, 'A man came to visit me so I greeted him with hospitality', the pronoun 'him' refers back to the man. However, there is nothing preceding this pronoun in this verse.

In the verse where Allah says, 'Say, "He, Allah, is One"' (*al-Ikhlās*: 1), the pronoun refers to the word 'Allah', which comes after it, so that His Majesty is instilled in the soul. Similarly, the pronoun 'this' in the verse under discussion refers to the Holy Quran, and thus the meaning will be 'the Quran was sent by the Lord of the worlds'. Again, the pronoun precedes its referent because of

its fame and constant presence in our minds. When you say, 'He is the One', the mind cannot help but think of Allah; and when you say, 'It was sent down by the Lord of worlds', the mind cannot help but think of the Holy Quran.

The verse in question tells that the Quran is the word of Allah, and not Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This is especially true because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had never previously been, before receiving his Message, an orator among his people. He was not known for public speaking or eloquence. Thus, he *peace and blessings be upon him* was by all worldly measure inferior to others in this regard. Subsequently, if the Message that came to him was of his making, why were others not able to produce the same? They had experience with public speaking and orating at marketplaces. In addition, they had a way with words. Therefore, if Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* fabricated the Quran, they were far more capable of fabrication since they were practiced in the art of speech.

Allah is the Lord of all the worlds, i.e. everything that exists. Similarly, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a mercy and grace to all the worlds, i.e. people, jinn, angels and yet other worlds. When the verse in which Allah says, 'And We have not sent you but as a mercy to the worlds.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 107), was revealed, Prophet Muhammad asked angel Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* 'Do you receive any part of this grace, O brother Jibril (Gabriel)?' Jibril (Gabriel) responded, 'Yes, I had feared an evil fate like Satan's, but when Allah revealed this verse to you. I felt reassured of my fate. That is the grace I have received.'

The Quran is not the only revelation from the Lord of the worlds. All the preceding Holy Books of the Abrahamic religions were bestowed by Allah, however, the difference between the Quran and previous Books is that they only represented a path and a plan for that specific messenger, then the messenger would perform miracles to prove that he was truthfully conveying his message from Allah.

The Book of Musa (Moses), for example, is the Torah and his miracles were performed with his staff, while the Book of 'Isa (Jesus) is the Gospel and his miracles were curing lepers and the dumb by Allah's Will. On the other hand, the Book of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* included

his path and his miracle. So, the miracle is the path itself. Why is that? Scholars say it is because the Quran came as a path for all of humankind, for all times and all places; so it stands to reason, that is to say, the path is itself the miracle and the miracle is itself the path. Given all of this, only Allah could have created this miracle and it was sent down by the Lord of all the worlds.

Moreover, the previous Books were for a specific community at a given period of time and their meanings were divinely inspired, but not their literal words. That is why Allah gave tidings of the coming prophet on the tongue of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* 'I will cause my words to issue from his mouth,' i.e. the speech of Allah, in both meaning and word, will be uttered from the mouth of Prophet Muhammad, and inasmuch as its specific words are from Allah, it is revealed from the Lord of the worlds.

Allah *Glorified is He* says,



The Trustworthy Spirit brought it down [193]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 193)

Someone might think that the revelation took the form of inspiration or speech sent directly into a person's mind. Thus, Allah said that it was brought down by the Trustworthy Spirit. Thus, verses were not spoken directly into the mind or the heart of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*; rather, the Trustworthy Spirit came to him and said that Allah says this and that.

The Quran was sent down exclusively through Jibril (Gabriel) acting as an intermediary. He would come to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and there were accompanying signs that he knew and felt. For example, his forehead would break out in beads of sweat, and then he would recover. These were the signs of the angel's presence and his conversation with Prophet Muhammad. This is how the divine inspiration unveiled itself, that is, not through direct revelation or casting words into the heart or mind of Prophet Muhammad.

Thus, those who accompanied him *peace and blessings be upon him* knew fully well when divine inspiration came to him. They would hear a noise

above his head like the buzzing of bees. The process would weigh him down *peace and blessings be upon him* to the point that if he rested his thigh on one of the companions during the revelation, the companion felt as if it were a mountain pressing down on him. If he was on his mount when the divine revelation came to him, he became so heavy that the ride would almost collapse. This is clear in the verse wherein Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Surely, We will make to light upon you a weighty word.' (*al-Muzzammil*: 5)

The hardship of receiving the revelation would continue to afflict him *peace and blessings be upon him* until divine inspiration left him. When it did not return for a while, Prophet Muhammad began to yearn for it, at which point Allah revealed to him the verses: 'I swear by the early hours of the day, And the night when it covers with darkness. Your Lord has not forsaken you, nor has He become displeased, and surely what comes after is better for you than that which has gone before.' (*ad-Duha*: 1-4) These verses tell that divine revelation will resume coming to you but without the hardship and without tiring you each time as you used to suffer before.

Allah says that the Quran was brought down by Jibril (Gabriel). This means that the Quran came down from above, from Allah *the Most High*, not from a mere human who might be right or wrong and who might be ignorant of what needs to be done, like the man-made laws that we see now which are amended every day and require improvement to meet the requirements of time, for new faults come to light day after day.

As the Quran was sent down from Allah *the Most High*, we must accept it with confidence and absolute trust. We should not resist it or presume anything. One might resist those who are his equals, but when one is before someone higher than him, he is obliged to be led by him, according to conviction. In the countryside, we hear people saying, 'Religious law spills no blood when it cuts someone's finger'. Why is that? That is because it was cut by order of one higher than you, by order of Allah, not by order of someone of your own standing.

When we contemplate a legal verse such as 'Say, "Come I will recite what your Lord has forbidden to you..."' (*al-An'am*: 151), we notice the word 'come' indicating a call to leave behind the lowlands of earthly law and to come up to the peaks of heavenly law. Come up, rise, do not descend to the

level of the laws of humankind, otherwise you will suffer with the changing times because whoever created these laws for you was human like you, and even if they had the best intentions, they do not know the absolute truth of matters. If they prove right sometimes, more often they will be wrong and they will be forced to change and amend their laws. Thus, the most reasonable thing for you is to take your lead from Allah *the Most High* because Allah *Glorified is He* is All Knowing of what is best for you.

Thus, this verse under discussion informs us that the Quran is from Allah *the Most High*. Even iron is among the blessings of Allah sent down, as Allah *Glorified is He* speaks of it, saying, ‘And We have made iron, wherein is great violence and advantages to men, and that Allah may know who helps Him and His messengers in secret.’ (*al-Hadid*: 25) Allah did not mention diamonds or other precious minerals as an example. Why is that? It is because iron is one of the tools used to aid the spread of Islam and raise up the word of Allah.

Angel Jibril (Gabriel) is called a Spirit because a spirit is something alive and the angels are living, yet they are incorporeal creatures, as if they were purely spirit. However, human beings are corporeal creatures.

The word spirit is used in several ways, among them is that which gives us life; Allah says, ‘And they ask you about the soul. Say, “The soul is one of the commands of my Lord.”’ (*al-Isra'*: 85) The Quran is also called *ruh*; Allah says, ‘And thus did We reveal to you an inspired book by Our command.’ (*ash-Shura*: 52) So, the Quran is like a spirit and the angel that reveals it is a spirit, thus you might say, ‘Why do I need a spirit then when I already have one inside me’? We say that the soul or spirit that you have is what gives life to your body and which departs from your body when you die, while the soul or spirit that comes to you through the Quran is eternal and everlasting. It is the path of Allah that gives you unending life. Thus, the soul or spirit that gives life to our bodies is present in both believers and disbelievers alike. However, the soul that you receive through the Book of Allah and His path is only for the believer, and it is eternal. Furthermore, it gives us new everlasting life after our ordinary temporary life is over. Read, if you would like, Allah’s saying, ‘O you who believe! Answer [the call of] Allah and His messenger when he calls you to that which gives you the life.’ (*al-Anfal*: 24)

Someone might ask, 'How is that possible when we are already alive'? Yes, we are alive with the first soul of our transitory lives. However, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* calls us to eternal life, so it is as if Allah is indicating that the life we live now is not the true life because it will come to an end, and that there is another life which is permanent and eternal. In addition, just saying that we are alive is a bit of an overstatement. That is because those who are truly alive do not die and such eternal life comes only through the path of Allah. This is the meaning of Allah's saying, 'And as for the next abode, that most surely is the life, did they but know!' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64) This is a hyperbolic form of referring to true life of the hereafter. As for the life of the body, what kind of life is this when man can die on the day of his birth or even if he lives to be a hundred?

