

vol. {17}

REFLECTIONS

**EL SHA'RAWY**  
**الشعراوى**

فواطر

المجلد {17}



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

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**EL SHA'RAWY**  
**الشعر اوان**

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Published by :



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Tel +97126265151

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Printing & Binding:

**Printing Group**

info@printinggroup.com

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ISBN: 978-9948-36-806-9

First edition 1441 H. - 2020

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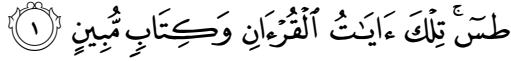
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the chapter of

***an-Naml***



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



***Ta Sin.* These are the verses of the Quran — a scripture  
that makes things clear [1] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 1)**

We have spoken much about these letters that stand alone at the opening of some chapters of the Quran; in this case, they are ‘*Ta Sin*’. They are alphabetical letters, pronounced according to their names (ta, sin). The difference between a letter’s name and the letter itself is that both educated and illiterate people speak using letters, thus being able to say, for example, ‘Mohammed wrote down the lesson’. If you ask the illiterate person to spell out these letters, he will not be able to do so because he does not know the names of the letters even if he can pronounce the letters themselves. As for the educated person, he will say M-o-h-a-m-m-e-d, etc

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was illiterate and he did not know the names of the letters, and so they are from Allah *the Almighty*. The letters *Alif Lam Mim* are pronounced at the start of the chapter of *al-Baqara* with their names, whereas at the beginning of the chapter *ash-Sharh*, they are pronounced as letters: *alam* (Did not).

‘These’ is a demonstrative pronoun referring to the verses that will follow during this chapter. We said that the word *ayat* has many meanings: it might be used to refer to the natural signs in the universe such as the sun and the moon: ‘Now among His signs are the night and the day, as well as the sun and the moon...’ (*Fussilat*: 37), ‘And among His wonders is this: He creates for you mates out of your own kind so that you might incline towards them...’ (*ar-Rum*: 21). These signs of the universe alert us to the magnificence of the Creator and His Infinite Power. It may also be used to refer to the miracles vouchsafed to messengers which confirm the veracity of the messages they

brought from Allah *the Almighty*. It may further refer to the verses of the Quran and its rulings, which is meant here by ‘...These are the verses of the Quran—a scripture that makes things clear’ (*an-Naml*: 1).

In the beginning of another chapter, Allah says, ‘*Alif Lam Ra*. These are messages of revelation – of a discourse clear in itself and clearly showing the truth.’ (*al-Hijr*: 1)

So, sometimes He says, ‘a discourse clear’, and sometimes He says, ‘verses... clear’; Allah *the Almighty* also sometimes adds ‘verses’ to ‘Quran’, while other times He adds ‘Quran’ (discourse) to ‘verses’, even though they are the same thing. How can the same thing be added to itself?

They say that if something is added to itself, this means that it is an additional attribute of the thing. If we say, ‘Zayd, the poet, orator, and tradesman came to see me’, all of these attributes are added to give further description. The Quran is a ‘discourse’ because it is recited in the heart, and it is a ‘verse’ because it is written down on the page. We use both these words, referring sometimes to the Quran and sometimes to the Book. The distinction is made by the attribution.

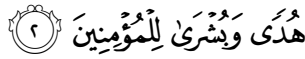
The meaning of ‘clear’ is plain and apparent, encompassing all of life’s issues and actions by way of commands and prohibitions, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...no single thing have We neglected in Our decree...’ (*al-An‘am*: 38).

I previously told the story of what happened to Sheikh Muhammad ‘Abdu when he was in France; one of the orientalists asked him ‘You say that the Quran encompasses everything, so how many loaves are there in a measure of corn?’ The sheikh called a baker, and asked him, and he told him how many. The orientalist said: ‘No, I want it from the Quran’, so the sheikh replied: ‘The Quran says, “...If you do not know this, ask those who know...”’ (*al-Anbiya*: 7).

So, it is as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...no single thing have We neglected in Our decree...’ (*al-An‘am*: 38).

Then the True Lord says:





**A guide and joyful news for the believers [2]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 2)**

The word ‘guide’ has two meanings, as follows: direction to success or giving assistance and aid. Direction is for the believer and the disbeliever alike because it guides and instructs everyone. After this, the guidance of aid comes according to whether you follow the guidance of direction.

Whoever obeys Allah *the Almighty* and believes in Him and follows His Guidance of direction, the True Lord will say to him ‘You have sought My Protection in your life’s work and you have obeyed My commands and kept away from My prohibitions; so I will make things lighter for you, make it easier for you to worship and help you to do it’. This is the guidance of aid about which Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘just as for those who are [willing to be] guided, He increases their [ability to follow His] guidance and causes them to grow in Allah *the Almighty* -consciousness.’ (*Muhammad*: 17)

Likewise, the disbeliever who does not follow the guidance of direction and chooses for himself another way – Allah *the Almighty* will help him to follow it and will make it easy for him to rush to disbelief. So, He *the Almighty* seals the hearts of the disbelievers so that faith does not enter it, and disbelief does not leave it.

But is the guidance mentioned here that of direction, or of aid? We say that it is guidance of aid, as is borne out by Allah’s word after it: ‘...and joyful news for the believers.’ (*an-Naml*: 2) They are only believers because they followed guidance, and glad tidings are only for believers. So, it is the guidance of aid for the believers in that it increases them in guidance to the straight path, and to paradise. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...Their light will spread rapidly before them, and on their right; [and] they will pray: “O our Lord! Cause this our light to shine for us forever, and forgive us our sins: for, verily, Thou hast the power to will anything!”’ (*at-Tahrim*: 8)

If the guidance meant here was the guidance of direction which comes to believer and disbeliever alike, it would be both a glad tidings and a warning; but the verse says, ‘and joyful news for the believers’ (*an-Naml*: 2), so it is clear that the meaning is the guidance of aid and that of glad tidings.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

الَّذِينَ يُقِيمُونَ الصَّلَاةَ وَيُؤْتُونَ الزَّكَاةَ وَهُمْ بِالْآخِرَةِ هُمْ يُوقِنُونَ ﴿٣﴾

**Who keep up the prayer, pay the prescribed alms, and believe firmly in the life to come [3] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 3)**

The believers are those who possess the creed of faith, which is faith in the One True Lord, the All-Powerful Allah *the Almighty* possessor of perfect attributes. You believe in this until it becomes a firm creed in your soul that cannot be shaken. Faith means the conviction of the heart, the pronouncement of the tongue and the work of the limbs. The pronouncement of the tongue is not sufficient; the responsibilities and duties of faith must be carried out, the most important of which are the prayer, the poor-due, fasting *Ramadan* and making the pilgrimage.

Prayer is an invitation from Allah *the Almighty* to His creation, an invitation from the Maker to the made: Allah *the Almighty* is inviting you to His presence. What a great product it is that is presented before its maker five times a day! Yet despite this, there are those who put work before prayer and when they hear the call, they say, 'I have work to do and I am busy'. Beware of thinking that prayer impedes beneficial things, or wastes time because in your working life you are with Allah's blessings, whilst in the prayer you are with Allah *the Almighty* Himself.

An allegory of this situation, and Allah has the highest example, is: if your father calls you and you do not answer him, what does he do with you? Do not make your Lord less important to you than your father. Your Lord calls you: 'Allah is the Greatest', i.e. He is Greater than your work and Greater than anything that could distract you from answering His call. In the prayer, we recharge our faith, which strengthens us in our daily lives. If you take your car battery to be recharged, do you say that you have wasted the battery?

If we counted the time that praying the five daily prayers takes, we would find that it is not even one hour out of twenty-four. So, do not begrudge yourself a meeting with your Lord where you stand before him, showing yourself to Him; He repairs everything within you that your working life has

corrupted, gives you aid and assistance and the recharge of faith which allows you to work in harmony with life and the universe around you.

If the mechanic repairs a machine by material means, your Lord is Unseen and so He repairs you by unseen means, and without your being aware of it. For this reason, prayer is at the peak of the requirements of faith.

If prayer is for self-rectification, the poor-due exists to rectify wealth. That is why you always find the prayer linked with the poor-due in the majority of verses. If wealth is the result of work, work is a product of time, then prayer takes time and the poor-due takes the product of time. The poor-due takes 2.5%; as for the prayer, it takes time itself, i.e. 100%.

Despite this, we do not say that prayer wastes time because the recharge that you obtain from the prayer means that you are able to do work that would take several hours in only half an hour because it gives you a blessed increase of time.

I said before that the call ‘Allah is the Greatest’ means that meeting with Allah *the Almighty* is more important than anything that might distract you, no matter how important you perceive it to be because Allah *the Almighty* gives blessed increase, and He gives power. If work and being productive on earth is something required of us, prayer in its proper time is even more important.

If we consider between which two prayers the greatest amount of time is, we find that it is between the dawn and midday prayers, which is the appropriate time for work and between the night and the dawn prayer, which is the appropriate time for sleep. In this way, the prayer organises our lives for us: between the dawn and the midday prayer are seven hours, which are the hours of work.

If the Islamic community were only to hold fast to its law and the guidance of its Lord, after these seven hours of work, you would be free after the midday prayer. But the specification that has become predominant in our working lives has people working not just through the midday prayer, but also through the afternoon prayer.

As for those who delay the prayer from its proper time, claiming that it is valid because of the length of time that exists between every two prayers: yes, there is a period of time between them, but you are not allowed to delay your prayer. In order to illustrate this issue, suppose that a rich man who is able to perform the pilgrimage does not perform it: when does he sin?

He sins when hope for long life deludes him and then death comes to him before he performs the pilgrimage. If he remains alive until he performs the pilgrimage, he will fulfil this obligation; but who guarantees that he will live long enough to fulfil it? Hence, the Hadith was narrated: 'Perform the pilgrimage before you are unable to perform it.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Such is the case with the time for prayer. It is extended, but who guarantees that your life will too be extended? For this reason, the one who does not perform the prayer sins at the final moment of his life; if he remains alive long enough to perform the prayer, he is safe.

So, do not use the long period of time as an excuse. Allah *the Almighty* made this extended time period for a wise reason, not just so that we could use it as an excuse to delay prayer beyond its proper time. The long period of time between prayers was made for the one who is asleep, until he wakes up; or the one who forgets, until he remembers.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and believe firmly in the life to come' (*an-Naml*: 3). The verse encapsulates the entire reality of the believer, beginning with belief and faith in Allah *the Almighty* then prayer and then the poor-due. These are the two duties that are linked with the two faiths: firstly, faith in Allah *the Almighty*; secondly, faith in the afterlife, recompense, the return, and the resurrection.

His saying, 'and believe firmly in the life to come' (*an-Naml*: 3) means absolute surety of a thing's existence, without any doubts or misgivings. For this reason, we said that knowledge means that you acknowledge a fact, announce that it is the truth and give evidences for it.

I said that certainty is of different levels: the certainty of knowledge, the certainty of the eye and absolute certainty. For example, if I tell you that in one city I saw bananas half a metre long, you trust me and do not doubt me, this is the certainty of knowledge. If you see it for yourself, this is the certainty of the eye. But if you take it, go to it and pick it and divide it between all who are present, this is absolute certainty; this level cannot be permeated by doubts.

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(1) Narrated by Al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak*, on the authority of Al-Harith ibn Suwayd.

So, when the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* asked his companion, Al-Harith ibn Malik Al-Ansari, 'How are you', he answered 'I have become a true believer in Allah', Prophet Muhammad asked 'every truth has its reality: what is the reality of your faith?' Harith replied 'I abstained from this world and its gold and its clay became equal in my eyes; it is as though I behold the denizens of paradise being favoured therein and the denizens of Hell being tormented therein.' The Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him: 'You know, so be steadfast!'<sup>(1)</sup>

'Ali Allah *be pleased with him* gave us a description of certainty when he said, 'If the veil was drawn back for me, I would not increase in certainty. I believed what Allah said and my eyes are not more trustworthy to me than Allah.'

This kind of certainty is also inherent in what we mentioned before about Allah's word "Art thou aware of how thy Lord dealt with the Army of the Elephant?" (*al-Fil*: 1), even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was born that year, and could not witness this event. So, the meaning is 'do you not know', and the word 'see' is used for 'know' to tell the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* that Allah's informing him is more trustworthy than what his own eyes see.

Allah *the Almighty* then says.

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ لَا يُؤْمِنُونَ بِالْآخِرَةِ زَيَّنَّا لَهُمْ أَعْمَالَهُمْ فَهُمْ يَعْمَهُونَ ﴿٤﴾

**As for those who do not believe in the life to come, We  
have made their deeds seem alluring to them, so they  
wander blindly [4] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 4)**

These people are the opposite of those who believe, pray and give the poor-due because the True Lord presents things with their opposites in order that we make a comparison between them. About these people, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'As for those who do not believe in the life to come...' (*an-Naml*: 4).

He did not negate their performance of the prayer, or their giving the poor-due. Why? Because they do not believe in Allah *the Almighty* to begin

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(1) Narrated by Al-Haythami in *Majma' Az-Zawa'id* (ascribed therein to At-Tabarani in *Al-Mu'jam Al-Kabir*). He said: 'Its chain contains Ibn Luhay'a, and others who need investigating.'

with, nor do they believe in the resurrection or the reckoning. If they know that, they would return to Allah, believe in Him and do good works.

The meaning of 'We have made their deeds seem alluring to them' (*an-Naml*: 4) is 'Those who do not believe in Allah or in the hereafter, and do not fulfil the obligations of faith, will not be excused because when We showed them faith and its obligations, We presented it well, made it attractive and alluring and made it seem goodly for them. Prayer is a meeting between you and your Lord which expresses your constant allegiance and gives you a recharge of faith. The poor-due protects you when you are weak and incapable and so when you are rich, We take from you so that We can give to you if you become poor. When We prohibited you from lying, We prohibited everyone else from lying to you and when We warned you not to give bribes, We said to everyone else "Do not take his wealth unlawfully" and so on. And in this way, We explained responsibilities and showed the wisdom behind them, and made them beloved to you.

Or, it means 'We made the things they did appear goodly to them', and that when Allah saw their yearning for misguidance and transgression, He sealed their hearts, as He says, 'Is, then, he to whom the evil of his own doings is [so] alluring that [in the end] he regards it as good...' (*Fatir*: 8)?

But who was it that made their deeds appear goodly? '...Satan has made all their own doings seem goodly to them...' (*an-Nahl*: 63). So, sometimes Satan makes their deeds seem goodly, and sometimes it is an unknown agent and sometimes it is Allah.

An example of Allah's doing this is His statement about Pharaoh "And Musa (Moses) prayed: "O our Lord! Verily, splendour and riches hast Thou vouchsafed, in the life of this world, unto Pharaoh and his great ones – with the result, O our Lord, that they are leading [others] astray from Thy path!..." (*Yunus*: 88). So, when Allah *the Almighty* gave them His blessing, they became deluded by it.

Allah *the Almighty* created Satan, and gave him progeny who attempt to overcome people and tempt them. This is only a test to see who will stop at these doors. The True Lord did not place barriers around sin or create attractions

for good deeds. The matter is down to you and if He sees that you incline to something and love it, He will help you to get it.

If someone's loved-one dies, or a woman's child dies, she keeps grieving for him, which will ruin her life and the life of those around her. Yet this will not help the dead one, or bring them back. We say to those who receive Allah's ordain with this resentment: When your Lord sees that you have become accustomed to grief, and that you yearn for it, He is Lord, so He will surely give you what you desire and every day open for you a door to it. So, whoever is exposed to such a trial must receive it with acceptance, close the door of sadness and not leave it ajar.

Another example of this is Allah's words, 'To him who desires a harvest in the life to come, We shall grant an increase in his harvest; whereas to him who desires [but] a harvest in this world, We [may] give something thereof – but he will have no share in [the blessings of] the life to come.' (*ash-Shura*: 20)

The meaning of 'stumble blindly' is that they are confused and bewildered, not knowing where they should go.

Allah *the Almighty* then say:

أُولَٰئِكَ الَّذِينَ لَهُمْ سُوءُ الْعَذَابِ وَهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ هُمُ الْآخَسُونَ ﴿٥﴾

**It is they who will have the worst suffering, and will be the ones to lose most in the life to come[5] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 5)**

It means terrible suffering in the hereafter. In addition to the losses they suffered during the Battle of Badr and the defeat they endured, things did not end there, for there will be another loss in the hereafter: '...and will be the ones to lose most in the life to come'. (*an-Naml*: 5)

'Greatest loser' implies an exaggerated loss; He did not say only 'losers', but rather 'lose most' because they lost out the delights of paradise, having not offered any good deeds in this world. It would have been better for them to be left without paradise and to remain in that state, but there will also come to them terrible suffering. So, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'and will be the ones to lose most in the life to come' (*an-Naml*: 5) because they will not enter paradise, which is one loss and then they will go to hell, which is another loss.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَإِنَّكَ لَتَلْقَى الْقُرْآنَ مِنْ لَدُنْ حَكِيمٍ عَلِيمٍ ﴿٦﴾

**You [Prophet] receive the Quran from One who is all wise,  
All Knowing [6] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 6)**

Allah *the Almighty* tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that these matters only come to him from Allah, the All-Wise, and the One Who handles things wisely. When Allah *the Almighty* rewards the virtuous or punishes the sinner, everything is performed wisely. Allah *the Almighty* knows best what recompense to give for good and what punishment to be inflicted upon the evildoers.

The True Lord *the Almighty* then tells us the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*:

إِذْ قَالَ مُوسَىٰ لِأَهْلِهِ إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا سَآتِيكُمْ مِنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ  
أَوْ آتِيكُمْ بِشِهَابٍ قَبَسٍ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

**Moses said to his family, ‘I have seen a fire. I will bring  
you news from there, or a burning stick for you to warm  
yourselves’ [7] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 7)**

We have recently mentioned some of Musa’s (Moses’s) story in the chapter of *ash-Shu`ara`*. Here, it is mentioned again. The story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* has been mentioned frequently in the Quran because they followed their prophets, and then disobeyed them so that much reference was made to them.

It is strange that they are proud of having many prophets. It is not something to be proud about because, really it is a shame. A prophet only comes when his companions are in a wretched state. The Israelites were in such misguidance and stubbornness that one single messenger did not suffice them. Rather, a great number of prophets were required for them. They see this as a point of pride, when really it is a flaw and a point of shame.

The reason behind repeating the story of the Israelites and Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* several times in the Quran is that the Quran does not merely



tell tales, or mention events solely for the sake of chronicling them; it only mentions stories in the context of moral admonition, or to make firm the heart of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘And [remember] out of all the accounts relating to the [earlier] apostles We convey on you [one] that wherewith We [aim to] make firm thy heart ...’ (*Hud*: 120).

Because Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was exposed to many hardships and worries during the course of his call and needed to be consoled and made firm, his Lord sent him specific scenes, but He did not relate the entire story.

Allah *the Almighty* related the entire story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* in the form of a story that was as tightly-woven and well-formed as any story can be. Despite this, Prophet Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* was not mentioned elsewhere except in two places: the first time is in the chapter of *al-An`am*: ‘...And out of his offspring, [We bestowed prophethood upon] Dawud (David), and Sulaiman (Solomon), and Ayyub (Job) and Yusuf (Joseph)...’ (*al-An`am*: 84). As for the second place, it is in the chapter of *Ghafir*: ‘And [remember:] it was to you that Yusuf (Joseph) came a foretime with all evidence of the truth; but you never ceased to throw doubt on all [the messages] that he brought you – so much so that when he died, you said, “Never will Allah send any apostle [even] after him!”’ (*Ghafir*: 34)

Telling a story, then, in several different parts is not due to an inability to relate them all at once. If Allah *the Almighty* had done this, the consolation and strengthening would have been all at once.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Musa (Moses) said to his family, “I have seen a fire...”’ (*an-Naml*: 7). Elsewhere, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...he said to his family: “Wait here. Behold, I perceive a fire...”’ (*al-Qasas*: 29). So in this latter verse, there is something new that was not mentioned in the former. As for Allah’s saying, ‘And when Musa (Moses) had fulfilled his term, and was wandering with his family [in the desert], he perceived a fire on the slope of Mount Sinai...’ (*al-Qasas*: 29), this means that he saw it himself. In the other two verses, he tells his family that he sees the fire. So, each verse has its own position and there is no repetition, as some might think.

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was travelling with his family along this rugged road and darkness overcame him until he was almost unable to see the road. He said to his wife: 'I have seen a fire...' (*an-Naml*: 7). That is, 'I will go to light a torch from it', so that we could find their way, or seek warmth from it.

His wife, simply, questioned his judgement, saying, 'How could you leave me here in this wild place alone'? He replied to her: '...Wait here. Behold, I perceive a fire...' (*al-Qasas*: 29). 'Wait here and relax, I will go and get it; for perhaps it is dangerous, so you should stay clear of it'. So, the different parts of the story have been mentioned in the Quran each to give a specific piece of information. There is no repetition.

Similarly, one notices that there is a difference between the following sayings of Allah *the Almighty*: '...perhaps I may bring you from there some tiding...' (*al-Qasas*: 29), and '...I will bring you news from there...' (*an-Naml*: 7). As for the first verse, the word 'perhaps' indicates hope because he was approaching something he was unsure about, in this state he honestly expressed the thoughts that came to him as unknown thing. Once he was sure, he said, '...I will bring you news...' (*an-Naml*: 7). That is to say that he was certain this time.

In the same vein, he said once: '...perhaps I may bring you from there some tiding or [at least] a burning brand from the fire...' (*al-Qasas*: 29) using the word *jadhwa* which means a 'brand' or 'ember'; whereas here he says, '...I will bring you news from there *shihab qabas*, or a burning stick for you to warm yourselves' (*an-Naml*: 7), using the words *shihab qabas* which mean 'a borrowed flame'. This is because he did not know whether, when he reached the fire, he would find it still lit with flames from which he could light a flame, or whether he would find that it had burned out. So, every repetition here has its own meaning, adding something new to the story. So, it is completed in piecemeal form, according to the intention behind it, whether admonition or strengthening. The meaning of 'his family' here is a group, which is borne out by the Arabic plural verb form used when he said, 'Wait here'. His wife was there and there were some herdsmen or servants. People need many things, which necessitate numbers: this one cooks, this one cleans this one does the laundry, etc.

But there is one thing that no one can do for you except your spouse, which are the conjugal relations and intimacy. It is also possible for the

spouse to do all of these things herself so that she does not need any other family members to help her. In this case, we are able to say that no one was with him except his wife.

This is common in our language (Arabic): A man says, ‘the family’, or ‘my family’, meaning his wife. This implies that the husband is giving value and appreciation to his wife.

Allah’s words ‘I have seen a fire’ conveys a feeling and sensation that gives comfort and assurance. The opposite of this is ‘foreboding’ which is a sensation and feeling of something that causes one anxiety, as in Allah’s saying about Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*: ‘...and in his heart Musa (Moses) became apprehensive. But We said, “Fear not! Verily, it is thou who shalt prevail.”’ (*Ta Ha*: 67-68)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهَا نُودِيَ أَنْ بُورِكَ مَنْ فِي النَّارِ وَمَنْ حَوْلَهَا  
وَسُبِّحَنَ اللَّهُ رَبَّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٨﴾

**When he reached the fire, a voice called: ‘Blessed is the person near this fire and those around it; may God be exalted, the Lord of the Worlds[8] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 8)**

That is, he went to the fire where ‘a voice called’ (*an-Naml*: 8). A ‘call’ is a request for someone to approach. If you call someone, they come to you, then you tell them what you want to say. For example, Allah’s saying, ‘...O Musa (Moses)!’ (*Ta Ha*: 11) was a call. As for Allah’s saying, ‘Verily, I – I alone – am Allah...’ (*Ta Ha*: 14), it was a direct address to Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. But what does the saying of Allah, ‘...a voice called: “Blessed is the person near this fire and those around it”’ (*an-Naml*: 8) mean? Allah *the Almighty* did not say ‘O Musa (Moses)’, so there is no call. They say that the address here is the call because as long as He is addressing him, He is calling him. This is similar to Allah’s saying, ‘and the inmates of paradise will call out to the inmates of the fire: “Now we have found that what our Lord promised us has come true...”’ (*al-A‘raf*: 44). The address is mentioned without any call because the call is clear from the context. Another example of this is clear in the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘And the occupants of the Heights will call out

to those whom they recognise by their marks [as sinners], saying, “What has your amassing [of wealth] availed you, and all the false pride of your past?”” (*al-A'raf*: 48), and ‘Thereupon [a voice] called out to her from beneath that [palm-tree]: ‘Grieve not...’ (*Maryam*: 24). So, the address is itself the call.

Concerning Allah’s saying, ‘Blessed is the person near this fire and those around it...’ (*an-Naml*: 8), the word ‘blessed’ does not generally befit fire because fire burns. As long as Allah says, ‘Blessed is the person near this fire’ (*an-Naml*: 8), it must be the case that whatever is in the fire is a creation that does not burn and is not affected by fire. Who are not affected by fire? It is the angels.

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* saw an amazing sight: he saw the fire ablaze on the branch of a tree; as the fire increased, the branch became more verdant. The fire did not burn the leaves, nor did the moisture and water of the leaves put out the fire. Who is able to do such a thing? For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* says after this: ‘Allah be Exalted, the Lord of the worlds.’ (*an-Naml*: 8) Be careful not to ask about such matters: ‘How’? Instead, absolve Allah *the Almighty* of your own ways of acting. This is amazing and extraordinary in your eyes, but for Allah *the Almighty* it is effortless.

The story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* seems similar to this miracle when his Lord saved him from the fire. The purpose of this miracle was not solely the rescue of Ibrahim (Abraham). If Allah *the Almighty* had only wanted to save him, He would not have let them catch him to begin with, or He would have put out the fire they lit with a rainstorm. There were many ways Allah *the Almighty* could have saved Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* with. But Allah wanted them to catch him, and cast him into the fire, whilst it was ablaze and then throw him into it themselves, witnessing all this first hand and then the fire did not harm him. It was as though He were saying to them: ‘I want to save him from the fire despite the strength of your means to burn him. I created fire and gave it its ability to burn, and it is bound to My command. If I tell it to be cold and harmless, it will be. There is no law that rules the universe; there is only My absolute control over My creation’.

So, what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* saw in the fire that burned on the verdant tree is an extraordinary matter in your eyes; but it is not extraordinary for He Who has Absolute Omnipotence, which overrules all natural law.

The word ‘blessed’ is in the passive form, meaning that Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who blessed it. No one can do this except Allah *the Almighty*. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘the person near this fire and those around it’ (*an-Naml*: 8), it might refer to the angels; or it might be the tree itself that was blessed because it did not burn, or it might be the fire because it was not extinguished and so thereby was blessed.

In another place in the Quran, the area that was blessed was extended. Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘from the right-side bank of the valley, out of the tree’ (*al-Qasas*: 30). Then, the True Lord *the Almighty* spoke to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* saying:

يَمُوسَىٰ إِنَّهُ أَنَا اللَّهُ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٩﴾

**Moses, I am God, the Mighty, the Wise[9]**  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 9)

This call came in its true form, with both vocative particle and object, ‘I am Allah, the Mighty, and the Wise.’ (*an-Naml*: 9) That is, ‘Since I am Allah, do not be surprised by what you see. When you hear someone speaking to you without seeing anyone of your own kind, do not be amazed or alarmed’.

Allah then says:

وَأَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا رَءَاهَا تَهْتَزُّ كَأَنَّهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ يُعَقِّبْ

يَمُوسَىٰ لَا تَخَفْ إِنِّي لَا يَخَافُ لَدَى الْمَرْسُلُونَ ﴿١٠﴾

**Throw down your staff,’ but when he saw it moving like a snake, he turned and fled. ‘Moses, do not be afraid! The messengers need have no fear in My presence[10]**  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 10)

There are other details and incidents that the verse does not mention here which are mentioned elsewhere such as ‘Now, what is this in thy right hand, O Musa (Moses)? He answered, “It is my staff; I lean on it; and with it I beat down leaves for my sheep; and [many] other uses have I for it.”’ (*Ta Ha*: 17-18) Etiquette dictates that an answer should confine to the question; but Musa

(Moses) *peace be upon him* wanted to extend the time he would spend in Allah's presence. When he felt that he had extended this time long enough, he said, '...and [many] other uses have I for it' (*Ta Ha*: 18), for the staff had many functions in his life.

Here, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Now throw down your staff' (*an-Naml*: 10), i.e. 'If the staff plays such simple roles for you and these are the only functions it gives you, I have another use for it. Behold the use I have for it and behold that which you do know not about it'!

Allah *the Almighty* then says, 'Now throw down your staff' (*an-Naml*: 10). When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* threw down his staff, he found it 'moving like a snake' (*an-Naml*: 10), i.e. a snake wriggling and moving. The amazing thing is that the staff did not change into something else of its own genus: a staff is a plank of wood, which was once the branch of a tree and so it is a type of plant. When it is cut and dried, it becomes hard. So, if it were to turn into another object of its own genus and become green again, this would be itself an amazing thing.

As for the True Lord, He changed it into a completely different genus, making it an animal. This is a huge transformation that would elicit surprise and even fear, especially if it was 'moving like a snake' (*an-Naml*: 10), i.e. to move quickly here and there. Musa's (Moses's) natural reaction upon seeing the staff in his hand taking this form would be to grow fearful and panic; Allah says, 'and in his heart Musa (Moses) became apprehensive. But We said, "Fear not! Verily, it is you who shall prevail!"' (*Ta Ha*: 67-68) The meaning of 'it is thou who shalt prevail' (*Ta Ha*: 68) in this verse is that Allah *the Almighty* was preparing him for an immense mission, and that this staff would have a role to play against his enemies, and that he would triumph against them, and that he would be the uppermost.

When the different accounts of this story are compared, we see that sometimes it is a *jan* (serpent), whilst the word *hayya* (snake) is used in another account; still yet the word *thu'ban* (snake) which is mentioned in a third position. All these are names for the same thing, referring to the different age, agility, and size of different kinds of serpents.

Allah's saying, 'he turned and fled' (*an-Naml*: 10) means that Musa (Moses) moved away from it and turned his back to it, 'and fled' (*an-Naml*: 10). This means that he went away from it and did not return to it, and so his Lord *the Almighty* called him, saying, 'Musa (Moses), do not be afraid! The messengers need have no fear in My presence.' (*an-Naml*: 10)

One notices that in both calls, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* is mentioned, as though they are a replacement for the previous call that was made in the form of an address: 'Blessed is the person near this fire and those around it...' (*an-Naml*: 8). Musa (Moses) is commanded not to be afraid for he would soon be forced to do battle and so he had to be firm and fearless, because he would not fight one man alone, but would rather face a group of sorcerers, assembled from all over the land. Allah *the Almighty* had already said to him: 'Verily, it is you who shall prevail' (*Ta Ha*: 68) so that this multitude would not frighten him.

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'The messengers need have no fear in My presence...' (*an-Naml*: 10). This means 'Do not fear, O Musa (Moses) because it was I Who sent you, and I am the One Who will undertake to protect you and help you', as the True Lord says elsewhere in the Quran 'For, long ago has Our Word gone forth unto Our servants, the Message-bearers, that, verily, they – they indeed – would be succoured, and that, verily, Our Hosts – they indeed – would [in the end] be victorious!' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173)

'You would be excused for fearing if you were far from Me, but what about if you are with Me and I am with you, addressing you'?

For Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to throw the staff this time was only a dry run for him so that he would be accustomed to this matter and be comfortable with it. Then he could practise it in order that he could perform this action in front of Pharaoh and the sorcerers with confidence, fortitude, and certainty that the staff would become a serpent.

After this, a sign came to confirm the soundness of moral responsibility for mankind, even the messengers. The messengers too, are morally responsible and every responsible person is able to obey or disobey – but the messengers are divinely protected from sin. As for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* he had an individual experience when he struck a man who then fell down dead: 'Moreover, they keep a grave charge [pending] against me, and I fear that they

will slay me.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 14) In another place in the Quran, the nature of this charge is specified: 'Musa (Moses) said, "O my Lord! I have slain one of them, and so I fear that they will slay me."' (*al-Qasas*: 33)

We are considering this issue now so that we can better understand:

إِلَّا مَنْ ظَلَمَ ثُمَّ بَدَّلَ حُسْنًا بَعْدَ سُوءٍ فَإِنِّي غَفُورٌ رَحِيمٌ ﴿١١﴾

**I am truly most forgiving and merciful to those  
who do wrong, and then replace their evil with  
good [11] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 11)**

The exception to Allah's saying, '...The messengers need have no fear in My presence' (*an-Naml*: 10) applies to 'those who do wrong and then replace their evil with good.' (*an-Naml*: 11)

It is as though Allah *the Almighty* is presenting the specific experience that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* went through: 'to those who do wrong' (*an-Naml*: 11), i.e. when he killed an Egyptian, but Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* confessed his wrongdoing and sought his Lord's Forgiveness, saying: 'And he prayed: "O my Lord! Verily, I have sinned against myself! Grant me, then, Your Forgiveness!" And He forgave him...' (*al-Qasas*: 16).

There is nothing more to say after Allah *the Almighty* forgives the sinner because after he did wrong, He then replaces their evil with good; (*an-Naml*: 11) that is he did good deeds after having sinned; '...I am truly Most Forgiving and Merciful.' (*an-Naml*: 11).

After this, the True Lord *the Almighty* says:

وَأَدْخِلْ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجَ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ فِي تِسْعِ  
آيَاتٍ إِلَىٰ فِرْعَوْنَ وَقَوْمِهِ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَاسِقِينَ ﴿١٢﴾

**Put your hand inside your cloak and it will come out white,  
but unharmed. These are among the nine signs that you  
will show Pharaoh and his people; they have really gone  
too far [12] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 12)**

This is another sign and a new miracle. Elsewhere, Allah *the Almighty* says about it: 'And now] put your hand into thy bosom...' (*al-Qasas*: 32).



What is the difference between ‘place your hand’ and ‘put your hand’? They say that when he placed his hand into the bosom of his robe, i.e. its opening, he would have been able to place it easily if the cloak had been open, so the word *adkhil* (place) was used.

If it was closed, however, or perhaps had buttons, he would have to put his hand into it with care, which is what is suggested by the Arabic word used here for *usluk* (put), which means to place with deliberative care.

The word used for the ‘bosom’ of the robe here is *jayb* which has a present-day vernacular use, which is the word for ‘pocket’, as well as an original lexical use, which is the opening of a shirt at the neck. People have pockets because they need to keep their money safe in their clothes, so that it is not on display where it will be noticed by thieves and crooks.

In the local Egyptian countryside, they still put pockets in their vests. So, we hear snake charmers and the like saying, in an attempt to endear themselves to people: ‘Allah bless those who put their hands in their pockets’, i.e. Allah bless those who will give me a pound.

As for Allah’s saying, ‘it will come out white, but unharmed’ (*an-Naml*: 12), it means that when he took his hand out, it would be shining and bright. It is known that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was somewhat dark-skinned and so when they saw his colour had become white, they might say that he had some kind of disease like leprosy.

For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* allayed this suspicion by saying ‘but unharmed’, i.e. free of disease. ‘...These are among the nine signs that you will show Pharaoh and his people...’ (*an-Naml*: 12) so that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* would know that this was one of nine signs by means of which Allah *the Almighty* would strengthen him in front of his enemies, Pharaoh and his people.

These nine signs were: the staff, which had two purposes: to become a snake before the sorcerers and to be struck against the sea when Pharaoh and his hordes assailed him. Then comes the hand and then two more: drought and scarcity of fruits, as in Allah’s saying, ‘And most certainly did We overwhelm Pharaoh’s people with drought and scarcity of fruits...’ (*al-Isra*: 130). Then

came the flood, the locusts, lice, the frogs, and the blood. This makes nine signs which strengthened Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* in the face of Pharaoh and his people. Was Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* sent to Pharaoh alone? No, He was sent to the Israelites, but he wanted to convince Pharaoh that he was a messenger sent by Allah *the Almighty* so that he would not come between him and them. The calling of Pharaoh to have faith in Allah *the Almighty* was incidental to the events of the story, and was not the essence of Musa's (Moses's) call.

The saying of Allah, '...they have really gone too far' (*an-Naml*: 12) means that even if someone is a disbeliever and disobedient to Allah *the Almighty*, he is still originally from believing stock, i.e. the original belief that Adam *peace be upon him* had, as did his progeny. However, they became depraved and abandoned the moral responsibility that encased their lives; just as a date comes out of its shell, people come out of the moral responsibility that was guarding them.

Then, the True Lord says:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ ءَايَاتُنَا مُبْصِرَةً قَالُوا هَذَا سِحْرٌ مُّؤْتَمِنٌ ﴿١٣﴾

**But when Our enlightening signs came to them,  
they said, 'This is clearly [just] sorcery!' [13]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 13)**

Allah's saying, 'enlightening signs' refers to the miracles that confirm the veracity of Messenger Musa (Moses). Messages could be given light in the passive sense, but how could they be 'light-giving'? We have recently found the truth of this matter. In the past, the Greeks and the ancient civilisations believed that the eye saw things by means of rays that came out of them onto the thing that was to be seen. Then, the Muslim scientist Al-Hasan ibn Al- Haytham came along, proved the falsehood of this theory, and proved it was the other way around. Sight is achieved by rays coming from the viewed object and reaching the eye, which is proved by the fact that we do not see things if they are in the dark even if we are in the light, whereas if the object is in the light and you are in the dark, you can see it.

So, it is as though it is the messages themselves that give the light because they sent out the rays that make sight occur. Or the messages are so clear that they urge people to see and pay attention, as though they can see the truth more clearly.

Then, the True Lord *the Almighty* says:

وَجَحَدُوا بِهَا وَاسْتَيْقَنَتْهَا أَنْفُسُهُمْ ظُلُمًا وَعُتُورًا  
فَانْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

**They denied them, in their wickedness and their pride, even though their souls acknowledged them as true. See how those who spread corruption met their end! [14] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 14)**

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘They denied them’ (*an-Naml*: 14) means that they denied them with their tongues, ‘...even though their souls acknowledged them as true’ (*an-Naml*: 14), i.e. they believed in them. So, it was a case of stubbornness and headstrong opposition, which is why Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘in their wickedness and their pride’ (*an-Naml*: 14) they were too arrogant to accept the truth. ‘...See how those who spread corruption met their end!’ (*an-Naml*: 14) That is to say that Allah *the Almighty* leaves their final outcome vague, to highlight its magnitude and its horror.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* leaves the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and Pharaoh and all that happened between them for another occasion, and said of Dawoud:

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا دَاوُدَ وَسُلَيْمَانَ عِلْمًا وَقَالَا الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ  
الَّذِي فَضَّلَنَا عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِّنْ عِبَادِهِ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٥﴾

**We gave knowledge to David and Solomon, and they both said, ‘Praise be to God, who has favoured us over many of His believing servants’ [15] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 15)**

One might wonder that since Allah *the Almighty* gave Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon them* many blessings other than knowledge:

softening iron for Dawud (David), giving Sulaiman (Solomon) such sovereignty that none after him should have been able to obtain, subduing the wind and the jinn for him, and teaching him the speech of birds and so on, yet despite all this, did He bless them with nothing more than knowledge, that is, the way of religion? Scholars say that this is because knowledge is the true blessing in which the believer should rejoice, not power, wealth, or the whole world, none of which are equal to it. So, they praised Allah *the Almighty* for giving them knowledge because it is the blessing that all creatures need. As for sovereignty, nobility and the subdual of the universe for one's service, it is possible to do without them.

When Abu Dharr was exiled to the village of Rabdha for warning against the negative effect of money, building and other worldly affairs, thereby causing social strife, before he left he went to `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* to ask for his pardon. However, `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* did not want to become involved, lest it be said that he had supported Abu Dharr in his opposition to the people of worldly affairs, so he said to him 'O Abu Dharr, you became angry for Allah's sake, so put your hope in the One for Whose sake you became angry. The people fear you on account of their worldly lives and their possessions. You feared them on account of your religion, so flee with that on whose account you feared them (i.e. flee with your religion) and leave aside what they feared you for. They are in dire need of that which you would forbid them. You are free of need for that which they would forbid you.'<sup>(1)</sup>

In this way, `Ali *Allah be pleased with him* answered the question and highlighted the importance of knowledge and divine guidance that no Muslim can ever dispense with or can live without. By knowledge one can gain another life which is lofty and eternal, whilst he is able to live without wealth and possessions.

The Caliph sent a message to Ja`far As-Sadiq<sup>(2)</sup> in which he said: 'O grandson of Prophet Muhammad, why do you not visit us (i.e. come to us and sit with us and converse with us) like other people do?' whereupon Ja`far

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(1) The story of the exile of Abu Dharr *Allah be pleased with him* and `Ali's stand with him.

(2) The story of Ja`far As-Sadiq *Allah be pleased with him* with the caliph who sent for him to visit him.

replied ‘I have nothing of this worldly life that I might fear you for’, i.e. I have no money that you could take, and you possess nothing of the hereafter that I could hope to take from you.’ This is the same logic that ‘Ali *Allah be pleased with him* previously used.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and they both said, “Praise be to Allah, who has favoured us over many of His believing servants.’ (*an-Naml*: 15) The praise here is dedicated to knowledge and the conservation of Allah’s Guidance. This verse offers as evidence for the veracity of prophecy. Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon them* said, ‘...who has favoured us over many of His believing servants’ (*an-Naml*: 15) as though there are some who were favoured more than them and as though this favouring was not confined solely to them. This was out of their humility.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَوَرِثَ سُلَيْمَنُ دَاوُدَ وَقَالَ يَتَّيْهَا النَّاسُ عَلِمْنَا مِنْطِقَ الطَّيْرِ  
وَأُوتِينَا مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ إِنَّ هَذَا لَهُوَ الْفَضْلُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٦﴾

**‘Solomon succeeded David. He said, ‘People, we have been taught the speech of birds, and we have been given a share of everything: this is a clearly a great favour’[16]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 16)**

Allah *the Almighty* says that ‘Sulaiman (Solomon) succeeded Dawud (David)...’ (*an-Naml*: 16) meaning that Sulaiman (Solomon) succeeded his father, Prophet Dawud (David) *peace be upon them* and became a prophet. He did not inherit wealth, a point which is clear in the following Hadith of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘We Prophets are not inherited from; what we leave behind is charity.’<sup>(1)</sup>

This indicates that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* came after Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* and inherited prophethood from him, even though they lived at the same time, as is shown by Allah’s statement elsewhere

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(1) Agreed upon by Al-Bukhari and Muslim, on the authority of ‘Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him*.

in the Quran: 'And [remember] Dawud (David) and Sulaiman (Solomon) – [how it was] when both of them gave judgment concerning the field into which some people's sheep had strayed by night and pastured therein, and [how] We bore witness to their judgment.' (*al-Anbiya'*: 78)

So Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* shared with Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* in this judgement and knowledge, but the True Lord made the knowledge come in stages, as is shown in Allah's saying, 'We made Sulaiman (Solomon) understand the case...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 79). Even though his father was present, and judged that the owner of the crops should take the sheep that had eaten them.

After Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* had left, Sulaiman (Solomon) asked them about his father's verdict and they told him what he had said, whereupon he *peace be upon him* said that it was better for the owner of the crops to take the sheep and benefit from them (i.e. from their wool and milk, etc.), while the owner of the sheep took care of the crops until they were back to their previous state, whereupon he could take his sheep back and the owner of the crops could take his crops back.<sup>(1)</sup>

This is an example of a prophet and his son, not of two different and non-related prophets. This indicates that the paternal rights over Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* did not prevent him from differing with his father's judgement because Allah *the Almighty* says about them, '...yet We vouchsafed unto both of them sound judgment and knowledge...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 79). Both judged according to the knowledge that Allah *the Almighty* endowed them with.

This story conveys the permissibility of appealing and overturning legal verdicts. When a judge of appeal overrules the verdict of the first judge, this is not an insult to him; rather, they both judged according to their knowledge and according to the evidence and facts at their disposal. Perhaps the second judge noticed something that the first judge missed.

So, the statement: 'Sulaiman (Solomon) succeeded Dawud (David)' (*an-Naml*: 16) does not mean that he came after him. They lived at the same age, Sulaiman (Solomon) inherited knowledge, wisdom and prophethood

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(1) Narrated by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas*

from his father, not sovereignty and wealth. This is because Allah *the Almighty* wanted His messengers, in their pursuit of delivering His Message to be far removed from any material benefit that might come to them or their offspring.

So, the poor people of the family of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* are not allowed to receive the poor-due from the believers. Where is this wise rule nowadays, however, when rulers and leaders and people of power give authority to their relatives and plunder the nation for their sakes?

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...He said, “People, we have been taught the speech of birds...”’ (*an-Naml*: 16), it means that birds have their own speech and language by means of which they can communicate with each other. As Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...although there is no beast that walks on earth and no bird that flies on its two wings which are not creature likes yourselves...’ (*al-An‘am*: 38).

With the advance of science, scientists are now talking about the language of ants, bees, whales and so on. These creatures communicate with their languages instinctively and precisely, but we cannot understand their speech. Allah *the Almighty* teaches us ‘The seven heavens extol His Limitless Glory, and the earth, and all that they contain; 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)

If you say, as some have, that this means the extolling of proof (of Allah), not speech, and words, we say, ‘Since Allah *the Almighty* says, “...but you fail to grasp the manner of their glorifying Him...”’ (*al-Isra*: 44), this must be by speech and words, but you do not understand it’.

Linguists say that speech is specific to mankind; as for the sounds made by animals and birds, they are only sounds that they make constantly, such as the meowing of a cat, the barking of a dog, the mooing of a cow or the croaking of frog. Yet, these sounds have meanings, for the meow of a cat when it is hungry is not the same as its meowing when it is frightened.

So, they express something, but we cannot understand these expressions. How could we, when we humans do not even understand each other’s languages without learning them, understand the language of these creatures?

Language is a societal necessity that we collectively establish, that is, we come to an agreement about what each word means, so that we can understand each other when we speak.

Language is born of listening. You are able to pronounce words when you hear them; you cannot say a word you have not heard, even if it is a word in your own language, and you will not know what it means. If I say to you: '*Ormulu and haemocyanin* are finer than *provenderalsacculi*', you will doubtless be unable to understand what they mean because these words are not generally known to us.

A child raised in an Arabic environment will speak Arabic because this is what he hears. He will not speak English, for example, because he does not hear it. If you put the same child in an English environment, he would speak English because language is not connected to race or blood. Language is based on listening.

The meaning of '...and we have been given a share of everything' (*an-Naml*: 16) is 'We have been given all blessings'. After a while, we will hear the very same expression used by the hoopoe about the queen of Sheba: '...and she has been given [abundance] of all [good] things...' (*an-Naml*: 23). She was akin to him in respect to other kings like her, not in respect to prophethood and the bearing of Allah's guidance '...this is clearly a great favour.' (*an-Naml*: 16), that is, favour that encompasses all favours.

Then the True Lord *the Almighty* says:

وَحُشِرَ لِسُلَيْمَانَ جُنُودُهُ مِنَ الْجِنِّ وَالْإِنسِ وَالطَّيْرِ فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

**'Solomon's hosts of jinn, men, and birds were marshalled in ordered ranks before him [17] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 17)**

Allah's statement 'were marshalled in ordered ranks before him' (*an-Naml*: 17) indicates that they were brought together from everywhere, as in Allah's saying, '...and send unto all cities heralds (*hashirin*).' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 36) 'The assembly' means the gathering of people to be reckoned on the Day of Resurrection. This gathering is called 'the assembly' because it will gather people from many different places in a single place until it becomes



constrained and crowded by them. This is the same as the meaning of the word *hashr* ‘assemble’ in Arab’s everyday use; they say, ‘We randomly assemble them together’.

The meaning of ‘marshalled in ordered ranks before him’ (*an-Naml*: 17) is that they were restrained (the original meaning of the Arabic word ‘to be in order’ is to restrain). This is similar to the Prophetic saying, ‘Allah restrains with power what the Quran cannot restrain’, that is, power, force and might prevent what the Quran cannot prevent because they do not believe in resurrection and punishment, but power is a deterrent that is present here and now.

However, from what were they restrained when they stood gathered before Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*? They say that they were restrained from any of them overtaking another to go to Sulaiman (Solomon) so that the last of them could come and they could all enter before him at once. By this, all the subjects were treated equally.

They tell us that one of the attributes of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was that if he sat in a gathering, he would regard and look at everyone the same amount so that it would be equal for all of them and he would not look at one of them longer than he did with another, nor would he single out any of them. Henceforth, no one would think that he had favoured one over the others.

He would also not bring close to him anyone except those people of merit and piety whom he knew would not attempt to take advantage of this position in order to gain authority over the people. So, Prophet Muhammad would not set specific places and he forbade this. This is very different from what we see today, when some people reserve a place for prayer in the front row at the mosque, then go to continue their job and then come back when the mosque is full, stepping over other people to get to their place in the front – this is not their place in Allah’s sight.

Allah *the Almighty* distributes places according to the order that people come. If you come to the mosque first, your reward is to be in the first row. Refraining from appointing places creates friendliness amongst the people, removes differences, and increases familiarity. In every prayer, you stand next to a different person, coming to know him and knowing how he is.

This is the meaning of ‘marshalled in ordered ranks before him’ (*an-Naml*: 17). The one in front was not allowed to move until the one behind him had come, so they all came to Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* together. But in the light of this meaning for the root word *w-z-a* ‘led forth in orderly ranks’ and ‘to restrain’, how can we understand Allah’s saying, ‘...Lord, inspire me to be thankful for the blessings You have granted’ (*an-Naml*: 19) where the phrase ‘inspire me’ is based on the same root? Here, Allah’s saying ‘inspire me’ means make me able and prevent me from being heedless of Your blessings so that I will remain grateful to you.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا أَتَوْا عَلَىٰ وَادِ النَّمْلِ قَالَتْ نَمْلَةٌ يَأْتِيهَا النَّمْلُ ادْخُلُوا  
مَسْكِنَكُمْ لَا يَحْطِمَنَّكُمْ سُلَيْمَانُ وَجُنُودُهُ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١٨﴾

**‘And when they came to the Valley of the Ants, one ant said,  
‘Ants! Go into your homes, in case Solomon and his hosts  
unwittingly crush you’ [18] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 18)**

The pronoun in the phrase ‘they came’ (*an-Naml*: 18) refers to Sulaiman’s (Solomon’s) hosts of men, jinn and birds, i.e. they all came together in one row and passed by ‘a valley of ants’ (*an-Naml*: 18), i.e. an ant colony. Allah’s saying, ‘to a valley of ants’ (*an-Naml*: 18) indicates that they came from the top of the mountain, or that they traversed the entire valley, as is said in Arabic: ‘He came upon the food’, meaning he ate it all.

As for the saying of Allah, ‘one ant said, ‘O Ants! Go into your homes...’” (*an-Naml*: 18), there is a question which is ‘What was the reason for this warning?’ This is clear in the following part of the verse, ‘...in case Sulaiman (Solomon) and his hosts unwittingly crush you.’ (*an-Naml*: 18) Then the ant explained the matter completely, saying, ‘unwittingly’ (*an-Naml*: 18). Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and his hosts would not have crushed an ant colony deliberately. They might crush you whilst they are unaware of your existence. This showed the ant’s just assessment and its knowledge of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and that he was neither a tyrant nor a ruffian. So, the ant saw from afar, and spoke truthfully, and judged honestly and because of all this, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* smiled.

This statement clearly shows the distinction of the ant colony in its organisation, in which everyone knows their role and fulfils it diligently. This ant must have been charged with the job of keeping guard and watching the surrounding environments like a soldier on sentry duty.

We said before that if you sit in a certain place and drop some scraps of food or cake, you will see a few ants circle around it without approaching it, then leave it. After a moment, you will see a whole group of ants come and carry off these scraps, as though the first group were scouts charged with the task of discovering places containing food and working out how many ants are needed to carry what they find. This can be shown if you double the amount of food you drop; you will see that the number of ants that come to take it away will also double. If you were to kill the first ant that came to scout, you would find that no other ants would come to this place. This is because the ant that survived would go back to its colony and warn the others not to come to this place.

There are many wonders and signs in the ant colony, Glory be to Allah, the One Who created them, and Glory be to Allah, the One Who guided them to this instinctive structural organisation!

Another wonder of ants is that in their hives, they split seeds into two. They, then, will not take root and destroy the hive; except for coriander seeds and the like, which can grow even if they are split into two: in this case, the ants break these seeds into four pieces.

Also, researchers on ants have noticed small white kernels the size of pinheads in front of ant hives. Upon examination, these have proved to be the parts of seeds that contain growth cells, which the ants have expelled from the seeds so that they do not grow.

Allah *the Almighty* the Most Great speaks the truth in His saying, ‘Although there is no beast that walks on Earth and no bird that flies on its two wings which are not creature like yourselves...’ (*al-An‘am*: 38).

Allah *the Almighty* described the ant’s statement as being speech, saying, ‘one ant said...’ (*an-Naml*: 18). It must have been the case that the warning ‘...O Ants! Go into your homes...’ (*an-Naml*: 18) was given before Sulaiman

(Solomon) *peace be upon him* and his hosts came, when they were just entering the valley. The word 'your homes' indicates that they had houses and dwellings to live and earn a living. As we say, they gather their provision from here and there, so you find them seeking out places of food and leftovers and finding them in the narrowest of places. We see cake shops for example, which are full of sugar, which ants love, yet we do not find a single ant there. Why? When they studied such phenomena, they found that ants do not enter places that contain any sesame products. This is another amazing fact about ants.

Allah *the Almighty* says, '...in case Sulaiman (Solomon) and his hosts unwittingly crush you.' (*an-Naml*: 18); 'to crush' is to break, as Allah *the Almighty* says about hell: 'And what could make you conceive what that crushing torment will be?' (*al-Humaza*: 5).

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَبَسَّمَ ضَاحِكًا مِّن قَوْلِهَا وَقَالَ رَبِّ أَوْزِعْنِي أَنْ أَشْكُرَ نِعْمَتَكَ الَّتِي أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ وَعَلَىٰ  
وَالِدَيَّْ وَأَنْ أَعْمَلَ صَالِحًا تَرْضَاهُ وَأَدْخِلْنِي بِرَحْمَتِكَ فِي عِبَادِكَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

**Solomon smiled broadly at her words and said, 'Lord, inspire me to be thankful for the blessings You have granted me and my parents, and to do good deeds that please You; admit me by Your grace into the ranks of Your righteous servants' [19]**  
**(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 19)**

Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* smiled. It was a smile accompanied by laughter. This is because he heard her before he reached her and because she saw before the witnessed thing had arrived. Some people have discussed this matter and concluded that the wind carried the ant's speech to him whilst he was still far away from it. This might be acceptable if it were a mechanical matter; but it was the work of the Lord and the power of the Creator who grants His blessings to whomever He wishes.

Allah says, '...O my Lord! Inspire me...' (*an-Naml*: 19), i.e. prevent me from being heedless, or from forgetting these blessings, so I remain grateful, praising you always. These blessings are beyond that which You grant to other creatures, beyond that which You granted my fellow prophets before me

and all the kings of this world. Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* was granted both sovereignty and prophethood, even though Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was offered sovereignty but refused it, preferring to be a servant and a messenger.

So, everyone who is granted a blessing must receive it by praising and thanking Allah *the Almighty*. We said before, about Allah's words, '...and on that Day, you will most surely be called to account for [what you did with] the boon of life!' (*at-Takathur*: 8), that the right of the blessing is that you praise the One Who granted it, so that you will not be asked about it on the Day of Resurrection

Thanking Allah *the Almighty* for His blessings is so similar to what they do in the Egyptian countryside: the wife takes an egg and puts it in a safe place suitable for a hen to make a nest. When the hen sees the egg, she comes and lays more eggs on top of it. In the same way, thanking Allah and praising Him for His blessings is the nucleus around which more of Allah's blessings will accumulate.

This concept is made clear in Allah's words: '...If you are grateful [to Me], I shall most certainly give you more and more...' (*Ibrahim*: 7). Do you not see that if someone has knowledge and applies it, Allah *the Almighty* will give him knowledge that he did not have before? For as long as he applies his knowledge, he shows that he can be trusted with knowledge, so Allah *the Almighty* gives him more and opens for him doors that were closed. This is in contrast to the one who gains knowledge but does not apply it: Allah *the Almighty* takes the light of knowledge from him, and closes its door to him, his memory fails and he forgets what he learned. Allah *the Almighty* says, '...For he who is grateful [unto Him] is but grateful for the good of his own self...' (*Luqman*: 12). That is, the fruits of his thanks return to him because if he thanks Allah with praise, Allah thanks him with increase, for one of His names is the All-Thankful.

Allah's saying, '...the blessings You have granted me...' (*an-Naml*: 19) is specific to him; Sulaiman (Solomon) says: 'and my parents' because he inherited sovereignty and prophethood from them. This is the price of blessings;

that one does good works in the community, so that one is trustworthy with blessings and fit to be given more.

Allah *the Almighty* wants us to widen the circle of righteousness and the circle of goodness in our communities. Do you not see that Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Who is it that will offer up unto Allah a goodly loan, which He will amply repay, with manifold increase?' (*al-Baqara*: 245) He named the goodness that you offer a 'loan', even though Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who gives all blessings. He did this to make the hearts of His servants feel compassion for one another because He created them, and Allah *the Almighty* undertakes to provide for them.

Then Allah says, '...admit me by Your Grace into the ranks of Your righteous servants.' (*an-Naml*: 19) He mentioned grace and blessing because they are the keys to salvation and by their means one enters paradise and without them no one will find salvation. Read the statement of the Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'None of you will enter paradise by means of your works.' They said 'Not even you, O Messenger Muhammad?' He replied 'Not even me, save that Allah covers me with His Mercy.'<sup>(1)</sup> In this same meaning, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Say, "In this bounty of Allah and in His Grace – in this, then, let them rejoice..."' (*Yunus*: 58). The true believer does not rejoice in his own deeds; he rejoices only if he gains Allah's Grace and blessing. It is as though he says to his Lord: 'I will not rely on my works, O Lord; rather, I will rely on Your Grace and blessing because if I compare the worship that You have charged me with to the blessings that You have granted me, my worship will fall short of Your right over me; so if You grant me paradise, it is by Your bounty'.

Some may ask 'How can our Lord give us blessings and increase, then forbid us from trading in usury? Are our good deeds not rewarded tenfold or more'? We say yes, but the increase here is from Allah *the Almighty* not from an equal being; it is an increase from the Lord to the servants.

Allah's saying, 'into the ranks of your righteous servants' (*an-Naml*: 19) shows the humility of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. Despite his

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(1) *Agreed upon Hadith by Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

position and his rank, he asked Allah *the Almighty* to make him one of the righteous and to place him amongst their ranks. Despite the sovereignty that Allah *the Almighty* gave him and that none after him could possess, he did not make himself special, or pre-eminent, or claim to be better than the rest of Allah's servants.

Allah *the Almighty* gave him prophethood and revelation and none of this caused him to become deluded or haughty. He asked his Lord to include him amongst His righteous servants, like when we say: 'Fit me in with these guys', when the car is full, for example, and there is no place for us to sit.

Who is saying this? It is Sulaiman (Solomon), son of Dawud (David) *peace be upon them* to whom Allah *the Almighty* gave sovereignty that none after him could possess. Yet despite this, he would put his slaves and retinue above himself. He would eat from the lowest quality flour, leaving the best part for his subjects.

So, he did not gain any advantage from his sovereignty, nor did he adorn himself with its outward signs. Rather, his Lord did this for Him because he was on the side of Allah's servants, so Allah *the Almighty* supported him. When you help your brother, you help him with your limited power and capability. Allah's help, however, comes according to His Omnipotent Power which knows no bounds. So, you are the one who benefits from this arrangement.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَتَفَقَّدَ الطَّيْرَ فَقَالَ مَا لِيَ لَا أَرَى الْهُدْهُدَ أَمْ كَانَ مِنَ الْغَائِبِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

**Solomon inspected the birds and said, 'Why do I not see the hoopoe? Is he absent? [20] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 20)**

The word for *tafaqqada* (inspected) is from the Arabic root (*f-q-d*), the derivatives of which are all connected to the meaning of loss. An example of this is Allah's statement about the brothers of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: 'Turning towards the herald and his companions, the brothers asked "What is it that you miss?"' (*Yusuf*: 71)

When it is in the form *tafaqqada*, it indicates that the thing is present and I am searching for it in its usual places.

The meaning of ‘Sulaiman (Solomon) inspected the birds and said, “Why do I not see the hoopoe? Is he absent?”’ (*an-Naml*: 20) is that the leader or director of something must always watch over it. Whenever Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* sat in the council of knowledge or the court, he looked to those of his dominion who were present, just like a military leader does when he observes his troops. Even though this was his kingdom, under his control, he *peace be upon him* did not leave it in neglect and fail to watch over it, it is a great indication. Why did he miss this bird in particular? Scholars say it is because he wanted to go out to the desert, and the hoopoe was knowledgeable concerning this matter knowing the desert’s unexplored territories and able even to see where water lay underground, just as one of us can see oil in its vessel.

We see that one of the divine characteristics of the hoopoe is that it is given a long beak because it does not eat things from the surface of the earth, but rather digs with its beak to bring up food from under the ground.

Do you not see that when the hoopoe told Sulaiman (Solomon) about the details of belief and faith in Allah, he said about the people of Sheba, ‘for they have come to believe] that they ought not to adore Allah – [although it is He] who brings forth all that is hidden in the heavens and on Earth...’ (*an-Naml*: 25). He chose this matter in particular because he knew about it, for it was the source of his provision.

When he did not find the hoopoe amongst those present, he said, ‘...Why do I not see the hoopoe? Is he absent?’ (*an-Naml*: 20) When someone asks about something that he knows the truth of, he does not do so in order to find it out, but rather asked to indicate that it was unusual for the hoopoe to be absent from his council.

Sulaiman’s saying, ‘Why do I not see the hoopoe’ (*an-Naml*: 20) means that perhaps he is present, but I cannot see him because of some fault of my own; but when he looked carefully and was sure that the hoopoe was absent, he said, ‘is he absent?’ (*an-Naml*: 20) So, he must surely be punished:

Sulaiman then says:



لَأُعَذِّبَنَّهُ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا أَوْ لَأَذْبَحَنَّهُ أَوْ لِيَأْتِنِي سُلْطَانٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٢١﴾

**I will punish him severely, or kill him, unless he  
brings me a convincing excuse for his absence [21]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 21)**

Punishment of disobedience is necessary because if disobedience goes unpunished, this will lead to further disobedience even greater than it. When we see an employee who does not do his job well, go unnoticed by anyone, we will do the same thing he does, then chaos, laziness and indifference will spread among us. Disaster ensues when laxity is rewarded and undeserving people are promoted.

Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* threatened the hoopoe: ‘I will punish him severely or kill him...’ (*an-Naml*: 21). The scholars have discussed the punishment of the hoopoe, saying that the beautiful feathers that he boasted of before the other birds would be plucked until he was featherless and then ants would be placed on him to gnaw at him; or that he would be placed with species other than his so that he would not find companionship with them and they would not resemble him in his actions and his ways. Or that they would make him serve his fellow hoopoes that had been obedient. Or that he would be placed with his adversaries, for some birds, if they mix, begin to fight and clash, pecking out each other’s feathers because they are natural adversaries. For this reason, they say, ‘It is more confining than prison to live among your adversaries’. The poet says:

One of the calamities of this world for a man

Is to see an enemy whom he is forced to befriend

Then, he changed the act of punishment to execution. Those who reject Allah’s Religion and wish to prevent His Laws from being implemented condemned this punishment. They tried to throw obscurity on Allah’s saying about adultery: ‘As for the adulteress and the adulterer – flog each of them with a hundred stripes...’ (*an-Nur*: 2). They denied the punishment of stoning to death, claiming that it is not mentioned at all; so from where did you get it?

I say that this ruling is deduced from Allah’s Book, when He said about the flogging of a slave-girl who commits fornication: ‘...they shall be liable

to half the penalty to which free married women are liable.’ (*an-Nisa*: 25) They said: ‘But how can you halve a death-sentence?’ This indicates their total lack of understanding of the divine rulings.

The meaning is: ‘they’, i.e. slave-girls ‘...shall be liable to half the penalty to which free married women are liable’ (*an-Nisa*: 25). He did not say simply ‘half of that to which free women are liable’; rather, He specified the penalty, so a slave is subject to fifty lashes. This specification showed that there is another punishment which is not halved, that is, execution.

Sulaiman’s (Solomon’s) threat to the hoopoe ended with his word ‘...unless it brings me a convincing excuse’ (*an-Naml*: 21), i.e. a clear justification for its absence. We understand from the verse that a subordinate is permitted to act according to his opinion without asking permission from his leader, if he sees a common good that cannot be delayed.

In such circumstances, the leader must respect the opinion of his follower and excuse him because he might have a good reason which the leader should praise him for and even reward him. As a matter of fact, one’s absence may be for a common good. As we say in our dialect: ‘The absent person’s excuse is with him’, that is, he has something important to do, which is why he was not present.

So, if a subordinate sees a good that can serve the common goal and sees that his opportunity is little, he is permitted to act without permission. In the First World War, one of the German officers acted contrary to the military rules; but it was a means to victory. So, they gave him a military medal, but meanwhile they did not forget to punish him for breaking the rules and laws.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَمَكَثَ غَيْرَ بَعِيدٍ فَقَالَ أَحَطْتُ بِمَا لَمْ تُحِطْ بِهِ وَجِئْتُكَ مِنْ سَبَإٍ بِنَبَأٍ يَقِينٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

**But the hoopoe did not stay away long: he came and said, ‘I have learned something you did not know: I come to you from Sheba with firm news [22] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 22)**

The meaning of ‘stay away’ is that the hoopoe stayed and remained absent for no long time, and was not very late in arriving because it knew that it was absent from Sulaiman’s (Solomon’s) *peace be upon him* army. The

hoopoe had gone without Sulaiman's (Solomon's) permission, so it returned as soon as it could. Once it got back, it was quick to speak: 'it came and Said...' (*an-Naml*: 22). The use of the Arabic particle (*fa*) here indicates quick succession, i.e. it arrived and began to speak immediately because it saw that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* was angry and preparing to punish it. That is why it spoke quickly before Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* could speak and scold it: '...I have learned something you did not know...' (*an-Naml*: 22), i.e. I know what you know not. This statement was directed to Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* who owned the entire world, and for whom Allah *the Almighty* subdued everything. So, he *peace be upon him* was amazed by the hoopoe's speech and yearned to know what it knew, whilst he *peace be upon him* knew it not. The hoopoe went on: '...I come to you from Sheba with firm news' (*an-Naml*: 22).

First, let us consider the beauty of the expression that linked 'Sheba' to 'firm news'. In Arabic, the two words produce assonance: *saba* and *naba*. This is a high rhetorical style in the Arabic language, which gives the expression a beautiful sound that is in harmony with the intended meaning. The word for this rhetorical device in Arabic is *jinas* (paronomasia) which means that two words have the same letters, but different meanings, such as the poet's saying

I left my home to come to you (*asiru*)

And my heart is a prisoner of your love (*asiru*)

The two lines both end with the word *asiru*, which means 'come/walk' in the first line, and 'prisoner' in the second. Another poet said:

The right you have upon me,

Has not even partly been fulfilled (*yajibu*)

By the heart that, upon your mention,

Beats harder within my breast (*yajibu*)

Here, the two lines both end with the word *yajibu*, which means both 'what is necessary' and 'to beat' in reference to the palpitation of the heart.

An example of *jinas* in the Noble Quran is found in the saying of Allah, 'It is He Who will cause you to die, and in time will resurrect you. And when

the Last Hour dawns, those who had been lost in sin will swear that they had not tarried [on Earth] longer than an hour...' (*ar-Rum*: 55). In the aforementioned verse, the word 'hour' is repeated with a different sense.

The Quranic expression '...I have come to you from Sheba with firm news' (*an-Naml*: 22) has a beautiful sound and a precise meaning. If it had said 'I come to you from Sheba with news' using the word *khavar*, both the words and the meaning would be deficient because 'news' means any kind of information, whereas 'firm' is only used to report some important, amazing news that attracts attention, as in Allah's words: 'About what do they [most often] ask one another? About the awesome tiding [of resurrection]' (*an-Naml*: 1-2).

*Jinas* is only beautiful when it is natural, without affectation. For example, consider the partial *jinas* (i.e. that in which not every letter of the two words are the same, but only most of them, so they rhyme) in Allah's saying: 'Woe unto every slanderer, fault-finder!' (*al-Humaza*: 1) The words used in the Arabic are *humaza* and *lumaza*.

The appropriate word, giving the desired meaning, has been used, without affectation. *Humaza* means someone who is deficient in speech; *lumaza* means someone who is deficient in actions. The Quran does not seek out words to produce rhymes; *jinas* only occurs when it is natural and fits the right meaning exactly.

Another example of this is the Noble Hadith: 'Goodness is inherent in the forelocks of horses.'<sup>(1)</sup> There is partial *jinas* in the words for *khayl* (horses) and *khayr* (goodness), which makes the expression beautiful and also gives the appropriate meaning.

Rhetorical devices may be sometimes artificial such as when someone artificially carves out a feeble rhyme using influential speech that makes little sense and sounds artificial, like trying to rhyme *qirab* (water-skin) with *'inab* (grapes).

The statement: '...I have learned (*ahattu*) something you did not know' (*an-Naml*: 22), means to have awareness of something from all sides. The Arabic root of this word is *muhit* which means ocean which is so wide.

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(1) Agreed upon Hadith by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

Also, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and, indeed, Allah encompasses everything.’ (*an-Nisa*: 126) using the same word *muhit* for imparting the meaning of ‘know’. We also get the word *ha`it* (wall) from this root which means the fence they put around orchards to protect them and demarcate their boundaries. It also gives the meaning of ‘to attend to something properly’. It further carries the meaning of the area of a circle meaning the space that it surrounds from all sides with its radii.

But does the hoopoe’s statement ‘...I have learned something you did not know’ (*an-Naml*: 22) imply a deficiency on the part of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*? No; it is rather a mark of honour for him because his Lord subdued for him those who would serve him. The difference between you doing something yourself and having it done for you is that when it is done for you, this increases your dominion and raises your rank.

Also, Allah *the Almighty* commands not to neglect the talents of those who follow us, that we should give them a chance and give them the means to use their skills, so that all of them say what they know, in case we ourselves do not know, so that it can serve us.

Is it not an honour for Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* to bring forth Bilqis throne without moving?! Allah says: ‘Answered he who was illumined by revelation, “Nay, as for me – I shall bring it to thee ere the twinkling of thy eye ceases!”’ (*an-Naml*: 40)

The hoopoe did not explain what Sheba was, a point that indicates that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* knew about Sheba and the dominion that was there; he only did not know how great and magnificent it was.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

إِنِّي وَجَدْتُ امْرَأَةً تَمْلِكُهُمْ وَأُوتِيَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَلَهَا عَرْشٌ عَظِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

**I found a woman ruling over the people, who has been given  
a share of everything – she has a magnificent throne [23]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 23)**

The statement ‘a woman ruling over the people’ (*an-Naml*: 23) means that she was their ruler; We have seen many instances of women who famously ruled

nations of men. Then it describes her as having ‘...who has been given a share of everything’ (*an-Naml*: 23). This seems to be an allusion to what Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* said before: ‘...and (we) have been given [in abundance] of all [good] things...’ (*an-Naml*: 16). She too had been given everything in comparison to her contemporaries, although Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* was given sovereignty and prophethood above what the Queen of Sheba was given.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...she has a magnificent throne’ (*an-Naml*: 23), the word ‘throne’ is the place where a monarch sits. Usually, a throne corresponds to the might of the sovereignty, so the tribal chief or the village chief or the mayor will have chairs that they sit on, which are appropriate to their ranks. So, a throne is the seat that the one in charge sits on.

The throne is described as ‘magnificent’, even though this is how Allah’s Throne is described. How can this be? They say that it was mighty compared to the other monarchs of her kind; as for Allah’s Throne, it is Mighty compared to all creation, that is, with Absolute Might.

So, the hoopoe told Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* about what distinguished the Queen of Sheba in respect to the sovereignty and made her resemble him *peace be upon him* as a monarch. After this, the hoopoe went on to tell him about matters related to prophethood and faith in Allah which is what Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* was concerned about and affected by.

Allah *the Almighty* says:

وَجَدْتُهُمْ وَقَوْمَهُمَا يَسْجُدُونَ لِلشَّمْسِ مِن دُونِ اللَّهِ وَزَيْنَ لَهُمُ  
الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَلَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمُ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ فَهُمْ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

**[but] I found that she and her people worshipped the sun instead of God. Satan has made their deeds seem alluring to them, and diverted them from the right path: they cannot find the right path [24] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 24)**

This is because when it circled the palace of Bilqis and found therein a window through which the sun shone, just as we find in the temples of the ancient Egyptians. In one of these temples, there is a window through which

the rays of the sun enter one time a year. Likewise, Bilqis had a window through which the sun entered so that she could see it and face it.

So, when the hoopoe took Sulaiman's (Solomon's) letter to her, it stood at this window and covered it with its wings, so the sun was not seen at the defined time, which is why she stood up and went over to the window, where it threw the book to her.

So, the hoopoe was a believer; it had knowledge of the necessity of having faith in Allah; it was loyal to it and thus disliked seeing it perverted. Allah says, 'But I found that she and her people worshipped the sun instead of Allah'. (*an-Naml*: 24) It knew that Allah *the Almighty* alone deserves to be worshipped. In addition, it knew about Satan and that he is the cause for the abandonment of the worship of Allah *the Almighty* a point which is clear in the saying of Allah, '...Satan has made their deeds seem alluring to them, and diverted them from the right path: they cannot find the right path.' (*an-Naml*: 24) So, it was aware of all the details of this matter. At this point, one should not be amazed by what the hoopoe said and if any, let him read the saying of Allah, '...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!' (*an-Naml*: 44)

There follows a direct admonition from a capable preacher, who understands Allah's word, knows His way and calls unto it, and who is proud of it and feels bad to see people abandoning the way of Allah *the Almighty* the Dispenser of blessings.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

أَلَا يَسْجُدُوا لِلَّهِ الَّذِي يُخْرِجُ الْخَبَاءَ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ  
وَالْأَرْضِ وَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُخْفُونَ وَمَا تُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٢٥﴾

**Should they not worship God, who brings forth  
what is hidden in the heavens and earth and  
knows both what you people conceal and what you  
declare? [25] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 25)**

As for the expression 'Should they not', it is formed in Arabic from the particles meaning 'that' and 'not'. The meaning is that Satan has made their


deeds seem fair to them so that they will not prostrate themselves to Allah *the Almighty*. So, the conjunctive particle ‘so’ is missing here which sometimes occurs in the Arabic language because it is superfluous. Another authentic reading of the Quran reads this phrase as ‘they must’, which is also one of the meanings of the aforementioned Arabic words; in this case, it implies exhortation and urging.

We said that the hoopoe chose to say ‘...who brings forth what is hidden in the heavens and earth...’ (*an-Naml*: 25) because it was familiar with this matter since it could see water beneath the earth just as one of us can see oil in its container. The meaning of ‘...what is hidden in the heavens...’ is rain; and what is hidden ‘on Earth’ is crops. From these two things come the bases of life’s sustenance: from the sky’s rain and the earth’s fertility come crops; animals then feed on crops, as do mankind.

Moreover, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...and knows both what you people conceal and what you declare?’ (*an-Naml*: 25). In another verse, He says, ‘...for nothing whatever, be it on earth or in heaven, remains hidden from Allah.’ (*Ibrahim*: 38)

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Say, “Whether you conceal what is in your hearts or bring it into the open, Allah knows it...”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 29)

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:


 اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ رَبُّ الْعَرْشِ الْعَظِيمِ

**He is God, there is no god but Him,  
 the Lord of the mighty throne [26]  
 (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 26)**

When the hoopoe spoke about Bilqis’ throne, it said: ‘...and she has a magnificent throne’ (*an-Naml*: 23). If the same expression is given a definite article, i.e. ‘a magnificent throne’, it refers to none but Allah’s Throne, for He has Absolute Might over all creation.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:



قَالَ سَنَنْظُرُ أَصَدَقْتَ أَمْ كُنتَ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

**Solomon said, ‘We shall see whether you are telling the truth or lying [27] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 27)**

As for the saying of Allah, ‘Sulaiman (Solomon) said, “We shall see...”’ (*an-Naml*: 27), sight is performed with the eye; but can truth or falsehood be known with the eye? No, so the word here does not refer to the sight of the eye, but rather to the knowledge based on evidence, so it means ‘we shall know’. In Arabic, we say, ‘this matter needs to be seen’ meaning that it needs to be studied and examined.

This verse shows an example of Sulaiman’s (Solomon’s) fine manners, and his kindness to his subjects. He was the ruler, who had to be obeyed, and yet he said to the hoopoe: ‘...We shall see whether you are telling the truth or lying’ (*an-Naml*: 27). Truth is the opposite of lying, but Sulaiman’s (Solomon’s) prophetic etiquette did not allow him to accuse one of his own forces of lying, so he said: ‘...or lying’ (*an-Naml*: 27), i.e. even if you lied, you are not alone in this; for many people lie. Another possible explanation is that he *peace be upon him* meant inclining to them and close to them. This indicates that by his prophetic inspiration, he knew that he was telling the truth, but as long as the matter was still open to investigation, he had to make sure because he would not give preferential treatment to any of his subjects.

Allah then says:

أَذْهَبْ بِكِتَابِي هَذَا فَأَلْقِهْ إِلَيْهِمْ ثُمَّ تَوَلَّ عَنْهُمْ فَانْظُرْ مَاذَا يَرْجِعُونَ ﴿٢٨﴾

**Take this letter of mine and deliver it to them, then withdraw and see what answer they send back [28] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 28)**

This is the ‘act of seeing’ that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* deemed necessary to be sure of the hoopoe’s honesty: that he should send it with a letter to these people. This is an example of the eloquent conciseness of the Noble Quran. After Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* said ‘...we shall see...’ (*an-Naml*: 23), he said: ‘Take this letter of mine...’ (*an-Naml*: 28).

Was the letter ready and prepared? No; the actual account was something like this: He said: 'We shall see whether you had told the truth or you are one of the liars', and then he wrote her a letter that said such-and-such, and then said to the hoopoe: 'Take this letter of mine...' (*an-Naml*: 28). All of this was left unmentioned because it can easily be inferred from the context of the story.

His word 'then withdraw' (*an-Naml*: 28) means 'go away for a while, and try and surmise to '...see what answer they send back' (*an-Naml*: 28), i.e. what they say to one another and how they discuss the letter amongst themselves. An example of this usage of the word 'return' can be found in Allah's saying, 'Why – did they not see that [the thing] could not give them any response, and had no power to harm or to benefit them?' (*Ta Ha*: 89)

The context leads us to say that the hoopoe went with the letter, conveyed it to Bilqis, she read and discussed it with her advisors and then said, as mentioned in the Quran:

قَالَتْ يَأْأَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ إِنِّي أُلْقِيَ إِلَيَّ كِتَابٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٢٩﴾

**The Queen of Sheba said, 'Counsellors, a  
gracious letter has been delivered to me [29]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 29)**

Notice here the quick answer to the command 'Take'. Immediately after it, the Queen of Sheba, said 'Counsellors, a gracious letter has been delivered to me.' (*an-Naml*: 29) This indicates that Sulaiman's (Solomon's) commands were sure to be quickly obeyed. So, all of the details between his saying 'Take' and the answer 'The Queen said ' is left unmentioned because of how quickly it happened.

The meaning of 'Counsellors' is the prominent and eminent people, the advisors and inner circle. As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* '...a gracious letter has been delivered to me' (*an-Naml*: 29), she described the letter as gracious, either because she had heard of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and the magnificence of his kingdom, or because the letter was written on fine paper with beautiful script and was then stamped with the official seal indicating that it was an important letter that needed to be studied and appraised.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

إِنَّهُ مِنْ سُلَيْمَانَ وَإِنَّهُ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ ﴿٣٠﴾

**It is from Solomon, and it says, “In the name of God, the Lord of Mercy, the Giver of Mercy [30] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 30)**

So, she knew Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*; she knew of his prophethood and his character that he was writing to them in Allah’s name and calling them by Allah’s command. The content of his letter was as follows, ‘In the Name of Allah, the Lord of Mercy, and the Giver of Mercy.’

Allah then says:

أَلَا تَعْلَمُونَ عَلَىَّ وَأَتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

**Do not put your- selves above me, and come to me in submission to God [31] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 31)**

It was a concise message of the utmost brevity: ‘Do not put yourselves above me’ (*an-Naml*: 31). Exaltation here means the haughtiness and superciliousness to which monarchs often become accustomed. She was a monarch like him, had a mighty throne and she had been given abundance of all things. The fact that he addressed her in this succinct way, far away from any discussion or debate, required that she should reflect and consider the matter carefully.

So, after she informed her advisors of the letter and what it contained, she asked for their opinion and counsel.

Allah then says:

قَالَتْ يَا أَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ أَفْتُونِي فِي أَمْرِي مَا كُنْتُ قَاطِعَةً أَمْرًا حَتَّى تَشْهَدُونِ ﴿٣٢﴾

**She said, ‘Counsellors, give me your counsel in the matter I now face: I only ever decide on matters in your presence’[32] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 32)**

We had spoken about the issue of *fatwa* (legal verdicts); the word *fatwa* is derived from the word *futuwwa*, meaning ‘strength and power’. The form of

the word means to give something you possess to others, so in this case, it means to give strength in the form of a judgement or an argument.

As for the saying of Allah, ‘...I only ever decide on matters in your presence’ (*an-Naml*: 32), it means that she would not decide a matter without their presence and counsel. This indicates that she accepted the principle of consultation despite her sovereignty, power, and authority. The nobles of her people then replied to her, as shown in the following verse:

قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَوْلُوا قُوَّةٍ وَأُولُوا بَأْسٍ شَدِيدٍ وَالْأَمْرُ إِلَيْكِ فَانْظُرِي مَاذَا تَأْمُرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

**They replied, ‘We possess great force and power in war, but you are in command, so consider what orders to give us’ [33]**  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 33)

We are physically powerful, brave, and mighty. Moreover, we have a great army which is large in numbers and equipment. As for the saying of Allah, ‘...but you are in command...’ (*an-Naml*: 33), it means that if you, the Queen of Sheba, wish to go to war, we are ready for it. They were presenting their opinion to her without trying to force her to follow it; it was a political opinion, not a wartime counsel. She had the final decision whether to go to war if she wanted, which is why Allah *the Almighty* concluded the verse with His saying, ‘...so consider what orders to give us’ (*an-Naml*: 33); the counsellors told her that they were ready for truce or even war, affirming that they awaited her command.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

قَالَتْ إِنَّ الْمُلُوكَ إِذَا دَخَلُوا قَرْيَةً أَفْسَدُوهَا وَجَعَلُوا أَعِزَّةَ أَهْلِهَا أَذِلَّةً وَكَذَلِكَ يَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

**She said, ‘Whenever kings go into a city, they ruin it and humiliate its leaders – that is what they do’ [34]**  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 34)

Bilqis then presented her opinion, as shown in the Quran saying: ‘Whenever kings go into a city, they ruin it’ (*an-Naml*: 34). This is because kings desire

sovereignty, so they plunder everything they pass by, and even destroy it outright. Why do they do this? Because when the covetous king arrives, he is not sure of victory, so he destroys everything; yet when he realises that he has gained victory, he looks after things and does not destroy them. As for the saying of Allah, ‘...and humiliate its leaders’ (*an-Naml*: 34), Bilqis said so because these kings’ kingdoms are built on the ruins of the previous one, and so the people of nobility and leadership are the first ones they start with because having had authority taken from them, they will be quick to try and regain it and they must surely feel rage and bitter enmity.

As for His saying, ‘that is what they do’ (*an-Naml*: 34), scholars differ over its meaning; some say that it is part of Bilqis’ statement, believing this to be a sort of addendum to what she said before. But what does: ‘...that is what they do’ (*an-Naml*: 34), add, after she said: ‘...Whenever kings go into a city, they ruin it and humiliate its leaders’ (*an-Naml*: 34)? So the correct opinion is that this expression is said by Allah *the Almighty* by way of confirming what Bilqis said and that she was correct in her view. Indeed, this is what kings do when they enter a village. This shows that Allah *the Almighty* is the Lord of all creatures and that when He hears any of His servants speak the truth, He supports them; He does not oppose them, or deny them their right.

وَإِنِّي مُرْسِلَةٌ إِلَيْهِمْ بِهَدِيَّةٍ فَنَاظِرَةٌ بِمَ يَرْجِعُ الْمُرْسَلُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

**But I am going to send them a gift, then see what answer  
my envoys bring back [35] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 35)**

The advisors left the matter up to her; she used her intellect, intelligence, and experience of life as a monarch. She said: ‘If Sulaiman (Solomon) is a king, he must covet the wealth we possess; and if he is a prophet, he will not care about any of it’. She decided therefore to send him a gift that would suit his position as king, and her own position, too, to confirm for him that she was in position of great wealth and riches. It must have been a valuable gift in order to attract the king, or, as we say, to make him ‘sit up and pay attention’. ‘But I am going to send them a gift, then see what answer my envoys bring back’ (*an-Naml*: 35). If he was a king, he would accept it. We would know that the way to deal with him would be to send to him a tribute of money

every year. If he was a prophet, he would not accept anything. This was a fine idea on the part of Bilqis, showing her intelligence and brightness, whereby she kept her people from war and conflict.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَ سُلَيْمَنَ قَالَ أْتِمِدُونَنِي بِمَالٍ فَمَا آتَانِي ۚ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ  
مِّمَّا آتَاكُم بَلْ أَنتُمْ بِهَدِيَّتِكُمْ تَفْرَحُونَ ﴿٣٦﴾

**When her envoy came to Solomon, Solomon said, ‘What! Are you offering me wealth? What God has given me is better than what He has given you, though you rejoice in this gift of yours [36] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 36)**

As soon as Bilqis’ messenger came to Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* with the gift, ‘...he said, “What! Are you offering me; wealth? What Allah has given me is better than what He has given you...”’ (*an-Naml*: 36), what gift is this, when I possess sovereignty the like of which none after me could possess? ‘Though’, i.e. think again, ‘...you rejoice in this gift of yours’ (*an-Naml*: 36).

He ascribed the gift to them, not to himself. Ascription means either possession, as in ‘the pen of Zayd’, i.e. Zayd’s pen; or it means composition, as in ‘a kilo of wheat’, i.e. a kilo composed of wheat; or it means within something, as in ‘the plot of the night’, i.e. a plot made during the night. So, his saying ‘...this gift of yours’ (*an-Naml*: 36) either means ‘your gift’, i.e. you would rejoice if someone gave you a gift like this, or because I will return it to you, so you can rejoice in its being returned to you as a blessing; or it means ‘a gift from you’, i.e. you would rejoice if you gave me a gift and I accepted it from you.

These are three possible meanings for ‘...though you rejoice in this gift of yours.’ (*an-Naml*: 36)

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

أَرْجِعْ إِلَيْهِمْ فَلَنَأَيِّبَنَّهُمْ يَجُودِرُ لَا قِبَلَ لَهُمْ بِهَا وَلَنُخْرِجَنَّهُمْ مِنْهَا أَذِلَّةً وَهُمْ صَاغِرُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

**Go back to your people: we shall certainly come upon them with irresistible forces, and drive them, disgraced and humbled, from their land [37] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 37)**

Remember that the queen said, ‘...then see what answer my envoys bring back’ (*an-Naml*: 35). It is as though he was aware of exactly what she had said and was speaking by means of revelation within him and said: ‘Go back to your people: we shall certainly come upon them with irresistible forces’ (*an-Naml*: 37).

In this way, it turns to be a confrontation; for his speech was the speech of revelation, which accepts no barter, not the speech of a king who chases the vanities of this world. ‘... and drive them, disgraced and humbled, from their land.’ (*an-Naml*: 37) It is as though he was showing them that he knew she had said: ‘Whenever kings go into a city, they ruin it and humiliate its leaders— that is what they do’ (*an-Naml*: 34). This was also a revelation.

The meaning of ‘with irresistible forces’ (*an-Naml*: 37) is that they will not be capable of resisting it and will be too weak to bear it. Then Allah says, ‘...and drive them, disgraced and humbled, from their land.’ (*an-Naml*: 37) because he would take their sovereignty, after they had been kings, they would be slaves. Then he continued his threat to them: ‘...and humbled’ (*an-Naml*: 37) because they would have to accept a life of slavery and be mere subjects, so he added ‘and humbled’ because people are only humbled by being killed or captured.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says:

قَالَ يَتَآيَأُهَا الْمَلَأُ أَيُّكُمْ يَأْتِينِي بِعَرْشِهَا قَبْلَ أَنْ يَأْتُونِي مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

**Then he said, ‘Counsellors, which of you can bring me her throne before they come to me in submission?’ [38] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 38)**

The word ‘Counsellors’ means prominent and eminent people and those of sound reasoning. ‘...Which of you can bring me her throne before they

come to me in submission' (*an-Naml*: 38)? This is also an example of Sulaiman's (Solomon's) divine guidance. It means that he knew what would happen when he returned their gift to them, and that they would be quick to surrender to Allah *the Almighty* because the return of the gift meant that they were people of principle, who possessed a divine message, which they would defend at all costs, and that they were not people who sought their own benefit.

When he saw that they would surrender willingly, he asked his hosts to bring him her throne, and assigned the time in which it was to be brought as: '...before they come in submission' (*an-Naml*: 38).

So, someone had to go to the kingdom of Sheba, take down the throne, carry it to the kingdom of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and then set it up there. Of course, such a task was beyond human capability. For this reason, none of them spoke up; even the ordinary jinn did not suggest to Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* that they were ready to perform this task.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قَالَ عِفْرِيتٌ مِّنَ الْجِنِّ أَنَا ءَانِيكَ بِهِۦ ۖ قَبْلَ أَن تَقُومَ ۚ مِن مَّقَامِكَ وَإِنِّي عَلَيْهِ لَقَوِيٌّ ءَمِينٌ ﴿٣٩﴾

**A powerful and crafty jinn replied, 'I will bring it to you before you can even rise from your place. I am strong and trustworthy enough' [39] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 39)**

Jinn are akin to mankind in their powers and skills. Some of them are strong and cunning, whilst others are unskilled, not able to do anything well. The word '*ifrit*' is derived from the verb '*affara*' which means to sprinkle dust. When the Arabs would race on horses or other mounts, the one in the lead would kick up dust in the face of the other, so he would have to slow down. So, they would call such a person '*ifrit*', because he had thrown dust upon those behind him. Or, it meant that he would throw dust into the face of anyone who confronted him and so they would call him '*ifrit*'.

So, an '*ifrit*' is a low, scheming kind of jinn and one of extraordinary power. He was the one to volunteer for this mission, saying, and '...I will bring it to you before you can even rise from your place...' (*an-Naml*: 39). This is a vague statement, because Sulaiman's (Solomon's) council sessions before his



subjects for the purpose of judgement or teaching would take time, perhaps an hour, or two. The bold jinn vowed that he would bring the throne during this time, i.e. he would not postpone it for another session.

His statement ‘...I am strong and trustworthy enough’ (*an-Naml*: 39) indicates that this bold jinni was aware of the grandeur and imposing size of the throne, that it was something precious that needed to be well looked-after, especially when being carried. With respect to its size and grandeur, he said: ‘... I am strong and trustworthy enough’ (*an-Naml*: 39), i.e. able to carry it. With respect to its value and preciousness, he said he was ‘trustworthy’, i.e. he would not damage it in any way.

Then another person, whose identity the Quran did not specify, spoke up and said:

قَالَ الَّذِي عِنْدَهُ عِلْمٌ مِّنَ الْكِتَابِ أَنَا ءَاتِيكَ بِهِ قَبْلَ أَن يَرْتَدَّ إِلَيْكَ طَرْفُكَ  
فَلَمَّا رَأَاهُ مُسْتَقَرًّا عِنْدَهُ قَالَ هَذَا مِن فَضْلِ رَبِّي لِيَبْلُوَنِي ءَأَشْكُرُ أَمْ أَكْفُرُ  
وَمَن شَكَرَ فَإِنَّمَا يَشْكُرُ لِنَفْسِهِ ۖ وَمَن كَفَرَ فَإِنَّ رَبِّي غَنِيٌ كَرِيمٌ ﴿٤٠﴾

**But one of them who had some knowledge of the Scripture said, ‘I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.’ When Solomon saw it set before him, he said, ‘This is a favour from my Lord, to test whether I am grateful or not: if anyone is grateful, it is for his own good, if anyone is ungrateful, then my Lord is Self-Sufficient and most generous’ [40]**  
**(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 40)**

The *taraf* mentioned here in Arabic is the upper eyelid, i.e. before you blink. The scholars have discussed this verse much. First, they say that ‘knowledge of the Scripture’ here means knowledge of the Preserved Tablet. Allah *the Almighty* teaches some of His creatures’ secrets from the Preserved Tablet. As for the identity of this person, scholars say that it was ‘Asif ibn Barkhia, who was a pious man to whom Allah *the Almighty* had shown some of the secrets of the universe.

Another opinion says that it was actually Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* himself, and that when the bold jinn said to him: ‘...I will bring it to you before you can even rise from your place.’ (*an-Naml*: 39), he replied:

‘...I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.’ (*an-Naml*: 40) because if it had been another person, this would mean his knowledge of revelation would have been greater than that of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*.

But the others answered this by saying that the greatness of Sulaiman (Solomon) was that one of his subjects could have such knowledge of revelation that they could bring forth the throne in the twinkling of an eye, whilst being a servant to the kingdom of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and subdued to his will. Furthermore, individual distinctions do not necessarily mean superiority. Moreover, it is not a condition of sovereignty that the sovereign should know trivial things!

As for my opinion, I choose the view that it was actually Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* himself who spoke.

There is a wide gap of capacity between he who would bring the throne before the king stood from his council and he who would bring it in the twinkling of an eye. To transport the throne from the kingdom of Bilqis to the kingdom of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* would need much time and strength.

Time and strength have an inverse relationship: as strength increases, time decreases. For example, when a small child tries to move something from one place to another, he approaches it slowly and carries it slowly until he puts it in its place. As for a man, he picks it up and moves it quickly. We notice this with different modes of transport. There is a difference between travelling by car, by plane and by rocket ship, for instance.

We spoke about this issue in the story of the Night Ascension, when Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was taken up with such speed because it was Allah *the Almighty* who took him up, and took him from one place to another. Because of this, the journey was swifter than the human mind could imagine.

As long as time has an inverse relationship with strength, do not ascribe this event to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It was Allah *the Almighty* who did it, and the strength of the All-Powerful, which has no need of time. If you ask why, then, the journey lasted a night, and took time, we say that it is because the Prophet Muhammad passed by and

witnessed things, spoke and asked questions, heard things and this is what took time. As for the Ascension itself, it happened in no time at all. For this reason, before the True Lord told us of this amazing event: ‘Limitless in His Glory is He who transported His servant...’ (*al-Isra*: 1), i.e. He is utterly unlike everything else. The same is true in the case of the carrying of the throne in the twinkling of an eye: the one who did it must have done it with the help of Allah *the Almighty*. According to knowledge that Allah *the Almighty* gave him, it was transmitted by the word ‘Be’, which needs no time or external strength. As long as the matter was by Allah’s will, power, and inspiration, we have nothing to say but ‘Amen’.

His statement ‘...I will bring it to you in the twinkling of an eye.’ (*an-Naml*: 40), challenged the bold jinn, so he would not think that he was more powerful than mankind. If Allah *the Almighty* wills, He can give me power greater than yours, by means of which I can subjugate you to my service.

This is in accordance with Allah’s words about the subjugation of the jinn: ‘They made for him whatever he wished of sanctuaries, statues, basins as [large as] great watering-troughs and cauldrons firmly anchored...’ (*Saba*: 13). So, that they knew they were ignorant, they continued to serve Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* when he was dead, supported by his staff before them, whilst they were frightened and in awe of him.

A challenge might be something higher, or it might be something lower, such as if a person says to his friend: ‘I have studied Paris in depth, to the extent that I can drive around it with you and tell you wherever we are, whilst I am blindfolded’; so his friend says: ‘I can tell you all this even if I am not blindfolded’!

‘When Sulaiman (Solomon) saw it set before him, he said, “This is a favour from my Lord...”’ (*an-Naml*: 40). This was either because Allah made him able to bring it himself, or because He subjugated for him someone with knowledge of revelation to bring it for him. Either way, it was from Allah’s bounty. ‘...to test whether I am grateful or not’ (*an-Naml*: 40), i.e. will I thank Allah *the Almighty* to pass the test, or will I show ingratitude to Allah’s blessing and fail? This is because a test is only judged by its outcome.

Gratitude is to ascribe the blessing to the One Who provided it and not to be distracted by the beauty of the blessing from the might of He who bestowed it, saying for example: 'I was only given it because of my knowledge'.

Allah's statement 'if anyone is grateful, it is for his own good' (*an-Naml*: 40) means that Allah *the Almighty* is not availed by our thanks, for He possesses the attributes of perfection before anyone thanked Him. Those who thank Him only benefit themselves and this is the fruit of their thanks. '...if anyone is ungrateful' (*an-Naml*: 40), i.e. he who denies the blessing and does not thank the One Who blesses, 'then my Lord is Self-Sufficient' (*an-Naml*: 40), i.e. He has no need of thanks, '...most generous' (*an-Naml*: 40), i.e. He gives to His slave despite the ingratitude he shows because His blessings are manifold without limit; and this is due to His forbearance and the kindness He shows His creatures.

When we reflect on Allah's words: '...And should you try to count Allah's blessings, you could never compute them' (*Ibrahim*: 34), this exact phrase is repeated in two verses in the Quran which might make some people say it is needless repetition; but if we consider the words that follow each of them, we will find that they are different: The first occurrence of this phrase is followed by: '...And yet, behold, man is indeed most persistent in wrongdoing, stubbornly ingrate' (*Ibrahim*: 34), whilst the second one is followed by: '...Behold, Allah is indeed Much-Forgiving, a dispenser of mercy.' (*an-Nahl*: 18).

So, they are complementary, each of them has its own meaning. The first one shows the wrong that a man does when he shows ingratitude to Allah's blessings and denies them. The second adds that despite this, Allah *the Almighty* is Forgiving and Merciful to His servant.

We also notice that the verse says, '...and should you try to count Allah's blessings...' (*an-Nahl*: 18), using the word 'should' which indicates something unlikelihood because no one would dare to count Allah's blessings in the universe as it is not possible to count them. No one has ever tried, even though they, with their modern devices, have counted everything. Yet no one has ever attempted to count Allah's blessings, not in any institution or university specialising in statistics.

This shows that they are incapable of doing it, just as we have never found anyone, for example, who has attempted to count all the grains of sand in the desert. Also, if we consider the exact words He uses, we find He says, ‘*ni`mat Allah*’ which literally means ‘Allah’s blessing’ (*an-Nahl*: 18), in the singular, not ‘blessings’ in the plural, the incapability is to count a single blessing because other manifold blessings are embodied within it, which under investigation prove to be beyond counting.

Then, when Bilqis came, he wanted her to undergo a test of intellect and a test of faith:

قَالَ نَكِّرُوا لَهَا عَرْشَهَا نَنْظُرْ أَتَنْهَدِي أَمْ تَكُونُ مِنَ الَّذِينَ لَا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

**Then he said, ‘Disguise her throne, and we shall see whether or not she recognizes it’ [41] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 41)**

The word *nakkiru* (disguise) literally means ‘make it unrecognisable’ because he brought the throne in the same appearance as it had in Sheba so that if she had seen it in this form, she would have recognised it, and he would not be sure of her intelligence. For this reason, he said: ‘Disguise her throne...’ (*an-Naml*: 41), i.e. change some of its identifiable parts. The same word in Arabic is used for a person who alters his appearance and his clothes so that no one recognises him.

As for the saying of Allah, ‘...Disguise her throne, and we shall see whether or not she recognises it’ (*an-Naml*: 41), it means that he *peace be upon him* ordered his soldiers to disguise her throne so that they would recognise whether she would be guided to Islam or be guided intellectually to the identity of the throne.

He says:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ قِيلَ أَهَكَذَا عَرْشُكَ قَالَتْ كَأَنَّهُ هُوَ وَأُوتِينَا الْعِلْمَ مِنْ قَبْلِهَا وَكُنَّا مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

**When she arrived, she was asked, ‘Is this your throne?’ She replied, ‘It looks like it.’ [Solomon said], ‘We were given knowledge before her, and we devoted ourselves to God [42] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 42)**

The question was worded: ‘Is your throne like this?’ (*an-Naml*: 42) This is in order to make the matter of the throne ambiguous to her and to test the

sharpness of her perception. If he had said, 'Is this your throne?' it would have suggested to her the answer, and so he said 'Is your throne like this?' (*an-Naml*: 42) It is as though he were saying 'this is not your throne'. When she looked at it as a whole, she recognised it to be her throne; but when she saw the changes and alterations, she thought it was another, so she chose a diplomatic answer that could be interpreted either way, saying: 'It looks like it' Upon this, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* realised that she possessed great intelligence, acumen and sound judgement.

This is the nature of the speech of politicians and diplomats: it is speech that is open to many interpretations, and can be applied to many situations that come after it, so that if something happens differently to how they predicted it, they will say: 'Did I not say to you such-and such...?'

An example of this is what Mu'awiya ibn Abu Sufyan<sup>(1)</sup> said to Al-Ahnaf ibn Qays: 'O Ahnaf, why do you not insult `Ali on the pulpit like the others do?' Al-Ahnaf replied: 'Pardon me, O Commander of the Faithful!' Mu'awiya said: 'I will reprimand you if you do not!' Al-Ahnaf said: 'If this is the case, I will climb the pulpit and say to the people: 'The Commander of the Faithful, Mu'awiya, commands me to curse `Ali, so curse him with me!' Upon this, Mu'awiya said: 'No, Ahnaf, say nothing at all.'

It is said<sup>(2)</sup> that tailor who was blind in one eye made a robe for a poet and one of the sleeves was longer than the other, so he could not wear it. When they asked him why he was not wearing his new clothes, he told them what the tailor had done, so they said: 'Satirise him (with a poem)!' He replied:

I speak verse of which it is not known

Whether 'tis praise or ridicule:

`Amr made a robe for me;

If only his two eyes were equal!

The poem incorporates two meanings: either a prayer for him (for two sound eyes), or a prayer against him (for two blind eyes). This is a diplomatic answer, by which a person may avoid confrontation.

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(1) *The story of Mu'awiya ibn Abi Sufyan with Al-Ahnaf ibn Qays about the insulting of `Ali.*

(2) The story of the one - eyed tailor.

Similarly, Bilqis gave a diplomatic answer: ‘It looks like it’. As for the statement ‘We were given knowledge before her, and we devoted ourselves to Allah’ (*an-Naml*: 42), it may be an extension of Bilqis’ words, i.e. I was given knowledge before this event, I knew you were a prophet when you gave me back the gift, you said what you said and I did not need the like of this event to recognise you as a prophet; or, it might be the statement of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*.

وَصَدَّهَا مَا كَانَتْ تَعْبُدُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ إِنَّهَا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمٍ كَافِرِينَ ﴿٤٣﴾

**She was prevented by what she worshipped  
instead of God, for she came from a disbelieving  
people [43] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 43)**

This means that the things that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* did along with the signs that she was shown took her from the disbelief that she had been accustomed to: ‘...for she came from a disbelieving people.’ (*an-Naml*: 43). By this, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* took her from what she had worshipped other than Allah *the Almighty*.

Allah then says:

قِيلَ لَهَا ادْخُلِي الصَّرْحَ فَلَمَّا رَأَتْهُ حَسِبَتْهُ لُجَّةً وَكَشَفَتْ عَنْ سَاقَيْهَا قَالَ إِنَّهُ صَرْحٌ مُمَرَّدٌ مِنْ قَوَارِيرَ قَالَتْ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي وَأَسْلَمْتُ مَعَ سُلَيْمَانَ لِلَّهِ رَبِّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

**Then it was said to her, ‘Enter the hall,’ but when she saw it,  
she thought it was a deep pool of water, and bared her legs.  
Solomon explained, ‘It is just a hall paved with glass,’ and she  
said, ‘My Lord, I have wronged myself: I devote myself, with  
Solomon, to God, the Lord of the Worlds’ [44]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 44)**

A *sarh* (hall) means either a grand, fortified castle, or a large hall in which kings sit. When she entered it, ‘she thought it was a deep pool of water’ (*an-Naml*: 44). She thought it was water and when someone sees water, or a wet surface, he automatically picks up his clothes so that he does not get wet. For this reason, Bilqis bared her legs, i.e. she lifted up the hem of her robe.

Upon this, Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* informed her that it was '... just a hall paved with glass' (*an-Naml*: 44), so she had no need to bare her legs, for it was not water, but only a hall paved with glass, i.e. made of glass or crystal, with water filled with fish flowing beneath it. '...She said, "My Lord, I have wronged myself..."' (*an-Naml*: 44), first of all by disbelieving, by thinking ill of Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* and imagining that he wanted to drown me in a pool of water, '... I devote myself, with Sulaiman (Solomon) to Allah, the Lord of the worlds.' (*an-Naml*: 44) It appears that she had not previously entered a testimony of surrender to Allah *the Almighty* before this one. So, the previous statement 'and (we) have surrendered ourselves unto Allah' was Sulaiman's (Solomon's) speech.

Her statement: '...I devote myself, with Sulaiman (Solomon)...' (*an-Naml*: 44) was like the word of Pharaoh's sorcerers when they saw the miracle: '...We have come to believe in the Lord of Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron)!' (*Ta Ha*: 70) because faith is only in Allah *the Almighty*, in the Messenger who leads to Allah; so she said '... I devote myself' (*an-Naml*: 44), and did not say: 'I have surrendered to Sulaiman (Solomon)'. Indeed, she did yield to him and was convinced of his prophethood. The haughtiness of monarchy in her did not allow her to humble herself before him, so she announced her surrender to Allah *the Almighty* alongside Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* because he was the cause of it. It is as though she were saying to Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*: 'Do not think I have surrendered to you. I only surrendered *with* you; so we are equal, and neither of us is higher than the other, for we are both Allah's servants'.

Some Judeo-Christian reports have been related about these events, including the story that Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him* made the court like this so that Bilqis would reveal her legs, because he had heard that she had hairy legs, as well as other baseless, fabricated stories that are not appropriate to the station of prophets.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* tells us of another prophet in the succession of prophets:



وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا إِلَى ثَمُودَ أَخَاهُمْ صَالِحًا أَنْ اعْبُدُوا  
 اللَّهَ فَإِذَا هُمْ فَرِيقَانِ يَخْتَصِمُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

**To the people of Thamud We sent their brother, Saleh,  
 saying, ‘Worship God alone,’ but they split into two rival  
 factions [45] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 45)**

The story of Allah’s Prophet Saleh (Shelah) *peace be upon him* and his tribe, Thamud, is in the chapter of *ash-Shu`ara`*. Here, it is repeated because the Quran would tell Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* stories of the succession of prophets in order to make his heart firm. Every time events occurred that shook his heart, Allah *the Almighty* gave him a Quranic revelation that fit the circumstances in which he found himself. This is not mere repetition of stories. It is a piecemeal distribution of parts, so that if they are collected together, the story is fully formed.

Allah’s words ‘To the people of Thamud We sent their brother, Saleh (Shelah)...’ (*an-Naml*: 45) mean that He sent him with something; what was it? ‘...Worship Allah alone’ (*an-Naml*: 45) For this reason, the particle *an* here has an explanatory role, meaning that it explains why he was sent, just as when Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘We inspired [thus] the mother of Musa (Moses)...’ (*al-Qasas*: 7); what did He inspire? ‘Suckle him.’ (*al-Qasas*: 7) The explanation might be a sentence, as in ‘But Satan whispered unto him.’ what did he whisper? ‘Saying, “O Adam! Shall I lead thee to the tree of eternal life, and [thus] to a kingdom that will never decay?”’ (*Ta Ha*: 120)

So Allah explained the whispering, which is a general thing, with His words: ‘Saying, “O Adam...”’ Likewise, the message to Thamud, in essence, was: ‘Worship Allah alone’ (*an-Naml*: 45). To worship, as we said, is to obey Allah *the Almighty* by doing what He commands and leaving that which He prohibits; as for that which is neither commanded nor prohibited, it is permissible, and you can either take it or leave it. If we were to examine the actions of human beings on earth, we would find that only 5% of their actions are covered by the Sacred Law with either a commandment or a prohibition; the rest in all is permissible.