Then Allah *Glorified is He* describes the spirit as being a trustworthy. He is trustworthy over the divine inspiration. Thus, the integrity of the Quran is safeguarded by Allah, by the Trustworthy Spirit that brought it down and by the Trustworthy Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to whom it was revealed. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And if he had fabricated against Us some of the sayings, We would certainly have seized him by the right hand. Then We would certainly have cut off his aorta. And not one of you could have withheld Us from him.' (*al-Haqq*: 44-47) In addition, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Nor of the unseen is he a tenacious concealer. Nor is it the word of the cursed, Satan' (*at-Takwir*: 24-25).

Allah then says:

عَلَىٰ قَلْبِكَ لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿١٩٤﴾

**To your heart [Prophet], so that you could
bring warning [194] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 194)**

Was the Quran revealed to the ear of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* or to his heart? The ear is the organ by which someone hears. However, Allah says that He revealed the Quran to his heart. That is because the ear is a means to reach the heart. The heart is the place of acquisition and the generator that moves the human body; it pumps the blood

into our bodies' limbs and thus organs create the energy that fuels our bodily functions and movements.

That is why when a sick person takes his medicine orally, it circulates through the body along the same path as food does and is absorbed slowly. However, if you want the medicine to take effect quickly, you give him an injection in his muscles, but the fastest way is to give him an injection into his veins so the medicine mixes directly with the blood and comes into effect rapidly. So, blood is what sustains life in human beings. Therefore, the heart is the seat of contemplation and thought and the ear is of no consequence if the heart does not heed what it hears. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Say, "Whoever is the enemy of Jibril (Gabriel), for surely he revealed it to Your Heart."' (*al-Baqara*: 97)

Thus, the meaning is that Allah brought it down upon his *peace and blessings be upon him* heart directly, as if the Message did not travel via the ears because Allah chose His messenger and created him with meticulousness for that purpose and even freed him from the normal human limitations that would impede this direct discourse. It is as if Prophet Muhammad's heart gained the faculty of perception in order to receive the words of Allah because he was created by Allah for Allah's purpose. As for those who hear the words of Allah with their ears alone, they are not well disposed to hear them, for their hearts are closed and hardened and they do not understand.

The heart is the resting place of all commandments and beliefs and all sensory perception goes to the heart. The eyes see, the ears hear, the nose smells and the hands feel, and then all of this is transmitted to the mind to sort through; then once the mind settles on an interpretation, it sends it to the heart to remain there and abide therein. That is why we call belief '*aqida*' because the heart has locked onto it so it no longer resurfaces to the mind to be questioned again, instead it is rooted in the heart and become a fixed belief.

We find that there are many verses which hinge upon or dwell upon the heart. Allah says, 'It is neither their meat nor their blood that reaches Allah but your piety.' (*al-Hajj*: 37) In another verse, He explains that Allah-consciousness rests with the heart: 'all this [is ordained by Allah]: those who honour Allah's rites show the piety of their hearts.' (*al-Hajj*: 32) In addition,

Allah says about bearing witness: 'And do not conceal testimony, and whoever conceals it, his heart is surely sinful.' (*al-Baqara*: 283) That is why Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says in the Hadith narrated by Nu'man ibn Bashir, 'Truly in the body there is a morsel of flesh, that, if it is sound, all the body is sound and which if it is diseased, all the body is diseased. Truly, it is the heart.'⁽¹⁾

The companions of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* inform us that divine inspiration used to come upon him with many verses at once as many as two or three fourths of a whole chapter. Then when the angel left him *peace and blessings be upon him* he would tell them, 'Write'. He would recite to them every verse, ordering them to put it in its place and chapter. He would recite them in prayer afterwards and they would come out exactly as he had dictated to them. That was because the Quran was revealed to his heart, not to his ears.

Out of his eagerness to memorise and preserve the Quran, he used to repeat everything Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* said after him so that he would not forget. Subsequently, Allah, sent down the verse, 'We will make you recite so you shall not forget.' (*al-A'la*: 6) In another verse, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And do not make haste with the Quran before its revelation is made complete to you and say, "O my Lord! Increase me in knowledge."' (*Ta Ha*: 114) Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Do not move your tongue with it to make haste with it. Surely, on Us [devolves] the collecting of it and the reciting of it. Therefore, when We have recited it, follow its recitation.' (*al-Qiyama*: 16-19)

One of the wonders of the Quran is that you cannot find someone who can speak extemporaneously for five minutes at a time and then repeat it verbatim, but Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to receive a chapter and then repeat it verbatim. This is in accordance with the words of Allah that He will make him recite and do not forget.

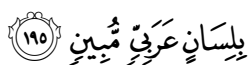
In the verse in question, Allah *Glorified is He* says that He revealed the Quran to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* so that He could bring warning. Someone who brings warnings is he who warns of evil before

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad

it happens so that the listener can prepare and not fall to the enticements of evil. The warnings do not come when evil strikes because at that point it would be of no avail. Similarly, one who heralds good tidings precedes the coming of good in order to urge and motivate the listener to goodness.

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'That you may warn a people whose fathers were not warned, so they are heedless.' (*Ya Sin*: 6) Likewise, just as previous messengers warned their peoples, so you too should warn yours as you join the lineage of messengers and messages.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:



**In a clear Arabic tongue [195]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 195)**

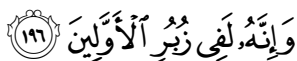
If the Quran was only revealed to the Prophet's heart *peace and blessings be upon him* how would they hear it? How would they write and memorise it? Here, the Arabic tongue comes into play and sets forth the Quran to the people. Thus, the Quran was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad in the heart and, later, on the tongue because the tongue is the way to memorise, preserve and recite something. The Quran is in a clear, articulate Arabic tongue and it covers all aspects of life. However, some might ask, 'If the Quran was revealed in Arabic, what about the few non-Arabic words in it'?

We say that the meaning of an 'Arabic tongue' is the words that were pronounced by the Arabs by their tongues, for these words had become part of their Arabic language, even if they were originally from other languages. The most important thing is that the Quran did not speak in a new language unknown to the Arabs, for before the Quran was revealed, these words were widely used among the Arabs.

The Quran was revealed specifically in Arabic because it was the Arab people that received the message of Islam and carried it to other peoples. So, they had to understand the Quran as a necessity. If you wonder how non-Arabs will accept and understand it as they are addressed in this Arabic Quran as well, we respond that whoever hears the Quran from the Arabs must then

convey it in the language of the people to whom the Quran is preached. As Arabs, this is our mission regarding the Book of Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:



This was foretold in the scriptures of earlier religions [196] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 196)

The demonstrative pronoun 'this' can be correctly read as referring to the Quran, as was the previous case; it can also be correctly read as referring to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It was foretold in the written scriptures of earlier religions. Thus, if the minds that had opposed Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* denied his Message and denied his miracles had first turned to the messages that preceded his instead, i.e. the Torah and the Gospel, then they would have had to believe in him because he was mentioned in those Books, as Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: 'Most surely this is in the earlier scriptures, The scriptures of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses).' (*al-A'la*: 18-19)

The general moral and doctrinal principles, the concept of divine justice and the stories of the prophets are all constant in the different scriptures and among the different prophets. All that change is the specific legal rulings of each, for each suits the times and the circumstances in which it was revealed.

Allah 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 that which We enjoined upon Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) and 'Isa (Jesus) that keep to obedience and be not divided therein.' (*ash-Shura*: 13) On reading this verse, one might say, 'Why did Allah send down the Quran then? Why does this verse not say "that which We had enjoined upon Muhammad"'? Scholars say that is because the specific legal rulings in the Quran will be different in order to suit all the eras, places, and peoples that the Quran was sent to guide.

Thus, it is narrated that 'Abdullah ibn Salam and Ibn Yamin, who were among the People of the Book, swore that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is mentioned in the Torah and the Gospel. The Quran says

of them, 'Those whom We have given the Book recognise him as they recognise their sons.' (*al-Baqara*: 146) When Ibn Salam heard this, he said, 'Our Lord is indulgent towards us in this matter as, by Allah, I do indeed know him like I know my own child, yet I know Muhammad better'.

In this regard, Allah says, 'those who follow the Messenger-Prophet, the unlettered, whom they find written down with them in the Torah and the Gospel.' (*al-A'raf*: 157) In addition, Allah *the Almighty* says through the words of 'Isa (Jesus) when he is addressing his people: 'And giving the good news of a messenger who will come after me, his name being Ahmad.' (*as-Saff*: 6)

Thus, the demonstrative pronoun 'this' here refers to either Muhammad or the Holy Quran as they both can be found in these Books. Both meanings are correct, because a description of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and the general principles, doctrines and stories of other prophets are both present in these books.

Therefore, it was incumbent upon those who received the Quran to believe in it, especially because Prophet Muhammad was an unlettered prophet who never had a formal teacher. His biographical information in this regard is well known. He had never read or written anything prior to the revelation. The Quran puts emphasis on this point. Allah addresses His prophet saying, 'And you did not recite before it any book, nor did you transcribe one with your right hand, for then could those who say untrue things have doubted.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 48) He also says elsewhere, 'And you were not dwelling among the people of Midyan, reciting to them Our communications, but We were the senders.' (*al-Qasas*: 45) In addition, Allah says, 'And you were not on the western side when We revealed to Musa (Moses) the commandment, and you were not among the witnesses.' (*al-Qasas*: 44) Moreover, Allah says, 'And you were not with them when they cast their pens [to decide] which of them should have Mary (Maryam) in his charge.' (*Al-'Imran*: 44)

All these verses, among many others, prove that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had no knowledge of these things other than what has been revealed directly to him in the Quran. So, it was incumbent upon people to believe in the Quran as soon as they heard it.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says,

﴿١٩٧﴾ أَوَلَمْ يَكُنْ لَهُمْ آيَةٌ أَنْ يَعْلَمَهُ عُلَمَتُ بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ

**Is it not proof enough for them that the learned men
of the children of Israel have recognized it? [197]**

(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 197)

Allah says that the learned men of the children of Israel have recognised that the Quran is from Allah. The learned scholars from among the children of Israel hoped to use the Quran to gain the upper hand over those who disbelieved. However, when it came, they disbelieved in what they already recognised. They used to say to the Aws and Khazraj tribes in Medina, that a time shall come when a prophet shall appear whom they would follow and with him defeat the idolaters, just as `Ad and Iram were defeated. Nevertheless, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* came, they denied him and gave him the lie, even though they knew he was a true prophet. Why is this?

Scholars say that is because they realised that he would wrest leadership from them as they were people of great knowledge, scholarship, vision, and martial prowess. In addition, they were preparing to crown `Abdullah ibn Ubiyya as their king the night that Prophet Muhammad migrated to Medina. When he *peace and blessings be upon him* came, he ruined their plans. Thus, they envied him his higher status, for he had taken the power of secular rule from them.

Allah mentions the learned men from among the children of Israel because they had already known the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and because He revealed things that only they had known. Among these learned men are five: `Abdullah ibn Salam, Asad, Usayd, Tha`laba and Ibn Yamin.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says,

﴿١٩٨﴾ وَلَوْ نَزَّلْنَاهُ عَلَىٰ بَعْضِ الْأَعْجَمِينَ ﴿١٩٩﴾ فَقَرَأَهُ عَلَيْهِمْ مَا كَانُوا بِهِ مُؤْمِنِينَ

**If We had sent it down to someone who was not an Arab [198]
and he had recited it to them, they still would not have
believed in it [199] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 198 - 199)**

Allah says that He has sent down the Quran in Arabic to an Arab community and if He had sent it down to non-Arabs, they would not have understood it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: ‘and if We had made it a Quran in a foreign tongue, they would certainly have said, “Why have not its communications been made clear? What! a foreign [tongue] and an Arabian!” Say, “It is to those who believe a guidance and a healing; and [as for] those who do not believe, there is a heaviness in their ears and it is obscure to them; these shall be called to from a far-off place.”’ (Fussilat: 44)

Why is that? It is because the receiver is jammed. If you want to receive any new information, you must first eject from your heart any information to the contrary. Subsequently, you can consider the two possibilities together and accept whichever aligns with the truth. Thus, Allah says, ‘Allah has not made for any man two hearts within him.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 4)

Describing them when they hear the Quran, Allah says, ‘And whenever a chapter is revealed, they cast glances at one another: Does anyone see you? Then they turn away: Allah has turned away their hearts because they are a people who do not understand.’ (*at-Tawba*: 127) This means that they want to sneak out and leave. In addition, Allah says in another verse: ‘and whenever a chapter is revealed, there are some of them who say “Which of you has it strengthened in faith?”’ (*at-Tawba*: 124) They wonder whether this chapter benefited any of them or increased their faith.

Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘and there are those of them who seek to listen to you, until when they go forth from you, they say to those who have been given the knowledge: “What was it that he said just now?” These are they upon whose hearts Allah has set a seal and they follow their low desires.’ (*Muhammad*: 16) They mean to ask, ‘what is new about this message?’ On the other hand, Allah *Glorified is He* says about those who believed: ‘And [as for] those who follow the right direction, He increases them in guidance and gives them their guarding [against evil].’ (*Muhammad*: 17)

Someone who is not a native speaker of Arabic cannot speak Arabic well even if He was able to pronounce it. Thus, the meaning of the verse is that if Allah had sent down the Quran, which is in Arabic, to some who is non-Arab, they would not have understood it. However, there is a possibility of it being bestowed on some non-Arabs who have studied and mastered Arabic and would be able to understand the Quran. Allah proclaims that if Prophet

Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had recited it to those non-Arabs, they would not have believed in it since they would not have understood any of it. Similarly, the disbelievers are like those non-Arabs in the way that they received the word of Allah and did not understand any of it. That is because they clung to obstinate disbelief and their hearts were gladdened by it until they became enamoured with disbelief and thereby Allah aided them in their disbelief and sealed hearts, so that faith could not enter their hearts and disbelief could not depart them.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

كَذَٰلِكَ سَلَكْنَاهُ فِي قُلُوبِ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٢٠٠﴾ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ حَتَّىٰ
يَرَوْا الْعَذَابَ الْأَلِيمَ ﴿٢٠١﴾ فَيَأْتِيَهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٢٠٢﴾

**So We make it pass straight through the hearts of the guilty
[200] They will not believe in it until they see the grievous
torment [201] Which will suddenly hit them when they are
not expecting it [202] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 200 - 202)**

Allah says that He has inserted disbelief into the heart of those sinners because they were non-Arabs who could not understand anything. Thus, they will not believe in it until they behold the grievous punishment. Inasmuch as they will not believe in it until they witness a grievous punishment, their belief was not accepted. In addition, that punishment will strike them suddenly and abruptly, so fast that they are senseless to it.

Thus, when the Quran was revealed and some of the Companions believed Prophet Muhammad, they and him were oppressed and harried until they were no longer safe from the tyranny of the disbelievers; they began to go about armed, night and day, and there was no one who would protect them.

It was under these circumstances that Allah revealed the verse: 'Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they shall turn [their] backs.' (*al-Qamar*: 45) When 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him*, heard this, he was taken aback and said, 'What hosts are these who shall be defeated when the Muslims are in such a poor state'? However, when he saw what happened at the Battle of Badr (the defeat of the idolaters and the victory of the religion of Allah) he said, 'Indeed, Allah speaks truth, the hosts will be routed and they will turn their backs in flight.'

Allah says:

فَيَقُولُوا هَلْ نَحْنُ مُنْظَرُونَ ﴿٢٠٣﴾ أَفِعْزَايَنَا يَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٢٠٤﴾

**And then they will say, 'Can we have more time?' [203]
How can they ask that Our punishment be brought to them
sooner? [204] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 203-204)**

When they see the grievous torment, they say ask for a break, and hope Allah will delay this chastisement from them. Were they not impatient to see the torment?! This is the nature of obstinate disbelievers; if Allah leaves them, they demand that torment befall them, and if torment befalls them, they say, 'give us a break and grant us respite'!

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

أَفَرَأَيْتَ إِنْ مَتَّعْنَاهُمْ سِنِينَ ﴿٢٠٥﴾ ثُمَّ جَاءَهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يُوعَدُونَ ﴿٢٠٦﴾
مَا أَغْنَىٰ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَمْتَعُونَ ﴿٢٠٧﴾

**Think, if we let them enjoy this life for some years [205]
And then the promised torment came upon them [206]
What good would their past enjoyment be to them? [207]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 205-207)**

Allah wants us to think and tell him what if He does allow them to enjoy for some years and thereupon the chastisement which they were promised befalls them. Will not the end be the same? The end is no good since it would not avail them of the torment.