So, moral responsibility entails that you do certain things because they are good for your society, and that you refrain from certain other things because they are bad for your society. So, what was the result? They '...split into two rival factions' (*an-Naml*: 45). Contention means that one of these factions stood against the other. What is meant is that one faction worshipped Allah *the Almighty* and obeyed Him, and the other faction opposed them and disbelieved in Allah.

This verse has been taken up by some of those who desire to attack Islam and the style of the Quran whilst they lack proficiency in Arabic sufficient enough to allow them to understand Allah's words; or if they have indeed learned it, their souls are not pure enough to receive Allah's words, as within them lie impurity and ill intent.

Their accusation is that the word 'two factions' is the Arabic dual form, whilst the clause: '...split into two rival factions' is in the plural form. Why, then, did Allah *the Almighty* not say 'rival' in the dual form, since it is two groups? The Quran uses this style of language in several places.

One of these is Allah's words: 'Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them; but then, if one of the two [groups] goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to Allah's commandment; and if they revert, make peace between them...' (*al-Hujurat*: 9).

Analogy would suggest that the verb 'fall to fighting' should have been in the Arabic dual form, rather than the plural. But if we reflect deeply on the meaning, we will find that a 'group' here means a plurality of people opposing another, and so if fighting occurred, each member of the group would carry their own weapon; the whole group would not advance as one carrying a single sword. In the moment of fighting, they would be a plurality.

For this reason, He said 'fall to fighting' in the Arabic plural form; as for in the beginning, and when the decision to fight was made, each group had a single position of its own, which the leaders expressed. Therefore, at this point they were considered as two groups, in the dual form.

Similarly, even though the word 'group' is a singular noun, it only refers to a plurality. Each member of the group stands in combat against a member

of the other group. So here, ‘they split into two rival factions’ (*an-Naml*: 45) means believers and disbelievers, ‘split into’ because every member of each group stood against a member of the other group.

In another place in the Quran, the True Lord explained this to us, when He says, ‘These two contrary kinds of man have become engrossed in contention about their Lord! But [thus it is] as for those who are bent on denying the truth – garments of fire shall be cut out for them [in the life to come]; burning despair will be poured over their heads, causing all that is within their bodies, as well as the skins, to melt away. And they shall be held [in this state as if] by iron grips; and every time they try in their anguish to come out of it, they shall be returned thereto and be told “Taste suffering through fire [to the fullest].”’ (*al-Hajj*: 19-22)

As for the other faction; Allah says, ‘[As against this,] behold, Allah will admit those who attain to faith and do righteous deeds into gardens through which running waters flow, wherein they will be adorned with bracelets of gold and pearls, and where silk will be their raiment: for they were [willing to be] guided towards the best of all tenets, and so they were guided onto the way that leads to the One unto whom all praise is due.’ (*al-Hajj*: 23-24)

So, Allah *the Almighty* shows the two factions what will happen to each of them and what their recompense will be. The expression ‘and, behold’ here indicates surprise, such as when someone says: ‘I went out, and behold! There was a lion at the door’. The meaning of this is that you were surprised by something you did not expect to see. Such is the case with the disbelievers of Thamud; when their prophet said to them: ‘Worship Allah alone’, they surprised us by splitting into two factions: believers and disbelievers.

Logic, truth and natural disposition should have meant that they accepted this command to obey and submit to Allah and that they not differ in this way, some ending up in paradise and others in hell.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Behold, [in the life to come] the truly virtuous will indeed be in bliss, whereas, behold, the wicked will indeed be in a blazing’ (*al-Infitar*: 13-14).

Scholars say that Allah *the Almighty* only sends messengers when there is a corrupt society. Allah *Glorified is He* has created a reproaching soul in man that makes him return to guidance and repent from sin. Also, He has created a peaceful soul which finds repose in faith and trusts the wisdom of Allah's commands and prohibitions. He also has created the part of the soul that enjoins wickedness, recognises no good or evil, and only calls its owner to sin.

Allah *the Almighty* is a Lord and a Guardian, and, as we know, the usual habit of a guardian is to oblige those under his authority to fulfil their purpose in the best way. Have you ever seen a father raise his children except for a purpose? Since Allah *the Almighty* is the True Lord, He would not command me to do anything unless it were for my own good and the good of my community. He does not benefit from our obedience, nor is He harmed by our disobedience because Allah *the Almighty* created the entire universe with His attributes of absolute perfection. So, natural disposition should lead to the reception of Allah's commandments with acceptance and submission.

This contention divides people into believers who were united in faith, and disbelievers who agreed on disbelief. The believers are unique in that their agreement would last until the end of their lives, and even further until they meet with Allah *the Almighty* in paradise. That is because they agreed on obeying the divine commands in this worldly life, and thus they will be rewarded with the same reward which is paradise; Allah *the Almighty* says, 'On that Day, [erstwhile] friends will be foes unto one another – [all] save the Allah -conscious.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67)

As for the disbelievers, they will be enemies to one another on the Day of Resurrection, to the point that they will curse and disown one another. When the Quran depicts the conflict of the denizens of Hell, it says, after mentioning the delights of paradise: 'All this [for the righteous]: but, verily, the most evil of all goals awaits those who are wont to transgress the bounds of what is right: hell will they have to endure – and how vile a resting-place! This, [then, for them –] so let them taste it: burning despair and ice-cold darkness and, coupled with it, further [suffering] of a similar nature. [And they will say to one another: "Do you see] this crowd of people who rushed headlong [into sin] with you? No welcome to them! Verily, they [too] shall have to endure

the fire! [And] they [who had been seduced] will exclaim: “Nay, but it is you! No welcome to you! It is you who have prepared this for us: and how vile a state to abide in!” [60] [And] they will pray: “O our Lord! Whoever has prepared this for us, double Thou his suffering in the fire!” And they will add: “How is it that we do not see [here any of the] men whom we were wont to count among the wicked, [and] whom we made the target of our derision? Or is it that [they are here, and] our eyes have missed them?” Such, behold, will in truth be the [confusion and] mutual wrangling of the people of the fire!’ (*an-Naml*: 55-64).

So, this world witnesses contention between the believers and the disbelievers, whereas in the hereafter, it will be amongst the disbelievers themselves— those who went astray and led others astray— those who followed and those who led.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قَالَ يَنْقُومِ لِمَ اسْتَعْجِلُونَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ قَبْلَ الْحَسَنَةِ  
لَوْلَا تَسْتَغْفِرُونَ اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُرْحَمُونَ

**Saleh said, ‘My people, why do you rush to bring [forward] what is bad rather than good? Why do you not ask forgiveness of God, so that you may be given mercy?’ [46] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 46)**

When the story of Thamud was mentioned in the chapter of *ash-Shu`ara`*, nothing was mentioned of hastening the coming of evil. What evil did they hasten for which their Lord reproached them? It was their saying: ‘Bring about, then, that [punishment] with which you have threatened us, if you are a man of truth!’ (*al-A`raf*: 70)

The affair of this tribe is strange: what would they do if the punishment did indeed befall them? Together, they said: ‘If this evil comes to us, we will seek forgiveness and repent’, imagining that seeking forgiveness and repentance would be accepted from them at such a time.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Verily, Allah’s acceptance of repentance relates only to those who do evil out of ignorance and then repent before their time

runs out: and it is they unto whom Allah will turn again in His Mercy – for Allah is All Knowing, Wise, whereas repentance shall not be accepted from those who do evil deeds until their dying hour and then say, “Behold, I now repent”; nor from those who die as deniers of the truth: it is these for whom We have readied grievous suffering.’ (*an-Nisa*: 17-18)

So, why do you seek to hasten the coming of evil and punishment when you should have sought to hasten the coming of good? Your seeking to hasten the coming of evil has thus prevented goodness from coming to you because it means that good deeds will not be accepted from you; Allah says, ‘...Why do you not ask forgiveness of Allah, so that you may be given mercy?’ (*an-Naml*: 46)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

﴿٤٧﴾ قَالُوا أَظْهَرْنَا بِكَ وَيَمَنُ مَعَكَ قَالَ طَحِرْكُمْ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ تُفْتَنُونَ

**They said, ‘We see you and your followers as an evil omen.’ He replied, ‘God will decide on any omen you may see: you people are being put to the test’ [47] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 47)**

‘Evil omen’ here means ‘to use birds to predict the future’. They used to do this to solve their problems, or before they travelled, for example. One of them would catch a bird and then release it, and if it flew to the right, they would see it as a good omen and would thus perform the task at hand; if it flew to the left, however, they would refrain from doing what they had planned to do. They called these ‘good omens’ and ‘ill omens’ and so the meaning is: ‘We feel bad about you and those that follow you’.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘...He replied, “Allah will decide on any omen you may see...”’ (*an-Naml*: 47), that is, your fate is sealed and this auguring is of no consequence and has no effect on what is incumbent upon you; so how can you use the bird’s actions to govern your own? Your destiny, and the fate that Allah *the Almighty* has planned for you, is already sealed.

In the chapter of *Ya Sin*, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...Your destiny, good or evil, is [bound up] with yourselves...’ (*Ya Sin*: 19), i.e. your bad luck is a result of the disbelief to which you have cleaved.

But why did they perceive an ill omen here when their prophet was calling them to Allah *the Almighty*? Scholars opine that this is because they opposed him *peace be upon him* once he called them to Allah. They were thus afflicted with a terrible drought, the sky withheld rain from them, and so they said: ‘It is he who has brought drought and ruin upon us’!

As for His statement ‘...you people are being put to the test (*fitna*)’ (*an-Naml*: 47), the word *fitna* here means either a test or else the grievous trial of entering Hell that would befall them.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَكَاثِبِي الْمَدِينَةِ سَعَةً رَهْطٌ يُفْسِدُونَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا يُصْلِحُونَ

**There were nine men in the city who spread  
corruption in the land without making  
amends[48] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 48)**

This matter is also a new piece of information about the story that was not mentioned in the chapter of *ash-Shu`ara*. In this way, if you reflect upon all the stories in the Quran, you will find that they are in different pieces, each one adding something new and handling a matter that fitted the context within which it was revealed. The wisdom behind this is to consolidate Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and to strengthen his heart.

The Arabic word used here for ‘men’ is *raht* which is a plural noun with no singular form; it indicates a number between three and nine, so ‘nine men’ suggests that they were clans or tribes or groups, each represented by a different person.

As for the saying of Allah, ‘spread corruption in the land’ (*an-Naml*: 48), we have a good question, ‘why did He then say: ‘without making amends’ (*an-Naml*: 48)’? Scholars believe this is because a person might be depraved in one matter, yet reformed in another, such as those who mix ill deeds with good, may Allah forgive such people.

As for these people, they were of pure depravity who reformed nothing and if they saw something good, they would go to it and corrupt it. They were insistent on depravity – there are always people who benefit from depravity,

so they oppose those who wish to reform and bring goodness because they will stop them from gaining this benefit.

We said that any religiously committed person with good morals and principles will be despised by this group that benefit from depravity, and they will oppose him and attempt to discredit him with backbiting and slander saying that he is an extremist, or they will even mock him. None would stand in the face of the messengers except this group that benefit from depravity.

Allah then says:

قَالُوا اتَّقَاسْمُوا بِاللَّهِ لَنُبَيِّتَنَّهُ وَأَهْلَهُ ثُمَّ لَنَقُولَ لِوَلِيِّهِ مَا  
شَهِدْنَا مَهْلِكَ أَهْلِهِ وَإِنَّا لَصَدِّقُونَ ﴿٤٩﴾

**They said, ‘Swear by God: we shall attack this man and his household in the night, then say to his next of kin, “We did not witness the destruction of his household. We are telling the truth”’ [49] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 49)**

These men or clans said, ‘...we shall attack this man and his household in the night.’ (*an-Naml*: 49) What foolishness, lack of intelligence and sagacity they showed! They took a vow and swore by Allah *the Almighty* that they would kill Messenger Saleh (Shelah)! This shows their foolishness, as though Allah *the Almighty* were assigning actions to them so that their foolishness and lack of intelligence will be clearly shown.

The literal meaning of the saying of Allah ‘then say to his next of kin’ in Arabic is to make someone sleep during the night until they wake up in the morning; but they wanted to make him sleep such that he would never wake up, i.e. kill him. Then, when his next kin come to seek requital for his death, they would say: ‘...We did not witness the destruction of his household. We are telling the truth.’ (*an-Naml*: 49), i.e. we did not see the slaying of his family and thus knew nothing about the perpetrators.

This is what they planned for Prophet Saleh (Shelah) *peace be upon him*. Thinking that Allah *the Almighty* would let His messenger be slain or let them slay him, they made this plan, not forgetting to prepare their defence when the matter was investigated. This was the extent of their plotting and scheming.



Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَمَكْرُؤٌ مَّكْرًا وَمَكْرُؤًا مَّكْرًا وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ

**So they devised their evil plan, but We too  
made a plan of which they were unaware [50]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 50)**

The meaning of ‘So they devised their evil plan...’ (*an-Naml*: 50) refers to the plan they hatched to slay Allah’s messenger to them, but Allah made their plan futile; Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘but We too made a plan’ (*an-Naml*: 50). There is a difference between Allah’s schemes: ‘...for Allah is above all schemers.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 54), and the scheming of the disbelievers: ‘...yet [in the end,] such evil scheming will engulf none but its authors...’ (*Fatir*: 43).

So, if you scheme for a good thing, it is not the evil kind of scheming; it is only a counter to the scheming of the enemy. You cannot simply leave him to plan and scheme against you without doing anything yourself; and so Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...for Allah is above all schemers’ (*al-Anfal*: 30) because they scheme for evil, whilst He schemes to counter this evil, help His messenger and save him from their scheming.

The word *makr* (scheme) is derived from the word for a tall tree whose branches are all intertwined with one another, so that we cannot tell which branch is which. Each branch is twisted and hidden by another.

Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘... they were unaware.’ (*an-Naml*: 50) This means that Allah *the Almighty* schemed with subtlety and wisdom, and thus the ones planned against were unaware of it; otherwise, it would not be a scheme.

If we reflect on Allah’s statements, ‘...yet [in the end,] such evil scheming will engulf none but its authors’ and ‘for Allah is above all schemers’ (*Fatir*: 43), we will see that a scheme is neither intrinsically good, nor intrinsically bad. It is only judged by the goal behind it, as Allah *the Almighty* says about conjecture: ‘O you who have attained to faith! Avoid most guesswork...’ (*al-Hujurat*: 12). So, it is clear that some conjecture is good, while others are evil.

Nowadays we are living a new phase in which schemes and ill opinions are prevalent. They say that honesty is the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s scheme because he

who schemes against people thinks that they are all schemers too, so he does not believe anything they say and he is cautious of them even if they are telling the truth. So, scheming and mistrust have become the norm, so if you are honest to a schemer, he will not believe you and will think to himself: 'He is trying to dupe me, or fool me'.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَأَنْظُرْ كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ مُكْرِهِمْ  
 أَنَّا دَمَّرْنَاهُمْ وَقَوْمَهُمْ أَجْمَعِينَ

**See how their scheming ended: We destroyed  
 them utterly, along with all their people [51]  
 (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 51)**

This verse reflects on what happened to them when they schemed against Prophet Saleh (Shelah) to overcome him at night and kill him. It is related that when they came upon him, stones pelted them from unknown directions and they were all destroyed. Allah *the Almighty* provided angels for Prophet Saleh (Shelah) to protect him and defend him.

Or, it may be that Allah *the Almighty* made a way for him to escape and go to Hadramawt, a city in Yemen. It was there that he died. So, the place was called Hadramawt which literally means 'death came'. Others say no; they went and waited for him at the foot of a mountain, hiding behind a stone in order to push it onto him, but the stone fell on them and killed them all. What is important is that Allah *the Almighty* destroyed them by any one of these means.

In the Quran, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And none can comprehend thy Lord's forces save Him alone.' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31) The disbelievers from among the people of Prophet Saleh (Shelah) wanted to slay him and his family, yet Allah *the Almighty* destroyed them instead.

Allah then says:

فَتِلْكَ بُيُوتُهُمْ خَاوِيَةٌ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا إِيَّانَا فِي  
 ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

**As a result of their evil deeds, their homes are  
 desolate ruins – there truly is a sign in this for  
 those who know [52] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 52)**

Allah's saying 'their homes are desolate ruins' (*an-Naml*: 53) indicates that Allah *the Almighty* destroyed them all; none of them remained alive. It is narrated that Allah *the Almighty* left their houses empty because of their wrongdoing. As for His saying, '...there truly is a sign in this' (*an-Naml*: 52), it means a moral and an admonition '...for those who know' (*an-Naml*: 52). In contrast to the destruction of the disbelievers, Allah *the Almighty* says about the believers:

وَأَنْجَيْنَا الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَكَانُوا يَتَّقُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

**But We saved those who believed and were  
 mindful of God [53] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 53)**

This means that the believers from among Prophet Saleh's (Shelah's) tribe were saved by Allah *the Almighty* from the punishment that befell their tribe, i.e. the tribe of Thamud.

Here, the mention of the story of Thamud ends. When the events mentioned here are compared with what is related in the chapter of *ash-Shu'ara'*, one finds that there are new pieces of information that are added here. In addition, it is noticeable that there is no mention here of the story of the she-camel that is mentioned in the chapter of *ash-Shu'ara'*, which illustrates that every verse adds something new to the story, that is, there is no redundancy at all in the verses of the Quran.

Then Allah *the Almighty* mentions a part of another prophet's story, namely Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* saying:

وَلَوْ طَا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَتَأْتُونَ الْفَاحِشَةَ وَأَنْتُمْ تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

**We also sent Lot to his people. He said to them,  
'How can you commit this outrage with your eyes  
wide open? [54] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 54)**

From the grammatical point of view, the name 'Lut (Lot)' here is in the accusative case, which indicates that it is an object of a verb, and so the explanation is that it means 'We also sent Lut (Lot)', as Allah *the Almighty* says, 'And [likewise], indeed, We sent unto [the tribe of] Thamud their brother Saleh (Shelah)...' (*an-Naml*: 45), and 'how can you commit this outrage with your eyes wide open?' (*an-Naml*: 54)

So, he mentioned that disease had spread amongst them. In the chapter of *ash-Shu'ara*, Allah *the Almighty* says, 'and when I fall ill, He is the One Who restores me to health' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 80).

Here, He says, 'with your eyes wide open', i.e. you do it openly and overtly. This shows that they were all doing it, and were even happy to do it, and that they no longer felt it to be shameful.

Or, it means: 'You saw with your own eyes what happened to those of depravity who came before you, and how Allah brought an end to them'.

Allah then says:

أَيُّكُمْ لَتَأْتُونَ الرِّجَالَ شَهْوَةً مِّنْ دُونِ النِّسَاءِ ۚ بَلْ أَنْتُمْ قَوْمٌ بِجَهْلُونَ ﴿٥٥﴾

**How can you lust after men instead of women? What  
fools you are! [55] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 55)**

This is an elucidation and an explanation of the disease that had spread among them. Even though '...What fools you are!' (*an-Naml*: 55) seems to contradict the previous statement 'with your eyes wide open' (*an-Naml*: 54), their lack of awareness was not due to lack of knowledge, but rather due to wilful impudence.

Some people think that ignorance simply means not to know; but this is what illiteracy truly means. Ignorance means that you perceive something differently to how it actually is, and this is why it is easier to convince an

illiterate person because he looks like a blank page. As for an ignorant person, he has a false notion implanted in his mind, which is why it must be removed from him firstly before trying to convince him with the true one. So, ignorance is more difficult for a preacher than illiteracy.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَمَا كَانَتْ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا أَخْرِجُوهُ  
 ءَالَ لُوطٍ مِّنْ قَرِيْبِكُمْ إِنَّهُمْ أَنَاسٌ يَّنْطَهَرُونَ ﴿٥٦﴾

**The only answer his people gave was to say, ‘Expel Lot’s followers from your town! These men mean to stay chaste!’ [56] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 56)**

How strange their situation was! The reason they expelled the believers was that ‘...these men mean to stay chaste!’ (*an-Naml*: 56) Glory be to Allah! When did purity become a sin and a crime that a person might be banished from his home for?! It is a familiar chant that we always hear from the people of falsehood in every time and place, whenever they oppose the people of truth and attempt to expel them from the scene so that they can be alone with their falsehood.

It is out of Allah’s Justice that their own speech should show their guilt and deplorable nature. The phrase, ‘mean to stay chaste!’ (*an-Naml*: 56), which they uttered, means that they themselves were unclean and Allah’s lawful and purified rules bothered them. It is as though Allah *the Almighty* made their own speech a means of condemning them so that they passed judgement on themselves by ways of it.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says,

فَأَنجَيْنَاهُ وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا أَمْرَأَتَهُ قَدَرْنَاهَا مِنَ الْغَابِرِ ﴿٥٧﴾

**We saved him and his family – except for his wife:  
 We made her stay behind [57] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 57)**

This means that the wife of Prophet Lut (Lot) was one of those who were destroyed along with her people because she used to show her people to the

neighbours of Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him*. So, they could go to them and perform depraved acts with them. For this reason, she too was punished as her people were.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَأَمْطَرْنَا عَلَيْهِمْ مَطَرًا فَسَاءَ مَطَرُ الْمُنْذَرِينَ ﴿٥٨﴾

**And We brought rain down on them. How dreadful that rain was for those who had been warned! [58] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 58)**

This rain was vile; and if the meaning of ‘rain’ here is ambiguous, Allah *the Almighty* made it clear in other verses, saying that it was stones of baked clay that were precisely fashioned and marked. It is stated that Allah *the Almighty* made them to exacting specifications so that each of them was struck by the stone that was marked for him and which could strike no other.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ وَسَلَامٌ عَلَىٰ عِبَادِهِ الَّذِينَ اصْطَفَىٰ ۚ اللَّهُ خَيْرٌ أَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

**Say [Prophet], ‘Praise be to God and peace on the servants He has chosen. Who is better: God, or those they set up as partners with Him? [59] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 59)**

We know that Allah *the Almighty* is praised for His blessings, but here ‘Praise be to Allah...’ (*an-Naml*: 59), comes after the mention of retribution, punishment and the smiting of the disbelievers. Scholars say that this statement is addressed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. It is an indication that Allah’s hosts are always victorious and that the final outcome will be on their side. This serves as a means of reassurance to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Also, the cleansing of the universe from those who would corrupt it so that the land and the people can be free of them, is also a blessing that deserves the proclamation: ‘Praise be to Allah’ (*an-Naml*: 59).

The destruction of the disbelievers and deniers of the Truth is a lesson and an admonition for others so that they do not approach that which would bring

destruction upon themselves. This is another blessing that merits praise. For this reason, Allah *the Almighty* commanded us to praise Him when we see some good given to those who are good, or some evil befall those who are evil. So, the meaning is ‘Say: “Praise be to Allah...”’ (*an-Naml*: 59), that the messengers were victorious and that the spreaders of corruption were defeated. Have you not heard the statement of the denizens of paradise: ‘...Till, when they reach it, they shall find its gates wide-open; and its keepers will say unto them, “Peace be upon you! Well have you done: enter, then, this [paradise] herein to abide!” And they will exclaim: “All praise is due to Allah, who has made His promise to us come true, and has bestowed upon us this expanse [of bliss] as our portion, so that we may dwell in paradise as we please!’ (*az-Zumar*: 73-74)

Likewise, when we see an evil person whose wickedness and corruption are widespread, receive the punishment from Allah, we say: ‘Praise be to Allah’. So, everyone spontaneously praises Allah *the Almighty* when blessing descends upon those who deserve it and when calamity descends upon those who deserve it.

Allah *the Almighty* says, about the people of evil and corruption: ‘And, indeed, We sent Our messages unto people before thy time, [O Prophet,] and visited them with misfortune and hardship so that they might humble themselves: yet when the misfortune decreed by Us befell them, they did not humble themselves, but rather, their hearts grew hard, for Satan had made all their doings seem goodly to them. Then, when they had forgotten all that they had been told to take to heart, We threw open to them the gates of all [good] things, until – even as they were rejoicing in what they had been granted – We suddenly took them to task: and lo! They were broken in spirit; and [in the end,] the last remnant of those folk who had been bent on evildoing was wiped out. For all praise is due to Allah, The Lord of all the worlds.’ (*al-An‘am*: 42-45)

After Allah *the Almighty* wiped out the evildoers: ‘For all praise is due to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds’ (*al-An‘am*: 45). In these verses, we notice the difference between the Arabic expressions ‘to open for’ and ‘to open upon’. To open for someone means to do something for their benefit, as in the saying of Allah: ‘Verily, [O Muhammad,] We have laid before you a manifest victory.’ (*al-Fath*: 1)

To open upon, however, means that this will lead to their eventual harm, and so ‘...We threw open to them the gates of all [good] things...’ (*al-An‘am*: 44) means that Allah *the Almighty* gave them good things in order to ruin them by their hands, and so they would be in a position of favour and status, so that when Allah’s punishment came for them, it would be all the more devastating.

In the story of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And as soon as you and those who are with you are settled in the ark, say: “All praise is due to Allah, who has saved us from those evildoing folk!”’ (*al-Mu‘minun*: 28) The praising of Allah here is for two things: Praise be to Allah because He drowned the wrongdoing disbelievers and thus delivered us from them; and praise be to Allah, because He saved the believers.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘and peace on the servants He has chosen’ (*an-Naml*: 59). This refers to the believers, to whom Allah *the Almighty* gave victory and final success. Peace was upon them after they endured the misery inflicted upon them by the stubborn disbelievers – so praise be to Allah *the Almighty* Who destroyed the corrupt and brought peace to the rightly-guided.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* brings up another matter in the form of a question in order that it will be more influential than the statement; Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Who is better: Allah, or those they set up as partners with Him?’ (*an-Naml*: 59)

If the verse had read: ‘Say, ‘Praise be to Allah and peace be upon those servants of His whom He chose’ because Allah is good, and what they ascribe divinity to is evil, this would have been a simple statement. A statement in itself, without considering who makes it, is open to be either believed or even denied.

If you pose the same issue as a question, you make those to whom you speak responsible for answering it. Likewise, if one of your friends ignores a favour you have done for him, rather than simply telling him, ‘I did such-and-such for you’, you leave him to be the one to tell you: ‘Did I not do such-and-such for you?’ No one speaks in this way except someone who is sure and convinced that the answer will in his favour.

So, the meaning of ‘Who is better, Allah, or those they set up as partners with Him?’ (*an-Naml*: 59) is: ‘Tell us, and we will be happy with your



verdict, after all you have seen and heard of this story: is Allah *the Almighty* better or that which they have falsely ascribed divinity to'? The answer will surely be: 'Allah is better'; and so when this verse was revealed, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was moved to react to it and quickly answered: 'Indeed Allah is better and everlasting.'

This shows that reaction to the Quran is essential. By this, we mean reaction to its meanings, not reactions to a beautiful voice and fine melodies used when reciting it. Those people who nowadays encourage reciters of the Holy Quran does so by shouting and yelling in a manner which is inappropriate to the majesty of Quranic verses. They do not understand their meanings, nor are they moved by them, to the extent that one of them might hear a verse describing Hell and respond by shouting as loud as he can: 'O Allah, increase us'!

The scribes from amongst the companions would react to the meaning of the verses, to the extent that they would complete a verse and then add to it a comment that suited it before moving on to another. Why was this? It was because they understood Allah's words, and were moved by their meaning, which shows that the Quran came in line with natural disposition. An example of this is that one of them said: 'Hallowed, therefore, is Allah, the best of artisans' and then afterwards this very statement was revealed as a Quranic verse, exactly as he had said it.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about the chapter of *ar-Rahman*, 'I recited the chapter of *ar-Rahman* to your brothers from the jinn, and they answered it better than you did! Every time I recited "Which, then, of your Lord's powers can you disavow?" (*ar-Rahman*: 13), they said "We deny none of Your blessings, O Lord, and praise is yours!"'

So, when we hear Allah's words, we should react to them and respond to them consciously. At every verse of glorification, we should glorify; at every verse of praise, we should praise Allah *the Almighty*; at every verse of supplication, we should say 'Amen'. These are the proper emotional reactions upon hearing the Quran and responding to it, not just listen to it or read it like it were poetry.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says,

أَمَّنْ خَلَقَ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ وَأَنْزَلَ لَكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً  
فَأَنْبَتْنَا بِهِ حَدَائِقَ ذَاتَ بَهْجَةٍ مَا كَانَ لَكُمْ أَنْ تُنْبِتُوا  
شَجَرَهَا أَإِلَٰهٌ مَعَ اللَّهِ بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ يَعْدِلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

**Who created the heavens and earth? Who sends down  
water from the sky for you – with which We cause  
gardens of delight to grow: you have no power to make  
the trees grow in them – is it another god beside God?  
No! But they are people who take others to be equal  
with God [60] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 60)**

The saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘Who is it’ is another question, as though Allah *the Almighty* after having decreed defeat for the disbelievers and victory for the believers, wanted to further instil faith in the souls of the believers. In addition, Allah *the Almighty* wanted His succour to the believers to be a nucleus of faith, a new emotion that would be a source of strength that would motivate them, so that they would be ready to face the enemies of the call and those who sought to oppose it.

Allah says, ‘Who created the heavens and earth? Who sends down water from the sky for you– with which We cause gardens of delight to grow: you have no power to make the trees grow in them– is it another deity beside Allah?’ (*an-Naml*: 60) So, the matter does not end simply with a battle in which the believers were victorious over the disbelievers; for within Allah’s creation lies that which is even greater still. If you were to ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they would say ‘Allah’. If you were to ask them ‘who created them?’, they would say ‘Allah’. They cannot deny these matters. It is as though Allah is asking them: ‘Was it Allah who created the heavens and the earth and sent down to you water from the sky, or was it those to whom you ascribed divinity besides Him’?

As long as Allah has claimed creation for Himself, and there is no counter to this claim, it had been confirmed for Him *Glorified is He* so that He can ask others: ‘is it another deity beside Allah’ (*an-Naml*: 60). If there is another god

besides Allah *the Almighty* Who created the universe, where is it? It must be either unaware of this claim, or else it is aware of it but frightened to counter it. Either way, it cannot be a god; otherwise, let this other come with creations and miracles greater than what we have seen.

If Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘I am Allah and there is no god besides Me and all of creation from the heavens to the earth is My Doing’, and there is no one to make a counter-claim, the matter is confirmed for Him. Allah says, ‘Allah [Himself] proffers evidence – and [so do] the angels and all who are endowed with knowledge – that there is no deity save Him...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 18).

Monotheism is first attested to by Allah Himself, then by the angels and then by those creatures who have sagacity. Emphasising this, Allah says, ‘Say: “If there were – as some people assert – [other] deities side by side with Him, surely [even] they would have to strive to find a way unto Him who is enthroned on His Almightyness?”’ (*al-Isra’*: 42) That is, these gods would have gathered and sought vengeance against the god who stole their dominion from them, and claimed it for Himself; or, they would have gone to Him to become close to Him and gain His affection.

Allah asks, ‘...Who sends down water from the sky for you’ (*an-Naml*: 60). Whatever is high above you can be called sky. It is well known that water falls from the clouds, which are above us. Or, it means that the will for its existence comes from above because the will for the existence of all things comes from the heavens, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘Indeed, [even afore time] did We send forth Our apostles with all evidence of [this] truth; and through them We bestowed revelation from on high, and [thus gave you a balance [wherewith to weigh right and wrong], so that men might behave with equity; and We bestowed [upon you] from on high [the ability to make use of] iron, in which there is awesome power as well as [a source of] benefits for man...’ (*al-Hadid*: 25).

It is obvious that iron comes from the earth; but Allah *the Almighty* is the One Who predestines its existence therein.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...with which We cause gardens of delight to grow’ (*an-Naml*: 60). Water benefits our lives in many ways and is a basic

source of life. The verse, therefore, mentioned only gardens because they too are a source of human life, providing food and drink. If you say that these days we consider beautiful gardens to be non-essentials, having no role in supporting our lives, we say: 'Yes, this is the case nowadays, but in the past, they would use the word 'garden' or 'orchard' to refer to any plot of land containing fruit or crops that was surrounded by a wall.

Although Allah *the Almighty* says '...of delight to grow' (*an-Naml*: 60), yet if you look at wheat, for example, a chief source of energy, you find that it is less beautiful than roses or jasmine. It is as though your Lord is saying to you: 'I have undertaken to provide you with luxuries and ornamentation; so I will provide you with your essential needs'.

Allah wants to transcend the taste and feelings of His servants. Read, for example, His saying: 'Behold their fruit when it comes to fruition and ripens' (*al-An'am*: 99). That is, before you eat this fruit, reflect upon its beauty and its fine appearance. It is as though it were a call for the elevation of taste and reflection on Allah's beautiful creation.

Do you not see that Allah *the Almighty* has allowed you to look upon every fruit to witness its beauty? Allah *the Almighty* says, 'Behold their fruit'. (*al-An'am*: 99) If you do not own it, you can still derive enjoyment from looking at it.

Another example of this transcendence of beauty is His saying after mentioning the benefits of cattle: '...and you find beauty in them when you drive them home in the evenings and when you take them out to pasture in the mornings.' (*an-Nahl*: 6) He also says, 'and [it is He who creates] horses and mules and donkeys for you to ride, as well as for [their] beauty...' (*an-Nahl*: 8).

Allah has provided us the necessities of life, gave us luxuries and additional delights. Notice the precise use of language here: 'Who created the heavens and earth?' (*an-Naml*: 60) The subject of 'created' is in the third person in Arabic, refers to Allah *the Almighty* as is the case with 'sends down'. As for 'We cause gardens of shining beauty to grow...' (*an-Naml*: 60), the pronoun changes to the first-person plural 'We cause...to grow', indicating majesty. Why is this? Scholars say it is because some divine blessings are

fulfilled without mankind participating in them, such as creation and the sending of rain, and so there is no suspicion that mankind could share in them. There are other things that man is part of, such as sowing crops and growing them. It is man who ploughs, sows, waters and so on, which might indicate that it is man who causes crops to grow. Allah *the Almighty* wanted to repudiate this notion. So, He ascribes the act of causing plants to grow to Himself, directly and unambiguously, in order to remove this suspicion.

Your Lord respects your actions and mentions your hard work, saying: ‘Have you ever considered the seed which you cast upon the soil? Is it you who cause it to grow – or are We the cause of its growth?’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 63-64)

Yes, you do perform some action and endeavour in this regard, but you used the earth, which Allah created; tools of iron, which Allah *the Almighty* created; seeds, which Allah *the Almighty* created and water, which Allah *the Almighty* created. As for the growing itself, you had nothing to do with it, so do not say that you are the ones who make it grow because truly it is Allah *the Almighty* Who does this; rather, say: ‘I ploughed, and I watered’.

For this reason, we find the response negating any suspicion that you might have some part in making crops grow: ‘[For] were it Our will, We could indeed turn it into chaff...’ (*al-Waqi‘a*: 65). Allah *the Almighty* also uses *lam at-tawkid* (particle for emphasis) in order to completely remove this suspicion.

This is different from what He says about the sending of water which has no suspicion of it being human action, and so the very same verb in Arabic is used, but without *lam at-tawkid* (the emphatic particle) attached to it: ‘Have you ever considered the water which you drink? Is it you who cause it to come down from the clouds – or are We the cause of its coming down? [It comes down sweet – but] were it Our will, We could make it burningly salty and bitter: why, then, do you not give thanks [unto Us]?’ (*an-Naml*: 68-70)

‘...No! But they are people who take others to be equal with Allah.’ (*an-Naml*: 60) The word used for ‘equal’ here in Arabic is *ya’dilun* which literally means ‘to do justice’. Of course, ‘justice’ is generally a praiseworthy attribute, and so when you hear this phrase, you might think that it is a description of a good characteristic that they possessed. With words like this,

we must be precise because they have many meanings. Depending on the prepositional particle used with it, the verb *ya'dil* can mean to be just, to incline, to avoid or to treat equally.

The meaning of the verb here is to avoid or evade. If only they had merely evaded it, it would have been better, but they evaded it for the sake of something else and made other things equal to Allah *the Almighty* as He says elsewhere in the Quran: 'All praise is due to Allah who has created the heavens and the earth, and brought into being deep darkness as well as light: and yet, those who are bent on denying the truth regard other powers as their Lord's equals!' (*al-An'am*: 1) That is, they consider Allah *the Almighty* equal to others.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* continues:

أَمَّنْ جَعَلَ الْأَرْضَ قَرَارًا وَجَعَلَ خِلَالَهَا أَنْهَارًا وَجَعَلَ لَهَا رَوَاسِيَ  
وَجَعَلَ بَيْنَ الْبَحْرَيْنِ حَاجِزًا إِيَّاهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦١﴾

**Who is it that made the earth a stable place to live? Who  
made rivers flow through it? Who set immovable mountains  
on it and created a barrier between the fresh and salt water?  
Is it another god beside God? No! But most of them do  
not know [61] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 61)**

Having spoken about the heavens and the earth in the previous verse, Allah *the Almighty* mentioned things that were common to them both; for rainfalls from the sky, the earth takes it in and produces beautiful gardens for us.

In this verse, Allah speaks about the earth, so He mentions some of the things that characterise the earth, saying: 'Who is it that made the earth a stable place to live?' (*an-Naml*: 61), i.e. Allah made it in a way that was comfortable, so that mankind could live upon it.

Also, He says, 'Who made rivers flow through it?' (*an-Naml*: 61), that is, water falls from the sky, and those upon whom it falls benefit from it directly. As for that which falls on the mountains, it gathers in the valleys and dams are made around it, so that people can use it at times of drought. Some rainwater flows into channels and they are called rivers.

We are able to differentiate between rivers and man-made waterways. In rivers, water flows from the tops of mountains, as well as from several different places, following declines in the land and courses through which the water can easily flow. You see it weaving to and fro, circling mountains, and rocks to follow its course.

As for man-made waterways, you see them following straight lines, except when, for example, a person of influence objects to its course, and so they have to change it so that it goes around his land.

You can witness this phenomenon if you pour water on sandy land and thus watch its flow. You will see it flowing here and there according to the nature of the land upon which it flows.

Allah says, ‘...Who set immovable mountains on it’ (*an-Naml*: 61). Allah *the Almighty* explains the wisdom behind these mountains, saying, ‘And He has placed firm mountains on Earth, lest it sway with you...’ (*an-Nahl*: 15).

So, the wisdom behind the creation of the mountains is to keep the earth still so it does not shake. If the earth had been created in a firm, solid state, it would not need the mountains, which shows that the earth was created in a state of motion and needed to be weighed down.

The wisdom behind the creation of the mountains is not only keeping the earth still; they have other functions, as Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘and has made the mountains firm: [all this] as a means of livelihood for you and your animals.’ (*an-Nazi‘at*: 32-33)

How can mountains be a provision for mankind and animals? Indeed, they are a provision because they store water so that when rain does not fall, we find the water that fell on the mountains, in rivers or waterfalls, behind dams between valleys, and in springs and wells where the earth has absorbed it.

Just as mountains store water, they also store fertility that visits agricultural land year after year, so it remains fertile. We have already spoken about the phenomenon of the process whereby the top layer of rock crumbles and falls into valleys along with rainwater and mixes with the soil, increasing its fertility.

Were it not for the firmness of the mountains and its rocks, they would break apart in only a few years, and we would lose the source of this fertility

after that. This phenomenon is a sign of Allah's Mercy to His creation because it is proportionate to population increase, so that as population increases, the fertile land for agriculture also increases.

We also said before that if you reflect on the placing of mountains and valleys, you will find that a mountain is a triangle with its base at the bottom and its point at the top, whilst a valley is the opposite: it is a triangle with its base at the top and its point at the bottom. So, we see that every increase from the soil and silt that breaks from the mountain increase the surface area of the valley, so the fertile area increases every year along with the increase in population.

Allah *the Almighty* says about mountains: 'Say: "Would you indeed deny Him who has created the earth in two aeons? And do you claim that there is any power that could rival Him, the Lord of all the worlds?" For He [it is who, after creating the earth,] placed firm mountains on it, [towering] above its surface, and bestowed [so many] blessings on it, and equitably apportioned its means of subsistence to all who would seek it...' (*Fussilat*: 9-10).

Allah *the Almighty* made mountains a source of provisions of food and water. Consider the river Nile and its valley, and how it was made from the soil that the waters carried from mountaintops in Africa, in order to make this fertile land in Egypt.

Then Allah *the Almighty* says, '...and created a barrier between the fresh and salt water?' (*an-Naml*: 61), i.e. fresh water and salt water because some water is fresh, some water is salty and by His Omnipotent Power and Wisdom, He placed a barrier between them, even though salt water is the origin of fresh water. Allah *the Almighty* made the surface area of salt water three-fourths of the earth. Wide as the surface area of salt water is, the volume of vapour that forms clouds are just as wide, so enough rain falls for everyone on earth to live. One poet composed a beautiful eulogy:

I brought a gift to his noble gathering,

Yet I only gave him what I gained from his largess;

Like the cloud that rains upon the sea

Yet it does it no favour, for the water came from it!



In order that we realise Allah's favour upon us in sending down rain and granting us fresh water, look at the difficulty and hardship endured in order to filter only a few centimetres of water; not to say anything about what an operation it would be to filter enough water to provide for lands and people the whole world over.

We also compared the surface area of the sea to a cup of water: if you pour it on the floor, it will dry in just a few minutes; but if you leave it in the cup for several days, it will only decrease a little.

Allah *the Almighty* made some fresh water run in springs within the earth, which a person can get if he needs it; or, He made it run in springs whereby fresh water runs alongside salt water, neither one mixing with the other, despite the free-flowing nature of water. This is a marvel of the Omnipotent Power of Allah *the Almighty*; the Creator. From the depths of the salty sea, fresh water springs flow because they each have their own path, and course, which they each follow so that neither of them disturbs the other, as Allah *the Almighty* says, 'He has given freedom to the two great bodies of water, so that they might meet: [yet] between them is a barrier which they may not transgress.' (*ar-Rahman*: 19-20)

Just as fresh water seeps into the earth to form springs and wells, salt water also seeps into the earth to form precious stones such as marble and minerals such as iron, magnesium, granite and so on.

After mentioning this verse discussing the earth in particular, Allah poses the question: '...Is it another deity beside Allah?' (*an-Naml*: 61) who could create such things? '...No! But most of them do not know.' (*an-Naml*: 61); and those who do not know, We have now informed them, and cut off their opportunity to plead ignorance.

If we examine the earth, we will find that there are other signs within it apart from that it is stable and firm. The earth is opaque and contains soil that is not pure white; this is because Allah *the Almighty* wants it to take in the heat and light of the sun so that crops will benefit from them. If the earth was transparent and reflected back the heat and light, the crops would not be able to benefit from them. So we find that some plants grow in summer and others in winter.

When they conducted some tests on plants, putting them in dark conditions and then making an opening so that light could come in, they found that the plants, because of the instinct that their Creator placed within them, would turn towards the light to obtain warmth and light. Glory be to Allah who created and measured, and decreed and guided!

Another of Allah's signs in the creation of the earth is that He made it move and revolve, in order that every place could take its share of warmth and cold; climates vary between summer, winter, autumn, and spring. These are cycles that life's foundations demand.

Henceforth, we find that botanists divide agricultural areas on earth into different types; there are wheat, banana, potato belts and so on. We find that each belt is apt for the growing of a particular crop, which is suitable for the population there, its environment and its climate.

So, we find that every type of plant is in its appropriate place, where it is not disturbed by any blight. As for when it is taken to another place, another environment, it will surely be afflicted in, some way.

The earth has another distinction, which is directly related to mankind. The earth is made of clay, which is also the origin of mankind, so the earth is really mankind's first mother. When a person dies, there is no place for him except in the lap of his mother. When the closest people to him leave him, the dearest, mother Earth accepts him, takes him in, and keeps him safe from all harm.

Another distinction of the earth is that it absorbs human and animal waste and leavings. By Allah's power, it turns them into fertilizer by means of which plants grow and yields are increased. In the countryside, they take foul-smelling animal waste out to the fields and by means of it beautiful flowers bloom, whose fragrance is beloved to people.

These are all marvels of creation, of which none are capable save Allah. Do you remember the Egyptian proverb: 'He could make a tonic from a salted fish'? Such is Allah's Power, which creates things from their opposites. Do you not see that the nicest fruit we eat here in Egypt comes from the yellow mountain, which is irrigated with sewage water?

After telling us about these general phenomena, which all creatures need, in the sky, and the earth, and the mountains, the rain, Allah the Almighty now tells us about things that are specifically required by mankind alone and only in certain times, asking:

أَمَّنْ يُجِيبُ الْمُضْطَرَّ إِذَا دَعَاهُ وَيَكْشِفُ السُّوءَ وَيَجْعَلُكُمْ  
خُلَفَاءَ الْأَرْضِ ۗ إِنَّهُ مَعَ اللَّهِ قَلِيلًا مَا تَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٦٢﴾

**Who is it that answers the distressed when they call upon Him? Who removes their suffering? Who makes you successors in the earth? Is it another God beside God? Little notice you take! [62] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 62)**

‘Answers’; a response means to realise the request of the one who asks. ‘The distressed’ is the one who has exhausted all his means, used them unsuccessfully, so that he has no choice but to leave the means to the One Who created them, seek His refuge; for before the Creator created mankind, He created the basic constituents for his life and its needs, and subdued them for his service.

For this reason, a Qudsi Hadith says: ‘O Son of Adam, I created all things for you, and I created you for Me; so do not let that which belongs to you distract you from He to whom you belong.’

Then, Allah *the Almighty* created for you the ability to utilise these things, and He created for you your essential provisions in the form of water and plants. If you wish to make your life more comfortable, you use the means Allah created, your own energy and think of how to develop and enrich your life.

The water that runs in your house when you turn on the tap, the light that is emitted simply by your pressing a switch and the car that transports you here and there in a matter of minutes, are all applications in people’s lives, which came about when they used their intellects to utilise what Allah *the Almighty* gave them of materials, minds, ideas and means. All of this is from Allah’s Hand, outstretched to His slaves, which we should never refuse.

So, if you try but fail, the means do not avail you, you must immediately seek refuge in the One Who created the means because He is your Creator and your Protector.

Read Allah's saying: 'For [thus it is:] when affliction befalls man, he cries out unto Us, whether he be lying on his side or sitting or standing...' (*Yunus*: 12).

If only, when he called his Lord and was answered, he would continue to bear his Lord in mind, expecting that misfortune might afflict him again; but no, when Allah *the Almighty* relieves his woe, he quickly returns to his old ways: '...but as soon as We have freed him of his affliction, he goes on as though he had never invoked Us to save him from the affliction that befell him! Thus, do their own doings seem goodly unto those who waste their own selves?' (*Yunus*: 12)

'Who is it that responds to the distressed...'? So, the distressed person will surely be answered by Allah *the Almighty* if someone says, 'I prayed, but I was not answered', know that he was not really in dire distress. Not every difficulty that visits a person is real distress. For example, if someone prays to Allah *the Almighty* to give him a better place to live or a larger income and so on, these are matters with no distress attached to them. Perhaps Allah *the Almighty* knows that this was the best thing for them, that if He had given them more, they would transgress, and be arrogant. Allah says, 'Nay, verily, man becomes grossly overweening; whenever he believes himself to be self-sufficient' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7).

You pray for what you see to be good, but your Lord knows that it is not good for you: 'As it is man [often] prays for things that are bad as if he were praying for something that is good: for man is prone to be hasty [in his judgments]' (*al-Isra'*: 11).

Your Lord, therefore, corrects this mistake in your understanding, and says to you: 'I will bring you what is best, but in a way that is better than this. If I answered you in the way you want, it will lead to a bad end'. It is as though Allah *the Almighty* our Lord and Guardian has placed a control on our prayers. If Allah *the Almighty* were some kind of employer, who had to give us all what we asked for, He would not be suitable to be a divine being – and Allah *the Almighty* is absolved of any such thing!

Man's nature is hastiness and impulsiveness, so our Lord intervenes in His servant's destiny in the way that is best for him, chooses what is right for

him, because He knows how things will turn out, the best time for them and everything has its proper time in His plan.

Read His saying, ‘Now if Allah were to hasten for human beings the ill [which they deserve by their sinning] in the same manner as they [themselves] would hasten [the coming to them of what they consider to be] good, their end would indeed come forthwith!’ (*Yunus*: 11)

One sees, for example, that a mother who loves and adores her son, raising her hands to the sky and prays against him or even herself when he disobeys or annoys her. What if Allah *Glorified is He* were to answer these insane prayers? He answers, out of His Mercy, those prayers of ours that are best for us and pardons our foolishness and hastiness.

In addition, Allah asks, who is the one that removes the suffering? Indeed, He is Allah just as there is no one but Him who answers the distressed. If there were another deity who could answer the distressed and remove the suffering, people would have turned to him in prayer, however when someone is afflicted, he only calls on Allah and turns to none but Him. No one would cheat himself in the time of need and distress that has befallen him.

Suppose that, and Allah is the highest of examples, a barber pretended to practise medicine and did not approve the medical colleges and its graduates. People began to turn to him and he started insulting and deploring medicine and doctors. He even said that those doctors had no experience in order to keep his place. However, what would he do when his son becomes ill? He might cheat the people, but he would not cheat himself. He would take his son in the dead of night wrapped in a blanket to one of those new doctors. Thus, every distressed and suffering person and even a disbeliever says and calls, ‘O my Lord, O my Lord’. Everyone turns his eyes and his heart to the sky and to Allah at times of trial as there is no debating.

Allah *Glorified is He* then asks, ‘Who makes you successors in the earth’? In other words, who makes each of you take the place of the other, as He says, ‘That He will most certainly make them rulers in the earth as He made rulers those before them.’ (*an-Nur*: 55) Does anyone but Allah *Glorified is He* have the power to do such things? Is there any god besides Allah? This question

denies the existence of any other gods besides Allah *Glorified is He* who could do these things. Thus, Allah ends the verse saying that we take little notice. This means that if we were to think and reflect, we would know that there is no god but Allah *Glorified is He*.

Next Allah *Glorified is He* asks:

أَمَّنْ يَهْدِيكُمْ فِي ظُلُمَاتِ الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَمَنْ يُرْسِلُ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ ۚ أَلَمْ يَكُنْ اللَّهُ تَعَالَى اللَّهُ عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

**Who is it that guides you through the darkness on land and sea? Who sends the winds as heralds of good news before His mercy? Is it another god beside God? God is far above the partners they put beside him! [63] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 63)**

In the past, the stars were the signs by which travellers on sea and land alike navigated. This is applied to some people and not others and existed before science developed. Allah says, 'And landmarks and by the stars they find the right way.' (*an-Nahl*: 16)

Many Arab scholars excelled in the study of stars and celestial bodies and the study of the seas. They established the foundations of these sciences not by their own knowledge, but rather by observing the phenomena of the universe and by the help and guidance of Allah. When we consider the development made by mankind in life, we find that it is the result of unexpected observations or even through mistakes. How did mankind find out how to use yeast in dough to make bread with this form and this taste? This resulted in making bread which has not fermented and that which has fermented. These words have been used in Arabic as metaphors for opinions. A fermented opinion means one that is well studied and thought out unlike an opinion that is not fermented is superficial and immature.

Perhaps a woman discovered this fact about yeast by mistake or by chance when she was making dough and forgot baking it until it rose. Then, when she baked it, it came out in the way we now like. Similarly, penicillin was discovered accidentally, as were submarines, steam and wheels, etc.

For example, consider why we cook some certain vegetables and not other kinds. It is the guidance of Allah *Glorified is He* who created, measured, decreed, and guided. We learned how to work iron after softening it in fire because Allah *Glorified is He* taught this to Prophet, Dawud (David) *peace be upon him* as Allah says, ‘And We made iron pliant to him.’ (*Saba*: 10) Thus, so many discoveries and advancements are due to the guidance of Allah. As time goes by, more of the secrets of the universe are revealed to us. Each discovery comes at the time that Allah *Glorified is He* wills. It is developed either by people using means of discoveries or by unexpectedly.

Read, if you like, the verse where Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And they cannot comprehend anything out of His knowledge except what He pleases.’ (*al-Baqara*: 255) When Allah *Glorified is He* wills, He reveals things to you and makes them accessible to you. When you are not alert to them, He unveils them by means of a sudden event. Consider the case of a Bedouin when he looks at the sky and says that it will rain in a couple of hours, however, there are no clouds in the sky nor any mist or signs of rain. Yet he knows it will rain because of his intuition based on prior experience.

Animals are another example of this divine guidance. They eat instinctively grass and avoid green mint or basil, despite its nice smell. Why is this? That is because some certain things were created for its sweet fragrance and not to be eaten. In addition, when animals eat their fill, they stop eating, unlike humans who will eat until they are bloated and then eat desserts and drink cold and hot beverages. They say that when you show your stomach all kinds of food, it shows you empty places. That is why we find that the smell of the waste of animals is less foul than that of humans, because animals eat according to the instinct that Allah instilled in them, whilst we eat according to greedy desire and without sticking to the orders.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* asks: ‘Who sends the winds as heralds of good news?’ That is winds bring glad tidings of rain and rain is one of the signs of the Mercy of Allah. Therefore, here comes the question of the possibility of the existence of another god beside Allah. There is no god but Allah. It is He who can guide you through the darkness on land and sea and Who sends the winds as heralds of good news. Thus, He is far above

the partners they put beside Him for He is absolved of there being any partner to Him in His universe.

Next Allah *Glorified is He* asks:

أَمَّنْ يَبْدَأُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ يُعِيدُهُ، وَمَنْ يَرْزُقُكُمْ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ أَإِلَٰهٌ  
مَعَ اللَّهِ ۚ قُلْ هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٦٤﴾

**Who is it that creates life and reproduces it? Who is it that gives you provision from the heavens and earth? Is it another god beside God?’ Say, ‘Show me your evidence then, if what you say is true’ [64] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 64)**

Those who disbelieve cannot deny the matter of creation. Allah *Glorified is He* Himself asked them: ‘and if you should ask them who created them, they would certainly say, “Allah.”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 87) And elsewhere, Allah says: ‘and if you ask them who created the heavens and the earth, they will certainly say, “Allah.”’ (*Luqman*: 25) They have no means of denying it. If they do, the reply is ready, that is, let whoever created first show us some new creation of his.

Allah *Glorified is He* creates life which means that He the initiated it from nothing. In addition, He reproduces it because the One who created us from nothing decreed that we should die and told us that we will be brought forth on the Day of Resurrection and that this creation will be repeated. However, those who are unable to deny creation deny resurrection. They say, as the Quran relates, ‘Qaf. I swear by the Glorious Quran (The Quran, that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah) Nay! They wonder that there has come to them a warner from among themselves, so the disbelievers say, “This is a wonderful thing. What! When we are dead and have become dust? That is a far (The Quran, from probable) return.”’ (*Qaf*: 1-3)

They scoffed at the notion of being returned after their death and the total decay of their bodies. The philosophers debated this issue much. In response to them we say that you reward those who do good and punish those who do bad, in man-made laws. You forbid some actions in themselves and appoint for them appropriate punishments. The law states that there can be no punishment without a crime and no crime without a text and no text without



an announcement. In addition, man-made law leaves no crime without a punishment. Thus, if human beings make these laws in their societies in order to regulate their lives, is not more likely that the Lord of humanity has established a system of reward and punishment? If you yourself do not like seeing a criminal evade punishment, how could you accept that such a thing could occur with respect to Allah *Glorified is He*?

Furthermore, many criminals commit their crimes without being found out by the law or evade justice and run from punishment. They escape from man-made laws in this world and if we left such people without being punished in the hereafter as well, they would truly be the winners and this will be an encouragement to everyone who breaks the law. However, if he knows that he has a Lord, who watches over him and has Power over him and that if the law of this world does not catch him, the laws of Allah will and that if he escapes punishment in this world, he will not escape it in the hereafter, he will be law-abiding.

But why do they deny the return and say that is a far from probable return. They wonder how is it possible to return a person after he dies, buried up and decays into particles that the earth absorbs. They add that a tree might grow in this place, feed on these particles and several people eat the fruits thereof. Subsequently, the particles of the dead body first are transferred to the fruits and then to those who eat them. They wonder to whom these particles will be returned when all humanity is brought back on the Day of Resurrection. To the first original person or the second who ate the fruits? If you give them to the first, the second person will be incomplete and vice-versa.

This speech of theirs is based on the supposition that a person is material only. However, a person is composed of both the material and the spiritual. Suppose a person who weighed one hundred kilos became ill and lost weight until he was only fifty kilos. When he recovered and became better, he returned to his previous state. Are the particles that he lost the same as the ones that entered him when he became healthy? Of course, they are not. Did his identity change with this decrease or this increase? Of course, it did not. He is the same person. Thus, a person has many different particles that make him up and he also has a spirit and a soul. When these things are combined,

the person exists. Therefore, Allah responds to them saying, 'We know indeed what the earth diminishes of them, and with Us is a writing that preserves.' (*Qaf*: 4)

Why do you deny the return after death, while you have accepted the first creation and admitted that Allah is the Creator? Is it not easier to rebuild something that existed than to create something from nothing? In addition, power and knowledge to do this return is required. As for knowledge, Allah says, 'We know indeed what the earth diminishes of them, and with Us is a writing that preserves.' (*Qaf*: 4) This means that He knows your weight and all your constituent parts and not a single atom escapes His Knowledge. Regarding the required power, you testified to it when you acknowledged that He has the Power to create from nothing as well as the return is easier than the first creation. Allah says, 'And He it is Who originates the creation, then reproduces it, and it is easy to Him.' (*ar-Rum*: 27) Although that the concept of easy and easier on the part of the Creator is not appropriate, we say it according to our own conventions to make it easier for us to understand. Moreover, Allah says, 'Were We then fatigued with the first creation? Yet are they in doubt with regard to a new creation.' (*Qaf*: 15)

Next in the verse we are studying, Allah asks, 'Who is it that gives you provision from the heavens and earth? Provision is everything from which benefit is obtained. It comes either from the sky or the earth or from where they meet each other when rain falls from the sky and mixes with the earth's soil so that crops grow. Therefore, here comes the question of the possibility of the existence of another god beside Allah. The same question is repeated to emphasise that there is no god but Allah who brings you all these things blessings.

Moreover, Allah asks them to bring their evidence if they were truthful about their claim about the existence of another god who created life and sent provision from the sky and the earth. If none proves this to his behalf, the claim is confirmed to the first one who claimed it since there is no counter-claim. In addition, the one who claims could leave aside the matter of resurrection as it is enough to claim the ability to initiate creation. If someone can create, he can bring something back. It is not impossible for someone who can create from nothing to reassemble something that already exists.

Someone might ask, ‘What is the relevancy of mentioning provision from sky and earth after the matter of reproduction? There must be a relationship between the two’. We say that the crop, which is the provision that comes after rain, combines with soil, has a cycle and a reproduction similar to that of mankind. Mankind eat crops, derives energy and nourishment from them. All what remains from them exits as bodily waste, which decays in the earth and what the body absorbed decays after it dies and becomes part of the fabric of earth. Similarly, roses, for example, after their beautiful bloom, they dry up when they are picked and their water diminishes and colour and fragrance disappear into the atmosphere. What remains from the dry material decays in the earth. When we plant another rose, it feeds upon the materials in the soil and the colour and fragrance in the atmosphere.

Thus, the constitutional elements of the universe have neither increased nor decreased since Allah created all creation. In addition, the nature of the cycle of plants including its beginning, end, and return is very similar to the creation, death, and return of mankind on the Day of Resurrection. It is as though Allah is proving to us our own return through the plant cycle that we see. It is an indication of the unseen that we have not yet witnessed.

Next Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ لَا يَعْلَمُ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضِ الْغَيْبَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ وَمَا يَشْعُرُونَ أَيَّانَ يُبْعَثُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

**Say, ‘No one in the heavens or on earth knows the unseen except God.’ They do not know when they will be raised from the dead [65] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 65)**

This verse is similar to the one where Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘and with Him are the keys of the unseen treasures, none knows them but He’ (*al-An‘am*: 59); everything that is beyond our perception and senses is considered unseen. Sometimes an unseen thing is relatively unknown matter to you and known to others. For example, I do not know what is in your pockets, but you know. When someone steals something and hides it, he only knows where it is.

On the other hand, there is an absolute unseen that none of us know. This is of two kinds. The first kind includes things that no one knows, but we might

discover one day such as all the discoveries to which humanity has been guided. These discoveries are preceded by some indicators that lead to them. This kind is the partially relative unseen because it is unseen today but will be seen sooner or later and thereby ceases to be unseen. It is like algebra exercises that we give children with premises and given quantities. They work their minds to arrive at the right solution. Speaking of this kind, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And they cannot comprehend anything out of His Knowledge except what He pleases.' (*al-Baqara*: 255) When Allah *Glorified is He* wills and when the right time comes, He guides us to it by means of precursors, i.e. researches or an unexpected occurrence that alert us to it. This notion is strengthened by the words of Allah: 'We will soon show them Our signs in the Universe and in their own souls, until it will become quite clear to them that it is the truth.' (*Fussilat*: 53)

The second kind of the absolute unseen is that which is truly unknown to everyone except to Allah who Alone knows its reality. Speaking of this kind, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'The Knower of the unseen! He does not reveal His secrets to any, except to him whom He chooses as a messenger.' (*al-Jinn*: 26-27) The matter of the resurrection is an example of the absolute unseen. Allah says, 'Say, "No one in the heavens and the earth knows the unseen but Allah."' (*an-Naml*: 65) No one knows when the resurrection will be but Allah. However, He has made heralds and signs that indicate its coming and its closeness.

Allah says about it: 'I am about to make it manifest.' (*Ta Ha*: 15) Some people are confused about the meaning of this verse and believe that it means to that Allah kept it hidden. However, it means to reveal and manifest it, not to conceal it. Thus, Allah makes the resurrection manifest as there are both great and small signs. We see some of them now and more signs are revealed to us day after day. However, it remains the case that the exact time of the resurrection is known only to Allah. He says about it: 'None but He shall manifest it at its time.' (*al-A'raf*: 187) Even the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* freely admitted that he had no knowledge of when it would be. He says when he was asked about it: 'I have no more knowledge thereof than you.'<sup>(1)</sup> It was an honour that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* does not

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

know something that Allah had kept for Himself and made it an absolute unseen of which He informed no one, even the messengers.

Allah *Glorified is He* might honour some of His creatures by allowing them to know something of the unseen. For example, Allah revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* many unseen things without there being any precursors to them. Thus, it must be a divine inspiration of the Quran. Consider the verses where Allah says: '*Alif Lam Mim. The Romans are vanquished. In a near land, and they, after being vanquished, shall overcome, Within a few years.*' (*ar-Rum*: 1-4)

The Romans were closer to Allah as they were people of the Book, while the Persians were pagan fire-worshippers. Therefore, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his companions hoped that they would defeat the Persians. However, it was revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that they were defeated and that they would be victorious in the end. If Allah *Glorified is He* had not specified that their victory would be within a few years, this would mean that their victory could have been at any time in the future. However, who could specify the time of the result of a battle between two great powers except Allah? In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* said that the believers shall rejoice on that day. That is because the victory of the Romans would please them as well as Allah *Glorified is He* decreed that the believers would defeat the disbelievers at Badr on the very same day the Romans would defeat the Persians.

Another example of the unseen matters that Allah *Glorified is He* granted to His servants is what happened to Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* when he was close to death. Abu Bakr gave his daughter `Aisha, *Allah be pleased with her*, some money. Later, he asked her to bring the money she had and said, 'they are only your two brothers and your two sisters.' We know that the two brothers were Mohammad and Abd Ar-Rahman. However, `Aisha had no sister at the time but `Asma, so who was the other? Abu Bakr married his cousin and she was pregnant at the time of his death, but Allah revealed to him that she would give birth to a girl, who would be a sister to `Aisha and `Asma.

Allah says in the verse we are studying that they do not know when they will be raised from the dead. This means that just as we do not know when we will die, similarly we do not know when we will be raised.

Allah says:

بَلِ أَدْرَاكَ عِلْمُهُمْ فِي الْآخِرَةِ بَلْ هُمْ فِي شَكٍّ مِنْهَا بَلْ هُمْ مِنْهَا عَمُونَ ﴿٦٦﴾

**Their knowledge cannot comprehend the  
Hereafter; they are in doubt about it; they are  
blind to it [66] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 66)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says that their knowledge cannot comprehend the Hereafter although it is built up, i.e. discourse about the life to come has been given again and again by successive messengers. Allah *Glorified is He* speaks about the state of the disbelievers in hell saying, 'Until when they have all come up with one another into it' (*al-A'raf*: 38). This means that they have been built up and gathered with each other.

Thus, the messengers of Allah have come one after another with the proclamations of the truth of the hereafter. Every one of them called to believe in Allah and the Last Day and came with signs that indicate it. Despite this constant succession of reminders of the hereafter, Allah *Glorified is He* says that they are in doubt about its reality. Why is this? Allah *Glorified is He* answers saying that this is because they are blind to it. That is, their sight and their insight are blind to it, so they have refused to be guided. If their eyes and their hearts were open, they would believe in it. Allah says in another verse, 'For surely it is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts which are in the breasts.' (*al-Hajj*: 46) Therefore, there can be something that certainly exists, but I can fail to see it or ignore it deliberately. The signs of the resurrection exist and have been sent down successively, however people are blind to them and do not see them. Their insight is blind to the clear signs of the hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَإِذَا كُنَّا تُرَابًا وَّءَابَاؤُنَا إِلَيْنَا لَمُخْرَجُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

**So the disbelievers say, ‘What! When we and our forefathers have become dust, shall we be brought back to life again? [67] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 67)**

They are trying to use the fact that their forefathers have not been resurrected to show that they will not be resurrected too. But who told them that the hereafter will come in this world? It is only called the hereafter because it comes after this world comes to an end.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

لَقَدْ وُعِدْنَا هَذَا نَحْنُ وَّءَابَاؤُنَا مِنْ قَبْلُ إِنْ هَذَا إِلَّا أَسَاطِيرُ الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

**We have heard such promises before, and so did our forefathers. These are just ancient fables [68] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 68)**

The disbelievers say that they have been dying and prophets have been reminding them of the Day of Resurrection, but it has not yet taken place. Thus, they say that these are just ancient fables, i.e. lies and legends of those who came before. But what is their motivation for accusing the prophets who passed on the message of Allah with such accusations?

The scholars say it is because a person’s soul is dear to him and everyone who ruins himself by living a life of sin wants to assure and relax himself. He can only relax if he tells himself that this is all a lie. If he were to admit that there will be a resurrection and a reckoning, his woes would be great as he has nothing except that he denied Allah and disobeyed His commandments. Thus, how can he admit that there will be a resurrection? Naturally, a disbeliever makes himself feel better by giving the lie to the news the messengers brought.

Therefore, there are those amongst these people who say about fate, ‘If Allah decreed that I should sin, why should He punish me for it’? Logic demands that they complete the picture and say, ‘And if He decreed that I should obey Him, why should He reward me for it’? Why do they mention

the bad and ignore the good? So in reality, these people want nothing more than a way out, through which they can escape the consequences of their actions.

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ كَانَ عَاقِبَةُ الْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

**[Prophet], say, 'Travel through the earth and see how the evildoers ended up' [69] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 69)**

Allah *Glorified is He* calls them to travel through the earth to witness and reflect on the consequences that came to those who sinned and gave the lie to their messengers and how Allah *Glorified is He* destroyed, annihilated them and decreed victory for the messengers. He does not call them to reflect on those who have been resurrected as the resurrection has not yet taken place.

The news of the resurrection is part of what the messengers brought, and whoever denies the messengers denies the resurrection that will undoubtedly occur, but Allah conceals the exact time when it will take place. He says, 'None but He shall manifest it at its time' (*al-A'raf*: 187). Then, Allah *Glorified is He* comforts Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in order to lessen the pain that he faced in his call, saying:

وَلَا تَحْزَنْ عَلَيْهِمْ وَلَا تَكُنْ فِي ضَيْقٍ مِّمَّا يَمْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

**[Prophet], do not grieve over them; do not be distressed by their schemes [70] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 70)**

Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah addressed Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* by saying, 'Then maybe you will kill yourself with grief, sorrowing after them, if they do not believe in this announcement.' (*al-Kahf*: 6) The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* was about to destroy himself with sadness. Thus, Allah emphasises here that the mission of a messenger is to deliver the message of Allah only. A prophet has nothing to do with making people believe. However, the Prophet's love for his people and his eagerness to save them made him grieve and become sad if any of them refused to believe. Allah says, 'Certainly a messenger has



come to you from among yourselves; grievous to him is your falling into distress, excessively solicitous respecting you; to the believers [he is] compassionate' (*at-Tawba*: 128).

Allah then says:

وَيَقُولُونَ مَتَى هَذَا الْوَعْدُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٧١﴾

**They also say, 'When will this promise be fulfilled if what you say is true?' [71] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 71)**

Those who deny the resurrection ask about the time of the fulfilment of the promise. In addition, they doubt its existence. They referred to the information of the resurrection as a promise even though for them it is a threat. The difference between a promise and a threat is that you promise to do good things but threaten to do bad things. Allah *Glorified is He* blotted out their words even though they were people of eloquence. This is a threat to them but a threat of evil to your adversary is a promise of good for you.

It is as though Allah were informing of two promises. He promised His messengers assistance and succour and promised the entire world a resurrection. Since the first promise was true and observable, take it as a herald and a sign that the second is true as well. You know that all the messengers were given victory against those who denied them; either by the punishment of annihilation or by the punishment of being defeated and routed.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

قُلْ عَسَىٰ أَنْ يَكُونَ رَدِفَ لَكُمْ بَعْضُ الَّذِي تَسْتَعْجِلُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

**Say, 'Maybe some of what you seek to hasten is near at hand' [72] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 72)**

The modal verb 'maybe' implies hope. However, when Allah *Glorified is He* says it, it implies certainty. For example, if you say, 'So and so a person might give you' this is weak hope. However, when you say, 'I might give you', it is a stronger statement because you do not have power over that person, but you have power over your own self. It would be even stronger to

say, 'Allah might give you' because your own means do not guarantee you are able to deliver. Nevertheless, when Allah *Glorified is He* says that it might be, this implies absolute certainty of hope and its highest degree and level.

Allah *Glorified is He* says that what they seek to hasten is near. It follows them and will come after them. It is right behind them and indeed they will be afflicted with what they hastily demanded. It was not long before they were defeated at Badr. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* fulfilled His first promise as He says, 'Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they shall turn [their] backs.' (*al-Qamar*: 45) And since you all witnessed this, take it as a sign of the unseen about which Allah *Glorified is He* told you.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَذُو فَضْلٍ عَلَى النَّاسِ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

**Your Lord is bountiful to people, though most of them  
are ungrateful [73] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 73)**

Allah *Glorified is He* delays the resurrection, out of His bounty, so that people might become aware of it. If Allah has not delayed it, it would have come upon them at the first time they disbelieved. This shows that Allah *Glorified is He* is giving mankind time so that people of guidance and faith increases amongst them. Do you not see that those who believed in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not all believe at the same time? They rather came to Islam across a huge expanse of time.

Thus, we observed how the first Muslims would be in pain when they missed an opportunity to kill the leaders and commanders of the disbelievers in their battles such as 'Ikrima, 'Umar and Khalid *Allah be pleased with them*. However, if Allah *Glorified is He* had revealed the unseen to them, they would have realised that Allah had saved them in order to serve as an instrument of victory to Islam and to be renowned and commanders against the disbelievers.

It is worth noting that Allah *Glorified is He* say that most of them are ungrateful to show that there are some who indeed do give thanks.

Allah *Glorified is He* says next:

وَإِنَّ رَبَّكَ لَيَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ ﴿٧٤﴾

**He knows everything their hearts conceal and everything they reveal [74] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 74)**

Someone might say, ‘since Allah knows what their hearts conceal and what they hide, He must certainly know what they reveal. Thus, why did He need to say everything they reveal’? In response, Allah mentions it because that which lies in the heart is unseen and since Allah *Glorified is He* is also unseen; someone might say that Allah only knows the unseen. Thus, say in response to this that Allah *Glorified is He* knows both the unseen and the open.

Allah says:

وَمَا مِنْ غَائِبَةٍ فِي السَّمَاءِ وَالْأَرْضِ إِلَّا فِي كِتَابٍ مُبِينٍ ﴿٧٥﴾

**There is nothing hidden in the heavens or on earth that is not in a clear Record [75] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 75)**

Everything hidden, no matter how well hidden it is, is something unseen. Allah *Glorified is He* uses the Arabic particle *min* (from) before the word hidden. Some say that it is a linguistic addition which adds no extra meaning to the verse. However, additional words do not befit the rhetorical style and eloquence of the Noble Quran. We hold Allah’s speech high above any trace of additional or meaningless language. Others had better manners with the Quran and said that the particle *min* here is a connector. But what does it connect? It must have a meaning.

To clarify this, suppose that you want to negate that you have any money. You would say, ‘I have no money’. This means that you have no money of any worth, but you might have a few pence that are not enough to be considered money. However, if you want to say that you have no money at all, you would say, ‘I do not have any money’, using the particle *min* in Arabic; this means that you have no money at all, no matter how little it might be. Thus, using the particle *min* here is neither a meaningless addition nor a connector. Actually, it serves to show the absoluteness of the negation.

Thus, the meaning is that the Knowledge of Allah encompasses all things from pre-eternity, however small or insignificant it might seem. Allah *Glorified is He*

says, 'And there falls not a leaf but He knows it, nor a grain in the darkness of the earth, nor anything green nor dry but [it is all] in a clear book.' (*al-An'am*: 59)

Moreover, the Omnipotence of Allah does not stop at the point of knowledge, but rather, He also records it in a clear record, i.e. the Mother Book where Allah recorded everything that would happen in the universe. Thus, everything we see happens in accordance with what Allah *Glorified is He* recorded in pre-eternity. For example, when Allah mentioned the transportations that existed at the time the of Quran, He says, 'And [He made] horses and mules and donkeys that you might ride upon them and as an ornament; and He creates what you do not know.' (*an-Nahl*: 8) Were it not for the end of the verse that states that Allah creates what we do not know, this verse could have been questioned since we have cars, planes and rockets now. So, we can include all modern modes of transport under the end of the verse.

We observed before that Allah, out of His Greatness, does not rebuke for any action that people do unless they have some choice in the matter. He only informs us about those things in which we have a choice and reveals our own free choice as occurred in relation to the changing of the prayer direction. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'The fools among the people will say, "What has turned them from their *qiblah* (direction of prayer) which they had?"' (*al-Baqara*: 142) Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* informed us of this directly and called such people as fools because they were showing enmity to Allah and Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Indeed, after this dismissal and this disparagement, they still went on to say what the Quran had declared. We did not see any intelligent person among them reflect on this verse and abstain from saying what the Quran says that they will say so that they could accuse the Quran of being incorrect and denigrate its veracity and the position of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. This did not happen and they indeed went on to what has turned them from their *qibla* which they had. They wonder why they stopped facing the Holy House in Jerusalem and faced Mecca instead. They said this, despite the intellects and free will with which they were endowed.

This issue also happened regarding Abu Lahab. Allah *Glorified is He* says of him: 'Perdition overtakes both hands of Abu Lahab, and he will perish. His

wealth and what he earns will not avail him. He shall soon burn in fire that flames.’ (*al-Masad*: 1-3) Allah revealed these verses because he said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when he gathered the people to preach the message of Allah, ‘Perished be you! Is this why you have gathered us?’ Abu Lahab was an uncle to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* just as Hamza and Al-`Abbas *Allah be pleased with them* were. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not know what future his uncle would have. He might have believed as Hamza did and become the Lion of Allah and just as Al-`Abbas ibn Abd Al-Muttalib did. When these verses were revealed, it was possible for him to prove it wrong by believing and pronouncing the testimonies of faith, even hypocritically. He did not do this even though he could have done this and it was within his free will to do so.

Thus, it is a manifestation of the greatness and miraculous nature of the speech of Allah that He could announce what the free action of disbeliever would be and reveal verses of the Quran in that was recited openly and yet they would be unable to refrain from doing these actions. Therefore, the Quran remained Allah’s proof against every disbeliever and obstinate denier.

If we reflect on the verse where Allah says, ‘Surely We have revealed the Reminder and We will most surely be its guardian.’ (*al-Hijr*: 9), we see that Allah revealed the Quran and undertook to preserve it Himself and did not leave this task to any other. While there are things that had not yet occurred, it is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is preserving it Himself, recording, and announcing it because it will definitely happen.

Allah does not fear that events will turn out any other way than He decreed. This is because He has dominion over them all. Do you not see that people keep the part of a bill of exchange that shows what others owe them and do not care about the part that shows what they must give? However, Allah keeps things for us, whilst it is for Him to bring them into being.

Read, ‘Soon shall the hosts be routed, and they shall turn [their] backs.’ (*al-Qamar*: 45) Allah *Glorified is He* recorded upon Himself this event and preserved it because He was able to bring it about and indeed they were defeated, turned upon their heels and the words of Allah proved true.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

إِنَّ هَذَا الْقُرْآنَ يَفُصُّ عَلَى بَنِي إِسْرَءِيلَ أَكْثَرَ الَّذِي هُمْ فِيهِ يَخْتَلِفُونَ ﴿٧٦﴾

**Truly, this Quran explains to the Children of Israel most of what they differ about [76] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 76)**

There is a difference between addressing someone who has no idea about what you are saying and addressing someone who has some prior knowledge. The person with an empty mind will accept what you say, whilst the one with prior knowledge will argue with you. Thus, some of the disbelievers and the people of the Book opposed and denied the Book of Allah and what it contained. Although they were enemies to Islam and hated it, if you were to ask them about what the Quran said, they would say, 'Yes, we know this from our own scriptures'. Allah says, 'but when there came to them [Prophet] that which they did not recognize, they disbelieved in him; so Allah's curse is on the disbelievers.' (*al-Baqara*: 89)

When `Abdullah ibn Salam looked at Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew he was a true messenger and his soul inclined to Islam. He said, 'By Allah, I know Muhammad like I know my own son or even more!' Allah speaks the truth when He says about them that they recognize him as they recognize their sons.

`Abdullah knew that Islam was the path that led to Allah and that every intelligent person should follow it. When he decided to embrace Islam, he wanted to go around declaring his conversion, revealing the hypocrites, the disbelievers, and the people of the Book. He said, 'O Messenger of Allah, I have gained honour by entering Islam and I fear that if I submit to Allah, the Jews will slander me and do such and such with me.' He then asked the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* to ask them about him before announcing his conversion to Islam. When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did, they said: 'He is our learned rabbi and the son of our learned rabbi.' They praised and lauded him but when `Abdullah announced the testimony of faith, they said: 'He is the worst of us and the son of the worst of us' and abused and insulted him.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَإِنَّهُ هُدًى وَرَحْمَةٌ لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

**And it is guidance and grace for those who believe[77]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 77)**

The Quran is a guidance of evidence and direction, which is for both the believer and the disbeliever, while it is a grace for the believers alone, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And We reveal of the Quran that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers.’ (*al-Isra*: 82) There is a difference between something which is a healing and which is a mercy. The mention of the two things together here implies some distinction between them. Something which is a healing is a cure for the ailment that the Quran came to treat, whilst a mercy prevents you from contracting this ailment again.

Allah says:

إِنَّ رَبَّكَ يَقْضِي بَيْنَهُمْ بِحُكْمِهِ ۚ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٧٨﴾

**Truly, your Lord will judge between them in His  
wisdom – He is the Almighty, the All Knowing [78]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 78)**

Allah *Glorified is He* is the Almighty Who controls and cannot be controlled, Who vanquishes and cannot be vanquished and Who protects and cannot be encroached upon. Moreover, He is also All Knowing, alongside this great might. Someone might be mighty and invincible and yet have no knowledge, but Allah is Almighty and All Knowing. He puts might in its place and meekness in its place 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. You honour whom You will and You humble whom You will. In Your hand is [all] good. Indeed, You are over all things competent.”’ (*Al-Imran*: 26)

The scholars have discussed the phrase that says that good is in Allah’s hand. Some came to the conclusion that this means that good and evil are in Allah’s hand. However, this explanation lacks understanding of the verse; for everything Allah does is good at all times. The act of giving the kingdom to

those who treat their subjects well is good and the removal of it from those who act with tyranny and iniquity is also good, as Allah *Glorified is He* has removed their means to tyranny so that they cannot continue. Thus, in both situations, there is good.

Inasmuch as the attributes of Allah include Might, Knowledge, Wisdom, Mercy, and Bounty, then be assured, O believer and put your trust in Allah.

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

﴿٧٩﴾ فَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ إِنَّكَ عَلَى الْحَقِّ الْمُبِينِ

**So [Prophet], put your trust in God, you are on the  
path of clear truth [79] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 79)**

To put your trust in someone means to admit your own weakness while achieving something you do not possess the strength it needs. True trust and reliance can only be in Allah *Glorified is He* who is Ever Living and cannot die. If you rely on other human beings like yourself, death might come to them before they meet your need. Allah *Glorified is He* said that the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* is on the path of clear truth. This means that you put your trust in Allah while you believe and obey Him and not while you disobey. Inasmuch as you rely on Allah while you keep to His obedience, He will surely succour you and aid you.

Then, Allah comforts Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and consoles him so that he will not be pained by those who stray from him and do not believe:

Allah *Glorified is He* says:

﴿٨٠﴾ إِنَّكَ لَا تَسْمَعُ الْمَوْتَى وَلَا تَسْمَعُ الضَّمَّ الدُّعَاءَ إِذَا وَلَّوْا مُدْبِرِينَ

**You cannot make the dead hear, you cannot make the deaf  
listen to your call when they turn their backs and leave[80]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 80)**

This verse advises Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* not to be sad and not to destroy himself with grief because of those who do not



believe; for his task is only to deliver the message. Delivering a message is carried out by speech that is received by means of apparatus that the listener possesses, i.e. the ear. If this apparatus does not work, they will not hear. These people's listening apparatus do not work and thereby they are like dead people or those who are deaf. The signs of Allah *Glorified is He* in the universe are all around them, yet they neither see nor hear them.

It would be better for them if they were only deaf. However, they turn their backs on the message. This is an exaggeration to indicate their refusal to hear the truth. If they stayed, they would not hear, so what if they turn their backs and leave altogether? Some of them feared that their deafness would end and that they would hear Allah's call and incline to it. This would be a disaster for them, as far as they were concerned.

This shows that they knew it was the truth and that if they had paid heed to it, they would have followed it. Did they not say 'Do not listen to this Quran and make noise therein?' (*Fussilat*: 26) This is because the Quran captivates the attention by its majesty and beauty. Therefore, they forbade listening to it and commanded that it should be covered with noise so it could not be heard and could not enter their hearts.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَمَا أَنْتَ بِهَادِي الْعُمَىٰ عَنْ ضَلَالَتِهِمْ ۚ إِنَّ تُسْمِعُ إِلَّا مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٨١﴾

**You cannot guide the blind out of their error: you cannot make anyone hear you except those who believe in Our signs and submit [to Us] [81] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 81)**

There is a difference between hearing the truth with an open mind and hearing it when you are occupied by something contrary to it. In order for the listening to yield benefit, you must receive it with an open mind and use your mind to compare it to what contradicts it. Subsequently, whatever you incline to and feel comfortable with you should accept it. This is what they refer to, even in the case of material things, as the theory of displacement, i.e. that a single confine cannot be filled with two different things at the same time. We gave the example of a glass and said that when we fill it with water, the air inside it comes out in the form of bubbles because water is thicker than air.

Someone might ask 'As long as Allah makes only those who believe in the signs and submit to Allah hear, what is the use of this hearing, since they already believe'? We say that there are three kinds of signs which are ordered together. The first kind is the signs that are inherent in the universe, which indicate the existence of an All-Powerful Creating deity so that you ask yourself who this creating deity might be. Subsequently, it comes to the role of the messengers who give you the answer to this mystery. They bring the signs necessary to prove that they are truly delivering the message of Allah. These signs come in the form of miracles. Thus, the messengers remind us of the signs inherent in the universe when we fail to notice them.

If we believe in the signs of the universe and the signs and miracles of the prophets, we must also believe in the signs and legal verses that were the miracle of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah then says:

وَإِذَا وَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ أَخْرَجْنَا لَهُمْ دَابَّةً مِّنَ الْأَرْضِ  
تُكَلِّمُهُمْ أَنَّ النَّاسَ كَانُوا بِآيَاتِنَا لَا يُوقِنُونَ

**When the verdict is given against them, We shall bring a creature out of the earth, which will tell them that people had no faith in Our revelations [82] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 82)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says that He shall give His verdict of punishment against them. This means that the word of truth will fall as though it was its nature to fall and needed no one to make it come down. It shall be given against them as if it was a ceiling coming down on them. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'So the roof fell down on them from above them' (*an-Nahl*: 26).

Giving the verdict of punishment here indicates that they will be exposed to trials and misfortunes. On exploring the occurrence of giving verdicts in the Quran, we find that it is always used to refer to difficulties, except in one place where Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And whoever goes forth from his house flying to Allah and His messenger, and then death overtakes him, his reward is indeed with Allah.' (*an-Nisa*': 100)

As long as they did not pay heed to the messages, did not accept them, did not pay attention to the guidance of Allah, and played deaf to it, they will certainly not hear the words of their fellow humans and so a creature will come from the earth to address them. Look at this humiliation and this stern rebuke. Since they did not listen to their fellow man and did not understand those who addressed them in your own tongue; so now listen to one lower than you and understand it and explain its speech.

However, what will the creature say to them? What kind of speech will it have? It will tell them that people had no faith in the revelations of Allah, i.e. they did not believe in the signs we sent them. Thus, this creature will speak to them and let whichever of them is skilled tell how it is able to speak to them.

There is a difference of opinion regarding the identity of this creature, its nature and description and how it is able to speak when it is a beast whose kind are unable to speak. But as long as Allah *Glorified is He* has informed us of it, it is real and should not be questioned. We must consider how the occurrence of things of which the Quran informed that would happen before they actually did and take this as proof that the other things it says will happen will indeed come to pass.

Allah then says:

وَيَوْمَ نَخْتَلُفُ مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ فَوْجًا مِمَّنْ يُكَذِّبُ بِآيَاتِنَا فَهُمْ يُوزَعُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

**The Day will come when We gather from every community a crowd of those who disbelieved in Our signs and they will be led in separate groups [83] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 83)**

A crowd is a group and a gathering of people. The first to be gathered on this day will be the arrogant tyrants who took lead in denying the signs of Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* will gather them first, in front of everyone and they will be the first to enter Hell, as Allah says about Pharaoh: ‘He shall lead his people on the Day of Resurrection, and bring them down to the fire.’ (*Hud*: 98)

Just as he led them in misguidance in this world, he will lead them into Hell in the hereafter. In addition, when the misguided people see their leaders of misguidance are admitted to fire first, they will know that there is no escape.

They might cling to them imagining that they can save them. Nevertheless, how could this be, when he meets his ultimate fate before they do?

Allah says that they would be led in separate groups to Hell. They will be prevented from going ahead of one another and thereby, they will all enter together. Allah will gather them all together in Hell, so that the followers and the leaders will be one in the same degradation and abasement. Perhaps some of the tyrants and oppressors might attempt to go quickly so that their followers do not see and disgrace them, but Allah *Glorified is He* will hold them back, so that they will be seen.

Allah then says:

حَتَّىٰ إِذَا جَاءُوا قَالَ أَكَذَّبْتُم بِآيَاتِي وَلَمْ تُحِطُوا بِهَا عَلِمًا أَمْ أَذَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨٤﴾

**Until, when they come before Him, He will say, ‘Did you deny My messages without even taking them in? Or what were you doing?’ [84] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 84)**

Allah *Glorified is He* details this moment in the chapter of *al-A'raf*. He mentions the dialogue that will take place on the Day of Resurrection, saying, ‘Who is then more unjust than he who forges a lie against Allah or rejects His communications? [As for] those, their portion of the Book shall reach them, until when Our messengers come to them causing them to die, they shall say, “Where is that which you used to call upon besides Allah?” They would say, “They are gone away from us”; and they shall bear witness against themselves that they were disbelievers. He will say, “Enter the fire among the nations that have passed away before you from among jinn and men”; whenever a nation shall enter, it shall curse its sister, until when they have all come up with one another into it; the last of them shall say with regard to the foremost of them, “Our Lord! These led us astray therefore give them a double chastisement of the fire.” He will say, “Everyone shall have double, but you do not know.” And the foremost of them will say to the last of them, “So you have no preference over us; therefore, taste the chastisement for what you earned.”’ (*al-A'raf*: 37-39)

Allah says:

وَوَقَعَ الْقَوْلُ عَلَيْهِمْ بِمَا ظَلَمُوا فَهُمْ لَا يَنْطِقُونَ ﴿٨٥﴾

**The verdict will be given against them because of  
their wrongdoing: they will not speak [85]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 85)**

Allah's verdict entails that punishment is obligatory upon them. The punishment would befall them as though it is a physical thing that will fall upon their heads. Thus, they will not speak, as their tongues will be shut because of the horror they will see and which will make them find nothing to say.

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

الْمَرِيرُوا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا اللَّيْلَ لِيَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ وَالنَّهَارَ مُبْصِرًا  
إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِّقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٨٦﴾

**Did they not see that We gave them the night for rest,  
and the day for light? There truly are signs in this for  
those who believe [86] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 86)**

The Quranic context moves from describing the Hereafter to casting light on a universal sign. This is one of the distinctive rhetorical features of the Noble Quran. It switches between the call to faith and the signs inherent in the universe. After informing us of the Hereafter, Allah *the Almighty* mentions these universal signs. It is as though Allah is saying that there is no excuse for those who deny His revelation because His signs are visible everywhere.

That is why Allah says, 'did they not see?' That is, He wonders whether they did not know and witness that it is He Who had made the night for them, so that they might rest therein. We know that night is dedicated for sleep and repose. In addition, Allah *the Almighty* created the day for them so that they will be able to see things and earn their living.

We mentioned before how Ibn Al-Haytham, a Muslim scientist, corrected the theory of vision. It had been thought that rays come from the eyes to the seen object, whereas the truth is that the ray starts from the seen object to the eye. Thus, it is the ray that allows the thing to be seen, that is, it is the main cause of vision without which we would not see anything. These are signs for

those who believe. Allah has ordered life for mankind by means of night in which you rest, and day in which you work and seek the His bounty. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘And out of His Mercy He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest therein, and that you may seek of His grace, and that you may give thanks.’ (*al-Qasas*: 73)

The way of life will not be normal unless we conform to this order that Allah has chosen for us. If people turn it and stay up night until dawn, the consequence of this will manifest itself in a lethargic, slow, and lazy attitude. Allah *Glorified is He* explains this to us when He says, ‘Say, “Tell me, if Allah were to make the night to continue incessantly on you till the day of resurrection, who is the deity besides Allah that could bring you light? Do you not then hear?” Say, “Tell me, if Allah were to make the day to continue incessantly on you till the Day of Resurrection, who is the deity besides Allah that could bring you the night in which you take rest? Do you not then see?”’ (*al-Qasas*: 71-72)

It is worth noting that Allah ended the verse that speaks about night with mentioning the sense of hearing, while He mentions the vision in the verse that speaks of the day. Why is that? Scholars say it is because the main sense of perception utilised at night is hearing; however it is the sight in the day. This indicates the nature of each of them, so that we do not change them staying up all-night and sleeping all day.

Concerning the saying of Allah, ‘And out of His Mercy He has made for you the night and the day, that you may rest therein, and that you may seek of His grace’, we notice that Allah, after speaking collectively, starts to elaborate on the subject; He mentions the two things together, the night and the day and then exposes the attribute of each of them in order. Thus, resting pertains to night, while seeking Allah’s bounty is a mission to be fulfilled in the day. Moreover, after speaking about two existing examples, the night and day, Allah chose to utilise the example of their hypothetical absence. Then once again, the context returns to speaking about the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

وَيَوْمَ يُنْفَخُ فِي الصُّورِ فَفَزِعَ مَنْ فِي السَّمَوَاتِ وَمَنْ فِي  
 الْأَرْضِ إِلَّا مَنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ وَكُلٌّ أَتَوْهُ دَاخِرِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

**On the Day the Trumpet sounds, everyone in heaven and on earth will be terrified – except such as God wills – and all will come to Him in utter humility [87] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 87)**

It is as though Allah is telling us to take admonition from the signs inherent in the universe as it will benefit us on a coming day, namely; the Day of Resurrection. On hearing the sound of the trumpet, everyone in heaven and on earth will be stricken with terror except those whom Allah wills not to be frightened. The scholars say that this refers to the angels, i.e. Israfil who will blow the trumpet and Jibril (Gabriel), Michael, and Azrael.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spoke about this, he said that he will return conscious and find his brother, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* clinging to the throne. This is because Musa (Moses) fell unconscious once in this world, when Allah revealed Himself to the mountain, as the Quran tells us: ‘But when his Lord manifested His Glory to the mountain He made it crumble and Musa (Moses) fell down in a swoon.’ (*al-A‘raf*: 143) Allah would not make Prophet Musa (Moses) swoon twice, and so he will not fall unconscious in the Hereafter.

Allah says that all will come to Him in utter humility and submission. None of them will be sound conceited as they have no power. The advent of resurrection spelt the end of the free will they possessed and by which they were granted some small dominion. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Say, “O Allah, Master of the Kingdom! You give the kingdom to whomsoever You please and take away the kingdom from whomsoever You please, and You exalt whom You please and abase whom You please.”’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 26)

However, Allah gave a portion of dominion and donated it to some of His servants in this worldly material life; all dominion belongs to Allah Alone in the Hereafter and no one can wrest it from Him. Allah says, ‘To whom belongs the kingdom this day? To Allah, the One, the Subduer [of all]’ (*Ghafir*: 16). Thus, everything you possess and your power over anything including your

own limbs will be taken from you. They will be beyond your control and will not respond to your orders. They served you in this life. They were your means of hearing, walking and holding; however, all of this will be taken out of your control; they will serve as evidence when they will testify against you on the Day of Resurrection.

Next, the context shifts again to mention a universal sign. Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَتَرَى الْجِبَالَ تَحْسَبُهَا جَامِدَةً وَهِيَ تَمُرُّ مَرَّ السَّحَابِ صُنْعَ اللَّهِ  
الَّذِي أَنْقَضَ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُ خَيْرٌ بِمَا تَفْعَلُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

**You will see the mountains and think they are firmly fixed, but they will float away like clouds: this is the handiwork of God who has perfected all things. He is fully aware of what you do [88] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 88)**

Allah *Glorified is He* draws our attention to the mountains. We think they are so firm that they do not move, yet they float away like clouds. Things are not as we deem them. They move and travel just as the clouds do, however, we are unaware and do not notice this movement because we are moving with them. Suppose that this mosque, in which we are gathering were on a rotary or a wheel that was rotating, would our positions and places in respect to one another change in any way? No, they would not. You cannot notice this movement unless you are outside the thing that is moving. Similarly, when you are on a train you see that the telephone poles outside moving, whilst you yourself are remaining still.

Inasmuch as this is an amazing phenomenon that will amaze humanity, Allah clarifies this wonderful sign and says that He has perfected all things. This is a call from Allah to mankind not to be amazed, since these signs are the creation of Allah. Thus, He chose to mention a particular attribute of His, i.e. He creates everything in this universe in a due measure.

However, some say that the movement of the mountains like clouds will be in the Hereafter. They cite in support of their opinion the verse where Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘And the mountains shall be as loosened wool.’ (*al-Qari’a*: 5)



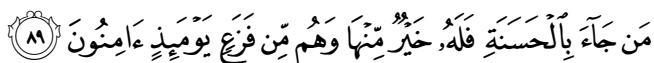
This is wide of the mark as the meaning of this verse is that the mountains will crumble and scatter and not that they will move. In addition, the statement in the verse we are studying is based on conjecture as Allah mentions the verb 'think'. Yet there is no conjecture in the Hereafter. When it comes, every event within it will be perceived with certainty.

The clouds themselves do not move and they have no motors to move them. It is the wind that moves them. Likewise, the mountains do not move of their own accord, for we have seen no mountain moving from its position. The movement of the mountains follows the movement of the earth because they are set as pegs upon it and a peg moves with the thing in which it is planted. Thus, when Allah speaks about the mountains, He says, 'And He has cast great mountains in the earth lest it might be convulsed with you.' (*an-Nahl*: 15) If the earth had been created in a state of stillness, it would not require anything to keep it firm. It must be in a state of motion.

It is Allah Who has perfected all things. In the past, people, before recent modern scientific findings, thought that astrologers and astronomers had knowledge of the unseen. As for now, scientists have discovered the rules that govern the motion of the earth and other celestial bodies in the solar system and have been able to measure all this precisely, so that they can predict the time and nature of the solar and lunar eclipses with complete accuracy. In addition, they were also able to fly to the surface of the moon by measuring these motions, and launch space stations and steer them with such accuracy that one could connect with another in outer space. If these phenomena had not been based on exacting data, they would have resulted in abject failure.

Moreover, the expression at the end of the verse that shows Allah's bounty on His creation serves as evidence for the correctness of our preferred explanation of the meaning of the movement of the mountains. Allah does not benevolently bestow His Handiwork on the Day of Resurrection, but rather, it is benevolently bestowed upon us now, in the life of this world.

Next Allah *Glorified is He* says:



**Whoever comes with a good deed will be  
rewarded with something better, and be secure  
from the terrors of that Day [89]  
(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 89)**

This verse has a subtle and beautiful connection with what has preceded it. All the signs of the universe that Allah *Glorified is He* has informed us of represent a single reality and you ascertained the truth of them when you saw and perceived them with your senses yourself. Similarly, just as Allah informed us of these signs, He is now informing us of another unseen reality which we must accept and believe in as we observed the truth of what we have seen.

Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that whoever comes with a good deed will be rewarded with something better. A good deed is an action that is performed for the sake of worshipping Allah. If you do something as Allah wants, it is a good deed on your part. In addition, Allah rewards good deeds tenfold and might reward them up to seven hundred times over according to the sincerity and devotion of the one who performs them.

The verse tells that whoever does a good deed in this world will be rewarded with something that stems from that good deed in the Hereafter. Some people say that saying that there is no god but Allah, for example, is a good deed and the reward for it will be better than it. However, this is an inexact understanding of the verse because it is Allah Who grants this reward and whoever comes with good deed will derive goodness from it as a result of it. Thus, the Arabic expression can mean 'better than' and 'good from'. It can also mean that the reward for a good deed is better than the good deed itself; for you do a good deed in a brief moment of time, yet the good and reward that come from it last forever.

Allah then says:

وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَكُبَّتْ وَجُوهُهُمْ فِي النَّارِ هَلْ  
تُجْزَوْنَ إِلَّا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٠﴾

**But whoever comes with evil deeds will be cast face  
downwards into the Fire. ‘Are you rewarded for anything  
except what you have done?’ [90] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 90)**

On the other hand, whoever comes with evil deeds will get his face casted and thrown violently downwards into the fire. Faces were singled out here, although the entire body will be thrown because the face is the noblest and most dignified part of the body. It is the seat of pride and haughtiness. Nevertheless, Allah *Glorified is He* wishes degradation and humiliation for them. Elsewhere in the Quran, He makes it clear that the entire body will be thrown into the fire, saying, ‘So they shall be thrown down into it, they, and the erring ones.’ (*ash-Shu‘ara’*: 94)

This fate is not unjust or unfairness for them. Allah says it is nothing but what they have done; He says, ‘...no injustice [shall be done] this day.’ (*Ghafir*: 17) Allah does not show courtesy to those who do good deeds, nor does He wrong those who do bad deeds.

Next Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّمَا أُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَعْبُدَ رَبَّ هَذِهِ الْبَلَدَةِ الَّذِي حَرَمَهَا  
وَلَهُ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ وَأُمِرْتُ أَنْ أَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٩١﴾

**[Say Prophet], ‘What I am commanded to do is to serve the  
Sustainer of this town, which He has made inviolable.  
Everything belongs to Him; I am commanded to be one of  
those devoted to Him [91] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 91)**

Inasmuch as Allah has given us this information that alerts us to His Power over the signs of the universe and has informed us of the Hereafter, the reward and punishment therein, all you have to do is to submit. Since you know, be steadfast and know that the one who passed on to you the guidance of Allah will be the first to adhere to it. All human beings must adhere to Allah’s Commands.

Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said that what he has been commanded to do is to serve the Lord of this town. When he *peace and blessings be upon him* asks you to do any action of moral responsibility, he has committed himself to it first. He is certain of the truth of the Message he conveys from Allah and thereby he has adhered to it.

To serve someone as we observed before is to worship and obey all commands and keep away from prohibitions. Allah created you from nothing, provided you from nothing, and ordered the motions of your life for your interest. Thus, when He obliges you to do anything, you should know that it is for your own good because it is He Who has undertaken your upbringing. If He were to leave you without any guidance, commands, or prohibitions, this upbringing would be flawed. Therefore, it is part of the perfection of the lordship to direct us, just as we direct and teach our own children. As long as your Lord has placed them there for you, you must obey Him.

Thus, we notice that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said that he is commanded to serve not to obey Allah. That is because lordship is about sustenance and educative upbringing, while divinity is connected to obligations. Therefore, the verse clarifies the significance of obeying the commandments of Allah. He educates you by means of these commandments and prohibitions, and you will yield the fruits of this commitment at the end.

Thus, Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* did not refer to his intellect when he heard about the Night Ascension. He did not consider its reality, but rather, he simply said, 'If Prophet Muhammad said it, he spoke the truth.' The criterion for him was that he *peace and blessings be upon him* had said it. Then, he would reason according to this and say, 'I believe the news he brings from the heavens, so how can I not believe him about this?'

Allah *Glorified is He* refers to the city of Mecca and signals it out because His House of Worship is there as He says, 'Most surely the first house appointed for men is the one at Bakka, blessed and guidance for the nations.' (*Al-Imran*: 96). He mentions a description of Mecca and says that He has made it inviolable. It is a sacred place where no fighting is allowed. Making places inviolable was to protect the world from the destruction of wars and

conflicts that lead each side to be consumed with seeking glory and find no means to this but that of the sword.

Making places inviolable make it seems as though Allah *Glorified is He* is giving His creatures a way to dissemble and hide, so that they would not be led by their delusions. One could say that he had not held back because of any weakness as it is the law that prevented him from fighting. They were prevented from waging war by the sanctity of a place such as the Sacred Mosque and by the sanctity of times such as the Sacred Months. One could say that had 'Allah not prevented me, I would have done so and so'. In this way, he can take refuge with Allah's prohibition of fighting so that he tastes the sweetness of peace and yearns to make his soul calm. It was due to the sanctity of Mecca that a man would not challenge the murderer of his father on meeting him therein out of respect for the sanctity of the Sacred House. This sanctity is also widened to include other species, it is forbidden to cut down trees or to hunt animals or birds therein.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says that everything belongs to Him. Thus, He chooses messengers from amongst angels and men and chooses certain places and certain times as well. He wants to spread this distinction to everything else. In addition, Allah *Glorified is He* does not show courtesy to anyone. When He sent a messenger, this messenger conveyed His Message to everyone and the benefit of this was apportioned to everyone. In the same way, the benefits of the inviolable places and times reach everyone and thereby Allah added the words that everything belongs to Him afterwards because this inviolability was made for all of them.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* says that he is commanded to be one of those devoted to Allah and those who implement His guidance. Allah made a contextual link between faith and good works because the point of faith is that you act in accordance to it. Allah says, 'I swear by the time. Most surely man is in loss. Except those who believe and do good...' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3). Allah *the Almighty* wants to interlink faith and legal rulings so that they form a practical course to follow in life.

Next Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَنْ أَتْلُوا الْقُرْآنَ ۚ فَمَنْ أَهْتَدَىٰ فَإِنَّمَا يَهْتَدِ  
لِنَفْسِهِ ۚ وَمَنْ ضَلَّ فَقُلْ إِنَّمَا أَنَا مِنَ الْمُنذِرِينَ ﴿٩٢﴾

**I am commanded to recite the Quran. Whoever chooses to follow the right path does so for his own good. Say to whoever deviates from it, 'I am only here to warn' [92] (The Quran, *an-Naml*: 92)**

When you read the Quran, you are not actually reading but listening to our Lord speaking. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is commanded to recite the Quran and constantly seek solace in the Quran that has been given to him, to show that he is, out of his love to the Quran, loves the One Who revealed it and loves to listen to Him. In itself, the recitation of the Quran is a pleasure and a joy.

Thus, he *peace and blessings be upon him* took joy in reciting the Quran and continued conveying it to the people as he is an example for his *ummah* after all, as Allah says, 'Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar.' (*al-Ahzab*: 21) Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is a role model to be imitated and thereby there is a part of every position he had, except that of prophethood, that can be gained by anyone who follows in his footsteps.

Thus, whoever chooses to follow the right path after the guidance reaches him and he is convinced by it does so for his own good because Allah will help him and will increase his guidance and success. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And [as for] those who follow the right direction, He increases them in guidance and gives them their guarding [against evil].' (*Muhammad*: 17) Therefore, guidance and piety do not benefit Allah Who ordained them, but rather, they only benefit the one who is guided. In addition, Allah mentions the contrasting image and tells Prophet Muhammad to say to whoever deviates from that guidance that he is only here to warn him against this act. This means that he *peace and blessings be upon him* is only concerned with being one of those who warn those who go astray.

Finally, Allah tells Prophet Muhammad to praise Allah *the Almighty* the One Who gave him the success to finish what His Lord has addressed him

including the worshipping of the Lord of the city of Mecca, reciting the Quran, drawing solace from and listening to it and conveying it to the people.

Allah says:

وَقُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سَيُرِيكُمْ آيَاتِهِ فَتَعْرِفُونَهَا وَمَا رَبُّكَ بِغَافِلٍ عَمَّا تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٩٣﴾

**Say, 'Praise belongs to God: He will show you His signs so that you will recognize them.' Your Lord is never unmindful of what you all do [93]**  
**(The Quran, *an-Naml*: 93)**

Praise be to Allah for His blessings and His guidance. Praise be to Allah Who does not punish anyone except after He warns and establishes the evidence against him. He will show you all His signs, within yourselves and elsewhere, so that you recognise the proofs of His Omnipotence and His Oneness in yourselves and in the heavens and the earth. He is never unmindful of what you all do, but rather, He witnesses over all things.





the chapter of

***al-Qasas***



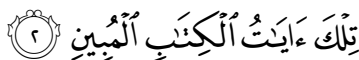
**In the Name of God, the Most Merciful,  
the Dispenser of Mercy**



***Ta Sin Mim* [1]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 1)**

The discrete letters at the beginning of some Quranic chapters occur in single letters such as *Qaf* and *Nun*, in two letters such as *Ta Sin* and *Ha Mim*, in three letters such as *Alif Lam Mim* and *Ta Sin Mim*, in four letters such as *Alif Lam Mim Ra*, or even in five letters such as *Ha Mim `Ain Sin Qaf* and *Kaf Ha Ya `Ain Sad*. Each of them has keys and secrets to its understanding of which we have not been given yet. All we have been doing are vague attempts to comment on them.

*Allah Glorified is He* says:



**These are the verses of the Scripture  
that makes things clear[2]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 2)**

*Allah Glorified is He* says that the following verses are the verses of the clear Scripture, i.e. the Quran.

*Allah the Almighty* then says:



**We recount to you [Prophet] part of the story of Moses and  
Pharaoh, setting out the truth for people who believe [3]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 3)**

Allah *Glorified is He* narrates to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* and Pharaoh. A story is an important piece of information that deserves our attention. Is there anything more important than sending Musa (Moses) to someone who had claimed divinity to himself? Thus, Allah devoted this chapter to the two of them and did not mention any other story except that of Qarun. That is because this chapter deals with a central theme which is that of monotheism, and responds to those who claim lordship and contests Allah in His unique attributes.