Allah says:

وَمَا أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ إِلَّا لَهَا مُنْذِرُونَ ﴿٢٠٨﴾ ذِكْرَىٰ وَمَا كُنَّا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٢٠٩﴾

**Never have We destroyed a town without sending down
messengers to warn it [208] as a reminder from Us: We are
never unjust [209] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 208-209)**

Similarly, in another verse Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'This is because your Lord would not destroy towns unjustly while their people were negligent'

(*al-An'am*: 131) Allah destroys them because a messenger came to call them to the divine way of guidance and to warn them, as Allah also says, 'Nor do We chastise until We raise a messenger.' (*al-Isra*': 15)

This all serves as reminder to the communities of the severe punishment that will afflict them in case they oppose their messengers. In addition, Allah *the Almighty* says that He is never unjust. It is you who did this to yourselves, as He says, 'And We did them no injustice, but they were unjust to themselves.' (*an-Nahl*: 118)

Allah *Glorified is He* then says,

وَمَا نَزَّلَتْ بِهِ الشَّيَاطِينُ ﴿٢١٠﴾ وَمَا يَبْغِي لَهُمْ وَمَا يَسْتَطِيعُونَ ﴿٢١١﴾

It was not the jinn who brought down this Quran [210]

it is neither in their interests nor in their power [211]

(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*': 210 - 211)

The disbelievers used to say that satanic spirits imparted the Quran to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. That was something they used to say of any skilled poet when they heard his poetry. So, every poet had an evil spirit who dictated poetry to him. They had a valley called 'The Valley of Abqar which was the valley of jinn. Thus, they thought that any smart person shall have a connection to the demons of this valley.

However, how is this possible when the Book revealed to Prophet Muhammad, opposes satanic spirits, curses them at every turn, and warns against them? Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Satan threatens you with poverty and enjoins you to be wretched.' (*al-Baqara*: 268) and 'Surely Satan is your enemy, so take him for an enemy, He only invites his party that they may be inmates of the burning' (*Fatir*: 6). Why, then, would satanic spirits help Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and dictate the Quran to him when he is their enemy? Why do the satanic spirits not give the Quran to the disbelievers when they are dearly beloved by them? This is one objection.

Allah mentions another one saying that the Quran does not suit their ends and is not in their power capacity. Truly Allah made the Quran both a miracle and a path. Miracles are beyond the power of both men and demons so that

none could corrupt it if they tried. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Surely, We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian.' (*al-Hijr*: 9) The believers were required to preserve the previous holy books. There is a difference between Allah guarding something from corruption and commanding someone to guard something from corruption. That is because a command can be obeyed or disobeyed. Allah knows how human powers failed to preserve the previous books, thus, He has taken it upon Himself to preserve His Quran Himself and not defer it to any of His creatures.

That is why you find many wonders and paradoxes when it comes to the memorization and preservation of the Quran. Despite the passage of time and the oppression of civilizations antithetical to Islam, which rain upon us each day some new deviance or departure from the teachings of Islam. Some of us fall in line behind them and all of this impairs the application of Islamic values. However, despite it all, the Quran is relied upon even more and memorized even more. Even non-Muslims vie to memorize and record the Quran or reprint the Quran. We have witnessed a copy of the Quran that fit on a single page and a copy no bigger than a knuckle. In addition, some people nowadays pride themselves on owning the smallest copy of the Quran in the world. Regardless of their motives for doing this, the point is that Allah has made even the enemies of the Quran aid in its preservation. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And none knows the hosts of your Lord but He Himself; and this is a reminder to the mortals.' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31)

Are not audio recording devices and speakerphones among the technologies used to spread and preserve the Quran? None of the previous books have received this kind of painstaking attention. Thus, the attention given to the Quran as a text is all out of proportion to the people's increasing deviation from its laws. It is as if Allah is saying to us that He will preserve this text even through non-believers and that He will make them record it and take interest in it and this will become an argument used against them.

In Germany before the World War, there was a vault with drawers and in each drawer, was a verse of the Quran and everything ever written about this verse from the explanation of Ibn 'Abbas' up to the present. This suggests that they were acting under the influence of a hidden power that Allah alone

controls. Allah says, 'Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian.' (*al-Hijr*: 9)

We have previously mentioned how some women walk through the streets with their chests showing and despite that they hang a copy of the Quran around their necks and onto their chests. Oh, if only they would cover their chest and not hang the Quran on it!

Therefore, how can they say that satanic spirits brought down the Quran when the Quran came to announce its enmity to them and to warn against them? How can they say this when satanic spirits only descend upon the most sinful and wicked disbeliever and you are the first upon whom they descend as Allah says, 'And most surely the devils suggest to their friends that they should contend with you' (*al-An'am*: 121)?

Allah said that the jinn cannot bring down the Quran because it is beyond their ability; Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِنَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّمْعِ لَمَعْزُولُونَ ﴿٢١٢﴾

**Indeed they are prevented from overhearing it [212]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 212)**

Allah *Glorified is He* has explains the meaning of this when He says, 'And that we sought to reach heaven, but we found it filled with strong guards and flaming stars. 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.' (*al-Jinn*: 8-9)

Allah says:

فَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ فَتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُعَذَّبِينَ ﴿٢١٣﴾

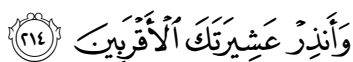
**So [Prophet] do not invoke any gods beside God, or you will
incur punishment [213] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 213)**

Allah is warning Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* against invoking any other deity other than Allah. Was the Prophet susceptible or suspect of invoking any deity beside Allah? The scholars say no, he was not,

but the intention of this verse is to give a directive and a command. As if Allah were saying to him, 'Make this a principle of yours. Take no god other than Allah'. This is not because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had invoked some other deity and thereby the divine inspiration came to prohibit that. However, it is setting and articulating an Islamic law and commands. If the great message-bearer Muhammad received such a stern threat if he ever took another deity, what do you think would be the case for the rest of us?

Whenever people hear these words directed toward the prophet who was sent to them, they must heed the words carefully and take warning from it. It is like when the president of a country gives an order to the prime minister of that country, for example, and the highest example is with Allah, and warns him of the consequences of violating his command, doubtless the regular citizens of that country will be even more obedient than the prime minister in following this command.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:



**Warn your nearest kinsfolk [214]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 214)**

Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took the command to believe to his family and kinsfolk. This specific sequence is meant to reassure his people that He is not exempt from that which he bids them to do. He required himself to adhere to it faithfully first and after that his kinsfolk. This behaviour commands obedience and acceptance. You would probably reject my orders if I do not follow them myself, unlike when I command and act upon my own orders before you do.

Similarly, 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him*, was standing at the pulpit giving the Friday sermon and said, 'O people, hear and obey.' A Bedouin stood up and said, 'You have no right to ask us to obey or listen.' Look at this. To whom such audacity is directed? To 'Umar when he is standing at the pulpit. 'Umar said, 'Why is that?' The Bedouin said, 'Because your robe is longer than our robes.' At that time cloth was distributed equally among Muslims

irrespective of how tall or short they were. `Umar called his son `Abdullah to stand and clarify it to the people. So, `Abdullah stood up and said, 'My father is a very tall man and the cloth that Muslims receive is not enough for him, so I gave him mine and he grafted it to his robe. Thus, I stand before you in my patches and rags.' At this, the Bedouin said, 'now we will listen and obey.'

But where is the exemplary behaviour in the halls of our government agencies now? Where are the heads of government who ought to come and sit at their desks at eight o'clock in the morning to be model examples for their subordinates? The lack of exemplary behaviour among our leaders and officials is the worst of our afflictions. That is why Allah's command and His law are first directed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and then to those closest to him, i.e. his kinsfolk because corruption starts in one's innermost circle. So, the president or the governor might be a good person, but his close retinues might spread corruption by abusing his name for their deviant purposes, or even misleading him with giving him fake information.

Thus, whenever companion `Umar *Allah be pleased with him*,⁽¹⁾ had to decide something that would be hard on the Muslim community, he would gather his family and relatives to him and say, 'Allah has willed that I decide such and such. If any among you disobeys me in this matter, I will make him an example for all Muslims.' In this way, he made certain of his family and relatives, first, a matter that helps him firmly carry out the divine command.

Consider the saying of Allah, 'Warn your nearest kinsfolk' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 214); it is an act of warning, as we mentioned before, that warns people of evil before it happens. Allah *the Almighty* did not say, 'Preach to thy kinsfolk', for example. So, it is as if He *the Almighty* were saying to him, 'Do not be swept up in leniency or compassion for your kinsfolk, rather begin with them what you will do with others'.

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made a model of this directive. He would say to his relatives, 'O `Abbas (uncle of the Messenger of Allah), O Safiya (aunt of the Messenger of Allah) O Fatima (daughter of Muhammad),

(1) *The story of `Umar Allah be pleased with him with his people whenever he wished to approve something.*

act upon Allah's Commands, for I do not relieve you from anything of Allah's. You cannot come to me with your family bonds when other people come to me with their actions.'⁽¹⁾

At the same time Allah *the Almighty* calls upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to warn his kinsfolk, He also says:

وَأَخْفِضْ جَنَاحَكَ لِمَنِ اتَّبَعَكَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٢١٥﴾

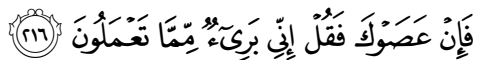
And lower your wing tenderly over the believers who follow you [215] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 215)

After commanding him to be stern with his kinsfolk, Allah *the Almighty* orders him to be tender and to lower his *jinh* (wing) to those who believe in him. Spreading one's wing is an expression of kindness and gentleness in one's treatment of others. The saying is taken from birds when they compassionately enclose their chicks in their wings.

Spreading one's wing is a sign of tenderness, not obsequiousness, or defeat. On the other hand, Egyptians say someone is *farid ajnihatuahu* (he has overspread his wings) meaning that he is acting proud and haughty. Egyptians say someone is *mujannah* from you if he has disobeyed your orders, i.e. he has winged away from you. In another place, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...spread the wings of thy tenderness over the believers.' (*al-Hijr*: 88) Concerning one's own parents, Allah *the Almighty* says one ought to '...spread over them humbly the wings of thy tenderness...' (*al-Isra'*: 24). He *the Almighty* does not say, 'Be obsequious towards them', rather 'be compassionate with them, tender towards them', because by doing this, you will find honour and salvation for yourself.

(1) On the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him who said, 'When Allah revealed 'Warn your nearest kinsfolk' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 214), the Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* stood up and said, 'O Qurayshi kinsfolk—or some phrase like that—purchase your own redemption, I do not exempt you from anything of Allah's. O tribe of `Abdu Manaf, I do not exempt you from anything of Allah's. O `Abbas ibn `Abd Al-Muttalib, I do not exempt you from anything of Allah's. O Safiya, (aunt of the Messenger of Allah) I do not exempt you from anything of Allah's. O Fatima (daughter of Muhammad) steal however much you want from my earthly possessions, but I do not exempt you from anything of Allah's.' Cited by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* [2753] and by Muslim in his *Sahih* [206].

Allah says:



If they disobey you, say, ‘I bear no responsibility for your actions’ [216] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 216)

If your relatives, O Prophet Muhammad, disobey you, do not hesitate to tell them plainly, ‘I bear no responsibility for your actions’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 216), at which point they no longer have a right to tenderness from you, nor the rights of relatives because you cease to have obligations to them. Thus Allah the Almighty says ‘say’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 216), this, rather than simply ‘wash your hands of them’.

He might simply cut off all ties to them, but the True Lord wants Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to announce this so that everyone will know that he *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent by Allah. Our Lord is teaching us a lesson here so that we do not give preferential treatment to anyone simply because he is our relative or because he is someone of high social standing. It is in this way that life will run smoothly.

Hypocrisy is the main reason behind the corruption of our social life and the spread of chaos and indifference among us; in actuality, this occurs when we indulge our leaders and authorities and overlook their transgressions. People treat them with forbearance and forgiveness, even though this destroys our society’s morale and induces chaos and carelessness.

That is why Islam teaches us to announce plainly, ‘I bear no responsibility for your actions’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 216), and then to let the law run its course and bring equitable justice to all. If the transgressor knows he will be made into an admonition for others, he will be deterred from transgressing.

Thus, it is said that ‘Umar *Allah be pleased with him* ruled the entire world, but the truth is he ruled himself first, a matter which enabled him to rule the world. Anyone who wants to rule the world at any time and any place must first rule himself. Then none of his followers will dare to cross him. When the people see what an example he is, they will listen to him and obey.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى الْعَزِيزِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٢١٧﴾

**Put your trust in the Almighty, the Merciful [217]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 217)**

You might say, 'If you did this, my allies will fall away and my close followers will break apart around me'. Allah says to you, 'You must not think that they will do you some good or save you from some harm, for everything in the universe is done by the command of Allah *the Almighty*. So, what is good for you is to obey Allah *the Almighty* and place your trust in Him. 'Put your trust in the Almighty, the Merciful' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 217). The Almighty is He who subdues and cannot be subdued, He who conquers and cannot be conquered. Despite that, He is also a Dispenser of Mercy to you and to them. The attribute of Grace and Compassion here negates what some might think here, namely; that being Almighty necessitates tyranny or oppression. Allah *the Almighty* being God, is a Merciful Dispenser of Mercy because targeting the tyrant with His Power is a grace and mercy for the tyrant's victims.

It is as if the True Lord is teaching His vicegerent on Earth, especially those at the top of the chain of command how to be erudite and wise. He is saying, 'Do not put your trust in a human being to do something you are incapable of yourself, since he too will be incapable of doing it. Rather, under such conditions, put your trust in the Almighty, the Dispenser of Mercy Whose Might and Mercy are yours'.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

الَّذِي يَرِيكَ حِينَ تَقُومُ ﴿٢١٨﴾ وَتَقَلُّبِكَ فِي السَّجْدِ ﴿٢١٩﴾

**Who sees you when you stand up [for prayer] [218]
And sees your movements among the worshippers [219]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 218 - 219)**

So long as this is the case, place your trust in Him *the Almighty* Who loves you and enables you to work and worship, getting up to offer pray to Him *the Almighty* at night when people are asleep; He *the Almighty* says, 'Who sees you

when you stand up [for prayer].’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 218) From this, we understand that it is acceptable and allowed for one to stand and pray at night.

Allah’s saying, ‘And sees your movements among the worshippers’ means that He sees your state of mind as you stand and pray. He sees the joy you feel for Him and your responsiveness to His call *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest). The word *akbar* literally means the greatest, the most important. He sees you when you stand before Him with an open heart and eagerly approach Him with enthusiastic worship, not in a state of languor or sluggishness.

If you devote yourself to Allah *the Almighty* He will give you plentiful rewards to recompense you for the profits and commerce of this world. Thus, the part of the call to prayer that pleased Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the most was *Allah Akbar*, i.e. Allah is the Greatest, greater than anything else. If you are asleep, Allah is greater than sleep; if you are engaged in business, Allah is greater than anything you might gain from your business. If you are working, Allah greater than your work, etc.

It is astonishing to see people give priority to work over prayer on the pretext that there is plenty of time and one can pray after work. This is a flimsy argument because when your Lord summons you saying, ‘*Allah Akbar*’, He wants you to respond immediately, not whenever you please. Otherwise, how could we say, ‘you responded to Allah’s call’ if you put it off when the *adhan* (call to prayer) was made? The large amount of time between morning and noon, or between evening and morning does not mean that you can pray at any point of time; rather, the call to prayer requires an expedient response.

We have an observation to make about *Allahu Akbar*. The word *akbar* is in the superlative, meaning the most: the greatest, the most important. If we did not use the superlative, we would say ‘something is *kabir* (great or important)’. This would suggest that work and industry are not necessarily trivial things, but rather, they are important things meriting our attention because they are at the heart of life and our affairs on earth would not function correctly without them.

But while work is important, Allah *the Almighty* is more important, He is the most important. Your Lord does not induce you to abstain from work or from the world because He created the world as it is. He *the Almighty* says,

‘And when the prayer is ended, disperse freely on Earth and seek to obtain [something] of Allah’s bounty...’ (*al-Jumu'a*: 10).

Elsewhere, He *Glorified is He* says, ‘...do not forget your share of the world. And do good as Allah has done good to you. And desire not corruption in the land. Indeed, Allah does not like corrupters’ (*al-Qasas*: 77) because the activities of this life aid you in carrying out your prayer and worship of Allah *the Almighty*. Through them, you are nourished, remain healthy, buy clothes to cover yourself properly in order to pray. Anything that is required to carry out an obligation is also obligatory. Despite that, Allah’s call to you is foremost and should be answered first because He who created you and created the world has summoned you with the words *Allahu Akbar*.