Allah says that He recites the story in truth because His conveyance of the story is true, as He says elsewhere: ‘Most surely this is the true explanation.’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 62) The word for story in Arabic is derived from a verb that means to follow a track. Some ancient Arabs were famous for their tracking abilities. They excelled therein to the extent that they could tell the difference between the tracks of a man and those of a woman and the like.

A famous story goes that a man once lost his camel and met a tracker and asked him about it. The tracker asked him if the tail of his camel was clipped. The man answered positively. The tracker asked if the camel was one-eyed and lame. The man said it was and thus became certain that it was the tracker who stole his camel. He seized him and took him to court. At the court, the tracker swore that he did not take his camel. He, however, knew that camels scatter their dung behind them but his camel left a single dung pile and thereby knew that it had a clipped tail. In addition, he noticed that one of its hoofs left no track in the sand, so he knew it was lame. Moreover, he noticed that it had eaten from one side and left the other so he knew it was one-eyed.

When Allah *Glorified is He* narrates stories to us, He tells the truth. The stories of the Quran are not embellished with fantasies like the stories of men. Therefore, Allah calls them ‘True Narrations’ and the ‘Best of Stories’ since they are in accordance with the original events.

He says:

إِنَّ فِرْعَوْنَ عَلَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَجَعَلَ أَهْلَهَا شِيَعًا يَسْتَضِعُّ طَائِفَةً  
مِّنْهُمْ يُذَبِّحُ أَبْنَاءَهُمْ وَيَسْتَحْيِي نِسَاءَهُمْ إِنَّهُ كَانَ مِنَ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٤﴾

**Pharaoh made himself high and mighty in the land and divided the people into different groups: one group he oppressed, slaughtering their sons and sparing their women — he was one of those who spread corruption [4] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 4)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says that Pharaoh made himself high and mighty in the land. He raised himself above his subjects and even above his ministers and the elite of his subjects. Moreover, he even attempted to rise himself above Allah by claiming Lordship and this is the height of self-elevation and the height of insolence and disbelief. As long as he possessed such attributes while being a mere human being with desires, he would naturally utilise them to debase his subjects.

Pharaoh divided his people into different groups and independent sects. A sovereign must treat his subjects equally, that is, no group should be given any privilege over another. However, Pharaoh made the people into sects, put some of them in power, and subordinated some of them to others. Undoubtedly, turning a united people into several factions is on the side of the ruler. It is to his interest to sow conflict amongst these factions and play one off against another in order to give them no chance to be stable or devise means of disturbing the ruler and making his throne tremble beneath him. In this way, he will continue to be required by all.

The indigenous people of Egypt were the Copts. However, when Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* came to Egypt and settled therein until he was placed in charge of the stores, his brothers came to take their provisions from Egypt and settled and made families there. In addition, they retained their own identity and did not blend in to the Coptic population.

Mistakenly, many people think that the Copt means a Christian. Actually, the word Copt refers to the indigenous Egyptian race. However, when the

Byzantine Empire occupied Egypt and spread Christianity, the word Copt was used to mean Christian.

But why did Pharaoh make the people into groups enslaving one another? It is said that because the Israelites had been at the service of the Hyksos rulers who invaded and temporarily removed the rule of the Pharaohs. Thus, when the Hyksos were expelled from Egypt, it was natural for the subsequent ruler to persecute the Israelites because they had been the allies of his enemies and had been on their side. This was the main reason behind Pharaoh's persecution of the Israelites.

When the Noble Quran speaks about the rulers of Egypt, ancient and modern, it calls them Pharaohs, as Allah says, 'And [with] Pharaoh, the lord of hosts.' (*al-Fajr*: 10) Here, in the story of Musa (Moses), Allah *the Almighty* refers to Pharaoh. As for the story of Yusuf (Joseph), there is no mention of the Pharaohs; rather, Allah refers to a king. This is an example of the miraculous nature of the Noble Quran as the rule in Egypt at the time of Yusuf (Joseph) was in the possession of the Hyksos, not the Pharaohs. They did rule Egypt before Yusuf (Joseph). Thus, when referring specifically to the time of Yusuf (Joseph), Allah uses the word 'the king' because there was no Pharaoh at the time of Yusuf (Joseph).

Allah *the Almighty* says that Pharaoh oppressed one group. The Copts, who were the indigenous population of Egypt, tyrannised the Israelites, in order to exact revenge for their support to their enemies. This serves as the first evidence of the falsehood of Pharaoh's claim to lordship. He turned his people into groups, while the subjects should all be equal. Thus, Allah says about the succession of Prophets: 'Surely, they who divided their religion into parts and became sects, you have no concern with them.' (*al-An'am*: 159)

The religion of Allah is one and His commandments are the same for everyone. If you were really in possession of the true religion, you would place all the people in a single group and would give none of them temporal power over any other. When you see such division and bias in a community, know that they are all guilty because Islam, as we said before, is like water that has no taste, colour, or smell. Everyone who likes water should like religion as we all need it to remain alive; but if we flavour this water

according to our own tastes, you might like orange while I might like mango and another person might like lemon, and so on. As such, the matter is subject to caprice and the religion that Allah intended to be united becomes divided. Thus, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: ‘My *ummah* will divide into sixty-some or seventy-some sects, all of which will be in Hell, except for the one that adheres to that which I and my companions are upon.’<sup>(1)</sup> So the group of Islam is one, but when we find tens of sects, groups and factions on the scene, which one would the Muslim follow? Therefore, since they divided their religion into parts and became sects, you have no concern with them.

Then Allah describes this oppression saying that Pharaoh was slaughtering their sons and sparing their women. We said that to corrupt that which is sound in itself is a kind of corruption. This kind is manifested by slaughtering males and sparing females because life cannot continue if a species is not preserved. Slaughtering males prevents the species from continuing. In addition, Pharaoh chose to slaughter the males because they were the source of evil for him. As for women, they could do no harm and he did not fear them, and so he kept them alive to live in service and degradation.

When we pursue the like verse, we find that it is mentioned in three other places in the Book of Allah with different rhetorical styles. In the first verse, Allah says, ‘And when We delivered you from Pharaoh’s people who subjected you to severe torment, killing your sons and sparing your women.’ (*al-Baqara*: 49); elsewhere, He says, ‘...who subjected you to severe torment, killing your sons and sparing your women.’ (*al-A’raf*: 141) These two verses are directly spoken by Allah. As for the third place, it is a narration from Allah of what came from the tongue of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he enumerated the blessings granted by Allah to the Israelites: ‘Call to mind Allah’s favour to you when He delivered you from Pharaoh’s people, who subjected you to severe torment, and slew your sons and spared your women.’ (*Ibrahim*: 6)

We notice that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* adds the word ‘and’ which is not mentioned directly by Allah because it is in the context of

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(1) Narrated by *At-Tirmidhi*

listing the blessings of Allah granted to his people and his intention was to show the magnitude of Allah's blessings to them and to remind them of all these blessings. However, when Allah spoke, He only mentioned the original blessing, which was to save them from the slaughter of the sons and the sparing of the women. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* does not mention each and every blessing. He only mentions the greater things and the slaughter of sons whilst sparing women is cruel suffering itself.

We notice that Allah once said that Pharaoh was slaughtering their sons in one place and killing them in another. That is because the males were killed in different ways, sometimes being slaughtered and sometimes being smothered.

The phrase 'subjected you to severe torment' is derived from the Arabic word *sawm* which means to leave an animal to free-graze. It seeks its own provision without us feeding it ourselves, rather than keeping it tethered and feeding it. Thus, Pharaoh sought out cruel suffering for them. As long as this was the case, they must have become experts at causing suffering.

Next Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَنُرِيدُ أَنْ نَمُنَّ عَلَى الَّذِينَ اسْتُضْعِفُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ  
وَنَجْعَلَهُمْ أَئِمَّةً وَنَجْعَلَهُمُ الْوَارِثِينَ

**But We wished to favour those who were oppressed in  
that land, to make them leaders, the ones to survive [5]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 5)**

So, this oppression of a Pharaoh would not last forever because Allah decreed that oppressors will not have success and that an oppressor will not die until those he oppressed take their revenge on him and show him the outcome of his oppression. Sometimes, the oppressed even feel sorry for the oppressor. What a thing to see those who were oppressed yesterday feeling sorry for the oppressor today.

Here we see Allah's defence of the believers. He wished to favour those who were oppressed. To favour means to give a compensatory blessing without any effort on the part of those who are granted it as though it is a gift from Allah and His defence of His friends and those who obey Him. This is



because `Ali Allah be pleased with him said, ‘Allah does not surrender the truth, He leaves it to see if people will seek to protect it; and if they do not protect it, He protects it.’ In addition, when Allah *Glorified is He* protects those who are made lowly, He does not only remove tyranny from them, but rather, He makes them leaders as well. He makes them leaders in religion and ethics and leaders in politics and rule. In addition, they are the ones to survive. They are the heirs of those who had oppressed them and become rulers and leaders. Look at what the stages of the protection of Allah over the people of truth are. Were it not that Pharaoh, who used force to make others lowly and debase, had turned his back to Allah and refused to follow Him, Allah’s Mercy would have reached him too and he would have lived in equality with his subjects.

Therefore, the leaders of revolutions, who come to end a reign of corruption and save their people from those who oppress them, must include everyone in their protection and care after they put an end to corruption and prevent its spread and realise justice in society. Thus, everyone lives together as equals in their society so that counter-revolution does not erupt.

Next Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَنُمَكِّنَ لَهُمْ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَنُرِيَ فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَامَانَ  
وَجُنُودَهُمَا مِنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَحْذَرُونَ ﴿٦﴾

**To establish them in the land, and through them show  
Pharaoh, Haman, and their armies the very thing they  
feared [6] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 6)**

We know that the earth is a place where events take place because every event needs a time and a place. Thus, the meaning of establishing them in the land is to make the earth a place to someone who is established therein. Establishment in land means that they can act therein with authority and derive therefrom goodness.

Allah explained the meaning of establishment for us in several places in the Quran. In the story of Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* He says, ‘Surely you are in our presence today an established, faithful one.’ (*Yusuf*: 54) This

is to say you have a position and a firm base that no one can harm you. Another example is the verse where Allah says, 'And thus did We establish Yusuf (Joseph) in the land.' (*Yusuf*: 21) This means that Allah gave him authority by means of which he derived goodness from the land and divided this goodness amongst everyone else.

Allah mentions someone named Haman. He was Pharaoh's minister, and of course each of them must have had their own private guards, apart from the general army of the state, as these days we have the republican guard and the royal guard and the army. Or, Haman was acting on behalf of Pharaoh as kings do not conduct their affairs except by means of viziers and in this situation the army would have taken their orders from Haman. It could also be that Haman had authority and a position of power no less important than that of Pharaoh and perhaps sometimes he would raise his head and be insolent with Pharaoh. We see this here in Egypt and thus the well-known country proverb that you say to the one who tries to deceive you, 'Are you trying to fool Haman'? That is to say, his trick will not fool the likes of you.

Allah wanted to show Pharaoh, Haman, and their armies the very thing they feared, which was the prophecy that came to them, either from soothsaying or from a dream as Pharaoh saw a fire coming from Jerusalem and overcoming the Copts of Egypt, but not harming the Israelites. When they interpreted this dream for him, he said: 'Surely someone will come from this land and take my kingdom from me'. In addition, it is narrated that the soothsayers told him that in that year a boy would be born who would be the cause of the loss of Pharaoh's kingdom.

Therefore, Pharaoh and his people would see this with their own eyes and experience it directly. What they feared would eventually come true. That is why Pharaoh ordered the slaughtering of all the Israelite's boys in order to be safe and to remain in power, however this precaution did not avail him ought.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ ۖ فَإِذَا خِفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ  
وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي ۖ إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ ﴿٧﴾

**We inspired Moses' mother, saying, 'Suckle him, and then, when you fear for his safety, put him in the river: do not be afraid, and do not grieve, for We shall return him to you and make him a messenger' [7] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 7)**

Pharaoh's affair was strange. After ordering the slaughter of Israelite children, a cradle arrived from the river carrying in it a baby. It never occurred to him that his parents had cast him into the river to save him from Pharaoh. How could this have escaped him, if he were a god? He did not see it by means of neither his lordship nor his intellect and sagacity. If the priests had informed him that his kingdom would be taken from him by means of one of these children and this prophesy was correct, the child would of course survive the slayings and grow up and bring an end to Pharaoh's kingdom. This means that the only children Pharaoh would kill would be the ones who would never grow to be the cause of his sovereignty's end.

Allah decreed that Musa (Moses) would be raised in the palace of Pharaoh and that his poverty-stricken mother would come and live with him in opulence and luxury. In addition, He decreed that Musa (Moses) would become a source of delight for the queen. Consider the heedlessness that afflicted the mind and covered the insight of Pharaoh, who claimed to be a god! In this way, we understand the verse where Allah says, 'And know that Allah intervenes between man and his heart' (*al-Anfal*: 24). And so his heart covers his insight and blinds it.

Allah revealed to Musa's (Moses's) mother to suckle him or put him in the river if she feared for his safety. What woman, if she feared for her son, would agree to cast her son into a river? Who would be happy to save him from the possible death of being slaughtered into certain death? Allah made her natural motherly emotion fade before the divine notion that came to her, which could not be touched by any notion from Satan.

Similarly, Allah also prepared the wife of Pharaoh to complete this divine plan for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* so that she said that Musa (Moses)

is: 'A refreshment of the eye to me and to you.' (*al-Qasas*: 9) Pharaoh replied to her: 'Nay, for you alone.' It is as though he was in some way aware of what would happen; but the will of Allah must always come to pass and fate will run its course, prevented by nought as when Allah wills something, His will cannot be refused.

Despite what Pharaoh knew from the dream or the prophecy, he raised the child in his home. Moreover, this matter was not quite free of the power of woman over man as well. Thus, when this verse was recited before the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he said, 'By He in whom oaths are sworn, if Pharaoh had said what his wife said, 'Musa (Moses) was a refreshment of the eye to her and to him', Allah would have guided him as he guided her.<sup>(1)</sup> But he refused the good that Allah sent to him, yet his wife surrendered to Allah and died in a state of belief. It was she who said, 'My Lord! Build for me a house with Thee in the garden and deliver me from Pharaoh and his doing, and deliver me from the unjust people.' (*at-Tahrim*: 11) As for Pharaoh, he died in his disbelief the worst of deaths.

Previously, we discussed the revelation of Allah to Musa's (Moses's) mother. We said that the word inspiration in general use means to inform in a secret way, leaving aside discussion of the meaning of the inspirer and the inspired-to and the inspired thing. In the sacred inspiration, it is when Allah reveals guidance to a messenger for His creatures. Thus, Allah inspires the angels: 'When your Lord revealed to the angels: "I am with you, therefore make firm those who believe."' (*al-Anfal*: 12) In addition, He inspires the messengers: 'Surely, We have revealed to you as We revealed to Nuh (Noah), and the prophets after him, and We revealed to Ibrahim (Abraham) and Ismail (Ishmael) and Ishaq (Issac) and Ya'qub (Jacob).' (*an-Nisa'*: 163) Moreover, He inspires the believers who serve the messengers faithfully: 'And when I revealed to the disciples, saying, "Believe in Me and My Messenger."' (*al-Ma'ida*: 111) As well as He inspires the bee and inanimate objects: 'When the earth is shaken with her [violent] shaking, And the earth brings forth her burdens, and man says, "What has befallen her?" On that day, she shall tell her news because your Lord had inspired her.' (*az-Zalzala*: 1-5)

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(1) Narrated by As-Suyuti in *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur* (p. 569)

Information by way of inspiration might also come from Satan as Allah says, ‘And most surely the devils suggest to their friends that they should contend with you.’ (*al-An‘am*: 121) It can come from those who are astray as well as Allah says: ‘Some of them suggesting to others varnished falsehood to deceive [them].’ (*al-An‘am*: 112)

The inspiration to mother of Musa (Moses) was from the fourth level, by way of a whispering in her soul or a revelation or a vision or an angel speaking to her. This all is possible.

This was inspiration from Allah and its content was an order to suckle him or cast him into the river if she fears for his safety. Then Allah prohibits her from being dreadful or sad, whilst the rest of the inspiration was glad tidings of two things. Thus, this verse combined for Musa’s (Moses’s) mother two commands, two prohibitions, and two glad tidings, in a concise, miraculous rhetorical form.

Allah orders her to suckle him as long as he is safe with her. However, when she fears for him, and Allah did not specify any particular thing to show that it applied to anything she might fear for her son, she is to cast him into the river. Allah showed concern for the feelings of a mother and her concern for her son, especially upon casting him into the river and so assured her and told her not to be afraid because Allah would ensure that he had an upbringing better than she could give him, in a home of wealth and sovereignty. He also told her not to grieve for his departure because this departure will bring goodness for you and for the whole world. He would bring an end to this tyranny and bring Allah’s guidance to rule over Allah’s creatures on earth. Furthermore, know that Allah will return him to you later and will make him a messenger. Thus, Allah protects him, not just for her but because he had an important mission.

It is said that Musa’s (Moses’s) mother continued to suckle him in her house as long as she was secure that Pharaoh would not discover him until a patrol came to search her house. She feared for the child, wrapped him in a blanket, and concealed him in an aperture next to the house, which was an oven on fire, not noticing this because of her fear. When the patrol left, she went to him and found he was unscathed. Allah wanted her to be assured that He would protect the child and that His promise was true.

The matter of Allah's inspiration to Musa's (Moses's) mother is mentioned twice in the Quran, which caused those orientalists whose views are superficial to accuse the Quran of useless repetition. They mention that Allah says, elsewhere: 'When We revealed to your mother what was revealed; saying, "Put him into a chest, then cast it down into the river, then the river shall throw him on the shore"; there shall take him up one who is an enemy to Me and enemy to him, and I cast down upon you love from Me, and that you might be brought up before My eyes.' (*Ta Ha*: 38-39) However, there is a difference between the first inspiration and the other. The first inspiration was specifically about suckling him for as long as he was safe, whilst the other inspiration was that after she feared for him, Allah inspired her to cast him into the river.

In the above-mentioned verse, we notice that Allah ordered her to cast him into the river even with force and with no care or delicacy as Allah's care would protect him either way. Moreover, the river shall throw him on the shore as it was a command from Allah to the water to deliver the child safely to shore.

In this inspiration, there was no mention of the matter of suckling the child. It is as though the first inspiration came to lay the foundations for what would happen, so that Musa's (Moses's) mother could be prepared spiritually for the task at hand; then, the second inspiration came to tell her to carry it out. An illustration of this might be that you warn your neighbour that thieves will come. You advise him to be cautious of this and then, when night falls, what you warned him about indeed happens and so you call him to quickly come and apprehend them.

Therefore, the rhetorical style of the first warning is different from the second. The former comes in a settled calm fashion with a calm tone because the situation is one of preparation and counsel, not action and implementation.

However, the second inspiration in the second verse comes with speed and an urgent tone. Allah says, 'Put him into a chest, then cast it down into the river, then the river shall throw him on the shore.' (*Ta Ha*: 39) The haste of expression here indicates that the situation is of very direct action.

In the first position, He says: 'cast him', whilst in the second He says: 'throw him'. Mothers do not throw their babies, but place them with care and affection. Here, the time was short, thus there was no room for care and affection.

There is a great wisdom behind commanding water to carry the chest to the shore; wild, fearsome creatures are found in deep waters, whilst the shore contains only calm small fish. Also, the chest would be clearly visible therein, so he can be watched, protected, and saved by his family. Consequently, he could reach the decreed household to be raised therein.

The chest did indeed reach the shore. Pharaoh, his wife-Asia- and their daughter were on the beach. When the chest reached the shore of the Nile, they found the baby inside. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was dark-skinned and curly-haired with a large nose. He was not beautiful, attractive or pleased those who looked at him.

Hence, Allah reminded him of His favour, saying: ‘...And I spread My Own love over you...’ (*Ta Ha*: 39) which means that you yourself were not beloved to those who saw you, but rather, it was by virtue of Allah’s love that people loved you. Upon looking at Musa (Moses), Asia loved and admired him. She kept him despite Pharaoh’s opposition to this.

Pharaoh’s daughter<sup>(1)</sup> who was afflicted with leprosy, had previously seen a vision in which she saw that her medicine would come out from the sea that whose saliva would heal the leprous parts. She remembered the vision when she saw Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* thus took his saliva, rubbed it into her skin and was immediately cured; so she became attracted to him.

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* became beloved to both the wife and the daughter of Pharaoh. Notwithstanding that Pharaoh would not refuse their demand. Pharaoh’s constant yielded to his wife and daughter’s requests.

His inclination to them, whatever he knew about the child, indicates clearly that spouses and children play at a man’s weak-point, a means of overcoming his sagacity and judiciousness and pressuring him to take certain decisions.

So Allah *the Almighty* reassures us of Himself, saying: ‘...no consort has He ever taken unto Himself, nor a son!’ (*al-Jinn*: 3) This is because a spouse can affect her husband in a way or another; a son, he can lead his father to cowardice and humiliation. Yet the True Lord has no influences that can pressurise Him in any way, for He is absolved of all imperfection.

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(1) The story of the vision of the daughter of Pharaoh and her healing from leprosy

One of the quirks about Abu Nawwas, a poet,<sup>(1)</sup> is that someone once asked him to mediate for him to the Caliph Harun Ar-Rashid. Abu Nawwas did so, but the Caliph did not grant his request. The man waited in vain, so he thought of another way. He asked someone else to intercede for him to Zubayda, the Caliph's wife. When she spoke with him, he quickly fulfilled the man's demand. Upon this, Abu Nawwas became angry and reproached his friend, the Caliph Harun, but he was not moved. So, he said to him: 'Listen to this:

The mediator who comes to you fully clothed

Is not like the mediator who comes to you naked!

As for Musa's (Moses's) divine protection, one notices that when the Lord said to him: 'go you to Pharaoh: for, verily, he has transgressed all bounds of equity', Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was afraid of this mission. The very name of Pharaoh at the time struck fear into the people's hearts, to the extent that Musa (Moses) and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* said: 'The two [brothers] said, "O our Lord! Verily, we fear lest he act hastily with regard to us, or lest he [continue to] transgress all bounds of equity."' (Ta Ha: 45) So Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* sought his Lord's help to fulfil his mission, saying: 'O my Lord! Open up my heart [to Your light], and make my task easy for me, and loosen the knot from my tongue so that they might fully understand my speech, and appoint for me, out of my kinsfolk, one who will help me to bear my burden: Harun (Aaron), my brother. Add You through him to my strength, and let him share my task, so that [together] we might abundantly extol Your Limitless Glory and remember You without cease! Verily, You see all that is within us!' (Ta Ha: 25-35)

What did his Lord say in reply? 'You are granted all that you have asked for, O Musa (Moses)! And, indeed, We bestowed Our favour upon You at a time long since the past.' (Ta Ha: 36-37) That is, you will be given all what you ask for.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

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(1) The story of Abu Nawwas asking a man to intercede on his behalf with the Caliph Harun Ar-Rashid



فَالْقَاطَةُ ۖ ءَالَ فِرْعَوْنَ لِيَكُونَ لَهُمْ عَدُوًّا وَحَزَنًا إِنَّ  
فِرْعَوْنَ وَهَمَانَ وَجُنُودَهُمَا كَانُوا خَاطِئِينَ ﴿٨﴾

**Pharaoh's household picked him up — later to become an enemy and a source of grief for them: Pharaoh, Haman, and their armies were wrongdoers [8] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 8)**

The Arabic word used for 'picked up' here is *laqata* that you find something haphazardly. The legal Arabic term *laqit* is the abandoned child of unknown parents, who is found by somebody, is derived from this word in question here. This was the case with the chest; for it came to the family of Pharaoh whilst they were sitting and they were not seeking it out or hoping for it. As soon as they found it, they picked it, but what was the reason behind that? The wife said: '...A joy to the eye [could this child be] for me and you...' (*al-Qasas*: 9), and from a different perspective, she said: '...he may well be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son...' (*al-Qasas*: 9). They had no sons and wanted a brother for their daughter; the daughter, on her part, wanted him as a means for her cure; but was this reason true?

No; they took him and raised him up in order to be a joy to them, yet a different destiny came to pass; Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* became '...an enemy and a source of grief for them...' (*al-Qasas*: 9); he was not a joy to the eye. The word *li* (to) here refers to the consequences, i.e. he was thinking of one thing, but the consequence was something totally different.

This verse indicates Pharaoh's foolishness and the lack of insight, for whilst he claimed to be a god, he agreed to raise Musa (Moses) in his house after the soothsayers warned him against the consequences of the vision he saw and after being fully aware of the danger this child posed against his kingdom and his life. This shows the truthfulness of Allah's words: '...and know that Allah intervenes between man and [the desires of] his heart...' (*al-Anfal*: 24).

The word *hazan* (grief) has the same meaning as the word *huzn*, as the word has two formations with the same meaning, which sometimes occurs in Arabic.

Allah's saying: '...Pharaoh, Haman and their armies were wrongdoers' (*al-Qasas*: 8) refers that they were *khati'in* (wrongdoers) because their actions were not appropriate in light of what they knew about the boy. They

did not judge things properly, nor did they think about the consequences. They should have had doubt about a child who came to them in such a manner; for it was clear that his parents had tried to save him from Pharaoh.

Allah *the Almighty* subsequently says:

وَقَالَتِ امْرَأَتُ فِرْعَوْنَ قُرْتُ عَيْنٍ لِي وَلَكَ لَا تَقْتُلُوهُ عَسَى أَنْ  
يَنْفَعَنَا أَوْ نَتَّخِذَهُ وَلَدًا وَهُمْ لَا يَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٩﴾

**And Pharaoh's wife said, 'Here is a joy to behold for me and for you! Do not kill him: he may be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son.' They did not realize what they were doing [9] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 9)**

Allah says: 'joy to behold for me'. The root of *qurra* (joy) is *qarr* which means to stay and settle in a place, from which is derived the word *qarar* 'stability'. The Arabic word *qarr* also means extreme coolness, as in the poet's word:

Light a fire, for the night is cold (*qarr*),

And the wind that blows is fearsome.

Bring a guest, and you are free, son!

So, the saying of Allah, 'joy to behold for me' could mean stability and lack of movement of the eye. The stability and firmness of the eye is either literal or metaphorical. If it is metaphorical, it means that the eye settles on a certain sight and is sufficed by it so that it has no need for looking at anything else.

This is the meaning of their saying: 'He only has eyes sufficed by what he has'. An example of this is what Allah *the Almighty* said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'And never turn your eyes [with longing] towards whatever splendour of this world's life...' (*Ta Ha*: 131).

So, they use the term 'eye-catching' to refer to those objects whose beauty attracts attention, as the poet says:

I fixed my eye upon the moon,

And those who saw me chastised me.

If only my critic would find some excuse;

For so eye-catching is its beauty.

Moreover, literal stability means that the eye becomes fixed so that one becomes blind. This is the basis of what the woman<sup>(1)</sup> said to the Caliph: ‘May Allah settle your eye, and complete His favour upon you!’ It seems that she was praying for him, while she was really praying against him because by ‘may Allah settle your eye’, she meant may Allah settle it with blindness. Also, when she said ‘and completes His favour upon you’, she meant end it because the completion of a thing spells the beginning of its end, as the poet says:

When a thing is completed, its deterioration begins:

Just observe the high noon when it is completed.

The Arabic word *qarr* could also mean coolness: it is known that heat spreads evenly throughout a place; yet Allah’s Wisdom decreed that the human body would be different, wherein each limb has its own particular temperature. The usual temperature of the skin is 37°C, whilst the liver, for example, does not function unless it is 40°C.

As for the eyes, if they increase in temperature to more than 9°C, they melt and one becomes blind. Amazingly enough, they are all components of the same body. This is why when we pray for someone, we say ‘May Allah *yugerr* your eyes’, i.e. may He make them cool and safe. Do you not see that when someone becomes angry, his eyes heat up and his face reddens?

So, the statement of Pharaoh’s wife: ‘...a joy to behold for me and for you!’ (*al-Qasas*: 9) means that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* will be a blessing and a delight, that with him we will be happy, joyful and satisfy our desire.

Elsewhere in the Quran, the True Lord explains to us the meaning of ‘a joy to behold for me and for you!’ (*al-Qasas*: 9), saying: ‘Allah is indeed aware of those of you who would divert others [from fighting in His cause], as well as of those who say to their brethren, “Come hither to us [and face the enemy]!”—the while they [themselves] join battle but seldom, begrudging you all help. But then, when danger threatens, thou canst see them looking to thee [for help, O Prophet], their eyes rolling [in terror] like [the eyes of] one who is overshadowed by death.’ (*al-Ahzab*: 18-19)

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(1) The story of the Arab woman who cursed the caliph and the people thought that she was praying for him

Their eyes roll here and there, as we say in Egypt: ‘His eyes never stop moving’, either from fear, or worry or discomfort; and all of this is contrary to ‘...a joy to behold for me and for you!’ (*al-Qasas*: 9) Her saying after this ‘Do not kill him’ shows that they actually wanted to kill him, so it was in their minds that the destruction of Pharaoh would come at the hands of this boy, and they were sure of this.

Allah *the Almighty* then says, ‘...he may be of use to us, or we may adopt him as a son. They did not realise what they were doing.’ (*al-Qasas*: 9) They did not sense whether he would be of use to them or not, or whether he would be a son to them or an enemy.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَرِغًا ۖ إِن كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِيَ بِهِ  
 لَوْلَا أَن رَّبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

**‘The next day, Moses’ mother felt a void in her heart — if  
 We had not strengthened it to make her one of those who  
 believe, she would have revealed everything about him [10]  
 (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 10)**

As for the word *fu`ad* (heart), we do not use this word unless we are speaking of something that directs your behaviour. The meaning of ‘... Musa’s (Moses’s) mother felt a void in her heart’ (*al-Qasas*: 10) is that she was empty of anything to control her actions. When she went to cast the child into the water, thinking of his loss and the dangers he would face, her matriarchy almost caused her to reveal her secret, and her emotions almost overwhelmed her.

As for the saying of Allah, ‘...she would have revealed everything about him’ (*al-Qasas*: 10), it means that she was about to reveal his matter as she ‘...felt a void in her heart—if We had not strengthened it to make her one of those who believe...’ (*al-Qasas*: 10).

I said before that a person can perceive things by his perception. This perception becomes a feeling and an emotion, and then it turns into a response and then action. As an example of this: I said that you see a flower, delight in

it, then move by to pick it and then your heart says to you: ‘You have no right to pick it because the owner of the garden might refuse, or press charges against you; for the flower does not belong to you’.

Such was the case with Musa’s (Moses’s) mother. Her heart was devoid of something to reassure her about her son and prevent her emotions from revealing the secret. The statement ‘...if We had not strengthened it to make her one of those who believe’ (*al-Qasas*: 10) means that Allah revealed tranquillity on her, so that the affair for her would be a matter of sound belief that could not be assuaged by superficial emotions. Another case of this is Allah’s saying about the People of the Cave: ‘and endowed their hearts with strength so that they stood up and said [to one another]: “Our Lord is the Lord of the heavens and the earth...”’ (*al-Kahf*: 14).

So, the endowing of the heart with strength means to protect those things that influence reactions. That is if something is not right, you do not do it and if something is right, you do it. These firm matters are the behaviour determiner. The heart of Musa’s (Moses’s) mother was devoid of them.

That is why we say about one who speaks words that are devoid of meaning: ‘Abandon this empty speech!’, i.e. this speech that has no meaning or benefit. They say that someone has ‘an empty mind’ meaning that his mind is devoid of beneficial matters.

This is the meaning of Allah’s saying: ‘...and their hearts an abysmal void.’ (*Ibrahim*: 43) In our local dialect, we say: ‘He has not even got any air’ because air is the last thing that something can be devoid of.

The meaning of ‘...she would have revealed everything about him’ (*al-Qasas*: 10), is that because of the void in her heart, she was close to saying, ‘he is my son’; Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...if We had not strengthened it to make her one of those who believe’ (*al-Qasas*: 10); faith is the safe side that even if you have some immediate desires, it protects you from falling prey to them. Musa’s (Moses’s) mother’s faith protected her from the instinctive desire of motherhood at this moment and prevented her from following her natural feelings and care. This immediate desire would have brought her great harm, for if they knew he was her son, they would have killed him.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهِ فَبَصَّرَتْ بِهِ عَنْ جُنْبٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿١١﴾

**And she said to his sister, 'Follow him.' So she watched him from a distance, without them knowing [11] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 11)**

Musa's (Moses's) mother said to her daughter: 'Go after him, see where he ends up and what happens to him'. When the sister heard this request, she immediately carried it out. This is indicated by the use of the particle *fa* which grammatically indicates an immediate consequence. Allah then says, 'So she watched him' (*al-Qasas*: 11). Allah *Glorified is He* did not say 'and she followed him' because the verb 'to watch' although generally means to see, it also indicates care and concern for the thing that is seen.

The meaning of distance in 'from a distance' is from a place where no one could see her, that is, she was following him or was concerned with him. This is similar to the Samaritan who said: '...I have gained insight into something which they were unable to see...' (*Ta Ha*: 96), that is, he saw from where no one could see him.

We notice here that Musa's (Moses's) sister received the instruction from her mother to 'Follow him' (*al-Qasas*: 11) only, without telling her to do so 'from a distance' which shows the intelligence of the girl as she fulfilled her task in the best way, even though she was not instructed to do all that. This is the wisdom of the messenger who takes care to deliver his message correctly. A poet said a wonderful thing about this notion:

If you are in need of a messenger,  
Send a wise man, and advise him not.

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'from a distance', some people think that this means 'from a close place', but this is not the case. Actually, it means that you are not facing the person, as is the case in Allah's saying: '...and the neighbour from among your own people and the neighbour who is a stranger...' (*an-Nisa*: 36). As the neighbour who is a stranger is in contrast to the neighbour who is from your own people, so it means 'the neighbour from a distance'.

In the Egyptian local dialect, we say ‘So-and-so gave me his side’, i.e. he avoided me and stayed away from me. So, some people think this word means the opposite of what it truly means.

Consider Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) words: ‘...and preserve me and my children from ever worshipping idols.’ (*Ibrahim*: 35) This is also the case with the saying of Allah *the Almighty* ‘...and shun every word that is untrue.’ (*al-Hajj*: 30) So, the words for ‘preserve’ and ‘shun’ here both are derived from the same root of *junub*; they mean to avoid and stay far away from something.

About the prohibition of wine, Allah *the Almighty* says, ‘...Intoxicants, and games of chance, and idolatrous practices and the divining of the future are but a loathsome evil of Satan’s doing: shun it...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 90). Some people say that this is not a text of prohibition because Allah did not say ‘it is forbidden’ but rather said ‘shun it’; so it is just a counsel and an advice. We say that if you knew the meaning of *ijtanib* (shun), you would know that it is even stronger than a mere proclamation of prohibition because the meaning of ‘wine is forbidden’ would be ‘do not drink wine’, whilst the meaning of ‘shun’ is that you completely avoid it, whether drinking, selling, buying, carrying or even sitting in the company of those who drink it.

The following verses discuss how destiny fell into place. Allah says:

وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلُ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ  
يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ نَصِيبٌ ﴿١٢﴾

**We had ordained that he would refuse to feed from wet nurses. His sister approached them and said, ‘Shall I tell you about a household which could bring him up for you and take good care of him?’ [12] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 12)**

It is not that. Wet-nurses were forbidden to him, as in the legal rulings of commandments and prohibitions; it means that Allah prevented him from suckling from wet-nurses who came to him one after another until his own mother came to him. The word ‘nurses’ here is the plural form of the Arabic singular *murdi`*. Some people mistakenly believe that word *murdi`a* gives the same meaning as *murdi`* which is not true. Read the opening of the

chapter of *al-Hajj*: 'On the Day when you behold it, every woman that feeds a child at her breast will utterly forget her nursling...' (*al-Hajj*: 2). So, a *murdi`* (wet-nurse) is someone whose occupation is to nurse and who is able to do it continuously, whilst a *murdi`a* (a woman that feeds a child at her breast) is a woman who is currently feeding a child at her breast at this particular moment. On the Day of Resurrection, she will completely forget about her child out of terror for what she beholds; this refers to the woman who is breastfeeding, not the professional wet-nurse.

The pronoun in the saying of Allah '...Shall I tell you' (*al-Qasas*: 12) refers to Musa's (Moses's) sister who was still about following the child. Haman heard her say: 'Shall I tell you about a household which could bring him up for you and take good care of him?' (*al-Qasas*: 12) He replied to her: 'You must be from this boy's family and aware of his story.' She replied: 'Rather, we are sincere in offering advice to the king.' Ultimately, they indeed did as she had advised; they were excused for doing so because the child refused to suckle from any of the others.

Then, the True Lord says:

فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ ۚ وَلِتَعْلَمَ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَٰكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

**We restored him to his mother in this way, so that she might be comforted, not grieve, and know that God's promise is true, though most of them do not know [13]**  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 13)

Allah *the Almighty* had already promised her: '...We restored him to his mother...' (*al-Qasas*: 13), so the time came for the first promise to be fulfilled, which was a glad tiding of the ultimate fruition of the second promise: '...and shall make him one of Our message-bearers' (*al-Qasas*: 7), but this would be in the future and it would indeed come to pass.

Allah's saying, 'We restored him to his mother in this way...' (*al-Qasas*: 13) indicates that the means are dominated by Allah Who creates them. It was He Who returned him to her, not his sister, or Pharaoh. Allah *Glorified is He*



directs things according to His will, paves the way for them, even intervening between a man and the desires of his heart in order that His Decree unfolds.

As for the saying of Allah ‘though most of them do not know’ (*al-Qasas*: 13), it means they do not know that Allah’s Promise always comes true.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَلَمَّا بَلَغَ أَشُدَّهُ وَاسْتَوَىٰ ءَاتَيْنَاهُ حُكْمًا وَعِلْمًا وَكَذَٰلِكَ نَجْزِي الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿١٤﴾

**When Moses reached full maturity and manhood, We gave him wisdom and knowledge: this is how We reward those who do good [14] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 14)**

The word ‘manhood’ means strength and maturity, which is between the ages of eighteen and twenty. ‘Maturity’ conveys that his mind had reached its intellectual maturity. So, when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had reached physical and intellectual maturity: ‘...We gave him wisdom and knowledge: this is how We reward those who do good.’ (*al-Qasas*: 14)

Then, Allah *the Almighty* states the story saying:

وَدَخَلَ الْمَدِينَةَ عَلَىٰ حِينٍ غَفْلَةٍ مِّنْ أَهْلِهَا فَوَجَدَ فِيهَا رَجُلَيْنِ يَقْتَتِلَانِ هَٰذَا مِن شِيعَةِ ۖ وَهَٰذَا مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ ۖ فَاسْتَغْنَتْهُ الَّذِي مِنْ شِيعَتِهِ ۖ عَلَى الَّذِي مِنْ عَدُوِّهِ ۖ فَوَكَزَهُ مُوسَىٰ فَقَضَىٰ عَلَيْهِ ۖ قَالَ هَٰذَا مِنْ عَمَلِ الشَّيْطَانِ ۖ إِنَّهُ عَدُوٌّ مُّضِلٌّ مُّبِينٌ ﴿١٥﴾

**He entered the city, unnoticed by its people, and found two men fighting: one from his own people, the other an enemy.**

**The one from his own people cried out to him for help against the enemy. Moses struck him with his fist and killed him. He said, ‘This must be Satan’s work: clearly he is a misleading enemy’ [15] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 15)**

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* wanted to enter the city at a time when the people were unaware because the Israelites were being persecuted. In some places, many Egyptians would not permit the Israelites from entering their towns. So Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* chose a time when they were unaware. He did not enter by night; otherwise he would have lost the way,

so scholars say that he entered at the time people took their naps, when the people were in their houses.

Mousa '...found two men fighting: one from his own people', i.e. from the Israelites, and '...the other an enemy...' (*al-Qasas*: 15), i.e. an Egyptian enemy. And '...the one who belonged to his own people cried out to him for help...' (*al-Qasas*: 15), i.e. for aid and rescue, whereupon '...Musa (Moses) struck him down with his fist...' (*al-Qasas*: 15). The Egyptian met his end and reached his appointed time of death as the blow was struck, i.e. he did not die because of it. This happens often when people argue: one of them strikes the other, he falls down dead. When they examine him, they find his cause of death was something else.

An example to illustrate this: when you commission someone to do something for you, or delegate him for you, he goes to the responsible people and does it, you say: 'So-and-so did this for me'. Yet in reality, nothing is done on earth without Allah From above first decrees it.

But Allah wanted to honour the agent, so He made His decree coincide with their action, so we say of a case such as this: 'Allah was certainly on his side'.

As we said before, the Egyptians hated the Israelites and persecuted them. When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* killed the Egyptian, their anger and hatred for the Israelites became intense, so Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* sensed that this action was the work of Satan, in order to deepen this enmity: '...clearly he is a misleading enemy.' (*al-Qasas*: 15)

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي ظَلَمْتُ نَفْسِي فَاغْفِرْ لِي فَغَفَرَ لَهُ إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْغَفُورُ الرَّحِيمُ ﴿١٦﴾

**He said, 'Lord, I have wronged myself. Forgive me,' so  
He forgave him; He is truly the Most Forgiving, the  
Most Merciful [16] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 16)**

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* teaches us here that when a person commits a sin, believing that he has done wrong, he should not be stubborn, but should instead confess that he has sinned and wronged himself and then immediately repent and seek forgiveness: 'He said, "Lord, I have wronged

myself. Forgive me...” (*al-Qasas*: 16). That is, O my Lord, Your Judgement is the truth and I am a sinner, confessing my sin. This point is what made the difference between the sin of Adam *peace be upon him* and the sin of Satan. Adam *peace be upon him* sinned and then confessed his sin and admitted it, saying: ‘the two replied: “O our Lord! We have sinned against ourselves...”’ (*al-A‘raf*: 23).

So, Allah accepted his repentance and forgave him. As for Satan, he tried to justify his refraining from prostration by saying, ‘...Shall I prostrate myself before one whom Thou hast created out of clay?’ (*al-Isra’*: 61) He further added: ‘...I am better than he: Thou hast created me out of fire, whereas him Thou hast created out of clay.’ (*Sad*: 76) He thus rejected Allah’s judgement.

I advise those who give legal rulings that contradict the Sacred Law, trying to turn the unlawful lawful for a reason or another, saying: ‘Beware of rejecting Allah’s judgement, because if you do so, you will be like Satan. Rather, give the correct judgement and then make the pretext that circumstances do not help you to implement it easily. In this way, at least you will preserve your faith. Sins are forgiven by repentance; but disbelief cannot be sidestepped’.

When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* sought forgiveness of his Lord, Allah *the Almighty* forgave him: ‘...He is truly the Most Forgiving, the Most Merciful.’ (*al-Qasas*: 16) Allah forgives our sins for us out of His Mercy. When a person is afflicted by heedlessness, and falls into sin – if he finds no way to repent and atone-he will despair, lose hope and continue to sin. Such a person would be utterly devoid of a conscience, voracious in his pursuit of iniquity, with nothing to prevent him from committing all manner of sin.

So, the availability of repentance gives the believer a chance that he will not be expelled from Allah’s Mercy; for Allah’s Mercy is so comprehensive that it covers all sins, no matter how many they may be.

So, Allah *the Almighty* said about the establishment of repentance: ‘...and thereupon He turned again unto them in His Mercy so that they might repent...’ (*at-Tawba*: 118). That is, Allah *the Almighty* made repentance possible for them and encouraged them to turn to it so that they would indeed repent and accept their repentance.

Then, the True Lord says:

قَالَ رَبِّ بِمَا أَنْعَمْتَ عَلَيَّ فَلَنْ أَكُونَ ظَهِيرًا لِلْمُجْرِمِينَ ﴿١٧﴾

**He said, 'My Lord, because of the blessings You have bestowed upon me, I shall never support those who do evil' [17] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 17)**

His saying, 'My Lord, because of the blessings You have bestowed upon me...' (*al-Qasas*: 17) means 'by forgiving, excusing me and accepting my repentance. Allah says, '...I shall never support those who do evil.' (*al-Qasas*: 17), i.e. 'I give covenant to Allah that I will never help those who commit sin'.

Then, Allah *the Almighty* says:

فَأَصْبَحَ فِي الْمَدِينَةِ خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ فَإِذَا الَّذِي اُسْتَنْصَرُهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَسْتَصْرِحُهُ. قَالَ لَهُ مُوسَى إِنَّكَ لَغَوِيٌّ مُبِينٌ ﴿١٨﴾

**Next morning, he was walking in the city, fearful and vigilant, when suddenly the man he had helped the day before cried out to him for help. Moses said, 'You are clearly a troublemaker' [18] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 18)**

After Musa (Moses) killed the Egyptian man, he became frightened, '...walking in the city, fearful...' (*al-Qasas*: 18). He looked at people's faces and observed how they reacted to him. Perhaps they would come and arrest him.

As they say, the guilty man almost seems to say: 'Take me'! If a group of people are sitting somewhere and suddenly police come in, they will be calm and unafraid, except for the guilty one, who will flee. The people in the Egyptian countryside have a saying which says 'The one who has a bruise on his head cannot help but be aware of it'.

Whilst Musa (Moses) was in this state of fear and anxiety, the Israelite who had sought his assistance the day before '...cried out to him' (*al-Qasas*: 18), i.e. called for someone to help him, this is a spontaneous reaction, an

appeal for rescue from peril. Allah uses this same word when quoting Satan: ‘... It is not for me to respond to your cries, nor for you to respond to mine...’ (*Ibrahim*: 22).

We said before that the addition of the letter *hamza* (glottal stop) to an Arabic verb can change its meaning to that of removal so that the word *sarakha* means to cry out for help, while the word *askhara* means to remove the peril that causes them to cry out. So, the meaning of the above verses is: ‘I cannot stop your crying out and you cannot stop me’. Upon this, Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* said to his compatriot who had got into trouble the day before: ‘You are clearly a troublemaker.’ (*al-Qasas*: 18). In other words, you wish to lead me astray by making me repeat my action of yesterday. Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* would not get into the same mess again. The believer is not stung from the same hole twice.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

فَلَمَّا أَنْ أَرَادَ أَنْ يَبْطِشَ بِالَّذِي هُوَ عَدُوٌّ لَهُمَا قَالَ يَمْوَسَّىٰ أَتُرِيدُ أَنْ تَقْتُلَنِي كَمَا قَتَلْتَ  
نَفْسًا بِالْأَمْسِ إِنْ تُرِيدُ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ جَبَّارًا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُصْلِحِينَ ﴿١٩﴾

**As he was about to attack the man who was an enemy to both of them, the man said, ‘Moses, are you going to kill me as you killed that person yesterday? You clearly want to be a tyrant in the land; you do not intend to put things right’ [19]**  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 19)

This statement ‘as he was about to attack the man who was an enemy to both of them...’ (*al-Qasas*: 19) means that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* again took the side of his compatriot. The Israelite sought to help him, but the Egyptian confronted him at the moment saying: ‘...the man said, “Musa (Moses), are you going to kill me as you killed that person yesterday?”’ (*al-Qasas*: 19) So he knew what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was the one who killed the Egyptian the day before. As long as they knew he was the killer, they surely must have looked for him, sought to take revenge against him.

Allah *the Almighty* says: ‘...You clearly want to be a tyrant in the land; you do not intend to put things right.’ (*al-Qasas*: 19) The Arabic particle *in*

here implies negation, i.e. 'you want nothing more than to be a tyrant in the land, for you killed someone yesterday and wish to kill me today'. So, they knew that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was the killer, thus they tried to capture him. At this point, he met the believing man:

وَجَاءَ رَجُلٌ مِّنْ أَقْصَا الْمَدِينَةِ يَسْعَىٰ قَالَ يَمُوسَىٰ إِنَّكَ أَمَلَاءُ  
يَأْتِمُرُونَ بِكَ لِيَقْتُلُوكَ فَاخْرُجْ إِنَّي لَكَ مِنَ النَّاصِحِينَ ﴿٢٠﴾

**Then a man came running from the furthest part of the city and said, 'Moses, the authorities are talking about killing you, so leave – this is my sincere advice' [20] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 20)**

This was the believing man of Pharaoh's family, who advised Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* to flee before they catch and kill him.

Allah then says:

فَخَرَجَ مِنْهَا خَائِفًا يَتَرَقَّبُ قَالَ رَبِّ نَجِّنِي مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢١﴾

**So Moses left the city, fearful and wary, and prayed, 'My Lord, save me from people who do wrong' [21] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 21)**

This is because the Egyptians were persecuting us and torturing us for no reason, so what would they do if they found an opportunity and a pretext to increase their tyranny over us?

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلَمَّا تَوَجَّهَ تِلْقَاءَ مَدْيَنَ قَالَ عَسَىٰ رَبِّي أَن يَهْدِيَنِي سَوَاءَ السَّبِيلِ ﴿٢٢﴾

**As he made his way towards Midyan, he was saying, 'May my Lord guide me to the right way' [22] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 22)**

As for the saying of Allah *the Almighty* 'As he made his way towards Midyan' (*al-Qasas*: 22), it means that he went in its direction, intending to

leave Egypt altogether. He did not direct to Midyan itself, but only to follow the road that led to Midyan, the land of Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him*.

If he had intended to go all the way to Midyan, he would not have said after heading in its direction: '...It may well be that my Lord will [thus] guide me onto the right path' (*al-Qasas*: 22). When Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* left Egypt in fear, seeking to flee, he did not think of a particular place, but rather what mattered to him was to leave this land and protect himself.

Allah *the Almighty* then says:

وَلَمَّا وَرَدَ مَاءَ مَدْيَنَ وَجَدَ عَلَيْهِ أُمَّةٌ مِّنَ النَّاسِ يَسْقُونَ  
وَوَجَدَ مِنْ دُونِهِمُ امْرَأَتَيْنِ تَذُودَانِ قَالَ مَا خَطْبُكُمَا قَالَتَا لَا  
نَسْقِي حَتَّى يُصْدِرَ الرِّعَاءُ وَأَبُونَا شَيْخٌ كَبِيرٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

**When he arrived at Midyan's waters, he found a group of men watering [their flocks], and beside them two women keeping their flocks back, so he said, 'What is the matter with you two?' They said, 'We cannot water [our flocks] until the shepherds take their sheep away: our father is a very old man' [23] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 23)**

The Noble Quran presents this story with eloquent brevity. Yet, it sheds light on the role of the woman in her society, the role of the man with respect to the woman and the things that necessitate a woman's going out to work.

The reference in saying of Allah 'arrived at Midyan's waters' (*al-Qasas*: 23) is that he went close to it, not necessarily that he drank from it. The word *warada* (arrived) can mean 'to drink' or 'to pass by'. It is used in this sense to clarify for us the meaning of Allah's saying: 'And every one of you will come within sight of it...' (*Maryam*: 71). The word *warid* used here is derived from the same verb *warada*. It is not that everyone will enter hell and be within its heat; it is that they will pass by it and will all see it. The expression 'we went to the stream' means that we approached it and saw it; but we did not necessarily drink from it.

'He found', i.e. at the water '...a group of men watering [their flocks] and beside them two women...' (*al-Qasas*: 23), i.e. far from the water '...keeping

their flocks back...' (*al-Qasas*: 23), restraining the flock and preventing them from going to drink because of the large crowd around the water. So he said '...“What is the matter with you two?”' (*al-Qasas*: 23) that is, why are you doing this? The question here implies amazement, i.e. 'Why are you preventing the flock from drinking when you have only come here to water them'?

Allah *the Almighty* casts light on their answer in the following part of the verse: '...they said, “We cannot water [our flocks] until the shepherds take their sheep away: our father is a very old man.”' (*al-Qasas*: 23) Their saying 'until the shepherds take their sheep away' (*al-Qasas*: 23) means 'until they leave the water'. The Arabic verb *sadara* is the opposite of *warada*; the latter means to come to water, while the former means to leave water. The verb *sadara* means to leave oneself, whilst *asadara* means to make another leave, i.e. to drive. So, the meaning is: 'We cannot water the livestock until the men finish watering their livestock and leave'. 'Shepherds', the plural of 'shepherd', means 'herdsman'. Then, the two women mentioned the reason for their coming to water and their doing of men's work: '...our father is a very old man.' (*al-Qasas*: 23)

Then, the True Lord says:

فَسَقَى لَهُمَا ثُمَّ تَوَلَّى إِلَى الظِّلِّ فَقَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي لِمَا أَنزَلْتَ إِلَيَّ مِنْ خَيْرٍ فَقِيرٌ ﴿٢٤﴾

**He watered their flocks for them, withdrew into the shade,  
and prayed, 'My Lord, I am in dire need of whatever good  
thing You may send me' [24] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 24)**

So, in the course of this story, we are given three rules. The statement 'We cannot water [our flocks] until the shepherds take their sheep away.' (*al-Qasas*: 23), their saying '...our father is a very old man...' (*al-Qasas*: 23), which gives us another meaning, and the saying of Allah, 'He watered their flocks for them...' (*al-Qasas*: 24) gives us a third.

These three rules settle the dispute in the Muslim society concerning the issue of women's working and the Islamic protocol in this regard. The first rule tells us that watering livestock is men's work, whilst the second tells that women should not go out to work unless it is necessary and they should



not undertake the man's responsibility unless he is incapable of doing it himself: '...our father is a very old man.' (*al-Qasas*: 23) As for the third rule, it teaches the Muslim society and all humanity that if a man sees a woman out working, it must be the case that she has no man to do it for her, so he should help her and make her job easier for her.

In 1950,<sup>(1)</sup> I travelled to Saudi Arabia and got into a colleague's car. On the way, I noticed him get out of the car and go to a house in front of which was a wooden tray covered with a piece of cloth. He put it into the car, and then we carried on. I asked him to explain what he had done. He said: 'It is usual for us that, if we see a table like this in front of a house, it means that the man of the house is not there and that the lady of the house has made the dough and needs someone to take it to the oven to bake it. If any of us passes by, we take it to be baked; we then put it back where it was.'

Allah's saying, '...We cannot water [our flocks] until the shepherds take their sheep away...' (*al-Qasas*: 23) indicates that if a woman is forced to go out and work, she must meet the need in the best way and not go mixing with men. She must not allow herself to joke around or chat with them. If a woman needs to go out and do the work of men, then it does not mean that she must become like men, allowing herself to mix with them.

As for Allah's saying, '...withdrew into the shade, and prayed, "My Lord, I am in dire need of whatever good thing You may send me..."' (*al-Qasas*: 24), it indicates that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* throughout his journey to Midyan, had travelled without any provisions, until hunger overcame him. He *peace be upon him* became malnourished until he was nothing but skin and bones, eating whatever vegetation he found on the ground. After he watered the flock for the two women, he sought repose under the shade of a tree and thereupon made his prayer: 'My Lord, I am in dire need of whatever good thing You may send me.' (*al-Qasas*: 24)

It is as though Allah *the Almighty* wants the weak person to seek aid; when he seeks it, he does not do it himself, but rather, it is Allah Who does it for him. So, we notice that when Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* prayed,

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(1) The story of the friend of Sheikh Ash-Sha'rawi with the dough stick in Mecca

He said: 'my Lord', choosing to call upon the attribute of sustenance; he did not say 'O Allah'. This is because divinity implies a being that is worshipped and that issues commandments and prohibitions. A sustaining Lord, however, is the one who undertakes to sustain, protect, and nurture. So, he said, 'O my Lord, I am Your slave, You brought me into existence, I am hungry and need to eat'.

The meaning of '...You may send me' (*al-Qasas*: 24), is that all goodness is really from Allah, even if it comes to me by means of another slave like me. This is because if you follow back the chain of any good thing in this world, it will of course return back to Allah, the Ultimate Giver. We gave the example before of the bread we eat: it begins with a seed, which would not have grown without Allah's nurture.

we said that the phrase 'All praise be to Allah' expresses the absolute of absolutes because even if you praise a human being for some kindness he does for you, you are really praising Allah, with whom all kindnesses are originated.

So, praising people is implicitly praising Allah. Thanking, in all its ways and forms, always goes back to Allah. One of them said: 'You do not truly praise Allah until you praise people'.

This is because all things are in Allah's hand, even though He has placed the means in ours. Allah *the Almighty* alone is able to prevent the means from working. I remember that the nation of Pakistan announced that they had a surplus of wheat and that it would not only suffice them, but also allow them to export widely. Then, before the wheat had matured, it was afflicted with an epidemic blight and destroyed. So, their predictions were all incorrect and they ended up having to import wheat that year.

This is the meaning of 'My Lord, I am in dire need of whatever good thing You may send me' (*al-Qasas*: 24). All goodness is from You, O Lord, even if You send it to me by the hand of another of Your slaves. I have need only of You, and I ask only of You.

Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* had barely finished his prayer to his Lord when deliverance came to him:

فَجَاءَتْهُ إِحْدَاهُمَا تَمْشِي عَلَى اسْتِحْيَاءٍ قَالَتْ إِنَّ أَبِي يَدْعُوكَ  
لِيَجْزِيَكَ أَجْرَ مَا سَقَيْتَ لَنَا فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُ، وَقَصَّ عَلَيْهِ الْقَصَصَ  
قَالَ لَا تَخَفْ بَجَوَّتَ مِنَ الْقَوْمِ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

**And then one of the two women approached him, walking shyly, and said, ‘My father is asking for you: he wants to reward you for watering our flocks for us.’ When Moses came to him and told him his story, the old man said, ‘Do not be afraid, you are safe now from people who do wrong’ [25] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 25)**

‘One of the two’ means one of the two maidens. ‘Walking shyly’ refers to her modesty in the way she came and walked. She said: ‘...My father is asking for you: he wants to reward you for watering our flocks for us.’ (*al-Qasas*: 25) When this invitation came to him, he did not hesitate to accept it but took hold of the opportunity. He knew that it was a quick response from his Lord to the prayer he made: ‘My Lord, I am in dire need of whatever good thing You may send me’ (*al-Qasas*: 24). It was a means that Allah had extended to him and he would never reject Allah’s means. So, he did not hesitate, and he did not refuse the father’s invitation.

The narrative here does not inform us how Musa (Moses) and the maiden went to her father, but it is narrated that they went at a time when the wind was blowing from behind. The girl was walking in front to show the way, but when the wind began to flatten her clothes against her body, he said to her: ‘Walk behind me and tell me which way to go.’

This is another example of prophetic etiquette.

‘...When Musa (Moses) came to him’ i.e. to Prophet Shu’aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* ‘...and told him his story’ (*al-Qasas*: 25), of what happened between him and the Egyptian, ‘the old man said, “Do not be afraid, you are safe now from people who do wrong.”’ (*al-Qasas*: 25) That is, he calmed him down and made him feel at ease.

Allah *Glorified is He* subsequently says:

قَالَتْ لِأَحَدِهِمَا يَتَأْتِ أَسْتَعِزُّهُ إِبْرَ خَيْرَ مَنْ أَسْتَجَرْتُ الْقَوِيُّ الْأَمِينُ ﴿٢٦﴾

**One of the women said, ‘Father, hire him: a strong, trustworthy man is the best to hire’ [26]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 26)**

This is a fourth rule that we extract from these verses, namely from the girl’s statement: ‘Father, hire him...’ (*al-Qasas*: 26). Her words are an indication that she did not desire to go out and work, but rather sought someone to do it instead, in order that she could stay at home. Then, the girl mentioned the basis for her making this proposal to her father: ‘...a strong, trustworthy man is the best to hire.’ (*al-Qasas*: 26). These are two essential conditions for hiring someone: strength enough to undertake the job and trustworthiness to get it done. One might wonder: how did the girl know that Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was strong and trustworthy?

They say it is because when he went to water their flock, he did not disturb the people, but rather went to another place, where he found a plant that he knew only grew where there was water. In this place, he moved a heavy rock that would take many men to move, then, watered the flock from the water that was underneath this rock. She knew he was trustworthy when he did not let her walk in front of him, so as to avoid seeing the allures of her body.

Then the role of the father and the judiciousness that he should display at times like these comes. The man would be his hired worker and he had two daughters at home, so he would be coming back and forth to them day and night. Wisdom dictated that as he would be in their house, it was appropriate to create an official relationship with him. So, he decided to marry him to one of his daughters, in order to create a situation in which everyone could feel at ease.

قَالَ إِنِّي أُرِيدُ أَنْ أُنكِحَكَ إِحْدَى ابْنَتَيَّ هَاتَيْنِ عَلَى أَنْ تَأْجُرَنِي  
ثَمَنِي حَبِيبٌ فَإِنْ أَتَمَمْتَ عَشْرًا فَمِنْ عِنْدِكَ وَمَا أُرِيدُ أَنْ  
أَشُقَّ عَلَيْكَ سَتَجِدُنِي إِنْ شَاءَ اللَّهُ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

**The father said, ‘I would like to marry you to one of these daughters of mine, on condition that you serve me for eight**

**years: if you complete ten, it will be of your own free will.  
I do not intend to make things difficult for you: God willing,  
you will find I am a fair man' [27] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 27)**

The local Egyptian proverb says: 'Seek a spouse for your daughter, but not for your son'. This is because a father's pride prevents him from offering his daughter to a young man who has all the makings of a good husband – although a minority indeed do this. This wisdom on the part of the father regarding his daughter's marriage would solve many of our problems. Very often, we find that a young man is upright both religiously and morally, but his social standing, as we say, is less than that of the girl and her family, so he fears to come and ask for her hand, lest he be rejected.

In such cases as this, the father should encourage the fellow to come forward; hinting that he would accept if he did, for instance by saying to him: 'why have you not yet gotten married, son, when so many girls would have you?', or similar expressions of encouragement.

As for if we reached the level of forthrightness that Prophet Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* reached when He says, 'I would like to marry you to one of these daughters of mine' (*al-Qasas*: 27), this is something else. This is a high level of etiquette on the part of the one making the offer and on the part of the one to whom the offer is made. In our societies, many young men and women are waiting for this forthrightness and this encouragement, from the parents of the girls.

Do you not see that Allah *the Almighty* allowed us to propose marriage to those whose husbands have died, when He says: 'But you will incur no sin if you give a hint of [an intended] marriage-offer to [any of] these women...' (*al-Qasas*: 27).

We are not unaware of the hints that can capture a woman's attention and make her think of marriage.

Allah's saying: 'on condition that you serve me for eight years' (*al-Qasas*: 27), means that remaining eight years in his service was the dowry of the girl. By this, he wanted to show how much the girl meant to him, so that her husband would not think that he had married her cheaply, or that her father had simply offloaded her onto him.

If '...you complete ten, it will be of your own free will. I do not intend to make things difficult for you: Allah willing, you will find I am a fair man.' (*al-Qasas*: 27), i.e. when you live with me, you will find that I treat you well; you will know that you have been fortunate to enter this family. Moreover, the time you spend with us will make you want to stay even longer.

So Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* answered thus:

قَالَ ذَلِكَ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكَ أَيَّمَا الْأَجَلَيْنِ قَضَيْتُ فَلَا  
عُدْوَةَ عَلَيَّ وَاللَّهُ عَلَى مَا نَقُولُ وَكِيلٌ

**Moses said, 'Let that be the agreement between us – whichever of the two terms I fulfil, let there be no injustice to me – God is witness to what we say' [28] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 28)**

That is, I am ambivalent, and whether I shall stay eight or ten years, 'Let that be the agreement between us' (*al-Qasas*: 28).

The scholars have derived another ruling from this verse, which is that upon making a marriage contract, the dowry must be specified, but it does not necessarily have to be taken upon the drawing of the contract. If you like, you can delay it until later, or delay part of it and give part of it. The dowry belongs to the woman so that if she were to die it would go to her inheritors. If the man, also, were to die (before paying it) it would be taken from his inheritors (to give to the wife). This is shown by the fact that Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* hired Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* for eight or ten years and made this the dowry for his daughter.

We notice that the narrative here does not mention anything about food, although Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was famished and had prayed to his Lord: 'My Lord, I am in dire need of whatever good thing You may send me' (*al-Qasas*: 24), but the biographers narrate that Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* presented Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* with food, asked him to eat saying that: 'I seek Allah's forgiveness', i.e. for eating the food, as though it were recompense for his watering the flock for the maidens, 'We are a people who would not exchange the works of the hereafter for the

weight of the world in gold.’ Shu’aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* replied: ‘Eat, for we are a people who serve food, and receive guests with hospitality.’ So, he said: ‘Now I will eat.’

Then, the True Lord says:

فَلَمَّا قَضَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَجَلَ وَسَارَ بِأَهْلِهِ ۚ آنَسَ مِنْ جَانِبِ الطُّورِ نَارًا  
قَالَ لِأَهْلِهِ امْكُثُوا إِنِّي آنَسْتُ نَارًا لَّعَلِّي آتِيكُم مِّنْهَا بِخَبَرٍ أَوْ  
جَذْوَةٍ مِّنَ النَّارِ لَعَلَّكُمْ تَصْطَلُونَ ﴿٢٩﴾

**Once Moses had fulfilled the term and was travelling with his family, he caught sight of a fire on the side of the mountain and said to his family, ‘Wait! I have seen a fire. I will bring you news from there, or a burning stick for you to warm yourselves’ [29] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 29)**

‘Once Musa (Moses) had fulfilled the term’ (*al-Qasas*: 29), i.e. that he had agreed upon with Shu’aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him*: ‘...and was travelling with his family’ (*al-Qasas*: 29).

We said that ‘family’ can be used to mean ‘wife’. In our local Egyptian dialect we say, ‘My family is with me’, or ‘The group are with me’, meaning our wives. This is because the things that a woman does for her husband are like the work of an entire group. Indeed, she does more than a group could, for she does something that no one else could do in her place, which is that she cohabits with her husband. So, she is performing the task of a group.

The meaning of ‘caught sight’ is that he saw with his eyes, or else became aware of it by sensing it. The mount of ‘Mount Sinai’ is the mountain where they caught sight. Allah says: ‘...said to his family, “Wait! I have seen a fire...”’ (*al-Qasas*: 29), i.e. Musa (Moses) told his wife that the fire was there, which implies that she herself did not see it, though he did.

This is an indication that it was not an ordinary physical fire of the kind that people light, otherwise his family too would have been able to see it. Therefore, it was something special to him. ‘I will bring you news from there’ (*al-Qasas*: 29), i.e. maybe I will find someone to advise us on the

right way to take, ‘...or a burning stick for you to warm yourselves.’ (*al-Qasas*: 29) Allah *Glorified is He* states that Musa said to his family: ‘Wait here. Indeed, I [Musa] perceive a fire [far away]; perhaps I may bring you from there some tiding or [at least] a burning brand from the fire so that you might warm yourselves’ (*al-Qasas*: 29). The phrase: ‘A burning brand’ is a piece of burning, yet flameless ember, and the words: ‘Warm yourselves’ express Musa’s hopes to find a source of warmth from that brand for his family. Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *the Most High* says: ‘a glowing flame, which is a piece of fire that has tongues of flame.

At this moment, Musa and his family hoped for two things:

- 1- Someone to guide them to the right way; they had lost their way amid unfamiliar desert.
- 2- A brand of fire as a source of warmth against the cold.

Other verses in the Quran relate the same story (in the chapter of *al-Naml*) without mentioning Musa’s statement ‘wait here’. Some people who tend to speak without deliberation attempted to criticise the Quran because of that. However, reflecting on the situation reveals that it is a depiction of a conversation between Musa *peace be upon him* and his family. A husband with his wife is left in darkness in the wilderness about which they know nothing and they cannot find the right way to continue their journey. Furthermore, the weather was very cold. Naturally, he said, ‘I see a fire; I will go and get some of it’. She must have replied ‘How can you leave me alone in that desolate place? One of us might get lost!’ He replied, ‘wait here’. It was inevitable for the phrases to be articulated in these two different ways, just as the Noble Quran mentions it.

The same is the case for his two statements: ‘I will bring you’ (*an-Naml*: 7) and: ‘Perhaps I may bring you’ (*al-Qasas*: 29). When he saw the fire, he said with certainty, ‘I will bring you’, but when he reconsidered the matter, he saw that perhaps it will burn out before he reached it, and therefore he said, ‘Perhaps I may bring you’, expressing a hope, not certainty.

Next Allah *Glorified is He* says:



فَلَمَّا أَتَاهَا نُودِيَ مِنْ شَاطِئِ الْوَادِ الْأَيْمَنِ فِي الْبُقْعَةِ الْمُبَارَكَةِ مِنَ  
الشَّجَرَةِ أَنْ يَمْوِسَىٰ إِنِّي أَنَا اللَّهُ رَبُّ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

**But when he reached it, a voice called out to him from the right-hand side of the valley, from a tree on the blessed ground: ‘Moses, I am God, the Lord of the Worlds [30] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 30)**

Here, the Lord *the Most High* gives a detailed map of the area. Some might say, ‘the side of Mount Sinai’ or ‘the right side of Mount Sinai’, but here the place is described as: ‘from the right bank of the valley, from a tree [burning] on blessed ground’ (*al-Qasas*: 30). The call was ‘O Musa! Verily, I am Allah, the Lord of all the worlds!’ (*al-Qasas*: 30) Musa *peace be upon him* heard this call coming from all directions because Allah is not limited by any direction. There is no need to ask where the call came from; this has nothing to do with how the Lord *the Most High* speaks. Meanwhile, he saw a fire blazing on the branch of a tree. As the fire blazed brighter, the tree became more verdant; the fire did not burn the tree, nor did the tree's moisture extinguish the fire. This, clearly, is an amazing sight which the mind cannot comprehend. We may wonder if he was able to accept all these marvels at first glance, or if he needed some time to accept them?

Then, the Lord *the Most High* says:

وَأَنْ أَلْقِ عَصَاكَ فَلَمَّا رَآهَا تُهْتَزُّ كَانَتْهَا جَانٌّ وَلَّى مُدْبِرًا وَلَمْ  
يُعَقِّبْ يَمْوِسَىٰ أَقْبِلْ وَلَا تَخَفْ إِنَّكَ مِنَ الْآمِنِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

**Throw down your staff.’ When he saw his staff moving like a snake, he fled in fear and would not return. Again [he was called]: ‘Moses! Draw near! Do not be afraid, for you are one of those who are safe [31] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 31)**

Other Quranic verses mention that the Lord asked him a question to make him feel at ease: ‘And what is that in your right hand, O Musa?’ (*Ta Ha*: 17). We said that Musa *peace be upon him* tried to lengthen this moment as long as he could to enjoy the closeness of his Lord. When he felt he had talked long

enough, Allah *Glorified is He* states that he said: 'and [many] other uses I find for it' (*Ta Ha*: 18). He spoke first at length to have more time with his Lord and then cut himself short out of good etiquette with Him.

Then there is a clear command to throw the staff: "Throw down your staff!" But as soon as [Musa] saw it move rapidly, as if it were a snake, he drew back [in terror], and did not [dare to] return' (*al-Qasas*: 31). He witnessed another amazing miracle, one which was even more astounding than what he had already witnessed. If we could accept the sight of fire blazing on a verdant green branch, could we not accept the sight of a staff turning into a snake, moving and twisting? It might be possible that the staff could transform into a verdant green branch, which is of the same genus as the staff. This will also be a miracle. However, transforming it into a different genus entirely and for a plant to become a fearsome moving animal is a wonder of the most extraordinary nature.

It is clear that some segments of the narrative discourse are left out, for the Quranic style is very lucid and concise. We can easily assume the events that have been omitted, such as the phrase, 'Musa threw down his staff' before: 'But as soon as he saw it move rapidly, as if it were a snake, he drew back' (*al-Qasas*: 31). Musa drew back in order to give himself a chance to think and to reflect upon the turn of events. The word used for 'snake' here is *jan*, which means a young snake. The accounts of this story tell us that the staff became like a *jan*, *thu'ban* and a *hayya*. The three words convey the same meaning. In agility, it was like a *jan* (young snake), whereas in length it was like a *thu'ban* (snake or eel). Finally, it was in thickness similar to a *hayya* (serpent).

After Allah *Glorified is He* states: 'He drew back', that is he moved away in fear and: 'And did not dare to return', that is he turned away and did not look back, his Lord called him: 'O Musa! Draw near and fear not' (*al-Qasas*: 31), come back and do not be frightened of anything.

Moreover, Allah *the Most High* told him something that he will have to keep in mind throughout the course of his mission: 'Indeed, you are of those who are secure'. He did not say 'Come back because I will make you safe from what you see here'. He said: 'You are of those who are secure'. In

other words, Musa's safety will be continuous and constant; Allah was with him, helping him. Whoever has Allah with him, helping him, fears no one. If he was scared at that time, how could he have reacted when he faced Pharaoh? In this way, the Lord *the Most High* trained Musa *peace be upon him* for him to be able to face Pharaoh and all his sorcerers and hosts without any fear or worry. As such, he is sure that Allah will succour him and help him in his confrontation with Pharaoh.

Musa *peace be upon him* drew many benefits from all these events and learnt from the wonders he witnessed. His surety and firmness gave him much strength. When Pharaoh, backed by huge hosts, decided to follow Musa *peace be upon him* and his people, Musa's people said: 'Indeed, we shall certainly be overtaken!' However, Musa *peace be upon him* remembered that Allah *the Most High* promised: 'You are of those who are secure!' In firm faith, He immediately said: 'Nay! Indeed, My Lord is with me, [and] He will guide me!' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 62) Evidently, Musa *peace be upon him* was confident as he knew Allah was with him, helping him and declared this trust he had openly. It could have been very easy to deny that Allah was helping him at that time, for the sea was in front of them and Pharaoh behind them. Nevertheless, Musa showed absolute trust in Allah's Promise and Support. Allah *the Most High* promises to save all His Prophets and Messengers. He says: 'For, long ago, has Our word gone forth to Our slaves—the Messengers—that verily, they will indeed, be succoured, and that verily, Our Hosts, indeed, will [in the end] be victorious!' (*as-Saffat*: 171-173)

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'O Musa! Fear not, for truly, in My Presence, the Messengers have no need to fear' (*an-Naml*: 10). Allah *the Most High* told the same to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who, in turn, benefited from it and trusted in Allah's Succour. As such, when they were in the cave with Abu Bakr Allah *be pleased with him* Abu Bakr said, 'O Messenger of Allah [Muhammad], if any of them but look beneath his feet, he will see us!' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'O Abu Bakr, what do you think of two men whose third is Allah?' The Quran narrated his words to his Companion: 'Grieve not; verily, Allah is with us' (*at-Tawba*: 40). Since the One Whom no eye can encompass was with them, helping them, they too will not be seen by any eye.

Then the Lord *the Most High* showed Musa *peace be upon him* another sign to add to his miracles,

أَسْلَكَ يَدَكَ فِي جَيْبِكَ تَخْرُجُ بَيْضَاءَ مِنْ غَيْرِ سُوءٍ وَأَضْمَمَ إِلَيْكَ  
جَنَاحَكَ مِنَ الرَّهْبِ ۖ فَذَلِكَ بُرْهَانُكَ مِنْ رَبِّكَ إِلَى  
فِرْعَوْنَ وَمَلَئِهِ ۚ إِنَّهُمْ كَانُوا قَوْمًا فَسِيقِينَ ﴿٣٢﴾

**Put your hand inside your shirt and it will come out white but unharmed – hold your arm close to your side, free from all fear. These shall be two signs from your Lord to Pharaoh and his chiefs; they are truly wicked people [32] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 32)**

Allah says: ‘Put your hand inside the front of your shirt *jayb*’ (*al-Qasas*: 32), that is, place it into the upper opening of your robe, widely called a *jayb*. It is where people used to keep money to protect it from being stolen. They used to put their hands down the front of their robes to get to their pockets. Notice the precision of the Quranic discourse: ‘It will come out [shining] white’ (*al-Qasas*: 32). Allah did not say ‘take your hand out’ in the form of a command, after He saying: ‘Put your hand inside the front of your shirt’ (*al-Qasas*: 32). This is because the action of removing the hand is automatic; by merely putting the hand in the robe, it will come out shining white. His control over his limbs was limited to only the placement of the hand, but getting it out was by a Divine Decree. The word ‘white’ means shining white without any blemish. Such whiteness was amazing for Musa *peace be upon him* for he was dark-skinned. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘without blemish’ in order for no one to think that he had been affected by leprosy or the like. Rather, it was a natural, miraculous white.

Allah *the Most High* says: ‘And [afterwards] hold your arm close to yourself, free of all fear’ (*al-Qasas*: 32). The word used here for ‘arm’ is *janah* (wing). The wings of a bird are like the arms of human beings. If someone wishes to swim, for instance, he moves his arms as a bird does when flying. It means ‘hold your arms close to you and all fear will leave you’. There are examples we see in life that illustrate this fact. When a

woman, for instance, sees her child behaving badly, she reacts by beating her chest and lamenting. Moreover, Ibn ‘Abbas *Allah be pleased with him* said, ‘Whoever fears should place his hand on his chest and he will be free of fears’. Try it to see if it is true.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘These’, that is, the two miracles of the staff and the hand: ‘shall be the two signs, *burhan*, from your Lord’ (*al-Qasas*: 32), that is, your True Lord: ‘to Pharaoh’, the false lord. Truth and falsehood cannot accompany each other; falsehood must surely come to nothing. It is weak and cannot stand up to the power of the Truth: ‘Rather, We hurl the Truth against falsehood and it knocks it down, and then it vanishes away! Woe be to you for the [false] things you ascribe [to Allah]’ (*al-Anbiya*: 18).

The word *burhan* (sign) refers to the evidence of something. The sign was sent: ‘To Pharaoh and his chiefs’ (*al-Qasas*: 32) because Pharaoh claimed to be a god and had intimidated his followers into obeying him. Indeed, as Allah *the Most High* says: ‘They are a people [who are] rebellious and *fasiq* (wicked)’ (*al-Qasas*: 32). Both Pharaoh and his chiefs were ‘a ‘people who were rebellious and wicked’, that is, they were disobedient to the Lord. The word *fasiq* (rebellious and wicked) is derived from a verb that describes the action of a date when it breaks out of its shell. Here, it means that they had broken out of the fold of the religion that covers a person and protects him from falling into sin. If a person casts off this robe and lifts that veil in rebellion against Divine Guidance, he becomes unclothed and reveals his nakedness.

The Lord *the Most High* then states what Musa said:

قَالَ رَبِّ إِنِّي قَتَلْتُ مِنْهُمْ نَفْسًا فَأَخَافُ أَنْ يَقْتُلُونِ ﴿٣٣﴾

**Moses said, ‘My Lord, I killed one of their men, and I fear that they may kill me [33]**  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 33)

Musa *peace be upon him* was still fearful about the issue of the Egyptian (that he had unintentionally killed in his youth). He asked his Lord to help him and strengthen him with his brother:

وَأَخِي هَارُونُ هُوَ أَفْصَحُ مِنِّي لِسَانًا فَأَرْسَلْهُ مَعِيَ رِدْءًا  
يُصَدِّقُنِي إِنِّي أَخَافُ أَنْ يُكَذِّبُونِ ﴿٣٤﴾

**My brother Aaron is more eloquent than I: send him with me to help me and confirm my words – I fear they may call me a liar' [34] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 34)**

The word *rid* refers to a helper or an assistant. We know from the story of Musa that he had been afflicted with a speech defect when he was young in Pharaoh's house. He did not find it easy to speak. For this reason, he sought the help of Harun's eloquence for his argument to be plain and resist any possible doubts. It was possible for Musa *peace be upon him* to ask his Lord to help him with his brother Harun *peace be upon him* with Harun being a mere follower. However, he wanted his brother to share his mission and gain this blessing and high status. Allah *Glorified is He* relates that Musa said: 'Send him with me, therefore, as a helper, so that he might [more eloquently] bear witness to my speaking the Truth' (*al-Qasas*: 34), that is, as a helper for me in order for people not to disbelieve me and for him to be a divinely entrusted Messenger like me.

Clearly, the verses of the Quran speak of Harun *peace be upon him* as a prophet like Musa *peace be upon him*. Allah *the Most High* says to them both: 'Go forth, both of you, to Pharaoh. Verily, he has transgressed all bounds of equity! But speak to him in a mild manner; perhaps he may be reminded or [at least] be filled with fear [of Allah]' (*Ta Ha*: 43-44). If we contemplate their Message, they appear like a single Messenger, as Allah says: 'Go, both of you, to Pharaoh and say, "Indeed, we are 'a Messenger' from the Lord of all the worlds"' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 16). Pharaoh even exclaimed: '[This] your "Messenger" who [claims that he] has been sent to you is truly a madman!' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 27)

He refers to them in the singular form; it is akin to a president sending a message in the hands of two or three people to his counterpart in other countries. We call these people an 'envoy', in the singular because they convey the same message. If you consider the one message that they delivered, Musa and Harun (Aaron) *peace be upon them* could stand as one Messenger, but if

you consider each of them individually, they are two Messengers. The Quran also speaks of them as two: ‘Indeed, we are “two Messengers” sent by your Lord’ (*Ta Ha*: 47).

To sum up, the Quran addresses them in the singular form and also in the plural form. When Musa *peace be upon him* invoked the Lord against Pharaoh and his people for their wealth-motivated deviation and indulgence in the worldly life, he said: ‘O our Lord! Wipe out their riches and harden their hearts so that they will not believe until they see the grievous suffering [that awaits them]!’ (*Yunus*: 88)

Musa *peace be upon him* alone spoke here, yet when Allah *the Most High* answered, He said: ‘The prayer of “you both” has indeed been accepted’ (*Yunus*: 89). As such, they seem as one single Messenger. Musa *peace be upon him* supplicated and Harun *peace be upon him* said, ‘Amen’; and the one who says ‘Amen’ takes part in the supplication as well.

The Lord *Glorified is He* then says:

قَالَ سَنَشُدُّ عَضُدَكَ بِأَخِيكَ وَنَجْعَلُ لَكُمَا سُلْطَانًا فَلَا يَصِلُونَ  
إِلَيْكُمَا بِآيَاتِنَا أَنْتُمَا وَمَنِ اتَّبَعَكُمَا الْغَالِبُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

**God said, ‘We shall strengthen you through your brother; We shall give you both power so that they cannot touch you. With Our signs you, and those who follow you, will triumph’ [35] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 35)**

His Lord answered: ‘We shall strengthen your arm through your brother’ because Musa *peace be upon him* said, as seen elsewhere: ‘Add [O Allah] to my strength through him, and let him share my task’ (*Ta Ha*: 31-32). As for Allah’s statement: ‘We shall strengthen your arm through your brother’ (*al-Qasas*: 35), it is an eloquent expression appropriate for Musa’s request. Indeed, a person does most, if not all, his work with his hands, and the muscles that lift and carry things are in the upper arm. When we praise someone for being strong, we say he has muscles. Yet, if a person is afflicted with a muscle-wasting disease, he becomes weak and unable to do anything.

Consequently, the meaning of this phrase is, 'We will assist you with physical strength'.

The Lord *the Most High* then says: 'And (we shall) endow both of you with power' (*al-Qasas*: 35). This power is allegorical; the power of strong argument, logic and evidence. He gave them both physical and mental strength. Consequently, Allah *Glorified is He* then says: 'so that they will not be able to touch you' (*al-Qasas*: 35), that is, We will save you from them. However, the battle of Truth and falsehood does not end with saving the people of Truth; they must also prevail over the people of falsehood. There is a difference between a person who suffers hostile attacks and manages to shut the door on him, and a person who dares to face hostile enemies and defeat them, thereby saving himself from harm, and hurting the enemies. This second case is the meaning of Allah's Words: 'By virtue of Our Signs shall you two, and all who follow you, prevail!' (*al-Qasas*: 35) In this way, Allah saved them from evils and also gave them victory.

Notice that the phrase: 'by virtue of Our Signs' (*al-Qasas*: 35) lies between: 'They will not be able to touch you' (*al-Qasas*: 35) and: 'shall you two, and all who follow you, prevail' (*al-Qasas*: 35). It is through these signs and amazing miracles that they will win salvation, and again, through these signs and miracles they will defeat their enemies and gain victory. The single phrase combines both meanings. This is an example of the great rhetorical eloquence of the Noble Quran. Another wonder of the lexical use of the Quran is manifest in the word *najm* (stars), as Allah says: '[At His behest] the sun and the moon run their appointed courses; [before Him] the stars and the trees bow in adoration'. (*ar-Rahman*: 5-6)

The word *najm* (stars or short stemless grass) lies between the sun and the moon, which are both signs in the sky, and the tree, which grows upon the earth. Clearly, in this verse the word *najm* can mean a 'star' or 'short stemless grass'; both meanings are suitable here. A poet said:

I watch the *najm* (star) as I come towards you,

Then my horse feeds upon it [*najm*, i.e. grass] in the wilderness.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:



فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ بِآيَاتِنَا بَيَّنَّتْ قَالُوا مَا هَذَا إِلَّا سِحْرٌ  
مُّفْتَرٍ وَمَا سَمِعْنَا بِهَذَا فِي آبَائِنَا الْأَوَّلِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

**But when Moses came to them with Our clear  
signs, they said, ‘These are mere conjuring tricks;  
we never heard this from our forefathers’ [36]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 36)**

The phrase: ‘Our Clear Signs’ (*al-Qasas*: 36) refers to ‘the clearly amazing miracles’ against which the deniers fell dumbfounded. They failed to find any way to account for such wonders. Musa *peace be upon him* came to them to undermine Pharaoh's throne of false godhood. They had nothing left to say but: ‘All this is nothing but sorcery devised [by man]. Never did we hear [the like of] this, [nor has it ever been heard of] in the time of our forefathers of old’ (*al-Qasas*: 36). For this reason, the Lord *the Most High* inspired Musa *peace be upon him* how to argue with these people.

Allah seems to have said to Musa, ‘You are going to a people who stick to falsehood and protect it to achieve their worldly interests from it. They will certainly become angry if you end their falsehood and show them the Truth. They have become accustomed to falsehood. If you attempt to free them from their traditions and show them new ways, you must be gentle and carefully avoid inciting their wrath since the bitterness of forsaking their customs is coupled with the bitterness of taking on a new unfamiliar course of life. It is enough that you will take from them the authority of “godhood” in whose shadow they live. Never pursue to increase their bitterness, lest you should provoke their stubbornly obstinate enmity’. Consequently, Allah *the Most High* says: ‘But speak unto him [Pharaoh] in a mild manner, so that he may be reminded or [at least] be filled with fear [of Allah]’ (*Ta Ha*: 44). In other words, excuse him when he loses his ‘godhood’ and becomes just an ordinary person. If they respond to you harshly, saying, as Allah *Glorified is He* relates: ‘All this is nothing but sorcery devised [by man] and never did we hear [the like of] this, [nor has it ever been heard of] in the time of our forefathers of old’ (*al-Qasas*: 36), respond to them gently.

وَقَالَ مُوسَىٰ رَبِّي أَعْلَمُ بِمَن جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ مِن عِندِهِ وَمَن  
تَكُون لَهُ عَاقِبَةُ الدَّارِ إِنَّهُ لَا يُفْلِحُ الظَّالِمُونَ ﴿٣٧﴾

**Moses said, 'My Lord knows best who comes with guidance from Him and who will have the final Home: wrongdoers will never succeed' [37] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 37)**

Clearly, Musa employs a very gentle and well-mannered way of discussing. He did not encounter them harshly or accuse them, as they did with him. Rather, he responded to them wisely and elegantly: 'My Lord knows best as to who comes with guidance from Him, and to whom the future belongs' (*al-Qasas*: 37). He did not say, 'I have come with guidance'. Then he added: 'Verily, never will evildoers prosper!' (*al-Qasas*: 37) 'The evildoers' generally include any evil party, without discrimination. He did not say, 'You are evildoers', but left it open for sound minds to contemplate.

Allah's saying: 'To whom the future belongs' (*al-Qasas*: 37) refers to what will come in the next world. This kind of prophetic etiquette of debate and dialogue is widely repeated in the life of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in his dialogues with the disbelievers of Mecca and other opponents. His Lord addressed Prophet Muhammad: 'Do not argue with the followers of earlier revelations otherwise than in a most kindly manner' (*al-'Ankabut*: 46). Simply, you will take them out of falsehood that they love as a tradition and a way of life to lead them to the Truth which they hate. As such, do not expose them to two difficulties. Amidst the most grievous torment when the disbelievers exposed Prophet Muhammad to unbearable sufferings, he used to say, 'O Allah, guide my people, for they know not!'

Shawqi—a famous poet and writer, wonderfully and concisely summarised this idea, saying, 'Advice is heavy; do not make it as heavy as a mountain and do not turn it into a futile debate'. When you extend advice, it simply means that the advisee is wrong while you are right. For others to respond positively, you should first attract them to you so that they accept your advice. Avoid hurting their feelings, or else they will become stubbornly arrogant. Like a patient, a person in the wrong needs someone to guide him and cure his illness. Do not be like the foolish friend who once saw a friend

drowning, but he just kept rebuking him for going into the sea. Naturally, the other friend will reply, 'Save me first and then advise me!' Relieve him first and then say what you like. Another person said, 'Facts are bitter, so phrase them mildly'.

Sometimes the guide despairs that his advice will be of any effect, which is an entirely different case. For example, Prophet Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* called his people for nine hundred and fifty years. He endured their denial patiently in the hope that they might eventually follow the guidance or even produce an upright generation who will accept what their fathers rejected. How great Nuh's patience with his people was and how great his manners in debates with them were! After they had accused him of lies and fabrications, Allah *Glorified is He* relates that he said: 'If I have invented it, upon me be this sin; but I am innocent of the sin you have committed' (*Hud*: 35). He ascribed sin also to himself, not just to them; perhaps he might attract their hearts in this way. However, Allah knew that they will not believe nor will any good be expected from them. The same goes true for their children as well. After Nuh *peace be upon him* had spent his long life calling them to the Truth, Allah commanded him to pray against them, as there was no hope left that they may accept the guidance. Allah *Glorified is He* said: 'And Noah prayed, "O my Lord! Leave not on earth any of those who deny the Truth: Indeed, if you do leave them, they will [always try to] lead astray those who worship You and will give birth to nothing but wickedness and stubborn ingratitude"' (*Nuh*: 26-27).

Likewise, in his discussion with the disbelievers of Mecca, The Lord *the Most High* relates Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* as saying: 'Neither shall you be called to account for whatever we may have become guilty of, nor shall we be called to account for whatever you are doing'. (*Saba*': 25) This expression is a case of lofty humility and fine etiquette in order to win their hearts. He ascribed sin to himself, though he was a prophet. Yet, when he spoke of them, he said: 'whatever you are doing', calling their sins, persecution and disbelief 'doings'. Had Prophet Muhammad simply repeated what his brother Nuh *peace be upon him* said, it will have been a sign of humble behaviour from him *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Then the Lord *the Most High* says:

وَقَالَ فِرْعَوْنُ يَتَأَيُّهَا الْمَلَأُ مَا عَلِمْتُ لَكُمْ مِنْ إِلَهٍ غَيْرِي فَأَوْقِدْ لِي يَهْمَنُ عَلَى الطِّينِ  
فَأَجْعَلْ لِي صَرْحًا لَعَلِّي أَطَّلِعُ إِلَى إِلَهِ مُوسَى وَإِنِّي لَأَظُنُّهُ مِنَ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

**Pharaoh said, ‘Counsellors, you have no other god that I know of except me. Haman, light me a fire to bake clay bricks, then build me a tall building so that I may climb up to Moses’ God: I am convinced that he is lying’ [38]**  
**(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 38)**

Pharaoh was apprehensive about what Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* was going to say to his people; he imagined that Musa will somehow ‘brainwash’ them. He wanted to remind them of his ‘godhood’ and pretend to be unaffected by what he had heard from Musa.

Allah *Glorified is He* relates what Pharaoh says: ‘O you nobles! No deity do I know for you other than myself’ (*al-Qasas*: 38), that is, beware of believing Musa’s words, for I am your god and you have no god besides me. Pretending to affirm his ‘godhood’, he addressed his vizier, Haman: ‘Therefore, O Haman, kindle me a fire for [baking bricks of] clay and then build me a lofty tower, that haply I may have a look at the God of Musa’. (*al-Qasas*: 38) Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* states that he said: ‘O Haman! Build me a lofty tower, that haply I may attain the ways and means—the ways and means of [reaching] the heavens—and that I may have a look at the God of Musa’. (*Ghafir*: 36-37) Apparently, he wanted to assure his people. As such, he expressed his determination to search for the God of Musa. He wrongly thought that building a high tower will help him see the God of Musa. However, did Haman build him that tower? Indeed, he did not build anything, which proves the nonsense and flippant manner of the entire affair. He simply mocked his people and flirted with their minds.

Pharaoh had no need to bake the clay and make bricks, as we do now, because they had stone and granite with which they built pyramids and statues. Baking the clay takes much time and effort. The real motive was to gain some time to delay his enemy and also distract the nobles among his

own people. Allah *Glorified is He* continues: ‘Haply I may have a look at the God of Musa’ (*al-Qasas*: 38). Before reaching any concrete findings, by either seeing the God of Musa or failing to see Him, he had already passed judgment over Musa: ‘I am convinced that he is one of those who [always] tell lies’. (*al-Qasas*: 38) He wished to prevent the nobles from paying any attention to the call of Musa.

وَأَسْتَكْبَرُوا وَهُوَ وَجُودُهُ فِي الْأَرْضِ بِغَيْرِ الْحَقِّ وَظَنُوا أَنَّهُم إِلَيْنَا لَا يُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٣٩﴾

**Pharaoh and his armies behaved arrogantly in the land with  
no right – they thought they would not be brought back to  
Us [39] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 39)**

That is, they behaved arrogantly without any right or just cause. They had no right to be arrogant. A person may take pride in any great deed he did; but if the great deed is done by another person, he has no right for he himself to be proud of this deed. A person can feel proud only for something which he himself did. They say ‘if you want to take pride in anything, take it in what you yourself did’. The same is true for all other matters about which the person may feel proud, such as riches, power, esteem, or authority.

This is why Allah *the Most High* dislikes the people who are arrogant. He said in a Sacred Hadith, ‘Pride is My Cloak and Majesty is My Robe; whoever vies with Me for either of them, I shall cast into Hell’.<sup>(1)</sup> Pride and Majesty are two Beautiful Attributes of Allah. All beings have been made equal slaves and creatures in the Presence of Allah's Majesty. No one may think he is superior to any other. All are equal. If anyone shows pride before another, he is only proud of something which has been conferred on, but not made by, him. For this reason, Allah *the Most High* will help the humble people who suffer from the arrogance of others, and raise them high.

In the countryside, we say, ‘Whoever discloses a fault he finds with his brother will not die until he sees the same fault in himself’. In reality, proud people lack faith because they are only proud when they look at people

(1) Ahmad in his Musnad; Ibn Majah in his Sunnan; Abu Dawud in his Sunnan, on the authority of Abu Hurayra Allah be pleased with him

lower than them. If they bear in mind the Majesty of their Creator, they will be ashamed to show pride before Him. This is why the arrogance of Pharaoh and his hosts was: 'without any right'. (*al-Qasas*: 39)

However, being proud of protecting the weak for them to live in safety is a good and a lofty ideal of which one should be proud. And when the Lord *the Most High* describes Himself as being Sublime and Proud, we say that this is true because in this way He protects us all from being arrogant to each other. Allah *the Most High* says: 'They thought that they will never have to appear before Us' (*al-Qasas*: 39). Their arrogance in this world was a result of their belief that they will not return to Allah. They believed that Allah created and provided for them, but He let them escape Him and His Punishment, and they thought that they will never return to Him! How absurd that belief is! Surely, everyone must return to Allah.

فَأَخَذْنَاهُ وَجُنُودَهُ فَنَبَذْنَاهُمْ فِي الْيَمِّ فَاَنْظُرْ  
كَيْفَ كَانَ عِقَابُ الظَّالِمِينَ

**So We seized him and his armies and threw them into  
the sea. See what became of the wrongdoers! [40]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 40)**

The Lord *the Most High* did not give them respite until they return to Him on the Day of Resurrection. Rather, He caused them to taste chastisement in this world before the Hereafter. Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And so We seized him and his hosts' (*al-Qasas*: 40), that is, all at once, in one grip, both the followers and the leader: 'and cast them into the sea'. (*al-Qasas*: 40) We threw them into the sea. Such a seizure, taking them all in one grip, clearly shows the power of the One Who seizes. No one could do such a thing but Allah the All-Powerful and All Mighty.

Allah *the Most High* says: 'Such is your Lord's Punishing Grasp whenever He takes to task any community that is given to evildoing. Verily, His Punishing Grasp is grievous, severe!' (*Hud*: 102) The human grasp is not described in the Quran as being powerful except when Allah encourages us to follow His Message with all our strength: 'Hold fast with [all your] strength unto what We have vouchsafed you'. (*al-Baqara*: 93)

Allah *the Most High* then says: ‘See the final fate of those evildoers’. (*al-Qasas*: 40) Their end was a wonder for many ages and one of the Divine Miracles. The sea and water are among Allah's Hosts by which He succours the Truth and destroys falsehood. We have already mentioned how Allah *the Most High* saved Musa *peace be upon him* and destroyed Pharaoh with the same object. He commanded Musa to strike the Red Sea with his staff and the water immediately became parted into two great masses, like two mighty mountains. Musa *peace be upon him* and his people crossed to the other side of the Red Sea. After that, he wanted to strike the Red Sea again to return it to its previous state, but Allah commanded him to leave it as it was. The Lord *the Most High* kept guiding the steps of His Prophet Musa. Allah *Glorified is He* said: ‘Verily, I shall be with you two, hearing and seeing [all]’. (*Ta Ha*: 46) Far be it for Allah to command his servant to do something and then leave him.

When Pharaoh saw the dry passage before him, he crossed it with his hosts behind him. Then Allah let the sea fall upon them as a sign and a lesson for others. Allah *the Most High* says: ‘[Nay], but today We shall save only your body, so that you may be a [warning] sign unto those who will come after you’. (*Yunus*: 92) Reflect on the Divine Power that saved Musa *peace be upon him* from drowning when his mother casted him into the water with her own hands, but later made Pharaoh perish in the Red Sea.

The Lord *the Most High* then says:

وَجَعَلْنَاهُمْ أَئِمَّةً يَدْعُونَ إِلَى النُّكْرِ وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ لَا يُنصُرُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

**We made them leaders calling [others] only to the  
Fire: on the Day of Resurrection they will not be  
helped [41] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 41)**

The word *A'imma* (leaders) is the plural of the word ‘*imam*’. It literally means someone who is followed by others. The follower is under the control of his leader; if we are in prayer, we do not bow until the *imam* bows and we do not rise from bowing until he rises. We must follow him. If the *imam* makes a mistake in prayer, the follower must alert him and remind him by saying, *Subhanallah* (Glory be to Allah). We only follow him concerning

what is right. Yet, when he makes a mistake, we should correct him. The leader is a role model and a good example for the followers. Referring to Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: Allah *Glorified is He* says: '[Remember] when his Lord tried Ibrahim (Abraham) by [His] commandments and the latter fulfilled them. He [Allah] said, "Indeed, I shall make you a leader of men"' (*al-Baqara*: 124). When Ibrahim *peace be upon him* wanted leadership to remain in his family, he said: '[Will you make leaders] of my offspring as well?' (*al-Baqara*: 124) In response, Allah corrected the error in his request, informing him that leadership is only appropriate for good people: 'My covenant does not embrace the evildoers' (*al-Baqara*: 124). Likewise, when Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* called upon his Lord saying, 'O my Lord! Verily, my son was of my family' (*Hud*: 45), Allah *the Most High* answered: 'O Nuh (Noah), indeed, he was not of your family, for verily, his conduct was unrighteous' (*Hud*: 46). Prophecy and leadership are based on action and behaviour, not just on ties of kin and blood.

Leadership could be in evil, as seen in the verse in question: 'We made them leaders [of evil] that invite to the fire [of Hell]' (*al-Qasas*: 41). They are evil examples and role models of evil. It is narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* said, 'Whoever establishes a good action has its reward and the reward of all who act upon it until the Day of Resurrection. Likewise, whoever establishes a bad action bears its sin and the sin of all who act upon it until the Day of Resurrection'.<sup>(1)</sup> Allah *the Most High* says about the leaders of evils: 'Hence, on the Resurrection Day they shall bear the full weight of their own burdens as well as some of the burdens of those ignorant ones whom they led astray' (*an-Nahl*: 25). Pharaoh and his nobles were leaders of evil, misguidance, terrorism, and tyranny. Consequently, they will be leaders in the Hereafter, but in Hell: 'And on the Resurrection Day no help will come to them' (*al-Qasas*: 41).

Allah *Glorified is He* continues:

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(1) Ahmad in his *Musnad* and Ibn Majah in his *Sunnan* on the authority of Jareer ibn 'Abdullah Allah be pleased with him



وَاتَّبَعْنَاهُمْ فِي هَذِهِ الدُّنْيَا لَعْنَةً وَيَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ  
هُم مِّنَ الْمَقْبُوحِينَ ﴿٤٢﴾

**We made Our rejection pursue them in this world,  
and on the Day of Resurrection they will be among  
the despised [42] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 42)**

Allah's Words: 'We followed them with a curse' (*al-Qasas*: 42) means, we have made the curse to afflict them and follow them. Allah's Words: '...with a curse in this world' (*al-Qasas*: 42) means whoever mentions them in this world will curse them and they will continue to be cursed as long as the world remains, that is until the Resurrection Day. Yet this curse and being expelled from Divine Mercy is nothing but an introduction to the eternal damnation awaiting them in the Hereafter. Allah *the Most High* says: 'But verily, for those who are bent on doing evil, there is a suffering in store [which is even] closer at hand than that [supreme suffering in the Hereafter]' (*at-Tur*: 47).

Allah's saying: 'And on the Resurrection Day they will find themselves among those who are bereft of all good' (*al-Qasas*: 42). The word *maqbuḥ* (bereft of all good) is derived from the root *qabuḥa* (to become very bad and ugly). The Arabs even invoke the Lord against a wicked person using the same root '*qabbahaka Allah*' in the hope to have him expelled and banished from any mercy and any goodness. Moreover, the phrase '*qabahatu al-dummal*' means to squeeze a boil before it has fully matured for the blood and pus to come out of it, resulting in a disfigurement of that area of the skin. As said before, if you leave a boil to the Divine Medicinal Power of your body until the immune system of the body heals it, it will not leave any mark. However, if you intervene with medicine and surgery, it will certainly leave a mark and disfigure the area.

Consequently: 'They will find themselves among those who are bereft of all good' (*al-Qasas*: 42) means that their faces will be disfigured after they used to be soft and vibrant. The Quran describes that disfigurement in several different ways, as follows:

- 'And some faces on that Day will be dust-stained. Darkness will cover them' ('*Abasa*: 40-41).
- 'On the Day [of Judgment] when some faces will shine [with happiness] and some faces will be dark [with grief]' (*Al- 'Imran*: 106).
- 'For on that Day We will gather all who were lost in sin, [they will be] blue [with terror]'. (*Ta Ha*: 102).

Clearly, the body only becomes blue because of severe blows that cause adverse reactions under the skin which manifest as bruises. The same is true for glaucoma (blue eye disease) which is worse than cataracts (white eye disease). Furthermore, the Arabs use the word 'blue' to indicate discouragement and intimidation. During the middle ages, soldiers used to paint their faces blue to frighten and terrify the enemy. Traditionally, blue is symbolic of Satan, and therefore the phrase, 'blue demons' is commonly used. Similarly, calling someone a 'blue tooth' is a way of disparaging him. The blue colour also indicates power, as in the poet's<sup>(1)</sup> saying:

'Will he slay me when the sword is my bedfellow,  
blue and sharp like the teeth of demons?

The black colour indicates bleak faces that are distorted and repulsive. Black itself is not a blameworthy colour. Many people with black skin radiate such an attractive and luminous glow that a person does not get tired of looking at them. It is self-evident that beauty has no particular colour. Allah *the Most High* bestows beauty and radiance and causes them to be manifested in a multitude of forms. Some people may have black yet shining faces while others may have white yet gloomy, lifeless faces.

Next, the Lord *the Most High* says:

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(1) Imru' Al-Qays

وَلَقَدْ آتَيْنَا مُوسَى الْكِتَابَ مِنْ بَعْدِ مَا أَهْلَكْنَا الْقُرُونَ  
الْأُولَىٰ بِصَآئِرٍ لِلنَّاسِ وَهَدَىٰ وَرَحْمَةً لَّعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

**After We had destroyed the earlier generations, We gave Moses the Scripture to provide insight, guidance, and mercy for people, so that they might take heed [43] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 43)**

Allah's saying: 'And [then] indeed, after We had destroyed those earlier generations' (*al-Qasas*: 43), referring to the tribes of Nuh (Noah), 'Ad, Thamud and others: 'We revealed to Musa (Moses) [Our] revelation' (*al-Qasas*: 43). Musa *peace be upon him* came at a time when the people of other Messengers used to suffer punishment because of belying their Messengers. The Messengers before Musa *peace be upon him* did not fight. They used to deliver their Divine Messages and raise their arguments, but their people used to ask for signs. As such, whenever Allah answered their request but they remained in disbelief, Allah used to afflict them with punishment. Allah *the Most High* says in another verse: 'Each one of them We seized for his sin. So, upon some of them We let loose a deadly tornado; and some were overtaken by a [sudden, mighty] blast; and some We caused to be swallowed by the earth; and some We caused to drown. It was not Allah who wronged them, but it was they who wronged themselves' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40). All deniers were brought to complete destruction which no one escaped. Musa *peace be upon him* came when the deniers used to receive Divine Annihilation, but in the Message of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* Allah *Glorified is He* commanded the Prophet to fight the disbelievers and deniers, without exposing them to complete havoc and annihilation. Prophet Muhammad's Message is universal for all times and places until the Last Hour, and he *peace and blessings be upon him* was trusted with the task of bringing peace and security to all humankind.

Concerning fighting during the era of Prophet Musa, Allah says: 'Have you not considered the assembly of the Children of Israel after [the time of] Musa (Moses) when they said to a prophet of theirs, "Send to us a king, and we will fight in the way of Allah"? He said, "Is it not possible, if you were commanded to fight, that you will refrain from fighting?" They said, "And

why should we not fight in the Cause of Allah when we have been driven out from our homes and from our children?" But when fighting was prescribed for them, they turned away, except for a few of them' (*al-Baqara*: 246). It has been narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Allah has punished no people, nor any generation, nor any community, nor any village-folk, since He revealed the Torah to Musa'.<sup>(1)</sup>

The punishment of annihilation ended with the revelation of the Torah with only one exception: in the case of the village of Ayla, located between Midyan and Jordan. The Lord *the Most High* gave us a clear example of the experience and role of different Messengers in the story of Musa *peace be upon him*. Abu Umamah *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'I took hold of the bridle of the Messenger's camel on the day Mecca was liberated. I heard him saying some fine beautiful words such as his saying, "Anyone from the people of the Book who believes in me has two rewards; the reward of believing in Musa or 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon them* and the reward of believing in me. Like us, he [now] enjoys the same rights and duties we have'.<sup>(2)</sup> This means that fighting was not obligatory for them.

Allah's Words: 'We revealed to Musa (Moses) [Our] revelation' (*al-Qasas*: 43) refers to the Torah.

The phrase: 'After We had destroyed those earlier generations' (*al-Qasas*: 43) means that this had been accomplished without any intervention on the part of the prophets.

Moreover, Allah's saying: '[to give] insight to men' (*al-Qasas*: 43) means that the revelation is like a light that guides them and insight that directs them. It is also a means of illuminating their hearts.

Allah's Words: 'And guidance and mercy' (*al-Qasas*: 43) means the revelation is a guidance to the right path and a mercy that protects the society from corruption and misguidance. It also saves them from being denizens of hell.

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(1) Narrated by Al-Hakim in his *Mustadrak* on the authority of Abu Sa'eed Al-Khudri *Allah be pleased with him*.

(2) Narrated by Ibn Majah and Sa'eed ibn Mansur on the authority of Abu Musa Al-Ash'ari *Allah be pleased with him*.

Then the Lord *the Most High* says: ‘...that they might be reminded (*yatadhakkaroon*)’ (*al-Qasas*: 43). The word *yatadhakkaroon* (to be reminded) means that you are aware of a certain matter but then forget it; consequently, you need someone to remind you of it. It is not new to you, because it is part of your natural disposition: ‘In accordance with the natural disposition which Allah has instilled into man’. (*ar-Rum*: 30)

However, this sound natural disposition is replaced by human desires and urges, and becomes covered by heedlessness and forgetfulness. For this reason, the Lord reminds people of the true guidance that they have forgotten. The sound natural disposition present in every soul contains the constituents that lead to faith and guidance, if people can but escape heedlessness.

Then the Lord says:

وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الْغَرْبِيِّ إِذْ قَضَيْنَا إِلَىٰ مُوسَى الْأَمْرَ وَمَا كُنْتَ مِنَ الشَّاهِدِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

**You [Muhammad] were not present on the western side of the mountain when We gave Our command to Moses: you were not there [44] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 44)**

Allah’s saying: ‘The western slope’ means the western face of the blessed area where the tree stood and where Allah spoke to Prophet Musa *peace be upon him* and entrusted him with the mission. The phrase: ‘When We gave the Law to Musa’ (*al-Qasas*: 44) means ‘When We entrusted Musa with the mission and commanded him to undertake it’. Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘Nor were you among those who witnessed [his times]’ (*al-Qasas*: 43). But you might wonder, if Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not witness these events, who told him about them? We say that Allah told him. If you say that perhaps someone else told him, or he might have read about them in an ancient book, in response we say that all his people testified to his illiteracy; he could not read or write and he never sat with any teacher. They all knew the circumstances of his life and the travels he had undertaken, yet nothing of that sort of education ever took place during any of them. As such, when they accused Prophet Muhammad of learning the Quran from a teacher, the Quran replied to their accusation saying: ‘Indeed, We know full well that they say, “It is but a human being that

imparts [all] this to him!” [But] the tongue of him to whom they so maliciously point is completely foreign, whereas this is Arabic speech, clear [in itself] and clearly showing the Truth [of its source]’ (*an-Nahl*: 103). In fact, they were referring to the fact that Prophet Muhammad used to visit two Byzantine blacksmiths.

Now, if the community to which the Prophet was sent was an illiterate community, who was his teacher? Illiteracy is considered as an unattractive feature so much so that a superficial person might say, ‘Do not say that Prophet Muhammad was illiterate’. However, we say that illiteracy is a defect, but it is a virtue in respect of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The word *ummi* (illiterate) is derived from the word *umm* (mother) meaning that the person is still in his natural state as his mother bore him, knowing nothing. Consider Allah's Words: ‘And Allah has brought you forth from your mothers’ wombs knowing nothing’ (*an-Nahl*: 78).

In our dialect we say that someone is ‘as he was when his mother bore him’, that is, he knows nothing. This is a bad quality for most of people because they have not learned from those around them or from life's experiences. As for the illiteracy of Prophet Muhammad, it was a noble characteristic because the best a normal student can do is to learn from other fellow humans. As such, he is indebted to them for this knowledge. As for the Prophet, he took his knowledge from the Omniscient; he was not affected by any person or indebted to anyone. For this reason, the whole world was amazed at the Arab nation, this illiterate and nomadic nation that had never stood united by any common law; each tribe used to have their own laws. How were they able to conquer the world and spread their civilisation over the globe in only half a century? If the Arabs were a civilised people, people will have said that Islam was just a developed phase in their civilisation, as was said about our victory in the October War. Our soldiers proved to be extraordinary fighters and had no doubt that Allah was aiding them when they initiated their battle declaring their trust in Allah with their battle cry, ‘Allah is the Greatest!’ But after three days of battle, people began to say in the newspapers that the victory was attained due to our advanced ‘civilisation’, although on the same day, ‘*thaghrat Al-Difriswaar*’ (Israelis attacking through the gap

between the Egyptian 2nd and 3rd Armies, widely called the Operation Stout-Hearted Men) took place.

It is strange that our fellow brothers want to reject the Divine Blessing and deny that Allah helped them. What do you find uncomfortable in a victory that came through Allah's Aid? Have you not read the verse: 'None can comprehend your Lord's Hosts save Him alone' (*al-Muddaththir*: 31)? After the gap occurred, what could you do to close it? Now, bring your ideas that civilisation taught you and get us out of this crisis! If these people found it too difficult to admit that Allah's Hosts were among the fighting ranks, was the engineer who was guided to the idea of using water pressure to open a way through the Bar Lev Line for the troops to cross, was he not one of Allah's Hosts?

Finding a solution to the problem took a lot of time and toil from us without any benefit until this man divinely endowed with insight came along. Allah *Glorified is He* guided him to use this procedure. He was not inspired randomly, but rather by his faith in Allah and his nearness to and humility before Him. May Allah reward him well on behalf of Egypt and Islam! It is also remarkable that after the war ended, they ran a simulation of the conflict, but they failed to cross the Bar Lev Line, even though it was during a time of peace and security. Back to the matter of illiteracy, we advise those who campaign to eradicate illiteracy in order to teach people sciences, call for the eradication of illiteracy to educate people about Allah first!

The Lord *the Most High* says: 'Now, you were not present on the western slope [of Mount Sinai] when We gave the Law to Musa, nor were you among those who witnessed [his time]!' (*al-Qasas*: 44) In other words, Muhammad did not see these events or attend them. The word 'witness' here means to attend, as Allah says about the month of *Ramadan*: 'Hence, whoever of you witnesses this month shall fast throughout it' (*al-Baqara*: 185). Here, the word 'witnesses' means 'to be present and living during this time'.

Then, the Lord *the Most High* says:

وَلَكِنَّا أَنشَأْنَا فِرْعَوْنَ فَطَّاعُولًا عَلَيْهِمُ الْعُمُرُ وَمَا كُنْتَ ثَاوِيًا فِي  
أَهْلِ مَدْيَنَ تَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ آيَاتِنَا وَلَكِنَّا كُنَّا مُرْسِلِينَ ﴿٤٥﴾

**We have brought into being many generations who lived long lives – you did not live among the people of Midyan or recite Our Revelation to them – We have always sent messengers to people[45] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 45)**

The people of Midyan refer to the tribe of Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him*. They were proficient at writing. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him*: 'You did not dwell among the people of Midyan reciting to them Our Messages' (*al-Qasas*: 45), that is, you did not live there or read to them as a student reads to his teacher for correction.

The Lord *the Most High* continues: 'But We were the senders' (*al-Qasas*: 45), that is, all Messages came from us, both those sent to the literate and those sent to the illiterate.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَمَا كُنْتَ بِجَانِبِ الطُّورِ إِذْ نَادَيْنَا وَلَكِنْ رَحْمَةً مِّن رَّبِّكَ لِتُنذِرَ  
قَوْمًا مَّا أَتَاهُمْ مِن نَّذِيرٍ مِّن قَبْلِكَ لَعَلَّهُمْ يَتَذَكَّرُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

**Nor were you present on the side of Mount Sinai when We called out to Moses. But you too have been sent as an act of grace from your Lord, to give warning to a people to whom no warner has come before, so that they may take heed [46] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 46)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Nor were you present on the side of Mount Sinai when We called out to Musa. But you too have been sent as a Mercy from your Lord' (*al-Qasas*: 46). In other words, you did not, O Muhammad, witness these things; rather, knowledge of them came to you as a Blessing from your Lord.

Allah *the Most High* then explains: 'To give warning to a people to whom no warner has come before so that they may take heed' (*al-Qasas*: 46), that is, in order for those who have forgotten to be reminded of the sound natural



disposition that the Lord *the Most High* implanted in man. The phrase: ‘Nor were you present’ (*al-Qasas*: 46) occurs in several places in the Quran, all of which indicate that Prophet Muhammad brought tidings that he could not have read in a book or heard from a teacher. In fact, he could not read and he never learned from a teacher. The people of the Book knew the truth of these tidings because their scriptures mention them. Allah *the Most High* says: ‘Those whom We gave the book know him (Muhammad) as they know their children’. (*al-An ‘am*: 20)

He says: ‘Indeed, this is in the former Scriptures; the Scriptures of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses)’. (*al-A ‘la*: 18-19)

One of the signs of prophethood is that the Lord lifted the veils on the unseen for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Things can be unseen to you because they are past events that you have no means of seeing. This is the veil of the past, which cannot be known except by reading books or studying at school; and Allah has ruled out the possibility of this for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. Or the veil can be a veil of the future and events that have not yet happened, which no one can inform you of except He who has known them since pre-eternity.

And Allah says to His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘We will make you recite, [O Muhammad], and you will not forget’ (*al-A ‘la*: 6). A Quranic revelation used to descend upon Prophet Muhammad, after which he used to dictate it to his companions, every verse in its place, arranged in the correct chapter. Then, he used to recite it as it had been revealed.

We said before that we could challenge anyone to speak for twenty minutes, for example, and then repeat what he has said word for word. He will not be able to do this. But for Prophet Muhammad, it was different because Allah *Glorified is He* promised him: ‘We will make you recite, [O Muhammad], and you will not forget’. (*al-A ‘la*: 6)

We also said that when the Quran was first revealed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* he used to repeat the verses in front of Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* worried that he might forget them. Consequently, Allah *Glorified is He* revealed to him: ‘Move not your tongue with it, [O Muhammad], to hasten with recitation of the Quran. Indeed,

upon Us is its collection [in your heart] and [to make possible] its recitation. So when We have recited it [through Jibril (Gabriel)], then follow its recitation'. (*al-Qiyama*: 16-18)

And: 'Do not hasten with [recitation of] the Quran before its revelation is completed to you' (*Ta Ha*: 114). That is, relax, O Muhammad, and do not fear that you will forget. Wait until the revelation of the verses is finished and you will be able reproduce them as they are without ever forgetting a single letter of them.

Concerning the lifting of the veil of the future, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And [He created] the horses, mules and donkeys for you to ride and [as] adornment'. (*an-Nahl*: 8) If the verse had ended with the mention of the animals, people will have said that the Quran only mentioned primitive things, leaving out cars, rockets and so on.

But the Lord *Glorified is He* completes the verse thus: 'And He creates that which you do not know' (*an-Nahl*: 8) in order for the Quran to make an allowance for all the different forms of transport that will be devised until the Day of Judgement.

Another example of this lifting of the veil of the future is Allah's Words: 'Exalted is He who created all pairs—from what the earth grows and from themselves and from that which they do not know'. (*Ya Sin*: 36)

That is, everything in existence is based on the coupling of the male and female, even those objects that we see as inanimate, having no life.

Another example of this unveiling is Allah's Words: '*Alif Lam Mim*. The Byzantines have been defeated. In the nearest land, but they, after their defeat, will overcome. Within three to nine years'. (*ar-Rum*: 1-4)

Who could judge what the results of a battle that will take place after seven years will be? After this, Allah was proved true, and the Byzantines were victorious. The victory was for people of the Book over the fire-worshipping Persians. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And that day the believers will rejoice in the Victory of Allah'. (*ar-Rum*: 4-5)

When the Companions yearned to perform *umrah*, the Messenger of Allah *Glorified is He* was inspired with this verse: 'You will surely enter

Al-Masjid Al-Haram, if Allah wills, in safety, with your heads shaved and [hair] shortened, not fearing [anyone]. He knew what you did not know and has arranged before that a conquest near [at hand]'. (*al-Fath*: 27)

Prophet Muhammad set off with them until they reached Hudaibiya, twenty-two kilometres from Mecca, where members of Quraysh confronted them and prevented them from performing *umrah*. They promised them that they could do it if they came back the next year, and wrote a treaty assuring them of this. When Prophet Muhammad had the scribe write on the treaty, 'This is what Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, pledges', 'Umr ibn Suhayl said, 'If we considered you to be the Messenger of Allah, we will not have fought you or barred your entry. Write instead, "Muhammad ibn 'Abdullah"'.

Upon this, the Companions reacted with anger, calling Prophet Muhammad back to them. 'Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* said, 'O Messenger of Allah, are we not on the right?' Prophet Muhammad replied, 'Indeed we are'. 'Umar said, 'And are they not on falsehood?' He replied, 'Indeed they are'. Consequently, 'Umar said, 'Then, why do we yield so humbly against the honour of our religion?' Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *may Allah be pleased with him* then said, 'Hold fast to his stirrup (i.e. calm down and do not cross the limit), O 'Umar, for he [Muhammad] is the Messenger of Allah'. And when 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb *may Allah be pleased with him* insisted on writing 'Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah', the Messenger of Allah looked at him and said, 'O 'Ali, you will suffer the like of this, so accept it'. Days and years passed by, and Prophet Muhammad passed away, and then Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman. When 'Ali assumed the caliphate and dispute arose between him and Mu'awiya resulting in them meeting one another at the battle of the Camel and the battle of Siffin, 'Ali was forced to agree to a peace treaty with Mu'awiya. In the treaty he wrote, 'This is what 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb, the Commander of the Believers, pledges'. But they said to him, 'If you were the Commander of the Believers, we will not have fought you'. Upon this, 'Ali remembered that Prophet Muhammad had said to him, 'You will suffer the like of this, so accept it'.

Prophet Muhammad saw beyond the veil of the past and that of the future; but what about the veil of the present? How is this veil lifted? For an

example of this, consider Allah's Words: '...and say among themselves, "Why does Allah not punish us for what we say?"' (*al-Mujadala*: 8)

So Allah showed him what was in the hearts of the people.

Moreover, during the battle of Mu'ta, the one battle in his lifetime that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not attend but which was still considered one of the Battles of the Prophet *ghazawat* because he saw it and attended it while he was still in Medina, Allah lifted the veil of the present for him. As a result, he was able to inform his Companions in Medina of the situation in Mu'ta as though he was seeing it with his own eyes.

On that day, the command was taken by a number of great Companions, namely Zayd ibn Haritha, Ibn Rawaha, Ja'far ibn Abu Taleb, and Khalid ibn al-Walid *may Allah be pleased with them*. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'So-and-so has been killed and the flag has fallen and therefore so-and-so lifted it, but he has now been killed and therefore so-and-so took hold of it'. When they came back from the battle, they mentioned the very same scene that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had described.<sup>(1)</sup>

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْلَا أَن تُصِيبَهُمْ مُّصِيبَةٌ بِمَا قَدَّمَتْ أَيْدِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُوا رَبَّنَا لَوْلَا  
أَرْسَلْتَ إِلَيْنَا رَسُولًا فَنَتَّبِعَ آيَاتِكَ وَنَكُونُ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٧﴾

**And may not say, if a disaster should befall them as a result of what they have done with their own hands, 'Lord, if only You had sent us a messenger, we might have followed Your message and become believers' [47] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 47)**

This means that if We had not sent you, Muhammad, and a disaster were to afflict them because of what their own hands had done, Allah will punish them in the Hereafter and they will complain saying: 'Our Lord, why did you not send us a Messenger so we could have followed Your Verses and been among the believers?' If Allah were to punish them without sending a Messenger to them, this will be an argument for them to use for their defence.

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(1) Related by Al-Bukhari in his (*Sahih*)

We said before that there can be no punishment without a prohibition, and no prohibition without a text, and no text without an announcement, and therefore laws must be published in official records for everyone to know about them for them to have no argument for any disobedience on their part; and no one can be excused or pardoned because of being ignorant of the Law.

Allah ruled out this argument when He sent Prophet Muhammad to them with true guidance to show them the way to goodness and reward in paradise, and warn them about evil and the punishment of hell. Allah explains: ‘So that men might have no excuse before Allah after [the coming of] these Messengers’ (*an-Nisa*: 165).

The wisdom of sending Messengers is only for them to be a decisive proof against whom they are sent to, for the particulars of religion are true, innate matters which a sound mind can be guided to naturally. Consequently, orientalist have thought long and hard about the personality of ‘Umar *may Allah be pleased with him*.

They say, ‘You mention ‘Umar all the time: when justice is mentioned, you say ‘Umar; when strength is mentioned, you say ‘Umar; and even when Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah, was alive and receiving revelation, you say that the Quran was once revealed concerning something that ‘Umar said. Do you have anything apart from ‘Umar?’

It is as though the Lord *Glorified is He* showed us, by means of ‘Umar’s personality, that He does not command us with anything that is distasteful to our natural disposition, but only commands us with things that our natural disposition could accept and be guided to naturally, if they were free from the influence of desire. ‘Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* was neither a prophet nor a Messenger, yet he arrived at the Truth because of his natural disposition towards religious belief and his sound, desire-free intellect with which he was endowed, up to the point that his sound natural disposition led him to utter the exact words of the Quran before they were even revealed.

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَلَمَّا جَاءَهُمُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ عِنْدِنَا قَالُوا لَوْلَا أُوتِيَ مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ أَوَلَمْ يَكْفُرُوا بِمَا أُوتِيَ مُوسَىٰ مِنْ قَبْلُ قَالُوا سِحْرَانِ تَظَاهَرَا وَقَالُوا إِنَّا بِكُلِّ كَافِرُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

**Even now that Our truth has come to them, they say, ‘Why has he not been given signs like those given to Moses?’ Did they not also deny the truth that was given to Moses before? They say, ‘Two kinds of sorcery, helping each other,’ and, ‘We refuse to accept either of them’ [48] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 48)**

Allah says: ‘But when the Truth came to them from Us’, referring to the Messenger that they had sought: ‘They said, “Why was he not given like that which was given to Musa (Moses)?”’ Glory be to Allah! If you wanted to be a liar, you must have a good memory! First, you only asked for a Messenger and you did not ask for any accompanying miracle, when Allah relates that you said: ‘Our Lord, why did you not send us a Messenger’, but now you seek physical signs like those with which Musa *peace be upon him* was sent.

If you reflect, you will find that the signs that came before Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were physical, material signs, such as Nuh’s (Noah’s) ship, Saleh’s (Shelah’s) she-camel, Musa’s staff and ‘Isa’s (Jesus’s) healing of the blind and the leper, and raising of the dead. All these were physical miracles that only lasted as long as they were performed, and this is why they were appropriate for those Messengers whose missions were limited to a certain time and place.

As for the Messenger who was sent to all people in all places and times, miracles constrained by time and place are not appropriate for him because they will only apply to their time and the eras that come after it will be bereft of any miracle. For this reason, the Lord *Glorified is He* gave Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* an eternal miracle which is preserved by Allah and will last until the Day of Resurrection.

We said that the Messengers before Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought miracles to confirm the truth of their Prophetic Message from Allah along with the Scripture outlining the way of guidance they had brought. The Scripture itself was not the miracle in these cases. As for Muhammad, his miracle was the Scripture itself and the guidance he was sent with, for the proof of his veracity to remain alongside the guidance to

which he called the people. As for his brethren Messengers who came before him, we describe the news of their miracles as pieces of information that may be believed or disbelieved by those who had been told them.

We believe in all these miracles because Allah told us about them in the Noble Quran. The Quran, which is a miracle and a guide, has the honour of keeping these other miracles alive because it has told us of them and has made their memory eternal.

Allah responds to them, saying: ‘Did they not disbelieve in that which was given to Musa (Moses) before?’ (*al-Qasas*: 48) He then tells us what they said about the miracle of Musa and the miracle of Muhammad: ‘[They are but] two works of magic supporting each other’ (*al-Qasas*: 48). That is, they said that Musa worked magic and Muhammad worked magic too, and that they were: ‘supporting each other’ (*al-Qasas*: 48). The response to this accusation is simple. The miracle of Musa, though it was similar to magic, was not itself magic. Magic tricks you into believing that a rope is a slithering snake; yet Musa’s staff truly did become a snake, rushing and devouring their magical offerings. Consequently, the magicians fell down in prostration because they saw that the miracle was nothing like their own work, and as a result they immediately believed.

As for those who say that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a magician, the response is simple, ‘If this is the case, why did he not also work his magic on you, just as he did (as you claim) on the others who believed in him?’

They then confirmed their disbelief in both Messengers, Musa *peace be upon him* and Muhammad, saying: ‘and indeed we are, in both, disbelievers’. (*al-Qasas*: 48)

قُلْ فَأْتُوا بِكِتَابٍ مِّنْ عِندِ اللَّهِ هُوَ أَهْدَىٰ مِنْهُمَا أَتَّبِعُهُ إِن كُنتُمْ صَادِقِينَ ﴿٤٩﴾

**Say [Muhammad], ‘Then produce a book from God that gives better guidance than these two and I will follow it, if you are telling the truth’ [49] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 49)**

Say in response to them: ‘Bring a Scripture from Allah which is a better guide than either of them’, referring to the Torah, which Musa brought, and

the Quran, which Muhammad brought, since they have not pleased you: 'that I may follow it, if you are truthful' (*al-Qasas*: 49). If you bring it, I will follow it.

This does point to two different ways: the way of Truth which Muhammad brought, and the way of falsehood upon which they insisted. Moreover, this challenge from Prophet Muhammad to the disbelievers implies that there is no book that offers better guidance than what he brought; not in their possession, and not in the possession of any who may come after them. When Prophet Muhammad suggested to them that there might be a book offering better guidance than his, he made them desire to find it; and if they looked for it but did not find such a book, they will realise the Truth without Prophet Muhammad even having to say it. Could any human being give the people a way that offers better guidance than Allah's Way?

He then says to them: '... if you are truthful' (*al-Qasas*: 49) knowing that they are not; for Allah made Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* the Seal of the Prophets. Obviously, no other Messenger will come with a new Scripture; and you, O disbelievers, cannot come up with a Scripture yourselves because if this were the case, every lawmaker will produce a system that served his own school of thought and satisfied his own desires.

From this we can say that the appropriate conditions of a lawmaker are:

Firstly, that he possesses vast knowledge in order for no fault to be found in him later—this condition cannot be satisfied by any human being. This is proved by the fact that many of the laws that were made in the past are no longer useful now and people call for their alteration only because new situations have arisen that did not occur to the people who first made these laws. And when these new issues arose, the restrictions troubled people and consequently they sought to alter these laws.

Secondly, the lawmaker must not have any capricious interest in those things that he legislates for people. The capitalists, the socialists, and others all make laws according to what will serve their ideology and way of life. Clearly, any law made for all mankind must not be based on any of these ways because it will not be free of desire.



Thirdly, the lawmaker must not benefit at all from any of the laws he makes.

If life's issues and regulations dictate that we should make laws to govern them, no human beings have the right to make these laws save those who have mature enough intellects and sound enough minds for them to be fit to be lawmakers.

But before there were people who were fit to make laws, what system did they follow? When there was no rule of law, people lived without any laws, but we see there are laws now; therefore who was it that established the first law? The one who established the first law was the One Who was the first to create anything.

Then the Lord *Glorified is He* says:

فَإِنْ لَّمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَكَ فَاعْلَمْ أَنَّمَا يَتَّبِعُونَ أَهْوَاءَهُمْ وَمَنْ أَضَلُّ مِمَّنِ اتَّبَعَ  
هُوَئِلَهِ بُغْيَاهُ هُدًى مِّنَ اللَّهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يَهْدِي الْقَوْمَ الظَّالِمِينَ ﴿٥٠﴾

**If they do not respond to you, you will know that they follow  
only their own desires. Who is further astray than the one  
who follows his own desires with no guidance from God?  
Truly God does not guide those who do wrong [50]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 50)**

This means that Allah did not consent to what they desired. He did not give them any other Scripture. But how might such a Scripture have come to them? The Lord *Glorified is He* answers this question with His Words: ‘And they said, “Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

So their problem was not with the Book itself, but rather with the one upon whom the Book was sent. This is the meaning of: ‘then know that they only follow their [own] desires’ (*al-Qasas*: 50).

Then Allah says: ‘And who is more astray’ meaning no one could be more astray: ‘than one who follows his desire without guidance from Allah?’ (*al-Qasas*: 50) He follows the desires of his lower self. But if his soul's desires correspond to the decrees of the Sacred Law, this is something

praiseworthy which Prophet Muhammad explained in the Hadith, 'None of you believes until his desires corresponds to what I have brought'.<sup>(1)</sup>

If we are in such a state, we are not really following our desires; we are following the Sacred Law. One of the righteous people who devoted their lives to goodness and worship said, 'O Lord, I fear you will not reward me for my good deeds; for You commanded us to fight our selfish passions and I have come to love good deeds such that they have become my passion'.

The worst of all misguidance is for a person to follow his own desires because people's desires are as contradictory as they can be, and this is why conflict and contradictory actions exist in the universe. The poet Al-Mutanabbi described this conflict, saying:

We all desire life for ourselves,  
And are thoroughly enamoured of it:  
The coward's self-love breeds fear,  
And the brave man's self-love breeds war!

We all love life and strive to hold on to it, but our means of achieving this differ. The coward, out of love for life, flees from the battle; while the brave man throws himself into it despite his love for life because he loves a different, more lasting life, which is the life of the martyr. Another poet said:

Everyone in the world is fishing;  
But they use different nets!

A man gives charity despite his own needs, seeing that others are needier than him. Allah *Glorified is He* says about such a man: '...but rather give them preference over themselves, even though poverty be their own lot'. (*al-Hashr*: 9) We say, 'This poor man makes a sacrifice, but he does this seeking Divine Reward and a ten-fold recompense for what he has given, not to mention paradise on top of this. It is a matter self-interest, after all, for religion depends on selfishness, a lofty one though, not a base selfishness. Religion raises man, makes him positive and beneficial to others which makes seeking self-interest nothing to be ashamed of.

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(1) Related by Ibn Abu 'Asim in *As-Sunna*, on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Amr ibn Al-'As.

When the Sacred Law tells you not to steal and demands that you lower your gaze, along with the other commandments of the Law, it restricts your personal freedom as an individual, but it also restricts the freedom of everyone else for your own benefit. It gives you more than it takes from you. That is, when you look at what has been taken from you by your following the Divine Way, do not forget what has been given to you (by others following it).

Consider Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and how he used to treat the diseases of the soul. A young man<sup>(1)</sup> from the Bedouins who had embraced faith came to him and complained of his weakness for women, and his lack of patience in abstaining from this desire, saying to him, ‘O [Muhammad], Messenger of Allah, allow me to fornicate!’ Despite this, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not scold him. He knew that he was in the presence of a sick person who needed to be cured of his ailment and who was complaining of the terrible malady in his soul, especially as he had been truthful in telling Prophet Muhammad his problem directly and was true to himself, and not deluded.

For this reason, Prophet Muhammad drew him closer to himself and said, ‘Brother Arab! Do you like such a thing for your mother? Do you like such a thing for your wife? Do you like such a thing for your sister? Do you like such a thing for your daughter?’ Each time the young man said, ‘No, O [Muhammad], Messenger of Allah, may I be made your ransom!’ Upon this, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Likewise, other people, O brother Arab, do not like such a thing for their mothers, their wives, their sisters nor their daughters’.<sup>(2)</sup>

The young man went away, and later said, ‘By Allah, nothing was more repulsive to me than fornication after I heard this from Prophet Muhammad; and every time I had a lustful urge, I remembered what the Messenger of Allah had said about my mother, my wife, my sister and my daughter’.

What draws people into sin and makes them desire sin is their failure to think of the consequences of it; and conversely, people are negligent in doing good deeds because they fail to think of the reward for them.

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(1) The story of the youth who asked Prophet Muhammad for the concession to commit adultery

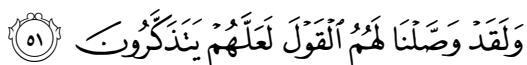
(2) Related by Ibn Jarir At-Tabari, on the authority of Abu Umama

I once said to some university students, ‘Suppose a young man has a voracious sexual appetite and he wants to satisfy his desires in an unlawful way, but we want him to repent and this is why we say to him, “We will give you everything you want on the condition that you agree to throw yourself into this oven after having spent the night indulging in your desires”, what will he do?’

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Indeed, Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people’ (*al-Qasas*: 50). Elsewhere in the Quran, He says: ‘And Allah does not guide the defiantly disobedient people’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 108). He also says: ‘Allah does not guide the disbelievers’. (*al-Baqara*: 264)

All of these verses show that Allah does not decree that someone should be without guidance unless they first do something wrong. The meaning of ‘guidance’ here, therefore, is the guidance of faith and piety. Allah guided everyone with the guidance of evidence and signs that show the way, but these people did not follow this guidance and therefore He denied them the guidance of faith.

Then the Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**We have caused Our Word to come to them so that they may be mindful [51] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 51)**

We have sent to them Messages, one after another, and every time a Messenger’s time came to an end and the people fell into disbelief, Allah sent them another Message in order that humanity will remain connected to the Creator’s Guidance. Or the verse refers specifically to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the sense that Allah sent him the Quran verse by verse, and every time a Quranic revelation came to him, Allah followed it with another, according to the turn of events.

This point is one of the matters that the opponents of Prophet Muhammad tried to make an issue out of, saying, as the Quran tells us: ‘Those who disbelieve asked, “Why has not the Quran been bestowed on him from on high in one single revelation?”’ (*al-Furqan*: 32) The Quran responded to

them showing them the wisdom of gradual revelation: ‘Thus [it is] that We may strengthen thereby your heart. And We have rehearsed it [to you] in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually’ (*al-Furqan*: 32).

If the Quran had been revealed all at once, the strengthening of Prophet Muhammad will also have only occurred once; yet he needed a constant strengthening in order to deal with the things as they happened to him. Allah sent the verses to him one by one for him to continue to hear his Lord’s Words every time things became difficult for him. Quranic revelations came to console him and lighten the difficulties he encountered from his opponents.

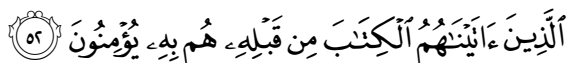
Another wisdom for this gradual revelation is found in Allah’s Words: ‘And We have rehearsed it [to you] in slow, well-arranged stages, gradually’ (*al-Qasas*: 32). Every time a piece of the revelation was sent down, it was easy for them to remember it, arrange it, and act in accordance with it. In addition, the believers who were charged with following this guidance will of course encounter new events and situations, and need to ask Prophet Muhammad about them; how will he answer them if all the Quran had been revealed at once?

It was of course necessary that the answer be delayed until after the question had been asked; and for this reason Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And they do not come to you with an argument except that We bring you the Truth and the best explanation’. (*al-Furqan*: 33)

The phrase ‘they ask you’ occurs several times in the Quran in several different chapters. How could the answer come to us if the Quran had come, as you say, in one single piece? Furthermore, Glory be to Allah, have you sufficiently mastered the rules in the Quran in its piecemeal form for you to ask for it to be given to you all at once?

Then Allah *Glorified is He* closes the verse with another wisdom of this step-by-step revelation: ‘...that they might be reminded’ (*al-Qasas*: 51). Every time a Quranic revelation came down, it reminded them of the Divine Guidance of which they had become heedless.

After that, the Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**Those to whom We gave the Scripture before  
believe in it [52] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 52)**

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* were saying to His Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘I will make your opponents from the people of the Book be the very ones who will testify to your truthfulness because they know you as they know their own sons, and everything in your Scripture is also present in theirs, and your physical image and description is in their possession’.

As such, you find that many verses from Allah’s Book state that the people of the Book are aware of the Truth contained within the Quran. Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And those who have disbelieved say, “You are not a Messenger”. Say, [O Muhammad], “Sufficient is Allah as Witness between me and you, and [the witness of] whoever has knowledge of the Scripture”’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 43). They are also a witness to the truthfulness of Prophet Muhammad by virtue of the previous Scriptures that they possess; hence, ask them about him. And Allah says: ‘But you prefer the worldly life, while the Hereafter is better and more enduring. Indeed, this is in the former Scriptures; the Scriptures of Ibrahim (Abraham) and Musa (Moses)’ (*al-A’la*: 16-19). And He says: ‘And indeed, among the People of the Scripture are those who believe in Allah and what was revealed to you and what was revealed to them, [being] humbly submissive to Allah’. (*Al-‘Imran*: 199)

If this was not the case, then why did ‘Abdullah ibn Salam and other Jewish scholars embrace Islam? The people of the Book who are true to themselves and their Scriptures will certainly believe in the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. As for those who do not believe, it is because they have been veiled by temporal power and the desire for the leadership they had before Islam came; leadership in matters of science, military and wealth.

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِذَا يُنْزَلُ عَلَيْهِمْ قَالُوا ءَأَمْنَابِهِ ؕ إِنَّهُ الْحَقُّ مِنْ رَبِّنَا إِنَّا كُنَّا مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مُسْلِمِينَ ﴿٥٣﴾

**And, when it is recited to them, say, ‘We believe in it, it is the truth from our Lord. Before it came we had already devoted ourselves to Him’ [53] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 53)**

When the Quran was recited to these believers from the people of the Book, they said, ‘We believe in it’, and they testified that it was the Truth from their Lord, and upon hearing Allah’s verses, their faith increased. That is, they had already surrendered to Allah before this, for they believed in their own Scriptures first and then believed in the Quran.

أُولَئِكَ يُؤْتَوْنَ أَجْرَهُمْ مَرَّتَيْنِ بِمَا صَبَرُوا وَبِذَرُوا  
بِالْحَسَنَةِ السَّيِّئَةَ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ ﴿٥٤﴾

**They will be given their rewards twice over because they are steadfast, repel evil with good, give to others out of what We have provided for them [54] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 54)**

The Lord *Glorified is He* wills to teach us that whoever wants the True religion must check if any religion which is supported by a miracle has come after the religion he follows. This is because if he believed that ‘Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was a Messenger from Allah, and that he came after Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* then clearly, it is not far-fetched that another Messenger might have come after ‘Isa. He must, therefore, search for the new religion, and search for proofs to justify his faith in this religion. This will be the case if the first religion had not been altered in any way; if it indeed had been altered, the matter is even clearer. This is because any alteration produces inconsistencies.

Allah says: ‘Those who follow the Messenger [Muhammad], the unlettered Prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah’ (*al-A’raf*: 157). They believed in him because they found his description in their Scriptures, and found pure, unadulterated doctrines in his Scripture, even though he was illiterate, knowing nothing of these matters. They took his illiteracy as a proof of his truthfulness.

Allah's word: 'Those' in this verse refers to the people of the Book who believe in the Quran and are humble before Allah, who were described earlier: 'Those will be given their reward twice for what they patiently endured' (*al-Qasas*: 54). This refers to their reward for believing in their Messengers, and their reward for believing in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

In a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad said, '[There are] three who will be given their reward twice over: A man from the people of the Book who believed in his prophet and then believed in me; a slave who observed the rights of Allah and the rights of his masters; and a man who owned a slave-girl, raised her well, and then set her free and married her'.<sup>(1)</sup>

Those who believed in their own Messengers and then believed in Prophet Muhammad deserved this rank and earned these two rewards, because they exposed themselves to harm from those who did not believe when they believed the first time, and then exposed themselves to harm again when they believed a second time. They were patient in the face of these two adversities, and as a result: 'Those will be given their reward twice for what they patiently endured'. (*al-Qasas*: 54)

Just as Allah will give those people of the Book who believed in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* their reward twice over, He will also give some of the other Muslims two rewards, including, as Prophet Muhammad said, 'A slave who observed the rights of Allah and the rights of his masters; and a man who owned a slave-girl...'. Moreover, this reward will not be denied to the followers of the religion that came directly before Islam, which was Christianity; it is for them, too. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'We have already sent Our Messengers with clear evidences and sent down with them the Scripture and the balance that the people may maintain [their affairs] in justice. And We sent down iron, wherein is great military might and benefits for the people'. (*al-Hadid*: 25) The most important of these benefits is: 'and so that Allah may make evident those who support Him and His Messengers, unseen'. (*al-Hadid*: 25)

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(1) Related by Al-Bukhari and Muslim



Allah *Glorified is He* specifically mentioned iron because the weapons of war are made from it. Allah sent down the Quran for a purpose, and sent down iron for another purpose. A poet said:

There is naught but revelation, or a sharpened blade

Whose edge cuts the neck of any who stray:

The first is the cure for a wise man's ailment;

The second, the cure for a foolish man's complaint.

I have a personal experience and memories connected with this verse: 'Those will be given their reward twice for what they patiently endured' (*al-Qasas*: 54). We were in a city in which some of our Christian brethren resided, and one of them was a very intelligent and sagacious man. He used to always keep company with the Muslims, attend their gatherings and listen to the Quran, and some particular verses used to linger on in his mind. One day, he came to me and said that he had heard the reader recite: 'And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds' (*al-Anbiya*': 107).

He asked me what the phrase 'the worlds' meant. I said to him, 'Indeed, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent as a mercy to all the worlds, and whoever believes in him has a share of this mercy, but whoever does not believe in him does not have a share. Despite this, if you look at the Quran carefully, contemplating it well, you will find that he was not a mercy for just the believers'. The Christian wondered how this could be. I recited to him Allah's Words: 'Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book in Truth so you may judge between the people by that which Allah has shown you. And do not be an advocate for the deceitful' (*an-Nisa*': 105). I pointed out that Allah says: 'between the people', not 'between the believers'.

Another example of Prophet Muhammad's mercy to the disbelievers is that he supported those of them who had been wronged, and gave them their rights. Allah *Glorified is He* then said to him: 'And seek forgiveness of Allah. Indeed, Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful' (*an-Nisa*': 106) because Allah does not love people who are false and sinful, even if they are Muslims.

Then, I mentioned to him the occasion of the revelation of this verse which was the story of the suit of armour that a Jew Zayd ibn Samin agreed to look after for a Muslim, Ta'ma ibn Ubayriq. The armour had been stolen from Qatada ibn Nu'man, and when he noticed it was gone, he went looking for it. He had put it in a sack of flour, and thus he followed the trail of flour until it led him to the house of Zayd ibn Samin, the Jew, whom he accused of having stolen it, announcing this to the people. The Jew said that Ta'ma ibn Ubayriq had left the armour with him to look after it on the pretext that he was worried it may be stolen from his own house. In this situation, the Muslims wanted to prove their companion's innocence because he was new to Islam. They were also worried about what people might think if they heard that one of them was a thief. Consequently, they wanted to convict the Jew, and they said as much to Prophet Muhammad in order for him to find a solution to exonerate Ta'ma, even though they knew it was not far-fetched that he could have stolen the armour.

Prophet Muhammad sat down to think about the matter, but very quickly the revelation came to him and told him that this matter did not need any thought or investigation: 'Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], the Book in Truth so you may judge between the people by that which Allah has shown you. And do not be an advocate for the deceitful' (*an-Nisa'*: 105). The verse convicted Ibn Ubayriq and indicated that this was not the first thing he had done, and it described him as being 'deceitful', i.e. untrustworthy. The verse also acquitted the Jew and corrected the misconception of those Muslims who were afraid that a Muslim may be exposed as a thief and were heedless of the grave consequences that will have arisen had justice been miscarried and the Jew been convicted.

Even though the verse convicted the Muslim, it raised the status of Islam in everyone's eyes: the Muslim's, the Jew's and everyone else involved in the incident, and everyone who has read the verse. If Prophet Muhammad had sided with the Muslim, the image of Islam that everyone held will have been shaken; and if this had happened, what will the Jews who were close to accepting Islam, and who indeed did embrace Islam after this incident, have thought?

This is like the case of the false witness: the first person to lose esteem for him is the one for whom he lies. It is said, 'If someone causes you to

lower yourself, you go down in their esteem, even if you are helping them'. The false witness helps you against your opponent with his testimony, but you trample all over his honour in the process.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'they avert evil with good' (*al-Qasas*: 54). This is also one of their attributes. They repay bad deeds with good ones, and therefore their qualities include forgiveness and mercy, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And whoever is patient and forgives—indeed, that is of the matters [that require] determination'. (*ash-Shura*: 43)

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And from what We have provided them they spend' (*al-Qasas*: 54). They spend what they must on themselves and their families and they give the poor—due that is incumbent upon them, and then they give out of generosity to the needy and the disadvantaged.

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا أَعْمَلُنَا وَلَكُمْ  
أَعْمَلُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ لَا نَبْنِئُ الْجَاهِلِينَ

**And turn away whenever they hear frivolous talk, saying,  
'We have our deeds and you have yours. Peace be with you!  
We do not seek the company of ignorant people' [55]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 55)**

This is another of the believer's attributes. Frivolous speech is the one that involves no benefit; it does not bring good if you hear it, nor bring harm if you miss it. The sensible person should abandon such speech because it deserves to be abandoned and ignored.

As such, one of the attributes of the slaves of the Most Merciful is: '...and when they pass by some evil play or talk, they pass by with dignity' (*al-Furqan*: 72). That is, they pay no heed to it.

The occasion of the revelation of this verse was when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* received the envoys of the Negus, who were a group of priests. When they sat down, he recited the chapter of *Ya Sin* for them, and they were deeply moved by it and all began to weep. Consequently, they believed in Prophet Muhammad. When they left, Abu Jahl confronted them and insulted them, saying, 'I swear by Allah, I have not seen a more

vile delegation than you! He (the Negus) sent you behind my back to bring him news about this man and you listened to him, and wept and embraced Islam! By Allah, we have never seen a more foolish delegation!' Yet they did nothing but turn away from him. This is the meaning of the Lord's Words: 'And when they hear frivolous speech, they turn away from it and say, "For us are our deeds, and for you are your deeds"' (*al-Qasas*: 55). They reacted to vain speech as nobles should react, and turned away from it. In addition to this, they were not silent in the face of this frivolous speech, but rather replied: 'Peace be on you; we do not desire [the company of] the ignorant' (*al-Qasas*: 55). That is, we have our good deeds, which we must perform, and you have your bad deeds, which you must forsake; clearly, all of us have things with which to be busy.

'Peace be on you'; this is either a greeting, as in our custom, or it can be an expression of parting. If you begin a debate with your friend and you see that he will make it into a long one, and that it might become an argument, you say to him, 'Peace be on you' as a way of parting. An example of this is what happened between the Friend of Allah, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and his uncle. After he debated with him and nothing came from the debate, he said, 'Peace be on you. I will ask forgiveness for you from my Lord'. (*Maryam*: 47)

Then, the Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

**You [Prophet] cannot guide everyone you love to the truth;  
it is God who guides whoever He will: He knows best those  
who will follow guidance [56] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 56)**

This is addressed to Prophet Muhammad pertaining his preaching to his uncle, Abu Taleb, who remained upon the religion of his people while protecting the Messenger of Allah because of his family ties to him not because of his love for Islam. There was wisdom in Allah making Abu Taleb remain in disbelief because by this Abu Taleb won the hearts of Quraysh and kept their respect. This is because they were pleased that Abu Taleb did not believe in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and did not give him

more than his right (as a relative), and they were pleased that he remained on the religion of his forefathers. For this reason, they respected the protection he gave his nephew which kept them from harming Prophet Muhammad and protected the cause from being severely damaged.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* very much desired to return this favour of protection—and he did not return favours with worldly offerings, but rather with that which endures for eternity. When Abu Taleb was close to death, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to him, ‘O Uncle, say there is no god but Allah, a word by means of which I will plead your case with Allah on the Day of Resurrection’.

He replied, ‘O nephew, were it not that Quraysh will castigate me for it, saying that I only believed out of dread of death, I will have said them to please you’.<sup>(1)</sup>

But it is narrated that after Abu Taleb passed away, Al-‘Abbas went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said to him, ‘O Muhammad, the word that you sought from your uncle to say, he indeed said it before he died, and I witnessed as much’.<sup>(2)</sup>

Notice here the precise words that Al-‘Abbas *may Allah be pleased with him* used. He did not say that this ‘word’ was ‘there is no god but Allah’, but rather, he called it ‘the word’. Why was this? It was because he himself had not yet entered Islam.

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(1) *Related by Muslim in his Sahih, and by Al-Bayhaqi and by Al-Wahidi, on the authority of Abu Hurayra*

(2) From the proofreader: There is a difference of opinion between the scholars concerning the issue of Abu Taleb accepting Islam. The vast majority of scholars are of the opinion that he did not accept Islam. This is because Muslim in his Sahih narrated that the following verse: ‘Indeed, you do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides those whom He wills. And He knows best those who are amenable to guidance’ (*al-Qasas*: 56) was revealed in relation to Abu Taleb. Moreover, Ibn ‘Abbas related a Hadith which is also narrated in Sahih Muslim and in which he narrated that Prophet Muhammad *peace be upon him* said, ‘Among the inhabitants of the Hellfire Abu Taleb will have the least suffering; he will be wearing two shoes (of fire) which will boil his brain’. (Summary taken from:

<http://islamqa.org/hanafi/daruliftaa-birmingham/87386/was-abu-talib-a-muslim-2>)

We spoke before about the meaning of guidance: 'Indeed, [O Muhammad], you do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills. And He knows best those who are amenable to guidance' (*al-Qasas*: 56). We said that guidance is of two kinds: the guidance of direction, and the guidance of assistance to those who believe in the direction. In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And those who are guided—He increases them in guidance and gives them their righteousness' (*Muhammad*: 17).

That is, they heard the evidence and followed it, and for this reason Allah granted them guidance: the guidance of faith and assistance.

Concerning this, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And as for Thamud, We guided them, but they preferred blindness over guidance' (*Fussilat*: 17).

That is, Allah *Glorified is He* showed them the way: 'but they preferred blindness over guidance', and as a result they were denied the guidance of assistance.

The guidance that is out of the capacity of the Messenger of Allah is found in Allah's Words: 'Indeed, [O Muhammad], you do not guide whom you like' (*al-Qasas*: 56). It is the guidance of assistance, providence and faith, for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* offered everyone the guidance of direction. Allah says: 'O you who have believed, shall I guide you to a transaction that will save you from a painful punishment?' (*as-Saff*: 10). The guidance of direction came first from Allah, and this was passed on by Muhammad, His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالُوا إِن نَّبِيعَ الْهُدَىٰ مَعَكَ نُنْخَطِفُ مِنْ أَرْضِنَا أَوْلَمْ نُمَكِّنْ لَهُمْ حَرَمًا آمِنًا  
يُجْبَىٰ إِلَيْهِ ثَمَرَاتُ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ رِّزْقًا مِنْ لَدُنَّا وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

**They say, 'If we were to follow guidance with you [Prophet], we would be swept from our land.' Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary where every kind of produce is brought, as a provision from Us? But most of them do not comprehend [57] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 57)**

The phrase Allah mentioned: 'If we were to follow the guidance with you, we will be swept from our land' (*al-Qasas*: 57) was uttered by Al-Harith

ibn ‘Uthman ibn Nawfal ibn ‘Abd Manaf. He went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, ‘We know that you have come with the Truth, but we fear that if we believe you and follow you, we will be expelled from our land’. It is clear that he was speaking for his people, who had agreed upon this statement.

They admitted to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he had come with the Truth and that he was rightly guided, but the reason they did not enter Islam is that they might be expelled. They should have used their minds and compared the case of being with Prophet Muhammad upon Truth and guidance while being expelled from their land, and the case of remaining in their disbelief.

The worst that could have happened to them is that people might have seized their wealth and possessions—supposing that this will actually have happened—and the worst that they will have suffered is to lose the temporary delights of this worldly life, delights that, even if they had remained with them, will have been enjoyable to them only as long as they remained in this world. The goodness that you will lose out in this world is limited to the capacity of humans; and this will not harm you in the slightest if you were one of the people who longed for the Hereafter, where you will find goodness that lasts forever and which is commensurate to the capacity of the Bestower of All Good.

As for the case of them remaining upon their disbelief, they will gain only a small enjoyment in this temporal world, and they will have no share of the eternal Hereafter. Tell me, then; which way is better to follow? A rational comparison of the two cases clearly shows that the better thing to do is to follow the way of guidance and Truth that Prophet Muhammad brought.

Furthermore, who said that if you follow the guidance of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* you will be torn from your land and be persecuted? This is why Allah replied to them by telling Prophet Muhammad, ‘Say to them, O Muhammad, “You have lied, for no one will banish you because of your Islam”’. Allah says: ‘Have we not established for them a Safe Sanctuary to which is brought the fruits of all things as provision from Us? But most of them do not know’ (*al-Qasas*: 57). Allah

*Glorified is He* provided for you, yet you disbelieve in Him and associate partners with Him, and you worship idols in ignorance. He gave you a safe life in the confines of His Sacred Sanctuary, and gave you all your life's needs; you dwell in a barren valley, yet fruits from all around are gathered there. Will the One who did all this for you abandon you after you believe in Him and follow the Truth? How could you judge things to be like this?

The meaning of Allah's saying: 'Have we not established for them?' is that we have made them stable and secure therein, as Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere, using the same words: 'And thus did We establish for Yusuf (Joseph) a firm place on earth' (*Yusuf*: 21)? To establish means to make stable.

Allah says: 'a Safe Sanctuary' (*al-Qasas*: 57), even though safety and security is for those who are in the place (not the place itself, as is suggested in the Arabic). But He wanted to make the place itself safe for everyone who entered it to be safe. Even a murderer cannot be punished in the Sanctuary, animals cannot be disturbed or hunted, and plants cannot be uprooted. Even stones are safe in this place: do you not see that they pelt stones with pebbles at the pillars (in the rites of the pilgrimage) outside the Sanctuary, yet inside the Sanctuary, they honour the Black Stone and kiss it?

If we consider the Sanctuary from the time of the Friend of Allah, Ibrahim, we find that there has been a Divine Plan for it, and that the Lord *Glorified is He* prepared it to be a Safe Sanctuary. When Ibrahim *peace be upon him* came to it, Allah relates that he said: 'Our Lord, I have settled some of my descendants in an uncultivated valley near Your Sacred House' (*Ibrahim*: 37).

This means that this place was bereft of all the constituents of life, except air because if there were no crops, this means there was no water. Hajar (Hagar) was at first reluctant to stay in this bleak place; but when she learned that Allah chose it for her, she said, 'Then, He will not forsake us'.<sup>(1)</sup>

She saw for herself that Allah had not forsaken her, for when she needed water for her child and ran in search of it between Safa and Marwa seven times, which was as much as she could manage, she found no water. If she herself had found water, the cause of this will have been her running and

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(1) Related as part of a longer Hadith by Al-Bukhari on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas



searching; but Allah wanted to show her the Truth of her words and confirm for her that He will truly not forsake her, doing so without any material means in order for her to see that her words were true. Allah willed that water will well up from beneath the child's foot when he stamped the ground and cried out of hunger and thirst—and there sprang the well of *Zamzam*.

When Ibrahim *peace be upon him* settled with his family in this bleak place, he wanted it to be a permanent settlement for them, not just a place to rest in the middle of a journey. This is why he said: '...our Lord, that they may establish Prayer. So make hearts among the people incline towards them and provide for them from the fruits that they might be grateful' (*Ibrahim: 37*).

It is as though Ibrahim *peace be upon him* wanted to be sure that his family could live in this place, and that it will be a place dedicated to the worship of Allah, where prayer will never cease to take place. This is the difference between a house of Allah chosen by Allah, and a house of Allah chosen by Allah's slaves.

The house that we build for Allah might be closed except for times of prayer, but the house that Allah chose for Himself is never bereft of people circumambulating and praying at any time of the day and night. Circumambulation only ceases when the Obligatory Prayers are offered; and when they finish, you see the people go straight back to circumambulating.

I saw the Sacred Mosque, one year, when there had been heavy rains and the water had flooded the area of the *Ka'ba* and covered the Black Stone. People were performing the circumambulation by swimming around the *Ka'ba*, and some of them dived under the water to kiss the Black Stone. It was as though the Lord *the Most High* wanted the circumambulation to continue around His Sanctuary, without stopping under any circumstance.

In light of this, we understand Allah's Words: '...Make people's hearts turn to them...' (*Ibrahim: 37*). The verbs *hawa* (fell) and *yahwi* (fall) literally mean: to fall. Things that fall have no choice as to whether they fall or not. Similarly, whoever comes to Allah's House, or brings subsistence to it, will find that something pushes him to go there, without his having any choice in the matter.

We can also understand these words in another way. Any of the Lord's Commandments might be subject to people being too lazy to fulfil them; for some people do not pray and some do not pay the poor-due—except for the pilgrimage, about which Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Proclaim the Pilgrimage to all people. They will come to you on foot and on every kind of swift mount, emerging from every deep mountain pass...' (*al-Hajj*: 27). So, by merely announcing the pilgrimage, people will come. Therefore, a man who is unable to pay for the pilgrimage goes hungry and reduces the expenditure on his family so that he can afford to perform it. It is the only obligation where you find people who are not obliged to do it falling over themselves trying to perform it.

Notice that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* prayed for security for the Holy Place twice: once when he said: 'My Lord, make this land secure...' (*al-Baqara*: 126), that is: make this place a secure city. A secure city can only be established in a place where people are sure that livelihood is secured. No city can be built, even by the disbelievers, unless they feel secured in that place. Thus, the first request was that the place be turned from a barren land to a secure place, just as all cities must be made secure when they are to be built. This indicates a general type of security.

Then he prayed again, saying: 'Lord, make this town safe...' (*Ibrahim*: 35). After Mecca had become a secure city, he prayed for it to be granted extra security which is a special type of security. Allah *Glorified is He* made it an inviolable city, where people are safe, just as animals, plants and even inanimate objects are safe.

Some people have questioned Allah's statement: '...whoever enters it is safe...' (*Al-Imran*: 97). They asked, 'Where is this safety when within *Al-Haram* (the Sacred Mosque) there has occurred violence, slaughter and a terrorising of innocents, as happened in the days of the Karmathians when they entered *Al-Haram*, killed people and stole the Black Stone; and as happened in modern times with the incident of Juhayman (Juhayman ibn Muhammad ibn Sayf Al-Otaybi was a Saudi Arabian religious activist and militant who, in 1979, led the Grand Mosque seizure of the *Masjid Al-Haram* in Mecca to

protest against the Saudi monarchy and the House of Saud), and the slaughter that took place in *Al-Haram* at that time?’

But the statement: ‘...whoever enters it is safe...’ (*Al-‘Imran*: 97) is a sentence that imparts a commandment and an encouragement, as though Allah is saying, ‘Keep safe all that enter the Sacred Mosque!’ It is not expressing a predetermined matter; rather, it is a legal ruling. There is a difference between the two. Predetermined matters must necessarily come to pass, while legal rulings may be obeyed by some and disobeyed by others. Whoever obeys these laws for the Sake of Allah and sincerely wants to abide by His Commandments, should maintain the security and safety of all within the Sacred Mosque. As for those who wish to reject their Lord, they disturb and terrorise people therein.

Another verse that often raises questions of a similar nature is Allah’s Statement: ‘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...’ (*an-Nur*: 26).

They say, ‘Very often, bad men marry good women, and good men marry bad women, and the reality does not correspond to this verse’. We say the same thing here, ‘This is a legal ruling constituting a commandment that can be obeyed or disobeyed. It is not a predetermined matter which must happen exactly as Allah *Glorified is He* has said it will, without any delay’.

Clearly, the meaning of the verse is, ‘If you marry, marry the corrupt to the corrupt and the good to the good, in order for parity to be realised. In this way, they will be able to live together in harmony. If the corrupt man insults his wife, she will be able to respond to him because she is an equal with him. There must be parity between the two, even in bad qualities; otherwise, what will a good woman do with a corrupt man and what will a good man do with a corrupt woman?’

Hence, this verse and its counterparts speak of legal rulings. Although they are phrased as simple statements, they are actually commands. This is similar to when you say about a dead person, in Arabic, ‘*Rahimahu* Allah (Allah had mercy on him)’, using the past tense; yet you do not know whether

Allah *Glorified is He* has shown him mercy or not. It is obviously a supplication for him that Allah *Glorified is He* may grant the deceased His Mercy. Here, we use the past tense in Arabic (which is customarily used when mentioning the deceased) to indicate that we hope he might be shown mercy.

Let us return to Allah's Words: 'Have We not established for them a secure sanctuary...' (*al-Qasas*: 57). We can see evidence of this establishment and security in the story<sup>(1)</sup> of the Elephant when Abraha came to destroy the *Ka'ba*, his army bringing a huge elephant named Mahmoud (the praised one). When one of the Arabs said in the elephant's ear, 'Kneel, Mahmoud, and return home safely', that is, save yourself, 'for you are in Allah's Sacred Land', the elephant immediately knelt as he was told to do.

Then the battle of the flocks of birds took place, pelting Abraha and his men with stones of baked clay reducing them to something similar to an empty field of straw and stubble, where all the corn had been eaten-up. All of this was due to the security that Allah *Glorified is He* had granted Quraysh, the dwellers of His Sanctuary, for the *Ka'ba* to remain their dwelling place. As long as they dwelled in the Sanctuary and the people came to them from all over the world to make pilgrimage, they will continue to be safe among the tribes and no one will dare to attack them or waylay their caravans in their winter and summer journeys. What security could there be more than this, and what can scare them after all this?

The pilgrims brought food and sustenance, and Allah *Glorified is He* speaks the truth: '[He did this] to make the Quraysh feel secure, secure in their winter and summer journeys. So let them worship the Lord of this House, Who provides them with food to ward off hunger and safety to ward off fear' (*Quraysh*: 1-4).

After this safety and security, how could anyone who believed in Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* fear that he will be torn away from his land? It is a baseless fear.

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(1) The story of Abraha attempting to demolish the *Ka'ba*

وَكَمْ أَهْلَكْنَا مِنْ قَرْيَةٍ بَطَرَتْ مَعِيشَتَهَا فَبَلَكَ مَسْكِنُهُمْ  
لَمْ تَسْكُنْ مِنْ بَعْدِهِمْ إِلَّا قَلِيلًا وَكُنَّا نَحْنُ الْوَارِثِينَ

**We have destroyed many a community that once revelled in its wanton wealth and easy living: since then their dwelling places have barely been inhabited – We are the only heir [58]**  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 58)

The phrase ‘how many’ here indicates a large number, as though you have left the question unanswered, thereby implying a multitude. For example, if someone is ungrateful to you and you do not want to list every single favour you have ever done for them, you say, ‘How much have I done for you!’ What you mean is, ‘I will not list everything, I will wait and see what you have to say’. This is because you are sure that the answer will be in your favour, and they will only be able to say, ‘Yes, you have done a lot for me’. Clearly, the phrase ‘how many’ in this verse implies a multitude; and it is presented to the one addressed as an argument against him.

The meaning of: ‘a community’ (*al-Qasas*: 58) is general; that is, anything that could be called a community, from the smallest to the largest. In the expression: ‘...that was once thankless *batirat* for the means they were given to live [a life of wealth and ease]...’ (*al-Qasas*: 58), the word *batirat* (thankless) is used, and from this the word *al-batar* (thanklessness) which means to forget to thank the one who gave you a blessing, is derived. This indicates that Allah *Glorified is He* does not even enter your mind as you enjoy His Blessings. Another meaning for this expression is that these Blessings were used as means to commit sin and disobey the One Who provided them.

One example of *al-batar* (thanklessness) is for a person to look down on a blessing, demean it or fail to appreciate it. For example, a mother might give her son a plate of lentils, which he is tired of eating, and for this reason he refuses to eat it. His mother says to him, ‘You are *btetbattar* (not thankful)?’ That is, ‘Are you receiving our Lord’s Blessings with thanklessness?’ We use this same word in our Egyptian dialect, though it originally comes from Classical Arabic.

As such, it is considered thanklessness to look down on Allah's Blessings and be dissatisfied with them, and to ask for something better than them.

The phrase: 'for the means they were given to live [a life of wealth and ease]' (*al-Qasas*: 58) refers to the means that enabled them to live an affluent life. Next, Allah *the Most High* says: '...since then their dwelling places have barely been inhabited—We are the only heirs' (*al-Qasas*: 58). As long as they were thankless for Allah's Blessings, He will surely take them back from their hands; and if Allah's Blessings are wrested from a town, the people must surely come to ruin or be forced to move away. The term 'barely' means all but a few resided there after their homes had been ruined.

Allah then says: '...We are the only heirs' (*al-Qasas*: 58). Allah *Glorified is He* will inherit their place from them because they did not leave anyone behind to inherit from them. If a place is left without any successor, all its belongings return to Allah *Glorified is He*.

In another verse, the Lord *the Most High* mentions this case more extensively, saying: 'Allah presents the example of a town that was secure and at ease, with provisions coming to it abundantly from all places; but it was ungrateful *kafarat* for Allah's Blessings...' (*an-Nahl*: 112). That is, they wantonly disregarded Allah's Blessings: '...so Allah afflicted it with the garment of famine and fear, for what its people had done' (*an-Nahl*: 112).

The meaning of *kufr* (to be ungrateful or disbelief) is to cover or hide the fact that Allah *Glorified is He* exists. However, the presence of a covering means something is covered. That is, the original, basic premise is that Allah *Glorified is He* exists; but the disbeliever conceals this existence. In this way, disbelief itself is a proof of faith: faith is the original, basic premise, and disbelief is something new and unusual that is introduced to it.

An example of this is our saying that falsehood is one of the forces of Truth. When falsehood emerges, people taste its bitterness and are burned by its fire. Consequently, they return to the Truth and what is right, and seek refuge therein when they are afflicted by calamities. Following the same logic, pain is a means of cure. This is why the most dangerous diseases are those that infiltrate someone without causing them any pain, resulting in them not becoming aware of it until it is widespread and very dangerous and

difficult to treat. For this reason, we call such diseases—we seek refuge with Allah from them—‘malignant diseases’.

Similarly, in Allah’s Words: ‘But it was ungrateful for *kafarat* Allah’s Blessings...’ (*an-Nahl*: 112) using the word *kafarat* which is derived from *kufrr*, there is an implicit proof of the existence of blessings. They still *kafaru* (denied) the Blessings, that is, they covered them, either by failing or neglecting to ponder over where they came from, or by keeping them from those who deserved them and withholding them from those who were unable to procure them for themselves. Because of this, Allah *Glorified is He* wrested these Blessings from them and prevented them from enjoying them, although they had the physical ability to work for them.

When some things are always available, they become monotonous. It may be that they understood that these things came to them automatically and naturally. When Allah *Glorified is He* took His Blessings from them and put an end to this monotony, He did this to make them understand that the monotony of obligations makes the reason and wisdom behind these obligations less effective. How is this?

We say that the Lord forbade certain things for us and allowed other things. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* forbade us from drinking wine, and now we have reached the point where we not only do not drink it, but we do not even think of it for one moment. It has become a monotonous habit for us. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to make religious obligations continuous for mankind; that is why man should not become accustomed to performing them as habits. This is why Allah breaks the monotony of this habit through, for example, the fast in Ramadan.

During *Ramadan*, He forbids you that which was permissible for you all the year and that to which you had become accustomed. Ramadan comes and with it the responsibility of fasting, and you are suddenly forbidden to eat that which you had just eaten the day before. In this way, the love of worship remains kindled and the slaves of Allah *Glorified is He* continue to yearn for it. Moreover, the religious obligations make them more disciplined.

After this, the Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the punishment for being ungrateful for His Blessings: ‘So Allah afflicted it with the garment of famine

and fear...’ (*an-Nahl*: 112). Famine has two manifestations: first, the stomach complains; and then, if hunger continues, the body becomes weak. All its organs experience pain and taste the misery of hunger. Allah *Glorified is He* wants to indicate to us the encompassing nature of this pain, and for this reason He compares it to clothing that encloses the whole body and envelops it from all sides.

This is Allah’s Way with wicked communities. He also says:

وَمَا كَانَ رَبُّكَ مُهْلِكَ الْقُرَىٰ حَتَّىٰ يَبْعَثَ فِي أُمِّهَا رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْهِمْ  
ءَايَاتِنَا وَمَا كُنَّا مُهْلِكِي الْقُرَىٰ إِلَّا وَأَهْلُهَا ظَالِمُونَ ﴿٥٩﴾

**Your Lord would never destroy towns without first raising a messenger in their midst to recite Our messages to them, nor would We destroy towns unless their inhabitants were evildoers [59] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 59)**

Clearly, we have to be taught the Message, and a Messenger has to come to tell us, ‘Do this and do not do that’. Thus, if punishment is inflicted upon the disbelievers, it is inflicted justly—after they have been clearly warned. Allah *Glorified is He* does not leave people to sin in heedlessness and then say, ‘That is all forbidden’.

We said before that the law states that there can be no punishment without a prohibition, and there can be no prohibition without a text, and there can be no text without an announcement. Allah *Glorified is He* never destroys a wicked community except as a punishment for what they had done.

Communities are of varying sizes: a *naj*’ means a place where a single family lives; a *kafr* means a place where a few families live, like a hamlet; then a *qarya* (village) and then an ‘*umm al-qura*’ (literally mother of the villages) which is a town or the capital. The Quran was revealed to an essentially nomadic people living an itinerant life, living in tents and travelling from one grazing land to another. They used the expression ‘*umm al-qura*’ to refer to a place in which there were villages and where there were available provisions that were not found in smaller settlements, just as today people in the countryside buy their needs from the district capital. It is as though the city is a mother to the villages in that it cares and provides for the smaller settlements around it.



Next, the Lord says:

وَمَا أُوتِيتُمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ فَمَتَّعُ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا وَزَيَّنَّهَا  
وَمَا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ وَأَبْقَى أَفَلَا تَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٠﴾

**Whatever things you have been given for the life of this world are merely [temporary] gratification and vanity: that which is with God is better and more lasting – will you not use your reason? [60] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 60)**

The word ‘whatever’ here refers to any of life’s needs and luxuries. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...is [only for] the [temporary] enjoyment of the worldly life and its adornment...’ (*al-Qasas*: 60). But however grand worldly enjoyment is, it is a short-lived enjoyment, as Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: ‘...Say to them, “Little is the enjoyment in this world...”’ (*an-Nisa*: 77). Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* wants from us that we do not become absorbed with these enjoyments or make them our goal because remaining alive to enjoy them is uncertain, and our enjoyment of them depends on our own activity and effort.

We said before that any worldly blessing will come to an end either by leaving you or by you leaving it. Your length of your life in this world is not equal to the length of the life of the Hereafter. Rather, the length of your life is only the period of time you remain in it; no matter what worldly gains you achieve—there is no escape from death. That is why our Lord shows us another life: a life of endurance and certainty, whose blessings will never leave you or will you leave them.

Next, Allah *the Most High* says: ‘...that which is with Allah is better and more lasting—will you not use your intellect?’ (*al-Qasas*: 60) It is: ‘...better...’ (*al-Qasas*: 60) because its blessings do not depend on your effort, but rather, they depend on the Omnipotent Power, Bestowal and Grace of Allah *Glorified is He*. And it is: ‘...more lasting...’ (*al-Qasas*: 60) because it is eternal and will never end. If a reasonable person were to compare the enjoyment of this world with the enjoyment of the Hereafter, he will surely choose the Hereafter.

For this reason, the Companion whom Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* informed about the reward of a martyr and who saw with

certitude that there was nothing between him and paradise except his being slain in the Cause of Allah, threw some dates he was carrying in his hand aside—seeing that the time it takes to eat them came between him and this goal—and he rushed into battle to gain martyrdom.<sup>(1)</sup> Why? This is because he compared the enjoyment of this world to the enjoyment of the Hereafter.

When the Lord *Glorified is He* encourages this comparison to be made by the disbelievers and the believers, He says: ‘Say, “Do you [O disbelievers] expect something other than one of the two best things to happen to us? ...”’ (*at-Tawba*: 52) Either we will defeat you, abase you and take the goods you possess, or we will gain martyrdom and move on to that which is better than what we leave behind. But for the disbelievers: ‘But we expect Allah to inflict punishment on you, either from Himself or at our hands...’ (*at-Tawba*: 52). That is, do not expect anything to come to us except goodness, and we expect nothing for you but evil.

Elsewhere, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Yet you [people] prefer the life of this world, even though the Hereafter is better and more lasting.’ (*al-A'la*: 16-17) This is why He ends the verse we are discussing by saying: ‘Will you not use your intellect?’ (*al-Qasas*: 60) If the intellect were to compare this world with the Hereafter, it will surely choose the Hereafter.

Then, the Lord *the Most High* says:

أَفَمَنْ وَعَدْنَاهُ وَعْدًا حَسَنًا فَهُوَ لَاقِيهِ كَمَنْ مَنَعْنَاهُ مَنَعًا  
الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا ثُمَّ هُوَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ مِنَ الْمُحْضَرِينَ ﴿٦١﴾

**Can the person who will see the fulfillment of the good promise  
We gave him be compared to someone We have given some  
enjoyments for this worldly life but who, on the Day of  
Resurrection, will be summoned? [61] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 61)**

This verse offers an explanation and emphasises what came before it. Allah’s saying: ‘...the good promise...’ (*al-Qasas*: 61) indicates a promise of some coming good. If your equal promises you something good, it will

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

match his own capabilities; but it might be that circumstances do not allow him to keep his promise at all. By contrast, if the promise is from Allah *Glorified is He* He will fulfil it according to His capabilities to give; and His promises are never broken: ‘...Who could be more faithful to his promise than Allah?’ (*at-Tawba*: 111) Thus, He says: ‘...will see the fulfillment of the good promise We gave him’ (*al-Qasas*: 60), that is, without doubt, ‘...be compared to someone We have given some enjoyments of this worldly life...’ (*al-Qasas*: 60) which will without doubt come to an end, ‘...but who, on the Day of Resurrection, will be *muhdareen* (summoned)’ (*al-Qasas*: 61), that is, to receive chastisement.

This word *muhdareen* (summoned) is only used in the Quran to refer to chastisement. Perhaps the one who initiated the use of the word *muhdar* from the same root and which means ‘court usher’ had this in mind when he did so; for a court usher never brings anything good.

Elsewhere, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘They claim that He has kinship with the jinn, yet the jinn themselves know that they will be *muhdaroon* (summoned). Allah is far above what they attribute to Him’ (*as-Saffat*: 158). Allah also relates one in paradise saying: ‘Had it not been for the grace of my Lord, I will have been among those summoned [and taken to Hell] (*muhdareen*)’ (*as-Saffat*: 57).

Then Allah *the Most High* says emphasising this summoning on the Day of Resurrection in order for the disbeliever not to think he can escape:


 وَيَوْمَ يُنَادِيهِمْ فَيَقُولُ أَيْنَ شُرَكَائِيَ الَّذِينَ كُنْتُمْ تَزْعُمُونَ

**The Day will come when God will call them,  
saying, ‘Where now are those you allege are My  
partners?’ [62] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 62)**

The question here is posed to those who associate partners with Allah, not to those whom they associated. The phrase ‘The Day will come...’ (*al-Qasas*: 62) is in the accusative case in Arabic, as it is an adverb of time. An appropriate verb must be implied here that is the verse means, ‘Mention the day when Allah will call unto them’. The one being addressed here is

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. However, to whom will Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* mention this? He will mention it to those who disbelieve in this day—the Day of Resurrection.

The verse gives us a glimpse of one of the events that will occur on this day: the Day of Calamity, after which there will be no calamity; the Day of Certainty which cannot be avoided; the Day of the Deafening Cry which will deafen the ears of those who did not prepare for it in the worldly life; the Day of the Overwhelming Event which will overwhelm the people; and the Day of Judgement when only religion will bring any benefit.

The Lord mentions this for two reasons: Firstly, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had been rebuked, attacked, scorned, and treated with derision. His opponents had exposed him to all manner of ill treatment; they had plotted and schemed against him, worked magic on him and so on.

When a prophetic mission encounters all this villainy, know that it has only been met with such a response because it means to bring an end to corruption that brings benefit to those who fear reform. This is because this prophetic mission will rob them of their advantages, the satisfaction of their passions, their prestige, their self-importance, and their oppression—and so, of course, they oppose it.

For this reason, we find that many Westerners see the might of Islam by examining the villainy and enmity of its opponents. They say, ‘If this religion had not been bent against their corruption, they will not have conspired against it; if it had been an insignificant matter, they will have left it to be eliminated by the passage of time. The fact is, they knew it was the Truth that will eliminate their falsehood and bring an end to their tyranny’.

The Lord *Glorified is He* commanded His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to recall that day: remind himself of it and remind his people, for them to bear it in mind; if they heard about the hardship and strife of this day, perhaps they will look at themselves and repent to Allah *Glorified is He*. The purpose behind Allah mentioning this is not to frighten them, but rather to warn them for them not to fall into disbelief that leads them to such a place. It is similar to the situation when you tell your son about the grave consequences of idleness in his studies and you warn him

that he might fail in order that he will change his ways and start to look for ways to succeed.

Furthermore, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘The Day will come when Allah will call them...’ (*al-Qasas*: 62). He called to them in this world, saying, ‘O People! O Sons of Adam!’ Yet, they ignored this and rejected His call. However, on that day, He will call them with a call they cannot ignore because: ‘Who has control today? Allah, the One, the All Powerful’ (*Ghafir*: 16). It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is reminding them of this day for them to pay heed and change their ways.

Secondly, the verse is a consolation for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to whom his Lord is saying, ‘Do not despair because of what they do to you, and do not be saddened by their plots and their obstinacy; for I will deal with them’. One can comprehend the secret of this psychological consolation and its impact on the soul of the oppressed and the wronged. It is like when your son complains to you that his brother has hit him or bullied him, and to console him you say, ‘Just you wait, I will sort him out’. The child will be calmed by hearing that justice will be done, and he will feel happier. Likewise, when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard the consequences that his enemies will face for what they had done, it consoled him and made it easier for him to bear what he had to bear.

The content of this call will be: ‘Where are those you alleged were My partners?’ (*al-Qasas*: 62) He does not only say ‘My partners’ and stop, but adds: ‘you alleged’. This is because Allah *Glorified is He* is one and has no associates. These so-called ‘associates’ of His existed only in these people’s minds; the people say, ‘Making allegations is a way of lying’. Therefore, they will find no answer to the question: ‘Where are those you alleged were My partners?’ (*al-Qasas*: 62) If these associates were with them, they will have said say, ‘These are the ones who led us astray, and therefore punish them, O Lord, twice over!’ However, they will not answer the question which shows that these associates did not actually exist. These polytheists will be dumbfounded, unable to answer, as Allah *Glorified is He* tells us: ‘All arguments will seem obscure to them on that Day...’ (*al-Qasas*: 66).

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ الَّذِينَ حَقَّ عَلَيْهِمُ الْقَوْلُ رَبَّنَا هَؤُلَاءِ الَّذِينَ أَغْوَيْنَا أَغْوَيْنَهُمْ كَمَا  
 غَوَيْنَا تَبَرَّأْنَا إِلَيْكَ مَا كَانُوا إِيَّانَا يَعْبُدُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

**And those [ringleaders] against whom the verdict will be passed will say, ‘Our Lord, these are the ones we caused to deviate. We caused them to deviate as we ourselves deviated, but now we disown them before You: they did not really serve us’ [63] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 63)**

The ones speaking here are the ‘associates’ who led the polytheists astray and deluded them. The phrase ‘*haqqa alaihim*’ (against who...will be passed) in the verse refers to the verdict being firm, certain and inevitable; there is no way it can be removed from them, as Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: ‘Our Lord’s Sentence on us is just and we must all taste the punishment’ (*as-Saffat*: 31). He also says: ‘The verdict will be given against them because of their wrongdoings: they will not speak’. (*an-Naml*: 85)

However, what is the meaning of the word *qawl* (‘verdict’, lit. ‘saying’) that shall be firm, certain and will be passed against them? This word will be, ‘Everyone has a place with Me in Paradise, if they believe; and everyone has a place in Hell, if they disbelieve’. What did the ‘associates’ say? They said: ‘Our Lord, those are the ones we led astray. We led them astray as we ourselves were astray...’ (*al-Qasas*: 63). Glory be to Allah! Now you say, ‘Our Lord’, acknowledging His Lordship? Allah *Glorified is He* replied to Pharaoh when he said something similar: ‘Now? And you had always been a rebel and a troublemaker!’ (*Yunus*: 91)

Now you acknowledge the Truth after your free will has been stripped from you and you have no control even over your own bodies and limbs! Your hand with which you used to strike, the foot upon which you used to walk and your tongue... they are all out of your control now because they are now in the Control of Allah *Glorified is He*. The Lord *the Most High* says: ‘On the Day when their own tongues, hands, and feet will testify against them about what they have done’. (*an-Nur*: 24)

His Words: ‘Those are the ones we led astray...’ (*al-Qasas*: 63) refer to the polytheists. His Words: ‘We led them astray as we ourselves were astray...’ (*al-Qasas*: 63) means: in order for both of us to be the same and this is why we led them astray, in order for them to lose out too. The people of falsehood always try their best to lure the people of Truth to join them in falsehood, in order for the people of Truth to be like them. This issue shows us the psychological reasoning inside any corrupt person when he sees someone who is virtuous and upright and does not join him in his corruption and iniquity. He does not want to be in perdition alone; why should others be different from him? Read Allah’s Words: ‘They will dearly like you to reject faith as they themselves have done, to be on the same footing [as them]...’ (*an-Nisa*: 89).

Do you not see that the people of falsehood, corruption, and iniquity mock and vilify the people of Truth in order for the people of Truth to become disinclined to virtue and righteousness, and to tempt them into their ways of falsehood? This continues until no one who practises his religion and adheres to his Lord’s Guidance is safe from their tongues, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘The wicked used to laugh at the believers. When the believers passed by them they used to wink at one another’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-30).

If only things stopped at mere winks and backbiting; these people go even further, deriving sport and play from their mockery of the people of faith and righteousness: ‘And when they returned to their people, they used to return *fakeheen* ( jesting)’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 31). The word *fakeheen* (jesting) means: happy and delighted with what they had done to the people of righteousness, showing that they were pleased with this state of affairs and that it satisfied something in their spiteful, diseased souls.

By contrast, the believer naturally loves to be dignified and to refrain from rising to these people’s bait, and for this reason his Lord *Glorified is He* defends him, saying to him, ‘Do not be sad for We shall avenge you and turn their mockery back upon them, making them the object of laughter and ridicule on an everlasting day in which their chastisement will be unending’.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘So today the believers are laughing at the disbelievers as they [the believers] sit on couches, gazing around. Have the

disbelievers [not] been repaid for their deeds?’ (*al-Mutaffifin*: 34-36) It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is making His believing slaves feel satisfied, saying to them, ‘Does their fate please you? Have We proved able to requite them for what they did to you?’ Yes, O Lord! The disbelievers’ mockery of the people of faith in this fleeting world of falsehood has become mockery at their expense in the Eternal Abode of Truth, an eternal, unending mockery.

Allah’s Words: ‘...We led them astray as we ourselves were astray...’ (*al-Qasas*: 63) mean: in order for us to be the same, neither of us better than the other. This is why Satan caused Adam *peace be upon him* to err; when he sinned and was expelled from Allah’s Mercy and the purity he enjoyed along with the angels, he wanted to take Adam *peace be upon him* and all his progeny to the same destination. He could not bear being doomed alone while Adam *peace be upon him* and his progeny enjoyed Allah’s Mercy and Favour.

Therefore Satan—may Allah curse him—was not content with his progeny leading Adam’s progeny astray; rather, he asked Allah *Glorified is He* to reprieve him until the Day of Resurrection for him, the great teacher, to lead them astray himself. It was as though he was worried that his progeny will not accomplish this mission well enough, and therefore he took it upon himself to do task, saying: ‘And then Satan said, “Because You have put me in the wrong, I will lie in wait for them all on Your straight path”’ (*al-A’raf*: 16).

Some people understand that Allah’s Words: ‘But Satan said, “Give me respite until the Day people are raised from the dead”, and Allah replied, “You have respite”’ (*al-A’raf*: 14-15) mean that Allah *Glorified is He* granted Satan what he asked for. But the phrase: ‘...You have respite’ (*al-A’raf*: 15) was not a response to his request; it was nothing more than a confirmation of something that was bound to happen even before Satan asked for it. Clearly, this means that Satan’s request was meaningless because he was already destined to be amongst those granted a respite. We may ask why? They said it is because Allah *Glorified is He* wanted Satan—who led Adam *peace be upon him* astray and caused him to fall from Paradise—to always keep reminding Adam’s progeny that he was the one who led their father astray.



As for the words of the ones the polytheists associated with Allah: ‘Our Lord, those (*ha’ula’*)’ are the ones we led astray. We led them astray as we ourselves were astray...’ (*al-Qasas*: 63), let us take a moment to consider the word *ha’ula’* (those) in the verse. This is a pronoun that refers to pluralities, both of men and of women. In Arabic, the word *ha’ula’* (those) is composed of the component ‘*ha*’ which is used to draw the person’s attention, and the component *ula’a*’ which is a demonstrative pronoun, as is the case with other Arabic words such as *hadha* (this, masculine form), *hadhihi* (this, feminine form), *hadhani* (these, masculine dual form), and *hatani* (these, feminine dual form). The component *ha* in all these words is used to attract the attention of the listeners and to alert them that you are speaking in order for them to pay attention and not miss what you are saying.

This is the case when you are speaking to your equal because he needs to be alerted, whereas when you are addressing your Lord *Glorified is He* it is inappropriate to use such an expression, which is used to draw the attention of the listener that the Polytheists will use. Since they said ‘Our Lord’, it is bad manners for them to then say *ha’ula’* (those). Do they really think Allah’s attention needs to be alerted to call Him like this?!

On the other hand, we notice the good manners employed by Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* as the Quran mentions: ‘[Allah said], “Musa (Moses), what has made you come ahead of your people in such haste?” He said, “Those (*ula’a*)’ are following in my footsteps. I rushed to You, Lord, to please you”’ (*Ta Ha*: 83-84). Musa used the word *ula’a*’ (those), without the prefix *ha*, which is used to draw attention, out of good manners with his Lord *Glorified is He*.

Notice also that whenever the disbelievers address Allah *Glorified is He* they use this word *ha’ula’* (those) with the prefix *ha*. Allah *the Most High* relates their words: ‘Our Lord, it is those (*ha’ula’*) who led us astray...’ (*al-A’raf*: 38). In another verse Allah states that they said: ‘Our Lord, those (*ha’ula’*) are the partners we used to invoke beside You...’ (*an-Nahl*: 86).

As for the believer, he finds it inappropriate to try to alert Allah’s Attention. More than that, a believer should not even need to do this with another believer because the believer should always be alert.

In the verse we are discussing, the ones the polytheists associated with Allah will then say: 'But now we disown them before You; they did not really worship us' (*al-Qasas*: 63). Now they are turning back; just as they said earlier: 'Our Lord', they now say: 'But now we disown them before You...' (*al-Qasas*: 63); but it is far-fetched that this disavowal could now avail them by any means since its time has already passed, as has the time of free will and moral responsibility. Now it is the time of reckoning, there is no more free will and choice. In this, they are akin to Pharaoh, when Allah *Glorified is He* says to him: 'Now, and you had always been a rebel and a troublemaker!' (*Yunus*: 91)

As for the saying of the 'associates': 'They did not really worship us' (*al-Qasas*: 63), it indicates that the 'associates' will say, 'We did not have the power to force you to worship us or strong enough arguments to convince you to do this; you were only waiting for just a signal from us', just as their leader, Satan, said: 'I had no power over you except to call you and you responded to my call, so do not blame me; blame yourselves...' (*Ibrahim*: 22).

These polytheists really worshipped their own selves, since their 'associates' were nothing more than idols, or the like, who spoke no words of guidance nor called people to worship them. What did the sun or the stars say to those who worshipped them? What did they command them to do? What did they forbid them from doing?

They were gods which did not have any systems of guidance or moral responsibility; and this is what the polytheists desired. By contrast, the one who bothers people with the matter of faith in the One God Who requires them to live by certain moral responsibilities, and Who delivers to them commandments and prohibitions, places a barrier between the human soul and its desires and keeps a tight rein of it, forcing it to stay within prescribed boundaries.

In this way, '...they did not really worship us' (*al-Qasas*: 63); rather, they worshipped themselves as well as their desires and lusts. It is very easy for a person to worship gods who demand nothing at all from him, as in such a case he is free to live as he pleases. This is what made the worship of these gods so popular.

That is why the Lord *Glorified is He* wants mankind to realise—as a proof against them—that it is their own lower selves that are the primary cause of their vain desires. If this was not the case and it was all down just to Satan’s whisperings, then who led Satan astray in the first place? In the same vein, a poet said:

When Iblis (Satan) disobeyed,  
Who was it that whispered to him?

In essence, it is all down to the arrogance and desire of the lower self; Satan does nothing but tempt it in order for it to fall. In a Hadith, Prophet Muhammad said, ‘When *Ramadan* comes, the doors of Paradise are opened and the doors of Hell are closed, and the devils are put in chains’.<sup>(1)</sup>

As long as the devils are chained, this means that they can have no influence on human beings. Allah *Glorified is He* knows that we all try to blame all our sins on Satan, and therefore it is as though He is saying, ‘The devils have been shackled and chained, so who can delude you and tempt you while they are chained?’ Clearly, it is your lower selves that whisper to you. Here we say, ‘Every sin that you commit during *Ramadan* has nothing to do with Satan; it comes from the desires of your lower self’.

We showed before how to discern whether a sin came from Satan or from the base desires of the lower self. If the sin is the only thing in your mind resulting in you not thinking of anything else, know that it is from your own self. By contrast, if you fail to commit a certain sin but you think of committing another, know that it is from Satan. This is because Satan wants you to sin anyhow and in anyway, and as a result he is happy to lead you from one sin to another if he is able to make you commit it. The lower self is different, however, for it wants something specific and will accept nothing else.

Then the Lord *the Most High* says:

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(1) Narrated by Ahmad and An-Nasa’i

وَقِيلَ ادْعُوا شُرَكَاءَكُمْ فَدَعَوْهُمْ فَلَمْ يَسْتَجِيبُوا لَهُمْ وَرَأَوُا  
 الْعَذَابَ لَوْ أَنَّهُمْ كَانُوا يَهْتَدُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

**It will then be said to them, ‘Now call those you worshipped as partners,’ and they will call them but receive no answer.**

**They will see the suffering and wish they had followed guidance [64] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 64)**

Allah *the Most High* had already called them, saying: ‘...‘where are those you alleged were My partners?’’ (*al-Qasas*: 62) That is, only in their allegations, for Allah *Glorified is He* has no associates. Here, He says to them: ‘...“Now call your partners”, and they will call them but will receive no answer; and they will see the suffering. If only they had followed guidance’ (*al-Qasas*: 64). He says *shuraka’ukum* (your partners), not *shuraka’i* (My partners), even though the polytheists deemed them to be associates of Allah *Glorified is He*.

But does the phrase ‘your partners’ mean they claim that they are divine? No, because the polytheists followed them but did not worship them. Then, what does ‘your partners’ mean? The scholars say that the construction that associates one noun with another in Arabic has three possible meanings. It either means ‘of’ or ‘from’, as in ‘an *ardeb*, a unit of measurement of wheat’; or it means ‘in’, as in ‘plotting in the night’; or it means ‘belonging to’, indicating possession, as in, ‘Zayd’s pen’, that is, ‘the pen of Zayd’.

Hence, the meaning of ‘your partners’ in the verse is that the partners were from the polytheists or of the same nature as them, that is, they were not distinct from the polytheists in any way. Yet a god must be of a higher nature, for if it is of the same nature as them, it is therefore their equal—and in such a case it is not fit to be their god.



The meaning of ‘Now call your partners...’ (*al-Qasas*: 64) is ‘Call them to come and save you, and intercede on your behalves’, as you used to say: ‘Those are our intercessors with Allah...’ (*Yunus*: 18), and as you used also to say: ‘We only worship them because they bring us nearer to Allah’ (*az-Zumar*: 3). Hence, call upon them that they might bring you closer to Allah and intercede for you. Someone who is able to do this must surely have a high position with Allah that of which he is sure. Yet, do these

‘partners’ have this status with Allah *Glorified is He*? How could they, when they cannot do as much for their own selves?

Allah *the Most High* then says: ‘and they will call them...’ (*al-Qasas*: 64), ‘O our partners! You, who told us such-and-such, help us!’ The result will be: ‘...but will receive no answer...’ (*al-Qasas*: 64) because they will be busy enough with their own affairs. Allah *Glorified is He* then says: ‘...They will see the suffering. If only they had followed guidance’ (*al-Qasas*: 64). That is, if they had followed Allah’s Guidance and the guidance of His Messenger Mohammad; had believed that the torment Allah had warned them of was real and true; and had believed that they could not avoid it, this will not have happened to them and they will not have met this end.

It may also mean, when they see—in the Hereafter—that this torment is real, they will wish that they had followed guidance.

Then, the Lord *the Most High* says:


وَيَوْمَ نَنَادُهُمْ فَيَقُولُ مَاذَا أَجَبْتُمُ الْمُرْسَلِينَ  

فَعِمِّيَتْ عَلَيْهِمُ الْأَنْبَاءُ يَوْمَئِذٍ فَهُمْ لَا يَتَسَاءَلُونَ

**On that Day He will call them, saying, ‘How did you respond to My messengers?’ [65] All arguments will seem obscure to them on that Day; they will not be able to consult one another [66] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 65-66)**

Here again, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘He [Allah] will call unto them...’ (*al-Qasas*: 65). What is the purpose of all these calls? It is to censure, rebuke, and deride them and all that they worshipped and followed instead of Allah *Glorified is He*. The content of this call will be: ‘How did you respond to My Messengers?’ (*al-Qasas*: 65) To ‘respond’ means to agree to someone’s requests; so how did you respond to them, after you believed in Allah *Glorified is He*? Did you accept the rulings they brought? Did you learn from them true self-evident knowledge?

This is meant to make them speechless because they will not be able to answer even if they tried to. Consequently, they will be ashamed and humiliated. After this, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘All arguments will seem obscure to

them...' (*al-Qasas*: 66). That is, they will have no recourse to arguments and excuses; they will be blind to them and not see them, and: 'They will not be able to consult one another' (*al-Qasas*: 66). They will have nothing to do but be silent, as the saying states, 'The best answer for what one dislikes is silence'. Moreover, it is a time, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'when no friend will ask about his friend' (*al-Ma'arij*: 10).

They will not be able to consult one another because they will all be equal in ignorance and partners in misguidance and all of them will be busy enough with their own affairs. Allah *the Most High* tells us: 'The Day man will flee from his own brother, his mother, his father, his wife, his children; each of them will be absorbed in concerns of their own on that Day' (*'Abasa*: 34-37).

Just as the polytheists will be asked: 'How did you respond to My Messengers?' (*al-Qasas*: 65), the Quran informs us elsewhere that the Messengers will be asked: 'On the Day when Allah assembles all the Messengers... "What response did you receive?"...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 109). That is: how did people respond to you with regards to what you taught the people, concerning: firstly, the knowledge of the basic matters of faith, and secondly, the knowledge of the sacred rulings: how did the people respond?

Notice the polite manners of the Messengers here, and the depth of their understanding when answering Allah's Question. They know exactly how their people responded to them; some of them believed were devoted to serving their cause, made sacrifices and were martyred, and others disbelieved and opposed them. Yet, despite all this, they will say: 'We do not have that knowledge: You alone know things that cannot be seen' (*al-Ma'ida*: 109).

How could they say: 'We do not have that knowledge' when they indeed do know? The scholars say it is because they are not certain whether those who believed did so with conviction or not; for they judge only according to the outward appearance of people, while people's inner states are known only to Allah *Glorified is He*. It is as though they are saying, 'O Lord, You are asking about true acceptance, not false pretence, and we do not know with certitude whether our peoples' acceptance was true or not, whereas you know all hidden things'.

In this way, they made the Lord *Glorified is He* the true arbitrator, the final judge and the sole authority in respect to determining Divine Justice, which will be announced for all to witness: ‘Who has control today?’ (*Ghafir*: 16)

In Arabic, a question is posed either in order to gain some knowledge, as when a student asks his teacher, or else in order to emphasise something that is already known, such as when a teacher asks his students in order that he can come to the conclusion on his own. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘On that Day neither mankind nor jinn will be asked about their sins’ (*ar-Rahman*: 39). That is, they will not be asked for the purpose of gathering information because of course Allah *Glorified is He* already knows.

Allah *Glorified is He* also says: ‘And stop them, for they shall be questioned’ (*as-Saffat*: 24). That is, they will be asked in order that they can confirm what they have done. Even though Allah’s Words on the Day of Resurrection is proof enough, for it cannot be denied, He will still ask them for them to confirm and bear witness to their own actions.

The Lord *Glorified is He* tells us that He will make the events of the Day of Resurrection horrific for the disbelievers not because He hates them, but because He wants them to picture this horrific image now for them to be impelled to repent and change their ways; this is because He has opened the door of repentance for them, and He is their Merciful Lord.

In the same vein, in a Qudsi Hadith, Prophet Muhammad said, ‘The earth said, “O Lord, allow me to collapse upon the Son of Adam, for he enjoys Your blessings but neglects to thank You”. The mountains said, “O Lord, allow me to fall upon the Son of Adam, for he enjoys Your blessings but neglects to thank You”. Thus He *the Almighty* said, “Leave Me and My Creation, for had you created them, you will have been merciful to them. Leave them, for if they repent, I am their Beloved; and if they do not repent, I am their Physician”’.<sup>(1)(2)</sup> That is, I sometimes give them incentives, and sometimes give them warnings. I make them yearn for paradise and I make them fear Hell, and I open for them the door of repentance. The door of

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(1) Ahmad narrated the like of this in his *Musnad*.

(2) From the proofreader: This is not a Hadith. See: <http://dorar.net/spreadH/465>.

repentance being opened is not only a Mercy from Allah *Glorified is He* to the one who repents, but is also a Mercy to everyone who suffers from the disobedience of those who sin.

If the door of repentance was closed in the face of the sinner, he will despair and become completely unscrupulous. Moreover, the society will suffer by his presence as long as he lives. Consequently, the open door of repentance is a mercy to those who repent a mercy to society and a mercy to all humanity. Moreover, it is a mercy to the sinner and to those completely immersed in sin.

Next, Allah *the Most High* says:


 فَأَمَّا مَنْ تَابَ وَآمَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا فَغَسَّيْنَا أَنْ يَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُفْلِحِينَ

**Yet anyone who has repented, believed, and done  
good deeds can hope to find himself among the  
successful [67] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 67)**

Why does Allah use the word ‘may’ that indicates a hope, after having said: ‘...who has repented, believed and done good deeds’ (*al-Qasas*: 67)? Why does He not say, ‘... [he] will find himself among the successful’, making felicity certain for him? It is said that it is because he may have repented, but it is not sure he will continue to repent in order to attain success. Another meaning might be that when Allah *Glorified is He* says ‘may’, the meaning is certainty. We said before that expressions of hope have different levels: hoping for something from someone who is present is stronger than hoping for something from one who is absent. And hoping for something from Allah *Glorified is He* is the strongest form of hope. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘...soon your Lord may raise you to a [highly] praised status’ (*al-Isra*’: 79).

What hope is stronger than a hope from Allah *Glorified is He*? Clearly, the word ‘may’ expresses hope when it comes from someone who is unable to attain what he hopes for. Yet, it is a certainty when it comes from One Who is able to do this: Allah, the true Lord.



After that, Allah *the Most High* says:

وَرَبُّكَ يَخْلُقُ مَا يَشَاءُ وَيَخْتَارُ مَا كَانَ لَهُمُ الْخِيَرَةُ  
سُبْحَانَ اللَّهِ وَتَعَالَى عَمَّا يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٨﴾

**Your Lord creates what He pleases and chooses those He will – they have no choice – so glory be to God, and may He be exalted above the partners they ascribe to Him! [68]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 68)**

From the previous verses, we expected that the context will tell us of the torment the polytheists will find in the Hereafter; but the verse says: ‘Your Lord creates what He pleases and chooses those He wills...’ (*al-Qasas*: 68). It is as though Allah is saying, ‘I know what is best and I know how to relieve you of their evil. Let me create whatever I will and choose what I will. I am the Lord, who has sworn to educate my subjects with that which will lead them to fulfil their purpose’.

Allah’s subjects are of two kinds, believers, and disbelievers. The believers will assuredly suffer because of the actions of the disbelievers. This suffering will continue as long as the disbeliever remains in his disbelief. For this reason, he has been given the possibility of repentance, and if he turns in repentance, it is accepted from him. This is the first way the believer is relieved.

The meaning of the phrase: ‘They have no choice’ (*al-Qasas*: 68) is, ‘You have no say in the matter, then let me choose for you; after that, follow what I have chosen for you’. Another possible meaning is that this verse: ‘Your Lord creates what He pleases and chooses those He wills...’ (*al-Qasas*: 68) is an answer to what they said: ‘And they said, “Why was this Quran not sent down to a distinguished man from either of the two cities?”’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) By this, they referred to Al-Walid ibn Al-Mughira or 'Urwa ibn Mas'ud Ath-Thaqafi. Allah *Glorified is He* replied to them by saying: ‘Are they the ones who portion out the Mercy of your Lord? We are the ones who portion out between them their livelihood in this world and We have raised some of them above others in rank...’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 32).

How could they hope to be, themselves, the ones who choose how mercy is distributed when it is Allah who distributed their means of livelihood among


them in the life of this world, making one-man rich, another poor, another weak and another strong. In the affairs of this worldly life, Allah *Glorified is He* arranged things for them as He willed; how could they desire to control the affairs concerned with the Hereafter and Allah's Mercy, apportioning it wherever they willed? Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'They have no choice', that is, they have no choice in the affairs of this nature.

Maybe Allah's Words: 'They have no choice...' mean that the believers do not have the right to object to Allah accepting the repentance of the polytheists who had injured them. They may say, 'Why do You accept their repentance when they did such-and-such to us, and we hoped to see them punished for it?'

The Lord *Glorified is He* chooses whatever He wills and does whatever He wills. When He accepts the repentance of the polytheists, He does not show mercy to them alone, but also shows mercy to the believers by relieving them from the evil that used to be done to them.

Allah's Words: 'So glory be to Allah, and may He be exalted above the partners they ascribe to Him!' (*al-Qasas*: 68) mean: Allah *Glorified is He* is exalted and absolved of what they want from Him, which is for the Lord to respond to the wants of human beings who follow their wild caprices. If the Lord were to yield to the wills of human beings who follow their caprices—and their caprices are all different—all of their lives will be ruined.

Do you not see that all human beings differ in their wishes and desires, and in all aspects of life? You find that a group of people may be of the same age or have the same social status, yet even in simple things such as buying products where each will choose a different brand or type.


وَرَبُّكَ يَعْلَمُ مَا تُكِنُّ صُدُورُهُمْ وَمَا يُعْلِنُونَ

**Your Lord knows what their hearts conceal and  
what they reveal [69] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 69)**

What their hearts conceal means he knows the secret: '...He knows [even] the secret [thoughts of man] as well as all that is yet more hidden [within him]' (*Ta Ha*: 7). A secret is what you keep to yourself, hiding it

from others for no one to know it but you. Or, it can mean something you tell someone else in confidence, at which point it is no longer a secret. The proverb says, 'If your breast cannot hold your own secret, how can other people's breasts hold it?'

If the Lord *Glorified is He* informs us that His Knowledge is vast and He knows all secrets, it is obvious that He must also know what is brought into the open because open matters are known to everyone. As for that which is even subtler than a secret, it refers to the fact that He knows what you keep to yourself before it even enters your heart; for He is the only one who knows things before they exist.

You might ask, 'If one of Allah's Attributes is that He knows secrets and what is even subtler than secrets, what is miraculous about knowing open things which are known to everyone?' Some orientalists made an issue of this, as have some of their Muslim followers who conform to their opinions.

If we consider the verses of the Quran, we find that Allah declares His knowledge of the hidden and the open to be equal, saying: 'It is all alike [to Him] whether any of you conceals his thoughts or bring them into the open...' (*ar-Ra'd*: 10). And He says: 'And [know, O men, that] whether you keep your beliefs secret or state them openly, He certainly has (full) knowledge....' (*al-Mulk*: 13). And in the verse we are examining now, He says: 'And your Lord knows all that their hearts conceal as well as all that they bring into the open' (*al-Qasas*: 69).

In these verses, Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the hidden before the open, but elsewhere He says: 'We will make you recite [O Muhammad] and you will not forget, except what Allah should will. Indeed, He knows what is declared and what is hidden' (*al-A'la*: 6-7). And He says: 'Verily, He knows all that is said openly, just as He [alone] knows all that you may conceal' (*al-Anbiya*': 110). Here, Allah referred to what is said openly before the hidden. He will not have done this if what is said openly did not possess some subtle quality; it is this quality that has gone unnoticed by those who do not study things in depth and who have therefore understood this verse incorrectly.

For example, if you keep something secret, it might come out with a slip of the tongue or be visible in your facial expressions. Or you might accidentally reveal your secret by using the wrong expression, as the Lord *Glorified is He* says: '...But [even so] you will most certainly recognize them by the tone of their speech ...' (*Muhammad*: 30).

So there are clues and signs by which we can deduce secrets. As for open matters, they are mentioned in the plural form: 'Verily, He knows all that is said openly, just as He [alone] knows all that you may conceal' (*al-Anbiya'*: 110), that is, He knows what you all reveal and what you all conceal, with the Arabic verbs reveal and conceal in the third person plural form. You should try to follow a public rally in which there are many people gathered, all talking at once. Can you distinguish between these voices and relate each word to the one who said it? This is the mystery of speech that is said openly and the subtle quality that these people failed to reflect on. As such, Allah informs us of His knowledge of all open speech which we ourselves can never know, no matter what technological developments we are granted to distinguish different voices.

This is why they say that you cannot solve a crime that occurs in a mob because all their voices and actions are jumbled together, each of them concealing the other. And they say, 'The individual is protected by the group'. And they say that the masses are like parrots, tending to copy others, as *Shawqi* said in his poem named 'The Death of Cleopatra', when they were defeated on the day of Actium but spread the word that they had been victorious; but such a trick could not fool the truly sagacious. They said to each other about the tumult of the masses:

Listen to the people, and how they are fed such delusions!

Their voices filled the air, praising those who, in reality, killed them.

The lie has done its work on them, and they have all been fooled:

What a bunch of parrots; their intellects are in their ears!

Clearly, knowledge of what is said openly, in such a case, is a distinction that Allah holds above all others. It is just like Him knowing the hidden.

And Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘And your Lord knows...’ (*al-Qasas*: 69) to reassure Prophet Muhammad. This indicates that He *Glorified is He* is his Sustainer and will take care of him and protect him, and for this reason He has told him not to be saddened by what they say for Allah knows what they conceal and what they reveal. And if you do not know what they say, know that Allah knows and will inform you of it. Did Allah not say to His Prophet Muhammad: ‘And they say to themselves, “Why does Allah not chastise us for what we are saying?” ...’ (*al-Mujadala*: 8)

That is, his Lord *the Most High* has informed him of what they even concealed in their hearts, as if saying to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ‘Do not think that I will only hold them to account for what you know of their actions; rather, I will also hold them to account for what you do not know’. In this way, Prophet Muhammad will be assured that Allah’s Knowledge encompassed all that they did.

Then the Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَهُوَ اللَّهُ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ لَهُ الْحَمْدُ فِي الْأُولَى وَالْآخِرَةِ وَلَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٧٠﴾

**He is God; there is no god but Him; all praise belongs to Him in this world and the next; His is the judgment; and to Him you shall be returned [70] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 70)**

Allah *Glorified is He* is the One Who truly deserves to be worshipped. He is endowed with all the attributes of perfection and: ‘There is no god but Him...’ (*al-Qasas*: 70). As long as He is One and nothing is like Him, no one can challenge Him or dispute with Him about anything. He has asked them before to bring their associates to openly settle the matter of worship and ascertain exactly who the master of the Day of Resurrection is.

The meaning of ‘the beginning’ in the verse under discussion is the creation that Allah created in beginning; that is, the universe that He prepared for His vicegerents on earth: the sun, the moon, stars, trees, mountains, water, air, and earth. Allah prepared the universe to receive man before He created him.

As such, when the Lord speaks of Adam *peace be upon him*, He does not say that he was the first thing to be created; rather, he was the first human.

This is because many other worlds were created before him. In fact, Allah says: 'Has there not been over man a period of time when he was nothing to be mentioned?' (*al-Insan*: 1) That is, the time he did not exist.

The preparation of the universe to receive mankind is a blessing that merits thanks and praise. Allah created the whole universe for you and then allowed you to benefit from it despite your lack of ability to control it or reach some parts of it yourself. The sun serves you, but you can neither control nor possess it. It works for you without any maintenance from your part and without needing any spare parts. Likewise, the whole universe is at your service and for your interest; and all of these merit praise.

After Allah *Glorified is He* created you in a universe that was prepared for your service, He left you to seek your sustenance therein. First, you were a cell in your father's loins, then an embryo in your mother's womb, and after that you were born and she held you in her lap. Allah does not consider you to be legitimately responsible until you reach adulthood and the age of rationality, and until you become mature and sane enough to reproduce. This is due to this being a sign of your complete maturity; just like a fruit, it does not reproduce until it is fully ripe and developed.

As such, we find that out of His Wisdom, Allah decreed that a fruit does not become sweet until its seeds are completely ripe in order for the seeds to sprout when you plant them after eating the fruit. If fruit is eaten before ripening, their seeds will not produce fruit and their species will die out. This is why we see that if you do not pick a ripe fruit from the tree, it will fall to the ground of its own accord, as though it were saying to you, 'I am ready to eat'.

For this reason, in the countryside we notice that mulberries and peaches, for example, fall to the ground when they ripen and then produce new plants, for their species to be preserved. If the unripe fruit were to fall, it will not be able to reproduce.

Similarly, human beings cannot procreate until they reach maturity, whereupon Allah makes them morally responsible and records their actions. Hence, we must recall the blessings that Allah granted us even before He called us into existence; and we must be sure that the One Who charges us with moral responsibilities now and issues commandments and prohibitions

is our Lord, Creator and Sustainer, and that He only orders us to do that which is best for us—and consequently, we must hear and obey.

Allah's Word: 'the end [of time]' (*al-Qasas*: 70) means that He will be praised on the Day of Resurrection, as He said elsewhere: '...And their call will end with [the words] "All praise is due to Allah, the Sustainer of all the worlds!"' (*Yunus*: 10)

That is, Allah is praised in the Hereafter. He granted us limited enjoyment of this world that is commensurate with our capabilities, while in the Hereafter He will grant us endless enjoyment that is commensurate with His Omnipotent Capabilities. When we see such blessings, we will have nothing to say but, 'Praise be to Allah!' Truly, praise is due to Allah both in the beginning and at the end.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And with Him rests all judgment; and unto Him shall you all be brought back' (*al-Qasas*: 70) because the Hereafter is for nothing but judgement and the settling of differences, for everyone to know what they owe and what they are owed. You should never think that the ones who hurt and oppress you will escape Allah's Grasp.

The Lord *the Most High* says: 'And unto Him shall you all be brought back' (*al-Qasas*: 70), that is, to be accounted. One variant canonical reading of this verse in the Quran states: 'and unto Him shall you all return', with the verb in the active voice; this is because they will return to Allah of their own accord, as though they have been set to do so like an alarm clock. When their time comes, they will come forth themselves, without anyone having to drive them forth.

As for the reading: '...shall you all be brought back' (*al-Qasas*: 70), this tells them not to think they can refuse to come forth, just as they refused to pay heed to Allah's Messengers in this world; in this world, the Messengers called them gently and softly, but in the Hereafter they will be called forth forcefully and despite themselves, and they will be unable to break away: 'On the Day when they shall be thrust into the fire with [an irresistible] thrust' (*at-Tur*: 13).

Next, the Lord *the Most High* says:

قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ اللَّيْلَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بِضِيَاءٍ أَوْ لَيْلٍ تَسْمَعُونَ ﴿٧١﴾ قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ عَلَيْكُمُ النَّهَارَ سَرْمَدًا إِلَى يَوْمِ الْقِيَمَةِ مَنْ إِلَهٌ غَيْرُ اللَّهِ يَأْتِيكُم بَلِيلٍ تَسْكُنُونَ فِيهِ أَفَلَا تُبْصِرُونَ ﴿٧٢﴾

**Say [Prophet], 'Just think, if God were to cast perpetual night over you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than He could bring you light? Do you not listen?' [71] Say, 'Just think, if God were to cast perpetual day over you until the Day of Resurrection, what god other than He could give you night in which to rest? Do you not see? [72] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 71-72)**

The Lord *Glorified is He* lists here some of the blessings He has granted His slaves in the form of two things connected with the movement and stillness of life. Movement brings good to people, and stillness brings repose for those who are exhausted by movement. By his nature, man cannot produce and work unless he has rested, and those who challenge this nature by staying up late at night and then working by day cannot keep this up for long, as their strength will dissipate and they will not be able to continue.

For this reason, Allah *the Most High* says: 'Consider the night as it veils [the earth] in darkness, and the day as it appears in glory! Consider the creation of the male and the female! Verily, [O men, the ends] you strive for are most diverse!' (*al-Layl*: 1-4)

Night and day each have distinguished roles, and similarly do men and women; do not attempt to mix these roles as otherwise life will be ruined and its series of events will wear you out. Before electricity, television, and video, our day started with the Dawn Prayer because we were used to sleeping after the Night Prayer. As for now, you can see what we have become. We used to begin our day energetically because we used to spend the night in complete tranquillity.