The saying of Allah, ‘your movements’ (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 219) means ‘your moving around’ or ‘your changing states’. This word denotes the positions of prayer: standing, bowing, sitting, and prostration. Your Lord sees you in all these states and sees your happiness. When you put your trust in Him, you are worthy of His blessings and thus deserve His Mercy.

Taqalubbaka (your movements) (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 219) could also mean that the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was able to see his companions when they prayed behind him, he could see as if what was behind him was right in front of him. This was one of his unique traits.⁽¹⁾

Thus, he *peace and blessings be upon him* was able to caution them against bowing or prostrating themselves in prayer before him when he was leading prayer. In addition, he *peace and blessings be upon him* was able to tell them what was incorrect to do intentionally in prayer, even though he could not see them.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

(1) *It is narrated on the authority of Abu Hurayra who said, ‘One day Messenger Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him prayed, then turned to the side and said, ‘O so-and-so, have you not perfected your prayer? Should not one be mindful of his prayer when he is praying? Otherwise he prays by himself. By Allah, truly I see what is behind me as if it were in my hands.’ Cited by Al-Bukhari in his Sahih [422] and by An-Nasa’i in his Sunnan [2/119]*



**He is the All Hearing, the All Knowing [220]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 220)**

He is All Hearing of what is spoken and All Knowing of what passes through our minds.

Allah then says:



**Shall I tell you who the jinn come down to? [221]
They come down to every lying sinner [222]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 221-222)**

The deniers of the Truth had previously said that the Quran was revealed by evil spirits, so Allah *the Almighty* responds to them by saying, 'I shall tell you whom the evil spirits descend upon and correct this false information for you. It is true that evil spirits descend, but not upon Muhammad, for he is their enemy and they descend upon their allies'.

Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and, verily, the evil spirits whisper unto those who have made them their own that they should involve you in argument....' (*al-An'am*: 121)

Then Allah says, 'They come down to every lying sinner' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 222), so this is what suits and pleases evil spirits. Jinn are of two kinds: the godly and the ungodly⁽¹⁾, the latter are those known as 'evil spirits' or 'demons'.

The word *affak* translated as 'lying sinner' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 222) means habitual liar. It is a hyperbolic form of *afak* which means to invert or pervert the truth. These people used to subvert the facts. They would say something that might coincide with the truth, and then mix it with many lies.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

(1) Allah *the Almighty* says that the Jinn say, 'just as [we do not know how it happens] that some from among us are righteous, while some of us are [far] below that: we have always followed widely divergent paths.' (*al-Jinn*: 11)

يُلْقُونَ السَّمْعَ وَأَكْثُرُهُمْ كَاذِبُونَ ﴿٢٢٣﴾

**Who readily lends an ear to them,
and most of them are liars[223]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 223)**

The saying of Allah '*yulquna as-sama'*' literally means to throw one's hearing. A person's means of hearing is his or her ear, thus the meaning is to lend an ear to something, as in Allah's saying, 'in this, behold, there is indeed a reminder for everyone whose heart is wide-awake – that is, [everyone who] lends ear with a conscious mind.' (*Qaf*: 37)

To lend an ear to someone is to listen attentively to someone even if he speaks with a faint voice, so you lean towards the person to hear him. Allah *the Almighty* says '...and most of them are liars' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 223). Some of them, a handful of them, might speak truthfully to cover up their lying, so you take his truthfulness this time as evidence that he is a truthful person when in fact his truthfulness is mixed with many lies.

Allah then says:

وَالشُّعْرَاءُ يَتَّبِعُهُمُ الْغَاوُونَ ﴿٢٢٤﴾

**Only those who are lost in error follow the poets [224]
(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 224)**

Ash-shu'ara (poets) is the plural of *sha'ir* (poet), Poetry is defined as metered, rhyming words. The disbelievers had accused Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of being a poet. The Quran responds to them in several places, among them is Allah's saying, 'and is not – however little you may [be prepared to] believe it – the word of a poet.' (*al-Haqq*: 41)

The disbelieving Arabs of Mecca were people of great eloquence, skill, and experience in rhymed, metered speech, to the extent that they would dedicate fairs to poetry in Dhi Al-Majaz, Dhi Al-Majanna and the 'Ukazh markets. They would hang the finest works of poetry on the covers of the *Ka'ba*. Yet despite that, they were unable to distinguish between poetry and the stylistics of the Quran.

They must have known the difference, so as the Quran says their accusation that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a poet, must have meant instead that ‘... [He is but] a poet – let us await what time will do unto him?’ (*at-Tur*: 30). So, by poetry, they mean honeyed speech that captures the heart and moves people emotionally, even if it is in prose form. This is what people now call free-verse poetry because they recite or write poetry, but it is unmetered and does not rhyme.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘Only those who are lost in error follow the poets’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 224), it refers to *ghawi* which refers to those people who have gone astray. It is they who follow the poets because the poets used to justify their way of life through their poetry. Neither principle nor morality governed their thinking, rather, their capricious desires ruled over these two, i.e. principle and morality. So, if they loved something, the poets would praise it, if they hated something, the poets would disparage it.

This is evident in Allah’s saying:

أَلَمْ تَرَ أَنَّهُمْ فِي كُلِّ وَادٍ يَهِيمُونَ ﴿٢٢٥﴾ وَأَنَّهُمْ يَقُولُونَ مَا لَا يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٢٢٦﴾

Do you not see how they rove aimlessly in every valley; [225]

how they say what they do not do? [226]

(The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara*: 225 - 226)

The pronoun ‘they’ here refers to the poets. A valley is a low place between two mountains where people would walk, where trees and gardens grew and where water was to be found.

The Arabs say that a person *hama `ala wajhihi* to mean that he walked aimlessly or without guidance. So, the meaning of the saying of Allah, ‘they rove aimlessly in every valley’ (*ash-Shu'ara*: 225) is that this was the condition of poets because they were men of words and imagination. One of them would praise you if he sought some boon from you; if you did not give it to him, he would mete out ridicule upon you. He practiced his art to obtain things from you, so he does not have a specific valley in which to walk through and has no code of principles to steer him, like one who wanders aimlessly through all the valleys.

Al-Mutanabbi⁽¹⁾ was one of the greatest poets of the Abbasid period and is cited as an example of wisdom and eloquence. Among the most famous of his poems is the verse:

The horse, the night and the wilderness know me

As do the sword and the spear, the paper and the pen.

When he was on one of his journeys, highway robbers fell upon him, but when he wanted to flee, his servant said to him, 'Are you not the one who said, 'The horse, the night and the wilderness know me/As do the sword and the spear, the paper and the pen'? At this, Al-Mutanabbi⁽²⁾ felt too ashamed to flee, so he stood firm before them and they killed him.⁽³⁾ Before he died, Al-Mutanabbi said, 'He would not have killed me if not for that servant of mine.' This line of poetry is famous for being the only verse to kill its author.

When⁽⁴⁾ Al-Mutanabbi came to Egypt, he praised its ruler, Kafur al-Ikhshidi⁽⁵⁾ hoping to win his favour. Kafur was black, so they used to call him by the name of Abu Misk, or literally, Father of Musk. When Al-Mutanabbi praised him, seeking his goodwill, he said:

(1) Ahmad ibn al-Husayn Al-Kindi, Abu At-Tayyib Al-Mutanabbi. Born in the year 203 *Hijri* in Kufa in a neighborhood called Kinda; he was raised in the Levant and then left for the desert to learn the skills of the Arabic language and its arts. In the desert of Samawa, between the Levant and Kufa, he claimed prophet hood, but then repented and reneged on his claim. He praised Sayf Ad-Dawla ibn Hamdan and Kafur, then later satirised and mocked him when he did not appoint him to a position. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-'Alam*, 1/115.

(2) The story of the killing of Al-Mutanabbi for one of his poetic verses.

(3) Al-Mutanabbi, his son and his boy servant were all killed in Nu'maniya in the year 253 A.H. when they were accosted on the road by Fatik ibn Abu Jahl Al-Asdi with a band of his companions.