The Lord, presenting His Numerous Blessings to us, says: 'Have you ever considered...' (*al-Qasas*: 71), that is, what you will do: 'If Allah had willed that there should always be night over you, without a break (*sarmadan*), until the Day of Resurrection...' (*al-Qasas*: 71), that is, for your whole lives: '...is there any deity other than Allah that could bring you light?'



(*al-Qasas*: 71) The word *sarmadan* (without a break) here means always, continuously, without a break.

For the word light in the verse, Allah used the Arabic word *diya'*, and not *nur*. This is because *nur* (light) can come from the stars and the moon, while *diya'* (bright light, with rays and warmth) comes only from the sun. This is why Allah says: 'He it is who has made the sun a [source of] radiant light (*diya'*) and the moon a light [reflected] (*nur*)...' (*Yunus*: 5).

He says: '...is there any deity other than Allah that could bring you light?' (*al-Qasas*: 71) He did not say, 'Who else could bring you light?' to show us that none could do such a thing but Allah and that there is no God but Him. By means of light, you see things, find your way, and go about your life's work without any commotion or turmoil. By means of light, I live safely with my surroundings. If we were to live in darkness, we will be destroyed or will destroy what is around us; this is because when you walk in darkness, either you crush what is smaller than you or you are crushed by what is stronger than you are.

Just as light is important for material matter, it also plays a role in spiritual matters, as the light of the spirit refers to the upright spiritual values that govern and rectify your life's actions and save you from crushing those who are weaker than you or from being crushed by those who are stronger than you. Consequently, it is logical that Allah says: 'He it is who bestows His Blessings on you, as do His angels, so that He might take you out of the depths of Darkness into Light...' (*al-Ahzab*: 43).

That is, from spiritual darkness to the light of true virtue, not physical darkness, because we need it to relax. Clearly, spiritual light is not less important than physical light. Allah says, describing His Own Light: 'Light upon light' (*an-Nur*: 35).

That is, two lights: a material light by which we see all around us in order not to stumble blindly but to be able to move safely; both believers and the disbelievers, righteous and the sinners benefit from this physical light, as Allah has not withheld it from any of His creatures. As for the second light: the spiritual light, the light of guidance, belief and virtue, Allah sends this by means of His Messengers. When the believer accepts

these two lights, he benefits from them in this world, and this benefit stays with him until the Day of Resurrection. This is why Allah says after this: 'Allah guides to His Light him that wills [to be guided]; and [to this end] Allah propounds parables to men...' (*an-Nur*: 35).

Since the noble verse under discussion began with the word: 'Say', it is appropriate that it should end with: 'Will you not, then, listen?' (*al-Qasas*: 71) That is, listen to what I say to you and reflect upon it.

Next, in contrast to the verse that mentions night, Allah mentions another of His Blessings, the blessing of day: 'Say, "Have you ever considered [this]: If Allah had willed that there should always be daylight over you, without a break, until the Day of Resurrection..."' (*al-Qasas*: 72), that is, eternal, with no end, '...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)

Notice that the two verses have the same structure but end with two different expressions. This indicates the miraculous nature of Quranic rhetoric, as each one has its own appropriate meaning. In the verse related to night, Allah says: 'Will you not, then, listen' while in the verse related to day, He says: 'Will you not, then, see'. This is appropriate as it is the ear, not the eye that is used at night: you listen without being able to see, and you 'perceive' with the ear. As for the day when there is light, the eye is used to see. Hence, this is a wise way to end the verses, giving the appropriate meaning for each. Then Allah mentions the two phenomena stated in these two verses together, by saying:

وَمِنْ رَحْمَتِهِ جَعَلَ لَكُمُ اللَّيْلَ وَالنَّهَارَ لِتَسْكُنُوا فِيهِ  
وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ ﴿٧٣﴾

**In His mercy He has given you night and day, so that  
you may rest and seek His bounty and be grateful [73]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 73)**

After speaking about night and day separately, Allah mentions them together here because their existence together is another manifestation of Allah's Mercy. The verse is a fine example of the rhetorical structure which

is called ‘involution and specification’; after He mentioned night and day together, Allah then describes them by saying: ‘...so that you might rest therein as well as seek to obtain [what you need] of His Bounty...’ (*al-Qasas*: 73) trusting the hearer’s intelligence and ability to link each statement to the appropriate one of the two, Clearly: ‘the night’ links with: ‘...so that you might rest therein...’ (*al-Qasas*: 73), and: ‘...the day’ links with: ‘as well as seek to obtain [what you need] of His Bounty...’ (*al-Qasas*: 73). We can see that ‘involution’ means to group the subjects being described all together and then to mention their separate descriptions after this, and ‘specification’ means to refer each description back to its appropriate subject.

An example of this is what At-Tymuriah stated:

My heart, my eye, my tongue, my Creator:

Content, weeping, grateful, Merciful

The subjects of the description are grouped together in the first line, and their descriptions are grouped together in the second, leaving you to link each one back to its subject.

Night and day are two complementary signs by which our lives are given order; for if you do not rest, you will not be strong enough to work. The energy you have is produced by things in your body. When you become tired, you find that your body becomes fatigued and exhausted, which is your body’s way of warning you that it is no longer able to work and that you must rest in order to regain your strength to be able to work again.

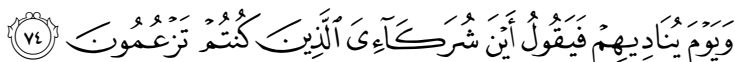
Rest should be commensurate with the level of tiredness. For example, you might stand still to rest from walking, and if that is not sufficient, you might sit. If you are more tired, you will be overcome by sleep, which is the natural constraint that prevents you from going against the nature with which Allah created you.

It is peculiar that some people challenge this nature, taking pep pills for them not to be overcome by sleep, and taking sleeping pills in order to sleep. If they only submitted to their natures, sleeping when they have the inclination to sleep and working when they had the energy to work, they will save themselves much inconvenience.

This is why it is said, 'Sleep is a guest who, if he calls on you, will soothe you; but if you call on it, it will harm you'. Until now, even with the advances of science, they have still not uncovered the secret of sleep and how it takes hold of a person so gently and peacefully without him being aware of what it exactly is; and I challenge any of us to explain how sleep overtakes him.

Allah has made sleep one of His signs, just like night and day, and the sun and the moon, saying: 'And among His wonders is your sleep, at night or in the daytime...' (*ar-Rum*: 23).

Then, the Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**The Day will come when He will call out to them,  
saying, 'Where are the partners you claimed  
for Me?' [74] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 74)**

Twice before now such calls have been mentioned, but there is no repetition here because each of these calls has its own specific purpose. The first call referred specifically to those whom they associated with Allah and their saying before Allah: 'Or Lord, those are the ones we led astray. We led them astray as we ourselves were astray...' (*al-Qasas*: 63). As for the second call, it addressed the idolaters, saying: '...How did you respond to My Messengers?' (*al-Qasas*: 65) As for here, the call is intended as a means of bearing witness against them. Hence, the words: 'Where' and: 'are those [beings or powers, those they associated]' and: 'whom you [idolaters] imagined to have a share in My Divinity' (*al-Qasas*: 74) are mentioned in all three verses, but the purpose of each verse is different from the others. In this way there is no repetition, but rather, there is emphasis.

After that, the Lord *the Most High* says:

وَنَزَعْنَا مِنْ كُلِّ أُمَّةٍ شَهِيدًا فَقُلْنَا هَاتُوا بُرْهَانَكُمْ  
فَعَلِمُوا أَنَّ الْحَقَّ لِلَّهِ وَضَلَّ عَنْهُمْ مَا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿٧٥﴾

**We shall call a witness from every community, and say, ‘Produce your evidence,’ and then they will know that truth belongs to God alone; the gods they invented will forsake them [75] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 75)**

That is, We will call forth all the prophets from their communities to bear witness against them and will say: ‘Produce your evidence for what you have been claiming!’ (*al-Qasas*: 75) Show us the associates you worshipped instead of Allah: where are they to come to your defence? But no, they will leave them and will flee from them: ‘But all arguments and excuses will by then have been erased from their minds, and they will not [be able to] obtain any [helpful] answer from one another’ (*al-Qasas*: 66).

Their associates will be absent and their witnesses will be absent, but Allah’s witnesses will be present: ‘...And We will have called forth witnesses from within every community...’ (*al-Qasas*: 75) who will testify that they delivered Allah’s Guidance to them. If they say, ‘Satan (Iblis) and misguided men led us astray’, Allah will respond that He did not leave them to be led astray, as if He did leave them they might have an excuse for sinning; rather, He sent them Messengers to guide them and these Messengers passed on to them the Divine Message.

What will they be able to do when you (Prophet Muhammad) testify that you passed on the Message to them, fulfilled your duty, and were persecuted and harmed by them now that their associates have deserted them and they have no one to speak for them or defend them? Upon this, their excuses will run out and the case will be closed.

Then, He says: ‘...And We will say: “Produce your evidence...”’ (*al-Qasas*: 75) that proves that Allah’s Messengers did not deliver the guidance, or bring an excuse to defend yourselves. And when they are dumbfounded and realise that their witnesses are absent except the witnesses that are against them: ‘They will come to understand that all the Truth is with Allah [alone]...’ (*al-Qasas*: 75).

However, they will be surprised at this, as Allah says about the disbelievers who were deluded and kept running after false mirages: ‘...Instead [of that], he finds [that] Allah [has always been present] with him and [that] He will pay him his account in full...’ (*an-Nur*: 39). And Allah refers to those who denied accountability in this world, saying: ‘...For they will find all that they ever did [now, in the Hereafter] facing them...’ (*al-Kahf*: 49). They will be surprised by that which they did not believe and in which they did not have any faith. But why should they be surprised, since Allah has informed them of it in this world and presented to them an outlet that they surely should have followed for them to be prepared for this situation? If you warn an intelligent person about the roughness of the road they are about to follow and the dangers and perils that lie therein, he will surely avoid it if the one who advises him is an honest person. He will then be on the safe side, even if the one who advises him is untruthful; there is no harm in being on the safe side anyway. A poet<sup>(1)</sup> said:

The soothsayer and the doctor both

Claim there is no resurrection.

I say: If you speak the truth, I lose nothing;

But if I speak the truth, the loss is yours!

What will you lose if you carry a pistol while following an ominous road, even if you find nothing there to perturb you? Clearly, if you (doubter in the Resurrection) do not lose anything, you will not gain anything either; whereas if we do not gain anything, we will not lose anything.

Next, Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...and all their false [lies] which they invented will forsake them’ (*al-Qasas*: 75), that is, all their claimed idols will disappear.

The Lord *Glorified is He* has given us an image of the Day of Resurrection; and no one fears the Day of Resurrection except those who believe in it. As for those who do not believe in the Hereafter and the Resurrection, they must be given another preventative because the Lord wants to preserve the harmony of the universe and the normal activities of life.

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(1) Abu Al-Htahya

If recompense came only on the Day of Resurrection, the non-believers will have continued unchecked with their corruption and will have made life wretched for everyone. Allah wants to protect life from those who spread corruption and do not believe in the Hereafter, and for this reason He sends upon them chastisement in this world before the chastisement of the Hereafter. Allah says: ‘But verily, for those who are bent on doing evil, there is suffering in store [even] closer at hand than that’ (*at-Tur*: 47). That is, before the chastisement of the Hereafter. As such, everything that afflicts the disbelievers in this world is a deterrent to every oppressor who tries to transgress and oppose the Truth. Consequently, our Lord now gives us an image of the worldly chastisement sent upon those who spread corruption on earth, saying:

إِنَّ قُرُونًا كَانَتْ مِنْ قَوْمِ مُوسَى فَبَغَى عَلَيْهِمْ ۖ وَءَايَيْنَاهُ مِنَ الْكُفْرِ مَا إِنْ مَفَاتِحَهُ  
لَنُؤْتِيَنَّكَ أُولَى الْقُوَّةِ إِذْ قَالَ لَهُ قَوْمُهُ لَا تَفْرَحْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْفَرِحِينَ ﴿٧٦﴾

**Qarun was one of Moses’ people, but he oppressed them.  
We had given him such treasures that even their keys would  
have weighed down a whole company of strong men. His  
people said to him, ‘Do not gloat, for God does not like  
people who gloat [76] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 76)**

He does not speak about the recompense of Qarun (Korah) in the Hereafter, but rather makes him an example in this world for all those who do not believe in the Hereafter that they might have cause to stop their oppression.

The idolaters of Quraysh persecuted Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* opposed his mission and injured his companions to the point where they were unable to defend themselves. Yet, the Quran was revealed to Prophet Muhammad, saying: ‘[Yet] the hosts [of those who deny the Truth] shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs [in flight]!’ (*al-Qamar*: 45)

‘Umar *may Allah be pleased with him* was amazed by this, thinking, ‘What hosts are those that will be routed while we are unable to protect ourselves?’ Then, when the battle of Badr took place and the idolaters were routed and killed, ‘Umar said, ‘Allah has spoken the truth: “[Yet] the hosts [of those

who deny the Truth] shall be routed, and they shall turn their backs [in flight]!” (*al-Qamar*: 45)

And thus it is said that no tyrant dies until Allah has requited him, and those whom he oppressed have been avenged. Once<sup>(1)</sup>, a tyrant died in the Levant without any evidence that Allah had requited him. The people were amazed at this, and one of them said, ‘It must be that Allah requited him without us being aware of it’. If he escaped the chastisement of this world, there is another realm beyond this one where the good find the fruits of their goodness and the evil find the consequences of their evil. Allah’s Justice entails this reckoning.

The Lord *Glorified is He* made Qarun a sign for all those who do not believe in the Hereafter for them to fear Allah’s Chastisement and beware of His Requital. From whom is this admonition drawn? It is drawn from Qarun (Korah), one of the leaders of his people and their wealthiest noble. Clearly, when Allah requited him, this requital will be an admonition to all those weaker and of a lower status than him.

A friend of mine used to work for the customs at Alexandria<sup>(2)</sup>. One day he was approached by a group of his colleagues who were bullies and wanted to dominate others. All that he did was to take their leader and throw him down on the floor. When the others saw this, they all dispersed and left him alone.

This is the same principle that was manifested in Allah retaliating against Qarun (Korah). He was a bully and a symbol of wealth and pride amongst his people. Allah says: ‘Behold, Qarun (Korah) was one of the people of Musa (Moses)...’ (*al-Qasas*: 76). And so, when we reflect upon the life of Musa *peace be upon him* we find that he faced many tyrant disbelievers. He faced Pharaoh, who claimed godhood, he faced Haman, and then he faced the Samaritan who betrayed him in his absence by calling his people to the worship of the Golden Calf.

And from among his own people, he was sorely tried by Qarun. The meaning of: ‘...one of the people of Musa (Moses)...’ (*al-Qasas*: 76) is either that he was a relative of his from among the Israelites, or that he lived

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(1) The story of the unjust man of the Levant

(2) The story of the officer in Alexandria’s customs office with some of his colleagues



among them and thus in this sense was one of them. The Quran does not go into this matter any deeper, but the exegetes say that he was the son of his paternal uncle. His lineage was Qarun, son of Yashar, son of Qahith, son of Lawa, son of Ya'qub (Jacob); and Musa was the son of 'Imran, son of Qahith, son of Lawa, son of Ya'qub (Jacob).

Some of the historians mentioned the enmity between Musa and Qarun. They said that when Musa *peace be upon him* asked Allah to strengthen him with his brother Harun (Aaron), He answered him, saying: 'He [Allah] said, "You are granted all that you has asked for, O Musa (Moses)!"' (*Ta Ha*: 36) And this was not the only time: 'And We had already conferred favor upon you another time' (*Ta Ha*: 37).

Allah sent Musa's brother Harun (Aaron) with him because he was more eloquent, and He made them partners in prophethood and addressed them together, saying: 'Go forth, [then] you and your brother...' (*Ta Ha*: 43) in order to confirm that the Message had not come from Musa by himself.

In the Quran, when Musa alone is addressed, know that Harun is also acknowledged at the same time. For example, when Musa supplicated against the people of Pharaoh, he said: 'And Moses prayed, "O our Lord! Verily, You have bestowed on Pharaoh and his chiefs splendour and riches in the life of this world, with the result, O our Lord, that they lead [others] astray from Your Path! O our Lord! Wipe out their riches and harden their hearts so that they may not attain to faith till they see the grievous suffering [that awaits them]!"' (*Yunus*: 88) Musa *peace be upon him* alone made this supplication, yet his Lord answered him by saying: 'The prayer of you both is accepted...' (*Yunus*: 89) addressing them both using the Arabic dual form, showing that Harun was not a Messenger allocated by Musa, but He was rather allocated by the Lord; and it also shows that the one who joins in with another who is supplicating by saying 'Amen' is like the one who makes the supplication, for Musa supplicated and Harun said, 'Amen'.

When Musa went to meet his Lord, he said to his brother: 'Act for me among my people...' (*al-A'raf*: 142). In Musa's absence, the Golden Calf was worshipped and Musa became angry with his brother Harun. But when things calmed down between them, the tasks of prophethood were divided between them. Harun was assigned the office of rabbinate; a rabbi is an

authoritative scholar, and was also assigned *Qurban*, that is, the duty to perform sacred offerings that draws one closer to Allah.

Upon this, Qarun (Korah) became angry because throughout all this he was not given anything, and his nephews had been distinguished from him by prophecy and rank, despite his great wealth. Then, Musa asked Qarun to give the poor-due from all his wealth, one dinar out of every thousand dinars, and one dirham out of every thousand dirhams. Qarun refused to pay and tried to turn the people against Musa.<sup>(1)</sup>

After that, Qarun planned a scandal for Musa for people to abandon him. He bribed<sup>(2)</sup> a wanton woman with a basin full of gold to make false allegations about Musa. When Musa came to preach the people and teach them the Law, saying, 'Whoever steals will have his hand amputated, and whoever commits adultery will be whipped if he was unmarried or stoned if he was married', Qarun stood up and said, 'Even if it was you, O Musa?' Musa replied, 'Even if it was me'.

Then the wanton woman stood up and said, 'He seduced me!' Musa replied, 'By He who parted the ocean, you will say what truly happened!' The woman began to tremble and she confessed what Qarun had planned, thereby exposing him. Upon this, the enmity between Qarun and Musa began.

Qarun began to act with iniquity and tyranny until Allah finally took him. Allah says of him: 'Behold, Qarun (Korah) was one of the people of Musa (Moses); but he acted arrogantly and insolently *bagha* towards them...' (*al-Qasas*: 76). The word used here is *bagha* which means to commit extreme injustice, especially as he had such great wealth that assisted him in his iniquity and in bending people to serve his goals, and he held a power position among his people. The verb *bagha* means to usurp the rights of others, to look down on people and treat them with contempt, or to be proud.

Allah elaborates on the nature of this arrogant insolence: '...simply because We had granted him such riches that his treasure-chests (*mafatih*)

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(1) Narrated by Ibn Abu Shayba, Ibn Al-Mundhir, Ibn Abu Hatim, Al-Hakim and Ibn Mardawayhi, on the authority of Anas.

(2) The story of the woman who was hired by Qarun to claim that Musa committed adultery with her.

alone will surely have been too heavy a burden for a troop of ten strong men or even more '*usba* to carry' (*al-Qasas*: 76).

The word *mafatih* which can mean both 'key' and 'treasure chest', also occurs in Allah's Words: 'For with Him are the keys (*mafatih*) to the things that are beyond the reach of created being's perception...' (*al-An'am*: 59).

If we say that *mafatih* is a plural, what is its singular form? It is not *miftaah* (key) because the plural of this is *mafaateeh* (with two long vowels). Rather, the singular is *maftah* which also means a tool used for opening like a key. Therefore, the meaning is that the keys to his treasure chest were a strong burden for ten men to carry. The purpose of this expression is to show the extent of his wealth. If something is a strong burden, this means that it is difficult to carry because it is very heavy. We do not distinguish heavy things from light things by sight, touch, or smell; we must carry them to ascertain their weight.

We said before that this sense is the muscle sense. A heavy load puts strain on the muscles and consequently you are aware of its weight, while if you carry a light object, you are almost unaware of its weight because of its lightness. If you were to hide some heavy weights in a tight space like a handbag, the weight will be visible to others because you will be struggling with it.

The word '*usba* (troop) means a group of people who adhere zealously to a particular cause, without there being any conflict between them. Another use of this word occurs in the Quran when the brothers of Yusuf (Joseph) said: 'Truly, Yusuf (Joseph) and his brother [Binyamin (Benjamin)] are dearer to our father than we, even though we are a troop of strong men (*'usba*)...' (*Yusuf*: 8). This was a word of truth that came from their mouths unintentionally because they truly were a troop of men united in their opposition to Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him* and his brother who was young and had no strength or power. They were all born of the same mother, save Yusuf and his brother who were born from another woman. Therefore, it was natural for Ya'qub's (Jacob's) heart to be inclined to the weak.

It is also said that '*usba* means a group between three and ten. In the case of *Yusuf's* (Joseph's) brothers, the Quran specified their number when Yusuf said: 'Behold, I saw [in a dream] eleven stars...' (*Yusuf*: 4) which represented his brothers, including Binyamin: '...as well as the sun and the

moon...' (*Yusuf*: 4) which represented his mother and father. From these two verses we are able to ascertain the size of the '*usba*'.

Using this same methodology, based on grouping different verses together to draw conclusions, Imam 'Ali *may Allah be pleased with him* was able to solve a problem that confused some people. Someone told him that a woman<sup>(1)</sup> had married and then given birth after six months, which suggested that she had conceived the child before getting married, as pregnancy normally lasts nine months.

But Imam 'Ali said, 'The minimum duration of pregnancy is six months'. The questioner responded, 'From where have you ascertained that, O Abu Al-Hasan?' 'Ali replied, 'I ascertained it by Allah's Words: "...and her bearing him and his utter dependence on her took thirty months" (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). And in another verse, Allah says: "And the [divorced] mothers may nurse their children for two whole years..." (*al-Baqara*: 233).' That is, for twenty-four months. Thirty minus twenty-four is six, and this must be the minimum duration of a pregnancy. In this way, the verses of the Quran complement and complete one another. It is a mistake to consider each verse in isolation, not considering the other verses that mention the same topic.

Then, Allah says: 'When [they perceived his arrogance] his people said unto him, "Exult not (*tafrah*) [in your wealth], for verily, Allah does not love those who exult [over riches]!" (*al-Qasas*: 76). They warned him against the forbidden kind of exultation. Generally, 'exultation' means the joy the soul expresses when something pleases it. There is a difference between something pleasing you because it gives you enjoyment and something pleasing you because it is beneficial for you. For example, a diabetic person might eat sugary foods because they give him enjoyment even though they are bad for him. In reality, exultation should be for something beneficial because Allah only placed true enjoyment in beneficial things.

When they said 'Exult not', they meant the exultation of mere enjoyment. But exultation and joy should only be found in beneficial things even if they are not enjoyable such as the bitter medicine which will cure one's illness. This is why Allah says: 'Say, "In [this] Bounty of Allah and in His Grace—in this, then,

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(1) *The story of the woman who gave birth after six months and Imam 'Ali solving this issue.*

let them rejoice (*yafraho*)...” (Yunus: 58). And Allah says: ‘And on that day will the believers [too, have cause to] rejoice (*yafrah*) in Allah’s Help [against their enemies]...’ (*ar-Rum*: 4-5). Allah called this *farah* (‘rejoicing’ or ‘exultation’) because it was exultation for something beneficial since the victory of the call means that the principles you believe in and fight for will be uppermost, and this will bring benefit to you and to the whole world.

As an example of the forbidden kind of exultation, exultation in mere enjoyment, the Quran says: ‘Those [hypocrites] who were left behind rejoiced (*fariha*) in their staying away [from war] after [the departure of] Allah’s Messenger’ (*at-Tawba*: 81). This is exultation in mere enjoyment because they hated the Messenger of Allah and refused to go out with him, and were happy to stay behind and leave him to go and fight alone.

Clearly, Allah’s Words: ‘...Exult not (*tafrah*) [in your wealth], for verily, Allah does not love those who exult’ (*al-Qasas*: 76) refers to the exultation of vain enjoyment that does not consider the ultimate consequences. The one who drinks wine drinks it because it gives limited enjoyment even though it is followed by terrible harm. Nowadays we hear people saying that dancing is a fine and beautiful art because they find some kind of enjoyment in it; but the condition of a truly beautiful and fine art is that it remains beautiful all the time. If it later becomes nasty and leads to further nastiness, as is the case of dancing, it is not really considered beautiful.

After that, the Lord *the Most High* says:

وَابْتَغِ فِيمَا آتَاكَ اللَّهُ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ وَلَا تَنْسَ نَصِيبَكَ مِنَ الدُّنْيَا وَأَحْسِنَ  
 كَمَا أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكَ وَلَا تَبْغِ الْفُسَادَ فِي الْأَرْضِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٧٧﴾

**Seek the life to come by means of what God has granted you, but do not neglect your rightful share in this world. Do good to others as God has done good to you. Do not seek to spread corruption in the land, for God does not love those who do this’ [77] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 77)**

‘Seek instead, by means of what Allah has granted you...’ (*al-Qasas*: 77), that is, use the wealth Allah has given you to obtain: ‘the life to come’. If

you use the wealth Allah gave you to seek this worldly life, this worldly life will come to an end when you die; but if you are able to take it with you to the Hereafter, you will keep possession of it forever—a blessing without end.

If you love the enjoyment of this world and cling on to it tightly, you should be aware that your worldly delights will not stay forever; you will lose them by dying or they will abandon you and leave you in poverty. Hence, if you yearn for wealth and desire to keep it in your possession, send it to the eternal life to come for it to remain with you forever, as an endless possession. Send it on to meet you in the Hereafter.

The Hadith says that once Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* asked ‘Aisha, the Mother of the Believers *may Allah be pleased with her* about a sheep that had been given to him. She said, after giving it in charity, nothing remained but the shoulder. ‘Rather’, he said, ‘It all remained, except the shoulder’.<sup>(1)</sup>

And he *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘The son of Adam says, “My wealth, my wealth”. Do you own of your wealth other than what you eat and consume and what you wear and wear out, or what you give in *Sadaqah* (charity) (to those who deserve it) and what you store for yourself’.<sup>(2)</sup>

This is why some of the righteous people used to say to whoever came to them begging, ‘Welcome to the one who will carry my provisions to the Hereafter without asking any payment!’

Once<sup>(3)</sup> a man came to Imam ‘Ali and asked him, ‘Am I one of the people of this world or one of the people of the Hereafter?’ He replied, ‘I do not have the answer to this question but rather, you have it, and you are the one who will decide this matter. If you give a warm welcome to the one who gives you something, you are one of the people of this world; and if you give a warm welcome to the one who takes from you, you are one of the people of the Hereafter’. This is because people love those who give them

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(1) Narrated by Ahmad and At-Tirmidhi

(2) Narrated by Ahmad, Muslim and At-Tirmidhi

(3) The story of the man who questioned Imam ‘Ali, ‘Am I among the dwellers of Heaven or Hell?’ And the response of Imam ‘Ali

what they love. If you love this world, you will be happy with the one who gives to you, and if you love the Hereafter, you will be happy with the one who takes from you.

But if our Lord has counselled us to seek the Hereafter, this does not mean we should abandon this world: ‘Do not forget your own [rightful] share in this world...’ (*al-Qasas*: 77). However, some people take this verse to mean it is fine to immerse oneself in this world and its delights.

If we reflect on the statement: ‘Do not forget your own [rightful] share in this world...’ (*al-Qasas*: 77), we understand that an intelligent person views the world as a trivial matter, but his Lord is informing him that he should take from it that which he needs to live. Thus, the implication is that he will have forgotten all about this world, and the Lord reminded him of it.

The people of deep spiritual knowledge have mentioned a subtle point about this matter. They say that your ‘share’ of something is that which you take with you and keep, not that which you lose. If this is the case, then your share of this world are the good deeds that you do, which will remain yours, staying with you and accompanying you to the next world. From this we learn that if your share of this world will increase your share of the Hereafter, your worldly life will serve your next life.

Or the statement may be directed to the miser, who does not spend even on himself, and for this reason, his Lord reminds him: ‘Do not forget your own [rightful] share in this world...’ (*al-Qasas*: 77). That is, take from it what will help you in the Hereafter. This is why they say of the worldly life that it is too important to forget, because it is the means to gain the Hereafter, but too trivial to be an aim in itself because it is followed by another aim that is more lasting.

Then, Allah says: ‘And do good [to others] as Allah has done good to you ...’ (*al-Qasas*: 77). The Lord *Glorified is He* wants His creatures to follow the manners that he prescribed for them, just as the saying states, ‘Conduct yourselves with the manners that Allah prescribed for you’.

That is, just as Allah was good to you, be good to people; and just as you desire that Allah forgives you, forgive those who wrong you: ‘... [For] do you not desire that Allah should forgive you your sins?’ (*an-Nur*: 22)

And as long as your Lord gives to you, you must also give, without fear of poverty; Allah is the One Who called you into existence, and in doing so He took it upon Himself to sustain you and look after you. Therefore, when you see someone who is unable to earn their own sustenance—and his Lord has made him this way for a wise reason—stretch out his hand to you, know that he is actually stretching it out to Allah, and that you are merely delivering to him what Allah has allotted for him.

We can find this concept in Allah's Words: 'Who is it that will offer to Allah a goodly loan...?' (*al-Hadid*: 11) Here Allah called charity a loan to Him. Why is this? Because this slave is Allah's slave, asking Allah to provide for him and Allah has tested him for a wise reason—no one should think that this state is intrinsically his, but one should rather learn from it—and therefore, who will give Allah a loan and fulfil the need of their brother?

Allah says: 'Who will give Allah a goodly loan' (*al-Hadid*: 11) even though He is the Giver. This is a word of respect to your property and your hard work. Allah is beyond comparison, but this is like when a man needs to pay for a surgical operation for his poor son and he says to his rich sons, 'Lend me money to pay for your brother's operation and I will pay you back later'.

It is narrated in a Hadith that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to visit his daughter Fatima and found her polishing a coin. When he asked her why she was doing this, she said, 'Because I intend to give it in charity and I know that it will fall into Allah's Hand before it falls into the hand of the needy person'. So the money belongs to Allah and you are only delivering it on behalf of Allah.

Some of the orientalist had a problem with this because they read the Quran and Hadith texts superficially without any insight, and as a result imagined that there was a contradiction. They say that Allah says here: 'Who is it that will offer to Allah a goodly loan which He will amply repay?' (*al-Hadid*: 11) And elsewhere, He says: 'Whoever shall come [before Allah] with a good deed will gain ten times the like thereof...' (*al-An'am*: 160). But the Hadith says, 'It is written upon the door to Paradise: Charity is rewarded tenfold, and loans are rewarded eighteen-fold'.<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Narrated by Al-Haythami, At-Tabarani, and Abu Na'im... It is said to be a weak Hadith.



Here, the apparent meaning of the Hadith seems, in their view, to contradict the noble verse; and this is because they do not understand Arabic well enough to approach the Quranic discourse as it should be approached. By carefully considering the verses and the Hadith, we find that they all agree that a good deed or an act of charity is rewarded tenfold. Therefore, the apparent discrepancy concerns Allah's Words: 'He will double it for him...' (*al-Hadid*: 11) and Prophet Muhammad's words, 'Loans are rewarded eighteen-fold'.

In fact, there is no contradiction here because when someone gives a dirham in charity and Allah rewards him tenfold which includes the dirham he gave, it is as though He gave him nine. When this nine is doubled, this makes eighteen.

Then Allah says: '...and seek not to spread corruption on earth. Verily, Allah does not love the spreaders of corruption' (*al-Qasas*: 77). Corruption is the result of straying away from Allah's Guidance. If you stray away from Allah's Guidance, you become corrupt. Just as there is physical corruption, there is spiritual corruption too. Allah says: 'Hence, do not spread corruption on earth after it has been so well ordered...' (*al-A'raf*: 56).

The Lord created everything in a perfect order for His creatures to be happy; do not approach it with the intent of corrupting it. Part of this order was the bestowal of Divine Guidance; the basis of a spiritual life that is more important than the bases of the material life.

Clearly, you must act properly with the universe around you. And if you cannot make it better, then leave it alone at least without making it worse. We gave the example before of a well: you can either spoil it by filling it in, or buttress it by building a protecting wall around it.

There are five issues that the people of Qarun (Korah) presented to him in advice which included both commands and prohibitions. They must have found that his deeds contravened these issues and they must have found him to be an ingrate who was deluded by his wealth. And for this reason they said: '...Exult not [in your wealth], for verily, Allah does not love those who exult' (*al-Qasas*: 77). They found that he had forgotten his portion of this world, not using it to prepare for the Hereafter, and that is why they said: 'Do not forget your own [rightful] share in this world...' (*al-Qasas*: 77). They found that he was miserly, not spending his wealth doing good deeds,

and that is why they said: ‘And do good [to others] as Allah has done good to you...’ (*al-Qasas*: 77); that is, share your blessings with others just as Allah has blessed you. Of course, he was acting against these commands and prohibitions, or else they will not have commanded or prohibited him at all.

Then Qarun responded to these five things to which his people had alerted him, saying:

قَالَ إِنَّمَا أُوتِيَتْهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ عِنْدِي ۖ أَوَلَمْ يَعْلَم أَنَّ اللَّهَ قَدْ أَهْلَكَ مِن قَبْلِهِ  
مِنَ الْقُرُونِ مَنْ هُوَ أَشَدُّ مِنْهُ قُوَّةً وَأَكْثَرُ جَمْعًا وَلَا يُسْأَلُ  
عَن دُنُوبِهِمُ الْمُجْرِمُونَ

**But he answered, ‘This wealth was given to me on account of the knowledge I possess.’ Did he not know that God had destroyed many generations before him, who had greater power than him and built up greater wealth? The guilty will not be questioned about their sins [78] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 78)**

But what does this response: ‘This [wealth] has been given to me only by virtue of the knowledge that I have...’ (*al-Qasas*: 78) have to do with the five things they advised him with? It is as though he was saying to them, ‘This is none of your business because the One Who gave me this wealth knows that I deserve it and was worthy of it, and that is why He trusted me with it; and I have no need of your advice’.

Or the meaning of: ‘This [wealth] has been given to me only by virtue of the knowledge that I have...’ (*al-Qasas*: 78) is, ‘I obtained it by means of my hard work, and my clever business sense’. Qarun was well known for his beautiful voice when he recited the Torah and he had also memorised it. He was also handsome and had a high level of knowledge of the Holy Book. It is strange that he could have all this knowledge, and yet say: ‘This [wealth] has been given to me only by virtue of the knowledge that I have’ (*al-Qasas*: 78), not remembering that before his time Allah had destroyed generations that were more powerful, wealthier and more numerous than him. Allah *the Most High* says: ‘Did he not know that Allah had destroyed [the arrogant of] many a generation that preceded him—people who were greater than him in power

and richer in what they had amassed (*jam'a*)?' (*al-Qasas*: 78) How could he have missed this despite his acquaintance with the Torah?

The meaning of 'did he not know' is: was it not part of his knowledge that 'many a generation' included people who were wealthier than him, yet Allah destroyed them; and they were whole communities, not individuals. The word *jam'a* (amassed) here could mean collecting money or it could mean that they were a large group of people.

After this, Allah says: '...But such as are lost in sin are not asked about their sins' (*al-Qasas*: 78). The incident that indicates they will not be asked is that Allah will take them suddenly, without warning. He did not say to Qarun, 'You did such-and-such and as a result I will do such-and-such to you, and I will cause the earth to swallow you along with your home'. Your deeds are known to you and the prior situations are sufficient for your punishment to take you by surprise.

For this reason, it was expected that punishment will come to him at any time. And therefore, Allah does not ask them and He does not conduct an investigation as the police do because there is no benefit in asking them, for there is no recompense for them except chastisement.

Despite his people's advice, Qarun (Korah) remained a haughty ingrate, not in the least paying any heed or even hesitating to be arrogant with others. He persisted in his arrogance, disdain of others and corruption. Allah *Glorified is He* tells his story in the Quran:

فَخَرَجَ عَلَى قَوْمِهِ فِي زِينَتِهِ ۚ قَالَ الَّذِينَ يُرِيدُونَ الْحَيَاةَ الدُّنْيَا  
يَلَيْتَ لَنَا مِثْلَ مَا أُوتِيَ قَارُونُ إِنَّهُ لَذُو حَظٍّ عَظِيمٍ ﴿٧٩﴾

**He went out among his people in all his pomp, and those whose aim was the life of this world said, 'If only we had been given something like what Qarun has been given: he really is a very fortunate man' [79] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 79)**

Qarun (Korah) was rich and prominent in society. He was gifted with a handsome appearance and great wealth. What if a man like him appeared before his people in all his finery, in a grand procession: 'He went out among his people in all his pomp...' (*al-Qasas*: 79). As for that pomp, exegetes have

said much in portraying its grandeur; he went out with a thousand slave girls, a thousand horses and so on. Many were struck with infatuation, dazzled by the lure of the pomp. They were captivated by his fortune, for they desired nothing but worldly pleasures. Allah *the Most High* describes these people, saying: ‘... those whose aim was the life of this world said, “If only we had been given something like what Qarun has been given: he really is a very fortunate man”’ (*al-Qasas*: 79). In another verse, the Lord *the Exalted* says, addressing Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: ‘And do not gaze longingly at what We have given some of them to enjoy...’ (*Ta Ha*: 131). Do not aspire to what is in the hands of others, and respect Allah’s Decree concerning His creation. He has distributed provisions among people the way they are. If you feel happy for people when see blessings in their hands, the effect of these blessings will extend to you. If you look enviously at what others enjoy, you thus harm yourself first and foremost for you will be deprived of the blessings you envy. Let us imagine blessings to be a dignified lover: they will not go to those who hate them, even if hatred stems from the fact that they belong to others.

One of the attributes of a true believer is that he wishes for others what he loves to have himself. If you do not like to see others enjoying blessings, are they to blame for this? What crime have they committed? It is as though you reject Allah’s Decree. When you reject and criticize the Decree of the Giver of blessings, He will certainly deny you these blessings.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in the Quran: ‘Do not covet what Allah has given to some of you more than others’ (*an-Nisa*: 32). Everyone has a role to play in life and each is gifted in the best way to fulfil that role, which makes everyone different. You may envy someone only because you do not see what you have in your hands; you may be endowed with a talent the one you envy lacks. You are gifted in your own way, but you are heedless of this. You pay too much attention to others, and that is why you do not see the treasures you have in your hand.

The Lord *the Most High* has distributed talents and provisions among His slaves on an equal basis. Before Him, we are all equal, for He neither has taken a wife nor begot a child. The total of the abilities anyone is endowed with is equal to what anyone else has been given. You may exceed me in a particular aspect while I exceed you in another. One is more intelligent;

another is physically more powerful; one has a lot of knowledge; one is more forbearing and so on.

Life needs all of us. We are complementary. Allah *Glorified is He* does not give all skills to one or some and leave the rest totally wanting in them. Everyone has a role and abilities exactly suitable for him. If you do your role well, this is sufficient. You do not need to excel in every walk of life.

Sometimes one does not benefit from his own skill and only others benefit from him. An Egyptian proverb expresses this paradox, saying, ‘The carpenter’s door is broken!’ Why does he not make a new door for himself? Perhaps it is because his own door is the only one he will not be paid for.

Therefore, if someone excels you in something, do not be resentful because his superior talent will bring you benefit. The right hand is generally more pliable and easy to use than the relatively clumsy left hand. The skill of the right hand has a useful effect that extends to the left hand, and similarly this is the case with people. Someone’s skill has a benefit that extends to those who do not have this particular skill. Therefore, do not be envious of the attainments of others, but rather be thankful for them, for they are at your service.

Furthermore, those who sought the transient pleasures of this life said: ‘... If only we had been given something like what Qarun has been given: he really is a very fortunate man’ (*al-Qasas*: 79). They considered him very lucky because they were only concerned with the life of this world and its enjoyments. As for the people of knowledge and sagacity, they had a different view and a wider perspective; they replied:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ وَيَلَكُمْ ثَوَابُ اللَّهِ خَيْرٌ لِمَنْ  
ءَامَنَ وَعَمِلَ صَالِحًا وَلَا يُلْقَاهَا إِلَّا الْصَّابِرُونَ

**But those who were given knowledge said, ‘Alas for you!  
God’s reward is better for those who believe and do good  
deeds: only those who are steady will attain this’ [80]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 80)**

Allah *Glorified is He* will not leave those enamoured with life’s finery to sow doubts in people’s minds concerning Allah’s Decree and cause them to

rebel against how He distributes provisions among His slaves. The Lord *the Most High* will not leave the people of falsehood to distort the Truth and mislead the people. A poet once said:

He Who has made the truth taste bitter

Will not leave people bereft of those who bear it [the truth].

Those who envied Qarun (Korah) cared only for the life of this world and desired nothing beyond its temporary pleasures. The other group who condemned such people's attitude are described in the Quran as: '... those who were given knowledge...' (*al-Qasas*: 80). This means that the people who desire nothing but the finery of this worldly life are shallow-minded and have no share of true knowledge. Because of this, they have fallen into the trap that the people of knowledge have evaded: they yearn too much for the enjoyments of this life, forgetting about the eternal bliss of the Hereafter.

Do not think that this life is the long time between the creation of Adam *peace be upon him* and the coming of the Hour. Rather, your life is the short time between your birth and death, and it will certainly come to an end. Those of understanding are those who choose that which will last forever over that which will inevitably end. Some longed for what was in the hand of Qarun (Korah), and for this reason the people of knowledge said to them: 'Alas for you!' (*al-Qasas*: 80) Their case is quite unfortunate, indeed, for they have a superficial understanding. Woe and misery are for those who envy others for what they have and resent what Allah has decreed for His slaves. They deserve punishment for this. Allah *Glorified is He* says about those who are over-attached to the life of this world: '... but most people do not know; they only know the outer surface of this present life and are heedless of the life to come' (*ar-Rum*: 6-7). They do not know the true meaning of this life or the next, for if they knew it, they will not say such words or entertain such hopes.

The people of knowledge tried to alert the other party to the right understanding: 'Allah's Reward is better for those who believe and do good deeds...' (*al-Qasas*: 80). What the Lord *the Most High* has prepared for His righteous slaves is better than this worldly life and all its dazzling temptations. Allah's Reward is better than what Qarun (Korah) possessed. How could

they crave what he possessed, whereas they criticised his actions and advised him against persisting in them? How is it that they were envious of his gains whereas they were displeased with his attitude?

Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse by saying: ‘... only those who are steadfast will attain this’ (*al-Qasas*: 80). Only the perseverant are guided to faith and righteous deeds. Only these are guided to the Truth, and therefore they devote themselves to the Hereafter and give it absolute preference over the life of this world. They are guided to be able to see the real meaning and worth of things, and are not deluded by appearances. Only those who are steadfast are guided to the Straight Path, as Allah *the Most High* says in another verse: ‘And no one will be granted such goodness but only those who are steadfast in patience, none but persons of the greatest good fortune’ (*Fussilat*: 35).

Patience means essentially to forbear what is apparently hard, but in essence, involves much good. This includes obedience to Divine Commands, avoidance of prohibitions and endurance of hardships. These are the three manifestations of patience.

As for the first, it consists of committing yourself to observing all that Allah enjoins on man. Such commitment weighs heavily on the soul. Allah *the Exalted* says about the Prayer (*Salat*), for example: ‘This is hard indeed for anyone but the humble’ (*al-Baqara*: 45). Many things can distract a person from performing prayer, and that is why one may find himself approaching it reluctantly. Let us recite what the Lord *the Most High* has said to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* about the prayer: ‘Order your people to pray, and pray steadfastly yourself...’ (*Ta Ha*: 132). This implies that constancy in observing prayer is heavy on the soul. However, if you commit yourself to it and make your soul accustomed to it, you grow more attached to it. After this, it no longer remains a heavy duty but rather turns into a relief and a beloved practice that gives your soul a break from the harshness of life. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us this when he said to Bilal who used to proclaim the Call to the Prayer, ‘Give us relief with it (the prayer), O Bilal!’<sup>(1)</sup> Today, most of the people seem as if they say to themselves, ‘Give us relief from it!’

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(1) Cited by Ahmad and Abu Dawud

Prophet Muhammad also said, 'The prayer (*salat*) has been made the apple of my eye'.<sup>(1)</sup> He *peace and blessings be upon him* singled out prayers from all other acts of worship because it is repeated five times every day; it is a constant source of relief to a believer. The other tenets of Islam are not like this; some come once a year, others once in a lifetime. To conclude, constant observance of what Allah commands is the first manifestation of patience.

The second is abstention from sinful acts. This is the most obvious manifestation of patience.

If you wish to borrow money  
to spend on extravagance,  
spend of your soul's patience,  
in anticipation of better times.  
Let your soul grant you that,  
or never blame others if they deny you!

To have patience with yourself is easier than to expect others to have patience with you. If your soul is not good enough to grant you this, there is no reason why you should blame others for begrudging you what they have.

The third manifestation of patience is to bear the adverse turns of fate, even though you do not understand Allah's Wisdom behind them. As long as fate comes from Him, the Lord and the Wise One, we should resign ourselves to it and to the fact that it is the best for us. He is your Lord, not your enemy. You are His slave and His own creation. Let us read what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'All creatures are the dependents of Allah, and the most beloved of them to Him are those who are kindest to His dependants'.<sup>(2)</sup>

To be able to bear afflictions patiently, it is sufficient to know that they come from Allah *Glorified is He*. If they are the direct outcome of your own failures, blame only yourself. If a student neglects his studies, he should know why he has failed in his exams. Another may have studied hard but

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(1) Cited by Ahmad, An-Nasa'i and Al-Hakim, on the authority of Anas

(2) Cited by Abu Na'im and Ibn Al-Jawzi



have a car accident on his way to attend his exam. This is out of his control, and for that reason he should not blame himself. He should know that it is the fate Allah has decreed for him out of His Wisdom. Perhaps conceit had crept into his heart that made him forget that success comes ultimately from Allah, not because he is clever. Thus, Allah *the Most High* wills to give him this lesson to teach him that everything in the end is in His Hand and by His Will and Assistance. A poet once said:

Were it not for the help Allah sends down to all,  
One's actions will be the means of his downfall!

When you do your best but success does not come, you should learn to respect Allah's Wisdom. His fate is a mercy for His creation.

We can divide afflictions into two kinds: those which involve an opponent, as in the case of assaults, murder, or the like, and those which do not involve an opponent, as in natural afflictions such as sickness or death. The Lord *the Most High* has prescribed rulings for us to deal with both. As for those which do not involve an opponent, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us, quoting Luqman's advice to his son: '...bear anything that happens to you steadfastly: that is the most resolute course to follow' (*Luqman*: 17). As for those afflictions that others cause you, Allah *the Most High* says: '...though, if a person is patient and forgives, that is truly the most resolute course to follow' (*ash-Shura*: 43). When an affliction involves an adversary, patience and forgiveness are the best policy. Enmity breeds rage and drags one into sin and revenge. Forbearance at such times is difficult and requires firm resolution. Even though this is quite lost in the translation, the emphasis laid on patience with one's adversary being the most resolute course to follow, in the second verse and which is indicated by the word 'truly', is greater than that in the verse talking about enduring hardships that involve no adversaries. This difference is clear in the original Arabic structure of the two verses.

Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us the virtue of forbearance with adversaries. He says: 'Hurry towards your Lord's Forgiveness and a Garden as wide as the heavens and earth, prepared for the righteous... who restrain their anger and pardon people—Allah loves those who do good' (*Al-Imran*: 134). That is, the first step is to keep your anger in check. This command acknowledges

that anger exists and is a part of the natural disposition of man, but it should be restrained or channelled in the correct manner. The next step is to pardon the person who has wronged you. This means getting rid of any grudge or rage you feel towards him and forgetting their injustice, as if it never occurred. This step needs one to be really devoted to Allah in order for it to take place. This is why Allah loves those who do this; those who repay evil with good. No doubt, this is a high status that not everyone is capable of attaining. Consequently, Allah does not make it mandatory that we forgive those who have wronged us; He only recommends this behaviour and encourages us to do it. If you are unable to pardon and therefore you take only the first step—that of restraining your anger from committing oppression—there is no harm with this. Allah *Glorified is He* permits one to seek retribution for the injustices done to him. However, to keep your anger in check and also forgive, this raises you to the status of a real devotee to Allah, and let it be sufficient for you that you will be one of those Allah loves.

Let it be sufficient for you that the one who does an injustice to you thus causes you to earn the Lord's Aid and Protection. He deserves a reward for that! A man of knowledge once said, 'Should I not do good to the one who made Allah on my side?' We have previously given the example of a child who has bullied his brother. The father must turn with affection to the wronged child, which should make the bully regret his conduct that has earned his brother their father's support and protection. Although Allah *Glorified is He* is beyond comparison, we can say that Allah, likewise, is on the side of His wronged slave until he restores his right from his oppressor.

Next, the punishment came upon Qarun (Korah):

فَخَسَفْنَا بِهِ وَبِدَارِهِ الْأَرْضَ فَمَا كَانَ لَهُ مِنْ فِئَةٍ  
يَنْصُرُونَهُ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ وَمَا كَانِ مِنَ الْمُنْتَصِرِينَ ﴿٨١﴾

**We caused the earth to swallow him and his home:  
he had no one to help him against God, nor could he  
defend himself [81] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 81)**

The earth swallowed Qarun (Korah) along with his house, which contained all his treasures and everything he owned. His wealth did not avail him at

all. He did not have anyone to protect him, nor could he protect himself. Who could ward off the Lord's Punishment when it comes upon him?

This poses a question: what, then, was the attitude of those who were infatuated by his pomp and splendour? The Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَأَصْبَحَ الَّذِينَ تَمَنَّوْا مَكَانَهُ بِالْأَمْسِ يَقُولُونَ وَيَكَابُكُ اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَنْ يَشَاءُ  
 مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَوْلَا أَنْ مَنَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْنَا لَخَسَفَ بِنَا وَيَكَانَهُ لَا يَفْلِحُ الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٨٢﴾

**The next day, those who had, the day before, wished to be in his place exclaimed, ‘Alas [for you, Qarun]! It is God alone who gives what He will, abundantly or sparingly, to whichever He will of His creatures: if God had not been gracious to us, He would have caused the earth to swallow us too.’ Alas indeed! Those who deny the truth will never prosper[82] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 82)**

The day before, they had said: ‘... If only we had been given something like what Qarun has been given...’ (*al-Qasas*: 79). However, after they witnessed the punishment that deservedly befell him from Allah—the scourge that cannot be held back from the disbelievers—they returned to their senses and said: ‘Alas [for you, Qarun]! It is Allah alone who gives what He wills, abundantly or sparingly, to whoever He wills of His creatures...’ (*al-Qasas*: 82).

The Arabic word *wayy* (translated in the verse as ‘alas’) denotes regret. It can also be used to express surprise or wonder. They regretted coveting Qarun's wealth when they saw the earth swallow him up along with his house. They blamed themselves, for they saw the Wisdom of Allah behind the manner He provides sustenance to His creatures. ‘It is Allah alone who gives what He wills, abundantly or sparingly, to whoever He wills of His creatures...’ (*al-Qasas*: 82).

Abundant sustenance is not a proof that Allah is pleased with His slave, nor is scant sustenance a proof of the opposite. Allah gave abundant provisions to Qarun (Korah) only to drag him to his downfall. When his arrogance reached a peak, Allah punished him with His Might and Power. The chapter of *al-Fajr* deals with this notion. The Lord *the Most High* says: ‘[The nature

of] man is that when his Lord tries him, giving him honour and blessings, he says, “My Lord has honoured me”, but when he tries him, restricting his provision, he says, “My Lord has humiliated me” (*al-Fajr*: 15-16). These verses answer both misconceptions. How can wealth be a proof that Allah is pleased with His slave, whereas the latter does not fulfil his duty to the Giver of this wealth? Allah explains: ‘No indeed! You [people] do not honour the orphans, and you do not urge one another to feed the poor. And you consume inheritance greedily, and you love wealth with inordinate love’ (*al-Fajr*: 17-20). What honour can there be in wealth that brings ignominy on its owner? Wealth is a test, a trial, and thus what honour does it bring on its owner if he fails in the test? In such a case, it will be better for him to be deprived of this wealth, which will certainly be better for him—not to disobey Allah using it! Wealth will be, in such a case, like a weapon in the hands of one who does not know how to use it: he might even kill himself with it.

And they said: ‘If Allah had not been gracious to us, He will have caused the earth to swallow us too...’ (*al-Qasas*: 82). The day before, they longed to be in Qarun’s position, but then they admitted that the Lord *the Most High* had been gracious to them when he saved them from that destiny. After that, they said: ‘Alas indeed! Those who deny the Truth will never prosper’ (*al-Qasas*: 82). The disbelievers will never attain success in the Hereafter.

In the following verse, Allah *Glorified is He* states a general law:

تِلْكَ الدَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ نَجْعَلُهَا لِلَّذِينَ لَا يُرِيدُونَ عُلُوًّا  
فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فَسَادًا وَالْعَاقِبَةُ لِلْمُتَّقِينَ ﴿٨٣﴾

**We grant the Home in the Hereafter to those who do not seek superiority on earth or spread corruption: the happy ending is awarded to those who are mindful of God [83]**  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 83)

One will have the right to claim superiority over others if whatever he possesses were originally his. However, since everything originally comes from Allah, none of us should exalt himself above any other. He Who has

granted you power can strip you of it and leave you ill and weak. He Who has given you wealth can cause you to turn poor. Keep arrogance in check, then, and humble yourself before Him. None of the gifts you possess are intrinsically yours. Everything belongs to *the Almighty* Creator. Moreover, this world is a world of vicissitudes. What you take pride in today may well go to someone else tomorrow, and in such a case will it please you if anyone exercised superiority over you for an advantage they have and you do not have? Hence, spare others the pain too. We are all dependent on Allah *the Most High*. Can you, for example, hold yourself in the air without falling? No, because He has not given you this ability. As long as this is the case, be careful not to exalt yourself above others. You may be in their place one day. One Who belittles others does so because he cannot identify the secret talents Allah has endowed them, and this is a defect, not an advantage over others. If you reflect on the matter, you will find that everyone has some quality that you do not have. Allah *Glorified is He* has no child or wife; all of us are equal before Him. No one is favoured above another except on the basis of devotion to Him. He has distributed talents among us equally. Why, then, should anyone exalt himself above others? Arrogance is the child of ignorance of the Lord's Majesty. He who is mindful of Allah is humble. He shrinks at the thought of His Greatness and will therefore be ashamed to hold himself above any of His creatures.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us how to respect others and how to be humble in front of them. When 'Adey ibn Hatim went to him, the Prophet gave him his seat. He thus laid the foundation for equality and respect. 'Adey said to him, 'I testify that you do not seek any high rank on the earth, and I testify that there is no God but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah', and he embraced Islam.

It is strange what we see nowadays at our mosques, which are the houses of Allah and the first places where this equality should exist. When an important person enters the mosque, someone spreads out a rug for him to pray on even though the mosque is already carpeted and clean. Some people reject to be treated with such a distinction, but others are happy with it, and these are the ones who seek to be exalted above others. Allah *Glorified is He*

enjoins us to establish justice and equality for our hearts to be joined and for no rancour to creep into them. This is how peaceful coexistence is possible.

The Lord *the Most High* concludes the verse by saying: ‘... the happy ending is awarded to those who are mindful of Allah’ (*al-Qasas*: 83). Eternal bliss is only for those who fulfil their duty to Him.

Allah *the Exalted* then says in the following verse:

مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْحَسَنَةِ فَلَهُ خَيْرٌ مِنْهَا وَمَنْ جَاءَ بِالسَّيِّئَةِ فَلَا يُجْزَى  
الَّذِينَ عَمِلُوا السَّيِّئَاتِ إِلَّا مَا كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ

**Whoever comes before God with a good deed will receive a better reward; whoever comes with an evil deed will be punished only for what he has done [84] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 84)**

We have previously pointed out that the Arabic word *khayr* can be used to mean ‘good’ which is the opposite of *sharr* (evil), as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘Whoever has done an atom’s-weight of good (*khayr*) will see it, but whoever has done an atom’s-weight of evil (*sharr*) will see that’ (*az-Zalzala*: 7-8).

It can also be used to mean ‘better’. For example, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘A strong believer is *khayr* (better) and more beloved to Allah than a weak believer, and there is good in both’.<sup>(1)</sup>

Allah says: ‘Whoever comes before Allah with a good deed will receive a better (*khayr*) reward...’ (*al-Qasas*: 84). A reward will be given him as a result of the good he has done. Whoever does a good deed will receive from Allah that which is finer and better, for good deeds are rewarded tenfold. Allah illustrates this Truth through the following parable: ‘Those who spend their wealth in the Cause of Allah are like grains of corn that produce seven ears, each [ear] bearing a hundred grains. Allah gives multiple increases to whoever He wishes: He is Limitless and All Knowing’ (*al-Baqara*: 261).

So the verse we are reflecting on states a fundamental fact about faith: that is, the obedient will be rewarded and the disobedient will be punished.

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(1) Cited by Muslim, Ahmad and Ibn Majah, on the authority of Abu Hurayrah

When you say someone has come with something, it probably gives the impression that he has created something that did not exist. However, when we do good deeds, we are only employing the power to do good that the Lord *the Most High* has granted us. It only entails arousing the good Allah has created within us. Also, ‘come with a good deed’ may refer to the fact that the obedient will bring this good deed before Allah *Glorified is He* to be rewarded for it. When one directs his intention to Allah in all that he does, he inevitably reaps the fruit of his devotion. This poses a question: are the rewards for good deeds restricted only to the Hereafter, or is the purpose of religion to bring happiness both in this life and the next? The wisdom behind sending down Divine Guidance is to set our lives right and therefore attain happiness now and in the Afterlife. Good deeds must have an effect in this world, too, but the ultimate reward will be in the Hereafter.

This verse comes after the mention of the story of Qarun. His people advised him: ‘... do good to others as Allah has done good to you...’ (*al-Qasas*: 77). But what is the criteria that make a deed good or otherwise? Is it the extent to which a deed makes one pleased or otherwise? Certainly not; sometimes people are pleased with things that harm them and dislike things that are good for them. What are the criteria, then? The Creator of all things is the One Who can show us right from wrong. He has created all humankind and knows what is best for them. His knowledge encompasses all creatures and all deeds, and the effects and outcomes that anything is likely to entail. We have both good and evil in our natural disposition, and we are endowed with the ability and choice to do right or wrong; sometimes we get confused and fail to determine what should be done and what should be avoided. A good deed is what the Divine Law declares to be good, not what anyone may deem good. We see many people enjoying harmful foods only because they taste good, and refraining from healthy food thinking that it is tasteless. Allah says: ‘... eat it with enjoyment and with a wholesome result’ (*an-Nisa*: 4) for what is enjoyable is not necessarily wholesome.

The Lord *Glorified is He* says: ‘Whoever comes before Allah with a good deed will receive a better reward...’ (*al-Qasas*: 84). What Allah gives in return for a good deed is far greater than the deed itself. Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... whoever comes with an evil deed will be punished only for

what he has done' (*al-Qasas*: 84). Clearly, recompense in the case of a good deed is greater, yet in the case of a misdeed, recompense is just equal to the sin committed. The Lord *the Most High* bestows His Mercy on His slaves, even the disobedient, and that is why a good deed is multiplied but a bad deed is not. A sinner will be requited only in proportion to his sin. Let us recite these verses from the chapter of *an-Naba'*: 'For those who were aware of Allah there is a supreme achievement: private gardens, vineyards, well-matched companions and an overflowing cup. There they will hear no vanity or lies: a reward from your Lord, a fitting gift (*hisab*)' (*an-Naba'*: 31-36). The word *hesab* (here rendered as 'fitting') does not mean that their recompense will be commensurate with their deeds. Rather, it means that they will be given what is sufficient and adequate for all their needs; their reward will be so ample that they will wish for nothing more. That is, *hesab* here refers to 'sufficiency', as when we say '*hasbi Allah*' which means 'Allah is Sufficient for me (as a protector)'. In the same chapter, Allah says about the evildoers that theirs will be: 'A fitting recompense [for them]' (*an-Naba'*: 26). That is, commensurate to their deeds. This means that our Lord treats us with generosity, not justice, in order to encourage us to do good deeds. When you do a good deed that extends to others, you are rewarded for everyone who benefits from this deed. It is only one deed, yet the reward is multiplied several times, out of His Mercy and Bounty *Glorified is He*.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّ الَّذِي فَرَضَ عَلَيْكَ الْقُرْآنَ لَرَادُّكَ إِلَىٰ مَعَادٍ قُلْ رَّبِّي  
أَعْلَمُ مَنْ جَاءَ بِالْهُدَىٰ وَمَنْ هُوَ فِي ضَلَالٍ مُّبِينٍ ﴿٨٥﴾

**He who has made the Quran binding on you [Prophet] will  
bring you back home. So say, 'My Lord knows best who has  
brought true guidance and who is blatantly astray' [85]  
(The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 85)**

The Arabic word *farada* (made binding) originally denotes cutting. The reason this word is used to mean 'binding' or 'obligation' is that when you cut something, you change it from its natural shape, just as the Quran changes the soul, cutting off its natural cravings and base desires from it and



directing it to Allah's Guidance. Allah *Glorified is He* says at the beginning of the chapter of *an-Nur*: 'This is a chapter we have sent down and made obligatory (*faradnaha*)...' (*an-Nur*: 1). The Quran cuts off base desires from the soul and directs it to what its Creator wants from it. This disciplines the human soul which usually instigates evil, looks to immediate pleasures, and hardly heeds outcomes.

The Quran represents the Guidance of Allah, composed of commands and prohibitions which are meant to regulate life by outlining the limits of the human soul and its actions. Allah *Glorified is He* has created us with the ability and freewill to do good or evil. There is a difference between the words '*ibad*' and '*abid*'; both mean 'slaves' yet with lightly different connotations. All human beings, both the believers and disbelievers, are '*abid*' of Allah. Even though the disbelievers refuse to obey Allah, they are still subservient to Him and subject to His Will and Control. Allah *the Most High* has given us the choice to obey or disobey. Still, He has complete control over us in other things where we have no choice whatsoever. A person of sound understanding will submit to Allah with regard to the realms in which he has freewill. He should let his choice comply with what his Lord commands. He should submit his will to his Lord's Will and be content to be guided by Allah in all things. Those who make this decision are '*ibad*' of Allah. This word describes those of Allah's slaves who have chosen to obey Him. In this sense, all slaves of Allah will be '*ibad*' in the Hereafter because none will have the freewill to choose to disobey Him. About that Day, Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'With whom will sovereignty rest on that Day? With Allah, the One who holds absolute sway over all that exists' (*Ghafir*: 16).

The revelation of the Quran is called *fard* ('an obligation' or 'binding') because it ordains moral responsibilities, which are usually difficult for the soul. Consider what Allah says about the prayer (*salat*), the most essential act of worship in Islam: 'This is hard indeed for anyone but the humble' (*al-Baqara*: 45). Only the humble understand the status of the prayer, they do not find it a heavy duty. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to say to Bilal, 'Relieve us with it [the Prayer], O Bilal!'<sup>(1)</sup> He also

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(1) Cited by Ahmad and Abu Dawud

said, 'Prayer has been made the coolness of my eye'.<sup>(1)</sup> The Prophet loved it and yearned for it until it became the ultimate source of his rest and repose.

We see that moral responsibilities seem difficult at first, and consequently they require the fortitude of faith to fulfil them. One will not bear the difficulty of doing something unless he trusts it will yield ample fruit. Faith is what motivates one to struggle for the Hereafter. For example, the Lord *the Most High* says about war: 'Fighting is ordained for you, though you dislike it...' (*al-Baqara*: 216). Of course the soul dislikes it, but if you remember the reward for it and that it will lead to either victory or martyrdom, you will yearn for it and be quick to heed its call. Before the Battle of Badr, one of the Companions heard what the reward of the martyr will be. He said, 'Is the only thing between me and paradise that I fight [in the battle] and be martyred?!' He was chewing a date at that time, but he immediately threw it down and rushed to the battlefield.<sup>(2)</sup>

Thus, the Lord *Glorified is He* promises ample rewards to urge the soul of the believer to eagerly do righteous good deeds. Some devote themselves very much to Him, fully understanding the reward awaiting them, to the extent that worship has grown to be almost a desire, a longing which they crave! One of the pious men once said, 'I fear that Allah will not reward me for my good deeds!' Asked why, he replied, 'They have grown to be almost a desire!' That is, he yearned for them as if they were effortless indulgences, just as sinners yearn for sins! When faith reaches such a state of firmness, it makes one a true slave of Allah who devotes himself to Him and trusts in His reward. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* used to stand in prayer throughout the night until his feet swelled [from standing so long]. When 'Aisha *Allah be pleased with her* asked him, 'Has Allah not forgiven you your sins, past and future [why do you exert yourself so much in voluntary worship]?' Prophet Muhammad replied, 'Should I not then be a grateful slave?'<sup>(3)</sup>

Then Allah *the Exalted* addressing Prophet Muhammad, says: '...will bring you back home...' (*al-Qasas*: 85). This is a promise of reward, of returning to his beloved Mecca even though his people dispelled him from it.

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(1) Cited by Ahmad, An-Nasa'i and Al-Hakim, on the authority of Anas

(2) Cited by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Jabir ibn Abdullah

(3) Cited by Al-Bukhari and Muslim

This verse was revealed in connection with the oppression that the Meccan idolaters inflicted on Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. The oppression was so great that he was forced to go to Taif to seek help. The people there were no less vicious than the Meccans, and therefore the Messenger of Allah found no help there and returned home broken and saddened. He found no one to secure him a safe return to Mecca, until finally Mut'im ibn 'Adey gave him his protection. That was a hard time when Prophet Muhammad, despite his glorious rank, found no one to help him or give him protection. The Companions had no power or influence at that time; in fact, they were encountering many difficulties in the Cause of Allah. The disbelievers of Quraysh had blockaded them in the Valley of Abu Taleb and had imposed on them a complete embargo, economically and socially. Muslims were denied access to food and water. They were forbidden from trading with their boycotters or establishing marriage relationships with them. That remained the case until they were forced to eat any scraps of food they could find and leaves from the trees.

Such were the reasons that forced Muslims to emigrate from Mecca. Emigration should be either to a place of safety or a place of faith. The first emigration was to a place of safety. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered his companions to move to Abyssinia where, the Messenger of Allah explained that there was a king who allowed none to be oppressed:<sup>(1)</sup> namely, King Negus of Abyssinia. That was proved right, for when Quraysh sent someone after them to speak to King Negus to send them back to Mecca, he refused to give them up and allow Quraysh to have their way with them, even though the gifts Quraysh sent him were grand and the temptation must have been great. This shows the greatness of Prophet Muhammad's intellect and his knowledge of the surrounding regions. He chose the place that will be most suitable to which his companions to emigrate. His choosing the king of Abyssinia could only have come through Divine Inspiration, or due to his shrewdness and tact, although he was an unlettered man who lived in an unlettered community. If the delegation of Quraysh had not gone to Abyssinia to seek out the Muslim emigrants, we will not have had evidence for the truth of what the Messenger of Allah said about its king.

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(1) Cited by Ibn Hisham in his *Biography of Prophet Muhammad*

King Negus was just and good to the Muslims who migrated to his country to seek his assistance and protection. Allah *Glorified is He* rewarded him by guiding him to the true religion. He embraced Islam, and Prophet Muhammad asked him to intermediate between him and Umm Habiba, whom the Prophet wanted to marry. Umm Habiba bint Abu Sufyan, Allah be pleased with her, was among the Muslim migrants to Abyssinia. She fled with her husband from Quraysh, but he converted to Christianity there. Keen to remain true to her faith, she left him. After that, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* married her.

These events illustrate two things. First, they illustrate the extent to which the believers were subject to injury and persecution from the disbelievers. Second, they also tell us to what extent a husband should be obeyed. Umm Habiba chose to immigrate with her husband, not solely out of love for him, but because she wanted to save her religion and remain steadfast in it. Hence, when he reverted to Christianity, she did not hesitate to leave him, upon which Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* proposed to her.

When King Negus died, Prophet Muhammad observed the Islamic funeral prayer and implored Allah's Mercy for him. This was the first emigration of Muslims. They immigrated to a place of safety, only to save their religion.

The second immigration was to a place of faith, Medina. After the first and second pledges of 'Aqaba, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* found people who agreed to extend aid to him and share the burden of the mission. The *Ansar* (the Helpers; Medinan Muslims) made great sacrifices for the sake of the faith, the like of which has never been witnessed in human history. A man may share his house with a dear friend, lend him his car, money or any of his material possessions, but not his wife! A man is most jealous when it comes to his wife(s). He does not allow any other man to even look at her. The *Ansar*, however, looked at things from quite a different perspective. They shared everything they had with their emigrant brothers. They sympathized with the fact that they had left their families and their homes, and that they were strangers and they were, naturally, in need of female companionship. A man of the *Ansar* used to tell his bother emigrant to look at his wives for him to divorce whoever his brother emigrant liked of them for his brother to marry her! Faith was so firm in their hearts that they used to sacrifice

every material gain for the cause of supporting their mission. They did not withhold anything from their fellow Muslims on whose shoulders was the responsibility of supporting Islam. They made such unprecedented sacrifices that are not even likely to be witnessed at any time after that.

Then came Allah's Command to Prophet Muhammad to also immigrate to Medina. He left in secret, but others, like 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* did not hide their departure. Upon leaving Mecca, 'Umar stood in public and challenged the disbelievers out loud, 'Whoever wants his mother to mourn him, his children to be orphaned, and his wife to be widowed, let him follow me beyond this valley!' Some might consider the secrecy of Prophet Muhammad's departure as an adequate reason to attack him. However, they do this on flimsy grounds. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was keen on providing an example for everyone to follow. Had he left Mecca in public, he will have made it obligatory for all Muslims to do the same, but what about those of them who were weak? Thus, he spared the weak the trouble and meanwhile left the strong to choose to leave secretly or publicly. By leaving secretly, he left no room for the weak to feel ashamed of leaving secretly as well. Furthermore, it is true that Prophet Muhammad left Mecca secretly, yet he passed in front of the assassins who lied in wait to kill him, sprinkling their faces with dust and saying, 'May these faces be disfigured!'<sup>(1)</sup>

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was guaranteed Divine Assistance, yet he was still keen on doing his part. He took the safest way to Medina, for had he taken the usual route, the Qurayshites will have caught him. They knew he was going to emigrate from Mecca after the pledge of 'Aqaba that he had concluded with the *Ansar* (Helpers; Medinan Muslims), and consequently they were lying in wait for him on his way to Medina. They sent spies to look for him and announced a fine reward for anyone who could bring him *peace and blessings be upon him* back to them. Anyone who reflects on the events of the Emigration will find that it was exactly planned to cover all possibilities. The Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to teach us, through the conduct of Prophet Muhammad, that we should not ignore the

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(1) Cited by Ahmad, Muslim and Ad-Darimi

means claiming that the Lord *the Most High* will do everything for us. Rather, we should make our plans, exhaust the possible means, and meanwhile put our trust in the Lord, for success comes only from Him.

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* left Mecca, which was his home and the most beloved place to his heart, he said, 'O Allah, You have made me leave the most beloved place to me, so take me to the most beloved place to You'.<sup>(1)</sup> Mecca was the dearest place to Prophet Muhammad and Medina was the dearest to Allah. As the Messenger of Allah approached Medina, his heart yearned for Mecca, and this is why Allah *Glorified is He* consoled him with these words: 'He who has made the Quran binding on you [O Prophet Muhammad] will bring you back home...' (*al-Qasas*: 85). The One Who charged you with the responsibility to fulfil the hardships of moral obligations and carry the burden of the Message will surely allow you to return home in victory. The eventual return of Prophet Muhammad to his home was very similar to the return of Prophet Musa (Moses) to his mother, for Allah said to her: '... We shall return him to you...' (*al-Qasas*: 85), not only return him, but also '... and make him a Messenger' (*al-Qasas*: 7). Allah promised her that her child will surely return to her, and return as a victorious Messenger as well. Just as Allah fulfilled His promise in returning Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* He fulfilled His promise of returning Prophet Muhammad victoriously to his beloved home, Mecca.

The Arabic word here which is translated as 'home' in the verse we are discussing is *ma'ad*, which means 'a place of return'. It is different from the word *maw'id* which means 'appointment'. It was a consolation from the Lord of the worlds that He will certainly return Prophet Muhammad to the place he yearned for and to which his heart was attached. The word *ma'ad* may also be understood to mean 'return to a renewed life', that is, a return to the Lord, to the Hereafter, as the Lord *the Most High* says in another verse: 'Whether We show you part of what We have promised them in this life or whether We take your soul back to Us first, it is to Us that they will be returned' (*Ghafir*: 77). Both meanings may be intended simultaneously in the verse under discussion.

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(1) Cited by Al-Hakim on the authority of Abu Hurayra

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘So say, “My Lord knows best who has brought true guidance and who is blatantly astray”’ (*al-Qasas*: 85). Allah means here to teach Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to argue with the disbelievers in a noble, respectful manner. The disbelievers accused the believers of being apostates who forsook the religion of their forefathers which they considered to be true, and embraced, as they thought, a false religion. Here Allah teaches His Prophet how to respond to them without being harsh or provocative. Minds need to be reasoned and debated with, not insulted or provoked, as Allah *the Most High* says: ‘Argue with them in the most courteous way...’ (*an-Nahl*: 125). Harsh argument only makes your opponent more entrenched in his obstinacy, while polite reasoning attracts the heart and causes the mind to incline to what you are saying. Consequently, Prophet Muhammad replied as his Lord taught him: ‘My Lord knows best who has brought true guidance and who is blatantly astray’ (*al-Qasas*: 85). Allah knows who of the two parties are adherents to the Truth and who have strayed in plain falsehood.

After that, Allah *the Most High* gives Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* a proof, drawn from his own experience of life, for the Prophet to be sure that his Lord was by his side and will never forsake him. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to reassure Prophet Muhammad that He will keep His promise to him. Could it be that Allah has chosen him to bear the Message only to forsake him after that?! The Lord *the Most High* says:

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَرْجُو أَنْ يُلْقَىٰ إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابُ إِلَّا رَحْمَةً  
مِّن رَّبِّكَ ۖ فَلَا تَكُونَنَّ ظَهِيرًا لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٨٦﴾

**You yourself could not have expected the Scripture to be sent to you; it came only as a mercy from your Lord. So give no help to the disbelievers [86] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 86)**

If you are amazed, Prophet Muhammad, or doubtful that We shall return you to your home, because the disbelievers were lying in wait for you there, consider how the Message first came to you. Did you ever think or expect that you will be a Messenger of Allah? It never crossed your mind, yet Allah *Glorified is He* gave it to you and chose you for it. How would Allah Who

gave you the Message, when you never expected it, deny you that which you love and yearn for? This verse confirms the truth of the phrase: '... will bring you back home...' (*al-Qasas*: 85). The Lord *the Most High* refers to the fact that Prophet Muhammad did not expect to receive the Message in another verse, saying: 'so We have revealed a spirit to you [O Prophet Muhammad] by Our Command: you knew neither the Scripture nor the faith, but We made it [the Quran] a light, guiding with it whoever We will of Our slaves...' (*ash-Shura*: 52). Putting it simply, the One who gave you the Message is in no way incapable of granting you what you seek. Exalted is He above every imperfection! Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not expect to be given the Book, but '... it came only as a Mercy from your Lord...' (*al-Qasas*: 86). It means: you did not hope that this Book will come to you, yet, We gave it to you; We did not do this except as a Mercy to you from your Lord.

When you called them to the Truth that had come to you from your Lord, the disbelievers opposed you and expelled you, therefore: '... give no help to the disbelievers' (*al-Qasas*: 86). The disbelievers had proposed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* that he should worship their gods for one year, and then they will worship his God for one year!<sup>(1)</sup> Allah sent down this verse to warn Prophet Muhammad not to help them persist in their misguidance or to concede to their falsehood in any way.

In compliance with his Lord's Command, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* never assisted any transgressor, even if he was one of his followers. We have previously mentioned the occasion on which the following verse was revealed: 'We have sent down the Scripture to you [O Prophet Muhammad] with the Truth so that you can judge between people in accordance with what Allah has shown you. Do not be an advocate for those who betray their trust' (*an-Nisa*': 105). A Muslim man from Medina, Tu'ma ibn Ubayriq, stole a suit of armour and accused a Jew, Zayd ibn Samin, of doing it. When the shield was found at the house of the Jew, its owner, Qutada ibn Nu'man, accused the Jew of stealing it. When the truth

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(1) Cited by *As-Suyuti on the authority of Ibn Abbas*



of what had happened was found out, Tu‘ma brought his family to intercede with Prophet Muhammad for him to rule against the Jew. The Prophet was reluctant to let the Jew win over the Muslim, especially as Islam was still new and he feared that incident will present Islam in a mistaken light. But on that occasion, this verse was revealed: ‘We have sent down the Scripture to you [O Prophet Muhammad] with the Truth so that you can judge between people...’, that is, all people, believers and disbelievers: ‘... in accordance with what Allah has shown you. Do not be an advocate for those who betray their trust’ (*an-Nisa*: 105). Allah commanded Prophet Muhammad never to argue on their behalf or resolve any matter affected by any bias for them. In the verse that follows it, Allah says, addressing Prophet Muhammad: ‘Ask Allah for forgiveness: He is Most Forgiving and Merciful’ (*an-Nisa*: 106). Allah *Glorified is He* commands His Prophet to implore His Forgiveness for the thoughts he had concerning that matter.

Some verses of the Quran appear at first glance to be stern with Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* such as: ‘If [the Prophet] had attributed some fabrication to Us, We will certainly have seized his right hand and cut off the artery of his heart’ (*al-Haqqa*: 44-46). All discourse of this nature found in the Quran is not actually meant to be severe against Prophet Muhammad. Rather, the Lord *Glorified is He* wants to attract the attention of all Muslims that if such admonition is addressed to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* himself, then how about you? For example, you tell your own child that you will inflict a certain punishment on him if he messed up the house only to send indirect admonition to your clumsy servant, as the saying goes, ‘It is you I mean, so listen well, O neighbour!’ A pious man once said:

If you find a warning in the Glorious Quran  
Addressed to the Prophet, the noblest man,  
Then be wise and heed the implied messages:  
‘It is you I mean, so listen well, My slaves!’

Then the Lord *the Most High* says:

وَلَا يَصُدُّكَ عَنْ ءَايَاتِ اللَّهِ بَعْدَ إِذْ أُنْزِلَتْ إِلَيْكَ  
وَأَدْعُ إِلَىٰ رَبِّكَ وَلَا تَكُونَنَّ مِنَ الْمُشْرِكِينَ ﴿٨٧﴾

**Do not let them turn you away from God's revelations after they have been revealed to you. Call people to your Lord. Never become one of those who ascribe partners to God [87] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 87)**

That is, do not let the idolaters dissuade you from delivering the Message of your Lord and reciting His Revelations to people. Allah's Words: 'Never become one of those who ascribe partners to Allah' is also an example of, 'It is you I mean, so listen well, O neighbour'. Prophet Muhammad was as far from polytheism as he could be; clearly, the warning is addressed to us.

The Lord *the Most High* concludes the chapter of *al-Qasas* with the verse:

وَلَا تَدْعُ مَعَ اللَّهِ إِلَهًا آخَرَ لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا هُوَ كُلُّ شَيْءٍ هَالِكٌ  
إِلَّا وَجْهَهُ لَهُ الْحُكْمُ وَإِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿٨٨﴾

**Do not call out to any other god beside God, for there is no god but Him. Everything will perish except His Face. His is the Judgement and to Him you shall all be brought back [88] (The Quran, *al-Qasas*: 88)**

Here is another instance where Allah addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* with a message and a warning actually meant for us. The Messenger of Allah will never have even thought of ascribing divinity to any but Allah, *Exalted is He*. No deity is worthy of worship except Allah, the One True God.

If there were any other deities besides Allah *Glorified is He* they would have opposed Him and confronted His will. Allah says, 'Say (O Muhammad), 'If there were (other) deities with Him (as they claim), surely, they would strive to find a way to Him (Allah) who Owns the Throne.' (*al-Isra*': 42) If such deities existed, they would have rushed to seize the Lordship from Allah or they would have drawn themselves nearer to Him *Glorified is He* to seize more power.

‘Everything is bound to be perished, except His (Eternal) Self (*wajhahu*)’. The Arabic word used here is *wajh* (face). In the Arabic language, the word face is used to assign the first attribute encountered in a person. We must describe Allah *Glorified is He* with the attributes that He uses to describe Himself, but without overlooking the rule that Allah had mentioned in another verse: ‘There is nothing like Him’ (*al-Qasas*: 88). So, Allah *Glorified is He* has a face, but it is not like the faces of His creation. The same is true in the case of the all the other attributes that Allah ascribes to Himself. The words that Allah *Glorified is He* uses are only lexically analogous of the attributes He created in His creatures, as Allah’s Existence transcends His creation’s existence.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘everything (*kulu shay*)’ is bound to be perished.’ They say that the word *shay*’ (thing) is the genus of all genera. This means that every object that has an existence is a ‘thing’, however small or insignificant it might be.

Some scholars have discussed whether Allah *Glorified is He* can be named a *shay*’ (thing) because He exists. They said that the origin of the word *shay*’ is the verb *shaa`a*’ which means ‘willed’. So, a *shay*’ (thing) is that which was willed by someone to come into existence. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* cannot be named a *shay*’ because no one preceded Allah’s Existence, but rather, Allah *Glorified is He* is the Essential Existence.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse: ‘...and there is not a single thing but extols His Limitless Glory and Praise’ (*al-Isra*’: 44). This means that every existing thing that had not previously existed praises Allah *Glorified is He*. Some people say that this mention of glorification and praise is merely a figure of speech. These people say that inanimate objects do not praise Allah *Glorified is He* with actual articulations of praise, but their existence is only an indication of the Glory of their Creator. However, Allah *Glorified is He* says in this same verse: ‘...but you (O men) fail to grasp the manner of their glorifying Him’ (*al-Isra*’: 44). This indicates that their glorifications are real articulations of praise. Therefore, everything that exists glorifies Allah *Glorified is He* with its own language, according to its nature.

Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* confirmed that birds have a distinct method of speech and that the mountains glorify Him in their own right. You would

be able to recognise their extolments of Allah *Glorified is He* if you had an understanding of their languages. However, since we still do not grasp the languages of other human beings fully, we are indeed further away from understanding the languages of stones and trees. If another human who speaks a language foreign to you is glorifying Allah, you would not be able to understand that extolment, even though that language is using the same methods of articulation and similar sounds as your language.

People report one of the Prophetic miracles by saying that several pebbles glorified Allah while being in Prophet Muhammad's blessed hand. However, the correct way of reporting that miracle is to say that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* heard the stones glorifying Allah when he was near them, simply because these stones glorify Allah at all times. Another example of such miracles was the way a tree trunk yearned to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* during his sermon.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'and (consider how) your Lord has inspired the bees' (*an-Nahl*: 68). Allah also says concerning the earth: 'As your Lord will have inspired it (the earth) to do' (*az-Zalzala*: 5). He also confirmed that ants have a speech of their own and that the hoopoe spoke to Prophet Sulaiman (Solomon) *peace be upon him*. Therefore, every object in creation has a language by which it understands its own kind. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...Each (of them) knows indeed how to pray unto Him and to glorify Him; and Allah has full knowledge of all that they do' (*an-Nur*: 41). Subsequently, by Allah's will, He may allow some of His creatures to understand the language of other creatures or objects.

As for the meaning of the words: '...bound to be perished' (*al-Qasas*: 88), some people think that cessation and expiry only applies to those things which have a soul, like humans and animals. Allah says, 'That he who would perish might perish in clear evidence of the truth, and that he who would remain alive might live in clear evidence of the truth' (*al-Anfal*: 42). Perishing is the opposite of being alive, and to our minds, animate objects perish when the souls depart their bodies. However, we must always be reminded that life has a broader meaning than that, and every perishable object has its own form of life, even if we do not perceive it.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...except His (Eternal) Self (*wajhahu*)’ (*al-Qasas*: 88). The words, ‘Eternal Self’, refer to Allah, Himself *Glorified is He*. Allah did not use the words, ‘Everything is bound to perish except Him’ because He *Glorified is He* is not a ‘thing’ (*shay*’), as we previously mentioned. The word *wajh* here has another meaning, as we say in Arabic, ‘I did that good deed for the sake of Allah (*le-wajh-illah*)’. This means that the good deed was performed with Allah *Glorified is He* in mind. Therefore, the meaning of this verse is that everything will perish except that which was done for the sake of Allah *Glorified is He*. These righteous deeds will never perish because they will harvest ample rewards in this world and in the hereafter.

Then, Allah says, ‘With Him rests all judgment; and unto Him shall you all be brought back’ (*al-Qasas*: 88). This is the judgment of Allah *Glorified is He* in the hereafter, when He will say, ‘With whom does Sovereignty rest on this Day?’ (*Ghafir*: 16) Why did Allah only refer to this sovereignty on the Day of Judgment, when in fact, He possesses the ultimate Sovereignty in this world and the Day of Judgment? Scholars say that in this world, Allah *Glorified is He* granted some sovereignty to some of His creatures, as He says about Nimrod: ‘...because Allah had granted him kingship’ (*al-Baqara*: 258), and: ‘(You Allah) grant dominion unto whom You will and take away dominion from whom You will’ (*Al-Imran*: 26).

Therefore, the Ultimate Sovereignty belongs to Allah *Glorified is He* and He grants some sovereignty to His creatures in this world for material means. However, in the Hereafter, sovereignty will be removed from everyone except Him. Human beings will even lose control over their limbs, as the limbs testify against them as to what they did in their worldly lives. If you want to recognize the truth of this concept, even in this world, consider all the matters of fate, like illness and death that inflict human beings, while they are completely helpless in refusing them.

Then Allah says, ‘...and unto Him shall you all be brought back (*turja`oon*)’ (*al-Qasas*: 88). They will be called to account in the Hereafter, for Allah *Glorified is He* did not create us in vain and did not disregard us. Rather, we will surely return to Him and made responsible for what we have done. Therefore, we must respect this return to Allah *Glorified is He* and revere what He has demanded from us in this world.

The passive verb *turja`oon* (you shall be brought back) is found many times in the Quran. It is used in reference to the disbelievers who disobey Allah *Glorified is He*. These words inform these disbelievers that they shall be returned to Him, without their consent, to be punished for their sins. If they refused Allah *Glorified is He* in this world, they cannot refuse His commands in the hereafter. Other verses use the verb in the active form: *tarji`oon* (you shall return). In this form, it refers to the believers who yearn for their reward in the Hereafter and are therefore rushing to accept it.

the chapter of

***al-'Ankabut***





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

**T**he chapter of *al-'Ankabut* <sup>(1)</sup> (The Spider):



### *Alif Lam Mim* [1] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 1)

We have already mentioned the concept of these distinct letters that begin some chapters of the Quran. Every time this phenomenon was repeated in the verses we have studied so far, we mentioned the different concepts upon which these letters can be understood. Since Allah *Glorified is He* has repeated them in many chapters, we must also repeat our discussion of their manifest connotation in the start of certain Quranic chapters

We previously said that, lexically, the Noble Quranic verses and chapters are based on the foundation of continuation and not interruption. Consider Allah's words: '(They are) two (gardens) of the deepest green. Which, then, of your Lord's powers can you disavow? In (each of) these two (gardens) will two springs gush forth. Which, then, of your Lord's powers can you disavow?' (*ar-Rahman*: 64-67) Allah did not stop at the verse: 'Which, then, of your Lord's powers can you *tukadhiban-e* (disavow)?', but rather, continued

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(1) This chapter is the 29th chapter in the final order of the Noble Quran and contains 69 verses. There is a difference in opinion regarding whether the chapter was revealed in Mecca (Al-Hassan, 'Ikrima, Ata' and Jabir) or Medina (Ibn Abbas and Qatada). Another opinion stated that it was revealed in Mecca except for its first ten verses that were revealed in Medina regarding the Muslims that remained in Mecca. 'Ali ibn Abu Taleb stated that some of its verses were revealed in Mecca and some verses were revealed in Medina. It was revealed after the chapter of *ar-Rum* and before the chapter of *al-Mutaffifin*. It is the 84<sup>th</sup> chapter revealed in the Quran.

the concept: 'In (each of) these two (gardens) will two springs gush forth' (*ar-Rahman*: 66). He uses the *kasra* (denoted by the *e*) at the end of the word *tukadhiban*, and did not end the word *tukadhiban* with a *sukoon*. Therefore, it is clear that each Quranic verse is continued into the following verse without separation. For this reason, during Quranic recitation, there is no obligatory pause between the verses. A person may only stop between the verses to draw their breath. Then, they should repeat the words of the preceding verse in order to connect the verses together.

Likewise, the successive Quranic chapters are to be connected together, so when you finish one chapter, you are not allowed to stop the recitation with a flat consonant. For instance, Allah *Glorified is He* did not end the final verse in the last chapter with the word *turja`oon*, but rather ended it with the word *turja`oon-a*. Therefore, this final vowel at the end of the word *turja`oon* connected the last verse in the preceding chapter of *al-Qasas* with the first verse of the following chapter of *al-Ankabut*.

Therefore, this is a general feature of the verses and chapters of the Noble Quran except for these distinct letters at the beginnings of some chapters. Contrary to the recitation of all the other words of the Quran, these specific and distinct letters are to be separated with pauses and flat consonants at the end of their pronunciation. Therefore, we are to recite this verse as, 'Alif. Lam. Mim', with pauses between the letters. We should not recite them as, 'Alifun-lamun-mimun', with a *tanween* (*nun*) at the end of each letter. They are distinct letters that should not be combined into one whole word. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'I do not say, 'Alif. Lam. Mim' is a single letter. Instead, I say *Alif* is a letter, *Lam* is a letter, and *Mim* is a letter.'<sup>(1)</sup> This Prophetic saying emphasised the notion that Allah *Glorified is He* separated these letters in recitation.

We mentioned previously that these letters are the raw components of the Quran as Allah's Quranic speech is weaved from the likes of these letters. We

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(1) *It is narrated by At-Tirmidhi on the authority of Ibn Mas`ud, that Prophet Muhammad said, 'whoever reads a letter from Allah's book will be granted a reward. Each reward is multiplied by ten times. I do not say, 'Alif. Lam. Mim', is a single letter. Instead, I say Alif is a letter, Lam is a letter and Mim is a letter.'*

gave an example to illustrate the importance of this concept. If you want to determine and compare the skill of several tailors, you should give all of them the same type of fabric from which to weave garments. You should not give one of them a piece of cotton, and then give the second tailor a piece of wool while giving the third one a piece of silk. Silk, for example, is softer and lighter than the other types of fabric. You would not be able to compare these tailors' skills properly if the raw materials they received were different.

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to illustrate the proof of the Quranic miracle in these letters. The letters: '*Alif. Lam. Mim.*' are distinct Arabic letters. They were presented as a challenge for the Arabs to bring verses resembling the Quranic rhetoric using these same letters which they eloquently used in their daily rhetoric and articulate poetry. Despite their assumed mastery in using these letters, they were completely unable to compile verses that can contend with the eloquence of the Quranic verses. Therefore, this clearly indicated that the rhetorical style of the Quran was a sublime revelation by Allah *Glorified is He*.

Additionally, the letters are spelt out in this verse without being combined in a single word. An illiterate person may know a particular word from daily usage, such as the collective pronunciation of the word 'write', for instance. However, that illiterate person will be unable to spell out the words of the individual letters as they have not studied them academically in a class. On the other hand, if you ask a literate school pupil to spell out the word 'write', he will say that it is composed of the letters: 'w, r, i, t and e' because he was taught these letters distinctively.

That being said, we know that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was illiterate, and therefore, did not know the individual letters of the Arabic alphabet. So, how did he pronounce the names of the letters *Alif, Lam, Mim, Ta, Ha, Ya, Sin* and *Qaf* that are used in the verses at the start of several chapters in the Quran? This is because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was taught these letters by Allah *Glorified is He*.

Furthermore, this concept of distinct letters teaches us the importance of the direct interaction between the student and a teacher when studying the Quran. A person studying the Quran on his own will mistakenly pronounce

the verse: 'Alif. Lam. Mim.' just as they pronounce the complete word *alam* in the verse, '*Alam nashrah laka sadrak*' (*ash-Sharh*: 1) which is at the beginning of the chapter of Ash-Sharh. This is because the verse: 'Alif. Lam. Mim' and the word, *alam* are composed of the same letters and an unaware learner will pronounce them similarly.

The verse: 'Alif. Lam. Mim' might also serve the purpose of alerting the attention of the listener. The Quran was revealed in the language and rhetorical style of the Arabs. Therefore, it employs many of the rhetorical devices and subtleties of the Arabic language. For example, the pre-Islamic poet 'Amr ibn Kulthum once said:

Nay ('Ala), bring us the jug and give us our morning drink,  
And leave not behind the wines of Andareena.

What is the purpose of the word 'ala (nay) in this poet's first verse, when the meaning is established without using it? The word 'ala (nay) alerted the Arabic listeners when they were not paying attention, so that they do not miss any following words that the speaker had to say. This is similar to calling a person's name out to direct his attention to your words. A surprised listener might miss certain crucial words from the speech if not alarmed by such introductions. Therefore, the purpose of the distinct letters at the beginning of these chapters might be to draw the listeners' attention to the important speech that follows these letters.

Furthermore, the letters may still have other meanings that are still open to interpretation, just like a perpetual spring providing sustenance to every person according to their capacity, Then, Allah says:

أَحْسِبَ النَّاسُ أَنْ يُتْرَكُوا أَنْ يَقُولُوا ءَامَنَّا وَهُمْ لَا يُفْتَنُونَ ﴿٢﴾

**Do people think they will be left alone after saying  
'We believe' without being put to the test? [2]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 2)**

The Arabic verb *hasiba* is used here to mean: 'assume'. Another similar Arabic word is the verb *hasaba* or *yahsibu* which means: 'to count'.

Allah *Glorified is He* phrased this verse in the form of a question. This phrasing indicates that people are incorrect in assuming that Allah *Glorified is He* will not subject them to trials and tests. Allah wants people of real fortitude to carry the message of Islam, because no one can carry the call to Islam without strong faith. It is these firm believers who can bear the tribulations of the message and the integrity of conveying it.

Faith is not just a simple utterance of belief, but is a great responsibility. This responsibility prevented the idolaters of Quraysh from believing in Allah because they knew that the testament: 'There is no deity but Allah (*La illaha ila Allah*)' is a declaration that has consequences and a code of life that orders certain commandments. This testament declares that no one is to be obeyed and worshipped except Allah *Glorified is He*. The disbelievers did not want this responsibility to affect their social position and timely powers.

So, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Did people assume (*hasiba*) that they will be left to say, 'We believe' (*al-'Ankabut*: 2) because the integrity of faith cannot be asserted by the mere declaration of certain words. On the contrary, words of faith need to be tested to prove their truthfulness. So, if the speaker of these words bears these trials and tribulations, this will indicate that their faith is true.

Allah *Glorified is He* emphasises this concept in another verse of the Quran, in which He says, 'And among mankind is he who worships Allah upon a slight edge. So, in case a charitable gain is bestowed upon him, he is composed therewith, but in case a temptation afflicts him, he turns over his face. (Thereby) he loses the present (life) and the Hereafter; that evidently is the greatest loss.' (*al-Hajj*: 11)

Allah *Glorified is He* tested the earlier believers with signs and miracles that went against natural laws. These believers trusted these miracles and believed in the truth of the messenger who brought them. Those who were unsure, confused, and in doubt, denied these signs and disbelieved in the divine message.

An example of the righteous approach of an early believer was the conduct of Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* after the night of *Al-'Isra` wal M'iraj* (Prophetic Migration to Jerusalem and Ascension to the Heavens).

When the disbelievers heard the events of the night from Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they related these events to Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* in an accusative and disbelieving tone. Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* answered their accusations by saying, 'If he (Prophet Muhammad) indeed related that he experienced these events, he spoke the truth. I believe him in what is more difficult to accept, that the revelation descends to him from the Heavens in a short part of the day.'<sup>(1)</sup> Abu Bakr was named *As-Siddiq* (the believer in the truth) due to this event. His faithful statement was at a time when some people retracted their belief and denied the events that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* related of the Night of Ascension.

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* intended these miracles to be difficult for a mind to accept, in order to examine, and test the integrity and the beliefs of those who declared their faith. Thereafter, the mission would only be undertaken by those who had firm devotion and conviction. These were the believers who were certain of the truth of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and all that he brought from his Lord.

Previously, we illustrated the foolishness of the Meccan idolaters who denied that the Night of Ascension had occurred. They asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'Do you claim that you went to Jerusalem in a single night, when we take a month to reach it on the backs of our camels?''<sup>(2)</sup> They ignored Allah's words: 'Limitless in His Glory is He (Allah) who transported His servant' (*al-Isra'*: 1). Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not say, 'I transported myself of my own accord'. Rather, he related that he was transported by Allah's Power. Similarly, if someone came to you and said, 'I took my young child to the top of Mount Everest', it would be foolish to ask him accusingly, 'How could a baby climb to the top of Mount Everest'?

We also mentioned that the time taken during any action represents the strength of the one performing the action. A weight which may take a young child several trips to move, may easily be carried by a single adult's hand.

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(1) Narrated by Al-Hakim, on the authority of `A`isha *Allah be pleased with her*

(2) Narrated by Ibn Hisham in his *Sira*

Therefore, the period of time needed to move the object has an inverse relationship with the strength of the carrier, as time decreases when strength increases. Hence, the person who travels to Alexandria on a donkey will be much slower than a person using a car or a plane. So, judge the plausibility of any action according to the power of its doer.

Since the action of Ascension was done by the Ultimate Power of Allah *Glorified is He* it took no time at all. This is a concept that minds do not encompass or accept without faith in Allah's Power.

Allah tests you because He has chosen you for a great mission. No one is fit for this mission except those who possess strong faith and certainty. Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned this concept in several Quranic chapters. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And most certainly shall We try you by means of danger and hunger, loss of worldly goods, lives and (labour's) fruits. But give glad tidings unto those who are patient in adversity' (*al-Baqara*: 155), 'And most certainly We shall try you all, so that We might mark out those of you who strive (in Our cause) and are patient in adversity: for We shall put to a test (the truth of) your assertions' (Muhammad: 31) and 'Did you assume that you could enter paradise, without Allah choosing those of you who have striven hard (in His cause)?' (*Al-'Imran*: 142)

These trials are like the examinations of aptitude that we require students to perform so we can assess their levels and the tasks they are able to complete. Therefore, we should not admonish these trials themselves, but rather judge their results. The results of these tests will determine which people are more capable of carrying out the mission that they have been assigned.

'Did people assume (*hasiba*) that they will be left to say, 'We believe', without being put to tests and *yuftanoon* (tempted)?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 2) The Arabic word *yuftanoon* means: to be tried and tempted. This word is derived from the word *fitna*, which refers to the process of smelting gold in fire to remove its impurities. This process preserves the most valuable parts of the gold so that it fits the purpose for which it is required.

Another example of this is a similitude stated by Allah *Glorified is He* to illustrate the relation between truth and falsehood. Allah says, 'He (Allah)

sends down water from the sky, so that the valleys are filled with running rivers, each to its determined (course). The (river's) flood carries away (on its surface) a foaming scum. And, likewise, scum rises from that (metal) which they kindle upon the fire, when they seek (to make) ornaments or utensils. Thus, Allah sets forth the parable of truth and falsehood. As for the scum, it goes away as refused debris. (And) as for whatever profits mankind, it stays in the earth. Thus, Allah sets forth (similar) parables.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17)

Therefore, these trials and tribulations were made to identify those believers who are true to their word, in order to separate them from the liars and feigners. Those who are truthful will have patience and forbearance, and the ones who lie will deny the truth and remain hesitant in their lives, Then, Allah says:

وَلَقَدْ فَتَنَّا الَّذِينَ مِنْ قَبْلِهِمْ فَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ صَدَقُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْكَاذِبِينَ ﴿٣﴾

**We tested those who went before them: God will certainly mark out which ones are truthful and which are lying [3]**  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 3)

In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* was consoling the early followers of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who were harshly persecuted and injured. These early companions *Allah be pleased with them* were beaten with whips under the heat of the sun and had heavy stones placed on their bellies. They were made to suffer long periods of hunger, to the extent that they ate carcasses and leaves from the trees. Allah *Glorified is He* was consoling them by informing them that they were not the first people to be tried in this way. This was a call for them to have patience as the believers before them were patient.

‘(And) indeed We already tempted the ones that were before them’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 3). For example, consider the trials that the children of Israel suffered at the hands of Pharaoh. Your trials are lighter than their harsh sufferings and are more lenient than their trials, by the Mercy of Allah. ‘So indeed, Allah definitely knows the ones who (act) sincerely, and indeed, Allah definitely knows the liars’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 3).

Some people might ask, ‘Did Allah not know their true natures even before He tested them?’ Indeed Allah *Glorified is He* knows the true nature of



His servants. The purpose of these trials is not for Allah to know their true states, but rather, to show the servants what is known about them. We may present an example for this, and Allah *Glorified is He* is beyond comparison. If a teacher grades his students without an exam, the failed student might exclaim, 'If you had tested me, I would have passed'! When the teacher then chooses to test that lazy student, he does fail appropriately. The purpose of the exam was to inform the student of their true academic level.

In the same way, Allah *Glorified is He* tests His servants in this world to show them what He already knows about them. He will give them tests to show them their own states so that they cannot deny them. Therefore, they will be witnesses against themselves, just as their own limbs will testify against them in the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

أَمْ حَسِبَ الَّذِينَ يَعْمَلُونَ السَّيِّئَاتِ أَنْ يَسْفُتُونَا سَاءَ مَا يَحْكُمُونَ ﴿٤﴾

**Do the evildoers think they can escape us? How ill they judge! [4] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 4)**

This verse also starts with the question: 'Do they assume?' However, this verse refers to those people who commit bad deeds, '...that they can escape (outrun) Us' (*al-'Ankabut*: 4). Do they think that can flee from Allah's punishment and requital for their sins? When you outrun someone, this means that you are fleeing from them while they are chasing you, this verse states that these sinners will not be able to escape their punishment, and that their conjecture is indeed mistaken: 'Indeed, wrong and false is their judgment' (*al-'Ankabut*: 4).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

مَنْ كَانَ يَرْجُوا لِقَاءَ اللَّهِ فَإِنْ أَجَلَ اللَّهُ لَاتٍ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٥﴾

**But as for those who strive for their meeting with God, God's appointed time is bound to come; He is the All Seeing, the All Knowing [5] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 5)**

The phrase: 'Whoever is hoping to meet Allah' refers to a person who believes in the Day of Resurrection and is waiting for it while working for its

reward. He believes that Allah created us, made this world to grant us blessed lives and will resurrect us again so that we are questioned for our actions. If man does not worship Allah *Glorified is He* to thank Him for the worldly blessings; he should at least worship Allah in fear of meeting His possible punishment in the Hereafter.

The people of insight maintain that there is a difference between those who seek the Hereafter hoping for Allah's rewards and Mercy, and those who seek the Hereafter purely for the sake of meeting Allah without fear from Hell or desire for Paradise. Rabi'a Al-'Adawiyya described this in the following verses of poetry:

They all worship out of fear of the fire,  
Seeing salvation as enough fortune  
Or to dwell amidst gardens in Paradise  
In fine palaces, to drink from its springs  
I have no regard for Paradise or Hell,  
I seek no substitute for my Beloved Lord.

She loves Allah *Glorified is He* for His Lordship, and not due to fear from Hell or desire for Paradise. She also said, 'O my Lord. If You see that I love You out of desire for Your Paradise, deny me it, and if You see that I love You out of fear of Your Hell, burn me therein.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *al-Kahf*: 'Hence, whoever hopes to meet his Lord (on the Day of Judgment), let him do righteous deeds, and let him not ascribe unto anything a share of the worship that is due to his Lord (alone)' (*al-Kahf*: 110). Do not hope to meet anything, even paradise because Allah's meeting is greater than every reward and should be sought for its own sake.<sup>(2)</sup>

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(1) From Proofreader: This information is per the knowledge and belief of Sheikh Sha'rawi *may Allah rest his soul* and it was stated by him to further clarify certain points, but it does not necessarily confirm to the scientific facts and information proven true.

(2) From Proofreader: This information is per the knowledge and belief of Sheikh Sha'rawi *may Allah rest his soul* and it was stated by him to further clarify certain points, but it does not necessarily confirm to the scientific facts and information proven true.

Allah emphasises this concept using more than one rhetorical tool of linguistic emphasis: '...for, indeed (*inna*), the appointed time set by Allah is bound to come (*la-aatin*)' (*al-'Ankabut*: 5). The words *inna* and *la* are two Arabic particles used for emphasis. Allah also used the active particle (*la-aatin*) (bound to come) which indicates the certainty of an event's occurrence. There is a similar lexical emphasis used in the verse: 'Everything will be perished (*halik*)' (*al-Qasas*: 88). Allah used the word *halik* (perished) instead of the word *sayahlak* (will perish) as the word *halik* is an active particle. Allah also tells Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in another verse: 'Yet, verily, thou art bound to be dead, (O Prophet Muhammad) and, verily, they, too, are bound to be dead (*mayyit*)' (*az-Zumar*: 30). Allah addressed them in this manner telling them that they are bound to be dead *mayyit* instead of telling them that they will die (*satamoot*) because the first lexical manner issues more emphasis in the Arabic language.

When you predict something in the future, you traditionally say, 'It will happen', and when you issue a threat to someone, you may say, 'I will enforce the following punishment'. While uttering such predictions in the future, you are actually speaking about events that you do not have the means to guarantee. Indeed, you cannot be sure that you or other people will live until the following day. In addition, you may change your mind about carrying out these actions or lose the ability to fulfil your threats due to illness or accident. On the other hand, Allah has complete power over everything. Nothing can escape His commands and time has no influence over His actions. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* does not say, 'The appointed time set by Allah will be coming', but rather: 'bound to come' with absolute certainty.

We spoke previously about the meaning of the verse: 'Allah's judgment has arrived. Do not, therefore, call for its speedy advent.' (*an-Nahl*: 1) Some people with superficial perceptions objected to this verse. They asked, 'How can someone call for something that has already arrived'? They did not understand the meanings of Allah's words or the subtleties of the Arabic language. Allah *Glorified is He* controls the future. Therefore, in Allah's sight, all the events of the future have already come to pass because nothing can stop His will from being fulfilled, and nothing can stand in His way *Glorified is He*. The phrase:

‘the appointed time set by Allah’ appears in several verses in the Quran. These verses include the verse in which Allah says, ‘And for all people, an appointed term has been set: and when (the end of) their term approaches, they can neither delay it by a single moment, nor can they hasten it’ (*al-A‘raf*: 34).

The verse we are now discussing says, ‘...the appointed time set by Allah is bound to come.’ There are two set events in a person’s life. The first set point in time is death that ends the individual’s life in this world. The second set point in time is his resurrection in the Hereafter to meet Allah *Glorified is He*. Therefore, these two set events are connected.

When Allah presents us with a matter of His Knowledge that we have not seen, He helps us to understand it by relating it to a tangible and familiar entity so that the mind can move from the material knowledge to the unseen abstract. The life spans of people in this world are diverse. Some human beings die in the womb and never come into this world; others take a single breath and then die, while many live for years or decades until their death. So, there is no set age or time for death to come, nor any set cause. Some people die of illness, others die by drowning and many others die after old age. An Arabic poet said:

Do not think that sickness is a cause of death,

No matter how grave the sickness might be.

Many a sick man was cured of his ails,

And many a healthy man met his decree.

Another Arabic poet also said:

The one in full health, was taken by death,

The sick one remained, upon finding strength.

Sometimes, epidemics spread disease through populations of people, yet some die whilst others live. Therefore, death has no fixed order. Allah says, ‘And for all people a term has been set: and when (the end of) their term approaches, they can neither delay it by a single moment, nor can they hasten it’ (*al-A‘raf*: 34). We find that life’s events confirm this concept, for there is neither a single time for death, nor a single cause of demise.

The truth of the first promise, which we can confirm by observing how all the creatures die, should make us trust that the divinely promised resurrection is bound to come. In the first set point, people's lives ended in various ways and at different times. In the second set point, Allah *Glorified is He* will revive all the lives that He created. They will all be resurrected at the same time with a single blast of the trumpet and everyone will be held accountable for their actions. We had different experiences in the first appointed time of death, but our experiences during the second appointed time of resurrection will be uniform.

We previously mentioned that there are three forms of time. The present which we are witnessing is preceded by a past which we have lost and will be followed by a future. We are similarly ignorant of the ancient past and the coming future. Allah gives us proofs for the things we cannot see through material examples in the part of existence that is visible to us. For example, we do not specifically know how Allah *Glorified is He* created us. We were only informed that man's origins came from dust that was mixed with water to form mud. The mud was shaped in the form of dark clay and this clay was shaped in a similar manner to the formation of pottery. Then, Allah made human beings reproduce. Their children start from single drops of sperm that become leech-like clots. These clots are then transformed into morsels of flesh. Thereafter, deeply embedded in this flesh, starts the development of the bones. Although modern science has shown us these particular concepts of creation in the successive stages of embryonic development, the early creation from dust still remains a theoretical matter that is not definitely outlined.

Therefore, we should not eagerly submit to anyone who claims that they have definite knowledge of the earlier stages of creations because Allah *Glorified is He* warns us about these false guides. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'I did not make them witnesses of the creation of the heavens and the earth, nor of the creation of their own selves; and neither do I (have any need to) take as My helpers those (beings) that lead (men) astray' (*al-Kahf*: 51).

Since they have no definite knowledge of the earliest stages of the creation of mankind or the creation of the universe, do not submit to them or consider them as guides. Take your guidance from the Book of your Lord, who created all things. Indeed, their stumbling ignorance about the universe and the origin

of mankind proves their feigning of knowledge, from which Allah has warned us. Therefore, how can we consider such concepts as the theory that man evolved from apes as an undisputed fact?

Allah *Glorified is He* ordered the angels upon the creation of Adam *peace be upon him*: 'And when I have formed him fully and breathed into him of My spirit, fall down before him in prostration' (*al-Hijr*: 29). The believer accepts these words to be true because he believes in Allah *Glorified is He* and in everything that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* brought.

Then, Allah provides other signs to guide the people who still do not have faith, but have a sincere desire to know the truth about this world. Allah provided them with signs that they can clearly witness. If someone does not comprehend the early stages of creation because they did not witness such events, they will certainly bear witness to the reality of death, as mankind experiences this concept every day. Death is the degeneration of life, and the degeneration of a thing often takes the opposite form of its creation. Allah informed us that the spirit was the final component that was added when man was created. Therefore, it is the first thing taken from him when he dies. Thus, the concept of death will confirm the statements that Allah *Glorified is He* informed us about our early creation.

The coming of the Hereafter is inevitable, so that the obedient servants can be rewarded for their righteous deeds and the disobedient sinners requited. Do you not see the disbelieving societies accepting this principle in their worldly life so that their people can live in stability? Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* will not let the tyrants and the criminals escape from requital in the hereafter if they escape requital in this world. Even if you punish the criminals you are able to catch, what about those who die before being punished? The existence of the Hereafter is the answer to such disharmony.

Allah *Glorified is He* ended the verse we are studying by saying, '...and He alone is All-Hearing, All Knowing' (*al-'Ankabut*: 5). Some people think that if Allah had only said, '...All Knowing,' it would have been enough, as divine knowledge would have encompassed all the things that can be heard. So, why did Allah say 'All-Hearing'? (*al-'Ankabut*: 5)

In the Arabic language, work (*'amal*), actions (*fi'l*) and speech (*qawl*) are assigned to separate parts of the body. The tongue utters the words (*aqwal*) and the rest of the body produces actions (*af'al*). The actions of the body and the utterances of the tongue are then collectively referred to as work (*'amal*). Because speech is the efforts of the tongue, and actions are the efforts of the limbs, the Arabic language perceives the importance of the tongue as it performs half of the body's efforts.

You declare your faith through the utterance of your tongue in saying, 'There is no deity but Allah, and Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah (*La illaha illa Allah, Muhammad Rasul-ul-llah*)'. This is the noblest work any person can do.

Additionally, the tongue can deliver Allah's message to His creatures. Furthermore, most of the actions of a person's limbs are the result of words reaching their ears from another person's tongue. Because of these important functions of speech, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'O you who have believed, why do you say one thing and do another?' (*as-Saff*: 2) Generally, every action springs from obedience to speech or from listening to speech. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* ends this verse by saying, '...and He alone is All Hearing, All Knowing' (*al-'Ankabut*: 5), as a recognition to the speech of His servants, Then, Allah says:

وَمَنْ جَاهَدَ فَإِنَّمَا يُجَاهِدُ لِنَفْسِهِ إِنَّ اللَّهَ لَغَنِيٌّ عَنِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٦﴾

**Those who exert themselves do so for their own  
benefit — God does not need His creatures [6]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 6)**

This verse refers to the times of trials and tribulations. A person who strives (*jahada*) and perseveres in these times of difficulty will achieve success. The word *jihad* means: to employ the utmost effort in order to achieve a desired result. It is derived from the word *ijtahada* which is used when a person has worked diligently in a particular endeavour. The word *ijtihad* refers to the process where scholars pay their utmost attention and awareness in order to derive rulings of jurisprudence.

*Jihad* has two spheres. The first sphere is the personal strife against one's own whims and desires. By accomplishing this sphere, that person will be more able to strive in the larger sphere against their external enemies.

The word *jahada* is embodied in the Arabic lexical form known as *mufaa'la*. This lexical template is used for reflexive or reactionary verbs that illustrate great exertions of effort. Such a verb has two opposing aspects. The first aspect is that it requires effort from the person doing it, and the second aspect is that it will invoke a resistance from the opposing force.

The first venue where *jihad* should take place is the human soul because your Lord *Glorified is He* created instincts and emotions within you that are made to serve a particular purpose. Then, Allah sent His divine guidance in order to restrict these instincts and refine them, so that they do not lead to impermissible actions.

Curiosity, for example, is a praiseworthy instinct in the realm of scientific inquiry and beneficial discoveries. However, if it develops into spying into people's private lives, it is forbidden.

Eating and drinking are instincts by which you take sustenance and gain the strength to work. However, if these basic needs swell and transform into greed and gluttony, they will have deviated from their intended purpose and use. Certainly, it is amazing the way many people eat. Cars, for instance, generally require a single form of fuel. On the other hand, many people are only satisfied by seemingly endless varieties of food. Each of these types of food has effects on the body, and when combined, can do more harm than good. Therefore, a person will need perseverance to restrict these basic instincts. This guidance follows the Prophetic tradition: 'We are a people who do not eat until we are hungry, and when we eat we do not get full. We do not drink until we are thirsty, and when we drink, we do not satisfy our thirsts.'

If we acted in accordance with this tradition, we may be able to solve a major economic problem in our country. A small and modest piece of food tastes delicious when you have been hungry. That is why the Arabs used to say, 'Indeed, hunger is a fine seasoning'! When you eat, you should not fill your stomach, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, '(Allow) a third of your meal for food, and a third for drink and a third for



air.'<sup>(1)</sup> With these judicious dietary recommendations, we may better preserve our physical soundness and health.

Since Allah *Glorified is He* created your instincts for a purpose, you should not go further than this purpose. These instincts include the basic emotions of love, hate, compassion, and sadness. The only rule in their case is that you should keep them within the confines of emotions. Do not turn them into reprehensible emotional actions. Therefore, love whom you will and hate whom you will, but do not transgress or base inconsiderate judgements upon these emotions.

We have previously given an example<sup>(2)</sup> of this in a story regarding `Umar *Allah be pleased with him*. `Umar had a brother named Zayd. Zayd was killed by a man, who later, embraced Islam. Whenever `Umar *Allah be pleased with him* saw his brother's murderer, he used to tell him, 'Turn your face away from me.' This meant that he did not want to see him. The man asked, 'Does your lack of love for me prevent me from having my rights?' `Umar answered, 'No, it certainly will not affect your rights.' Then, the man replied, 'I do not cry over love.' Indeed, love and hate are emotional matters. It is the actions which these emotions lead to that are important. An important part of strife is striving against the tyrants who gain power over you. You should strive against them, and bear their persecution patiently. Your love for the truth should allow you to be patient for its sake.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And most certainly We shall try you all, so that We might mark out those of you who strive (in Our cause) and are patient in adversity: for We shall put to a test (the truth of) your assertions' (*Muhammad*: 31). All of these trials require you to persevere and strive with patience.

If you have a rival and you are able to react to their abuse with a better attitude, then do so. However, if you want to seek retaliation from them, punish them with the equal like of what they have done. This is a very difficult task, because it is difficult to measure the transgression that they have committed

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(1) Narrated by At-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, Ahmad and Al-Hakim, on the authority of Al-Miqdam ibn Ma'di Karab

(2) The story of `Umar ibn Al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* with the killer of his brother Zayd ibn Al-Khattab.

so that you do not overstep the bounds. For example, if your enemy strikes you, can you strike them back with the exact same force, without transgression? If not, do not allow yourself to fall into the trap of excessive retaliation. It is better for you to adhere to Allah's words: 'And (those who) pardon their fellow-men, and Allah loves the fair-doers' (*Al- 'Imran*: 134).

If you are afflicted with a tribulation in which you do not have an adversary, as in the case of sickness, death or the other matters of fate that Allah *Glorified is He* may send upon you, say, 'My Lord wants the best for me. Certainly, my sins and bad deeds are being effaced by this tribulation, and I can gain the reward of patience through it. It might be that I was heedless towards Allah's commandments, or the worldly matters deluded me, so Allah *Glorified is He* sent me this trial in order to remind me of Him'.

Another aspect of *jihad* is struggling to make the soul accept Allah's Commandments and Prohibitions. Religious responsibility is essentially difficult for the soul to obey, so it requires struggle and perseverance. Therefore, beware of mistaking Allah's commandments for His prohibitions, or His prohibitions for commandments. If you look into it, you will find that the commandments and prohibitions in Allah's way of guidance are nearly seven percent of your daily life. The rest of your life is composed of permissible actions which you are free to take or leave.

Righteous people might find themselves attacked by the mockery and derision of other people, even from people of their own religion. This is because the people of error always feel inadequate and are aware of their own feebleness. Thus, they try to drag other people down to their level so that everyone becomes a sinner. That is why they mock and belittle the people of morality in order to make them abstain from these righteous actions.

Read, if you like, Allah's words in the following verse: 'Behold, those who have transgressed in sins used to laugh at those who have believed. (And) whenever they passed by them, they used to wink at one another (derisively). (And) whenever they returned to the people of their own kind, they returned while jesting. (And) whenever they saw those (who believe,) they said, "Behold, these (people) have indeed gone astray." (And) in no way were they sent as preservers over them. But, today, on the Day (of Judgment),

the ones who have believed are laughing at the steadfast disbelievers: (for, resting in paradise) on couches, they will look down (at the disbelievers), "Have the steadfast disbelievers been requited for what they were performing?" (al-Mutaffifin: 29-36) Therefore, there is no doubt that you must bear the abuse of such people patiently, and struggle against your soul so that you do not fall into the traps that they are setting for you.

Whispered insinuations from Satan may attract you to sin and make evil seem alluring to you. In such circumstances, remember Allah's words: 'O children of Adam! Do not allow Satan to tempt you in the same way as he caused your parents to be driven out of the garden. He deprived them of their garments (of piety) in order to make them aware of their nakedness' (al-'Araf: 27). Therefore, you must always bear in mind the first enmity between our father Adam *peace be upon him* and Satan so that we are always on our guard.

We have previously explained how you can tell the difference between a sin that comes from your soul and a sin that comes from Satan's whispers. The soul specifies a particular sin and wants no other. However, in Satan's case, if you refuse his advances in a particular sin, he will try another method because the important thing for him is that you sin in any possible way. So, you have many enemies. Each one of these enemies requires your perseverance to resist their methods.

This verse we are studying mentioned struggling in Allah's cause after a previous verse which stated that the Hereafter is bound to come. This means that whoever believes in meeting Allah *Glorified is He* in the Hereafter, should prepare for His judgment by striving fully in this world.

Allah says in this verse: 'Hence, whoever strives (*jahada*) (in Allah's Cause) does so for his own good: for, verily, Allah is not in need of anything in all the worlds' (al-'Ankabut: 6). Man was placed in a universe that had been prepared to receive him. He was granted earth and a sky, as well as the Sun, the Moon, water and air. He has prepared the universe to serve them, and indeed, they cannot add anything to Allah's dominion. Therefore, all your actions and thoughts as human beings are for your own comfort and success. When you do good deeds, no one benefits from them except you and your Lord does not need your provisions.

If you strive, you only do so for your own sake. If you have an employee who tries to remind you of the service he did for you, you would think of replying, 'No, you served yourself and your family because when you served me, you did so to make a living. I am the one who worked to make the money with which I paid you'.

In the same way, Allah *Glorified is He* says to us, 'Hence, whoever strives (*jahada*) (in Allah's Cause) does so for his own good', by following Allah's way and guidance. Allah emphasises this matter in several verses, including the verse in which He says, 'Whoever does what is just and right, does so for his own good; and whoever does evil, does so to harm himself: and indeed Allah does not wrong His creatures' (*Fussilat*: 46). He also says, 'If you persevere in doing good, you will be doing good to yourselves; and if you do evil, it will be unto yourselves,' (*al-Isra'*: 7). Another verse states: 'Whatever good it (the self) does, it is in the favour (of itself) and whatever evil it does, it is against its own favour' (*al-Baqara*: 286).

Thus, the matter is that your actions will affect you, and Allah's Commandments are for the wellbeing and safety of His creation. Every craftsman wants his creation to be as good as it can be. That is why Allah *Glorified is He* bestowed upon man part of His power, knowledge, and influence. Allah *Glorified is He* granted man some attributes that resemble His own attributes. Hence, one of the people of insight said, 'Imitate the qualities of Allah *Glorified is He*'.

Allah's divine help is transcendent, in that He bestowed some of these attributes to His servants. Allah *Glorified is He* did not merely carry out these actions for us, but rather, helped us to do them by giving us the necessary allocations of power.

When human beings see a person who is unable to carry their luggage, they generally provide their help by carrying it for them. In this case, the incapable people remain incapable and weak. They will still need someone to help them every time they have to carry their luggage.

On the other hand, Allah's help and bestowal is ultimately sublime. He gives you some of His Power, Omnipotence, and Self-Sufficiency so that you can do your actions for yourself. Therefore, a person who wants to imitate this sublime attribute should follow the parable, 'Do not give a poor man a fish.

Instead, teach him how to fish for himself so that he will not need you all the time'. The more transcendent form of support is to give other people that which they are able to use without further support. So, Allah gives powers to the strong people, wealth to the wealthy people, knowledge to the people who are knowledgeable and wisdom to the wise minds. These are all manifestations of His Magnificence. He does not give the entire attribute to His servant, but rather gives the servant part of the attribute so that it becomes a part of them. In fact, Allah *Glorified is He* gives you more than that. He gives you the free will to use that attribute by merely thinking about the action. By Allah *Glorified is He* what do you actually do in order to stand up? What real efforts do you invest when you want to pick something up or move one of your limbs? Do you even have to order them to move?

When you look at a bulldozer or a crane performing a task, you will see that its every movement requires a button to be pushed in order to perform its mechanical duties. Now, think about the actions that are necessary for you to stand up, for example. You merely think about standing up and you find yourself doing so. Your limbs move and respond to your free will.

When your Lord says to you 'His (Allah's) order is such that when He wills a thing to be, He says unto it, "Be", and it is' (*Ya Sin*: 82), you should believe these words easily because you have witnessed the same thing with your own body. You may fall asleep simply by laying your head down on a pillow or move your hands merely by thinking about it. If you can move yourself at your sheer free will, indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* has the Ultimate Power to affect His universe in whatever form He wills.

Your simple actions require no significant efforts because Allah *Glorified is He* has allowed you to use an attribute of His Omnipotent word, 'Be'! However, he did not make this attribute an intrinsic part of your nature, as you will be deluded by it. Therefore, if Allah wants to remove this power, He can easily take this ability from you, as He says, 'Nay, verily, man becomes grossly transgressing, whenever he believes himself to be self-sufficient' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7).

Therefore, a paralyzed person may try to move their leg, for example, but it does not respond to their intentions. This paralysis can happen after their legs had previously followed their mere thoughts. This infliction is laid down

as a sign, so that mankind recognizes the gifts of Allah *Glorified is He*. Indeed, He can take these gifts back if He wills, as it is not an intrinsic part of human nature.

In conclusion, striving in the way of Allah *Glorified is He* comprises many aspects. It includes striving against instincts and emotions, striving against the difficulties of adhering to the divine commandments and prohibitions, striving against the demons of mankind and the jinn and striving against the enemies of Islam who wish to put out Allah's light.

Al-Bukhari narrated that Khabab ibn Al-Arat *Allah be pleased with him* went to see Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and said, 'O Messenger of Allah. We are in trouble and suffering (from the actions of the disbelievers). Will you not ask Allah's relief for us? Will you not pray for us?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Harsher events occurred with the (believing) people who came before you. A hole would be dug for a man, and he would be placed therein. Then a saw would be brought forth (by the disbelievers) and he would be cut in half, and then his flesh would be dragged from his bones with combs of iron. Yet, none of this would make him renounce Allah's religion.' Then Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* reassured him that this period of tribulation would not last much longer, saying, 'By Allah, Allah will establish the matter (of this religion), until a rider will be able to go from Sana'a to Hadramawt fearing nothing but Allah and the wolf that stalks his flock.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* who is the Seal of the Prophets, was once visited by Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri *Allah be pleased with him*. Abu Sa'id found Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* complaining of a fever. He placed his hand on the blanket under which Prophet Muhammad was covered and felt the heat of his fever through the sheets. Abu Sa'id asked, 'O Messenger of Allah, is it not difficult for you?' Prophet Muhammad replied, 'O Abu Sa'id, just as tribulations are doubled for us, so the reward will be doubled for us.'<sup>(2)</sup>

This was to emphasise that tribulations do not indicate animosity, as they can be granted as blessings from Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah *Glorified is He* informs

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Ahmad

(2) Narrated by Ibn Majah

His angels about His humble, obedient, and patient servants. The angels respond, 'How can they not love and obey You, when You have given them all their blessings?' The angels then mention the blessings Allah has given man, and Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Even when I took these blessings from them, they are devoted and sincere in their belief towards My Lordship.'

Allah ends the verse we are studying by saying, 'Verily, Allah is not in need of anything in all the worlds' (*al-'Ankabut: 6*). This is because all these different kinds of struggle do not benefit Allah *Glorified is He* or add anything to His dominion. Rather, the struggling servant is the one who benefits from his struggle. Allah *Glorified is He* is not in need of the obedience or worship of those who obey or worship Him. In fact, Allah is the One, who provides for them from His bounty and blessings, Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُكَفِّرَنَّ عَنْهُمْ سَيِّئَاتِهِمْ  
وَلَنَجْزِيَنَّهُمْ أَحْسَنَ الَّذِي كَانُوا يَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٧﴾

**We shall certainly blot out the misdeeds of those who believe and do good deeds, and We shall reward them according to the best of their actions [7] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut: 7*)**

Here, Allah *Glorified is He* reminds us of the final outcome of the believers saying: 'And as for those who believe' (*al-A'nkabut: 7*) they 'believe that their Lord is Allah who possesses the attributes of Absolute Perfection and Wisdom, and is their Protector Who has Omnipotent Power.' Then, Allah says, '...and do righteous deeds (*al-salihat*)' (*al-A'nkabut: 7*) because righteous deeds are the natural outcomes and fruits of sincere faith. The word *al-salihat* means that these deeds do not change or spoil this world. Allah *Glorified is He* has created a world that functions in the best way for your service, so do not corrupt it. Indeed, the least you can do in the weakest form of faith is to leave good things as they are, without alteration. If you want to rise to a higher level of faith, then make them only better.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And when they (the sinners) are told, "Do not spread corruption upon the Earth", they answer, "We are but improving things!"' (*al-Baqara: 11*). So, Allah *Glorified is He* made the earth with all its

natural laws sound for us. Do you not see that in places where rainfall is minimal, Allah *Glorified is He* allowed water to collect in the depths of the ground, in order to preserve it until it is needed, while preventing the sun from evaporating it?

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Say (to those who deny the truth), "What will you do if all of your water were to vanish underground. Who (but Allah) could provide you with water from (new) unsullied springs."' (*al-Mulk*: 30)

We previously gave an example that illustrates the meaning of leaving good things as they are. Imagine a well from which desert Bedouins drink. Corruption would be in throwing garbage into the well to ruin the water, or fill the well with soil to block it. Both these actions are examples of corruption. On the other hand, someone may build a wall around the well to protect it or construct a device to easily draw the water from it. If you cannot do these righteous actions, the least you can do is to leave the well alone without spoiling its sustenance.

A 'righteous deed' is any action or idea that benefits any social aspect of the life of human beings. Do not think that some jobs are superior than others are. Simply, every job, no matter how insignificant you might see it—as long as it serves society and people, is a noble job. The job value lies in the values of the doers who do it perfectly. No job is superior to another. However, some workers are better than others are; as said, 'the value of a person lies in what he does perfectly'. I have previously given an example of this category. Here I repeat it, even if it is from a non-Muslim environment; there was a union leader in France, who always looked after the rights of workers and defended them. One day he became a minister. They said to him, 'Now, grant us the rights that you used to demand for us'. Perhaps, the demands he introduced were beyond the ability and budget of the ministry. Now, he himself had become the minister. At one point, one of the workers acted rudely towards him and said, 'Do not forget that once you were a shoe-shiner!' 'Yes', he replied, 'but I used to do a good job of it!' Note how the Lord *Glorified is He* mentions the reward of faith and righteous actions, 'We shall most certainly efface their [previous] bad deeds' (*al-'Ankabut*: 7). Here, Allah's Wisdom is manifest; He effaces bad deeds before rewarding the good deeds.



Actually, removing evils shall be prior to tasting the sweet of good deeds. Fending off sins and evils shall take precedence over securing good and benefits. For example, when a person throws a stone at you and, meanwhile, another throws an apple at you, which one will you deal with first? Of course, you will defend yourself against harm first. The Creator *Glorified is He* knows the nature of His slaves and that their heedlessness and keeping distant from His guidance may lead them to sin. The law defines crimes and specifies their punishments; it regards it possible for them to occur.

Allah allays the fears of His slaves with promises to forgive their sins first, before rewarding their good deeds. By his very nature, man is inclined to sin more than to do good deeds. Allah *the Exalted* says, 'We shall most certainly efface their [previous] bad deeds.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 7) Another verse declares, 'Except for those who repent, believe and do righteous work. For them Allah will replace their evil deeds with good. Allah is ever Forgiving and Merciful' (*al-Furqan*: 70). What grace is greater than exchanging their bad deeds with good ones? It is not only that He will efface them. It is like a sale of forgiveness that everyone should avail. The Quran states, 'Verily, good deeds drive away evil deeds' (*Hud*: 114). The Noble prophetic statement even declares, 'Follow bad deeds with good ones and you will erase them.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Allah *the Exalted* then mentions good deeds, '[We] shall most certainly reward them in accordance with the best that they ever did' (*al-'Ankabut*: 7). As said, when the Lord *Glorified is He* wants to enrich a poor person, He does so by means of a loan from his wealthy brethren, 'Who is it that will offer up unto Allah a goodly loan, which He will amply repay' (*al-Baqara*: 245). Even though Allah is the One who gives everything, He respects human nominal ownership, hard work, and toil. He respects their work and the fruits of their work, just as a father does with his children, taking from the wealthy one to help the poorer with promises to pay him back later. Just as you do not take back the gifts you give, Allah too does not take back the gifts He gives.

When we were in America, an orientalist asked us whether there was conflict between Allah's word 'whoever shall come with a good deed will gain ten times the like thereof' (*al-An'am*: 160) and the Prophet's words, 'It is

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(1) *Ahmad and Abu Na'aym on the authority of Mu'adh ibn Jabal Allah be pleased with him*

written upon the door of Paradise that a charity is rewarded tenfold while loans are rewarded eighteen-fold.<sup>'(1)</sup> Allah guided me to answer his question rightfully so they would not win the argument. I said to the interpreter, 'Yes, good deeds are rewarded tenfold when they are given in charity. For loans, if you give a dollar, this is worth ten dollars in reward, but your dollar is repaid to you, so only nine would remain. The double of nine is eighteen.' The Lord *Glorified is He* moves on to mention the first unit of building society, which is the family, composed of a father, a mother and children. Allah wants to rectify the first foundation for the rest of society to become healthy and right. Allah *the Exalted* says:

وَوَضَّيْنَا لِلْإِنْسَانِ بِوَالِدَيْهِ حُسْنًا وَإِنْ جَاهَدَاكَ لِتُشْرِكَ بِي مَا لَيْسَ لَكَ بِهِ  
 عِلْمٌ فَلَا تُطِعْهُمَا إِلَىٰ مَرْجِعِكُمْ فَأُنَبِّئُكُم بِمَا كُنتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ ﴿٨﴾

**'We have commanded people to be good to their parents, but do not obey them if they strive to make you serve, beside Me, anything of which you have no knowledge: you will all return to Me, and I shall inform you of what you have done[8] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 8)**

The parents look after children until they grow up and become strong. By that time, the parents grow weaker and become in need of others to look after them. Now, the children of westerners, for example, leave their parents with no one to care for them. Sometimes, they put them in houses for the elderly if they do care for them. However, they mostly leave them without any care. When we look at this, the greatness of Islam and the wisdom of the divine guidance in Muslim society are clear for us. A wise person said that it is better to marry when you are young—not to produce children, but to produce 'parents' for you, who look after you in the 'infancy' of your old age. The Lord *Glorified is He* wants us to have families built on strong foundations and sound faith. Allah *the Exalted* says, 'Now [among the best of righteous deeds which] we have enjoined upon man [is] goodness towards his parents' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8). Elsewhere in the Quran, He gives the same instruction, 'Now [among the

(1) *Al-Tabarani and Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Abu Umamah Allah be pleased with him*

best of the deeds which] we have enjoined upon man [is] goodness towards his parents' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15).

In the Quranic verse (*al-'Ankabut*: 8), the word *husn* stands for goodness or excellence. It means that Allah recommends us to be good to them in an absolute sense, whilst in the Quranic verse (*al-Ahqaf*: 15), the word *ihšana* stands for kindness or beneficence. Kindness is declared mandatory. Why does He enjoin goodness here and kindness there? In response, He enjoins goodness in the verse that mentions religious dispute, wherein He says, 'Should they endeavour to make you ascribe divinity, side by side with Me, to something which you mind cannot accept [as divine], obey them not' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8). Disbelief creates animosity and discord, and brings about rivalry. The Lord stresses the importance of showing goodness, not only kindness, because this situation requires strong will. However, when they do not disbelieve, it is enough to show them kindness, so He says, 'Bear them company in this world's life with kindness' (*Luqman*: 15).

When the Lord *Glorified is He* counsels us about our parents, who are the direct cause of our existence, He does so in order to make them a means for clarifying the true origin of existence. He counsels you concerning the direct cause of your existence—your parents. The Lord *Glorified is He* just reminds His slaves of this counsel and draws their attention to their responsibilities to pay due attention to parents and, meanwhile, worship and obey Allah—the real Creator, whereas parents are only a means. Faith here acts as a way for kindness and good relationship, 'Worship Allah [alone], and do not ascribe divinity, in any way, to aught beside Him. Do good unto your parents' (*an-Nisa'*: 36). Parents are partial causes of existence, whilst Allah is the Absolute Cause. The orientalist tried to criticise that point. For them, the following verses are in conflict with one another:

- 'Bear them company in this world's life with kindness'. (*Luqman*: 15)
- 'You cannot find people who [truly] believe in Allah and the Last Day, and [at the same time] love anyone who contends against Allah and His Messenger—even though they be their fathers'. (*al-Mujadala*: 22)

This conflict only exists in their minds; they do not understand the language of the Quran, so they do not know the difference between love and kindness. Love designates heart's inclination, which gives rise to kind acts towards loved ones. Kindness is equally extended, to those whom one loves and those whom one does not love—to maintain life. Allah says, 'Yet, should they endeavour to make you ascribe divinity, side by side with Me, to something which your mind cannot accept [as divine], obey them not. [For] it is unto Me that you all must return, whereupon I shall make you [truly] understand [the right and wrong of] all that you were doing [in life].' (*al-'Ankabut*: 8)

In other words, keep this rule in mind because I will ask you about it on the Day of Resurrection. Elsewhere the Quran says, 'Bear them company in this world's life with kindness, and follow the path of those who turn towards Me. In the end, unto Me you all must return; and thereupon I shall make you [truly] understand all that you were doing [in life]' (*Luqman*: 15). Parents' disbelief does not allow you to abuse or neglect them. Beware of that. Allah will question you whether you treated them with kindness or not.

Another Quranic verse mentions the bases of this counsel concerning parents—'We have enjoined upon man goodness towards his parents. In pain did his mother bear him, and in pain did she give him birth; and her bearing him and his utter dependence on her took thirty months' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). Note that deep concern for mothers. Allah *the Exalted* only mentions fathers in His word: 'Say, "O my Lord! Bestow Your Grace upon them [father and mother], even as they cherished and reared me when I was a child!"' (*al-Isra'*: 24) This grace here is expected in the Hereafter. All these directives concerning mothers because of the hardships they undergo in a child's infancy, when he is aware of his mother's favour. They endure the hardships for his sake and when he grows up and his senses develop, he finds that the father is the one who does everything for him. The favours of fathers are then plain to children whilst those of mothers need clarification, then, the Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُدْخِلَنَّهُمْ فِي الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٩﴾

**We shall be sure to admit those who believe and  
do good deeds to the ranks of the righteous [9]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 9)**

Allah first mentions faith as the origin before righteous deeds. Being a righteous one is a momentous thing as manifested by the fact that even the prophets wish it for themselves, then, the Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَمِنَ النَّاسِ مَن يَقُولُ ءَامَنَّا بِاللَّهِ فَإِذَا أُوذِيَ فِي اللَّهِ جَعَلَ فِتْنَةً  
لِّلنَّاسِ كَعَذَابِ اللَّهِ وَلَئِن جَاءَ نَصْرٌ مِّن رَّبِّكَ لَيَقُولُنَّ إِنَّا كُنَّا  
مَعَكُمْ أَوَّلَيْسَ اللَّهُ بِأَعْلَمَ بِمَا فِي صُدُورِ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿١٠﴾

**There are some people who say, ‘We believe in God,’ but,  
when they suffer for His cause, they think that human  
persecution is as severe as God’s punishment — yet, if any  
help comes to you [Prophet] from your Lord, they will say,  
‘We have always been with you’. Does God not know best what  
is in everyone’s hearts? [10] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 10)**

Allah’s words: ‘Now there is among men many a one who says [of himself and of others like him], “we do believe in Allah...”’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 10), indicates that these people speak with their tongues but cannot bear tribulations patiently. Speech here is not backed up by action. Allah says about such people, ‘O you who believe, why do you say one thing and do another?’ (*as-Saff*: 2)

Allah *the Exalted* says about the hypocrites, ‘When the hypocrites come unto you, they say, “we bear witness that you are indeed Allah’s Messenger!” Surely, Allah knows that you are His Messenger and He [Allah] bears witness that the hypocrites are indeed false [in their declaration of faith].’ (*al-Munafiqun*: 1) Allah *the Exalted* does not deny their statement that Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is the Messenger of Allah, but He denies the sincerity of their testimony, because a testimony must convey harmony between hearts and tongues, an element missing in their case.

‘But whenever he is made to suffer in Allah’s Cause’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 10): When one suffers because of faith in Allah without doing any injustices, ‘he

thinks that persecution at the hands of man is as [much to be feared, or even more than,] Allah's punishment' (*al-'Ankabut*: 10). Here, he makes human torment akin to Allah's punishment. He fears human persecution and equates it with the divine punishment for disbelief. It is absurd reasoning because human persecution will end, even by death of those persecuted, and tortured, whilst Allah's punishment in the hereafter is eternal. Human torment is also limited by human power, whilst Allah punishes according to His Own Power. Any likeness between them is a mistake.

Although this verse was revealed in relation to `Ayyash ibn Abu Rabi'a, the rule it declares is generally applicable to all similar cases. `Ayyash ibn Abu Rabi'a was a maternal brother of `Amr ibn Hisham known as Abu Jahl, and Al-Harith Ibn Hisham. Their mother's name was `Asmaa'. When `Ayyash embraced Islam and emigrated to Medina, his mother was deeply saddened. She said, 'No roof will cover me, nor will I eat, drink or bathe until `Ayyash returns to the religion of his forefathers.'<sup>(1)</sup> She remained in this state for three days until hunger forced her to stop. Her sons Al-Harith and Abu Jahl went to Medina to convince `Ayyash to return home and please his mother. They kept tempting him and causing his heart to pity her until he agreed to go home, but he refused to give up Islam. When the three of them left Medina for Mecca, they tied him up and each one gave him a hundred lashes. Abu Jahl was more lenient towards him than Al-Harith. `Ayyash swore by Allah that he would kill Al-Harith if he ever found him outside the Sacred Precinct. After pacifying his mother, `Ayyash returned to Medina. Later, his brother Al-Harith met him at Qubaa' but `Ayyash did not know that his brother Al-Harith<sup>(2)</sup> had embraced Islam, so he rushed to him and fulfilled his vow, killing him on the spot. News of this reached the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*. Soon this verse was revealed, 'It is not conceivable that a believer should slay another believer unless it be by mistake' (*an-Nisa*': 92).

There was also revealed, 'Now there is among men many a one who says [of himself and of others like him], "we do believe in Allah"—but whenever

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(1) *Al-Wahidi Al-Nisaburi narrated it.*

(2) *Actually, it was not his brother Al-Harith, but Al-Harith ibn Yazid ibn Aneesa, who was with `Ayyash's brothers when they tied him up and lashed him as Ibn Hajar affirmed. See Ibn Hajar, Al-Isabah.*

he is made to suffer in Allah's cause, he thinks that persecution at the hands of man is as [much to be feared, or even more than,] Allah's punishment' (*al-'Ankabut*: 10). He aimed to escape human persecution by disbelief; he did not believe to escape Allah's punishment.

Allah *the Exalted* says, 'Yet, if succour from your Lord comes [to those who truly believe], he is sure to say, "Behold, we have always been with you!"' (*al-'Ankabut*: 10), i.e. give us a share of spoils, but 'is not Allah fully aware of what is in the hearts of all creatures?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 10) Allah *the Exalted* knows what is in their hearts and their hope for believers. He says about them, 'Had these [hypocrites] set out with you, [O believers,] they would have added nothing to you save the evil of corruption'. (*at-Tawba*: 47)

The Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ اللَّهُ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَلَيَعْلَمَنَّ الْمُنَافِقِينَ ﴿١١﴾

**God will be sure to mark out which ones are the believers, and which the hypocrites [11] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 11)**

The Lord *Glorified is He* knows the innermost of His slaves even before their creation. He knows their future choices and deeds, but there is a difference between knowledge that exists before an event and knowledge that exists after the event. If Allah *the Exalted* says, 'I will do such-and-such with them because I know what they will do', they would have said, 'No, by Allah, we would not have done any such thing'. As such, He leaves them until they indeed go on to do those things He knew they would. Then, the Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا لِلَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا اتَّبِعُوا سَبِيلَنَا وَلْنَحْمِلْ خَطِيئَتَكُمْ وَمَا هُمْ بِحَامِلِينَ مِنْ خَطِيئَتِهِمْ مِنْ شَيْءٍ إِنَّهُمْ لَكَاذِبُونَ ﴿١٢﴾

**Those who disbelieve say to the believers, 'Follow our path and we shall bear [the consequences for] your sins,' yet they will not do so — they are liars [12] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 12)**

Here is another form of abuse. Those who disbelieve said to the believers 'Follow our way', namely, the religion of their ancestors and worship of idols.

They worshipped gods who do not hold them morally responsible and expected nothing from them. Conversely, you worship Allah who expects you to follow His way of guidance and obey His Commandments and Prohibitions. As such, 'Follow our way' is to give them authority 'and we shall indeed take your sins upon ourselves' (*al-'Ankabut*: 12) is that we will be responsible for your sins. If you incur sins by doing so, we will bear them. Note the absurdity of disbelievers; they believe it is a sin and prepare to bear it. How can they bear it? How can they be responsible for it before Allah *the Exalted*? Does a disbeliever have any right to intercede on behalf of or defend others in the hereafter?

Allah *the Exalted* then says, 'But never could they take upon themselves aught of their sins. Behold, they are liars indeed' (*al-'Ankabut*: 12). He stresses that they are liars, as He says: '[On that Day] it will come to pass that those who had been [falsely] adored shall disown their followers and the latter shall see the suffering [that awaits them]' (*al-Baqara*: 166).

Their followers will say, 'O our Lord! Show us those of the invisible beings and humans that have led us astray; we shall trample them underfoot, so that they shall be the lowest of all!' (*Fussilat*: 29) The affection between leaders and followers in this world will become enmity. Since they shared misguidance in this world, they will be at odds in the Hereafter. Allah *the Exalted* says, 'on that Day, friends will be foes unto one another – [all] save the Allah-conscious' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67). When a pious person sees another in the hereafter, he will thank him and acknowledge their favour of education, guidance, and protection from perdition. As such, they love and praise one another, even if they did not endear one another in this life.

Conversely, the people of misguidance will curse each other and forsake one another. The absurdity of disbelievers is made clear in their statement, 'We shall indeed take your sins upon ourselves' (*al-'Ankabut*: 12). It is also clear in their saying, 'O Allah! If this be indeed the truth from you, then rain down upon us stones from the skies or inflict [some other] grievous suffering on us!' (*al-Anfal*: 32) and from their saying: 'Do not spend anything on those who are with Allah's Apostle, so that they [may be forced to] leave...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 7). They acknowledged him as the Messenger of Allah and discouraged people from giving the poor and needy around him. This is foolishness, even as a confrontational tactic. Allah then says:



وَلِيَحْمِلُوا أَثْقَالَهُمْ وَأَتَقَالَا مَعَ أَثْقَالِهِمْ وَلَيَسْئَلَنَ يَوْمَ الْقِيَمَةِ عَمَّا كَانُوا يَفْتَرُونَ ﴿١٣﴾

**They will bear their own burdens and others besides: they will be questioned about their false assertions on the Day of Resurrection [13] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 13)**

Elsewhere, Allah says, 'Hence, on Resurrection Day they shall bear the full weight of their own burdens, as well as some of the burdens of those ignorant ones whom they have led astray. How evil the load with which they shall be burdened!' (*an-Nahl*: 25) The word used in the verse (*al-'Ankabut*: 13), for burdens is *awzar*, whilst in the verse (*an-Nahl*: 25), is *athqal*. They are synonyms. As such, they will bear their own personal burdens and more burdens for others whom they misled, 'They will most certainly be called to account on Resurrection Day for all their false assertions' (*al-'Ankabut*: 13), i.e. their deliberate lies. After declaring the general principles, the Lord *Glorified is He* now moves on to speak about the particulars of certain divine messages, saying:

وَلَقَدْ أَرْسَلْنَا نُوحًا إِلَىٰ قَوْمِهِ فَلَبِثَ فِيهِمْ أَلْفَ سَنَةٍ إِلَّا خَمْسِينَ عَامًا فَأَخَذَهُمُ الطُّوفَانُ وَهُمْ ظَالِمُونَ ﴿١٤﴾

**We sent Noah out to his people. He lived among them for fifty years short of a thousand but when the Flood overwhelmed them they were still doing evil [14] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 14)**

The scholars say that Nuh (Noah) *peace upon him* was the first messenger sent to humankind. Those who came before him, like Adam and Idris (Enoch) *peace be upon them* were prophets to whom Allah revealed a religious message to follow and become examples of faith and good behaviour. Whoever sees them could follow their example but those who do not are not disbelievers unless they believe in them and then deny their way.

Although a prophet and a messenger are sent by Allah, there is a difference between them. The prophet has a revealed message, but he is not commanded to impart it to others whereas the messenger has a revealed message that he shall deliver to others. Allah says, 'Yet whenever we sent forth any messenger or

prophet before you' (*al-Hajj*: 52); so prophets are also sent by Allah, but sent only to themselves. Why was this the case before Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* particularly? In response, the human race was very few in numbers before Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* and new to the earth. The deviations had not become widespread amongst them. When humankind spread out, the affairs of life grew complex and people needed Allah to send them messengers.

The Lord *Glorified is He* presents a short account of Nuh's (Noah's) story here. There is another Quranic chapter wholly dedicated to this story besides other parts mentioned several times elsewhere in the Quran. However, this particular context, like a telegram about Nuh (Noah), only tells the outset and end of the story, 'Indeed, [in times long past] we sent forth Nuh (Noah) unto his people' (*al-'Ankabut*: 14). As such, Nuh (Noah) was sent to his own people; they already knew him before being a messenger and knew his behaviour, character, and lifestyle among other things about him. The messenger was not distant from or unknown to them. When the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* first announced his mission, those who knew him well believed in him without even having to ask for a miracle; all it took was for him to say, 'I am the Messenger of Allah'. They believed in and followed him. Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* for instance, immediately without the least hesitation believed the Messenger. When they said to him, 'Your friend claims to be a prophet,' he said: 'I believe in him.' Why? Simply, he knew him and thus trusted his past life. Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had a very fine character in dealings with people; how could he lie about Allah? The fact that the messenger belongs to his people is a way of making people feel at ease. When they said, 'we will not believe until an angel is sent to us', the reply was, 'Are you angels to await an angel as a messenger'? 'Say: "If angels were walking about on Earth as their natural abode, we would indeed have sent down unto them an angel out of heaven as a messenger' (*al-Isra'*: 95).

Had the Lord sent an angel, could have they seen him? Of course, not! What will be the case when an angel is sent to humankind? He would have assumed a human form. If that happened, they would have said, 'we want an angel'.

Allah *the Exalted* then says, 'He dwelt among them a thousand years bar fifty' (*al-'Ankabut*: 14). This number is open for several meanings. He did not

say 'He dwelt amongst them nine hundred and fifty years'. The numbers in the Quran have many secrets. Read, for example, 'We appointed for Musa (Moses) thirty nights [on Mount Sinai] and we added to them ten, whereby the term of forty nights set by his Lord was fulfilled' (*al-A'raf*: 142). In the chapter of *al-Baqarah*, the Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'When we appointed for Musa (Moses) forty nights' (*al-Baqara*: 51). The latter context mentions the total number, while the former context gives the details about that number. The wisdom behind this is that no sooner had Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* gone to meet his Lord that his people began to worship the calf during the thirty-nights. Allah *the Exalted* did not allow Musa's (Moses's) return to his people when the thirty nights were over. He added ten more so that Musa (Moses) would not go back and see the deviation of his people.

The matter is highly precise. Without the exception in Allah's word 'bar fifty', the listener might think that it was only an approximate figure. Clearly, approximate numbers befit humans, whereas the Lord expresses the absolute exactitude. It is like asking someone about the time and he says, 'One minute and a half to ten' i.e. giving the exact time.

The wisdom behind this quick reference to the story of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* is to console Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* after the animosity, arrogance and denial that his people showed. They persecuted his companions and tried to impede his mission. This went on so much that it took up thirteen years of his mission. His Lord consoled him, saying, 'Be patient, Muhammad, for your brother Nuh (Noah) was patient for one thousand years bar fifty'. The time of difficulties you underwent so far is very simple. Men of fortitude among the prophets had to bear more than that.

Notice that Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'a thousand years' (*al-'Ankabut*: 14) using the word *sana* for 'years' and then, 'bar fifty (years)' (*al-'Ankabut*: 14) using the word *'am* for 'years'. Indeed, both words mean 'a year' but some say that *sana* starts from the month of *Muharram* and ends with the end of the month of *Dhu Al-Hijja*, whereas actually *sana* means any year, whether it starts with *Muharram* and ends with *Dhu Al-Hijja* or not. It can begin and end at any time, e.g. 'a year from now'. When we say that so-and-so is twenty years old, we mean from the day he was born until twenty years later on the

same date. The words *sana*, *`am* and *hajja* are synonyms. They mean 'a year', be it a solar year, a lunar year or any other year.

Noticeably, the methods of timekeeping familiar to the Arabs were based on lunar movement. Only days are possible to calculate through the movement of the sun. We cannot use the sun to tell about months. We calculate months through the movement of the moon. When a new moon is born, this means a new month has begun. We base the year on the months, so that twelve lunar months make one year, to which eleven days can be added to make a solar year. It might be that the Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to teach us that *sana* and *`am* are the same thing, so there is no need to argue about such a thing. Then Allah *the Exalted* mentions the end that the disbelievers met, 'Then the floods overwhelmed them while they were still lost in evildoing' (*al-'Ankabut*: 14). The reason why they suffered is not because they are enemies, but because they wronged themselves by disbelief. As such, this short part of the story ends in a single verse consoling Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* at a time when his victory over the disbelievers seemed very far.

The word 'overwhelmed them' (*al-'Ankabut*: 14), in Arabic is *akhadha* which means literally 'to take over'; it indicates the force and power with which they were taken. Does the word imply violence? In the case of an enemy, the word designates the violent way of taking them but with other than enemies, it means just to deal with someone gently.

A flood is an overflowing of water onto land beyond the usual amount. After having been a source of life for all living things, it becomes a source of death and destruction. The Lord *Glorified is He* wills to alert our attention to the reversals that occur in nature, so we do not think that His creation is monotonous and predictable. Prophet Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* struck the sea with his staff and the water became solid and rose like a mountain. Again, he struck the stone with it and water flowed out. This is absolute Omnipotent Power which relies on no means or intermediaries. They are made by Allah *the Exalted* and He does what He wills. Things are not controlled by their causes, but by the divine planning will. In his, 'Poem on the Nile', Ahmad Shawqi said,

When had you begun your flow through villages?

What a generous hand you give to all cities!

Do you descend from Heavens  
Or your tributaries just flow over gardens?

Up to the line:


You pour water, so it becomes gold;  
You drown the earth, and the drowned one revives.

Those overwhelmed here are the deniers of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*. They wronged themselves by denying their messenger and turning away from the guidance. The Lord *Glorified is He* saved Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* in the Ark. Allah *the Exalted* says, 'He said [unto his followers], "Embark in this [ship]! In the Name of Allah be its run and its riding at anchor!"' (*Hud: 41*) Allah *the Exalted* commanded him to build the Ark, 'Build, under Our eyes and according to Our inspiration, the Ark [that shall save you and those who follow you]. And do not appeal to Me in behalf of those who are bent on evildoing. For they are destined to be drowned.' (*Hud: 37*)

Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* knew what the end of the wicked deniers is very close. He kept it to himself whilst making the Ark in submission to his Lord. However, his people had no familiarity with ships. They knew nothing about them; they then mocked at Nuh's (Noah's) action: '[Nuh (Noah)] set himself to building the Ark. Every time the great ones of his people passed by him, they scoffed at him' (*Hud: 38*). In response, he spoke to himself saying, 'If you are scoffing at us – behold, we are scoffing at you [and your ignorance], just as you are scoffing at us' (*Hud: 38*). He knew that their end is approaching and what Allah had in store for them.

The Lord *Glorified is He* gives us this exemplum of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* in order that we reflect on his whole story and learn the moral admonition. There are many lessons to learn from the life of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*. The people worshipped idols, named Wudd, Suwa', Yaghuth, Ya'uq and Nasra. Here, we learn that the fellowship of prophets is a fellowship of morality, guidance, action, and emulation and their bond is a bond of piety and righteousness. The fact that Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was a prophet did not save his evil son from destruction.

When Nuh (Noah) prayed to Allah, ‘O my Lord, Surely, my son was of my family, surely, your promise always comes true’ (*Hud: 45*) The Lord *Glorified is He* corrected Nuh’s (Noah’s) perception, ‘O Nuh (Noah), behold, he was not of your family. Surely, he was unrighteous in his conduct’ (*Hud: 46*). It does not mean that his son was illegitimate. Allah does not hide the truth from any of His prophets. Furthermore, his wife was a traitor, passing secret information to his enemies. Allah *the Exalted* said about her, ‘Allah puts forth as examples of those who disbelieved, the wife of Nuh (Noah) and the wife of Lut (Lot)’ (*at-Tahrim: 10*). The Lord *Glorified is He* explains the meaning behind His word ‘He was not of your family’ by saying, ‘He was unrighteous in his conduct’ so that we would not have any untoward thoughts about the wife of any prophet. Simply, his son was unrighteous in his conduct and the lineage of the prophets is a lineage of righteous acts, not blood ties. Then, the Lord *Glorified is He* says:


 فَأَنْجَيْنَاهُ وَأَصْحَابَ السَّفِينَةِ وَجَعَلْنَاهَا آيَةً لِلْعَالَمِينَ

**We saved him and those with him on the  
Ark. We made this a sign for all people[15]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut: 15*)**

That is, we saved Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* ‘together with all who were in the Ark’ (*al-'Ankabut: 15*), with him. Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* built the Ark for his people. It was not for him alone. He built it to save those who mocked at him and derided him for building it. The believers boarded it and saved their lives while the disbelievers refused and drowned. Here, remember that when the Lord *Glorified is He* requires the believer to give something to someone who does not possess it, be it knowledge, money, aid and the like—know that this is their right. It is not your favour for them. When Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* built the Ark, Allah made it the right of people, referring to them as *Ashab As-Safina*, literally ‘the people of the Ark’. The Ark was their right. Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was not supposed to build it and then lend it to them, rather, he made it especially for them. The same concept is found in His words, ‘those in whose possessions there is a due share, acknowledged’ (*al-Ma'arij: 24*). This due financial right on wealth

is mentioned twice in the Quran, once in the above verse and again in Allah's words, 'A due share unto such as might ask [for help] and such as might suffer privation' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 19). No one of these instances specify the due amount or give any details of it. Allah calls them both *haqq* (right). The right that is 'known' *ma'lum* is the obligatory poor-due, whilst the unknown right refers to the voluntary charity. The latter is not specific but left to a believer's generosity, love of good deeds and his level of nearness to the Lord *Glorified is He*. 'Indeed, the righteous will be in gardens and springs, enjoying all that their Lord will have granted them. Indeed, 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)

These voluntary acts of worship indicate a person's devotion and love for good deeds and obedience. It evinces one's trust that Allah only obliges him with the smallest amount of worship worthy of His Divinity. The scholars say that you must be careful when you reach this level ordaining things on yourself, e.g., taking an oath or making a vow, one should keep it. Once you vow or take an oath, it becomes obligatory and you should not overlook it.

Keep it within your own capability because if you do it ordinarily and then give it up, it is as though you dislike it; you tested your love for Allah and have not found Him (Allah forbid) worthy of love. Allah refers to 'all who were in the Ark' (*al-'Ankabut*: 15), as *Ashab As-Safina* literally 'the people of the ark'. It shows us that the ark was built by Allah's Command for their sakes. When Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* finished its building, it was rightfully theirs. How to understand His words, 'all who were in the ark' in the light of the fact that Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* also carried pairs of every animal in the ark? In response, those pairs are not included in the expression "*Ashab as-Safina*" because they were owned by the people of the ark. Allah *the Exalted* says, 'which we then set up as a symbol for all people' (*al-'Ankabut*: 15). It was an incredible event, the like of which had never occurred in human history. Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* built the ark in response to the inspiration from his Lord. It was matchless and unprecedented. As such, it

was a 'symbol' and miracle that Allah taught him how to build it. It had a great religious significance for him; it saved the believers while the disbelievers drowned. It was 'a symbol for all people.'

The Lord *Glorified is He* mentions Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* saying:

وَابْرَاهِيمَ إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ أَعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَاتَّقُوهُ  
ذَٰلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَّكُمْ إِن كُنْتُمْ تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿١٦﴾

**We also sent Abraham. He said to his people, 'Serve God and be mindful of Him: that is better for you, if only you knew [16] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 16)**

The word 'And' here is used to connect the sentences; this verse is connected to 'And, indeed, [in times long past] we sent forth Nuh (Noah).' In other words, remember Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* 'when he said unto his people: "worship Allah and be mindful of Him"' (*al-'Ankabut*: 16). We said that to worship something is to obey it in all commands and prohibitions. If anyone claims godhood but has no commandments and prohibitions to obey, it cannot be a god. Those who say, 'we worship them for no other reason than that they bring us nearer to Allah' (*az-Zumar*: 3), speak untruthfully. In reality, they only worshipped idols because they neither command nor prohibit them; their godhood is merely symbolic. It entails no moral responsibility. The first proof of their false worship is that their gods offered them no guidance.

The commandment 'be mindful' of Allah directly follows the commandment to worship Him. It means to obey Allah's commands and avoid His prohibitions; it is a synonym of worship. When it is mentioned in conjunction with worship, it means 'obey His commandments out of fear of His Wrath and place a protective barrier between you and Allah's Might and Majesty'. We said before that Allah has attributes of Majesty, such as the Compelling Power, the Mighty, the Avenger and the Degradator. He also has attributes of Beauty such as the Forgiving, the Compassionate, the Merciful and the Clement. Mindful righteousness admits a person to the attributes of Beauty and protects him from the attributes of Majesty.



Allah *the Exalted* then says, 'that is better for you, if only you knew!' (*al-'Ankabut*: 16) In other words, the previous command to worship Allah and be mindful of Him is best for you. If you do not know this, there is no goodness in your knowledge. Allah says, '[This is] Allah's promise; never does Allah fail to fulfil His promise, but most people know [it] not. They know but the outer surface of this world's life, whereas of the ultimate things, they are utterly unaware' (*ar-Rum*: 6-7). The true knowledge is that of the hereafter; the knowledge of the divine laws and guidance that grants a human being the true goodness of all times. Conversely, the worldly knowledge, even if lending you some benefits, is only temporary and ends when life ends. As previously said, knowledge is to be aware of a matter of creation for which you can produce some evidence. It covers all known things in life, i.e. the empirical material knowledge, whose impact affects this world. As for the highest knowledge, it is that you know what Allah wants of you. This knowledge is for the Hereafter. For example, Allah *the Exalted* says, 'Do you not see that Allah sends down water from the sky, thus We produce with it fruits of various colours? And of the mountains are peaks that are white, red or some other colour and intense black. And from the people, and the animals, and the livestock, are various colours. As such, only the knowledgeable among Allah's servants fear Him. Allah is Almighty, Forgiving.' (*Fatir*: 27-28)

Allah *the Exalted* mentions the knowledge of plants, inanimate objects, and man (human biology), and animals (animal biology). He mentions all different species and genera. He then says, 'As such, only the knowledgeable among Allah's servants fear Him,' although He mentions no specific legal ruling here.

The meaning of 'only the knowledgeable' refers to those who discover things about the universe and help people in their lives. They unveil Allah's Power and incredible creation, and remind people of Allah *the Exalted*. Reflect on your own self, for example, and how the windpipe is directly next to the gullet; if you swallow even half a grain of rice in the wrong way, you cannot relax until you have it out. Reflect on the uvula, and how it works automatically with no need to control. Think of the cilia of the windpipe, and how they move upwards to expel the food which enters if the uvula is impaired and does not close the windpipe during swallowing. You sit comfortably with nothing to

disturb you and then all of a sudden you find yourself in need to answer a call of nature. What happened? Simply, the digestive system has something like a trap door, which expels a certain amount of waste at a certain time. When the defecation removes the indigestive substances, a person feels the need to relieve himself to get rid of it.

Reflect on the nose, the nasal hairs, and the mucus. Everything is made in a certain way for a good reason. The hairs filter out all the dust from the air that enters the nose and the mucus collects the fine dust that the hairs miss. The air then enters into lungs clean and pure. Reflect on the outer ear and how it has several different curvatures to prevent the air from entering the ear. The signs inherent in human body are numerous and miraculous. Only the endeavours of scientists, using human minds, can interpret and discover them. Some knowledge is beyond human mind. It comes down from above and represents the law that maintains harmony; the law the Creator releases to protect the creation. Whoever is only concerned with worldly empirical knowledge denies themselves the lasting good. Simply the best that material knowledge can give is to make your material life more comfortable, whilst knowledge of the Hereafter makes your worldly life comfortable and do the same for you in the Hereafter.

As such, Allah's words 'this is the best for you' (*al-'Ankabut*: 16), refers to the divine system of harmony embodied in the divine commandments and prohibitions, which must not be confused or challenged. We compared this system to the instruction manual that a manufacturer makes for his product which, if followed, will ensure that the product works properly. The same goes true of Allah's guidance to humankind. If you do not know this, no other knowledge will be of any good to you. Allah *the Exalted* says, 'To him who desires a harvest in the life to come, we shall grant an increase in his harvest; whereas to him who desires [but] a harvest in this world, we [may] give something thereof – but he will have no share in [the blessings of] the life to come' (*ash-Shura*: 20). The goodness that endures is the goodness of the hereafter.

Then, the Lord *Glorified is He* says:

إِنَّمَا تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا وَتَخْلُقُونَ إِفْكًا إِنَّ الَّذِينَ  
تَعْبُدُونَ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ لَا يَمْلِكُونَ لَكُمْ رِزْقًا فَابْتَغُوا عِنْدَ اللَّهِ  
الرِّزْقَ وَاعْبُدُوهُ وَاشْكُرُوا لَهُ إِلَيْهِ تُرْجَعُونَ ﴿١٧﴾

**What you worship instead of God are mere idols; what you invent is nothing but falsehood. Those you serve instead of God have no power to give you provisions, so seek provisions from God, serve Him, and give Him thanks: you will all be returned to Him [17] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 17)**

‘You worship only’ refers to their claim that they ‘worship them for no other reason than that they bring us nearer to Allah.’ (*az-Zumar*: 3) In reality, no worship is there, for those idols issue no command or prohibition, and have no guidance. It is senseless to worship them. They worshipped idols instead of Allah but when strictly cornered, they claim, ‘we worship them for no other reason than that they bring us nearer to Allah.’ (*az-Zumar*: 3) They are polytheists and anyone who denies their disbelief is a disbeliever. The idol refers to created things made holy, be they stones, e.g. limestone, granite, or marble; or metal e.g. gold, silver or bronze; or wood. Some would make idols out of date-paste and when they were hungry, they would eat it. ‘Umar Allah be pleased with him once ridiculed this funny behaviour. It is unreasonable and illogic to take a piece of a mountain to carve a statue and then make it into a god for worship after you made it yourself. It may be broken and then you try to repair it. No intellect accepts it. The Quran asks them, ‘Do you worship something that you [yourselves] have carved?’ (*as-Saffat*: 95) As the world progressed, this phenomenon disappeared. It is something that the mind cannot accept. The meaning of ‘you give visible shape to a lie’ is that you make and the act of making comes from nothing. They make it from nothing! Do they create a true or false object? They just make ‘a lie,’ i.e. they deliberately reverse fact. Allah thus called the cities *al-mu'tafikaat* (turned upside down or overthrown) ‘just as He thrust into perdition those cities that were overthrown’ (*an-Najm*: 53). Allah overturned these cities.

As explained before, the ‘truth’ is identical with reality. If we say, ‘Mohammad is generous’, it means that there must be a person named Mohammad who

possesses the attribute of generosity. If this sentence has no reality, it is untrue and goes against reality, i.e. a 'lie'. The Lord *Glorified is He* does not find fault with them for having created something. He confirmed that His creatures do create; He says, 'Hallowed, therefore, is Allah, the best of Artisans!' (*al-Mu'minun*: 14)

However, if Allah creates from nothing, we only create from the created substances. We make clothes from cotton, glass from sand, and plough from iron and so on. We create new things from other available substances, whereas the Creator *Glorified is He* creates things that existed from nothing. As said, human creations remain as they are, so a knife remains a knife; it does not grow into a dagger; a cup does not give birth to more cups. Allah's creations grow, develop, and reproduce. Allah acknowledges that human beings create, but He is the best Creator.

The Lord *Glorified is He* does not find fault with these people because they create; He finds fault with them because they create lies and falsehoods. He says, 'Behold, those [things and beings] that you worship instead of Allah have it not in their power to provide sustenance for you. Seek, then, all [your] sustenance from Allah' (*al-'Ankabut*: 17). Elsewhere the Quran explains that they worship gods that can neither bring harm nor benefit. He mentions another important matter which is the maintenance of human life by means of physical nourishment which we call sustenance (*rizq*). The gods that they worship do not have the power to provide them with sustenance. If no rain fell and the land became dry, you would all die of starvation. You should reflect on the source of your life. Who gives it to you. As such, worship and obey the one who gives it. We say in our dialect, 'You eat my food, so obey me'! I feed you, but you obey others?! Sustenance is the prime reason why people work. At first, we all strive to eat and drink—to keep life. When things improve, we seek to save for the future. A blue-collar worker, for example, may save enough for a month, whilst a farmer saves enough for a year. It is amazing that out of all of Allah's creatures, only human beings, mice, and ants save for the future. As for other animals, they only take the food they need and leave the rest without worries for the future. They do not eat more than they need or store for tomorrow. Allah reminds His creatures of their sustenance as an important element for human lives. It is amazing that

sustenance always comes even from whence you do not know as divinely decreed. The clearest sign that sustenance is divinely distributed by Allah's decrees is that when a woman becomes pregnant, her menstrual cycle, which had come to her regularly before she became pregnant, stops. Her blood becomes the sustenance of the embryo in the womb. No one else takes it or benefits from it, even the mother. When an embryo is created, the blood becomes its nourishment. Yet, if no embryo is created, the blood comes out from the woman for her own good health. If it remains, it may damage her. Simply, it is not her sustenance; it is the sustenance of the child in her womb. If this were not the case, the woman would become weaker every time she lost this blood in the regular manner. We all have our own sustenance, which no one else can take.

A pious person once said, 'It is wonder that a child of Adam seriously seeks for what is guaranteed for him and leaves what is required from him'. The Lord guarantees your sustenance, so be mindful of your duties and busy yourself with Allah's Commands. It is strange that some beggars, especially those seen in the season of *Hajj* (pilgrimage), show their maladies and the maladies of their children to gain people sympathy with them. They complain to people about the Creator and show malcontent with divine decrees. Allah does not like to see His slaves complaining about Him to His creatures. The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'If tribulation visits you, conceal it' <sup>(1)</sup> By Allah, if the people of tribulation were to conceal it and wait in their houses, Allah would send their provision to their very doors.

Provision is guaranteed by Allah, so He mentions this favour to His slaves, and denies that other false gods can do the like of it: 'Those you worship instead of Allah have no power to give you provisions, so seek provisions from Allah...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 17). And then He says, '...worship Him, and give Him thanks: you will all be returned to Him.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 17) So if you are not to worship Him because He gives you provisions, then worship Him because you shall return to Him and shall be held accountable for your deeds before Him.

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(1) *Al-Bayhaqi and Al-Hakim narrated it from Ibn 'Umar.*

It is enough that His blessings precede any obligations with which He assigns you. He leaves you to enjoy His blessings, without requiring anything of you until you reach adulthood which is the age of physical maturity, when you become able to reproduce. After this, you respond to what He requires of you by showing ingratitude to Him?! If to worship and obey Allah was only to give Him thanks for what He has done for you, it would still be obligatory for you.

Allah orders people 'be grateful to Him' because He *Glorified is He* wants to give them even more. So, He makes showing gratitude for His blessings the means to bring forth this increase, saying, '...If you are grateful [to Me], I shall most certainly give you more and more...' (*Ibrahim: 7*).

So, your Lord is waiting for you to give thanks and by merely accepting His blessings by saying, 'Praise be to Allah', you will surely receive more blessings.

Some of the people of deep insight say that Allah should not only be praised for His countless untold blessings, but that He should first be praised because there is no god but Him; if this was not the case, and there was another god, we would not know who to follow. So, the Oneness of Allah is one of the greatest of His blessings which merits praise.

Allah *Glorified is He* gives us a parable to illustrate this as He says in the Quran: 'Allah sets forth a parable: A man who has for his masters several partners, [all of them] at variance with one another...' (*az-Zumar: 29*).

The verse relates the example of a slave who is owned by different partners, who do not agree with each other, and another example of 'a man depending wholly on one person' (*az-Zumar: 29*), that is, a slave owned by a single master; then '...can these two be deemed equal as regards their condition?' (*az-Zumar: 29*) Surely, they are not equal. Likewise, the one who serves Allah alone, and the one who associates partners with Him

Concerning Allah's *Glorified is He* saying: 'O you who believe! Partake of the good things which We have provided for you as sustenance...' (*al-Baqara: 172*); one of the righteous people says that the thief who consumes unlawful food is eating his divinely-ordained sustenance. Although it is destined for him, he seizes it unlawfully. If he were to refrain from stealing,

he would eat the same sustenance, but lawfully, as Allah would facilitate it to him in a legal way. The meaning here is that Allah created you and gave you sustenance, so do not disobey Him. If you are not to worship Him for the good He has done for you and then worship Him in order to protect yourselves from the punishment that shall come.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تُكْذِبُوا فَقَدْ كَذَّبَ أُمَمٌ مِّن قَبْلِكُمْ  
وَمَا عَلَى الرَّسُولِ إِلَّا الْبَلَاغُ الْمُبِينُ ﴿١٨﴾

**If you say this is a lie, [be warned that] other communities before you said the same. The messenger's only duty is to give clear warning [18]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 18)**

Here Allah *Glorified is He* says to them that you give the lie to what We have said to you and what Our Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* has brought you because to believe in him would mean that you would have to take on moral responsibilities, follow the way of guidance and give up some of your free will concerning some prohibited worldly enjoyments. Although you are required to give up some of your free will in this respect, it is Allah *Glorified is He* who has honoured you when He gave you free will, which nothing else in creation possesses this because they all submit themselves entirely to the will of their Lord.

In this regard, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Verily, We did offer the trust [of reason and volition] to the heavens, and the earth, and the mountains: but they refused to bear it because they were afraid of it. Yet man took it up – for, verily, he has always been prone to be most wicked, most foolish.' (*al-Ahzab*: 72)

So, everything in the universe is divinely subdued to act its role, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...there is not a single thing but extols His Limitless Glory and praise...' (*al-Isra'*: 44). And He says, 'Do you not see that before Allah prostrate themselves all [things and beings] that are in the heavens and all that are on earth – the sun, and the moon, and the stars, and the mountains, and the trees and the beasts? And many human beings [submit to Allah

consciously], whereas many [others, having defied Him,] will inevitably have to suffer [in the life to come] ...' (*al-Hajj*: 18).

So, the universal principle that all creatures are submissive to Allah is all-inclusive with no exceptions, except in the case of humankind some of whom obey Allah, and some of whom do not.

So, the meaning is, 'if you give the lie' you are not the first to have done so because '... [other] communities have given the lie [to Allah's prophets] before your time...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 18). But you must pay attention to what happened to the communities who denied the end they met and beware lest you are afflicted with the same end.

Some contentious people have objected here, saying, 'How could the Quran say that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said to his people, "And if you give [me] the lie – well, [other] communities have given the lie [to Allah's prophets] before your time..." (*al-'Ankabut*: 18), when there was only one community before them; the community of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him*'? In this, they believe they have found a mistake in the Quran.

We reply to them that yes indeed, the community of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was a community to whom a message of faith was delivered, but before them came the communities of Adam, Sheeth (Seth) and Idris (Enoch) *peace be upon them* all of which came before Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*. This can also be replied that Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* spent almost a thousand years amongst his people, which amounts to almost ten generations, if we define a generation as one hundred years. Each of these was itself a community.

Then, Allah says, '...The messenger's only duty is to give clear warning.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 18) So, a messenger's mission is simply to deliver the message which people can either accept or reject. Messengers are not given recompense or payment for everyone who believes in them, so do not think that by denying the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* you are somehow reducing his reward, especially as you feel hatred towards him. So, the meaning here is that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* is ordered to say to his people, 'I am only obliged to deliver the message and I have delivered it, so I will obtain my reward from my Lord. You cannot harm me by your disbelief, but you can only harm yourselves'.



Our Prophet, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would become deeply sad and pained if any of his community would slip through his fingers and disbelieve in him, until his Lord said to him: 'It is not for you [O Prophet] to make people follow the right path, since it is Allah [alone] who guides whom He wills...' (*al-Baqara*: 272).

Allah addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the Quran: 'Perhaps, [O Muhammad], you would kill yourself with grief that they will not be believers.' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 3)

When Allah *Glorified is He* revealed to him the following verses: 'By the morning brightness. And [by] the night when it covers with darkness, Your Lord has not taken leave of you, [O Muhammad], nor has He detested [you]. And the Hereafter is better for you than the first [life]. And your Lord is going to give you, and you will be satisfied.' (*ad-Duha*: 1-5), Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* took this chance and prayed to his Lord, 'So I will not be satisfied to see any of my community enter the Fire.'<sup>(1)</sup> This is because he *peace and blessings be upon him* loves his followers and is deeply concerned for them and full of compassion and mercy towards them. Allah speaks of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in the Quran saying, 'Indeed, there has come unto you [O mankind] a messenger from among yourselves: heavily weighs upon him [the thought] that you might suffer [in the life to come]; full of concern for you [is he, and] full of compassion and mercy towards the believers'. (*at-Tawba*: 128)

Allah *Glorified is He* describes this deliverance of the message as being clear, that is, plain and lucid because sometimes a message can be simply a presentation of something without any corroboration or proof to support it, but this is not the case with the divine message.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

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(1) *Al-Khatib and Al-Bayhaqi narrated the like of it on the authority of 'Abdullah ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with them... See As-Suyuti, Ad-Durr Al-Manthur, vol. 8, p. 543.*

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا كَيْفَ يُبْدِئُ اللَّهُ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ  
يُعِيدُهُ إِنَّ ذَلِكَ عَلَى اللَّهِ يَسِيرٌ ﴿١٩﴾

**Do they not see that God brings life into being and  
reproduces it? Truly this is easy for God [19]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 19)**

This is directed to the community whom Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was calling to Islam. This is the case of those who disbelieved in the past, just as you disbelieve now, then where are your minds? If only you reflect on the universe in which you live in which you have been placed and which was prepared for you with everything you need to live, you would have surely realized the truth.

The word *yara* (to see) in the verse under discussion means 'to know', as Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: 'Have you not seen, [O Muhammad], how your Lord dealt with the companions of the elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1) The meaning here: Have not you been acquainted with the story of the elephant. This is because Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not see what happened with the elephant, but the word 'to see' was used in place of 'to know' in order to remind us that Allah's words to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were more trustworthy than what he would see with his own eyes.

That is why, when he heard the news of Prophet Muhammad's Night Ascension, Abu Bakr As-Siddiq *Allah be pleased with him* said, 'If he indeed said it, he spoke the truth.'

The use of the question form 'Have you not seen ...' here is a rhetorical question, like when you ask your son, 'Do you not know what happens to people when they ignore their studies'? Your intention is to warn him against doing the same, so you remind him of the consequences of ignoring one's studies, making him admit it himself 'Those who ignore their studies fail'.

Likewise, when someone denies the good you have done for him, you say, 'Did I not do such-and-such for you'? So, he admits it without you having to say it for him, which amounts to a more convincing argument.

When, in Arabic, a negative particle comes directly after an interrogative, it is called a 'rhetorical question', that is, the questioner criticises what the questioned is doing and try to let him admit the truth by himself. Accordingly, the intended meaning here is that: 'Do they disbelieve as though they have not seen what happened to the communities who disbelieved in the past? Do they disbelieve as though they have not seen Allah's signs and His overwhelming Omnipotent Power evident in the whole universe'? They should have taken a considered look in order to discover who created this universe; and if you were to ask them who created it, they would find no answer except to say, 'Allah', as the Quran says: 'And if you asked them, "Who created the heavens and earth?" they would surely say, "Allah"' (*Luqman*: 25).

But how could they admit this fact, whilst they do not believe in Allah? This is because such a matter is too obvious to be denied. The one who makes or invents an item, even the smallest and simplest, becomes very proud to call it his own and people even claim to have made things that they have not. Then what about a universe designed with such precision and such magnitude, yet which no one has claimed for themselves? A claim should be given to the one who makes it as long as there is no counter-claim.

So, I say that Allah *Glorified is He* before He said, 'there is no god but Me', and before He asked us to do so, He testified to it to Himself, saying: 'Allah [Himself] proffers evidence that there is no deity save Him...' (*Al- 'Imran*: 18). According to this testimony and all peoples' acknowledgement thereof, Allah *Glorified is He* says to a thing, 'Be!' and so it is. If He did not believe he is the Only One God, He would not have said so.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Do they not see that Allah brings life into being and reproduces it? Truly this is easy for Allah.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 19) Why does He say this, although we have not yet witnessed the reproduction of life, let alone the first creation?

Scholars say that we see this creation and recreation all around us in the phenomena of the universe. We see it in crops, for example, and how Allah gives new life to the land in the form of plants, which are then harvested and then replanted so that the cycle begins again. And flowers bloom with radiant

colours and sweet scents, yet when they are picked the water drains from them, and then dry up and wilt and their scent disperses into the air and then another flower replaces them and so on.

For example, observe the cycle of water. Has the amount of water that Allah created in the universe increased since He prepared it for mankind when He *Glorified is He* created Adam and Eve *peace be upon them*? The amount of water has been the same from then until now despite the huge increase in population because the constituents of the universe have remained the same since Allah created them, but they follow a cycle of creation and renewal.

You may contemplate Allah's words: 'Say, "Would you indeed deny Him who has created the earth in two days? And do you claim that there is any power that could rival Him, the Lord of all the worlds?"' For He [it is who, after creating the earth,] placed firm mountains on it, [towering] above its surface, and bestowed [so many] blessings on it, and equitably apportioned its means of subsistence...' (*Fussilat*: 9-10). It is as though as the sustenance of the whole creation has been prepared since creation began and until the Last Hour. It does not increase, but it follows a natural cycle.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Truly this is easy for Allah' (*al-'Ankabut*: 19). One may ask: which of them; the creation or the bringing people to life again is easy for Allah? As for creation, they all accept it and there is no argument about it. So, this statement refers to bringing people to life again. Is the One Who created from nothing unable to renew this creation? The first creation was from nothing, whilst the return will be from something, so which one is easier according to your own understanding? That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'and He it is who creates [all life] in the first instance, and then brings it forth anew: and most easy is this for Him...' (*ar-Rum*: 27). Although it cannot be said about Allah *Glorified is He* that some things are easier for Him than others; rather, He is addressing us in a way we can understand.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* addresses Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying:

قُلْ سِيرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ فَانظُرُوا كَيْفَ بَدَأَ الْخَلْقَ ثُمَّ اللَّهُ يُنشِئُ  
الْنَّشَأَ الْآخِرَةَ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَىٰ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ

Say, ‘Travel throughout the earth and see how He brings life into being: and He will bring the next life into being. God has power over all things [20] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 20)

In Arabic, *sayr* means to move from one place to another, but do we travel in the earth, or on it knowing that the Arabic verse literally says, ‘Travel in (*fi*) the earth...’? In reality, we travel in the earth just as Allah *Glorified is He* says because the atmosphere that surrounds the earth is a part of the earth and without it there could be no life on earth. So, when you travel, you travel inside the earth because the ground is below you, whilst the atmosphere is above you so it is as though you are inside it.

The reason for the travelling as mentioned here is to see ‘how He has created in the first instance’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 20). In another verse, Allah says, ‘and then contemplate...’ (*al-An'am*: 11). Here the particle *thumma* which means ‘and then’, is used, whilst in the verse under discussion, the particle *wa* which means simply ‘and’, is used. This is because travelling in the earth has two motivations: either for tourism, reflection, and contemplation or for trade and business if one cannot gain enough provisions in one’s own land. So, Allah’s words: ‘...Go all over the earth and behold...’ (*al-An'am*: 11), refers to a journey for the purpose of reflection and contemplation.

As for Allah’s saying: ‘and then behold’, the word *thumma* (and then) implies that there is a succession of events with a pause between them, as though He is saying to us, ‘Travel in the earth to do business and then take some time to reflect and contemplate upon what you see’. And there is nothing to prevent travelling for both reasons.

You might recall that Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *al-Qasas*: ‘Verily, [O Muhammad,] He who has laid down this Quran in plain terms, making it binding on you, will assuredly bring you back [from death] to a life renewed...’ (*al-Qasas*: 85). This referred to Emigration to Midyan. And in this current chapter, He says: ‘O My servants who have believed, indeed My earth is spacious, so worship only Me.’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 56) This means: If your

sustenance is scant in one place, seek it out in another and if the natural signs in the universe are not enough to satisfy your desire for contemplation, then travel in the earth and you will find many signs and lessons in the many different races, environments, fruits, climates and so on.

That is why Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘... [The angels] will say, “Was, then, Allah’s Earth not wide enough for you to forsake the domain of evil?”’ (*an-Nisa’*: 97) All the earth belongs to Allah. It is limitless and has originally no boundaries. However, when peoples divided it and established national boundaries that prevented people from moving freely within it, many problems were created and it became difficult for people to travel for tourism or to seek sustenance if it had become scant in their own lands.

We, in Egypt, are bordered by the Sudan, in which there are many fertile areas that if farmed could meet the needs of the entire Arab world. Yet can we go there to farm this land? If we did, they would say, ‘They have come to colonise us’!

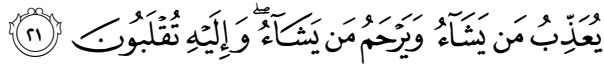
So, when I had the opportunity to speak at the UN, I said: ‘It is not possible to solve the current problems of the world unless we apply the principle of the Creator, Glory be to Him, and return to the guidance He gave us to organise our lives. How can we establish these borders and fences between us, when our Lord says: “And the earth has He spread out for all living beings” (*ar-Rahman*: 10)’?

So, the whole earth is for all people and when we realise this principle no one will be short of sustenance because if it is scant in one place you can seek it in another. Most of the troubles of the world today either arise from lands without people, or people without lands; so why can we not seek to restore the balance that Allah wants in His creation?

So, the travel mentioned in this verse is based on reflections on ‘...how He brings life into being: and He will bring the next life into being....’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 20) As long as we believe that Allah is the One Who created us in the very beginning, we must know that the renewal of this creation will be even easier, as He says: ‘Could We, then, be [thought of as being] worn out by the first creation?...’ (*Qaf*: 15) So, as people may have doubt concerning

the second life, the Creator *Glorified is He* emphasises His Omnipotent Power, saying, ‘... Allah has Power over all things.’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 20)

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:



**He punishes whoever He will and shows mercy to whoever He will. You will all be returned to Him [21]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 21)**

Why did Allah *Glorified is He* mention punishment before mercy here? Elsewhere, He mentions mercy first, saying: ‘...He forgives whom He wills, and He punishes whom He wills...’ (*al-Ma'ida*: 18). Scholars say that this is because the speech here refers to the deniers and the disbelievers and so it is appropriate to begin with them by mentioning punishment: ‘He punishes whomever He wills, and bestows His mercy on whomever He wills...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 21). However, one may ask: why does Allah *Glorified is He* mention mercy towards the disbelievers after having threatened them with punishment? I reply that this is because Allah *Glorified is He* threatens His slaves with punishment in the beginning so that they shall repent and believe in Him and then opens for them a door to His Mercy so that they yearn to obey Him and have faith in Him.

It is narrated that Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘My Mercy prevails over my Wrath.’<sup>(1)</sup> So at the same time as He threatens punishment, He tells His slaves, even the disbelievers, that His Mercy prevails over His Wrath.

Allah says, ‘...and unto Him you shall be made to return’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 21), in the passive voice, which indicates that they will be brought forth and dragged before Him. He is telling them: ‘Whatever level of tyranny, arrogance and misappropriation of Allah’s blessings you reach, you will still be returned to Him, and stand before Him. So, mark this well because you cannot escape Him’, so it is appropriate that He says:

(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*

وَمَا أَنْتُمْ بِمُعْجِزِينَ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَلَا فِي السَّمَاءِ وَمَا  
لَكُمْ مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ مِنْ وَلِيٍّ وَلَا نَصِيرٍ ﴿٢٢﴾

**You cannot escape Him on earth or in the heavens;  
you will have no one to protect or help you besides  
God [22] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 22)**

The word *yu`jiz* means to incapacitate someone. The meaning here is that you will not be able to escape Allah or refuse Him when He wants you to stand before Him, but rather, you will come forward subdued.

Notice here that Allah *Glorified is He* says in Arabic '*wa ma antum bimu`jizin*' which literally means 'You cannot escape Him'. He did not say, 'And you will not escape from Me when I come for you', or something like this. To negate a verb is not like negating an adjective. For example, if you say to someone, 'You did not make me a shirt', this means that one is able to do so, but you did not, so the ability is there but the will to act is not. However, when you say to someone, 'You are not a tailor', this means that you negate that he has the ability to make clothes.

Likewise, Allah did not negate the verb for them so that we would not imagine that such a thing is even possible for them; to run and escape from the meeting with Allah in the hereafter is something utterly unimaginable. Therefore, He negates that they could even be described with this adjective, saying: 'You cannot escape Him on earth or in the heavens...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 22).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* concludes the verse, '...you will have no one to protect or help you besides Allah' (*al-'Ankabut*: 22). One may say, 'If they cannot hope to escape, someone else might be able to elude Allah, or might be able to intercede for them, or defend them'. So Allah *Glorified is He* negates this too because no one and nothing can elude Him.

So, Allah says to them in another verse, 'How is it that [now] you cannot succour one another?' (*as-Saffat*: 25) meaning, where are the strong people whom you used to resort to for help? So, He negates that they will have any protector or any succour. In Arabic, there is a difference between *al-wali* (a protector) (someone who is close to you and beloved to you, who defends you



with prudence and diplomacy and intercedes for you if you need him to) and *an-nasr* (succour) (one who defends you with strength and force).

So, He negates their ability to elude Him and negates that they will have any protection or succour, but He clarifies this by saying ‘besides Allah’. This means that they may have a protector or succour, but this cannot be attained except through Allah. So, if they want a true protector and helper, they should believe in Allah and then He will be their protector and helper. It is as though He is saying to them, ‘If you repent, renounce your disbelief, and confess your sins, I will be your protector and helper’.

Elsewhere in this chapter, He says: ‘...and you will have none to succour you’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 22). Here Allah does not say ‘besides Allah’ because this refers to the hereafter and in the hereafter, there is no repentance or confession. So, Allah’s words ‘besides Allah’ only refer to this world.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا بِآيَاتِ اللَّهِ وَلِقَائِهِ أُولَٰئِكَ يَئِسُوا  
مِنْ رَّحْمَتِي وَأُولَٰئِكَ لَهُمْ عَذَابٌ أَلِيمٌ ﴿٢٣﴾

**Those who deny God’s Revelation and their meeting with Him have no hope of receiving My grace: they will have a grievous torment [23] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 23)**

If the disbeliever insists on his disbelief and his worship of idols that bring neither benefit nor harm, nor offer any counsel or guidance, he will have no refuge or recourse to Allah’s Mercy because he has worshipped useless idols and disbelieved in Allah and so there is no one to protect him from Allah. Moreover, the idols he worshipped can offer no succour and so he can do nothing but abandon all hope.

All the disbelievers’ hopes will be abandoned because they worship that which could neither benefit nor harm them and disbelieved in He who possesses all benefit and harm.

I reiterate here that Allah’s signs either refer to the cosmic signs that confirm Allah’s Omnipotence and indicate the Wisdom of the Creator *Glorified is He*

such as night and day, the sun and the moon; or else it refers to the miraculous signs which the messengers are supported with and by means of which Allah helps them and shows the truthfulness of their divine messages. It may also refer to the verses of the Quran and according to this meaning this verse means that they disbelieved in the verses of the Quran which convey to them Allah's Injunctions.

Those people disbelieved in all these signs. Since they disbelieved in these signs and disbelieved also in their meeting with Allah in the hereafter, then Allah's Mercy is far from them and they shall abandon all hope of it.

So, their end will be that '...they will have a grievous torment.' (*al-'Ankabut: 23*)

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَمَا كَانَتْ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا اقْتُلُوهُ أَوْ حَرِّقُوهُ فَأَنْجَاهُ  
 اللَّهُ مِنَ النَّارِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٢٤﴾

**The only answer Abraham's people gave was, 'Kill him or burn him!' but God saved him from the Fire: there truly are signs in this for people who believe [24]**  
**(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut: 24*)**

Having called them to worship Allah Alone and associate nothing with Him in worship and had explained to them the falsehood of worshipping their idols which neither can help nor cause harm to them, the people of Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* were expected to give a logical answer. They should have debated him, defended their idols, and proved why they were right to worship them.

Nonetheless, their answer proved their intellectual bankruptcy. 'The only answer Ibrahim's (Abraham's) people gave was, "Kill him or burn him!"' (*al-'Ankabut: 24*). Is this your answer for what had been said to you, people of Ibrahim (Abraham)? It is nothing but evasion and a proof of the total absence of any strong argument. It is the answer of the one who has no answer, who has nothing but issuing threats and showing signs of strength and aggression. This is the language of those who have no argument to make.

But why did the Quran even call this an answer? Scholars say that this is because if they had not said this, it would have been said about them that they did not even notice their prophet's words or pay any attention to them, as though his words had no worth and did not need to be answered. So, although their speech was no kind of answer, it was in the form of an answer, though a very poor one.

They said: 'Kill him'. We know that to kill means to destroy the physical body in such a way that the soul is released because it finds no sound body in which to live. As for death, this is when the soul is released first, and then the body is destroyed when it decays in the grave. So, they are both equal in that they mean the end of life.

I have explained this before using the example of an electric light bulb. Electricity does not emit from the light bulb, but rather, it is outside of it. The effects of the electricity on the lamp appear if it is working correctly and can turn the electrical current into light. If you break it, you will find no evidence of the electricity's presence and there will be no light; you could also turn off the electricity, whilst the lamp is still working properly.

Then they said, 'or burn him'. Is burning someone a more severe punishment than killing him? Killing is a worse punishment. A person may be burnt and then he might be rescued and treated so he does not die. Killing someone means making sure that he dies, whilst burning someone does not necessarily do the same. So, why did they not just say 'Kill him' or put the punishments in order of severity and say, 'Burn him or slay him'?

They started with the worst punishment they can inflict on him because of the extent of their fury they felt against him, so they said, 'Kill him'. Then they had another idea: 'Why do we not burn him in a fire so that perhaps he will renounce his call because of the pain of the burning'? This would have been a triumph and victory for them.

But who was the one who said 'Kill him'? Who ordered the execution, and to whom did the order was issued? They all agreed to kill him, so there was no difference between the one who gave the command and the one to whom it was directed. This can be inferred from the wording of the verse itself which reads: 'The only answer Ibrahim's (Abraham's) people gave was...':

‘Kill him or burn him!’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 24) The wording of the verse refers that all of them agreed on the matter. It may be also inferred that the ones who gave the order were the ruling elite to whom the people were subjected. As for the carrying out of the order itself, it was the job of the subordinates.

When a crime is committed, the masses get angry and their reactions vary; some would say ‘Kill him’, others would ‘put him into prison!’ As such, these proposals as well as reactions are theirs, all of them.

Then the verse continues, ‘but Allah saved him from the fire’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 24). Some philosophers raise an objection here, saying, ‘How could this happen, although the nature of fire is to burn? How could this natural law be broken?’ In reply I say to them, ‘How could it be a miracle if it had not happened in this way’?

Allah *Glorified is He* created the universe and placed within it natural laws whose causes and effects occur simultaneously. For example, when you plough the earth, sow seeds in it, and water it, natural law states that it will produce crops. However, in order that no one imagines that the universe simply follows these laws and does not follow Allah’s will, we find that from time to time He breaks these laws to show us His Absolute and Omnipotent Power over His creation.

So, if Allah *Glorified is He* has not decreed that you will gain provision from your farm, your crops will fail or they will be destroyed by a plight or a storm before they are full-grown. So, the matter all depends on Allah’s Absolute Power and Sustenance; it is not simply a matter of mechanics.

Allah *Glorified is He* broke natural laws for Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* when he struck the sea and it parted into two huge walls of water and the flowing water became a solid mountain. Allah *Glorified is He* also broke natural laws for Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* when Allah said to the fire: ‘[But] We said: “O fire! Be cool, and [a source of] inner peace for Ibrahim (Abraham)!”’ (*al-Anbiya*: 69)

Allah *Glorified is He* broke these natural laws to produce miraculous wonders and to show that Allah’s Hand always has control over His dominion. He did not create these natural laws and then leave them to control the universe

without His ever intervening in it, as philosophers say. Allah *Glorified is He* created natural laws to act, but His Infinite Power and Omnipotence can overrule these natural laws.

Here Allah says, ‘... but Allah saved him from the fire: there truly are signs in this for people who believe.’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 24) But when we refer to the story of the Ark, we find that Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘We then set [the Ark] up as a sign for all people’. So there, Allah says ‘a sign’, whereas here He says ‘signs’. Moreover, there He says, ‘for all people’, whereas here He says, ‘for people who believe’. So, the difference in phrasing revolves around two things: Allah *Glorified is He* called the Ark ‘a sign’ because the amazing thing about the Ark was not how it was built because anyone who saw it could have built one like it, but rather that Allah *Glorified is He* told Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* to make it before there was any sign that he needed to do so and then prevented the storms and hurricanes from sinking it and drowning its passengers. As for the matter of burning, it involved many marvels and wondrous signs. It was possible for Allah *Glorified is He* to prevent them from getting Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* in the first place or it was possible that, once they had gotten him and thrown him in the fire, Allah could have sent down rain to put out the fire and save him or Allah *Glorified is He* could have sent some of the people who had compassion and mercy in their hearts to save him from being cast into the fire. But none of this happened, for Allah *Glorified is He* allowed them to seize Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and throw him into the blazing fire, whilst he was tied up with rope, and despite all that, the fire did not harm him, so the signs were clear and obvious to the eyes of all who witnessed this.

The second thing is that Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘for all people’ when talking about the Ark because when it cast off and saved its passengers from the flood, the ark remained there in its place for all to see and reflect upon, so it left a clear trace to which anyone could bear witness.

As for Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*, Allah says, ‘...for people who will believe’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 24) because the rescue of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* from the fire was an admonition for those who witnessed it alone and we believe in it because Allah, in whom we believe, has told us

about it. So, these represent signs only for those who believe in Allah, not for all people.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالَ إِنَّمَا اتَّخَذْتُم مِّن دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْثَانًا مَّوَدَّةَ بَيْنِكُمْ فِي الْحَيَاةِ الدُّنْيَا  
ثُمَّ يَوْمَ الْقِيَامَةِ يَكْفُرُ بَعْضُكُم بِبَعْضٍ وَلَيَعَنُ بَعْضُكُم بَعْضًا  
وَمَأْوَيْكُمُ النَّارُ وَمَا لَكُم مِّن نَّاصِرِينَ ﴿٢٥﴾

**Abraham said to them, ‘You have chosen idols instead of God but your love for them will only last for the present life: on the Day of Resurrection, you will disown and reject one another. Hell will be your home and no one will help you’ [25]**  
**(The Quran, *al-’Ankabut*: 25)**

According to this verse, it is as if Ibrahim (Abraham) said to his people, ‘You do not believe in the cosmic signs that prove Allah’s Omnipotence and you do not believe in the miracle you witnessed when my Lord saved me from the fire. You should have believed that no one save Allah could do such a thing. So why is it that you insist on disbelieving?’

It must be, therefore, that you disbelieve in Allah and worship idols, not because you are intellectually convinced that they should be worshipped and not because they deserve to be worshipped, but rather, you worship ‘...and your love for them will only last for the present life...’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 25). This means that it was insincere love and flattery for one another because they have seen their rulers worship these idols so they blindly follow them with their own worship. It may also mean that they did so out of love for their forefathers, following their example, as the Quran says: ‘...Behold, we found our forefathers agreed on what to believe – and, verily, it is but in their footsteps that we follow!’ (*az-Zukhruf*: 23).

In another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...Enough for us is that which we found our forefathers believing in and doing...’ (*al-Ma’ida*: 104).

But this love, flattery and hypocrisy only last as long as this worldly life exists, after which this love between you will be severed as ‘On that Day,

[erstwhile] friends will be foes to one another...' (*az-Zukhruf*: 67). This love and flattery will become enmity and will become war, as the subordinates will say, as the Quran states: '...O our Lord! Show us those of the jinn and humans that have led us astray: we shall trample them underfoot...' (*Fussilat*: 29). And the Quran relates also: '[On that Day] it will come to pass that those who had been [falsely] adored shall disown their followers, and the latter shall see the punishment [that awaits them], with all their hopes cut to pieces!' (*al-Baqara*: 166)

In the verse under discussion, this truth is confirmed: '... on the Day of Resurrection, you will disown and reject one another. Hell will be your home and no one will help you.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 25) This is because everything that had gone before should have caused them to believe, yet they did nothing but to insist on disbelief.

At the same time as the love of the disbelievers will become enmity, the enmity of the believers who cooperate in good deeds will become love and affection. Then a believer will say to his brother who drew him to obedience and goodness and encouraged him to stick to it, despite his initial reluctance, 'May Allah reward you with goodness, for you have saved me'!

The punishment will not end with the disowning and cursing that they have brought upon themselves, but rather, they will then move onto an even more severe punishment as Allah says to them, '...Hell will be your home and no one will help you.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 25) Notice here that Allah *Glorified is He* did not say, 'And you have none save Allah to succour you' because the discourse here relates to the hereafter, where there shall be no repentance and no going back, so it is too late for them to seek a friend or a helper to protect them from Allah. Likewise, they will find no help from those they worshipped instead of Allah, since they seek the aid of idols and statues who can neither speak nor answer their calls.

And so ends this quick reference to the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* although his full story is long and he is the elder of the messengers and the 'Father of the Prophets'. If one wants to tell the whole story of Ibrahim (Abraham), it will take a long time. To show his greatness, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Verily, Ibrahim (Abraham) was a nation...' (*an-Nahl*: 120).

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَأَمَّنَ لَهُ لُوطٌ وَقَالَ إِنِّي مُهَاجِرٌ إِلَىٰ رَبِّي إِنَّهُ هُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٦٦﴾

**Lut (Lot) believed him, and said, ‘I will flee to my Lord: He is the Almighty, the All Wise’ [26]  
(The Quran, *al-’Ankabut*: 26)**

This verse refers to the people of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* remained in their disbelief, whilst Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* believed in him. Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* was Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) nephew. They were originally from Iraq and would later move to the Levant.

Investigating the word *amana* (came to believe) in the Glorious Quran, we find that it revolves around the concept of security, inner peace, tranquillity and peace of mind, but its meaning differs according to the different contexts in which it is used. Here, Allah says, ‘...Lut (Lot) believed him...’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 26). Did Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* believe in Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*? Usually when we speak of belief we say, ‘He believes in Allah’. The meaning in this context must be different from this and it does not refer to belief in Allah.

So, the meaning of the Arabic verb *amana* here is like its use in Allah’s word about Quraysh: ‘...and made them safe from danger.’ (*Quraysh*: 4) Here the word *amana* is used to mean ‘to keep safe’. Here the verb is transitive. The subject is Allah and the direct object is the Quraysh whom Allah kept safe from fear. The same is true of the same verb *amana* in Allah’s saying: ‘...Shall I trust you with him...’ (*Yusuf*: 64).

The meaning of the verb *amana* in the verse under discussion is that he believed him, not believed in him.

Another example of this usage is found in Allah’s *Glorified is He* saying: ‘... [But [we know that] you will not believe us even though we speak the truth’ (*Yusuf*: 17) which means that ‘You will not think our words are true’. As for believing in Allah, it means to have faith and conviction in His Existence and His, attributes of Absolute Perfection.



Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* would not have believed Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* unless he also believed in Allah, Who sent him. So, it is as though he believed in Allah and then believed in everything that came from Him. The story of Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* is elaborated on in another occurrence in the Quran. It is only mentioned here because it was a result of the debate and struggle that went on between Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and his people. When he called them to believe in Allah, no one believed in him except Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* his nephew.

I may now recall my late teacher Sheikh Musa, Allah have mercy on him. Once he was teaching us Quranic exegesis and we were discussing the story of Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him*. I asked him, 'Why do we ascribe the bad thing that Lut's (Lot's) people did to him, as we call the one who do such a practice *Luti* (in Arabic meaning 'homosexual', derived from the name 'Lut (Lot)'), when all Lut (Lot) did was to fight this depravity and bring an end to it?' The Sheikh replied, 'Then what should we call it?' I said, 'The Arabic language is rich in its derivative possibilities. For example, we make an adjective from 'Abd Al-Ashhal by saying Ashhali, and from 'Abd Al-'Aziz by saying 'Abdazi, and from Bakhtanasar by saying (Bakhti), and these days we call someone who studies at the Dar Al-'Ulum school-a faculty at Cairo University, Egypt- dar`ami and so on; so why can we not merge the words *qawm* and Lut (Lot) (the people of Lut (Lot) and make it into *qawti* to describe them, so that we save Prophet Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* from having something ascribed to him that he had nothing to do with?'

Another time, I attended an event honouring Taha Hussein. In my speech, I said to praise him, 'You have a Tahsani approach in knowledge that is a unique approach only peculiar to you!' This is because we find many scholars named Taha, and many named Hussein. Therefore, I merged his first and last names to refer only to him.

So, Allah's saying: '...Lut (Lot) believed him...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 26) is a parenthetical statement within the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* because Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* represented the final result of Ibrahim's (Abraham's) call to his people. Therefore, the discourse shifts back to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: '...and said, "I will emigrate to my Lord..."'

(*al-'Ankabut*: 26). The meaning here is 'I will leave this place because it is not a good place to establish the call'.

In Arabic, the word *hijra* (emigration) as well as all its derivatives signify the meaning of leaving one thing for another. But the verb *hajara* means that someone forsakes according to his own choice, whilst the verb *haajara* denotes the involvement of another one meaning that one is forced to leave one's land. Prophet Muhammad's move from Mecca to Medina therefore would be described using the verb *haajara*. This means that he did not emigrate because he wanted to, but rather his people abused him and drove him to leave his home. Accordingly, the people of Quraysh were the second party which forced Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* to immigrate to Medina. The poet Al-Mutanabbi said:

If you are forced to leave a people who were able

To keep you with them, then they are the ones who are leaving

The precise rhetorical style of the Quran is evident in this matter, as it termed Prophet Muhammad's move from Mecca to Medina as a *hijra*, a word which is derived from the triadic root verb, instead of the usual verbal noun of *hajara* which is *muhajara*. The reason for this is that the connotations of the word *muhajara* imply that the person dislikes the thing he is leaving. Therefore, Allah uses the verb *hajara*, but when He uses the noun, He says *hijra*, not *muhajara* because Prophet Muhammad did not leave Mecca due to his detestation to it.

I have mentioned before that the first emigration of Muslims to Abyssinia was an emigration to a place of security only, not a place of religious faith; for when Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* directed them to Abyssinia specifically, he said '...Therein is a king with whom no one suffers oppression.'<sup>(1)</sup> It is as though the map of the entire world were shown to Him *peace and blessings be upon him* and he chose this particular place because he saw that it was a place of safety for his believing companions. As for the emigration to Medina, it was an emigration to a place of faith, which is clear

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi and Ibn Hisham on the authority of Umm Salama

to us when we consider the relationship between the Meccan Emigrates and the people of Medina, *Al-Ansar* (The Helpers).

Here, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* says, ‘... “I will emigrate to my Lord”’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 26). So, he did not intend to go to a certain destination, but rather turning to his Lord was what was important. If not, one might well ask, ‘How one can emigrate to one’s Lord, when He is everywhere, both there and here’?

So, the meaning is: ‘I will emigrate according to my Lord’s command and I will go wherever He bids me’. You might move from one place to another because your boss tells you to, for example, whilst even before he tells you to go you want to move to this place, so you welcome this turn of events because it is a means for the realisation of your own wishes. So, you are not really going because you have been ordered to; you are going because you want to. To clarify this meaning, Prophet Muhammad says, ‘The emigration of one who emigrates for the sake of Allah and His Messenger is for the sake of Allah and His Messenger; and the emigration of one who emigrates for gaining a worldly advantage or for marrying a woman is for what he has emigrated.’<sup>(1)</sup>

The meaning of Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) saying, as mentioned in the Quran: ‘... “I will emigrate to my Lord...”’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 26) is: ‘I am not moving out of my own desire and will, but rather I am going where Allah has directed me’. I remember that once something of this nature happened to me. I was a member of a group of seventy men and we did something that violates our boss’s commands, so he decided to transfer us all to different places. We went to him to try and persuade him to change his mind, but he was impassive, saying, ‘How can I be the boss if my demands are not met by my staff?’ One of us, who was a brave man, said to him, ‘Well, we will go wherever you like, but you should know that you cannot send us to a place where Allah is not present’. This word of truth affected the boss and he saw sense because the truth is powerful. And then things went our way and the boss changed his mind.

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(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Muslim*, on the authority of `Umar

So, the meaning of ‘...and said, “I will emigrate to my Lord...”’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 26) is: ‘My Lord directs me, and Allah *Glorified is He* is everywhere’. This is supported by Allah’s saying, ‘...and wherever you turn, there is Allah’s Face...’ (*al-Baqara*: 115).

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to us: ‘Know that I only directed you to the *Ka'ba* in your prayers to confirm this fact; for you turn to it from wherever you are and from whatever direction you face, it is your direction when you perform prayer’.

Then the verse concludes, ‘...He is the Almighty, the All Wise.’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 26) Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* chose, out of all his Lord’s attributes, to mention that He is ‘the Almighty’, that is, He Who is invincible and can overcome anything. This attribute was evoked by what happened when they tried to burn him, as though he were saying to the people, ‘I am going to the protection of He who cannot be overcome’.

Ibrahim (Abraham) chose to describe Allah *Glorified is He* as ‘the All Wise’, that is, ‘He is truly Wise in all His actions, so He will surely take me to a place where my call will be heard, to people who deserve to be given this call because of their attentiveness and willingness to listen to the truth and hearts that yearn and eagerly await the word of truth that you have rejected’.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَوَهَبْنَا لَهُ إِسْحَاقَ وَيَعْقُوبَ وَجَعَلْنَا فِي ذُرِّيَّتِهِ النُّبُوَّةَ وَالْكِتَابَ  
وَعَاقِبَتُهُ أَجْرُهُ فِي الدُّنْيَا وَإِنَّهُ فِي الْآخِرَةِ لَمِنَ الصَّالِحِينَ ﴿٢٧﴾

**We gave Isaac and Jacob to Abraham, and placed prophethood and Scripture among his offspring. We gave him his rewards in this world, and in the life to come he will be among the righteous [27] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 27)**

The time of reward came so that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* could gain from his Lord recompense for his patience in the face of tribulation and for his remaining steadfast upon his faith. When he was on his way to being thrown into the fire, Jibril (Gabriel) *peace be upon him* came to him and said, ‘Ibrahim (Abraham), do you need anything?’ And Ibrahim (Abraham)

*peace be upon him* replied, 'Nothing from you.'<sup>(1)</sup> So his Lord rewarded him, broke the laws of nature for him, gave him blessings and bounties, and praised him by saying: 'Verily, Ibrahim (Abraham) was a man who combined within himself all virtues, devoutly obeying Allah's will...' (*an-Nahl*: 120).

Moreover, Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was not considered by his people to be a person of importance which is shown by the fact that when he broke their idols, some of them said: '... "We heard a youth speak of these [gods with scorn]: he is called Ibrahim (Abraham)."' (*al-Anbiya*: 60) So, he was not well known amongst them, but rather was anonymous, known to no one. So, when he called to Allah, Allah supported him and said, 'I will make you the "Friend of Allah", the "Elder of the Messengers" and I will put your name on every tongue after you have been anonymous'. Now, we, Muslims, are required to mention him *peace be upon him* in *at-tashahud* (the closing benediction) every time we pray.

To make sure of this inference, consider Ibrahim's (Abraham's) supplication when he prayed to his Lord: 'And give me a good name among later generations' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 84). It is as though he was saying, 'Lord, my people have belittled me, so grant me renown in Your Sight'.

It is well known that certain natural laws govern reproduction and childbearing. Therefore, when Hajar *peace be upon her* conceived Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* Ibrahim's (Abraham's) wife, Sarah *peace be upon her* became angry that the slave-girl Hajar *peace be upon her* had been given this distinction.<sup>(2)</sup> But how could she herself have a child when she was ninety years old at the time, and Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* was a hundred years old?

Natural law would state that to conceive at such an age would be impossible; yet Allah broke these natural laws and allowed them to conceive as a gift from Him: 'We gave Ishaq (Issac) and (then later) 'Ya'qub (Jacob) to Ibrahim (Abraham)' (*al-'Ankabut*: 27). And in another verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...and [Ishaq's (Issac's) son] Ya'qub (Jacob) as an additional gift...' (*al-Anbiya*: 72).

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(1) Narrated by As-Suyuti in his *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, vol. 5, p. 64

(2) This is mentioned in the Old Testament, see Genesis, 21: 9-12.

This means that Ya`qub (Jacob) was as an added increase. This is because Ibrahim (Abraham) showed patience when he was ordered to sacrifice Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him*. Therefore, Allah said to him, 'Now do not sacrifice your son; you have done what was required of you and you have passed the test, so I will spare him for you and what is more I will give you a brother for him, who will in turn conceive Ya`qub (Jacob)'.

Allah further told Ibrahim (Abraham) that He would make them prophets: 'and placed prophet hood and Scripture among his offspring' (*al-'Ankabut*: 27). So, when we consider the genealogy of prophets, we find that most of them were from Ibrahim's (Abraham's) line; all those who came after him were from his offspring.<sup>(1)</sup>

The word 'offspring' mentioned here refers to Ishaq (Issac) and Ya`qub (Jacob) *peace be upon them* who were both miraculously born to Sarah *peace be upon her*, whilst Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* came in the conventional, natural way common to all human kind, including Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*.

It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is using this matter to demonstrate how His Omnipotent Power is manifested by effects that show the power of the absolute Causer, saying to Ibrahim (Abraham), 'If your people have disbelieved you and refused to believe, I will give you offspring who not only are rightly guided believers, but who also will be guides for all people'.

Although the progeny of Ishaq (Issac) and Ya`qub (Jacob) *peace be upon them* dominated the next four thousand years of prophetic succession, it would be from the line of Ismail (Ishmael) *peace be upon him* that the Seal of Prophets and Leader of the Righteous, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would come; and his message would remain until the Day of Resurrection. The messengers from Ishaq's (Issac's) *peace be upon him* line were dispersed amongst the nations, each having their own limited time, whilst the Message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* encompasses all times and places, and no messenger will come after him until the Day of Resurrection.

Allah's saying: 'and Scripture' refers to all the divine Books that were revealed to the prophets who came from Ibrahim's (Abraham's) line, which

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(1) See *Al-Qurtubi, Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, vol. 7, p. 5229.

were the Quran, the New Testament (the Gospels), the Old Testament (the Torah) and the Psalms.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'We gave him his rewards in this world' (*al-'Ankabut*: 27). Scholars say that this refers to his having been unknown and then becoming famous and renowned and his having been poor and then being given riches by Allah. The scholars of prophetic biographies say that he owned so much livestock that one person could never hope to count it and that he had twelve guard dogs and so on. All of this was only his reward in this world.<sup>(1)</sup>

Then Allah further tells us, '...and in the life to come he will be among the righteous.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 27) Allah will not say to him that he has been granted all the goodness he deserved in this worldly life, but rather in the next world too he will be amongst the righteous. This is the dearest wish of all the prophets. So, his reward in this world subtracted nothing from his reward in the hereafter.

But why did Allah *Glorified is He* describe Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* as being righteous in the hereafter? Scholars say that there are three things related from Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* that those people who like to ferret out faults call lies, or sins: the first is that he said to the King of Egypt that Sarah *peace be upon her* was his sister; the second is that when his people asked him to come out with them to celebrate their festival, he said, 'I am ill';<sup>(2)</sup> the third is that when he broke their idols, they asked him: 'Have you done this to our gods, O Ibrahim (Abraham)'? 'He answered: "Nay, it was this one, the biggest of them, that did it..."' (*al-Anbiya*: 63). These seekers of faults say that these statements prove that the prophets are not free from sin. But what can they say when the ultimate Judge declares that someone will be righteous in the hereafter?!