Al-Mutanabbi was travelling with a group of people as well, so the two parties engaged in combat. Al-Mutanabbi was slain near Dayr Al-'Aqul, which is on the western edge of the center of Baghdad. Fatik was the uncle of Nasba ibn Yazid Al-Asda Al-'Ayni who was the object of ridicule in Al-Mutanabbi's poem.

(4) The story of Al-Mutanabbi with Kafur Al-Ikhshidi in Egypt.

(5) Kafur ibn 'Abdullah Al-Ikhshidi, Abu Al-Misk, a famous prince, was born in the year 292 A.H. and was an Abyssinian slave purchased by Al-Ikhshi. He later became the ruler of Egypt in 312 A.H. Al-Ikhshidi freed him, and Kafur rose to prominence in his ranks, until eventually he became the ruler of Egypt in 355 A.H. He died in Cairo in 257 A.H. at the age of 65. See Az-Zirikli, *Al-'Alam*, 5/216.

Father of everything good, not just father of musk

And in another poem, he said:

O Kafur, Allah, has decreed that you be the first among men

And He does not see fit to decree for you a second.

When Kafur did not grant him his request, and the relations soured between them, Al-Mutanabbi said in ridicule,

Even if the heart hides some secret and I am not

Pleased neither with myself nor with you, I will show you am I pleased
out of falseness, treachery, cowardice and malice.

Did you seem a person to me, or a source of shame?

Your sandaled feet delighted me, indeed

I saw you in sandals even if you were barefoot.

Your kind came from faraway countries

To entertain weeping, mournful ladies

And if not for the people's preferences

I would have praised you with the mockery in my soul

The poet may be stingy but he praises generosity and the generous, raising them up as high as the clouds:

When you visit someone, look closely at the light of his fire

You will find that an excellent fire comes from an excellent hearth.

The poet Hati`a, despite his clear stinginess, praised someone who was so generous that he was worried he would have to slaughter his own child to feed his guest because he had nothing else to slaughter. Hati`a provided a poetic rendering of generosity in this poem, or poetic story, which is considered one of the classics of Arabic literature. Despite that, Hati`a did not take a lesson from his own poetry and instead remained obstinately stingy and miserly.

In describing a generous person, he says,
Famished, belt tightened, for three nights the only food to eat discarded
In the sands of a desert without any trace of human habitation
A coarse man stranger to civil company
Who in his rude simplicity he makes a blessing of wretched solitude
On a narrow mountain path he left his barren wife and
three sons thin as ghosts or cattle with shrunken skins
Barefoot and hardly clothed, they have never eaten
Fresh bread or known the taste of wheat.
He saw a terrifying apparition in the midst of shadows
But when he realized it was a guest, he opened his arms and lavished him
with attention
And when his son, in confused disbelief, saw the guest he said
O father, slaughter me so you can be sure to feed him
And do not make an excuse of our poverty to he who has come
For he will think we are rich and heap curses on our stinginess.
But while they were talking there appear in the distance a herd
Of wild donkeys in an ordered procession behind their leader
They came seeking water, and the man snuck towards them
Even though for their blood he was far thirstier than them.
He waited to let them slack their thirst
Then aimed at them an arrow from his quiver
And a female fell, a well-rounded body
Abounding with meat and fat
Oh how he rejoiced as he dragged her toward his family,
And Oh how happy were they when they saw her bleeding wound.

They passed the night joyful that they had acquitted a host's duties to his guest

Without losing anything, but rather gaining more than before

And the father, out of sheer happiness, felt like a father

To their guest, and the mother, out of her happiness, like a mother to him

Allah *the Almighty* speaks the truth when He says, 'Do you not see how they rove aimlessly in every valley; how they say what they do not do?' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 225-226), they describe generosity when they are misers; they describe courage while they themselves are cowards, etc. Once⁽¹⁾ two poets gathered with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Az-Zabriqan ibn Badr and Qays ibn `Asim as well as `Umar ibn Al-Ahtam. One of them said a few words in praise of someone who was present, calling him lord of the tribe. But the praised one became angered for he thought that this was less than he deserved, whereupon he said, 'By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, he knows more of me than he says' meaning that he did not accord me all due credit. So, the poet said, 'Why, by Allah, he said what he has said, he is a stingy giver, with a fool for a father and scoundrel for an uncle.' Praise Allah! At the beginning of the session he was lord of his tribe, and now he is a stingy giver with a fool for a father and a scoundrel for an uncle!

Then the poet said, 'By Allah, O Messenger of Allah, I did not lie in the first statement and I told the truth in the second, but at first I was pleased so I described something as better than what I knew. Then I became angry so I described something as worse than what I knew.' At this point Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Truly there is beguilement in plainness.'⁽²⁾

Next the True Lord makes an exception to those poets who are lost in grievous error, saying:

-
- (1) *The story of the poets who gathered around the prophet peace and blessings be upon him one of them praising Az-Zabriqan ibn Badr in the beginning of the meeting and cursing him towards the end, and the Prophet peace and blessings be upon him objecting to this behavior.*
 - (2) *Al-Bayhaqi cites this Hadith in the context of this story in Dala'il An-Nubuwwa [5/216] with two chains of narrators. The first breaks off at Muhammad ibn Az-Zubayr al-Hanzhali, whilst the second goes back to a Hadith by Ibn `Abbas.*

إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ وَذَكَرُوا اللَّهَ كَثِيرًا وَانْتَصَرُوا
 مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا ظَلَمُوا ۗ وَسَيَعْلَمُ الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا أَيَّ مُنْقَلَبٍ يَنْقَلِبُونَ ﴿٢٢٧﴾

**Not so those [poets] who believe, do good deeds,
 remember God often, and defend themselves after they
 have been wronged. The evildoers will find out what
 they will return to [227] (The Quran, *ash-Shu'ara'*: 227)**

Some of the poets were idolaters like `Abdullah ibn Az-Zaba`ri and Musafih Al-Jamhi who ridiculed and criticised Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The grievous, straying wrongdoers gathered around such poets who urged and encouraged them to ridicule Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Allah *the Almighty* revealed the following verse about such people: 'Only those who are lost in error follow the poets.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 224) At this point, the Muslim poets including `Abdullah ibn Rawaha, Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, Ka'b ibn Malik and Hassan ibn Thabit rushed to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'Are we among those who are lost in grievous error, O Messenger of Allah?' So, he *peace and blessings be upon him* recited this verse to them: 'Not so those [poets] who believe, do good deeds...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 227).

The True Lord makes an exception of the poets who have these four traits in abundance: 'Not so those [poets] who believe, do good deeds, remember Allah often and defend themselves after they have been wronged...' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 227). It means that they remember and mention Allah *the Almighty* in their poems to call people's attention to the obligations of their religion and the admonitions of faith. Then they came to aid Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* against those who attacked him.

These three poets aided the victory of Islam and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Every time the disbelievers ridiculed him *peace and blessings be upon him* they rebutted them, proved their claims to be false and defended the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to the extent that he *peace and blessings be upon him* erected a pulpit⁽¹⁾ for Hassan ibn Thabit and said to

(1) Cited by Al-Hakim in his *Mustadrik* [3/478] on the authority of `Aisha Allah be pleased with her who said, 'The Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* placed a pulpit in the=

him, 'Speak and the holy spirit is with you, make a mockery of them and the angel Jibril (Gabriel) is with you.'⁽¹⁾

As for Ka'b ibn Malik, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Make a mockery of them, for truly your words are harsher upon them than a rain of arrows.'⁽²⁾ He *peace and blessings be upon him* permitted them to recite poetry in the mosque because they were among those exceptional poets who believed, did righteous deeds, remembered Allah often, aided the victory of Islam and sang the praises of Messenger Muhammad to defend him and rebut the sharp tongues of the disbelievers.

Allah says, 'and defend themselves after they have been wronged' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 227), means they did not foolishly contravene Islamic tenets by pre-empting the disbelievers with verbal attacks; rather, they defended themselves and refuted the abuses heaped upon Islam by the disbelievers. Thus, when Abu Sufyan ridiculed Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* one of them⁽³⁾ responded by saying:

Do you ridicule him when you are no equal to him?

Of the two of you, the evil one is the ransom to be paid for the good one

My father, his father and my honour

Will answer for the honour of Muhammad

Allah *the Almighty* says, 'not' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 227), after 'have been wronged' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 227). But who wronged them? It was the people who assumed an antagonistic attitude towards Islam and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. They subjected Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and those who believed in him to their machinations and abuse. It was the people who isolated him *peace and blessings be upon him* and his family

= mosque for Hassan to stand on and defend the pride of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who said, "Truly Allah aids Hassan ibn Thabit with the Holy Spirit in whatever he defends the honour of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*." "

(1) Cited by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* [2213 and 6153], and by Muslim on the authority of Al-Bara' ibn 'Azib in his *Sahih* [2486]; the book of *Fada'il As-Sahaba*.