In any case, anyone who reflects on these three statements will find that they are all types of the ambiguous phrases of which Prophet Muhammad

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(1) See Ibn Kathir, *Tafsir Ibn Kathir*, vol.3, p. 411. See also Al-Qurtubi, *Tafsir al-Qurtubi*, vol. 7, p. 5229; As-Suyuti in his *Ad-Durr Al-Manthur*, vol. 6, p. 459.

(2) Narrated by Ibn Abu Hatim, on the authority of Zayd ibn Aslam

*peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Ambiguous speech is an alternative to lying.'<sup>(1)</sup> As for his saying that Sarah *peace be upon her* was his sister, she was indeed his sister in faith, a fellow believer; and maybe if he had said, 'She is my wife,' the king would have killed him to take her for himself. As for his saying 'I am sick', it was an excuse preferred to avoid attending a profane ritual that no believer should attend. It may not be a reference to physical illness, but something related to heart, i.e., my heart gets disheartened to see his people's disbelief. As for His saying, '...Nay, it was this one, the biggest of them, that did it...' (*al-Anbiya'*: 63), he intended by this to give a convincing argument to show the falsehood of their idol-worship. He wanted to make it so that they themselves would say what he wanted to say, to convince them that their idols could not bring benefit, or harm, or even move.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَوْ طَا إِذْ قَالَ لِقَوْمِهِ إِنَّكُمْ لَنَا تُؤَنَّفُوهَا مَا  
سَبَقَكُمْ بِهَا مِنْ أَحَدٍ مِنَ الْعَالَمِينَ ﴿٢٨﴾

**And Lot: when He said to his people, 'You practise outrageous acts that no people before you have ever committed [28] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 28)**

Now the focus turns from the story of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* to the story of his nephew Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him*. Notice that when the Quran speaks of Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham) and Lut (Lot) *peace be upon them* it mentions their names first; although the normal practice in the Quran when it speaks of messengers is to mention their people first, as in: 'And unto [the tribe of] 'Ad [We sent] their brother Hud (Eber)...' (*al-A'raf*: 65), and 'And unto [the tribe of] Thamud [We sent] their brother Saleh (Shelah)...' (*al-A'raf*: 73), and 'And unto [the people of] Midyan [We sent] their brother Shu'aib (Jethro)...' (*al-A'raf*: 85).

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(1) Narrated by Ibn 'Udayy on the authority of Imran ibn Husain... See *Al-Kamel fi Du'afaa' Al-Hadith*, vol. 3, p. 96.



They say it is because the peoples of Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham) and Lut (Lot) did not have any distinctive names, so Allah *Glorified is He* mentions the prophets first. As for 'Ad, Thamud and Midyan, they were well-known names for particular nations, and well-known settlements. The basis is that the people are the ones for whom the divine message and guidance is intended, so they are mentioned first as they are the target of the message. As for the messenger, the message is not something that Allah *Glorified is He* intends for a single person.

'And Lut (Lot), [too, was inspired by us] when he said unto his people: "Verily, you commit abominations such as none in all the world has ever committed before you!"' (*al-'Ankabut*: 28) He called his people's vice an 'abomination', so the scholars say that its punishment should be the same as the other abomination; for Allah *Glorified is He* also called adultery an abomination, saying: '...for, behold, it is an abomination and an evil way' (*al-Isra'*: 32). The legal punishment for adultery is stoning, so the punishment for those who commit the crime that the people of Lut (Lot) committed is also stoning.

His saying, '...such as none in all the world has ever committed before you' (*al-'Ankabut*: 28) does not mean that no one had ever done such a thing before them; rather, when done before it had been an individual matter, not a widespread epidemic as it was with these people.

أَيِّنْكُمْ لَتَأْتُوا الرِّجَالَ وَتَقَاطِعُونَ السَّبِيلَ وَتَأْتُوا فِي  
نَادِيَكُمُ الْمُنْكَرَ فَمَا كَانَ جَوَابَ قَوْمِهِ إِلَّا أَنْ قَالُوا  
أَنَّا نَبْعَذَابُ اللَّهِ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مِنَ الصَّادِقِينَ ﴿٢٩﴾

**How can you lust after men, waylay travellers, and commit evil in your gatherings?' the only answer his people gave was, 'Bring God's punishment down on us, if what you say is true' [29] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 29)**

The statement 'Must you indeed approach men...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 29) shows their perversion of sexual instinct. Allah *Glorified is He* placed sexual instinct within mankind in order to preserve the species. The wisdom behind it is procreation, and procreation only occurs by means of a male-female relationship

so that the male's sperm can fertilize the female's ovum, and then develop into an embryo in the womb. This is why Allah *Glorified is He* referred to the woman as 'tilth' because she is a locus for growth; so a condition for approaching a woman is that she be approached in the right place for growth to occur.

So, the people who wanted to make it permissible for a woman to allow her husband to approach her from any way he liked adduced as evidence for Allah's words: 'Your wives are your tilth; go, then, unto your tilth as you may desire...' (*al-Baqara*: 223). We say to these people: You are mistaken in your understanding of the verse because 'tilth' means the crops that are grown from the earth, so the meaning of the expression 'as you may desire' means 'as long as cultivation is possible'; so their argument is invalid which is a result of their not understanding the meaning of 'tilth'. Correctly understood, the verse means, 'Approach them in any way you desire as long as it is in the place of cultivation'.

In His Wisdom, Allah *Glorified is He* connected the preservation of the species with sexual instinct, and gave it a pleasure and enjoyment greater than any other pleasure in life. For example, if you see a nice view it pleases your eye, and if you hear a nice sound it pleases your ear and so on. All your senses have certain stimuli that give them enjoyment.

But by which of these senses is sexual pleasure felt, and which of your faculties is pleased by it? All your senses and faculties derive enjoyment from it, so the human being cannot resist it. For this reason, they say that it is the one moment when a person can truly be unaware of his Lord, and that is why we are commanded to take the purification bath afterwards.

If the Creator had not linked the survival of the species to this pleasure, many people would not have bothered with it because of all the hardships and responsibilities that necessarily come with raising children.

We mentioned before the proverb: 'The religiously permissible cuts off the nose of jealousy'. For example, a man is jealously protective of his daughter, and does not want men from outside the family to even look at her, and he becomes enraged if anyone tries to woo her; but when a young man comes to his door to seek his daughter's hand in marriage, he welcomes him, and the

people of the house greet him with cheers, and serve drinks and decorate the house. What is the difference between the two situations? At first, he was boiling with rage, but in the second situation when Allah's words are mentioned, while observing their marriage rites, they have placed within his heart coolness and tranquillity.

As for the aberration of the people of Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* and their approaching men, it represents a perversion of nature by which the species cannot be preserved, and this is also the case with approaching a woman in other than the place of procreation.

Allah's words 'and thus cut across the way' (*al-'Ankabut*: 29) means that they cut off the way for the species to be preserved because even if adultery brings a child, it will not give him a noble, honourable existence in society. Allah *Glorified is He* has made one way alone for the species to be preserved, so there should not be any reproduction except by this way, whether it involves a man or a woman.

The word 'way' is a broad term meaning a direction or a road, whether a physical road that we walk upon or a metaphorical way of life that we follow, as in Allah's words: 'Say [O Prophet], "This is my way..."' (*Yusuf*: 108).

That is, this is my way and my path of guidance. So, the moral way is one single way so that we do not collide with one another or have any conflicts in our lives. As for material ways, there are many so that our physical lives do not become congested.

The physical way or road upon which we travel is considered a mark of civilisation in a nation. Before the war began in 1939, Hitler was very concerned with building a network of roads because a non-conventional war requires additional roads at wartime. One example of this is the road they call the 'Road of the Pact', commemorating the pact of 1936.

So, every time there is more activity, extra roads are needed; these roads are built in a way that is appropriate to the environment in which they are built. In cities, we call them streets, whilst in the countryside we call them roads according to how built-up an area is. These roads and streets branch out into side streets, which are smaller, and these side streets branch out further

into alleys, which are smaller still. Every time a place becomes more crowded, the people resort to widening the means of movement in order that life can go on comfortably.

For example, in Cairo there are many underground passageways and overpasses, so that things will not come to a standstill, and so that people can move freely.

Underground passages are more apt to preserve a city's beauty, and overpasses are better when they are out of the city, because you can get beautiful views of the distant horizon from them, whereas if the reverse is done, and overpasses are built in the city streets, they tarnish the beauty of the place and make the street look like nothing more than a warehouse, and disadvantage the people living in neighbouring buildings.

Governments should be aware of these issues when they plan cities. Consider Allah's words: 'And then makes it easy for him to go through life' (*'Abasa*: 20).

We should make roads easy for people to traverse because their lives and work depend on traversing these roads. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...and thus [you] cut across the way...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 29). Amongst Lut's (Lot's) *peace be upon him* people were highwaymen who waylay people as they travel and take their money and rob them of their possessions, and kill them if they try to resist. After having cut off the way for people to travel, they then cut off the way for the species to be preserved.

And Allah *Glorified is He* tells us that they committed these shameful deeds in their open assemblies. They did not abstain from doing and saying vile things, and sitting in the streets and mocking the passers-by, like those who in our day sit in cafes and loiter in the streets abusing Allah's creatures, and openly saying and doing vile things so that no one is safe from their abuse.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* taught us the proper way of behaving in the street. When someone asked him, 'What is the right of the street, O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'Lowering the gaze, and avoiding harm, and returning greetings.'<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri

Bad manners had spread amongst the people of Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* so that they did not keep one another in check, as Allah *Glorified is He* said about the Jews: 'They would not prevent one another from doing whatever hateful things they did...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 79).

An 'assembly' means a place where people gather. This word also occurs in Allah's words: 'and then let him summon [to his aid] the counsels of his own [spurious] wisdom' (*al-'Alaq*: 17). That is, the place where the chiefs and leaders of the people meet, as we see today with the word 'club' (in Arabic, the *nadi* is used for both). The public assembly is considered the final stage for defining the proper behaviour that a society should observe. For example, you have your own room in your house, where you have your own way of acting; and in the living room of your house you have wider rules to adhere to, and in the street you have even more.

Adherence to this decorum depends on the situation in which you find yourself. When you are with people you do not know, your behaviour is not the same as when you are with people you do know, such as the employee in his office and the student at school.

So, these people cut off the way for the preservation of the species by their perversion and deviation from the natural way; and they also cut off the physical way by waylaying people and frightening them and stealing their possessions, and kidnapping them with the intention to perform these vile acts. Moreover, they would flaunt these acts of theirs, and perform them openly in their assemblies and meeting places.

And how did the people answer Lut (Lot)? '...But his people's only answer was, "Bring down upon us Allah's chastisement, if you are a man of truth!"' (*al-'Ankabut*: 29) That is, if you truly are a messenger from Allah, and we truly are sinners, then show us the torment with which you threaten us. They said, 'Bring down upon us Allah's chastisement' (*al-'Ankabut*: 29), even though chastisement is a painful thing that no one would wish upon himself. This shows that they did not understand their own words, and that they did not believe him to be truthful; otherwise, if they thought he was truthful, they would not have asked for Allah's chastisement.

Elsewhere, the Quran says about them: 'But his people's only answer was this: "Expel [Lut (Lot) and] Lut's (Lot's) followers from your township! Verily, they are folk who make themselves out to be pure!"' (*an-Naml*: 56)

So they had two positions, and two replies: the first was, 'Bring down upon us Allah's chastisement' (*al-'Ankabut*: 29); and when he did not answer this ridiculous request, and continued to call them to the truth, not having yet despaired of them, they followed another course, saying, 'Expel [Lut (Lot) and] Lut's (Lot's) followers from your township' (*an-Naml*: 56), and the reason for this was: 'Verily, they are folk who make themselves out to be pure' (*an-Naml*: 56). In their eyes, purity was a fault, and righteousness was a crime, which shows their corrupt minds and their rotten judgement.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

قَالَ رَبِّ انصُرْنِي عَلَى الْقَوْمِ الْمُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٣٠﴾

**So he prayed, 'My Lord, help me against these people who spread corruption' [30] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 30)**

There is a difference between someone being corrupt in himself, and someone spreading corruption to others. It would have been better for them had they been only corrupt in themselves; but they were corrupt as well as corrupters, spreading their corruption to others.

وَلَمَّا جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا إِبْرَاهِيمَ بِالْبُشْرَى قَالُوا إِنَّا مُهْلِكُوا

أَهْلَ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ إِنَّ أَهْلَهَا كَانُوا ظَالِمِينَ ﴿٣١﴾

**When Our messengers brought the good news [of the birth of a son] to Abraham, they told him, 'We are about to destroy the people of that town. They are wrongdoers' [31] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 31)**

Now Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* is mentioned in the midst of the story of Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* just as before Lut (Lot) was mentioned in the midst of the story of Ibrahim (Abraham). The meaning of 'Our [heavenly] messengers' (*al-'Ankabut*: 31) are the angels, as Allah says:

‘[In His Almightyness,] Allah chooses message-bearers from among the angels as well as from among men...’ (*al-Hajj*: 75).

The angels brought glad tidings to Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*, but the content of these tidings is not mentioned here. The glad tidings was the birth of Ishaq (Issac) and Ya`qub (Jacob) *peace be upon them* and the righteous progeny that would come from them. The messengers also brought a warning that Allah *Glorified is He* would destroy the people of that land, so the glad tidings and the warning provided balance: Allah *Glorified is He* told Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* of the righteous lineage that would come from him, bringing goodness to the world, and Allah told him of how He would destroy those who deviated from His way.

Notice that the verse does not mention the cause of the glad tidings, not saying, ‘Because he was a loyal, virtuous believer’, whereas it did mention the cause of the destruction of the people: ‘...for its people are truly evildoers’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 31). Why is this? It is because the bestower of a grant does not ostentatiously flaunt about his giving nor does so in return for some equal service, whilst the chastiser must give the reason for his punishment.

What was Ibrahim’s (Abraham’s) first reaction when he heard these glad tidings and warnings? He did not ask anything about the glad tidings even though he was yearning for them, but rather was concerned with the matter of the land’s being destroyed, whilst his nephew Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* still dwelt there. So, he said:

قَالَ إِنِّي فِيهَا لَوَطًا قَالُوا نَحْنُ أَعْلَمُ بِمَنْ فِيهَا لَنُنَجِّيَنَّهُ  
وَأَهْلَهُ إِلَّا أَمْرَأَتَهُ كَانَتْ مِنَ الْغَابِرِينَ

**Abraham said, ‘But Lot lives there.’ They answered, ‘We know who lives there better than you do. We shall save him and his household, except for his wife: she will be one of those who stay behind’ [32] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 32)**

So Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* did not immediately rejoice in the glad tidings, but was rather concerned with the destruction of the land of the people of Lut (Lot) because Lut (Lot) was still there. This shows us that a

person should not be concerned with his own good fortune and forget about the misfortunes of others. So, the angels replied: 'We know fully well who is there' (*al-'Ankabut*: 32). This matter was known to them.

Then they reassured him about his nephew: 'most certainly we shall save him and his household' (*al-'Ankabut*: 32). The word 'household' includes the whole family, and therefore they made an exception: '...all but his wife: she will indeed be among those that stay behind' (*al-'Ankabut*: 32).

In Arabic, *ghabirun* (Those who stay behind [singular *ghabir*]) has two lexical usages; we use it with the word 'time' to mean 'the past', and we also use it to mean something that remains; so the same word gives two opposite meanings. This is because the angels came to destroy that land, and Lut's (Lot's) wife stayed behind to be destroyed with the others; she stayed behind to receive chastisement, and so the use of the word *ghabir* implied both these meanings. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَمَّا أَن جَاءَتْ رُسُلُنَا لُوطًا سِيقَهُمْ وَصَافَهُمْ ذُرْعًا وَقَالُوا لَا تَخَفْ وَلَا تَحْزَنْ إِنَّا مُنْجُونَكَ وَأَهْلَكَ إِلَّا أَمْرًا نَكُ كَانَتْ مِنْ الْغَابِرِينَ ﴿٣٣﴾

**When Our messengers came to Lot, he was troubled and distressed on their account. They said, 'Have no fear or grief: we shall certainly save you and your household, except for your wife – she will be one of those who stay behind [33] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 33)**

Ibrahim (Abraham) had witnessed the very same thing that now happened to Lut (Lot), and knew why they had come to him; but why was Lut (Lot) grieved by their presence, when they were angelic messengers from Allah *Glorified is He* occupying the most beautiful forms? They say it is because angels come in the most beautiful forms; if we want to praise a person for his beauty, we say they are like an angel, as the women said to the 'Aziz's wife (Zulaykha) about Yusuf (Joseph) *peace be upon him*: '...This is no mortal man! This is nought but a noble angel!' (*Yusuf*: 31)

When Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* saw them in this beautiful form he felt fear, not joy because his people were iniquitous and evil, and he was sure that



they would try and visit wickedness upon his guests: 'he was sorely grieved on their account' (*al-'Ankabut*: 33), that is, he was aggrieved because '...seeing that it was beyond his power to shield them' (*al-'Ankabut*: 33). The Arabic idiom here is literally 'he was straitened as regards the reach of his arm on their behalf' meaning his arm was not long enough to protect them, i.e. he did not have the power to save them from the people.

There is a difference in the Arabic between the phrase 'And so, when Our [heavenly] messengers came to Ibrahim (Abraham)' and the phrase 'And when Our messengers came unto Lut (Lot)'; an extra particle *an* occurs in the latter phrase. The reason for this is that the angels were delayed somewhat with Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* so the meaning is 'When Our messengers at length came to Lut (Lot)...'.

When he was aggrieved by their presence instead of being overjoyed and feared for them, they reassured him: '...but they said: "Fear not, and grieve not! Behold, we shall save thee and thy household – all but thy wife: she will indeed be among those that stay behind."' (*al-'Ankabut*: 33) Do not fear for us because of these wicked men, for we are not human beings, we are angels who have come to rid you of them, and cut the roots out from under this heinous perversion; and we will save you and your household from the punishment that afflicts them.

Then all his household were to be saved but his wife: 'all but thy wife'; she had grieved him much, and revealed his secrets and told the men where to find his guests; '...she will indeed be among those that stay behind' (*al-'Ankabut*: 33) remaining to be punished.

But how exactly would they bring an end to those people?

إِنَّا مُنْزِلُونَ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ هَذِهِ الْقَرْيَةِ رِجْزًا مِّنَ السَّمَاءِ بِمَا كَانُوا يَفْسُقُونَ ﴿٣٤﴾

**And we shall send a punishment from heaven down on the people of this town because they violate [God's order] [34]**  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 34)

'Horror' here means a torment that would fall upon them from the sky in the form of rocks that Allah *Glorified is He* would rain upon them '...in requital

of all their iniquitous doings' (*al-'Ankabut*: 34), i.e. because of their corruption and deviation from Allah's way.

وَلَقَدْ تَرَكْنَا مِنْهَا آيَةً بَيِّنَةً لِّقَوْمٍ يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٣٥﴾

**We left some [of the town] there as a clear  
sign for those who use their reason [35]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 35)**

This is because this punishment annihilated them, and wiped them out, and made them an admonition for every sagacious person and a sign in the land for anyone who passed it by, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And, verily, [to this day] you pass by the remnants of their dwellings at morning-time' (*as-Saffat*: 137). The admonition of the people of Sodom will remain as long as people pass by their dwellings. Allah *Glorified is He* called it 'a clear sign', a sign meaning something amazing that makes one reflect, which was 'clear' as a symbol that remained plain for everyone to see, 'for people who use their reason', i.e. those who search and reflect upon the cause of the affliction that visited those people, and the torment that Allah *Glorified is He* sent upon them.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَإِلَىٰ مَدْيَنَ أَخَاهُمْ شُعَيْبًا فَقَالَ يٰقَوْمِ اعْبُدُوا اللَّهَ وَارْجُوا  
الْيَوْمَ الْآخِرَ وَلَا تَعْمُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ ﴿٣٦﴾

**To the people of Midyan We sent their brother Shu'ayb.  
He said, 'My people, serve God and think ahead to the  
Last Day. Do not commit evil and spread corruption in  
the land' [36] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 36)**

Midyan was one of the sons of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* for whom his tribe was later named. It was the usual practice to name tribes after their most famous members, the individual's name becoming the name for the whole tribe. Then, the name became to mean the place where they lived, as can be seen by Allah's words: 'Now when he arrived at the wells of Midyan...' (*al-Qasas*: 23). So Midyan became the name for the place which they say extended from Sinai to the Euphrates.

This is a concise reference to the story of the people of Midyan and their brother Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* which was also mentioned during the story of Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him*. Allah *Glorified is He* says 'their brother...' to show that when Allah chooses people to bear the message, He chooses those who are beloved to their people, and those whose characters and histories are known to them, and those of whom the people have some prior experience, so they know them to be people of righteousness, not corruption; and so when they pass on their messages from Allah *Glorified is He*, the people will believe them, and they will have foundations to assist them in guiding others.

Allah says, 'O my people! Worship Allah' (*al-'Ankabut*: 36). The word *qawm* (people) in its strictest Arabic sense refers only to men, because they are the ones who undertake missions (which in Arabic is *yaqumun*, derived from the same root as *qawm*) most important and weighty matters. And so, Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: 'O you who have attained to faith! No men shall deride [other] men: it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves; and no women [shall deride other] women: it may well be that those [whom they deride] are better than themselves...' (*al-Hujurat*: 11). The word *qawm* is used here to mean men, in contrast with women.

We said that worship means obedience, so 'Worship Allah...' means: Obey Allah in everything that He has commanded, and abstain from everything that He has forbidden. If you believe in Him as God and Creator, you must listen to what He says when He advises you with commandments and prohibitions.

You know that Allah *Glorified is He* with His attributes of Absolute Perfection has created you, and created everything for you, so by worshipping Him you do not add to Him any new attribute. Allah was God before you existed; He was an Omnipotent Creator before you existed and He created the universe for you before you existed. And after all this you disobey Him and disbelieve in Him, yet He still does not deny you His favour, or hold back His blessings from you. Allah *Glorified is He* deserves your worship and obedience because to obey Him brings benefit to you.

We said before that the word 'slavery' is a blameworthy word that the self dislikes if it is intended and directed to a human being because when one human being is a slave to another, the master takes the utmost benefit from

the slave. But when a human being is a slave to Allah, it is the slave who takes benefit from his Master. Slavery to Allah is an honour, and strength, and a means of avoiding disgrace and ignominy. You find that reformers everywhere fight against human slavery, and call for slaves to be emancipated.

The first thing that Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* commanded his people to do was 'Worship Allah...', just as Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* said to his people, 'Worship Allah and be conscious of Him' (*al-'Ankabut: 36*); Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* did not command his people to worship Allah *Glorified is He* first, but rather concerned himself with the vile act that had spread amongst them, even though all the messengers came to call people to worship Allah.

Regarding this, we say that Lut (Lot) *peace be upon him* did not command his people to worship Allah *Glorified is He* because he was one of Ibrahim's (Abraham's) people, and followed his religion, which is indicated by Allah's words: 'Thereupon Lut (Lot) came to believe in him...' So he was a follower of Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* and practised the teachings that Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* had brought. He did not command the people to worship Allah because Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* had already done so. Rather, he took on a different responsibility, and Allah *Glorified is He* singled him out for a different mission which was to stop his people from continuing with the vile practise that had spread amongst them.

He then said, 'and look forward to the Last Day' (*al-'Ankabut: 36*), which shows that the Last Day was not on their minds, and that they had not made any preparations for it, as though they thought they could escape from Allah *Glorified is He* and that they would not return to Him. He reminded them of this day, and encouraged them to work for it.

And how can we not prepare for the Last Day, when in our worldly lives, we act according to the same logic as should be the case with the Last Day? For example, you might work and toil in the fields, sowing and planting and watering for a whole year, but when you gather your crop at the time of harvest, and fill your stores, you forget all about the hard work and the toil. At this time, the lazy person who did not do any work will feel regret. On the day of harvest, you will see that the measure of wheat you took from your storage, and

considered it a loss at the time, has now brought you ten more measures; so when you took it from the storage this was not a decrease but rather an increase.

And so we should understand the Last Day with this same logic. We bear the hardships of worship and obedience in this world in order to gain everlasting delight in the hereafter; for whatever the delights of this world might be, they can only come to one of two eventualities: either you will leave them by dying, or they will leave you and be replaced by poverty.

As for the hereafter, you will not be taken from its delights nor will its delight be taken from you. And so it is more fitting that you sow seeds for the hereafter, and make a thousand preparations for it. If your worship is difficult, and your faith involves hardships, think of the greatness of the reward. If you remember the reward for obedience, its difficulties and hardships will seem easy to you; and if you feel the heinousness of the punishment for disobedience, you will easily forgo it and reject it.

So, the only thing that makes a person insist on sin is that he does not remember the punishment for it, and he does few good deeds because he does not remember the reward for it.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'The fornicator is not a believer when he fornicates, and the one who drinks wine is not a believer when he drinks it.'<sup>(1)</sup> This means that if they had remembered their faith, they would not have done it; they were heedless of their faith and so fell into sin.

Whoever remembers the reward of acts of obedience finds sweetness when he performs them, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said about the prayer, 'Give us comfort in it, O Bilal!'<sup>(2)</sup>

'...And do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 36). The verb *ta'thaw* here (act wickedly) is derived from the word *'athw* which means corruption that is concealed. So, the Arabic construction here is of two different words with the same meaning, which is a kind of Arabic idiomatic expression used for emphasis.

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(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayra*

(2) Narrated by *Ahmad and Abu Dawud*

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...who thereupon said, “O my people! Worship Allah...”’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 36) indicates that this statement was added to another statement that came before it, of which the approximation is: ‘And so We sent to the people of Midyan their brother Shu’aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* who said, “O my people, I am Allah’s messenger to you’ after which he told them what they had to do: ‘Worship Allah’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 36). The combination of worshipping Allah *Glorified is He* and looking forward to the Last Day means: Do not separate worship from its goal, and its reward, and do not separate disobedience from its punishment.

Allah says, ‘...and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 36), so I do not say to you that you should make things better, but only that you should at least leave things alone and do not corrupt them. This is because the Creator made the universe for us in a perfectly sound state, such that we only have to preserve its soundness.

The river Nile, for example, is a gift from the Creator, and an artery of life flowing with cool water. You all remember the days when it used to flood, bringing up mud that made its waters look exactly like clay, from which we filled jars, and after a while the mud receded, taking all the dirt with it, and the water remained clear and pure. As for these days, it is polluted, and its waters have been spoiled by all the waste cast into it, and we have become the first people to suffer from the effects of this pollution.

And so city-dwellers, no matter how advanced their civilisations are, have reached the point where they cannot relax unless they leave the city and go to places of pure nature, which remain as Allah created them without any noise, or pollution, or electricity, or civilisation.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَكَذَّبُوهُ فَأَخَذَتْهُمُ الرَّجْفَةُ فَأَصْبَحُوا فِي دَارِهِمْ جَثِيمًا ﴿٣٧﴾

**They rejected him and so the earthquake overtook them.  
When morning came, they were lying dead in their  
homes [37] (The Quran, *al-’Ankabut*: 37)**

Why do people deny the call to good? They say that the only people who deny the call to good are those who benefit from evil because if good comes,

it will cut off the way to their evil, and take from them their social position, power and their leadership. All those who opposed Allah's messengers were leaders and people of high social standing who had become accustomed to leadership and greatness, and to having people be their slaves; so why would they make way for the messengers to remove them from their positions?

If not, then why did 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy hate Prophet Muhammad, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him*? He hated him because the day that he *peace and blessings be upon him* arrived in Medina, they were preparing a crown for 'Abdullah ibn Ubayy to make him king of the city; but when Prophet Muhammad came to them, they were distracted by this great event, and they abandoned their previous plans.

But what did Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* say to his people that they could give the lie to? He gave two commands: 'Worship Allah [alone], and look forward to the Last Day', and one prohibition: '...and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption' (*al-'Ankabut*: 36). It is obvious that commandments and prohibitions are not to be either believed in or denied because they are orders, not reports; for what is a lie? A lie is that you say something is the case when actually it is not, or that something is not the case when actually it is; and these are both reports.

If your speech reflects reality it is truthful, and if it does not it is a lie. So how can we pass judgment over something that has nothing to do with telling the truth or lying? If I say to you, 'Stand up', can you reply, 'You are lying'? Of course not, because the resulting action of such speech does not come until after it has been spoken, and that is why they divide Arabic speech into two categories: reporting speech (*khbar/ikhbar*) and initiative speech (*insha*).

In order to make this simple for learners, we say that when a person speaks this makes what we call a vocal attribution. Before they spoke, this matter was already in their mind, so before I say 'Zayd is hard working', this thought occurs in my mind, and there is in reality a person named Zayd who is hard working.

So, we have a mental attribution, and a vocal attribution, and an actual attribution. If the actual attribution exists before the mental and the vocal, the speech is a report, and is therefore open to be believed or denied.

So, the actual attribution is not the result of the vocal attribution. However, when we say, 'Stand up', the actual attribution comes as a result of the vocal attribution. As long as the actual comes after the vocal, the speech cannot be said to be open to being believed or disbelieved.

Let us return to what Allah's prophet Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon him* said. We find that he expressed two commands: 'Worship Allah [alone], and look forward to the Last Day', and one prohibition: '...and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption' (*al-'Ankabut*: 36). Commands and prohibitions are types of initiative speech that cannot be judged as either true or false; so to what did they give the lie?

So, the first difficulty is that the Quran says, 'they gave him the lie' (*al-'Ankabut*: 37). This is only a difficulty for someone who does not possess the level of understanding of the Arabic language to grasp the gist of Allah's words. Allah *Glorified is He* says here 'but they gave him the lie' (*al-'Ankabut*: 37) because Shu'aib (Jethro) commanded them to worship Allah *Glorified is He* in his capacity as a messenger sent by Allah to give them this command because it was obligatory for them to worship Him, so he only ordered them to do what was incumbent upon them. And he told them that the Last Day is a reality, without doubt, so look forward to it, and that spreading corruption in the land is forbidden.

So, the meaning of his words can be expressed as a report: the two commands and one prohibition he gave were obligatory matters, and they gave the lie to the grounds for them.

The meaning of 'worship Allah' (*al-'Ankabut*: 36) is: Single Him out for worship, which means obedience in all that Allah commands and forbids. This worship is required from everyone, and it is the basis of the law brought by all the prophets and messengers: 'In matters of faith, He has ordained for you that which He had enjoined upon Nuh (Noah) – and into which We gave thee [O Muhammad] insight through revelation – as well as that which We had enjoined upon Ibrahim (Abraham), and Musa (Moses), and 'Isa (Jesus): Steadfastly uphold the [true] faith, and do not break up your unity therein...' (*ash-Shura*: 13).



The issues of worship and belief in the Last Day are general matters over which the divine messages do not differ. As for the sacred laws of commands and prohibitions, these differ from prophet to prophet.

The meaning of 'look forward to the Last Day' (*al-'Ankabut*: 36) is: act in such a way that reflects your anticipation of the Last Day. Why should you love the Last Day, and look forward to it? No one loves it or looks forward to it except those who do good deeds, and so wait for it in order to gain the reward for what they have done. If the meaning were something else, he would have said, 'And fear the Last Day'.

So, the meaning is: Do such works as will make it appropriate that you should hope for the Last Day. A person only hopes for that which will benefit him. We might well ask here: If a person believes in Allah and obeys his Lord's commandments and prohibitions, is their reward in the hereafter something for them to hope for, or is it their right? It might be supposed that Allah would say to those who obey Him: 'Enter Paradise because of what you used to do, it is your entitlement and your right'. So why does the Quran call it a hope when it is actually a certainty?

They say it is because our reward in paradise is a favour from Allah, for He created us, and created things for us and gave us many strengths and blessings before He required anything of us. So when you worship Allah *Glorified is He* as He should be worshipped, you are not repaying the favours He did for you, or giving Him what He truly deserves; and so if He rewards you in the hereafter, He does so purely out of His favour and Generosity.

Allah says, 'Say: "In [this] bounty of Allah and in His Grace – in this, then, let them rejoice: it is better than all [the worldly wealth] that they may amass!"' (*Yunus*: 58)

If you hire a worker for one hundred pounds a month, for example, and give him his pay in advance, will he ask you to pay him again? If the end of the month comes and you give him another ten pounds, this is out of your favour and generosity.

And so He said, 'and look forward to the Last Day' (*al-'Ankabut*: 36) because upon reflection and deep thought it becomes apparent that reward in

the hereafter is pure favour from Allah *Glorified is He* And so the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'None of you will enter paradise by means of his acts.' They said, 'Not even you, O Messenger of Allah?' He replied, 'Not even me, unless Allah enfolds me in His Mercy.'<sup>(1)</sup>

The prohibition in the words '...and do not act wickedly on earth by spreading corruption' (*al-'Ankabut*: 36) means: Do not spread corruption openly, or it means: Do not do things that seem beneficial to you but are actually harmful. Remember when cotton was the principle produce in Egypt, and the chief source of income. It was threatened by worms that fed on cotton, and so we fought this infestation with our hands until the Americans introduced pesticides to us, and we used one called DDT, which quickly eliminated all the worms and the farmers thought that the problem was solved once and for all.

But after a few years, the worms became resistant to this chemical, and DDT became like a narcotic for them, and we began to suffer the negative effects of these pesticides on our water, soil and crops, and on the health of people and animals. So, we should always consider the consequences before beginning anything, and weigh up the pros and cons.

Likewise, when they invented cars they said that they would make it easier for people to travel and transport goods; yet after the revolution in modes of transport that the world has undergone, if we weigh up its benefits with its ills, we will find that its ills are greater because of the pollution it has caused, and that if we were to return to primitive modes of transport, and travel by horseback, it would be better.

I remember<sup>(2)</sup> that when we came to Egypt in 1936 or 1937, there were spaces set aside for parking donkeys in public places, just like the car parks we have today. They were the only means of transport then. It is enough to say that donkey droppings can be used to fertilize the earth, whilst the exhaust fumes of cars cause disease and death.

What happened after Shu'aib's (Jethro's) people gave their prophet the lie?

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Abu Hurayra

(2) The story of the donkey squares

Allah's way with the messengers that came before Prophet Muhammad was that they would deliver their Lord's message, but were not charged to fight the disbelievers with the sword; if they disbelieved His signs, the Lord of Might would punish them Himself, and the matter would end with the destruction of the deniers.

The fact that Allah *Glorified is He* did not command people to fight the disbelievers is logical, which we can see if we consider what happened when the Israelites asked Allah to allow them to fight: 'Are you not aware of those elders of the Children of Israel, after the time of Musa (Moses), how they said unto a prophet of theirs, "Raise up a king for us, [and] we shall fight in Allah's cause"? Said he: "Would you, perchance, refrain from fighting if fighting is ordained for you?" They answered: "And why should we not fight in Allah's cause because we and our children have been driven from our homelands?" Yet, when fighting was ordained for them, they did turn back, save for a few of them.' (*al-Baqara*: 246)

No one was commanded to fight to spread the call except Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because he and his followers could be trusted with this responsibility, and because he *peace and blessings be upon him* was the last of the prophets and messengers, and so naturally he met all the necessary criteria.

The result of their denial was: '...Thereupon an earthquake overtook them: and then they lay lifeless, in their very homes, on the ground.' [*al-'Ankabut*: 37] This was Allah's punishment because He *Glorified is He* took care of the deniers Himself. In the chapters of *al-Hijr* and *Hud*, Allah *Glorified is He* says 'the blast' (rather than an earthquake). Of course, the verses are not contradictory. A blast means a loud, alarming sound, which we hear when the wind blows violently, as when it blows softly we do not hear any blast.

So a blast means a violent wind, and such a wind will surely lead to a tremor (*rajfa*, which can mean 'trembling' or 'earthquake') of the sort that destroys houses and buildings when bomb explodes, for example. So the blast comes first, and the tremors follow; and so the Quran sometimes mentions the cause, saying 'blast' *sayha*, and sometimes mentions the effect, saying 'earthquake' or 'trembling' *rajfa*.

‘...And then they lay lifeless, in their very homes, on the ground.’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 37) The word used here in Arabic is *asbahu* which means ‘they became’, or literally ‘they became in the morning’, so the time that this happened is specified as morning. The usual practice is for attacks to be made at dawn, before the enemy is ready to face you, still being drowsy with sleep. Until this day, military strategists and leaders still prefer to attack at dawn, in order to surprise the enemy.

To attack at this time has become the norm to the extent that to attack at another time is considered a cunning stratagem of war, as was the case with the decision our leaders took in the October 1973 war, when they surprised the enemy by attacking at midday. They completely surprised them, and caught them in an unguarded moment because they did not choose the usual time to attack, which is dawn. So, a person should not be completely regular with everything he does, but should rather vary his routine according to circumstances.

There is a story that a man was very keen to wake his son up early so he could go to work and earn his living, and so the father said, ‘So-and-so’s son got up early, and found a wallet with one hundred pounds in it’! So the son, who was lazy and did not want to get up early, replied: ‘That wallet was dropped by someone who got up even earlier than him’!

The meaning of ‘lifeless’ is completely still, without any motion.

Then, the verses of the Quran take us to another brief mention of part of the story of the succession of divine messages, as concise as a telegram:

وَعَادًا وَثَمُودًا وَقَدْ تَبَيَّرَ لَكُمْ مِنْ مَّسْكِنِهِمْ وَزَيْنَ لَهُمُ  
الشَّيْطَانُ أَعْمَلَهُمْ فَصَدَّهُمْ عَنِ السَّبِيلِ وَكَانُوا مُسْتَبْصِرِينَ ﴿٣٨﴾

**[Remember] the tribes of 'Ad and Thamud: their history is made clear to you by [what is left of] their dwelling places.**

**Satan made their foul deeds seem alluring to them and barred them from the right way, though they were capable of seeing [38] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 38)**

Notice that each of these quick references introduce the story and then swiftly move on to the end: ‘And the tribes of 'Ad and Thamud...’

(*al-'Ankabut*: 38) is the introduction, and 'as should have become obvious to you from [whatever there remains of] their dwellings' (*al-'Ankabut*: 38) is an allusion to what happened to them. It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* is saying to us: 'I will not tell you what happened to them because you can see their dwellings for yourself, and you pass them by night and day': '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)

With the advances in science, they are now able to photograph what lies under the ground, and much archaeological evidence of the settlements of 'Ad and Thamud and the sand-dunes they inhabited has emerged. Read Allah's words: 'Are you not aware of how thy Sustainer has dealt with [the tribe of] 'Ad, [the people of] Iram the many-pillared?' (*al-Fajr*: 6-7)

Naturally, the remnants of previous people are now generally found underground, and we have to dig to reach them because they have been buried by dust as time has passed. How should this not be so, when if we leave our houses for a month we return to find them covered with dust, even though all the windows and doors were closed? You can imagine for yourself how the dust would cover places open to the elements for thousands of years.

And they tell us that hurricanes and sandstorms could bury whole caravans entirely; and so why would we expect the remnants of these settlements to still be above ground? We can witness today how desert roads can be left covered by sand after storms so that they cannot be traversed until the sand is cleared.

And so we should say: 'Yes, Lord, we have seen their dwellings, and have passed by them, even if we have only done so by virtue of the modern photography that has shown them to us'. '...Satan had made their [sinful] doings seem goodly to them' (*al-'Ankabut*: 38), that is, he tempted them with disbelief, and convinced them that it was the right way to live their lives, '...and thus had barred them from the path' (*al-'Ankabut*: 38). As long as Satan drew them to his path, he of course barred them from the path of faith, '...despite their having been endowed with the ability to perceive the truth'

(*al-'Ankabut*: 38), that is, Allah *Glorified is He* did not take them, whilst they were unaware of the truth.

This is because the principle that Allah *Glorified is He* has chosen for His creatures is: '...Moreover, We would never chastise [any community for the wrong they may do] ere We have sent an apostle [to them].' (*al-Isra'*: 15)

That is, a messenger who shows them the way, and warns them of the consequences of disbelief. And so Allah *Glorified is He* only punished them after He had sent them a messenger whom they then denied.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقُرُونٌ وَفِرْعَوْنٌ وَهَمَانٌ ۖ وَلَقَدْ جَاءَهُمْ مُوسَىٰ  
بِالْبَيِّنَاتِ فَاسْتَكْبَرُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَمَا كَانُوا سَبْقِينَ ﴿٣٩﴾

**[Remember] Qarun and Pharaoh and Haman:  
Moses brought them clear signs, but they behaved  
arrogantly on earth. They could not escape Us [39]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 39)**

The discourse is still concerned with the line of divine messages, having moved on from discussing 'Ad and Thamud to making mention of '...Qarun (Korah) and Pharaoh and Haman...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 39). The proof of Allah's words in the previous verse, '...despite their having been endowed with the ability to perceive the truth' (*al-'Ankabut*: 38), is His word here: 'to them had come Musa (Moses) with all evidence of the truth...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 39), that is, with plain matters that left no room for doubt as to the truth of Allah; *Glorified is He* and the messenger who had come to deliver His message.

'But they behaved arrogantly on earth' (*al-'Ankabut*: 39), that is, they deemed themselves to be mighty. He did not say, 'They were proud', but rather 'they behaved arrogantly' (*al-'Ankabut*: 39), as though He is saying that they possessed no intrinsic quality that they could have been proud of, A proud person is proud not of something that is intrinsically his, but rather of something that was given to him. It could be taken from him at any time, so how can he be proud of it? And so, we say that the proud person has forgotten to see the

effects of Allah in His creation; if his Lord was on his mind, he would be too ashamed to be proud.

If a person is cognizant of his Lord's Might, he feels humble in himself and ashamed to be proud. A person proud of his strength and health is deluded, because he does not consider that the weak person whom he belittles might actually surpass him in something else, or be gifted in something more important than strength and vigour. Does he not see that this vigour is a contingent thing, which came to him from somewhere else, and will soon pass from him to something else?

So, when Musa (Moses) *peace and blessings be upon him* came to Qarun (Korah), Pharaoh, and Haman bearing Allah's clear signs, they behaved with arrogance and refused to follow him, not because of something naturally occurring within them, but simply reacting unjustly: '...and withal, they could not escape' (*al-'Ankabut*: 39). Allah *Glorified is He* negated the possibility that they could outrun Him, as He says elsewhere: '...but there is nothing to prevent us' (*al-Waqi'a*: 60).

To outstrip (the literal meaning of verb *sabaqa* from which this expression is derived) is not inherently good or bad; it is the destination that determines this: what is it that is reached first? For example, we hear people today describing others as 'backward' or 'reactionary'. To go back is not inherently bad: a person might sin against himself, and then return to his Lord's guidance; and what a fine return this is. So, arriving first is also not inherently bad, as in Allah's words: 'And vie with one another to attain to your Sustainer's forgiveness...' (*Al-'Imran*: 133). That is, strive to arrive to His forgiveness as soon as possible.

'...And withal, they could not escape' (*al-'Ankabut*: 39). (Literally 'they did not outstrip'.) Races take place in arenas; if the arena is the hereafter, could anyone outstrip Allah *Glorified is He* and escape from Him? They will not outstrip Him, and they will not escape His Grasp, and they will not be able to stop Him from reaching them.

Allah says:

فَكُلًّا أَخَذْنَا بِذُنُوبِهِ فَمِنْهُمْ مَن أَرْسَلْنَا عَلَيْهِ حَاصِبًا وَمِنْهُمْ مَن أَخَذَتْهُ  
الصَّيْحَةُ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن خَسَفْنَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ وَمِنْهُمْ مَن أَغْرَقْنَا وَمَا  
كَانَ اللَّهُ لِيُظْلِمَهُمْ وَلَكِن كَانُوا أَنفُسَهُمْ يَظْلِمُونَ ﴿٤٠﴾

**And We punished each one of them for their sins: some We struck with a violent storm; some were overcome by a sudden blast; some We made the earth swallow; and some We drowned. It was not God who wronged them; they wronged themselves [40] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 40)**

The discourse here refers to the deniers and the disbelievers who have just been mentioned: `Ad, Thamud, Midyan, the people of Lut (Lot), Qarun (Korah), Pharaoh, and Haman. It was appropriate that Allah *Glorified is He* should give a comment included all these people because they were in reality a single faction. And so Allah says, 'Every one of them', that is, all the deniers We just mentioned.

He says: 'For every one of them did We take to task for his sin...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40). This taking to task reflected the power of Him who performed it, and so Allah *Glorified is He* says about His taking to task of the deniers: '...We took them to task as only *the Almighty*, who determines all things, can take to task.' (*al-Qamar*: 42)

That is, a Mighty One Who cannot be overcome, and an All-Powerful One Who can take whom He wills to task without their being able to resist Him in His Might.

The reason for this taking to task is 'sin'; so it is not a case of injustice or tyranny, but is rather pure justice, and so Allah *Glorified is He* says at the end of the verse: '...And it was not Allah who wronged them, but it was they who had wronged themselves' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40).

Allah specifies the way in which these deniers were dealt with: '...upon some of them We let loose a deadly storm wind...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40), that is, a wind that carried in it small stones that would not cut them but rather burn and scratch them as the wind pelted them. He did not say, for example, 'We sent upon them a fire' because fire might simply have burned them so they died immediately and painlessly; rather, He sent upon them a storm of burning



pebbles to scratch them painfully. We hear some people say, 'I'll burn him with a cold fire!', that is, in order to maximise the duration of his pain.

Then, He says, 'and some of them were overtaken by a [sudden] blast' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40) meaning a calamitous sound that shakes the earth which was the fate of Thamud; 'and some of them We caused to be swallowed by the earth' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40) which was the fate of Qarun (Korah); '...and some of them We caused to drown...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40) which was the fate of the people of Nuh (Noah), and Pharaoh.

These are the four ways by which the deniers were annihilated: fire in a storm, air in a blast, enveloping in earth and drowning in water. May Allah have mercy on the scholar Fakhr Ad-Din Ar-Razi, who said that this verse encompassed the elements by which humans have life, which are four in number: water, fire, earth, and air. In the past, they called these the Four Elements, but since then science has made a distinction between elements and substances.

Elements can be extracted from substances, but nothing further can be extracted from elements, because they are recurrent atoms from which nothing else can be taken. For example, the air around us is a substance from which can be extracted oxygen and so on, and water is a substance comprised of several elements. Mendeleyev composed a Periodic Table of Elements; giving each of them a number he called the atomic number. For example, the element with the number 1 contains one single proton, and the one with the number 2 contains two protons, and so on until number 93, although he found some gaps in these numbers which he left blank and were later filled in by other scientists.

For example, Madame Curie discovered the element radium, and they found that indeed its number was one of the ones missing from Mendeleyev's table, and so they put it in its proper place. This shows how the universe has been created with its elements in perfect order, elements of which, thanks to the advances in science, 105 are currently known.

When scientists analysed the fertile soil upon which we raise crops, they found it to contain 16 elements, the most abundant of which was oxygen, the least abundant magnesium, which accounted for less than 0.1% of the total. When they analysed the human body, they found these exact same 16 elements. It is as though Allah *Glorified is He* even used the disbelievers to show the truth

of His assertion that He created man from mud so that we would know that when Allah *Glorified is He* wants to reveal a secret of His universe; He does so even by the hand of the disbeliever.

The first person to talk about the four elements from which the universe is made was the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who died in 384 BC. Using these four elements as their bases, they would interpret the stars. For example, in the case of marriage they would consider the star-signs of the couple according to these elements, so if the man's sign was an air sign and the woman's was a fire sign, they would say 'They will make a blazing fire'; or if the woman's sign was a water sign and the man's was an earth sign, they would say 'They will make clay.'

It is patent that Allah *Glorified is He* in His Omnipotent Power makes the elements of life the same as the elements of death. Allah *Glorified is He* is able to bring life and destruction with the same thing just as He destroyed Pharaoh with water and saved Musa (Moses) with water.

Likewise, if we reflect on the four elements we will see that they are the constitutional elements of the human being. Allah *Glorified is He* created him from water and soil to make mud, and then He dried him with heat so he became like potter's clay, and then he began to breath air. So, the same four elements of creation were the elements of destruction.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* wants His creation to approach the universe with all its signs and phenomena with acute discernment so that they can take heed of its lessons and secrets. We can see that all new discoveries come as results of careful scrutiny of the phenomena of the universe. Our Lord draws our attention to the importance of empirical knowledge when He says, 'and there are many signs in the heavens and the earth that they pass by and give no heed to' (*Yusuf*: 105).

Thus, we should reflect on what we see; for mankind did not arrive at the age of steam and Archimedes' principle of displacement, the discoveries of electricity, gravity, or penicillin, except by means of careful observation of the nature of things. Therefore, observation is the first principle of every empirical science after which comes experimentation, and then repeated experimentation until a scientific conclusion is disclosed.

Air is a principle means of human life, and by means of it balance exists in the universe. Yet, if Allah *Glorified is He* wills, He makes it into a hurricane or a destructive storm. We said before that you can go without food for a month and without water for ten days, but you can only go without air for a very short time. Thus, air is the most important means of preserving life. That is why we hear people who are in a state of rage saying: 'By Allah, I will smother him!' because it is the most direct way to bring about death. Therefore, the need for air is one of the well-known key agents used for killing. Moreover, air keeps things balanced. Mountains and skyscrapers do not stand by the power of reinforced concrete, but rather by the balance of the air. This is borne out by the fact that if you remove all the air from one side of them they will quickly collapse on that side. This is how bombs cause their destruction. They depend on the notion of creating vacuums, and the principles of what they call the forces of contraction and expansion. Everything around you is only standing because air is surrounding it from all sides.

We said that when the Noble Quran talks about air, it talks about it with the precision of an All Knowing Creator. Every time the word 'wind' is mentioned in the singular, it refers to destruction and annihilation; and every time it is referred to as 'winds' in the plural, it refers to growth goodness and nurturing. For example, consider Allah's words: 'We send the winds to fertilize...' (*al-Hijr*: 22). Here, it is *ar-riyah* (winds) in the plural. In another verse, the True Lord says, 'and as for 'Ad, it was destroyed by a furious wind.' (*al-Haqqa*: 6) Here it is *rih* (wind) in the singular, coming from one direction, causing destruction. Then, the verse we are discussing, ends with this truth: '...It was not Allah who wronged them; they wronged themselves.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40) because the Creator *the Exalted* ennobled the children of Adam *peace be upon him*: 'We have honoured the children of Adam...' (*al-Isra'*: 70). He singled them out from all other creatures and ennobled them with intelligence and free will. If you examine the universe, and scrutinise all the different species in existence, you will find that mankind are the masters of this entire universe.

The different species in the universe form a hierarchy: mankind comes first; then the animals; then the plants then the inanimate objects. If one of the wonders of Allah's bounty is manifested in an inanimate object, it develops and becomes a plant; and if a plant is given one of the wonders of His bounty

such as sensation, it becomes an animal; and if the True Lord manifests His Grace in that animal and gifts it with intellect, it becomes a human being. Yet, when a plant takes on the quality of growth, thereby rising above the inanimate object, does it lose its inanimate qualities? No, it does not. Rather, it retains them, for if it ceases to grow, it becomes fixed like a stone. Likewise, the animal has the quality of sensation which raises it above plants, yet it retains its plant-like qualities of growth and development.

Just so, the human being, master of the universe, who is honoured by his Lord with intelligence, still retains qualities of the inanimate object which is seen by the effects of gravity on him; if he hurls himself from a great height, he cannot simply grasp the air and stay there. Likewise, he retains his plant-like and animal-like qualities. Thus, within him there are qualities inherent in all the species that are lower than he is, and he is marked out from them by his intellect. So, Allah *Glorified is He* does not make him morally responsible until after his intellect has fully developed. Moreover, he is only held responsible on condition that he is free of mental defects such as insanity; and that he acts freely, for the one who acts under compulsion is not responsible for his actions, as he, then, is deprived of his free will.

Hence, it is not appropriate for mankind who is honoured by his Lord with intellect and free will, and is favoured above all other creatures to worship anything unless it is of a higher rank than himself. If he lowers himself by worshipping a being occupying a lesser rank than himself, it is bizarre and inappropriate. The worshipper must occupy a lower rank than the worshipped. You are higher in rank than the animal, plants and inanimate objects below you; how can you suppose that a statue has control over you, when you make it yourself, and place it wherever you desire to and repair it if it breaks?

Your Lord honoured you, yet you dishonoured yourself, and were content with your degradation. He made you a master, and you made yourself a slave to the lowest of creatures. Allah *Glorified is He* says, in a Qudsi Hadith, 'O Son of Adam, I made you for Myself, and I made the entire universe for you; let not what is made for you distract you from the One Whom you are made for.'<sup>(1)</sup>

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(1) *Ahmad and Ibn Kathir narrated the like of it.*

The words, 'It was not Allah who wronged them' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40) means 'It was not appropriate that Allah should wrong them'. When you say such a thing is inappropriate for someone to do, this implies that they were able to do it, but it was not right for them to do so. The True Lord denies that He wronged them, not because He was unable to do so, but because it is not appropriate that He wrongs anyone. This is because to wrong someone means to take what is rightfully theirs; and Allah *Glorified is He* owns everything, so why would He need to wrong anyone?

Another example of this is the negation of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* being a poet, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'We have not taught the Prophet poetry, nor could he ever have been a poet...' (*Ya Sin*: 69). The Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* could have become a poet because he possessed all the necessary means to do so, but it was not appropriate for him *peace and blessings be upon him* to be a poet because poets are liars (usually speak of things that are not real), wandering from valley to valley. So, there is a difference between something being appropriate and its real existence. This notion is supported by Allah's words: '...your Lord is never unjust to His creatures.' (*Fussilat*: 46)

Here, the word *zhallam* (unjust) is used, which is an exaggerated form of the word *zhalim* (wrongdoer). He did not simply say *zhalim*; why not? It is because if Allah *Glorified is He* were to allow Himself to do wrong, it would be a wrong commensurate with His Omnipotent Power, and so He would not be called merely *zhalim*, but rather *zhallam* with the exaggerated adjective form – and Allah *Glorified is He* is far removed and above ever being any such thing. When we, before, spoke about *sighat al-mubalagha* (the exaggerated adjective form), we said that the exaggeration might refer to the action itself such as when you eat a single piece of bread with your meal whilst someone else eats five pieces; or it might refer to the action being repeated such as when you eat three meals and someone else eats six; in this case we would, in Arabic, call such a person *akul* or *akkal* (one who eats a lot). Thus, the exaggeration of the adjective form comes from magnifying the action itself, or from its being repeated.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...your Lord is never unjust to His creatures.' (*Fussilat*: 46) He did not say 'To His creature' in the singular form because

the plurality of the people would necessitate the plurality of the wrongdoing—if it could possibly be imagined — and so the exaggerated adjective form *zhallam* is used here. A linguistic rule (in Arabic) states that to negate an exaggerated adjective does not necessarily negate the minimal amount of the quality of this adjective, and that to assert the minimal amount does not assert the exaggerated amount. So, if you say that someone is *akul* (that is he eats a lot), all the more so he is *akil* (that he, first, eats). Yet, if you say that he is *akil*, this does not necessarily mean that he eats a lot. In Allah's words, '...your Lord is never unjust to His creatures.' (*Fussilat*: 46), the negation of the exaggeration of Allah's being *zhallam* (an extreme aggressor) does not in itself negate its origin *zhalim* (aggressor). Yet, of course, we know that He is absolutely absolved of aggression whatsoever.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...they wronged themselves.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 40) The form of this self-wronging of theirs is that they lowered and abased themselves by disbelieving after Allah had honoured them. They should have risen higher by means of this honour instead of abasing themselves by worshipping lesser beings.

After having informed us of the disbelievers who associated partners with Allah *Glorified is He* and denied the messengers, and what became of them, the Quranic discourse now gives us a parable to illustrate these truths to us, saying:

مَثَلُ الَّذِينَ اتَّخَذُوا مِنْ دُونِ اللَّهِ أَوْلِيَاءَ كَمَثَلِ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ اتَّخَذَتْ  
بَيْتًا وَإِنَّ أَوْهَنَ الْبُيُوتِ لَبَيْتُ الْعَنْكَبُوتِ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٤١﴾

**Those who take protectors other than God can be compared to spiders building themselves houses – the spider's is the frailest of all houses – if only they could understand[41] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 41)**

The word *mathal* 'parable' and its derivatives are mentioned in the Quran many times. The root stem *m-th-l* expresses concepts of which we must be aware. The word *mithl* indicates a simile, specifically a simile where one thing is compared to another. This is found in Allah's words: 'There is nothing like Him' (*ash-Shura*: 11). This is also found in His words: 'And the recompense of evil is punishment like it...' (*ash-Shura*: 40).

As for the word *mathal*, it means a similitude in the form of a story, or a comparison of numerous things to other numerous things such as in the case of Allah's words: 'tell them, too, what the life of this world is like: We send water down from the skies...' (*al-Kahf*: 45). Thus, the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not simply compare one thing to another here, but rather compares two complete concepts: the life of this world, with its splendour, allure, verdure and enjoyment, and then its end after all this, is like water when it falls from the sky and mixes with the soil of the earth which gives forth beautiful flowers, and it quickly becomes bare, dry earth.

That's why some people who have had problems with the rhetorical style of the Quran objected to the True Lord's statement about 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*: 'In Allah's eyes 'Isa (Jesus) is just like Adam: He created him from dust, said to him, "Be", and he was...' (*Al-'Imran*: 59).

The cause of their objection is that the word *mathal* (which is usually used to compare concepts or plurals) is used here to compare one singular person to another, namely comparing 'Isa (Jesus) to Adam *peace be upon them*. We say in response that this is actually comparing one complete concept with another, and this objection has actually resulted due to an imperfect understanding of the verse. The True Lord is not comparing 'Isa (Jesus) to Musa (Moses) *peace be upon them* in their capacity as two personalities; rather He is comparing the story of Adam's creation *peace be upon him* with that of 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*: Adam was created without a father, and so was 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon them*. Thus, the meaning is: if you are amazed that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* was created without a father, then you should be even more amazed at Adam's creation, for he had had neither a father nor a mother. If you believe in 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* as a god because he had no father, the analogy requires that this misbelief should have pertained to Adam *peace be upon him* not 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him*.

The truth is that Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to show His creation the extent of His Absolute Omnipotence, and that He is not bound to create in any specific way, but rather, He can create however He wills whether with a father and mother, or with neither mother nor father, or with a mother alone or a father alone. This matter does not depend on causes, but rather on the will

of the One Who causes, Allah *Glorified is He* Who simply says to a thing, 'Be!', and it is. A couple might come together but be destined not to conceive, so they do not. Moreover, Allah *Glorified is He* might heal an infertile woman so she can conceive, or He might make an old woman fertile again so she can conceive. The evidences for these cases are obvious. Thus, the absoluteness of Allah's Omnipotence in this matter covers every possibility, and has no limit.

When the True Lord gives us parables, He wants to explain something abstract by means of something concrete; and something vague by means of something plain; and something general by means of something specific. In this respect, the Quran follows the conventions of the Arabs who made much use of parables to explain and clarify.

It is related<sup>(1)</sup> that someone was very well-respected and admired by the people, and another man was jealous of him, and wanted to attach some accusation to him to mar his reputation so that he could usurp the position he held amongst the people. So, he accused him of frequently visiting a beautiful widow. Indeed, the people had seen him going to her house, whereupon a woman would come out and take something from him. When the people looked into the matter, they found that she was an old woman with many children, and they were very poor, and that the man had been sharing with them the provision that Allah *Glorified is He* had given him. When they realised this, they lauded the man, and honoured him, and he became even more noble and worthy in their eyes. A poet took this theme and expressed it as a parable:

If Allah wills to unfurl a hidden virtue,  
He makes it liable to the tongue of the jealous:  
If fire does not burn all it touches  
We would not have discovered the fragrance of incense.

The incense mentioned here is *oud* (aloes: odorous wood), the fragrance of which only emerges when it is burned. Another word derived from the root *m-th-l* is *mathulah* (exemplary punishment), as in Allah's words: '...and indeed there have been exemplary punishments before them' (*ar-Ra'd*: 6).

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(1) *The story of accusation of the good man with adultery by those who envy him*



*Al-mathulat* 'exemplary punishments' refers to the punishments that overtook the previous denying nations, making them an example and cautionary tale for others. When a parable becomes famous, it spreads on people's tongues and they use it as an example. For instance, Hatim At-Ta'i became so famous for generosity that people began to use his name as a metaphor for it. A short phrase might become so famous amongst us that it becomes a proverb that we use in suitable situations. For example, if a student neglects his studies all through the year and then studies hard all the night that precedes this exam, we say, 'Before you shoot, the quivers should be filled'. We always use the exact wording of the proverb, even though the situation involves no shooting of arrows, or any quivers. Thus, proverbs are said just as they are without making any changes whether the situation is that of a singular noun, a dual or a plural, or a masculine or feminine noun. We say, 'What is behind you, O Isami (Arabic name)?' using the Arabic feminine second person pronoun because in its original context it was said to a woman.

The True Lord says, 'The parable of those who take guardians besides Allah is as the parable of the spider that makes for itself a house...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 41). This is a parable concerned with the highest of doctrinal matters which Allah *Glorified is He* has given us in order to clarify and explain, and to make the matter easier for us to comprehend. Beware of saying, when Allah *Glorified is He* draws a parable for you, 'What does Allah mean by using this example'? For Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Allah does not shy from drawing comparisons even with something as small as a gnat, or anything above that...' (*al-Baqara*: 26).

Some people wonder that since a gnat is a trivial thing: how could Allah draw a parable from it? The reality of the matter is that a gnat is one of Allah's creations, and it contains many wonders and secrets that call us to reflect and contemplate. It is not a trivial thing as you might think; rather, for you to arrive at an understanding of the secret of divine greatness that it contains within it would be sufficient cause for you to be proud. This tiny creature contains within it all the constituents of life and sensation; do you know where its brain is, or where its circulatory system is...etc.? Aside from flies, mosquitoes and other tiny creatures, do you not see that microbes that you cannot even see with your naked eye can cause you harm, despite your strength, preventing you from sleeping, and causing you discomfort?

So, do not ask why Allah *Glorified is He* draws parables from these things because 'Allah does not shy from drawing comparisons even with something as small as a gnat, or anything above that...' (*al-Baqara*: 26), i.e. that which is even smaller and harder to see. This is because just as the might of the Creator is found in immense things, it is also found in the smallest and most delicate of things. For example, the 'Big Ben' clock tower, the largest and most famous clock in the world by which the world sets its time. If you consider this clock, you will see that it is as big as it is in order that people can see it from afar, and tell the time by it, and so it shows the greatness and skill of the designers and engineers who made it. Its greatness lies in its size and grandeur. Yet if you consider the clock they are able to set into a ring, you will find that it too comprises greatness and skill because of the precision required to manufacturing such a small clock. Likewise, the first radios were the size of the old threshing machines, and now they are small enough to fit in one's pocket.

Some of Allah's creatures are so delicate that you cannot perceive them with your senses. It is curious that people demand to see Allah *Glorified is He* with their own eyes, when they cannot even see the outcome of his creation. You cannot see jinn, nor can you see microbes and germs, and you cannot even see your own soul which lies between your two sides and on which your life depends. You cannot see these things, or perceive them with your other senses; and so one aspect of the greatness of Allah *Glorified is He* is that He sees all, but all cannot see Him.

Let us return to the parable that Allah *Glorified is He* is giving us: 'The parable of those who take guardians besides Allah...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 41), i.e. partners in divinity and intercessors, 'is as the parable of the spider', the frail creature that makes its web with the delicacy that we all see, and which spun its web over the cave in which the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* stayed during his emigration, sharing with the pigeon the duty of throwing off the polytheists, '...that makes for itself a house' (*al-'Ankabut*: 41) from these fragile threads, '...and most surely the frailest of the houses is the spider's house' (*al-'Ankabut*: 41). The fault of the spider is not that it makes a house, but that it makes it from these fragile threads which can be blown away by the wind. A house should be a sanctuary that protects its inhabitants, and that it

has doors, windows, walls and so on. As for its use as a net to catch prey, it is perfectly appropriate. Just so, the idolaters took idols as gods, whereas if they had simply taken them as indications of Allah's Omnipotent Power of creation, it would have been more fitting and more beneficial for them. Just as the spider's house can be destroyed by a gust of wind, and when you clean your house you might kill the spider itself, Allah *Glorified is He* does likewise with the deeds of the idolaters: 'and We shall turn to the deeds they have done and scatter them like dust.' (*al-Furqan*: 23) Also, He draws another parable to illustrate this: 'The deeds of those who reject their Lord are like ashes that the wind blows furiously on a stormy day...' (*Ibrahim*: 18).

The meaning of '...did they but know.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 41) is if they could but understand the reality of things. The spider's web is no kind of house, but it is effective for catching insects; just so, idols and stones cannot be taken as gods, but they can be useful if they are seen as evidences of the Creator's power. Had they reflected on this, and reflected on the secrets of their creation, they would have been guided to faith by means of them. So, they are evidence of Allah's Omnipotence, if they but knew. The mountain, this rock from which you hew your idols, is the first thing to serve you, and to serve those creatures which are lower than you, namely animals and plants. We said before that inanimate objects serve plants, and plants serve animals, and they all serve mankind. In this way, inanimate objects are the servants of all servants, yet you have made them into gods. Look at this transformation, and the baseness of this notion of yours, and your unfortunate disposition in making the lowest and basest of things into the highest and noblest—according to your claims.

How could this be, when Allah *Glorified is He* has singled you out from all other creatures? It was more fitting that you search for something higher than yourself that merits your worship; and were you to do so, you would find nothing to take as a god except Allah *Glorified is He*. If you wish, read what Allah *Glorified is He* says about inanimate objects: 'Say, "How can you disregard the One Who created the earth in two days? How can you set up other gods as His equals? He is the Lord of all the worlds!" He placed solid mountains on it (the earth), blessed it, and measured out its varied provisions for all who seek them—all in four days.' (*Fussilat*: 9-10)

It is as though the immense, solid mountains are stores that release resources for mankind with the passage of time. Rocks break from them, and become the silt which rainwater carries to us in the wet seasons, from which is formed the topsoil of the plains and valleys, becoming a source of fertility and growth that is constantly renewed and uninterrupted. You remember the floods we had before, and the goodness that the Nile would carry to us, renewed each year, and how the water would resemble nothing so much as *tahini* (sesame paste) because of all the silt it carried. If only the idol-worshippers who carve rocks into idols would reflect on these signs indicating the power of the Creator instead of worshipping them in His place.

Elsewhere in the Quran, the True Lord *Glorified is He* gives us a parable which also illustrates this essential doctrinal issue: ‘Allah puts forward this illustration: can a man who has for his masters several partners at odds with each other be considered equal to a man devoted wholly to one master? All praise belongs to Allah, though most of them do not know.’ (*az-Zumar*: 29) There is a difference between a servant who serves and obeys a single master and a slave who is owned by several masters; if only they were in agreement, but they are ‘...at odds with each other...’ (*az-Zumar*: 29), each one issuing his own orders, and having his own demands; so how can he please them all? How can he meet all their needs when they are at odds with one another?

The one who worships Allah *Glorified is He* alone with no associates is like the servant to a single master, and the one who worships idols is like the servant who has several disputing masters. This is how the True Lord gives people parables illustrating truths, in order to make them plain and clear.

Then, the True Lord says:

إِنَّ اللَّهَ يَعْلَمُ مَا يَدْعُونَكَ مِنْ دُونِهِ مِنْ شَيْءٍ وَهُوَ الْعَزِيزُ الْحَكِيمُ ﴿٤٢﴾

**God knows what things they call upon beside Him: He is the Mighty, the Wise [42] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 42)**

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘Surely, Allah knows whatever thing they call upon besides Him...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 42) because when they were pressed, they said, ‘We do not worship the idols; we worship the stars or angels that control

these idols'. Allah *Glorified is He* responds to them by saying, 'Surely, Allah knows whatever thing they call upon besides Him...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 42). The words: 'whatever thing' here imply insignificance, as though what they invoke besides Allah *Glorified is He* is not even considered as a thing, or that it is too trivial to be considered a thing; or it means that whatever it might be that they invoke, Allah *Glorified is He* knows it.

The word *shay`a* (literally: thing) here used to mean 'whatever thing', is derived from the verb *sha`a*, *yasha`a* and *shay`an*, (willed, wills, thing). *Shay`a* means something that someone else is wanted to do, and the one who wants is Allah *Glorified is He*. It is as though they are worshipping the thing, leaving aside its Creator. After Allah *Glorified is He* ennobled them, they abased themselves, and chose degradation for themselves, worshipping that which occupies a lesser rank in creation than they do. Idols are inanimate objects which are the basest form of existence. Then, He says, '...and He is the Mighty, the Wise.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 42) He is Almighty: that is, He overcomes and cannot be overcome; and He is Wise in everything He decrees and commands.

Then, the True Lord says:

وَتِلْكَ الْأَمْثَلُ نَضْرِبُهَا لِلنَّاسِ وَمَا يَعْقِلُهَا إِلَّا الْعَالِمُونَ ﴿٤٣﴾

**Such are the comparisons We draw for people, though only the wise can grasp them [43] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 43)**

No one who hears a parable from Allah *Glorified is He* and then fails to understand it is truly learned, and so those who objected to Allah's words: 'Allah does not shy from drawing comparisons even with something as small as a gnat, or anything above that...' (*al-Baqara*: 26), disdaining the gnat, and seeing it as unworthy of having parables drawn from it, are not learned. We say to them: you possess neither intelligence nor awareness of the subtlety of this parable. Read Allah's words: 'those you call on beside Allah could not, even if they combined all their forces, create a fly...' (*al-Hajj*: 73).

Leave aside the matter of creation, and consider the simplest of things: if a fly lands on your food and takes some, can you get it back, however much power and force you use? The fly is not a trivial thing as you imagine, and

even those things smaller than it, like mosquitoes, and microbes which cannot be seen with the naked eye; they are all Allah's creations, and they embody secrets which indicate His Omnipotent Power.

The True Lord says, 'Allah does not shy from drawing comparisons even with something as small as a gnat, or anything above that...' (*al-Baqara: 26*), meaning: something even smaller. Consider the gnat, which is even smaller than the fly, and how it possesses a tiny proboscis by which it pierces the skin and extracts the blood which you yourself can only extract with difficulty. You cannot see microbes with your naked eye, yet they can invade the body and cause it to sicken, demolish its foundations, and perhaps cause its death.

In essence, these creatures which you find insignificant contain many lessons and signs, but only those who are aware can understand them. Most of these signs and secrets were discovered by people who do not believe in Allah *Glorified is He*. Some of them understood and so became believers, whilst others did not and remained on their disbelief, even though of all people, they were the ones who should most have believed in Allah *Glorified is He* because they had the knowledge to discover the Creator's secrets of creation. It is said in an Islamic tradition: 'the truly knowledgeable person is the one who knows who created him, and why.'

Then, the True Lord says:

خَلَقَ اللَّهُ السَّمَوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ بِالْحَقِّ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لَآيَةً لِّلْمُؤْمِنِينَ ﴿٤٤﴾

**God has created the heavens and earth for a true purpose.**

**There truly is a sign in this for those who believe [44]**

**(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut: 44*)**

Here, the True Lord wants to direct us to His Omnipotent Power, and so says: 'Allah has created the heavens and earth with truth...' (*al-'Ankabut: 44*). Creating is to bring the non-existent into existence, but for a special purpose and a role it has to play. So, if you create something in this way but without it having any purpose, this is not considered truly to be creation. The issue of creating is the one thing that those who do not believe in Allah agreed with: 'If you ask them who created the heavens and earth, they are sure to say, "Allah"...' (*Luqman: 25*).

Why did they admit this, of all things? Why did it stump them so? This should not be surprising, since we see that whenever someone brings something new he is eager to ascribe it to himself, to show people his efforts and his experience and to declare that he has invented or discovered such-and-such, as is the case with those who discovered electricity or invented the telephone or the television.

To this day, we still remember that it was Archimedes who discovered the law of displacement, and that Newton discovered the law of gravity. Nowadays, people register patents so that no one can steal their work, and to ensure that people of intellectual endeavour and genius are able to hold onto the fruits of their labours. Likewise, Arabs, in old days, used to recognise people's achievements to the extent that they even gave credit to the first person who for instance, said: *amma ba'd* (an Arabic expression used to begin speeches and which means: and then),<sup>(1)</sup> and the first people to do other things. Therefore, we know the first people to do all kinds of things, and every product, invention, and discovery is ascribed to the rightful person, so we immortalize their memory, and make statues of them and so on.

What about the Greatest Creator Who created the heavens and the earth, as well as everything and everyone within them? Does He not have the right to announce Himself? It is not His right that His servants should acknowledge that He created them, especially when no one else has claimed to have created the heavens and the earth, and the True Lord has no rivals in this matter? Furthermore, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent to us by Allah *Glorified is He* to inform us of this fact, and no one disputed it—putting in our minds that all claims are granted to those who make them unless another claimant comes forth.

We gave the example before—and Allah has the highest examples—of a company of people who sit down at a gathering, and when they disperse, the host finds a wallet full of money belonging to one of them, and asks them whose it is. If all of them say it is not theirs except for one person, who claims it, will the host doubt that it belongs to him?

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(1) *Ibn Abu 'Asim and At-Tabarani narrate that Abu Musa Al-Ashari said that the first person to say this was the Prophet Dawud (David) peace be upon him.*

You might ask ‘Since Allah asks them “...If you ask them who created the heavens and earth...” (*Luqman*: 25), and they replied “Allah”, why does Allah even mention this issue?’ They say that it is because the True Lord *the Exalted* does not intend by this verse simply to inform us that He created the heavens and the earth, but rather, He intends to inform us that He created the heavens and the earth in accordance with a true purpose. The truth is something firm and unchanging which does not conflict with the wisdom attached to everything in existence. If we consider the creation of the heavens and the earth, we will find that it is firm, and unchanging. Allah *Glorified is He* says elsewhere: ‘The creation of the heavens and earth is greater by far than the creation of mankind...’ (*Ghafir*: 57).

The heavens and the earth represent a mighty, immense creation such that if you compare it with the creation of mankind you will find mankind’s creation to be lesser. Consider for example the life span of the heavens and the earth next to the life span of mankind. The longest human life that we know about until now is that of Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* and after this life we consider to be so long, he died. Whether a person lives for one year, or a thousand years, he will eventually have to die.

The heavens and the earth, and all the other creations they contain, were created to serve mankind. Thus, the servant (the heaven and the earth) lives much longer than the served (mankind). Allah *Glorified is He* created the sun millions of years ago, and it has remained the same without changing, or failing to fulfil its purpose; and the same is true of the moon: The sun and the moon follow their calculated courses.’ (*ar-Rahman*: 5) That is, they move according to a precise arrangement so that they can predict the coming of solar and lunar eclipses down to the exact date and time, and indeed they occur just as they said. This shows that they were created according to a precise calculation. It is enough that we set our clocks by the sun, and that despite what is known of the huge sizes of the sun and the moon they travel in the solar system without colliding, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...each floating in its orbit.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 33)

All of this is part of the meaning of the heavens and the earth having been created with truth: according to a precise, firm system which neither changes



nor fails to operate in any of its phenomena. As a human being, you yourself can change because Allah *Glorified is He* has given you free will so you can choose whether to obey Him or not, and whether to believe in Him or to disbelieve—Allah forbid. Creating the heavens and the earth, however, was done in the form of subdual and absolute control; although they had the ability to choose, by the general law and the first choice, as Allah *Glorified is He* tells us: ‘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) So, they were given the choice, and they chose not to choose; they gave up their free will in favour of their Lord’s will.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘...There truly is a sign in this for those who believe.’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 44) Why did He say, ‘for those who believe’ when it is a message for all people? Elsewhere, Allah *Glorified is He* addresses the disbelievers saying: ‘...who created the heavens and earth’ (*Luqman*: 25). So why did He specify the believers here and not the disbelievers? Some said: there is a difference between the creation of the heavens and the earth, and their being created in accordance with truth. Everyone believes that they are created, but only the believers know that they are created with truth.

Then, the True Lord says:

أَتْلُ مَا أُوْحِيَ إِلَيْكَ مِنَ الْكِتَابِ وَأَقِمِ الصَّلَاةَ ۖ إِنَّ الصَّلَاةَ تَنْهَىٰ عَنِ  
الْفَحْشَاءِ وَالْمُنْكَرِ وَلَذِكْرُ اللَّهِ أَكْبَرُ ۗ وَاللَّهُ يَعْلَمُ مَا تَصْنَعُونَ ﴿٤٥﴾

**[Prophet], recite what has been revealed to you of the  
Scripture; keep up the prayer: prayer restrains outrageous  
and unacceptable behaviour. Remembering God is  
greater: God knows everything you are doing [45]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 45)**

After having spoken about some of the Prophets, namely Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses), Nuh (Noah), Saleh (Shelah), Hud (Eber), Lut (Lot) and Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon them* and then speaking of those who disobeyed them ‘And We punished each one of them for their sins...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 40), Allah

*Glorified is He* then wanted to console His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* by assuring him that he should not be disturbed or distressed or downcast by the attitude of those who disbelieved in him and tried to bar the way of Allah *Glorified is He* showing enmity to his call. The True Lord says, by way of consolation: '[Prophet], recite what has been revealed to you of the Scripture...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 45), that is: Why are you sad, O Muhammad, when you possess the greatest means of solace, which is without end: the Book of Allah *Glorified is He* and His miracle which has been sent down to you. Therefore, concern yourself with it, because every time you read it you will find solace with your Lord. If your contemporaries (O Muhammad) do not believe in it, and do not pay heed to its miraculous qualities, continue to recite it yourself; it might be that Allah *Glorified is He* will bring from these people progeny whose hearts are pure enough to receive the message of Allah and believe in that which these people reject; the miracle will remain as long as it is recited as per Allah's Command. 'Recite' (*al-'Ankabut*: 45), that is, recite, and do not be defeated, and do not despair; for the Quran will bring comfort to your heart. When human beings send a messenger to others and then is denied, the messenger returns to the one who sent him. Since your people (O Muhammad) have denied you, return to Me by listening to the Book that I have sent as a miracle to aid you, and wait for the coming of a people who will listen to the Word of Allah *Glorified is He* that you convey unto them, which will penetrate their pure hearts so they will believe.

People react to things in different ways, and the Quran sheds light on this matter. There are those people who, when they hear the Quran, their hearts are moved, and their skin quivers, whilst there are others who, when they hear it, respond to it with mockery: 'what was that he just said?' (*Muhammad*: 16) They attempt to make light of the Quran, and of the Messenger of Allah, Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

The Quran emphasises this reality in another passage: '...Say, "It is guidance and healing for those who have faith, but the ears of the disbelievers are heavy, they are blind to it; it is as if they are being called from a distant place."' (*Fussilat*: 44) Thus, the Quran is a single entity, but those who receive it differ from one another. The lessons of the Quran can only be absorbed by those who receive it purely since the transmission is one. Do you blame the

radio station if your own radio is broken and so does not receive the signal? Likewise, those who want to receive the transmission of Allah must do so with a heedful ear and a pure heart that is not distracted by that which is in opposition to the divine message. You must first remove from your soul any prejudices against the Quran you might have, and only then can you receive the Word of Allah *Glorified is He* and react to it appropriately.

To illustrate the different ways in which a single action can be reacted to, we gave the example before of someone who blows on his hands to warm them up, and someone who blows into his tea to cool it down. One seeks warmth, the other coolness; the action is the same, the reaction different.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '[Prophet], recite what has been revealed to you of the Scripture...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 45). This is the distinction of your miracle, (O Muhammad); you can repeat it at any time, and recite it as much as you want. Moreover, all who come after you who hear it can do the same; and it will keep on being repeated until the Day of Resurrection.

As for the miracles of the previous messengers *peace upon them*, they were uniquely meaningful to those who witnessed them only. Once those who had witnessed them had died, no one else could have real knowledge of them even if they lived at the same time but were not there to physically witness them. For example, consider those who lived at the time when Musa's (Moses's) staff became a snake but did not witness it for themselves: what did this miracle represent for them? Nothing; but we trust in it and believe in it because the Quran tells us that it took place. Thus, the miracles of the previous messengers came in the form of brief moments, like the striking of a match which then cannot be struck again; some witnessed them, and that was that. The Quran, however, informs us of all the miracles of the previous messengers *peace be upon them*; so see the benefit that all the messengers took from the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* and how the Quran immortalised their memory so that their miracles are preserved with his miracle. It is as though the Quran brought benefit to all the other messengers *peace be upon them* and all their miracles. Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Quran: 'We sent to you [Muhammad] the Scripture with the truth, confirming the Scriptures that came before it and with final authority over them...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 48).

We return to the verse we are discussing. Allah then says: '...keep up the prayer...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 45). It is clear that 'recite' refers to speech, the act of the tongue, whilst 'prayer' refers to the actions of the body. The human being has various limbs, of which five are the most important: the eye for seeing, the ear for hearing, the nose for smelling, the tongue for tasting, and the fingertips for touching.

Just as a precaution, some called them 'the five visible sensory organs'. Indeed, with the advance of science, they have discovered that human beings have other senses and means of perception that were not known before such as the muscles which establish the weight of an object; for which of your five senses will tell you the weight of an object without your lifting it from the ground? We also have the sense of ascertaining, by which we sense the thickness of objects by holding them between our fingers. When you go to a draper, for example, and examine different fabrics, rubbing them gently, you can determine which one is thicker than the other.

The curious thing is that the tongue alone takes half the importance of all the parts of the body. The actions of the five senses are collectively referred to as 'action', and action is comprised of words and deeds. So, every deliberate movement of the limbs is called an *'amal* (action), but the action of the tongue is called *qawl* (speech), whilst the actions of all the other limbs are called *fi'l* (deeds). The reason the tongue has this position is that it is the instrument of divine warning and divine glad tidings. Moreover, by means of the message is passed on. The True Lord says, 'You who believe, why do you say things and then do not do them?' (*as-Saff*: 2) Allah *Glorified is He* did not use the word *'amal* here, but rather the word *fi'l* deed because speech is the compliment of deeds, and they are both actions *'amal*; and actions are determined by the intention of the heart.

Yet, why did Allah *Glorified is He* choose to mention prayer here as the act of the limbs? They say it is because prayer is the pinnacle of actions, as the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* said, 'Prayer is the pillar of faith.'<sup>(1)</sup> Prayer marks the difference between the believer and the disbeliever. The question remains: why does prayer hold this rank out of all the Pillars of Islam?

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(1) Narrated by *Al-Bayhaqi and Ad-Daylimi*

At this point, we would like to mention that the enemies of Islam, and even some of those who are Muslims but who fear that its spread will remove them from their positions of power and tyranny, wish to restrict Islam to its five pillars alone. If you mention this tradition, they will leave you alone, and let you be free to say what you wish as long as you are restricted to the boundaries of the five pillars; but beware of saying that Islam came to organise every facet of life—because their prosperity depends on Islam being restricted to the five pillars only.

These people do not understand that the five pillars do not represent Islam as a whole, but are rather the bases and foundations upon which its edifice stands. They want to remove Islam from people's lives, and so we say to them: Indeed, these are the Pillars of Islam; as for Islam itself, it encompasses everything in our lives, starting with the pinnacle of doctrine in the form of our saying, 'There is no deity worthy of worship but Allah, and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah', and ending with the action of removing of harmful objects from the street. Islam is a religion that pervades all aspects of life; how should this not be the case when it teaches us about even the simplest details of our lives?

Do you not see that Islam is even concerned with the proper way to enter the bathroom and relieve oneself, and all the etiquette and details that apply to it? Do you not see that the inspector who is responsible for watching over the marketplace and ensuring that Allah's laws are followed therein, if he sees a butcher blowing into a carcass to inflate and then skin it with his mouth, will dispose of this carcass because it has been inflated in an unsanitary manner, with air filled with carbon dioxide and other harmful gases which will damage the meat? Furthermore, He is charged with visiting the barbers and making sure their premises are clean and germ-free; and if he smells garlic or onions on them, for example, he will order them to close their premises and not work that day so that people will not be offended by the smell.

What law is this that gives such regard to people's safety and feelings? It is the religion of Allah *Glorified is He* and His way which leaves no aspect of life, big or small, without assigning certain rules and codes of conduct to govern it. Would a system of this nature leave ordinary life aside, and be confined only to matters of worship?

When you look at all the different problems in the developing world—leaving aside the developed world—you find that they are economic problems. If you sought out the root of these problems, you would find that they all stem from the abandonment of Allah's guidance and His law. By Allah, if they were to apply to their economic crisis Muhammad's saying: 'We are a people who do not eat until we are hungry, and do not fill ourselves when we eat.'<sup>(1)</sup> If they were to apply this, and follow the way of their Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*, they would find a way out of this crisis, and they would live comfortable lives. If you followed this principle when eating and drinking, a couple of morsels would suffice you; and the most delicious food is that which is eaten when one is truly hungry, however simple it might be.

As for now, we see people eating 'appetizers' before their meals and snacks afterwards. Why? Because they have rejected the guidance of their Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* eating until they are full and then eating even more. The True Lord *Glorified is He* says, 'and eat and drink [as we have permitted] but do not be extravagant' (*al-A'raf*: 31). The Arabs, who lived very simple lives, used to say, 'The best sauce is hunger.' This is the true 'dipping', and the best of appetizers.

Let us return to the matter of the rank of prayer amongst other acts of worship, and the reason why it is the buttress of the religion. The meaning of 'Prayer is the pillar of faith'<sup>(2)</sup> and 'Islam was built upon five things'<sup>(3)</sup> is that the religion is composed of many other things, but these are its bases and foundations. If we consider these foundations, we find that the first of them, 'There is no deity worth of worship but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah', only needs to be said once to be fulfilled; and the poor-due is not obligatory for needy people; and sick people do not have to fast, nor do travellers, or menstruating women and so on; and the pilgrimage is only obligatory for those who can afford to perform it.

So, what is the pillar that is obligatory for all Muslims, and is not excused under any circumstances? It is prayer. Thus, it takes a large portion of one's

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(1) Narrated by Ahmad and At-Tirmidhi on the authority of Al-Miqdad

(2) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi and Ad-Daylami

(3) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Ibn 'Umar

time both at day and night, and it constitutes the sign of allegiance to Allah *Glorified is He*. Moreover, it distinguishes between the believer and the disbeliever. If you see someone who is not fasting, not paying the poor-due or not performing the pilgrimage, it might be that he has some reason that excuses him; but if someone does not pray, and repeats this many times, you will certainly have doubts about his adherence to the religion of Islam. Thus, prayer has held this position amongst all the other acts of worship ever since it was first enjoined. Every one of the obligations of this religion was established by means of divine inspiration except the prayer which was given directly by Allah *Glorified is He* to His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* during the Night Journey.

Previously, we gave an example for this—and Allah has the highest examples—of an employer who issues his orders by various means according to the importance of the order. He might simply write a memo and have it delivered, or he might call the employee on the telephone; if it is a very important matter, he calls him personally to his office and commission him with what he needs.

This summoning was a great honour for Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* because of the close proximity of the Sender to the one sent to. The True Lord *Glorified is He* did not want the community of Muhammad to be denied a share of the grace He gave to him. It is as though He were saying, ‘Whichever of My servants wishes to be as close to Me as Muhammad was, closer than two bow’s lengths, let them pray.’

The meaning of ‘keep up the prayer’ is to be constant in something, that is to do it in the best way possible, and so the prayer that is required is prayer which meets all the criteria that He who established it requires: ‘...prayer restrains outrageous and unacceptable behavior...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 45). If someone offers prayer that fulfils all its necessary criteria, it will restrain him from all that is loathsome and wicked; and so if your prayer does not restrain you from what is loathsome and wicked, know that it is deficient, and below the standards that Allah *Glorified is He* expects. The level of this deficiency determines the effect prayer has on the conduct of he who offers it. So, if you fall into any outrageous and unacceptable acts, this indicates the degree to

which your prayer is correct, and the degree to which you are concerned with perfecting it and making it constant.

The meaning of ‘...prayer restrains outrageous and unacceptable behavior...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 45) is made clear by what Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said when they told him that there was a man who prayed, but whose prayer did not prevent him from performing loathsome and evil acts: ‘leave him alone; for his prayer indeed will restrain him.’<sup>(1)</sup> This means that it is not a question of a natural law that is never broken; rather, it is a legal directive which can either be obeyed or disobeyed. If it was a natural law, no one who prayed would be able to commit loathsome acts. It is as though I say to my sons on my deathbed: ‘All who enter this house are to be honoured’. I say it as though it is a fact, rather than saying, ‘Honour all who enter this house’; so whoever amongst them respects my advice will honour all who enter the house, and those who do not honour my advice will not. If I had said ‘Honour all who enter this house’, I would have obliged them all to obey.

A clearer example still is Allah’s words about the Sacred Mosque: ‘...whoever enters it is safe...’ (*Al- 'Imran*: 97). When some capricious people attacked it, and fired shots within its walls, killing innocent people, there were many who questioned this verse, asking how this could have happened when Allah *Glorified is He* says: ‘whoever enters it is safe’. They used this incident as evidence that the verse was incorrect—Allah forbid. The reason they did this is that they did not understand the difference between a natural law and a legal directive. Allah’s words ‘whoever enters it is safe’ is a directive, which can either be obeyed or disobeyed, as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* were saying, ‘Protect whoever enters the Sacred Mosque’. Some people obeyed the command and gave protection to all who entered the Sacred Mosque, whilst others disobeyed and terrorised the people, and murdered them within its walls. If it were a natural law, it could not possibly have been broken, just as the sun has never failed to rise.

The same is true of ‘...prayer restrains outrageous and unacceptable behavior...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 45). The prayer is a commandment from Allah

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(1) *Ahmad narrated the like of it from Abu Hurayra.*



*Glorified is He*. He who established it is He who says, 'Allah commands justice, doing good, and generosity towards relatives and He forbids what is shameful, blameworthy...' (*an-Nahl*: 90). Allah *Glorified is He* forbids us these things, but do we all obey? Thus, prayer itself will not prevent you because this is a directive, not a natural law.

Some people think that His words: 'prayer restrains outrageous and unacceptable behavior' (*al-'Ankabut*: 45) mean that there are no loathsome and irrational deeds in the prayer. This is also correct because when we enter the prayer by saying the opening *takbir*: *Allahu Akbar* (Allah is the Greatest), this makes all those things that were permissible a moment ago forbidden as long as we are praying. For example, you cannot eat, drink, or unnecessarily move in the prayer even though these things are all permissible outside of it. So, what about something that was forbidden even before you began praying? It is clearly forbidden a priori.

According to this understanding, prayer restrains you from outrageous and unacceptable behavior for as long as you are praying because the opening of the prayer with 'Allah is the Greatest' means that Allah *Glorified is He* is greater than everything in existence, including the desires and whims of the soul. If not, how can you stand before your Lord and then disobey His guidance? According to this understanding, prayer indeed restrains one from all outrageous and unacceptable behavior. The meaning of 'outrageous' is everything word and deed that repulses; 'unacceptable' means everything that sound human nature dislikes. '...Remembering Allah is greater' (*al-'Ankabut*: 45). The word *dhikr* (remembrance) is a gerund; gerunds can be ascribed to both active agents and passive agents, like when you say: 'I like the prince's hitting of Zayd' or 'I liked the hitting of Zayd by the prince'. So, when you say 'remembrance of Allah', this could mean either mentioning that Allah *Glorified is He* makes, or remembrance and glorification that the servant makes of Allah *Glorified is He*. If the meaning is the remembrance and mentioning that Allah *Glorified is He* makes, i.e. of the one who prays, this means that when someone prays, and remembers and glorifies Allah by saying 'Allah is the Greatest', and glorifies Him by saying, 'Glory be to Allah' and prostrates before Him in humility, he has truly performed an action in which he remembered and glorified Allah

with word and deed. Allah *Glorified is He* rewards this by mentioning that person; so the mentioning is Allah's mentioning the one who remembered and glorified Him in the prayer.

There is no doubt that Allah's mention of you is greater and more magnificent than your mention of Him. You glorify Him from adolescence to death; whilst He gives you, as a reward for remembering Him, an exalted abode which has no end in which you will never die nor will its blessings be taken from you. The meaning is: Allah's remembrance of you by reward and mercy is greater than your remembrance of Him by obedience—this is according to the understanding that the remembrance here refers to Allah *Glorified is He*.

The other meaning is that the remembrance here is the servant's remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He*. In this case, it means that the remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He* outside of the prayer is greater than remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He* within the prayer. How is this? They say it is because you prepare for the prayer by performing ablution, getting ready to enter your Lord's presence after the prayer begins. When the prayer ends, and you continue with your ordinary life, your remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He*, whilst you are far from His presence and busy with your life is greater than your remembrance of Him, whilst you are in His Presence.

An example to illustrate this—and Allah has the highest examples—is of someone who praises a ruler whilst in his presence, and someone else who praises him in his absence. Which one of them is more pleasing, and which one of them is more honest in his remembrance?

Read what Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Friday Prayer: '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). This indicates remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He* in the prayer; but do not think that the remembrance of Allah *Glorified is He* is confined only to the prayer: '...then when the prayer has ended, disperse in the land and seek out Allah's bounty. Remember Allah often so that you may prosper.' (*al-Jumu'a*: 10) Therefore, you should never overlook remembering Allah because remembrance of your Lord outside the prayer is greater than remembering Him during the prayer.

It is narrated on the authority of `Ata` ibn As-Sa`ib that Ibn `Abbas asked `Abdullah ibn Rabi`a about his opinion on the meaning of ‘and the remembrance of Allah is greater’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 45). He replied: ‘Reciting the Quran is good, prayer is good, glorification of Allah is good, and praise Allah is good, and saying ‘Allah is the Greatest’ is good saying ‘There is no god but Allah’ is good, but the most preferable thing to do is to when a person remembers Allah as he is about to commit a sin, so abstains from it.’

Although Ibn `Abbas understood the verse in a different way, he said, ‘By Allah, how wonderful!’ He was impressed by Ibn Rabi`a’s saying, praised his understanding of the verse, and did not criticise his effort to understand it. It is normal that a person remembers Allah when he does good deeds, but remembering Him when one is about to commit an act of disobedience and abandoning it is more preferable and greater. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘and the remembrance of Allah is greater’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 45).

Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said, ‘Seven people Allah will give them His shade on the Day when there would be no shade but the shade of His Throne (i.e., on the Day of Resurrection); among them is a man whom an extremely beautiful woman seduces (for illicit relation), but he (rejects this offer and) says: “I fear Allah.”’<sup>(1)</sup> This is the greatest remembrance of Allah because when it comes to acts of obedience, a person needs great efforts to turn from sin into obedience.

As for the opinion of Ibn `Abbas about ‘...and the remembrance of Allah is greater’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 45), it was that Allah’s remembrance of people by means of reward and mercy is greater than the people’s remembrance of Him by means of acts of obedience. The evidence on this is that your Lord *Glorified and Exalted is He* does not hold you accountable for your deeds until the age of puberty, letting you enjoy His blessings for fifteen years without any responsibilities. In addition, He does not suspend His sustenance even if you stray from His guidance and disbelieve in Him.

Therefore, Allah’s remembrance of you by creating you from nothing and sustaining you constantly with His blessings is greater than your remembrance

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(1) Related by Muslim from Abu Hurayra

of Him by obeying Him. Allah *Glorified is He* has remembered you even before He enjoined on you to remember Him. In addition, your remembrance of Allah in this life is transitory, while His remembrance of you by means of reward and mercy in the Hereafter is eternal and endless.

Allah ends the verse, saying: ‘...And Allah knows that which you do.’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 45). This can be understood as glad tiding for the believers and a warning for the disbelievers. When a teacher says to his students on the day of the examination, ‘The hard working will succeed’, this is a glad tiding to the hard workers and a warning to the lazy. The sentence is one, and for the person to choose for himself the category he wants.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَا تُجَادِلُوا أَهْلَ الْكِتَابِ إِلَّا بِالَّتِي هِيَ أَحْسَنُ إِلَّا الَّذِينَ ظَلَمُوا مِنْهُمْ وَقُولُوا آمَنَّا  
بِالَّذِي أُنْزِلَ إِلَيْنَا وَأُنْزِلَ إِلَيْكُمْ وَإِلَهُنَا وَإِلَهُكُمْ وَاحِدٌ وَنَحْنُ لَهُ مُسْلِمُونَ ﴿٤٦﴾

**[Believers], argue only in the best way with the People of the Book, except with those of them who act unjustly. Say, ‘We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you; our God and your God are one [and the same]; we are devoted to Him’ [46] (The Quran, *al-’Ankabut*: 46)**

Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us in this verse how to argue with the people of the Book. Before mentioning the different forms of argumentation in the Noble Quran, let us understand the meaning of argumentation.

The Arabic word *jadal* (argumentation) literally means twisting something soft to make it hard, as we do with our ropes in the countryside. Cotton and wool, for example, are fluffy, and take up a lot of space. If we want to make a cotton or wool thread, we take a few strands and wrap them around one another to make them strong. By interweaving threads in this way, we can make a strong rope; the purpose for which we intend to use the rope determines how strong it will be.

The words *jidal*, *jada*, and *mujadala* are derived from the word *jadl* which refers to argument, debate, and discussion. It also suggests that there are two

parties who have different points of view, and each of them tries to support and defend his point of view in order to convince the other.

If the intention of argument, debate, and discussion is to arrive at the truth, it is appropriate to use these terms, but if the discourse involves dispute and obstinacy, the intention cannot be reaching the truth; rather, it involves seeking to defeat the other party. In this case, *jadāl* has many names in Arabic, including the word *lijāj* (persistent arguing), as mentioned in Allah's saying: '...they would persist in their transgression...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 75).

If we twist something until it is contracted, it will become stronger; do you want to make your opponent stronger when you argue with him? No, you try to strengthen yourself to face him. Some scholars explained this point saying that when you bring your opponent away from following falsehood, and direct him towards the truth, you strengthen his certainty about something that will benefit him. It is as though he was filling more space than the size required for him because of the falsehood that he adhered to, so you strengthened him with the truth (like twisting a fluffy piece of cotton to make thread). In our dialect, we say that someone is 'full of air', as though he is filling more space than his own size requires. Therefore, we should be aware that the objective of debate should not simply be to defeat the opponent, but to support the truth that will benefit and strengthen him.

In other words, the literal meaning of the word *jadāl* (debate) is also derived from the word *jidal* (the ground). It seems as if the stronger contender throws the weaker to the ground in wrestling, for example. Debate takes place between two persons, each one of whom has an opinion which he prefers and of which he is convinced. When you debate someone, you try to make him abandon the opinion he prefers and accepts your opinion and convince him with it which he does not prefer. Therefore, you cannot do this using a way that he dislikes, not to make things harder for him.

Therefore, you must be gentle and win his heart in a tender manner since giving advice is something hard. Shawqi, Allah rest is soul, said, 'Do not make advice as hard as a mountain, or impart it by means of argumentation. The one who gives advice usually seems to be better than the one he advises.' Some people say that the truth is harsh, and so it should be said by gentle

words because you try to make your opponent abandon what he is accustomed to. Therefore, you must do this in a way he likes.

A person may express a single fact in different ways; whether pleasant or unpleasant. For example, there was a king who had a dream that all his teeth fell out, and so he asked for someone to interpret this dream. An interpreter came, listened to the dream, and said: 'The meaning is that your whole family will die.' Therefore, the king was disheartened, as this expression did not please him. Another interpreter said that the dream means that he will live longer than anyone else in his family. Then king was pleased by this interpretation. The meaning was the same, but the expressions used were different.

One man went to see another and found him weeping. He asked him why he wept, so he replied, 'I was wrongfully punished.' The first man was amazed and replied, 'What would you do if you had been punished rightfully? Would you laugh?' This means that those who are wrongfully punished should not weep because they have done nothing wrong; the ones who really should weep are those who have been punished justly and rightfully for their wrongdoing.

A man suffered the loss of a loved one, so he was wailing and crying. The friend came to comfort the bereaved man and said, 'My son was killed unlawfully!' His friend replied, 'Praise be to Allah, Who made your offspring a victim of murder, rather than a murderer!'

Therefore, sound logic and gentle words are important, and the one who debates must choose his words carefully, and wait for the opportune moment. Do not debate with your opponent, while he is angry with you, or you are angry with him. Some people said that a man was walking along by the sea when he came across a child drowning, so he threw himself in the sea in order to save the boy. Once he had saved him, he began to chastise him and beat him, and the boy said, 'Thank you, may Allah bless you!' Why did this happen? It is because he treated him cruelly after rescuing him. What would happen if he had stood on the shore and shouted at the boy without throwing himself into the sea in order to save him? Wise people say: 'Save and then advice'.

Our Lord *Glorified is He* teaches us the basics and etiquette of debate because He wants to take people from disbelief to belief and from denial to

certainty. This can only be achieved by gentleness and leniency, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way...' (*an-Nahl*: 125).

Allah teaches us that there are different levels of debate, according to the state of the opponent. Those who deny Allah's existence have a specific form of debate, those who believe in Allah but assert that He has partners should be debated with in a different manner, and those who believe in Allah but will follow their prophet should be debated with in a different manner. In addition, those people who belong to your own religion but dispute with you should be debated with in a manner that suits them.

Therefore, argumentation has many levels which we can find in the Quran. The Quran argues with those who do not believe in the existence of Allah, saying, 'Or were they created by nothing, or were they the creators [of themselves]? Or did they create the heavens and the earth? Rather, they are not certain.' (*at-Tur*: 35-36)

Therefore, it presents to them the plain issue of creation, which none has claimed for themselves or could deny, even the polytheists and the atheists. They know that even the simplest product has a maker, even if it is a cup or a pencil.

Is the One Who created the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon and other creatures not more deserving to be recognized as the Creator? They themselves are created and do not claim to have created themselves. Therefore, who created them?

We said before that a claim is given to the one who stakes it unless a counter-claim is made. Allah *Glorified is He* stated plainly via His messengers and in a Quran which will be recited until the Day of Resurrection that He created this universe. If any obstinate person asked, 'Who created Allah?' we say that whoever created Him should declare this. Allah *Glorified is He* testified that there is no god but Him: 'Allah witnesses that there is no deity except Him, and [so do] the angels and those of knowledge...' (*Al-'Imran*: 18). No one claims that he is a god. This is relevant to the argumentation with those who deny the existence of Allah.

As for those who believe in Allah but ascribe partners to Him, we should debate them in this way: Can you see those to whom you ascribe partnership with Allah, or are they unseen? If they say that they are unseen, then they should be aware that Allah has declared His Oneness, and that He has no partner. Therefore, where are their partners?

Why do they not defend their claimed divinity? Either they are unaware of Allah's declaration or else they are aware of it but unable to answer it. Either way, they do not have the attributes of divinity. What kind of god is this who does not know what goes on around him or fears to face his rival?

If they say that their associates are idols, trees, stars and so forth, they are made by them, so how can they worship these idols? Moreover, they are gods that offer no system of guidance or moral responsibility; what commandments or prohibitions have they issued? Their worship is utter falsehood.

Then, we ask those who associate partners with Allah: 'Do those whom you associate with Allah all work together with the same powers or they have specific things which they are able to do'? If they all share in the same tasks, so one of them will be sufficient, and the others are useless; if they handle things in turns, this means that each of them is capable of doing one thing and incapable of doing another, but a true god cannot fail in doing anything.

Allah *Glorified is He* answered these people by, saying, 'Say, [O Muhammad], "If there had been with Him [other] gods, as they say, then they [each] would have sought to the Owner of the Throne a way."' (*al-Isra'*: 42) This means that they would have gone to Him to oppose Him or seek their due from Him. They would have prevented Him from taking everything for Himself or would have sought His favour. In another verse, Allah says, '...then each deity would have taken what it created, and some of them would have sought to overcome others...' (*al-Mu'minun*: 91).

After explaining how we debate with those who do not believe in Allah, and those who associate partners with Him, let us move onto how we debate with the People of the Book. Debate with these people can be friendlier than with other people because they believe in Allah, the Creator, and in the messages He has sent and the Books He has revealed. The only difference between us and the people of the Book is that they do not believe in the



message of Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* although we believe in their messengers and their scriptures, which is the first thing that distinguishes Islam from other religions.

We believe in other messengers who were sent before Messenger Muhammad; so why do they deny that another messenger could come after their messenger? When a messenger comes after another, he does not contradict him regarding the basics of the religion. All the messengers agree with each other concerning the fundamentals of creed and morality, and agree that they are Allah's servants who love one another. Therefore, they should not disagree with each other.

Allah *Glorified is He* teaches us: '[Believers], argue only in the best way with the people of the Book except with those of them who act unjustly...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 46) as they are neither atheists nor polytheists; but they believe in your Lord, messengers and books, and the only difference is that they do not believe in your messenger.

Some people object to the fact that Islam allows a Muslim to marry a Jewish or Christian woman, but prevents a Muslim woman to marry a Jewish or Christian man. The reason for this ruling is that responsibility in marriage is held by man. When a Muslim man marries a Jewish or Christian woman, he believes in her prophet; as for the Jewish or Christian man, he does not believe in the Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him* of the Muslim woman. Therefore, there is a huge difference between the two situations.

The meaning of 'only in the best way' is that debate can have different levels of kindness. An example of kind debate is found in Allah's saying: '...And indeed, we or you are either upon guidance or in clear error.' (*Saba'*: 24)

Nuh (Noah) *peace be upon him* was also kind when he debated his people, saying: '...Say, "If I have invented it, then upon me is [the consequence of] my crime, but I am innocent of what [crimes] you commit."' (*Hud*: 35) He ascribed the invention of falsehood to himself, and said that he would have sinned if he had spoken falsehood; if he was not the liar or the sinner, they were surely the sinners.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said to his people: 'Say, "You will not be asked about what we committed, and we will not be

asked about what you do.”’ (*Saba'*: 25) He *peace and blessings be upon him* mentioned guilt in connection with himself, and he did not mention it in connection with those obstinate deniers. This is the politest manner of spreading the call to Allah.

In conclusion, debate the non-believers in a kind manner, and debate the people of the Book in the best manner because they excel over other people in their belief in Allah. If they transgress and wrong themselves in matters relevant to faith, claiming that Allah has a son or anything else, they become at the rank of polytheists. When they say such things, we should debate in a kind way, but not in the best way.

Can the sword impose beliefs? No, the sword can only harm people's physical forms. As for the heart, it yields only to faith; Allah does not want physical forms, but wants hearts. Allah says in the chapter of *ash-Shu'ara'*: 'Perhaps, [O Muhammad], you would kill yourself with grief that they will not be believers. If We willed, We could send down to them from the sky a sign for which their necks would remain humbled.' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 3-4) If Allah wanted to subject all bodies and hearts to Him so that no one would reject faith, there would not be any disbelievers, and the disbeliever only disbelieves because of the free will that Allah has given him. Allah *Glorified is He* wants us to love and worship Him because He deserves to be worshipped.

Those who go beyond the limits of their Book by saying that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* is the son of Allah, or that Allah is the third of three have become disbelievers and polytheists. We ask those people to follow their messenger and Book which was revealed by Allah and they will find therein glad tidings of the coming of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: '...the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel...' (*al-A'raf*: 157).

Those people do not only disbelieve in Muhammad and the Quran, they also disbelieve in the Book revealed to them. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* tells us: 'They have certainly disbelieved who say, "Allah is the third of three"...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 17) and, 'They have certainly disbelieved who say, "Allah is the third of three."...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 73).

This means not to treat them as people of the Book. When we were asked abroad by Muslim youths about marrying Christian women, we told them to ask these women about Prophet `Isa (Jesus); if they say that he is a messenger of Allah, you can marry her because they belong to the people of the Book. However, if they say that he is the son of Allah, consider her as though she is disbeliever and polytheist.

This is the meaning of Allah's saying: '...except with those of them who act unjustly...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 46). We do not deal with such people with the sword because the sword is only to protect people's right to choose. I have the right to manifest and clarify my religion to others. If they prevent me from doing so, I will deal with them with the sword; if they let me clarify my religion, they are free to believe or disbelieve, according to their wish.