(2) Cited by Muslim in his *Sahih* [2390]; the book of *Fada'il As-Sahaba*.

(3) It was Hassan ibn Thabit according to Muslim in his *Sahih* [2490]; the book of *Fada'il As-Sahaba*.

from society to the extent that they were forced to eat tree leaves for food. It was the people who conspired to kill him *peace and blessings be upon him* which led him to immigrate to Medina.

Allah *the Almighty* out of His Mercy and Wisdom permitted the oppressed to defend and relieve himself from suffering wrongful oppression. If these feelings of frustration are bottled up inside one's self, they are sure to explode. Thus Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Hence, if you have to respond to an attack [in argument], respond only to the extent of the attack levelled against you; but to bear yourselves with patience is indeed far better for you, since Allah is with those who are patient in adversity.' (*an-Nahl*: 126)

Allah *the Almighty* also says, 'Allah does not like any evil to be mentioned openly, unless it be by him who has been wronged [thereby]...' (*an-Nisa'*: 138). Allah *the Almighty* permitted the wronged and the oppressed to express themselves, to reject oppression.

Then the chapter ends with Allah's saying, '...defend themselves after they have been wronged. The evildoers will find out *munqalab* what they will return to.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 227) This means that these deniers of the Truth will know what their end and their return will be. The word *munqalab* (a turn their destinies are bound to take) refers to the fate that awaits a person and it is to what a person returns. The True Lord promises them something that will torment them, that is, the matter is not limited to the victory of the Muslims over them. Another punishment is waiting for them in the Hereafter.

Just as Allah *the Almighty* says elsewhere, 'But, verily, for those who are bent on doing evil, there is suffering in store [even] closer at hand than that [supreme suffering in the hereafter] ...' (*at-Tur*: 47).

In order to evoke terror and awe, Allah *the Almighty* has obscured the nature of this *munqalab*, i.e. this turn they are destined to take. It could be so awful and terrible that it is indescribable in words, such as when Allah's Words left the exact fate of Pharaoh and his men ambiguous: '...and they were overwhelmed with the agony that overwhelmed them' (*Ta Ha*: 78). This indicates something so awful that it is unspeakable. The ambiguity here speaks volumes because the mind begins to imagine every possible punishment.

The *munaqlab* (turn they are destined to take) is not in and of itself blameworthy or praiseworthy; if one ends up doing evil, it is an evil turn; and if one ends up doing good, it is a good turn. Thus, the *munaqlab* of the disbelievers who opposed Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* will be an evil, shameful turn.

What of the fated turn of Pharaoh's sorcerers to whom Pharaoh said, '...Have you come to believe in him ere I have given you permission? Verily, he must be your master who has taught you magic! But I shall most certainly cut off your hands and feet in great numbers, because of [your] perverseness...' (*Ta Ha*: 71). What did they say in reply? 'No harm [canst thou do to us]: verily, unto our Lord do we turn!' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 50). This means that they will have a praiseworthy turn for the better.

Some people might think that their fated turn will be a good one and that they will come to a happy end, but they delude themselves into thinking their deeds merit a good turn and Allah *the Almighty* has prepared some other end for them. It is like the man to whom Allah *the Almighty* gave two vineyards, between which was fertile soil for agriculture, and around which were palm trees. Upon being dazzled by all the blessings of this world, the man thought that he would have something like it or better in the Hereafter. He said, '... But even if [it should come, and] I am brought before my Lord, I will surely find something even better than this as [my last] resort!' (*al-Kahf*: 36)

One's *munqalab* (turn their destinies) and one's place of return are left to Allah *the Almighty*. Righteous deeds will be pleased with his fated turn because he knows with certainty that it will be a reward from the True Lord. Thus, the True Lord teaches us about the mounts that transport us: 'And they carry your loads to [many] a place which [otherwise] you would be unable to reach without great hardship to yourselves...' (*an-Nahl*: 7).

He teaches us to remember Him and mention Him: 'And He it is who has created all opposites. And He [it is who] has provided for you all those ships and animals whereon you ride, in order that you might gain mastery over them, and that, whenever you have mastered them, you might remember your Lord's blessings and say, "Limitless in His Glory is He who has made [all] 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 Lord that we must always turn.” (ash-Shu'ara': 12-14)

Mounts and beasts of burden, as well as those means of transportation which have replaced them now, are among the greatest of Allah's blessings to us. If Allah *the Almighty* had not subjugated them for us, we would not have been able to do so and we would have had no control over them. That is why we say, '...since [but for Him], we would not have been able to attain to it.' (az-Zukhruf: 13), we would not have been able to domesticate them. A small boy might be seen leading a huge camel, making the camel kneel or even loading it with heavy burdens, and all the while the camel is obedient and easily led. But the same boy would be frightened by a small snake. Why is that? It is because Allah *the Almighty* has subjugated the camel for us, but not the snake.

Allah the Greatest speaks the truth when He says, 'Are 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, so that some of them they may use for riding and of some they may eat.' (Ya Sin: 71-72)

But what is the relationship between His saying, '...Limitless in His Glory is He who has made (all] this subservient to our use – since [but for Him,] we would not have been able to attain to it.' (az-Zukhruf: 13) and His saying, 'Hence, verily, it is unto our Lord that we must always turn.'? (az-Zukhruf: 14) They say these verses are correlated to each other because we will turn to Allah *the Almighty* in the Hereafter and we will be asked about these blessings. If we gave thanks to Allah *the Almighty* for this blessing, then we have given them their due acknowledgment, and whoever thanks Allah *the Almighty* for the blessings of this world will not be asked of them in the Hereafter, for he will have already given them their due.

Allah *the Almighty* says that they 'will find out' (ash-Shu'ara': 227) using the Arabic letter *sin* before the verb 'to know' in order to indicate the future tense. But this does not mean they will only come to know after a great amount of time, as some might think. Allah *the Almighty* hides the time of one's death as well as its cause and its place. This ambiguity is the great power of the Quran

to make things clear because under such circumstances you will expect death all the time. If a person knew the time of his death, he would say to himself, 'I will do what I wish and then repent before I die'.

Thus, the length of time inferred from the future tense in this phrase is not indefinitely long. Death may come upon you by surprise after which you can do no deeds and make no repentance. Allah *the Almighty* says, 'On the Day when they behold it, [it will seem to them] as if they had tarried [in this world] no longer than one evening or [one night, ending with] its morn!' (*an-Nazi'at*: 46)

We have said that the verse 'The evildoers will find out what they will return to' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 227), indicates that there is a threat and a promise. When the True Lord emphasises a threat, He does so out of compassion and mercy for His creatures; He loves them and if He threatens them today, they will be secure and sound later. He draws their attention so they will return to Him and attain His reward and His Grace.

It seems that through the act of threatening Allah *the Almighty* wants to spread His Mercy, not His Domination, just as you might be hard on your son so he studies and you might threaten him so that he works hard. Thus, a promise of a something good brings good, a threatening promise of evil can also bring good, which is why you should know that everything that comes from your Lord is good for you, even if it is the threat of some promised punishment.

Thus, the chapter of *ash-Shu'ara'* has been provided with an example of the True Lord's reassurances to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to lighten his sadness and remorse at the condition of his faithless people. This chapter also regaled him *peace and blessings be upon him* with stories from the procession of messengers detailing how Allah *the Almighty* aided them and made them victorious, and how He defeated their enemies.

Then his Lord comforted him by rebutting the disbeliever's fabrications, showing their arguments to be false and revealing the emptiness of their cause. Then the narrative ends with a clear declaration that the wrong-doers have an evil turn awaiting them, and this end is left ambiguous to make it all the more awesome: '...The evildoers will find out what they will return to.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 227)

If something is clearly delineated, it can only be one thing. If it is left obscure, it is more forceful and effective because one begins to imagine all the different possibilities, just like when a traveller is late in returning home while we are sitting waiting for him in great apprehension and our minds wander through all the possible reasons that could have caused his delay. One fanciful conjecture spring to your minds, and each conjecture appears in your mind with burning intensity, while only one possibility will be what actually happened.

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