If they believe, this will be good; if they do not believe, they will have rights and responsibilities as we do. They pay the *jizya* (tax) in return for living on our land and enjoying our protection and the services we provide for them. How could we oblige the believers to pay *zakat* (obligatory alms) and leave others without paying anything?

We find many opponents of Islam object to the issue of paying *jizya* (tax) saying that Islam spread by the sword. This is a contradictory statement because we only oblige them to pay the *jizya* (tax) for letting them to embrace their religions; if we forced them to convert to Islam, they would not have to pay *jizya* (tax). Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong...' (*al-Baqara*: 256).

You will not be forced to do something unless your arguments are weak; since truth is clearly distinct from falsehood, there will be no need to do this.

Some people understand this verse incorrectly so that when you tell them to pray, they say, 'There is no compulsion in religion'. We say to them, 'You have not understood the meaning. There is no compulsion in the basis of religion: with regard to believe or not, as you are free in this matter. However, once you believe and testify that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah, you do not have the right to trespass

the boundaries of Islam. There is a big difference between 'There is no compulsion in religion' and 'There is no compulsion in religious observance'.

Part of the wisdom of Islam is that it announces the penalty for apostasy to anyone who wants to believe. He should know before embracing Islam that embracing Islam then apostatising entails the penalty of death. Those who wish to embrace Islam should know about this ruling first, so that they reach it after deep reflection and with full conviction.

'people of the Book' (*al-'Ankabut*: 46) means the Book which was revealed by Allah Who taught His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* how to debate the idolaters by saying: '...So ask the people of the Book if you do not know.' (*an-Nahl*: 43)

Therefore, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* knew to refer things to the people of the Book, and trust their testimony. In another verse, Allah taught him what to say to those who refused to believe: 'And those who have disbelieved say, "You are not a messenger". Say, [O Muhammad], "Sufficient is Allah as witness between me and you, and [the witness of] whoever has knowledge of the Scripture."' (*ar-Ra'd*: 43)

Allah's Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him* referred to the people of the Book because of the clear proofs and indications they possessed of his sincerity, so that 'Abdullah ibn Salam said, 'I recognised him when I saw him as I recognise my own son, and my recognition of Muhammad was even stronger.'<sup>(1)</sup> How could they not have recognised him when he was mentioned in their books with his name and his description: '...the Messenger, the unlettered prophet, whom they find written in what they have of the Torah and the Gospel ...' (*al-A'raf*: 157).

They used to foretell their victory over the idolaters in Medina, saying, 'The time has come for a prophet to be sent to Mecca, and we will follow him and slay you with him as 'Ad and Iram were slain!'<sup>(2)</sup> When the Prophet whom they recognised came, they denied and disbelieved in him: '...although before they used to pray for victory against those who disbelieved - but

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(1) Stated by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir*

(2) Stated by Ibn Kathir in his *Tafsir*

[then] when there came to them-that which they recognized, they disbelieved in it...' (*al-Baqara*: 89).

How could it be that Allah testified to the sincerity of His Messenger in their Books, and then they belied him? They said that they belied him because they were afraid of losing their temporal power, believing that Islam would take it from them.

The phrase 'in the best way with' (*ash-Shu'ara'*: 46) occurs in another verse in the Quran, but not in the context of religious debate. It occurs in reference to everything that causes people to debate: '...Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better; and thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend.' (*Fussilat*: 34)

A man came to me and mentioned this verse and matters pertaining to good conduct, saying: 'I acted in accordance with this verse, but I did not find the true friend'! I replied to him: 'The fact that you have this on your mind proves that you did not actually repay with that which is better because Allah does not state something in the Quran that is contrary to real life. If you really repay bad turns with something better, your rivals will certainly become like true friends to you. One of the wise men said:

If you are bothered by what someone does,

Pay your ransom of 'that which', and you will see.

This means that if a person treats you badly, '...Repel [evil] by that [deed] which is better...' (*Fussilat*: 34) so that '...thereupon the one whom between you and him is enmity [will become] as though he was a devoted friend.' (*Fussilat*: 34)

I remember a young man came to me and said, 'My uncle is rich and I am poor, but he does not let me have a share in his wealth, while he lets others enjoy his wealth.' I replied, 'By Allah, does it please you that your uncle is well-off?' He kept silent, so I said, 'It seems it does not please you. But you should know that bounties love their owners more than their owners love them, so they do not go to those who hate to see them in the possession of their owners. You should repent to Allah, remove the feelings of hatred for your uncle, and put your trust in Allah, the Provider. If you want to share in

someone's bounties, you must be pleased that he has these bounties, so they will gain some of them. When you hate to see someone else having bounties, you object to Allah's decree'. A short while after I talked to this man – and Allah is our witness – my doorbell rang, only to find him back again, saying to me, 'Do you know what happened? My uncle came to me an hour before dawn. When I opened the door, he began to scold and beat me, saying, 'Why do you abandon me and allow strangers to consume my wealth when you are present?' Then he gave me the keys and said, 'From this morning onward, you will undertake the responsibility of work.' I replied to the man, 'You are pleased to see your uncle enjoying these bounties, and so they have received some of them.'

Allah's saying 'except with those of them who act unjustly' (*al-'Ankabut*: 46), means those who wrong themselves by committing idolatry, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...Indeed, association [with him] is great injustice.' (*Luqman*: 13) You wrong yourself, not Allah, by committing idolatry because the oppressor is always stronger than the oppressed. Associating partners with Allah is considered great oppression, as other sins can be forgiven by either by repentance or Allah's Mercy and Forgiveness: 'Allah does not forgive association with Him, but He forgives what is less than that for whom He wills...' (*an-Nisa*': 116).

Allah *Glorified is He* tells us the best way to answer those who wrong themselves: 'Say, "We believe in what was revealed to us and in what was revealed to you; our Lord and your Lord are one [and the same]; we are devoted to Him.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 46)

Why do we differ as long as our Lord and yours is one, and your Book mentions the messenger who will come after your messenger? Just as other messengers came before yours, you should have believed in him and accepted him.

A woman came to me complaining that her husband had not fulfilled his promises. Before they married, she had stipulated that he would not go to his first wife again. I asked her, 'Do you mean that you are his second wife, and you accepted him while he is married to another?' She said, 'Yes.' I replied, 'Why did you accept him?' She said, 'I liked him and he liked me.' I said, 'There is nothing to stop him from liking another woman and marrying her,

and she may tell him not to go to your second wife. Would this please you?' Therefore, respect the right of the first wife so that the third wife will respect your right.' Then, she stood up and left.

Allah says, 'our Lord and your Lord are one [and the same]' (*al-'Ankabut*: 46) because the verse is relevant to those who wronged themselves by associating others with Allah.

Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...we are devoted to Him.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 47); He did not say, 'It is Him in whom we believe'. Why? It is because faith lies in the heart and entails trusting Allah and accepting His legislation which includes commandments and prohibitions. There are people who are not real believers, as they behave like Muslims, but actually they are hypocrites.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'The Bedouins say, "We have believed." Say, "You have not [yet] believed; but say [instead], "We have submitted", for faith has not yet entered your hearts..." (*al-Hujurat*: 14). Therefore, there is a difference between faith and submission; one of them might be fulfilled without the other. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'By time. Indeed mankind is in loss. Except for those who have believed and done righteous deeds...' (*al-'Asr*: 1-3).

Allah says, '...we are devoted to Him.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 46),. It means that they follow the teachings of their religion.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says:

وَكَذَلِكَ أَنزَلْنَا إِلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ فَالَّذِينَ ءَاتَيْنَهُمُ الْكِتَابَ يُؤْمِنُونَ بِهِ  
وَمِنْ هَؤُلَاءِ مَنْ يُؤْمِنُ بِهِ وَمَا يَجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الْكَافِرُونَ ﴿٤٧﴾

**This is the way We sent the Scripture to you [Muhammad].  
Those to whom We had already given Scripture believe in  
[the Quran] and so do some of these people. No one refuses  
to acknowledge Our revelations but the defiant [47]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 47)**

'This is the way We sent the Book to you [Muhammad]...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 47); this means that as Allah revealed a Book upon those who came before Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* He revealed to him a Book

which contained the divine message. All the Books of Allah contained commands and prohibitions, but the Quran is the only Book of Allah that contained both the divine message and the miracle.

All the messengers who preceded Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* were sent down with a Book of Allah that contained the divine message, and were accompanied by a miracle that was separate from the Divine Book. Musa's (Moses's) Book was the Torah, and his miracle was the staff; 'Isa's (Jesus's) Book was the Gospel, and his miracle was to bring life to the dead with Allah's leave. As for Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* his Book and Miracle are the Quran. The miracle is connected to the divine message and will remain connected to it. As Muhammad's divine message will remain until the Last Hour, his miracle will remain existent before all people.

However, no one can say, for example, that 'Isa's (Jesus's) miracle is present because we only know about it from the Quran. This shows us the favour that the Quran did for the previous messengers and their miracles, as they confirm them for those who did not witness them and everyone who believes in the Quran also believes in them.

Did every messenger bring a miracle? Miracles only accompanied the messengers who were challenged and accused of lying. Miracle confirmed that these messengers were truly sent by their Lord. Therefore, we find that, for example, Prophet Shayth (Seth), Idris (Enoch) and Shu'aib (Jethro) *peace be upon them* were not accompanied by miracles.

Did Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* and the Mother of the Believers, Khadija, need a miracle in order to believe Messenger Muhammad? Of course not, as when Prophet Muhammad told them that he was the Messenger of Allah, they believed him, so they did not need any miracle.

Therefore, Prophet Muhammad differed from all the other messengers in the fact that his Book was also his miracle. We said before that Allah *Glorified is He* sends miracles in what the contemporaries of the messengers excelled because if Allah challenged them with something that they knew nothing about, they would say that they had no knowledge of this matter, so it is not possible to challenge them with it. The Arabs were people of eloquence



and rhetoric, and they held festivals and events for demonstrating their skills in speech, so Allah challenged them with the eloquence and rhetoric of the Quran to create something like it, then to create ten chapters like those contained in the Quran then to bring even one chapter, but they could not. The Quran is in their language, but the speaker is Allah *Glorified is He* so no one could create anything like the Quran.

The Quran is a Book that encompasses all the Divine Books that preceded it, preserving the laws that Allah wishes to preserve, and abrogating that which He wishes to abrogate. On the other hand, principles of faith are fixed and cannot be abrogated, nor can stories and historical events. Abrogation only applies to laws, commandments and prohibitions because laws should be appropriate to the environments to which they are applied.

Therefore, some messengers lived at the same time, such as Ibrahim (Abraham) and Lut (Lot), and Musa (Moses) and Shu'aib (Jethro), but each of them had his own message because each of them was sent to a particular place for him to treat a particular ailment at a time when it was difficult to travel between different environments. Therefore, a group of people in one place might be utterly unaware of other people in a neighbouring environment.

As for Prophet Muhammad, he came at a time when different environments communicated with each other and civilisations intermingled. People have managed to see and know incidents which take place in different parts of the world. The ailments of different societies have become similar to each other, so one messenger for all people will be enough to treat these ailments.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...Those to whom We had already given Divine Book...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 47), this means the people who preceded Prophet Muhammad. '...believe in [the Quran] ...' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 47) because no temporal power holds them back from the new revelation; they consider the attributes of the new messenger that are mentioned in their Divine Book and match them with the attributes of the Messenger Muhammad. Therefore, when Salman Al-Farisi heard that there was a new prophet in Mecca, he went to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and began to examine him closely. He found two signs that the previous Divine Books mentioned: that he accepted gifts not voluntary charity. Salman searched for the third

sign, but Messenger Muhammad realised what he was doing because of his Prophetic insight, so he said, 'Perhaps you are looking for this', and revealed the Seal of Prophet hood, which was the third sign.<sup>(1)</sup>

'Abdullah Ibn Salam showed courteous behaviour when he went to Messenger Muhammad while he was still embracing Judaism. He said, 'O Messenger of Allah, the Jews are slanderers, and I fear that if I declare embracing Islam they will insult and slander me, so I want you to ask them about me. Once they answer you, I will declare that I have embraced Islam.' When a group of Jews came to Messenger Muhammad, he asked them about their opinion about 'Abdullah ibn Salam. They replied, 'He is our chief, rabbi and leader...' 'Abdullah Ibn Salam said, 'As they have said this about me, I testify that there is no god but Allah and that you are the Messenger of Allah.' Then the Jews immediately said, 'Rather, you are the worst of us, and the son of the worst of us', and they insulted him further. Therefore, 'Abdullah said, 'Did I not tell you, O Messenger of Allah, that they are slanderers?''<sup>(2)</sup>

'...Those to whom We had already given Scripture believe in [the Quran]...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 47) means that there will come after the idolaters who lived in Mecca other people who will believe in the Quran.

'...No one refuses to acknowledge Our revelations but the defiant.' (*al-'Ankabut*: 47). The word *jahd* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, refers to deliberate denial because denial may result from ignorance, for example, *judud* is denial or affirmation of something. The tongue may say something positive, while the heart is negative, or vice versa.

The Quran differentiates between expressions and actual feelings in the heart of those who make them. For example, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'When the hypocrites come to you, [O Muhammad], they say, "We testify that you are the Messenger of Allah"...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1).

Their statement was acceptable. 'Allah knows that you are His Messenger...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1). This means that their statement was in line with Allah's

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi on the authority of Salman, the Persian Allah be pleased with him

(2) Related by Al-Bayhaqi and Al-Bukhari on the authority of Anas ibn Malik Allah be pleased with him

Knowledge; but: '...Allah testifies that the hypocrites are liars.' (*al-Munafiqun*: 1) How does Allah say that they are liars when what they said is in line with His Knowledge?

Allah's sayings require deep reflection on their meanings. Allah said that they were liars, not because of their saying that Muhammad is Allah's Messenger - as this is true - but because of their testimony, as the testimony of their tongues did not match the belief of their hearts. What they testified is true, but the testimony itself is a lie.

However, why does Allah ascribe deliberate denial to the disbelievers? They said that the believer is in a state of certainty and wakefulness, and so he would never dare to say such things because he knows that Allah does not immediately punish people for their sins, but delays the punishment until the Day of Reckoning, as this knowledge keeps them from denial.

وَمَا كُنْتَ تَتْلُو مِنْ قَبْلِهِ مِنْ كِتَابٍ وَلَا تَخُطُّهُ  
بِيَمِينِكَ إِذًا لَأَزْتَابَ الْمُبْطِلُونَ ﴿٤٨﴾

**You never recited any Scripture before We revealed this one to you; you never wrote one down with your hand. If you had done so, those who follow falsehood might have had cause to doubt [48] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 48)**

The word *tatlu*, which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, means 'recite', because you only recite that which you have already heard. It is as though your speech follows what you heard. 'you never wrote one down with your hand' (*al-'Ankabut*: 48); the phrase *takhuttahu biyaminik* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse, means writing.

There is a difference between reciting and writing. You might be able to recite something because you have memorised it after hearing it, such as people whom Allah has afflicted with the loss of sight, so they recite what they have heard from memory. As we said before, hearing is the first sense that a person uses. It is possible to memorise what you hear, but writing it down is a different matter.

This discourse is a kind of argument in order to convince the idolaters of Quraysh who belied Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and to console and reassure him. Allah confirms to Messenger Muhammad that what the disbelievers said about him is mere fabrication, as he never before recited a book, nor did he write it with his hand, and they were well aware of his way of life. Allah says in another verse in the Quran: ‘...I had remained among you a lifetime before it. Then will you not reason?’ (*Yunus*: 16)

Before his prophetic mission, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* spent forty years among his people, during which they never saw him recite, write or deliver a speech or compose a poem, so how could they deny him?

If they say that Muhammad had a special genius which he kept hidden for forty years, we will say that genius generally comes forth towards the end of the second decade of a person’s life, at the age of seventeen or eighteen. Who guaranteed for Muhammad that he would even live until the age of forty, when he himself witnessed the deaths of his grandfather and parents?

If he had read and written something, they might have had an excuse for doubting him, as they said: ‘...Legends of the former peoples which he has written down, and they are dictated to him morning and afternoon.’ (*al-Furqan*: 5)

They also said: ‘It is only a human being who teaches the Prophet’, so Allah responds to them, saying, ‘...The tongue of the one they refer to is foreign, and this Quran is [in] a clear Arabic language.’ (*an-Nahl*: 103)

The disbelievers said that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was a sorcerer, a poet and an insane person, which were fabrications which can be easily refuted. If he was a sorcerer, why did he not cast a spell on them? If he was a poet, did they ever hear him recite poetry before his mission?

If he was mad, madness means losing one’s intellect so that he cannot choose between several options, had they ever seen Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* showing something like this? How could an insane person have such lofty morals and noble character? They testify that he was a truthful and an honest person, and he was in control of his actions, so how could they accuse him of insanity?

The phrase 'before We revealed this one' has many wonderful indications in the Book of Allah, one of which occurs in the following verse: 'you never wrote one down with your hand' (*al-'Ankabut*: 48). Some scholars say that the verse means that he did not read or write before the revelation of the Quran, but it is possible that he learnt to read and write after the Quran was revealed to him, so that there would be no one in his *ummah* better than him in any good attribute.

The following saying of Allah requires reflection: '...Then why did you kill the prophets of Allah before...' (*al-Baqara*: 91). If the phrase '*min qabl*' (before) had not been included in the verse, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* might have thought that those disbelievers would kill him, causing him to fear them. In addition, the disbelievers might have thought of killing him as other prophets were killed. The verse asserts that although this happened in the past, it would never happen again, and Allah would never allow them to slay His Prophet *peace and blessings be upon him*.

The phrase '*wama kunta*' (you were not) is also repeated several times in the Book of Allah, indicates that the Quran has transcended the past, present and future.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'and you, [O Muhammad], were not on the western side [of the mount] when We revealed to Musa (Moses) the command...' (*al-Qasas*: 44). Allah *Glorified is He* also says, '...And you were not a resident among the people of Midyan, reciting to them Our verses...' (*al-Qasas*: 45). Allah also says, '...And you were not with them when they cast their pens as to which of them should be responsible for Maryam (Mary)...' (*Al-'Imran*: 44). Allah also says, 'You never recited any Book before We revealed this one to you; you never wrote one down with your hand...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 48).

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* as described him as: '...the Messenger, the illiterate prophet...' (*al-A'raf*: 157). Beware of imagining that Messenger Muhammad's illiteracy was a defect in his personality. Although it may be a defect regarding other people, it entails honour for him because the meaning of *ummi* here is that he was in his natural state, just as he was when his mother gave birth to him, not learning anything from anyone. He received learning directly from the Creator, so his knowledge was far beyond that of all other people.

This was the basis for the sublime knowledge and sound judgement that *`Ali Allah be pleased with him* possessed to the extent that *`Umar Allah be pleased with him* who himself is well known for his sound judgement and the Quran corresponded to his reasoning and opinion. said: 'Woe be it to any place on earth in which Abu Al-Hasan (*`Ali*) is not found.'<sup>(1)</sup> Why did he say this?

It is because *`Ali, Allah be pleased with him*, was a man of sound reasoning, logic and eloquence. *`Umar* changed his verdict in the case of a woman<sup>(2)</sup> who gave birth after six months of marriage. *`Umar Allah be pleased with him* wanted to charge her with adultery because pregnancy usually lasts for nine months. Therefore, some people said that she had had sexual relation before marriage. However, *`Ali Allah be pleased with him* thought differently, and said to *`Umar*, 'But Allah says other than this.' *`Umar* asked what he meant. *`Ali* said, Allah says, 'Mothers may breastfeed their children two complete years for whoever wishes to complete the nursing [period]...' (*al-Baqara*: 233). *`Ali* added that Allah also says, '...his gestation and weaning [period] is thirty months...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). By subtracting two years from thirty months, we get six months. Therefore, if a woman gives birth after only six months, this is considered as a normal matter which should rise no suspicions.<sup>(3)</sup>

Once Hudhayfa *Allah be pleased with him* came to *`Umar Allah be pleased with him* who asked him, 'How are you, Hudhayfa?' He replied, 'O Commander of the Believers, I have begun to love trial, hate the truth, pray without ritual purity and possess on earth what Allah does not possess in Heaven.' *`Umar* became angry and was about to strike him with the cloth he had in his hand, whereupon *`Ali Allah be pleased with him* came in and found *`Umar* in this state of anger. Therefore, he told him what Hudhayfa said. Then, *`Ali* said, 'Indeed, Commander of the Believers, he loves trial, as Allah says: 'Your wealth and your children are but a trial...' (*at-Taghabun*: 15). He hates the truth because he dislikes death, which all people dislike. He also invokes blessings upon Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* without

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(1) Related by Al-Hakim and Al-Bayhaqi

(2) The story of the woman who gave birth after 6 months and the stance of *`Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him* from her and *`Ali Allah be pleased with him* saving her

(3) Related by Ibn Kathir in his Tafsir

being in a state of ritual purity and he has a son and a wife, but Allah has neither of these in Heaven.' Therefore, 'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* said his famous statement, 'Woe be it to any place on earth in which Abu Al-Hasan ('Ali) is not found.'

Why was 'Ali distinguished by this knowledge, sagacity, and wisdom? It is because he was raised in the Prophetic household, and received the Islamic sciences when he was young. He knew nothing of the pre-Islamic ignorance, so the Islamic sciences resulted in his sound judgement and sagacity.

If Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had learnt reading or writing: '...those who follow falsehood might have had cause to doubt' (*al-'Ankabut*: 48), and would have had an excuse and a reason to be doubtful. The word *irtiyab* means uncertainty coupled with accusation. They might have accused Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* of knowing how to read and write, so Allah describes them as 'follow falsehood' (*al-'Ankabut*: 48). They followed falsehood with regard to their accusation.

Allah *the Exalted* then says:

بَلْ هُوَ آيَاتٌ يَبَيِّنُ فِي صُدُورِ الَّذِينَ أُوتُوا الْعِلْمَ  
وَمَا يُجْحَدُ بِآيَاتِنَا إِلَّا الظَّالِمُونَ

**But no, [this Quran] is a revelation that is clear to the hearts  
of those endowed with knowledge. No one refuses to  
acknowledge Our revelations but the evildoers [49]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 49)**

'But no' indicates the negation of what comes before it, and an affirmation of what comes after it. It means that the Quran: '...is a revelation that is clear to the hearts of those endowed with knowledge...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 49). Allah says: '...to the hearts...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 49), rather than 'to the minds' because the ear receives speech and presents it to the mind. If it accepts it, it settles in the heart where it becomes creed and faith which cannot be shaken by doubts. Allah *Glorified is He* says about the Quran: 'The Trustworthy Spirit has brought it down. Upon your heart...' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193-194). It means that the revealed verses settled in his heart, not his ear.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَقَالُوا لَوْلَا أُنزِلَ عَلَيْهِ آيَاتٌ مِّن رَّبِّهِ قُلْ إِنَّمَا  
الْآيَاتُ عِنْدَ اللَّهِ وَإِنَّمَا أَنَا نَذِيرٌ مُّبِينٌ ﴿٥٠﴾

**They say, ‘Why have no miracles been sent to him by his Lord?’ Say, ‘Miracles lie in God’s hands; I am simply here to warn you plainly’ [50]  
(The Quran, *al-’Ankabut*: 50)**

After the Quran was revealed and utterly confounded them, they asked for other signs. We previously said that when people ask for signs from Allah’s messengers, He gives them what they ask for, and if they still disbelieve, He seizes them with a seizure of one Exalted in Might and Perfect in Ability.

Allah say: ‘...We gave Thamud the she-camel as a visible sign, but they wronged her...’ (*al-Isra*: 59).

When they belied the sign that they had requested, Allah ruined them because the matter is not that of signs and convention, rather, it is a matter of stubborn insistence on disbelief. Therefore, their request for a special sign does not prevent them from disbelieving in Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...nothing has prevented Us from sending signs...’ (*al-Isra*: 59). The verse refers to the verse which they requested; ‘except that the former peoples denied them.’ (*al-Isra*: 59) When the sign was revealed and they still disbelieved, they were punished by Allah. However, Allah *Glorified is He* vowed not to punish Messenger Muhammad’s people, while he was among them: ‘But Allah would not punish them while you, [O Muhammad], are among them, and Allah would not punish them, while they seek forgiveness.’ (*al-Anfal*: 33)

This is the reason why signs are not given to them; moreover, the signs they desire are temporal phenomena, just as a matchstick can only be lit once and then goes out. Those who see it become fully aware of it, while it is merely a tale for those who have not seen it.



The Arabic particle *lawla* which is mentioned in the Arabic text of the verse (Why have no) has two uses: if it precedes a nominal sentence, it indicates prevention of something for a certain reason such as if I say, '*lawla Zayd `indak lazurtuk*' (If Zayd were not with you, I would come and see you). Therefore, the presence of Zayd prevents the visit. If it precedes a verbal sentence such as '*lawla tudhakir durusak*' (Why do you not revise your lessons?) indicates encouragement or incitement.

Their saying: '...Why have no miracles been sent to him by his Lord?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 50) means that they do not want to acknowledge the sign that had already come to them from their Lord. Then, they contradicted themselves when they said: 'Why was this Quran not sent down upon a great man from [one of] the two cities?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31)

They acknowledged the Quran and were convinced of it, but what bothers them was that it was revealed to Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* from among all people. They further contradicted themselves and admitting that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah when they said: '...Do not spend on those who are with the Messenger of Allah until they disband...' (*al-Munafiqun*: 7).

Since you acknowledge him to be the Messenger of Allah, why do you oppose him? Their spontaneous natural dispositions contradicted them, and the truth manifested on their tongues without their even noticing it. The True Lord *Glorified is He* responded to them by saying: '...Say, 'Miracles lie in Allah's Hands...' (al-'Ankabut: 50). They are from Allah, not me, and they do not come according to your desires. '...And I am only a plain warner,' (*al-'Ankabut*: 50) that is, such is my role. The word 'warner' is only used in this context, even though Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was sent as both a bearer of glad tidings and a warner, because they were a people given to falsehood and obstinate denial. So, it was more appropriate to warn them than to give them glad tidings.

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

أَوَلَمْ يَكْفِهِمْ أَنَّا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكَ الْكِتَابَ يُتْلَى عَلَيْهِمْ إِنَّ  
 فِي ذَلِكَ لَرَحْمَةً وَذِكْرَى لِقَوْمٍ يُؤْمِنُونَ ﴿٥١﴾

**Do they not think it is enough that We have sent  
 down to you the Scripture that is recited to them?  
 There is a mercy in this and a lesson for believing  
 people [51] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut: 51*)**

The question here is rhetorical expressing astonishment and rebuke, that is: How could the Quran be not sufficient to convince them when it is the greatest of all signs, of which they have not been able to reproduce even a single verse, and which has brought them so many lessons and wonders? So it is clear that they only wish to dispute, and disbelieve; for if they truly sought truth and guidance, a single verse of the Quran would have been enough to make them believe.

Allah's saying, 'which is recited to them' refers to the fact that several verses of the Quran would be revealed at once to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* perhaps as much as a half or three-quarters of a section (*hizb*), and once the process of receiving the revelation was finished, he would recite them to his companions so they would write them down. He would recite them exactly as they had been revealed, and some companions would record them, and others would memorise them; for they were a people skilled in recitation and memorization.

Then when the time of the prayer came, Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* would lead the people in prayer and recite the verses that had been revealed to him, repeating them exactly as he had dictated them to his companions. This was a divine gift that Allah bestowed on His Messenger *peace and blessings be upon him*. He announced it to him, saying, 'We shall make you to recite (the Quran), so you (O Muhammad) shall not forget (it).' (*al-A'la: 6*) If you do not think so, then challenge any person who is acclaimed as the best memorizer to repeat a speech or a statement that he made half an hour ago exactly as he said it the first time.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...Verily, herein is mercy and a reminder (or an admonition) ...' (*al-'Ankabut: 51*); for whom? 'For a people who believe...' (*al-'Ankabut: 51*). This is because the Quran only benefits those

who receive it sincerely and believe in it. As for the non-believers, their ears are deaf to it, and their eyes are blind to it. They neither understand nor reflect on its meanings. This is because they do not receive it with a serene soul, but rather with disdain and resentment, and so shut themselves off from its light, its blessings, and its guidance. Therefore Allah *the Most High* says of those who receive His words in a gracious, thoughtful manner: ‘Say, “It is for those who believe a guide and a healing. And as for those who disbelieve, there is heaviness (deafness) in their ears, and it (the Quran) is blindness for them...”’ (*Fussilat*: 44). And He says of those who deny the Quran and receive His Words in a bad, rejecting manner: ‘...and as for those who disbelieve, there is heaviness (deafness) in their ears, and it (the Quran) is blindness for them...”’ (*Fussilat*: 44).

We said before that the action is the same, but the response is different. We gave the example of a person who blows on his hands to warm them, and another who blows on his tea to cool it. And you also blow on a candle to put it out, yet you blow on a fire to make it burn. Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘We send down the Quran as healing and mercy to those who believe...”’ (*al-Isra*’: 82). There is a difference between healing and mercy. Healing signifies that there was a sickness and it has been healed. Mercy, on the other hand, is that the sickness or ailment should never return. So, the Quran came to heal spiritual ailments. Through recitation, the Quran heals your ailments and gives you protection against them. If you fall prey to any of these spiritual maladies, recite the parts of the Quran which are prescribed for healing, and you will be cured by Allah’s leave. So, the healing influence cures those ailments which arise because of spiritual heedlessness.

If we apply the lessons of the Quran to our own souls, we will attain this mercy. A human is composed of a physical body in addition to morals, ethics, and values. They call the totality of these spiritual values ‘psyche’. A person might be physically healthy on the outside, but spiritually sick. For this reason, one area of medical specialization is that of psychology. When doctors cannot find any physical cause for a person’s illness, they diagnose it as a psychological condition. But if you consult a psychiatrist, you find that all he can offer is a sedative drug that soothes the patients and induce them to sleep and think of nothing. Is this any kind of cure?

On contemplating our Lord's Book, we would find that it contains two cures: a physical cure and a psychological cure. The health of the body is maintained through enjoying the things that Allah has allowed and abstaining from the things that He has forbidden. All you have to do is be constant in following your Lord's guidance, and you will be safe from physical ailments. If you are one of those who love to eat lawful foods, but do so to an extent close to gluttony, read what the Quran says in this regard: 'O Children of Adam, dress well whenever you are at worship, and eat and drink [as We have permitted] but do not be extravagant; Allah does not like extravagant people.' (*al-A'raf*: 31)

The teachings of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* shed further light on this Quranic verse: 'Enough for the son of Adam are a few mouthfuls that will keep his back straight. But if it is indispensable, then a third (of his stomach be) for his food, a third for his drink and a third for his breath.'<sup>(1)</sup> A person should eat to live, not live to eat. Some superficial people have said: 'What does 'a third for his breath' mean? Do we breathe with our stomachs?' But with the advances in science, we now know that overfilling the stomach puts pressure on the diaphragm and constrains the lungs, making it difficult to breathe.

As for the psychological side, psychological ailments result either from a constriction of the senses that limits their natural capacities, or else their dilation beyond their natural capacities. This is like an egg which has a particular size: if you try and constrict it or stretch it, it will break. This is also the cause of the ailments that afflict the human soul. The soul's faculties must remain in a state of balance and equilibrium. You find this balance in the Guidance of your Lord *Glorified is He* Who says, '[Know this,] so that you may not despair over whatever [good] has escaped you nor exult [unduly] over whatever [good] has come to you...' (*al-Hadid*: 23).

The part of the verse saying: '[Know this,] so that you may not despair over whatever [good] has escaped you...' refers to psychological contraction;

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(1) Narrated by *At-Tirmidhi* in his *Sunnan* (2380) and *Ibn Majah* in his *Sunnan* (2349) on the authority of *Al-Miqdam*

while ‘...nor exult [unduly] over whatever [good] has come to you...’ refers to psychological expansion. Both these extreme states are blameworthy and prohibited; but who is it that does not regret that which he loses, or rejoice in that which he gains?

And so we find that slow-witted people, who are not overly affected by the turn of events, often enjoy good health because they do not worry about things. This notion has not escaped the poets, where one of them<sup>(1)</sup> said:

The strength of firm resolve lies in dullness too:

Also, a simpleton has a strong and resilient soul;

Ask the people of fortitude, if fortitude’s foundations

Would crumble - were they any weaker than the dull-spirited!

So, what you might think to be dull is actually strong fortitude in accepting events and not being crushed under them. Accordingly, mercy in Allah’s law lies in attaining safety and secure from diseases, whether they be physical or psychological, by continually adhering to its guidance.

قُلْ كَفَىٰ بِاللَّهِ بَيْنِي وَبَيْنَكُمْ شَهِيدًا ۖ يَعْلَمُ مَا فِي السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضِ ۗ  
وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا بِالْبَاطِلِ وَكَفَرُوا بِاللَّهِ اُولٰٓئِكَ هُمُ الْخٰسِرُونَ ﴿٥٢﴾

**Say, ‘God is Sufficient witness between me and you: He knows what is in the heavens and earth. Those who believe in false deities and deny God will be the losers’ [52]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 52)**

‘Say’, that is, to those who deny your station as a prophet, ‘...sufficient is Allah between me and you as Witness...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 52). That is, ‘It is enough for me that Allah testifies that I have delivered His Message. Your testimony regarding me does not benefit me at all, just as it would not benefit me if you believed in me. Similarly, it will do me no harm if you disbelieve in me. I will take my reward from my Lord for simply delivering the message, and I have done so. Allah has testified to this’.

(1) *It was Sheikh Ash-Sha`rawi himself Allah rest his soul.*

Allah *the Exalted* says elsewhere in the Quran: ‘And those who have disbelieved say, “You are not a messenger.” Say, (O Muhammad), “Sufficient is Allah as Witness between me and you...”’ (*ar-Ra’d*: 43). That is, ‘You have not been satisfied with the signs, nor have you believed in them, but I am satisfied with the Lord of these signs as a Witness between me and you’. And so there was a dispute regarding the divine message between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his people who denied that he has brought any message from his Lord.

This dispute must be resolved. If we consider the disputes that occur between people, we find that either the accused party confesses or a truthful witness – not a false one – gives testimony. Then the judge is left to pass judgement based on the given testimony or other incontestable evidence. The judge must not be an arbitrary person; neither should be the executive authority that is charged with implementing the issued verdict. The verdict must be implemented honestly. And so disputes between human beings go through various stages. Rights are liable to be violated when one of the responsible parties does not meet the necessary conditions. If the witness lies or the judge or the bailiff are prejudiced and deliberately commit miscarriages of justice, everything will come out wrong.

As for the settlement of disputes under the government of the True Lord *Glorified is He* as in the dispute between Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his people, Allah alone suffices as Witness, Judge, and Executive Authority. Why is this? It is because He ‘knows what is in the heavens and earth’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 52). Nothing whatsoever on the earth or in the heavens is hidden from Allah, He knows what is secret and what is yet more hidden; so what testimony is more just than His? He is the Just Arbitrator Who judges with absolute truth because He has no prejudices and biases that could lead Him to err. He alters nothing in the execution of His judgements since He executes them Himself.

Who would be the winner, then, in a court whose judge was the True Lord *the Most High* and in which the litigants were Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and his people? Since Allah was the Witness, the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* won indeed; and, the disbelievers lost when they

denied Allah and were dissatisfied with the proofs that the Noble Quran presented to them.

Allah's Knowledge of the unseen is not a process of deliberation and study that enables Him to know. Rather, all things occur at the time He has set for them since pre-eternity, and the world has come into being in exactly the way He has determined it since pre-eternity. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* says, 'Verily, His command, when He intends a thing, is only that He says to it, "Be!" and it is!' (*Ya Sin*: 82) That is, Allah gives this command to a certain thing, which suggests that it already existed and was waiting for Allah's command before it would reveal itself to mankind. So, Allah's word 'Be!' only serves to manifest the thing; as for creation itself, it was done with in pre-eternity. The model is already present. So, The True Lord *Glorified is He* perfectly knows all that is concealed in the heavens and the earth, and we do not even know what lies concealed within our own selves. A question presents itself regarding Allah's saying, 'Verily, He knows what is secret and what is yet more hidden' (*Ta Ha*: 7): is there anything more hidden than a secret? Scholars explain this by saying that a secret is something you conceal within yourself, and what is yet more hidden than this signifies that Allah knows it even before it occurs to you.

Some people have paused at Allah's words: '...Allah knows what you reveal and what you conceal' (*an-Nur*: 29), and His words: 'He (Allah) knows that which is spoken aloud (openly) and that which you conceal' (*al-Anbiya*: 110). They ask why Allah states that He knows all that is said openly and knows what we reveal, even though this is something unconcealed, known to everyone? We answer this by saying: Try to grasp Allah's Intention. Allah did not say, 'I know what one of you reveal and what one of you say openly,' but rather said that He knows what all of us reveal and what all of us say openly. In order to clarify this, imagine a demonstration made by hundreds or thousands of people, and how their voices will all mix together as they shout so that you cannot tell one voice from another.

But The True Lord *Glorified is He* can tell these voices apart, and identify each one. In a demonstration, everyone can say what they like, and give voice to sentiments they would never dare to express alone, because their voices are

all mixed together. They can conceal their voices among those of the crowd so that no one can tell whose voice is whose. Hence, we can understand how the knowledge of loud, open speech can be even more powerful than knowledge of that which is concealed.

If you hold the view that scientists, with their discoveries and researches, have been able to find out much that have previously been concealed in the universe such as electricity, atoms, and other elements, and that therefore they possess knowledge of the unseen, we answer this by saying: Indeed, they learned things which had been hidden in the universe, but they came to know them thanks to the precursors that Allah has placed in the universe and facilitated finding them. Scientists used these precursors as a means to make their discoveries. This is like if your son solves a geometry problem by making use of the given data. And so in reality, these are not matters of the unseen. Rather, they were already existing matters that had a specific time in which they were destined to appear. When their time came, Allah helped His creatures to discover them by means of direct observation, or triggered by precursors. When the time for a thing's appearance coincides with human research, it is said, 'Humans have gained cognizance of some part of Allah's unseen world'! Allah *the Exalted* says, '...they will never compass anything of His Knowledge except that which He wills...' (*al-Baqara*: 255). That is, Allah decides the time when something should emerge. Even if the time comes for a certain secret to appear, but humans have not approached it with their researches or lighted upon its precursors, Allah reveals it to them, even if by accident. In fact, mankind has discovered many secretes of the universe by accident.

The real unseen is that which has no precursors to lead to it, and which no one knows except Allah. Concerning it, Allah *the Exalted* says, '(He Alone) the All-Knower of the unseen, and He reveals to none His unseen. Except to a messenger whom He has chosen...' (*al-Jinn*: 26-27). So, the messengers of Allah did not inherently know the unseen, but were rather informed about the unseen.

Then, Allah *the Exalted* says, '...and they who have believed in falsehood' (*al-'Ankabut*: 52) by worshipping that which is other than Allah such as statues and idols; 'and disbelieved in Allah' the Creator, the Necessary Being. '...It is those who are the losers' (*al-'Ankabut*: 52) because the disbelief on



the part of Allah's creatures does not harm His Essence in any way or detract from His attributes of Perfection. By all His attributes of Perfection, He created all creation; these perfect attributes inherently characterize His Eternal Nature, whether people believe in Him or not.

But there is a difference between believers and disbelievers. A human is naturally keen on life, firmly clinging to it. And so when he falls ill, he seeks treatment to preserve his life, and he fears death. He sees people dying all around him and sees how his grandparents have preceded him in death, and how none of them is left. He sees how death comes without any cause; as they say, 'Death, without any cause is its own cause'. So, death is a certainty, but people doubt it. They do not imagine that it will happen to them because they hate to think of it. And so the Hadith goes, 'I have never seen a certainty more closely resembling doubt than people's certainty about death'. Because a person knows he will die, he tries to live on through his children and grandchildren so that his memory remains for as long as possible. But since this is the reality, why do they not believe in Allah so that their belief endows them with eternal life which they will never leave behind or be parted from: the life of the Hereafter? So, who will the losers be? The losers shall be the disbelievers who thought their lives would only be as short as the time they spent in this worldly life.

Then, The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَيَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَلَوْلَا أَجَلٌ مُّسَمًّى لَّجَاءَهُمُ  
الْعَذَابُ وَيَأْتِيَنَّهُمْ بَغْتَةً وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ ﴿٥٣﴾

**They challenge you to hasten the punishment: they would already have received a punishment if God had not set a time for it, and indeed it will come to them suddenly and catch them unawares [53] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 53)**

It is strange that a person should call down punishment upon himself, and hasten it if it is slow in coming to him. Yet, evidently these people only asked for it because they believed it would never come to them; if they gave any credence to such a possibility, they would not have sought punishment.

‘...And had it not been for a term appointed, the torment would certainly have come to them’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 53) because Allah has decreed a specific appointed time for everything. The decreed time differs from one person to another with respect to how long they live and when they die. But there is one decreed time that will visit them all at once – the decreed time of the Last Hour.

And so Allah *the Most High* says, ‘There is a time set for every people; they cannot hasten it, nor, when it comes, will they be able to delay it for a single moment’ (*al-A’raf*: 34) that is, their own individual times of death? As for the decreed time of the Resurrection, it is one single moment for all, which Allah has appointed. A wondrous aspect of the difference between these two divinely ordained terms is that the separate times of individual deaths in this world end life, while the decreed time of the Hereafter begins a new life. So, the meaning of ‘and had it not been for a term appointed, the torment would certainly have come to them’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 53) is that the time of punishment is not a matter subject to human inclinations and desires. Therefore, Allah *the Exalted* says, ‘Man is created of haste. I will show you My signs. So ask Me not to hasten them.’ (*al-Anbiya*: 37)

When Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* concluded the Al-Hudaibiyah Treaty between him and the disbelievers in Mecca and accepted to return to Medina with his companions without performing *’umrah* (lesser pilgrimage), the companions, including *’Ali* and *’Umar Allah be pleased with them* became angry and dissatisfied with this treaty to the extent that they almost disobeyed the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* out of protective jealousy for their religion. Consequent upon this, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* went to Umm Salamah *Allah be pleased with her* and said, ‘The Muslims are ruined.’<sup>(1)</sup> She asked him why, and he replied, ‘I commanded them but they did not obey.’ She replied, ‘Pardon them, O Messenger of Allah, for they are distressed. They came full of yearning for the House of Allah and got so close to it, and then they were refused entry and their passage was barred. Excuse them, O Messenger of Allah, and go out and do what Allah has commanded you and leave them be.

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(1) Narrated by Imam Ahmad in his *Musnad* (vol. 4, p. 326) on the authority of Marwan ibn Al-Hakam

When they see you doing them (the rites), they will start doing them; they will then know that it is a resolute task.' The Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* went out and performed the final rites of *'umrah*, and the people did the same. The advice of Umm Salamah *Allah be pleased with her* succeeded and it saved the situation.

Then Allah revealed to them the wisdom behind their return that year without there being any fighting: they had brothers in Mecca who believed, but they concealed their faith. If they had entered Mecca by force, they might have killed them without knowing of their faith.

'Umar *Allah be pleased with him* was, as usual, extremely concerned for the cause of truth, and so he said, 'O Messenger of Allah, are we not in the right?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied, 'Yes indeed (we are).' 'Umar said, 'then why do we yield in such a lowly way against the honour of our religion?' Abu Bakr *Allah be pleased with him* then said, 'Do not overstep your position, O 'Umar, he is the Messenger of Allah.'<sup>(1)</sup> That is to say, restrain yourself and do not go beyond your limits. Then later on, in praise of this treaty, he said: 'There was no victory for Islam greater than the victory of Al- Hudaibiyah – not even the conquest of Mecca.' Why? Because the Al-Hudaibiyah Treaty forced the *mushrikin* (those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity or worship) to acknowledge Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* when before they had opposed him and refused to recognise his cause. Now they were writing treaties with him and making agreements with him. What is more, it gave the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* the opportunity to move freely and spread the message of Islam throughout the regions of the Arabian Peninsula. But at the same time, people did not know the extent and the depth of what was between Muhammad and his Lord. People usually seek to hasten matters, while Allah *Glorified is He* cannot be hastened by the impatience of His servants, but He leaves matters to unfold as He wills.

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(1) *Muslim and Al-Bukhari narrated a similar Hadith on the authority of Sahl ibn Hunayf Allah be pleased with him; Muslim in his Sahih (1785) in the Book of Jihad (Striving) and Al-Bukhari in his Sahih (4844).*

Then, Allah *the Exalted* says, ‘...and surely, it will come upon them suddenly while they perceive not!’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 53) That is, they will be taken unaware by it. It will not be according to their desire. ‘...While they perceive not!’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 53) can mean they will be taken unaware when it comes, or that they are unaware now that it is true, and that it will happen at an appointed time? (The Arabic could suggest either possibility). The meaning is that they are not aware now that it is drawing near, and that it has an appointed time, and that it will come upon them unexpectedly with all its terrors. So, it was appropriate that they should realize this truth from the beginning and believe in it. Evidently, the meaning is not that they will not notice the shock of the Hour when it comes because their awareness of it then will do them no good.

Then, The True Lord *Glorified is He* says<sup>(1)</sup>:

يَسْتَعْجِلُونَكَ بِالْعَذَابِ وَإِنَّ جَهَنَّمَ لَمُحِيطَةٌ بِالْكَافِرِينَ

**They challenge you to hasten the punishment: Hell  
will encompass all those who deny the truth [54]  
(The Quran, *al-’Ankabut*: 54)**

That is, say to them: ‘If you wish to hasten your punishment, know that it is certainly coming. If you yearn for it, Hell is waiting for you; and it will be filled with you and then ask, “Are there any more?”’ The severity of punishment is commensurate with the power of the Punisher in its strength or weakness, and its range and capacity. When the Punisher is Allah *the Most High*, none in the universe can punish as He can.

In the part of the verse saying: ‘...and verily! Hell, of a surety, will encompass the disbelievers’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 54), to encompass means to envelop and surround on all sides. There are four chief directions: north, south, east, and west, between which are subsidiary directions, which can also be broken down into further subsidiary directions. To encompass is to envelop and

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(1) *Al-Qurtubi said in his Tafsir* (vol. 7, p. 5247): ‘It was said that it was revealed concerning ‘Abdullah ibn Abu Umayyah and other polytheists when they said: “...or make the sky fall on us in pieces, as you claimed will happen...”’ (*al-Isra*: 92).

surround from all these directions. Another example of this is Allah's statement: 'Verily, We have prepared for the wrongdoers a fire whose walls will be surrounding them.' (*al-Kahf*: 29) That is, it envelops them on all sides.

One of the striking phenomena of fire in the Hereafter is that in this world, you could torment someone with fire that surrounds him so he cannot escape it. But fire naturally rises because the flames go upward; and if it were under someone's feet, he could stamp it out with his feet like people stamp out cigarette butts. When you stamp on a flame, you deprive it of oxygen, and so it goes out. As for the fire of the Hereafter, it can attack from all sides.

يَوْمَ يَغْشَاهُمْ الْعَذَابُ مِنْ فَوْقِهِمْ وَمِنْ تَحْتِ أَرْجُلِهِمْ  
وَيَقُولُ ذُوقُوا مَا كُنْتُمْ تَعْمَلُونَ

**On the Day when punishment over-whelms them from  
above and from below their very feet, and they will be told,  
'Now taste the punishment for what you used to do' [55]  
(The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 55)**

Allah *the Exalted* says elsewhere in the Quran: 'They will have layers of fire above them and below...' (*az-Zumar*: 16). In this world, fire does not attack from these two directions (above and below) because the nature of fire is to rise upwards, and if it is beneath someone's feet it is extinguished. And so this is another dimension that will intensify the severity of the punishment in the Hereafter; fire shall not only encompass them from all sides, but also comes to them from above and below.

But a person may toughen himself up to withstand the torment and try to remain strong so that no one gloats over his suffering. In this person's case, the torment comes to him in another form, in a way that degrades and humiliates him. For this reason it shall be said to him: 'Taste it – you who [on earth] has considered yourself so mighty, so noble!' (*ad-Dukhan*: 49) Therefore, Allah describes His punishment as being humiliating, painful, mighty, and severe.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...and they will be told, 'Now taste the punishment for what you used to do.''' (*al-'Ankabut*: 55), and has not said, 'Taste the fire'.

That is, taste the consequences of what you have done, as though their actions themselves will be the fire that burnt them.

Then, The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

يَعْبَادِيَ الَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا إِنَّ أَرْضِي وَسِعَةٌ فَإِنِّي فَأَعْبُدُونِ ﴿٥٦﴾

**My believing servants! My earth is vast, so worship Me and Me alone [56] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 56)**

To keep a balance in the speech, after speaking of the disbelievers and the deniers, the True Lord then mentions the believers in order to further stress the wretched condition of the disbelievers. They and the chastisement they will face are directly followed by the delights which the believers shall attain. And so the torment of the disbelievers is all the more severe; for if the believers were not destined for these delights, the state of the disbelievers would seem lighter.

Allah *the Exalted* says: 'O My slaves who believe! ...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 56). We said before that all of mankind are Allah's slaves, and Allah's slaves are of two kinds: believers and disbelievers, all of whom Allah has given free will. The believer is the one who gives up his choice and submits to his Lord's choice, and prefers Allah's wishes to his own wishes. In doing so he becomes a slave in everything, even in his free choices, and when he does this, he becomes a true servant and worshipper of Allah. The disbeliever, on the other hand, refuses to acknowledge his Lord's will and chooses disbelief over belief and disobedience over obedience, forgetting that either way he is Allah's slave and under His control in many things over which he has no power of free will. It is as though Allah is saying to him, 'O disbeliever, you have rebelled against your Lord and refused to obey His Commandments and Prohibitions. You transgressed against your Lord's law of 'Do this' and 'Do not do that' and grew accustomed to rebel against Allah, but why do you not rebel against Him also in the turns of fate He sends you? Why do you not rebel against illness or death?' So, it is clear that you are in your Lord's Grip and you cannot slip from it.

Accordingly, the believers and the disbelievers are equal in slavery to Allah, but the difference between the two lies in the fact that a believer

chooses freely and contentedly to follow Allah's will. Indeed, there is a difference between a slave who obeys you because you drag him in chains, and a servant who voluntarily serves you while he is free and unrestrained. And so the believer accepts faith in Allah of his own accord and has the freedom to disbelieve if he chooses. This constitutes both slavery and servanthood at the same time.

The address, 'certainly, spacious is My Earth' (*al-'Ankabut*: 56) indicates that their Lord is saying this to the believers, while they are still on the earth, in the midst of its vastness, in order to draw their attention that they shall be persecuted and tormented and that abuse and pain shall be inflicted upon them by opponents. Allah says to them: 'Do not be driven away by the harsh conditions you shall meet and do not give up your mission. If this place is no longer good to you, go somewhere else; for My Earth is wide, so do not restrict yourselves (to a single land)'.

For this reason, our Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* said: 'All the lands belong to Allah and all the people are the slaves of Allah. So, wherever you find *khair* (pleasant and favourable circumstances for life) settle down there.'<sup>(1)</sup>

The problem we face today is these borders and restrictions that we have placed in the geography of Allah's territory, thereby narrowing what Allah had widened for us. Allah's Earth is wide, and it has no visas, passports, or 'black lists'.

I said once at the United Nations: 'If you were to simply apply a single Quranic principle, there would be no evil upon the earth; this principle is: 'And the earth He (Allah) has spread out for all living beings.' (*ar-Rahman*: 10) This means that the earth is for all people, and so if the provisions are scarce in one place, seek them in another. The problem we have today is that there are lands without people, and people without lands. Our neighbour Sudan, for example, contains some of the best lands for farming, yet there are none to farm it. Why is this? Because of the restrictions we have imposed on ourselves, thereby constraining our lives. A poet was truthful when he said:

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(1) Ahmad narrated a similar Hadith in his *Musnad* (vol. 1, p. 166) on the authority of Az-Zubayr ibn Al-'Awwam Allah be pleased with him.

It is not the land that narrows and contracts for its people

But rather the manners of men narrow and contract.

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...therefore worship Me (alone).' (*al-'Ankabut*: 56) Since we have accepted the principle of emigration, we must then know that it has conditions, the first of which is that you immigrate to a place where your faith will be protected, not diminished. Before you leave your homeland and settle in another land, consider whether or not you will be able to follow your religion as Allah has required you in the place to which you plan to move. If this is possible for you, there is no objection; if not, then you cannot immigrate to a place that will cause you to abandon your faith or come between you and the practice of your religion.

Would it please you to be living in a non-Muslim land simply to make money, and then see your daughter coming home holding hands with a boy about whom you know nothing, but who has now been forced upon you since your daughter has gotten to know him in the conventional way of the inhabitants of this land? When such a thing happens, none of the money you have made will help you or repair the damage that has been done to your honour.

We explained before that emigration may be to a land of safety only, where you are safe to practice your religion, and safe from being turned away from it. Such was the case with the emigration that Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* ordered some of his companions to make to the land of Abyssinia which was not a land of belief but rather a land of safety. Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained his rationale for ordering this emigration by saying: 'There is a king there in whose presence none is wronged.'<sup>(1)</sup> After the emigration was undertaken to this land, the truth of Messenger Muhammad's words was shown, as though he had absolute knowledge of the environment around him and the state of their people.

Therefore, he did not order them to emigrate to any of the regions of the Arabian Peninsula since they were all subservient to Quraysh because of their guardianship of the *Ka'ba*. Consequently, they could not extend protection to

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bayhaqi in *Dala'il Al-Nubuwwah* (vol. 2, p. 301) on the authority of Umm Salamah Allah be pleased with her



those whom the Quraysh wanted. Even when they emigrated to Abyssinia for the sake of their religion, they were not safe from the Quraysh who sent to the Negus an envoy<sup>(1)</sup> to request their handing over and offered him gifts to tempt him to give up the emigrants who believed in Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*. But this plan did not work with the just king whose heart was inclined to believe, and so he loved the believers and defended them, and refused to give them up. It was narrated that he, too, believed after that, and when he died the Messenger of Allah *peace and blessings be upon him* offered the funeral prayer for him.<sup>(2)</sup>

As for the emigration to Medina that followed the emigration to Abyssinia, it was a move to a place of both security and belief, where you could be safe to practice your religion, and spread it and preach it, and find there believing brethren who would assist you with their wealth and with all their possessions. Surely, the *Ansar* (Supporters from Medina) gave the finest example of beneficence and solidarity in history, whereby a Supporter from Medina would see that one of his brothers from among the Meccan Emigrants (*muhajirun*) had left behind all his family and wealth in Mecca, and so would provide him with companionship and support – so behold what effect faith had upon the Supporters.

The structure of Allah's saying: '...therefore worship Me (alone)' (*al-'Ankabut*: 56) is an Arabic stylistic formation also found in the following verse: 'You alone we worship, and You alone we ask for help.' (*al-Fatiha*: 5) There is a difference between saying, 'We worship you' and, 'you alone we worship.' Saying, 'We worship You' does not rule out the possibility that we might worship others as well, but 'You alone we worship' limits worship to Allah *the Exalted* alone and to no other. So, the meaning is: If you wish to emigrate, let your emigration be for Allah's sake, as Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* explained in the noble Hadith: 'Whoever's emigration is to Allah and His Messenger, then his emigration is for Allah

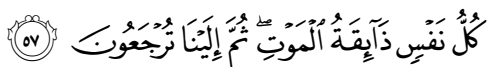
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(1) Namely `Amr ibn Al-`As Allah be pleased with him

(2) Narrated on the authority of `Imran ibn Hussain by Ahmad in his *Musnad* (vol. 4, pp. 439 446), At-Tirmidhi in his *Sunnan* (p. 1039) and he classed it as authentic, and Al-Nasa'i in his *Sunnan* (vol. 4, p. 70).

and His Messenger; and whoever's emigration is for some worldly gain which he may acquire or a woman he will marry, then his emigration is for that for which he emigrates.'<sup>(1)</sup>

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



**Every soul will taste death, then it is to Us that you will be returned [57] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 57)**

That is, if you would say – and indeed they did say this – that we have no land or property in neither Medina nor any source of income,<sup>(2)</sup> so how can we leave our children and the community in which we live? Know that you must eventually leave behind all such belongings, if not while you are alive, you will surely do so when you die; for ‘Every soul shall taste death ...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 57).

And it may well be that you shall return to your homes again, as Allah *the Exalted* says to His Messenger: ‘Verily, He Who has given you (O Muhammad) the Quran will surely bring you back to a place of return...’ (*al-Qasas*: 85). And even if you never return, this will not harm you in the slightest, because inevitably you have to leave everything behind when you die. It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* was making it easier for them to leave behind their relatives, homeland, possessions, and offspring.

We can also perceive by Allah's saying, ‘Every soul shall taste death...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 57), right after His saying, ‘...certainly, spacious is My Earth...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 56), that when Allah makes a statement like ‘...certainly, spacious is My earth...,’ which stirs up in a person's soul emotions such as the love of

(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari in his *Sahih* (1) and Muslim in his *Sahih* (1907) on the authority of 'Umar ibn Al-Khattab Allah be pleased with him

(2) Narrated by Al-Qurtubi in his *Tafsir* on the authority of Ibn 'Abbas Allah be pleased with him who narrated that Prophet Muhammad peace and blessings be upon him said to the believers in Mecca when they faced persecution from the mushrikin: ‘Set out to Medina, emigrate to it, and do not live near the oppressors.’ They replied: ‘We have no dwellings or properties there, and no one to feed us or give us water.’ Hence, the following Quranic verse was revealed: ‘And how many a living creature that does not carry its sustenance! Allah sustains it and you...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 60).

accumulating wealth and the desire for ownership, He then makes another statement to calm down these emotions. Therefore, Allah declares, 'Every soul shall taste death (*al-'Ankabut*: 57) so that we do not become greedy for the trifles of this world, enticed by the prospects of wealth, and emigrating for its sake, since all will end in death, and everything that has been gathered will be lost.

This issue was also made clear by Allah's statement: 'O believers, those who ascribe partners to Allah are truly impure; so do not let them come near the Sacred Mosque after this (final) year...' (*at-Tawba*: 28). When Allah wanted to prohibit the presence of the *mushrikin* (those who associate others with Allah in His Divinity or worship) in the Sacred House, He *Glorified is He* knew that the Muslims would think of the material consequences of this prohibition, and how it would affect their trade and livelihoods during the seasons of pilgrimage and trade. Allah says, immediately after issuing this prohibition: '...and should you fear poverty, then (know that) in time Allah will enrich you out of His Bounty...' (*at-Tawba*: 28). On hearing this alongside the ruling, they would know that Allah had seen what was in their souls, and had responded to their concerns and worries even before they had voiced them. This shows that Allah's law deals with all the soul's emotions and thoughts, and that it does not put you in a position that causes you fear without also providing you with the means to eliminate your fears.

وَالَّذِينَ ءَامَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ لَنُؤْتِيَنَّهُمْ مِّنَ الْجَنَّةِ غُرَفًا  
تَجْرَى مِنْ تَحْتِهَا الْأَنْهَارُ خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا نِعَمَ أَجْرُ الْعَامِلِينَ

**We shall lodge those who believed and did good deeds in  
lofty dwellings, in the Garden graced with flowing streams,  
there to remain. How excellent is the reward of those who  
labour [58] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 58)**

This is the contrast of '...and verily! Hell, of a surety, will encompass the disbelievers. On the Day when punishment overwhelms them from above and from below their very feet...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 54-55). Allah mentions the contrary side to heighten the exasperation of the disbelievers, as when He says, 'Indeed, the righteous will be in delight (Paradise), and indeed, the wicked will be in Hellfire.' (*al-Infitar*: 13-14)

Certainly, mentioning the two contrasting states together increases the joy of the believer, and the woe of the disbeliever. ‘... We shall surely give lofty dwellings in Paradise...’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 58), that is, Allah will lodge them in paradise enabling them to reside in its dwellings. The word used here for ‘give or assign dwellings’ is (*nubawwi*) which also occurs when Allah addresses His Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* saying: ‘(O Prophet), remember when you left your home at dawn to assign battle positions (*tubawwi*) to the believers...’ (*Al-'Imran*: 121), that is, to post the believers at their stations.

The word *jannah* (garden or paradise) can mean a land in this world in which there are plants, and trees, and flowers, as in Allah’s saying: ‘Would one of you like to have a garden of palm trees and grapevines...?’ (*al-Baqara*: 266) And His saying, ‘Verily, We (Allah) have tried them as We tried the people of the garden...’ (*al-Qalam*: 17). And His saying, ‘And present to them the parable of two men, upon one of whom We had bestowed two vineyards...’ (*al-Kahf*: 32). If the gardens of this world are so rich in verdure, fertility, and beauty and are filled with all kinds of sustenance and comfort – if this is the case in this world of causality in which we live, what do you imagine Allah has prepared for His servants in the Hereafter?

One of the wonders of paradise is that ‘underneath it rivers flow.’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 58) We know that in this world, rivers flow through channels with banks on either side, which hold back the water; whereas in paradise, the rivers flow without banks.

When we used to travel to civilized and modern countries and see all the conveniences and comforts of life provided there, I used to say to my companions, ‘Take a lesson from this luxury and ease: this is what the humans have made for themselves – imagine what the Lord of all humans has made for them!’ And so when you see someone who is blessed with whatever bounty, do not envy him, but rather make it a cause that strengthens and deepens your certainty that Allah exists and that what is with Him is better for you than this. Do you not see that when The True Lord *Glorified is He* tells us of paradise, He says, ‘This is the similitude of Paradise which the pious have been promised....’ (*Muhammad*: 15)

Allah illustrates paradise with parables and examples because our language cannot arrive at a proper description of the splendours of paradise.

Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in describing it, said: 'In it (Paradise) there is what no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no human heart has imagined.'<sup>(1)</sup> Everything that we have heard about paradise is not actually a description of it, but is only a similitude for it. Yet despite this, when Allah *the Exalted* gives us a simile for paradise, He frees it from all impurities, and so says, '...therein are rivers of water that does not alter rivers of milk the taste whereof does not change, rivers of drink delicious to those who drink, and rivers of purified honey...' (*Muhammad*: 15). In the end, it is enough for us to know that the delights of paradise will be commensurate to Allah's infinite Power and Ability.

Allah's saying, 'to live therein forever' points to the fact that however great or varied a delight may be, its owner is always anxious and worried that sooner or later he will lose it, either by dying or becoming poor. On the contrary, the delights of paradise are eternal and will never end or vanish. You will have them forever without losing them or leaving them behind, as Allah says, 'Neither limited nor out of reach.' (*al-Waqi'a*: 33) Nothing will ever spoil or blemish the perfection of these delights.

Indeed, the successful are those who prefer the next life to this one because the delights of this world are bound to end. Do not say, 'This world is millions of years old'; rather, its true age is how long you remain alive in it. For what have you got to do with other people's ages? Moreover, in this world your enjoyment is commensurate with your own capability and power because the delights of this world are gained by employing means; while the delights of the Hereafter are given by the Creator of all means, and so they are pure delights that nothing can blemish. You might eat food in this world which then causes you problems and discomforts like colic or wind, in addition to the discomforts of relieving yourself and ridding yourself of the body wastes produced from this food. But in the Hereafter, Allah will provide you with

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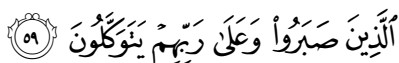
(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* in his *Sahih* (pp. 3244, 7498) and *Muslim* in his *Sahih* (p. 2824) on the authority of *Abu Hurayra* Allah be pleased with him.

food which is exactly commensurate with your needs, and so it produces no waste because it has been directly prepared by Allah's Command 'Be!'

One of the Muslim scholars was once asked: 'You say that you will eat in paradise, but will not need to relieve yourselves. How can this be?' He answered: 'Why should this sound strange? Do you not see that an embryo in its mother's womb feeds and develops without needing to defecate? Allah gives it the exact amount of sustenance it needs to grow, and so it produces no waste. If it were to expel waste into its placenta, it would die in the womb.'

Allah says, '...excellent is the reward of the workers.' (*al-'Ankabut: 58*) Indeed, what an excellent reward this shall be because before reaching the age of moral responsibility you lived for years enjoying Allah's blessings without Him holding you responsible for anything. Then He will reward you for the short time you have been morally responsible with an everlasting, unending reward. Can there be a more generous reward? It is enough that Allah Himself is the One Who stresses this fact when He says, '...excellent is the reward of the workers.' (*al-'Ankabut: 58*)

Then, The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:



**Those who are steadfast, those who put their trust  
in their Lord! [59] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut: 59*)**

This is one of the attributes of the good doers: 'Those who are patient...' (*al-'Ankabut: 59*). So, do not think that they carried out righteous deeds in an easy, comfortable atmosphere and opulent environment. A true worker for Allah is the one who shows patience. The phrase 'those who are patient...' (*al-'Ankabut: 59*) indicates that they will suffer trials and afflictions, as Allah says in another place: 'Do people think they will be left alone after saying 'We believe' without being put to the test?' (*al-'Ankabut: 2*)

The believers who were persecuted and tormented until they were forced to emigrate for the sake of their religion had patiently endured through the difficulties. However, there is a station even higher than patience because your enemy may also be patient, and this necessitates that you vie with them

in patience, as Allah *the Glorious and Exalted* instructs: 'You who believe, be steadfast, more steadfast than others...' (*Al-'Imran*: 200); that is, *al-muthabbarrah* means to strive to have more patience and perseverance than others.

Patience is required to bear the struggles of life, the difficulties of moral responsibility, and the temptations of sin; they say, 'Patience to obey, and patience not to disobey'. The poet spoke the truth when he said:

Be a man like a grinder: it keeps to its place

And chews (food); it cares not whether it is sweet or bitter.

So 'Those who are patient...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 59) means exhibiting patience in the face of adversities. '...And put their trust (only) in their Lord (Allah)' (*al-'Ankabut*: 59), that is, regarding their sustenance and provisions. The Meccan Emigrants were very concerned about their sustenance when they wanted to emigrate, they said, 'We have no house or property, or land and so on'. Allah *Glorified is He* wanted to reassure them about their sustenance: '...and put their trust (only) in their Lord (Allah).' (*al-'Ankabut*: 59)

He who created you will surely provide for you. One of the amazing things about provision is that your provision is not what you own, but is rather what you truly benefit from. You might own something and have it stolen from you. Or you might have food cooked for you but then not eat it. Or you might eat it, but it does not reach your stomach. Or it might reach your stomach, and then you vomit it all out. Or it might reach your blood stream but then be spilled because of an injury or an insect bite or the like – this is because it is not your destined provision, but rather the provision of another creature.

It is amazing how a crocodile, despite its huge size and the fear it inspires in people, after eating comes onto dry land and opens its mouth so that small birds can come and clean between its teeth, and in the process, get some bits of food. They work together in perfect harmony and positive cooperation. If a crocodile is threatened by a hunter, for example, the bird gives a cry which the crocodile understands to mean it should flee. Consider from where this bird obtains its sustenance, and where Allah has placed its provision! And so they say, 'The One Who created him created his provision'.

We gave the example before of the uniqueness of the embryo's sustenance in its mother's womb, and how when the woman becomes pregnant, the blood

becomes sustenance for the embryo. If she had not been pregnant, it would have been expelled without the mother's having any use for it. Why is this? Because it is the divinely-ordained provision of the embryo, not the mother.

And so the next noble verse says:

وَكَايْنٍ مِّنْ دَابَّةٍ لَا تَحْمِلُ رِزْقَهَا اللَّهُ يَرْزُقُهَا وَإِيَّاكُمْ وَهُوَ السَّمِيعُ الْعَلِيمُ ﴿٦٠﴾

**How many are the creatures who do not store their sustenance!  
God sustains them and you: He alone is the All Hearing ,  
the All Knowing [60] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 60)**

Allah *Glorified is He* wants His creatures to be assured of their provision, and so He says: 'How many a living creature' (*al-'Ankabut*: 60). The Arabic particle *ka'ayyin* has several meanings, one of which is 'how much' or 'how many' or 'how often' with the intention of a rhetorical question, as in: 'How many favours have I done for you'? That is, you have done him countless favours. This is also the case here, and in Allah's saying, 'And many a Prophet fought (in Allah's Cause) and along with him (fought) large bands of religious learned men. But they never lost heart for that which did befall them in Allah's way...' (*Al-'Imran*: 146).

The Arabic word *dabbah* (moving living creature) literally means anything that crawls upon the earth. In this context, it means everything that is alive and has movement. Since the word *dabbah* can imply 'something which has footsteps' and we cannot hear the footsteps of the ant, is the ant considered to be a *dabbah*? It is, because it steps on the earth, but we cannot hear it. Its Creator is the One Who can hear its footsteps; for what applies to the large also applies to the small, although you yourself do not have the means to hear it. This is borne out by the fact that someone who is hard of hearing will be advised to use a hearing aid so he can hear, and the same is true of glasses for the shortsighted.

So, everything can be heard and seen, but what is important is the instrument of hearing or seeing. And so they say, by way of exaggeration, 'So-and-so can even hear the footsteps of an ant'.

The significance of Allah's statement: 'And how many a living creature that does not carry its sustenance' (*al-'Ankabut*: 60) is that not every creature



carries its sustenance; many do not store up provisions, yet they still eat and live. It may be that the meaning is that such creatures are unable to carry their sustenance, or that they are able to carry it but do not. For example, do lice and fleas that accumulate as a result of poor personal hygiene carry their own provisions? Likewise, the mosquitoes that, despite their weakness, feed on the blood of the powerful human being, and the microbes that assault him, also do not carry their own sustenance. A donkey, however, is able to carry its own sustenance, but does not. It stops eating when it is full and does not save anything, and might even trample on the remaining food or urinate on it. The same is true of almost all other animals. Therefore, it is said that no creature knows how to hoard except humans, mice, and ants.

Allah makes these particular creatures hoard for wisdom, to show His Absolute Power. The fact that these creatures hoard is no oversight on Allah's part when He decreed that some other creatures do not hoard; rather, He created for them their own means of sustenance, of which you yourself are utterly incapable.

Reflect on an ant colony and the wonders it contains. Researchers in this field have remarked that if you leave a crumb of food, an ant will come and encircle it, and then go and send a number of ants to it who can carry it. If you double the amount of food, the number of ants sent to bring it will also double. The ants live in a kingdom of the utmost organisation, precision, and specialization. What is more amazing still is that they have remarked that ants expel small white specks from the ground around their hives, and when they examined these specks they found that they contain the seed which causes crops to grow, and that the ants expel them so that crops do not grow under their hives and so destroy them. Glory be to the One Who created and proportioned, and Who decreed and guided!

More amazing still, they discovered that ants break down coriander seeds into four pieces because it is possible for half a coriander seed to germinate on its own, and so they break the halves again to prevent this.

So, many creatures do not bear their own sustenance, yet '...Allah sustains it and you...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 60). With respect to sustenance, Allah first mentions living creatures and their provisions, and then, in addition, mentions the

humans ‘...and you.’ So, the matter of our own provisions and livelihood is included with that of other living beings. Although mankind is the essential creature and the one honoured by Allah, and this entire universe was created to serve mankind, still Allah did not say, ‘We provide for you and for them (the other creatures)’. Why is this? Scholars say it is because we, humans, might think that these living creatures cannot bear their own sustenance, or bring it, or manage it, and so Allah enlightens us to the fact that He provides for them before us.

Some of the orientalisists who try to analyse the Quran while not possessing sound knowledge of Arabic have objected to Allah’s saying: ‘And kill not your children for fear of poverty. We (Allah) provide for them and for you...’ (*al-Isra’*: 31). And His saying: ‘kill not your children because of poverty’ (*al-An’am*: 151) [Where the word *khashiya*; (for fear of) is not mentioned, and the word used instead is *min* (because of)]. They ask, ‘Which one is more eloquent than the other? If one of them is eloquent, the other one must be ineloquent’.

The basis of the objection which they make is that they believe that the two verses mean the same thing, while actually they do not. The first one says, ‘And kill not your children for fear of poverty...’ (*al-Isra’*: 31) which implies that there is no actual poverty yet, but rather only fear of it; as for the second verse, which says ‘kill not your children because of poverty’ (*al-An’am*: 151), this implies that poverty exists in this case. So, the first halves of the two verses in question are different, and their second halves are different as well. In the first case, Allah says (in the second half of the verse), ‘We provide for them and for you’ (*al-Isra’*: 31); this is because in this case there is no poverty, and you are not worried about your own provisions and livelihood, and so He mentions the children first. As for the second instance, He says, (in the second half): ‘...We provide sustenance for you and for them...’ (*al-An’am*: 151). Here Allah mentions the parents first because this refers to a situation where poverty exists, and so people are more concerned with their own sustenance before that of their children. So, each verse has its own meaning, and there is harmony between its first and second halves. It is very important to contemplate the diction of the Quran and try to grasp Allah’s words.

Allah *the Exalted* then says, ‘...He is the Hearing, the Knowing.’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 60) He chooses to mention the divine attributes of hearing and knowing here because the True Lord *the Most High* sustains and watches over His creation. He did not create it and then leave it under the control of natural laws, but rather, He created it and continued to look after it and sustain its existence. And so Allah says, when declaring His guardianship and care for His creatures and creation: ‘...neither slumber nor sleep overtakes Him...’ (*al-Baqara*: 255). That is, ‘O My servants, sleep peacefully, for your Lord sleeps not’.

The divine attribute of ‘Hearing’ is appropriate in this context because when hunger pangs strike, a person might cry out or say something to indicate that he is hungry, and so it is as though Allah were saying, ‘I will not make you do so’.

Then, The True Lord *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنۢ خَلَقَ السَّمٰوٰتِ وَالْاَرْضَ وَسَخَّرَ  
الْشَّمْسَ وَالْقَمَرَ لَيَقُوْلُنَّ اللّٰهُ فَاَنۢى يُؤْفَكُوْنَ ﴿٦١﴾

**If you ask the disbelievers who created the heavens and earth and who harnessed the sun and moon, they are sure to say, ‘God.’ Then why do they turn away from Him? [61] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 61)**

Allah *the Exalted* says to those who were not satisfied by the Quranic verses that were sent down to Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and demanded other signs from him: ‘Allah placed signs for you in the universe before He sent you messengers, and He gave you signs that showed the miraculous nature of the heavens and the earth. Is there any of you who could create the like of even the tiniest part of this universe?’ The creation of the heavens and the earth is an unending miracle; so why do you ask for more signs, when Allah only made them to support the truthfulness of His messengers in their prophetic missions so that people believe them?

Allah *the Most High* says, in response to them: ‘This is the creation of Allah. So show Me that which those (whom you worship) besides Him

have created...' (*Luqman*: 11). The creation of the heavens and the earth and the sun and the moon was a miraculous sign to the whole world, especially the disbelievers.

This matter of creation is plain and evident, and no one can deny it, as we explained before. Therefore, the answer to this question: '...they will surely reply, "Allah"' (*al-'Ankabut*: 61). This confession of theirs should inspire the believer to praise Allah, saying: 'Praise be to Allah that they have admitted this fact themselves. Praise be to Allah Who inspired their tongues to pronounce the word of truth, and made plain the argument that would show the falsehood of their disbelief'.

Allah *Glorified is He* then says, 'How misguided, then, are their minds?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 61) After their admission, how could they stray from the truth of Allah's way?

Then Allah *Glorified is He* says:

اللَّهُ يَبْسُطُ الرِّزْقَ لِمَن يَشَاءُ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ وَيَقْدِرُ لَهُ إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عَلِيمٌ ﴿٦٢﴾

**It is God who gives abundantly to whichever of His servants  
He will, and sparingly to whichever He will: He has full  
knowledge of everything [62] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 62)**

'Allah grants abundant sustenance, or gives it in scant measure' (*al-'Ankabut*: 62). Most people understand the word 'sustenance' to refer solely to money. In reality, sustenance refers to everything that a person draws benefit from. Knowledge, patience, discretion, power, humility, and good workmanship are all forms of divine sustenance. Allah *Glorified is He* gives abundant sustenance to whom He wills, and withholds it from whom He wills. Those who receive scant sustenance must therefore be given more by others who were sustained abundantly by Allah *Glorified is He*. In addition, Allah may also grant a person abundantly in one aspect of sustenance, while withholding another aspect of their provision. For instance, a man might be granted abundant intelligence, but barely adequate material wealth.

It is as though the Allah *Glorified is He* dispersed His gifts and blessings evenly amongst His creatures without combining them all in one individual.

We previously mentioned that the sum of each person's blessings is ultimately equal to that of every other person's blessings. So, whoever is highly gifted in one aspect will certainly be lacking in another. This guarantees that all the members of society will remain connected by the link of mutual need, as people will be dependent on other individuals' talents and support.

So, when Allah *Glorified is He* gives abundant sustenance to one of His servants, while withholding the same form of sustenance from another servant, this does not mean that He loves the former individual or hates the latter individual. If you were to examine every form of sustenance and provision given to both servants, you would find that they were blessed equally.

Reflect upon Allah's words: 'But is it they who distribute your Lord's grace? (Nay, as) it is We who distribute their means of livelihood among them in the life of this world, and raise some of them by degrees above others.' (*az-Zukhruf*: 32) Which of these groups of people are raised and blessed more than the other groups? Which group of people is consistently overpowered? Upon examination, you will find that every group of individuals is blessed in the matters that they are specialised in and surpassed in other matters of sustenance and talent.

We have previously illustrated an example to explain this concept. Imagine a wealthy person living in a remarkable mansion. One day, he may need a plumber to repair his lavatory to get rid of a revolting stench. That seemingly independent man may need to leave his comfortable abode to look for the plumber. After visiting the plumbers' workshop, he may need to plead with him to pay a quick visit if he was busy, or even drive him to his house to carry out the task quickly. In this instance, the plumber will be overpowered above the rich person. Therefore, superiority is only revealed when the superior person is needed.

Furthermore, if there were no poor or rich people in this world, who would work in a country's farms, factories or markets? These forms of labour are mostly based on need and not on voluntary service. Therefore, if you wish to compare two individuals' blessings, do not look down on either person because each of them might have a talent that others might direly need one day.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَلَيْنَ سَأَلْتَهُمْ مَنْ نَزَّلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ مِنْ بَعْدِ  
مَوْتِهَا لَيَقُولُنَّ اللَّهُ قُلِ الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ بَلْ أَكْثَرُهُمْ لَا يَعْقِلُونَ ﴿٦٣﴾

**If you ask them, ‘Who sends water down from the sky and gives life with it to the earth after it has died?’ they are sure to say, ‘God.’ Say, ‘Praise belongs to God!’ Truly, most of them do not use their reason [63] (The Quran, *al-’Ankabut*: 63)**

Once again, the polytheists did not deny that these signs were created by Allah *Glorified is He*. They admitted that it is Allah who sends the rainwater from the sky and gives life to the barren land because these clear signs of creation cannot be attributed to other powers. ‘They will surely answer, “It is Allah”’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 63). Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* commanded us to reply to their admission by saying: ‘All Praise is due to Allah’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 63) who inspired them to speak the truth in response to an unshakeable argument. However, although these polytheists admitted to the existence of Allah’s signs in creation, ‘...most of them will not use their reason’ (*al-’Ankabut*: 63) because they still disbelieved in Allah’s Oneness *Glorified is He*.

Allah then says:

وَمَا هَذِهِ الْحَيَاةُ الدُّنْيَا إِلَّا لَهُوٌّ وَلَعِبٌ وَإِنَّ الدَّارَ الْآخِرَةَ  
لَهِيَ الْحَيَوَانُ لَوْ كَانُوا يَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٦٤﴾

**The life of this world is merely an amusement and a diversion; the true life is in the Hereafter, if only they knew [64] (The Quran, *al-’Ankabut*: 64)**

We know that the Arabic word *al-hayat* (life) refers to the sensations and movements that man experiences. If his sensations and movements cease, he is no longer described as having a life. In this verse, the life of this world is given three descriptions. Firstly, it is described as the lower life (*dunya*). The word *dunya* suggests that there must be a higher life which is the Life of the Hereafter. It is also described as a passing distraction (*lahu*) and a playful engagement (*la`ib*).

Although, we have defined the worldly life as the presence of sensations and movements in a being, the true reality of things is that everything in existence has its own unique form of life. We can find evidence for that in a verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* says about the end of this life: ‘Everything is bound to be perished, except His (eternal) Self’ (*al-Qasas*: 88). Therefore, everything that can be called a ‘thing’ must come to perish. At the same time, we find in another verse that the process of ‘perishing’ is the opposite of ‘living’, as Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘So that anything that would perish might perish in clear evidence of the truth, and everything that would remain alive might live in clear evidence of the truth’ (*al-Anfal*: 42). Therefore, according to this verse, living (*al-hayat/al-a'ish*) is the linguistic opposite of perishing (*al-halak*).

You may define your own life as the sensations and movements which you experience as a human being, but everything else, including inorganic matter, has its own form of existence. We can see that a mountain is composed of many pieces of rock that may transform over time into materials that are more valuable. These reactions which we cannot comprehend are a form of existence, though utterly different from our own lives.

Consider the force known as ‘magnetism’. When we magnetise a piece of iron, it will have the ability to attract pieces of iron filings and move them in particular directions. These particles and their reactions are a distinct form of existence. Now consider the words of Allah *Glorified is He* in this verse: ‘And they will ask their skins, “Why did you bear witness against us?” – (and) these (skins) will reply, “Allah, who gives speech to all things, has given speech to us (as well).”’ (*Fussilat*: 21) Therefore, our body parts have their own unique life and will develop their own speech and discourse. We cannot sense this phenomenon because their lives do not resemble our lives. If you were to observe certain many materials, you would see that their colour changes gradually with the passage of time. This change of colour indicates the presence of some kind of movement in their constituting particles.

Allah *Glorified is He* described the life of the Hereafter by saying that it is the only life. He used the word *hayawan* rather than the usual word for life, *hayat*. There is a difference between the two words. The word *hayat* refers

to the life of plants and animals in this world which ends in death and obliteration. The word *hayawan* refers to the true, higher, and eternal life in the Hereafter.

Allah *Glorified is He* illustrates the material life of this world when He describes the creation of Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* while commanding the angels to prostrate to him: 'And when I have formed him fully and breathed into him of My *ruhy* (Spirit), prostrate...' (*al-Hijr*: 29). So, Allah *Glorified is He* formed Prophet Adam *peace be upon him* from clay and breathed His Spirit into his material body. Thereby, material life was granted to him. However, there is a higher form of life which Allah *Glorified is He* described in His words: 'O you who have believed! Respond to the call of Allah and the Apostle whenever he calls you unto that which will give you life' (*al-Anfal*: 24). Why did Allah *Glorified is He* address the believers in that manner, when they were already alive in this world? The life meant in this verse is not the material life of this world, but is the moral life that results when we follow the teachings of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*.

Hence, the commandments ordaining Allah's way are also referred to as a *ruh* 'life-giving spirit' in the following verse: 'And thus, too, (O Muhammad,) have We revealed unto you a life-giving spirit (*ruh*) according to our Order' (*ash-Shura*: 52). Similarly, the angel who brought down this message was called a *ruh* in the verse: 'The trustworthy divine spirit (*ruh*) has come down with it (the message)' (*ash-Shu'ara*: 193).

Therefore, the statement: '...whereas, behold, the life in the Hereafter is indeed the only (true) life (*al-hayawan*)' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64) means that it will never leave you or be taken from you. You will never be parted from its eternal blessings. Moreover, if your enjoyment of this world is based on your abilities and power, the blessings of the Hereafter are solely based on the power and ability of Allah *Glorified is He* the Creator of the worlds.

After that, the life of this world is described as being: '...a passing distraction (*lahu*) and a playful engagement (*la'ib*)' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64). These are two activities that human beings engage in with no foreseen benefit, except the momentary joy and delight they garner from them. Generally, when someone performs an action that has no benefit, we refer to his behaviour as being futile.



Therefore, passing distractions (*lahu*) and playful engagements (*la'ib*) are both futile actions. However, they are still different in a certain aspect. An act of play brings no benefit, but it does not necessarily keep the person from doing beneficial necessities. When a child plays, they are not being distracted from imperative moral responsibilities. The word *la'ib* (playful engagement) is thus used for someone who has not yet reached adulthood. As for an older, morally responsible person, playful actions are referred to as *lahu* (passing distractions). As a result of these distractions, that person was probably abandoning their responsibilities and kept from performing their righteous duties. This is the essential meaning of the Quranic expression *lahu al-hadith*, which refers to 'distracting and frivolous plays with words'.

Therefore, Allah's words: '...the life of this world is nothing but a passing distraction and a playful engagement,' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64) means that it distracts people from the higher moral life that occurs when we follow Allah's Guidance. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...if they but knew this' (*al-'Ankabut*: 64). This phrase could have been an indication that they were prevented from knowing this by an outside force. However, in actuality, this is an expression of desire. It states that if the disbelievers gave themselves the chance to realize the truth of this world and the Hereafter, they would accept their Lord's Guidance in order to obtain His eternal blessings. Certainly, they would choose the way of faith instead of the way of disbelief. Hence, the meaning of the verse is that they actually chose to deny this truth out of their own accord.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

فَإِذَا رَكِبُوا فِي الْفُلِ دَعَوْا اللَّهَ مُخْلِصِينَ لَهُ  
الَّذِينَ فَلَمَّا نَجَّاهُمْ إِلَى الْبَرِّ إِذَا هُمْ يُشْرِكُونَ ﴿٦٥﴾

**Whenever they go on board a ship they call on God, and  
dedicate their faith to Him alone, but once He has  
delivered them safely back to land, see how they ascribe  
partners to Him! [65] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 65)**

The discourse in this verse, mentioning a ship fighting a stormy sea, comes after discussing the true natures of this world and the Hereafter. What is the

connection between these two distinct topics? Firstly, we need to realize that the Quranic verses are the noble words of Allah and that Allah *Glorified is He* always puts everything in its right place. You should reflect upon Allah's words closely to grasp the deeper meanings of the Quran, as Allah *Glorified is He* ordered: 'Will they not, then, try to contemplate this Quran?' (*an-Nisa*: 82)

The previous verse stated that this world is a place of futility. Its merry distractions may cause people to be distanced from Allah's Guidance without preparing for the next truer life. On the other hand, intelligent people should have the utmost concern for the next life. They should work fervently for its sake by following Allah's Guidance in this world. Therefore, since this world is a means to the Hereafter, and a field in which we sow the seeds of its following life, therefore, this life resembles a ship. It is a material channel or tool that is designed to take you to an ultimate end, and is not a desirable end in itself.

'And so, when they embark on a *fulk* (a ship) (and find themselves in danger), they call unto Allah, (at that moment) sincere in their faith in Him alone' (*al-'Ankabut*: 65). The Arabic word *fulk* can be used to refer to a single ship, but may also be used as a plural word referring to a fleet of ships. In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* used it in the singular form. He also used this form in another verse in the Quran: 'And Nuh (Noah) set himself to building the Ark' (*Hud*: 38).

'They call unto Allah, (at that moment) sincere in their faith in Him alone' (*al-'Ankabut*: 65). It is clear from the context of their words that their calls are not prayers of praise such as the praise we find in the following supplication: 'Praised is He (Allah), Alone without partners, Who has made this (vehicle) subservient to our use – since (but for Him,) we would not have been able to attain to it' (*az-Zukhruf*: 13). Rather, their calls in the verse we are studying are distress calls of urgency and dire need that resulted from their exposure to grave dangers and hardships. This is proved further when Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...but as soon as He has brought them safe ashore, they (begin to claim and) ascribe partners to His Divinity' (*al-'Ankabut*: 65). When their ship was exposed to peril, their means did not avail them. Therefore, they called upon Allah *Glorified is He* out of distress, sincere in their faith to Him alone. Then, when Allah saved them, they disbelieved.

Allah *Glorified is He* says in another verse illustrating a similar example: ‘And (behold what happens) when you (the disbelievers) go to sea in ships. They sail in them in a favourable wind, and they rejoice therein – until there comes upon them a tempest wind, and waves surge towards them from all sides so that they believe themselves to be encompassed (by death; and then) (*uheeta behem*) they call unto Allah, (at that moment) sincere in their faith to Him alone (calling upon Him), “If You will but save us from this, we shall most certainly be among the grateful.”’ (*Yunus*: 22)

The Arabic phrase *uheeta behem* (encompassed) in this verse indicates their realization that they had no escape or refuge, except to turn to Allah *Glorified is He* with a sincere faith that nothing can save them except Him. At the beginning of their maritime journey, they were happy, rejoicing in their apparently safe voyage. Allah *Glorified is He* was not on their minds in the least. Yet, when they lost all their material means, they returned to the truth, for there was no time for artifice.

This is because all people, including disbelievers, do not usually deceive themselves when they reach the points of highest distress. Their hearts immediately shift to their Creator, Allah *Glorified is He* and they forget everything else that they worshipped besides Him. At these distressing times, they do not submit themselves to their lies or charades of false deities and idols. Therefore, their prayers when they call unto Allah at these life-threatening moments are sincere supplications. Then, they are inspired by firm certitude in the One True Lord, Allah *Glorified is He*. It is a call unsullied by any trace of idolatry, for nothing can help at such times except Allah *Glorified is He* who alone deserves to be worshipped.

We previously explained this before using an example from our own lives. Barbers used to perform the role of healers in some of our rural villages. There were no professional physicians in these rural areas at that time, and these barbers had the same social positions that physicians have today. However, when many physicians started residing in these rural areas, the barbers were the first to attack the genuine practitioners of medicine. This is because the physicians were affecting the barbers’ sources of livelihood by taking their patients away from them. However, when one of those barbers

saw his own child falling ill with a fever, he said to his wife, 'Wait until the night falls, and I will take him to the physician, when no one is watching'.

Therefore, a person will not deceive himself during times of real danger. There is a natural disposition of faith that resides within the human soul that only believes in the single power of Allah *Glorified is He*. Even atheists may spontaneously cry out, 'O my Lord! O my God', at starting hints of danger. They exclaim these calls subconsciously before submitting them to their intellects because they can only deny Allah's Existence on a conscious level. They may have been able to cover these natural dispositions of faith by material means, but when these means are made redundant by a catastrophic event, the natural disposition of faith emerges and influences these disbelievers against their wills.

We may notice that Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'And behold when your Lord brought forth the offspring from the loins of the children of Adam. He called upon them to bear witness about himself; "Am I not your Lord?" They answered, "Yes, indeed, we do bear witness thereto!"...' (*al-A'raf*: 172) All human beings testified at that time because they were still in the elemental world of spirits, and before they were swayed by their conflicting human impulses. Allah *Glorified is He* says, '...lest you say on the Day of Resurrection, "Verily, we were unaware of this (truth)", or lest you say, "Verily, it was but our forefathers who, in older times, began to ascribe divinity to other beings with Allah; and we were but their late offspring (who followed their wrong ways)."' (*al-A'raf*: 172-173)

Allah *Glorified is He* created mankind to be accountable and responsible towards His creation on this earth. He also subdued everything in the universe for them. If mankind remained in steadfast adherence to Allah's Guidance, and stayed within the bounds of this responsibility, they would find success. However, if they consider themselves unanswerable inhabitants of this universe, they would fail. Allah *Glorified is He* created man and knows the whims and desires of His creation. Therefore, Allah informed mankind in this verse that they were responsible and accountable to Allah upon His Earth. They must follow their obligations in order to avoid spoiling their lives and clashing with other beings in Allah's creation. In order to harmonise with the other beings on this earth, human beings must follow Allah's Guidance and

remain submissive to the commandments of the Creator who granted them their responsibilities.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* alerted them to another concept. The material means of this world will serve mankind as they need, but they have no power or sovereignty over these means. Thus, they should not allow these means to distract them from their accountability to Allah. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Nay, verily, man becomes grossly transgressing whenever he believes himself to be self-sufficient' (*al-'Alaq*: 6-7). When everything is going your way and all the material means serve you easily, remember the verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Behold, to your Lord everything will return' (*al-'Alaq*: 8). Events will occur in your life in which no material means can defend you, and from which you will find no refuge except according to Allah's Will.

How can mankind transgress, when Allah *Glorified is He* has granted them emanations of His Perfection? He has given them abilities that emanate from His Omnipotent Influence. He has bestowed awareness upon them, which emanates from His All-Encompassing Knowledge. If you take a simple look at the blessings that Allah *Glorified is He* has showered you with, you will find that they are endless. For instance, what conscious efforts do you actually exert when you wish to stand up or move your limbs? You simply will these actions and your limbs respond without deep thought. These limbs even obey your will without your prior understanding of their methods.

We previously compared between the movement of a human being and the movement of a mechanical crane. The mechanical crane performs many complicated actions, but every movement may require a separate button to be pressed by the operator. Now, consider your own human movements. What buttons do you need to control if you want to perform similar movements to move your body? Your limbs obey your mere desires, as though you had a share of Allah's Attribute: 'His (Allah's) Command is such that when He wills a thing to be, He but says unto it, "Be", and it is.' (*Ya Sin*: 82)

If you are able to perform the actions of your limbs simply by willing them, it is more logical that Allah *Glorified is He* can move His creation according to His Omnipotent Will. In addition, the movements and reactions of your limbs are not inherently yours, since your Creator can take these

abilities from you. For instance, you may easily lose the ability to move your hand at mere will.

Therefore, you are always a subject of Allah's absolute power. He did not grant you some of His Attributes without accountability. In fact, our Lord has warned us, 'If you think yourself free of any needs, you will transgress. So, remember that all things will come to an end according to your Lord's Will'.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* warned us regarding another crucial matter: 'Know that if Allah should touch thee with misfortune' (*Yunus*: 107), do not request the support of His material means. This is because: '...there is none who could remove it (the misfortune) except Him' (*Yunus*: 107). This is Allah's advice to His creation, as He loves His creation to be as perfect as they can be. So, if harm befalls you and you are unable to repel it by your own means, only seek the help of your Lord.

These are the three points of advice that Allah *Glorified is He* stated to us before we are met by trials and tribulations. Firstly, avoid considering yourself free of need, as that arrogant state will lead you to transgress against Allah's creation. Secondly, know that your final return will surely be to your Lord. Thirdly, if harm befalls you and you find no way to repel it by your own means, only seek Allah's refuge. Indeed, Allah *Glorified is He* alerted us to these dangers as an emanation of His Mercy.

So, you love this worldly life, and when harm and peril befall you aboard a ship, you fear death and call upon Allah *Glorified is He* to save you. This is because you are eager to cling to the life of this world. So, why do you not believe in Allah *Glorified is He* and gain another life which is more lasting? The way to this lasting life in the Hereafter is to have faith and certitude, and to follow Allah's Commandments and Prohibitions.

This issue which was mentioned in the Quran has been confirmed by the events of our lives. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'For (thus it is:) when affliction befalls man, he cries out unto Us, whether he be lying on his side, sitting or standing.' (*Yunus*: 12) The word 'man' in this verse refers to all the believers and disbelievers. The words: '...whether he be lying on his side, sitting or standing' (*Yunus*: 12) mean that people confronted by afflictions cry unto Allah *Glorified is He* in whatever state they might be.

These states represent the different stages of the human mind. If you are walking with a heavy load on your shoulders and you become tired, you put the load down and stop walking. If you are still tired, you will sit or even lie down. When you are standing, you carry the weight of the whole body on your two feet, thus deriving minimal rest from this. When you sit down, your weight is supported on the hips. Then, when you lie down, half the body is supported by the other half and you derive the greatest rest from this position. In the light of this verse, we understand that Allah *Glorified is He* will answer you when you call unto Him, whether you are standing, sitting, or reclining.

Generally, once Allah *Glorified is He* saves man from his fears and averts harm from his way, man still continues to wrong himself again. Allah *Glorified is He* says, ‘...but as soon as We have freed him of his affliction, he goes on as though he had never invoked Us to save him from the affliction that befell him’ (*Yunus*: 12). Elsewhere in the Quran, Allah *Glorified is He* says of this matter: ‘Now (thus it is) when affliction befalls man’ (*az-Zumar*: 8), whatever affliction it might be, ‘...he is likely to cry out to his Lord, turning unto Him (for help); but as soon as He (Allah) has bestowed upon him a blessing by His Grace, he (man) forgets Him whom he had invoked before’ (*az-Zumar*: 8). Many people do not only forget Allah’s blessings, but may actually worship other deities besides Allah *Glorified is He*. Allah *Glorified is He* says regarding such a person: ‘... (he) claims that there are other powers that could rival Allah’ (*az-Zumar*: 8) by attributing the help he was granted to his fellow human beings.

Notice that the discourse in these verses discussed the case of a single individual seeking Allah’s refuge on their own, without anyone seeing their supplications and need. In this case, the matter is between the individual and his Lord *Glorified is He*.

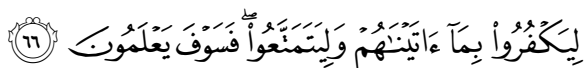
However, Allah *Glorified is He* also illustrated examples in which individuals were exposed to the perils of danger in front of their fellow human beings. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the following verse: ‘And whenever danger befalls you at sea, all those (powers), which you are used to invoke, forsake you, (and nothing remains for you) except Him (Allah)’ (*al-Isra*’: 67). This verse illustrated how a large group of people also seek refuge in Allah’s help. Each person in this ship will be exposed to their peers during the moments of their dismal weakness.

The benefit of this exposure will be seen later on, as people tend to avoid wrongdoing after their moments of distress are witnessed by other human beings.

During the stages of the pilgrimage, for example, people of all social classes move equally as they perform the circumambulation around the *Ka'ba*. Some people of elevated social status may be witnessed in a state of submission as they weep for forgiveness in Allah's House of Worship. A superior manager or an executive seen in such a modest state by their subordinates should find sufficient humility in their hearts. This humility should prevent them from any future wrongdoing towards their subjects.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* wanted us to abstain from our sins after He has delivered us from harm, as though He was saying to us: 'Beware and realise that your life's events have been declared in Allah's Book'. Each one of us should know that we have been watched throughout our lives and all our thoughts were recorded by Allah *Glorified is He*. The truth of the Quran is that it never changes. Every fact that Allah *Glorified is He* states in the Quran will surely come to pass as He says it would.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:



**Let them show their ingratitude for what We have given them; let them take their enjoyment – soon they will know [66] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 66)**

The Arabic particle *le* ('thus/let them') is the commanding particle *lam-ul-'amr*. It is not used in this verse to suggest causality since ingratitude was not the goal of the disbelievers. When they returned to their old ways after Allah had saved them, they were only returning to their original state. The Arabic particle *le* is used here to resemble the command used in sentences such as, 'Let 'Umar stand up'. Thus, the meaning of the verse is: 'Let them show their ingratitude'. However, the command used here is also a threat, that their ingratitude will surely be punished.

Examples of this commanding particle *le* in the Quran are found in the verse: '...and let them walk (once again) (*le-yattawafu*) around the Most



Ancient House' (*al-Hajj*: 29) and the verse: '(In all these respects,) thus, let him who has ample means spend (*le-yunfiq*) in accordance with his amplitude; and let him whose means of subsistence are scanty spend (*le-yunfiq*) in accordance with what Allah has given him' (*at-Talaq*: 7).

In its general grammar, the Arabic particle *le* can either be used as an indicator of causation (*lam-ut-ta'leel*) or as a commanding particle (*lam-ul-'amr*). However, as we said, the word *le* is used in our current verse as a commanding particle (*lam-ul-'amr*), and in this case, implies a threat. The proof that it is a commanding particle is that the commanding *le* causes the following word to be read with a *sukoon* (without a vowel) as in the more authentic recitation of this verse. The proof that the verse implies a threat can be found in its final part, as Allah *Glorified is He* concluded the verse by saying: 'Indeed, in time, they will come (*fasawfa*) to know (the truth) (*ya 'lamun*)'

Generally, in the Arabic language, one of two particles (either *sa* or *sawfa*) is used to indicate an event that will happen in the future. *Sa* is used for the near future and *sawfa* is reserved for the distant future. Therefore, in this verse, the phrase *fa-sawfa-ya 'lamun* (...they will come to know) was used instead of the phrase *fa-sa-ya 'lamun* (...they will soon know'). This is because the phrase *fa-sawfa-ya 'lamun* is a more appropriate reference to a more distant future, including the Hereafter, and lexically encompasses further points in time than the phrase *fa-sa-ya 'lamun*. In the early days of Islam, the Muslims were weak and unable to defend themselves. They went to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and asked him to call upon Allah *Glorified is He* to protect them from the disbelievers' harm. Had the verse said to the idolaters at that early period in Islamic time, 'You will soon know', it would not have been factually appropriate. Thus, Allah *Glorified is He* stated the longest possible breadth of time for the threat to be fulfilled, by saying: 'Indeed, in time, they will come to know' (*al-'Ankabut*: 66).

We find a similar degree of lexical precision in the pact that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* made with the *Ansar*( supporters) *may Allah be pleased with them* who embraced Islam in Medina. When they met Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* they said to him, 'State your conditions (in our pact with you).' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings*

*be upon him* replied, 'Protect me in that which you protect yourselves, and your honours, and your possessions.' The *Ansar* asked, 'And what will be our reward if we do so?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* could have said to them, 'You will possess the earth', or 'You will spread Allah's call and be given victory against your foes'. However, some of these *Ansar* would die at an earlier date without witnessing the fulfilment of any of these promises. So, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* promised them a reward that every one of them would surely witness, whether they lived for a long time or died shortly after the pact. He made the promise to them that they would be granted: 'Paradise.'<sup>(1)</sup>

Furthermore, to have taken them from one worldly gain to another would have been a wretched bargain. Rather, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* wanted to take them from the worldly gains to a reward that is greater than the world's finite treasures. Indeed, paradise is greater than all of this world's riches.

One companion was chewing some palm-dates on the battlefield when he was told that paradise had been prepared for the martyrs. He asked Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* 'O Messenger of Allah. Are you telling me that, all which stands between me and paradise is that I have to be killed in Allah's Cause?' Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* replied affirming the statement. Thereupon, the companion threw away his palm-dates, and rushed to the battlefield to anticipate this reward.<sup>(2)</sup>

The Quran uses the particle *sa* to refer to the imminent affairs of this world that are to happen in the near future, as in the verse: 'We shall show them (*sa-nureehim*) Our signs in the horizons (of the universe) and within themselves' (*Fussilat*: 53). This verse's vision lasts from the time of Prophet Muhammad's message until the coming of the Last Hour, as we are continuously being shown scientific phenomena in the universe that show Allah's Omnipotent Power. So, the word *sa-nureehim* (we shall show them) was true at the time of Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* and will still be proven truthful until the end of time.

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(1) Narrated by Ahmad on the authority of Abu Mas'ud Al-Badri

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhari and Muslim on the authority of Jabir may Allah be pleased with him

We can also note that this part of the verse: ‘And thus, (let them) (thoughtlessly) enjoy (*le-yatamata`u*) in their worldly life’ (*al-'Ankabut*: 66) contains the verb *yatamata`u* proceeded by the particle *le*. According to our previously mentioned interpretation, if the particle *le* is considered as a commanding particle (*lam-ul-amr*) instead of a causation particle (*lam-ut-ta`leel*), the word should be correctly recited as *le-yatamata`u* with a *sukoon* (non-vowel) after the Arabic letter *l*, and not *lee-yatamata`u* with a *kasra* (vowel) after the letter *l*. This interpretation is not taken into consideration in many copies of Quranic recitation which use the recitation ‘*lee-yatamata`u*’, contrary to our interpretation. This shows that the Book of Allah *Glorified is He* is All Conquering and cannot be contained by any scholarly effort.

I remember that the great scholar Sheikh Mohammad Fo`ad `Abd Al-Baqi *Allah rest his soul* and may He reward him with the best reward for his services to Islam, once wrote a book to count the frequency of all the words that appeared in the Noble Quran. He tried his best to give the accurate count of every word especially the word ‘Allah’, for whose sake he had prepared his effort. Despite this, he forgot to include the word ‘Allah’ that occurs in the connotation of the *basmala* ‘In the Name of Allah, the Most Merciful, the Dispenser of Mercy (*Bismillahi ar-Rahman ar-Raheem*).’ Instead, he began his count with the verse: ‘All praise is due to Allah alone, the Lord of all the worlds.’ (*al-Fatiha*: 2) Therefore, his account of the number of occurrences of Allah’s name was shorter by one than the real count. Indeed, the Book of Allah *Glorified is He* is too great to be fully encompassed by any scholar, Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

أَوَلَمْ يَرَوْا أَنَّا جَعَلْنَا حَرَمًا ءَامِنًا وَيُخَاطَفُ النَّاسُ مِنْ حَوْلِهِمْ  
أَفَبِالْبَاطِلِ يُؤْمِنُونَ وَبِنِعْمَةِ اللَّهِ يَكْفُرُونَ ﴿٦٧﴾

**Can they not see that We have made [them] a secure  
sanctuary though all around them people are snatched  
away? Then how can they believe in what is false and deny  
God’s blessing? [67] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 67)**

The Arabic word used in this verse to indicate the meaning of awareness is *yaraw* (have they not seen) which is derived from the word *ra`a* (to see). We previously said that this Arabic word can be used to refer to either having

visual sight or having knowledge. For instance, a person can say in the course of a discussion, 'I see (*ara*) the same opinion which that person sees.' There is a phrase of wisdom that says, 'To see is a level higher than to know.'

In the discourse of the Quran, the word 'to see' is sometimes used when addressing someone who did not in fact see the matter being mentioned. For instance, Allah *Glorified is He* says to Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'Did you not see how your Lord dealt with the Army of the Elephant?' (*al-Fil*: 1) It is well-known that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* did not witness that event because he was only born that year. Therefore, the word 'see' in this regard is used to mean, 'Did you not know?' Why did Allah *Glorified is He* not simply use the phrase: 'Did you not know?' rather than the phrase: 'Did you not see,' regarding the event being narrated? The scholars say that since the speaker in this instance is Allah *Glorified is He* the use of this phrase established that Allah's divine narrations are more certain than what human beings can witness with their own sights.

'Are they, then, not aware (*yaraw*) that We have set up a secure sanctuary (for those who believe in Us), with people (living in the areas) around them being carried away (by fear and despair)?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 67) The sanctuary of the *Ka'ba* is secure, despite the disturbance that happened to it before Islam when Abraha threatened it. It still remains as a secure sanctuary despite the recent event when Juhayman disturbed it.

When the phrase 'secure sanctuary' in the Quran refers to the *Ka'ba*, it has three applications. Firstly, those who lived in the sanctuary at the time of the revelation of these verses saw that it, indeed, was a safe place. This security had been granted to them since the time of the prayer made by Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him*: 'O our Lord! I have settled some of my offspring in a valley in which there is no arable land, close to Your Sanctified House' (*Ibrahim*: 37).

When Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* made this prayer, the area was unsettled and empty, as it did not possess the basic constituents of life. Generally, people only build homes and settle in places where they feel secure, and where all of life's basic needs can be met. Therefore, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) prayed to Allah *Glorified is He* to make this place

secure for a city to be built upon it. 'O my Lord! Make this a secure land' (*al-Baqara*: 126). The word 'land' used here has an indefinite outline. It could have been a land prepared for the settlement of any people, whether believers or disbelievers. When Allah *Glorified is He* answered Prophet Ibrahim's (Abraham's) prayer, by making it a land able to provide the basic needs of people's lives, Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) prayed again, saying: 'O my Lord! Make this land secure' (*al-Baqara*: 126). That is, I desire that this land, which has become a city, to be distinguished and secured than any other city. Prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) *peace be upon him* prayed this prayer because the city contained the House of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Therefore, it remained a place where a man might see his father's murderer in its Sanctuary, yet not be allowed to confront him until he leaves it. Therefore, even a criminal was safe within the boundaries of its Sanctuary. However, it was permitted for people to limit the criminal's sustenance to force him to leave Mecca so that no one can disturb the sanctity of the House of Allah *Glorified is He*. It follows that the activities of hunting and cutting trees were all forbidden in the Sanctuary, as well as any other activity that disturbs the Sanctuary's residents.

It is as if Allah *Glorified is He* was asking the idolater: 'Why do you not believe in the religion that has given you this secure land, at a time when the people around your land are being snatched in grave battles? Why do you not respect your existence in this place which Allah has given you?' It was audacious that some of these disbelievers said: 'If we were to follow the guidance to which you (Muhammad) invite us to follow, we would be torn away from our very land' (*al-Qasas*: 57). How could this be? If Allah *Glorified is He* had protected you when you were idolaters, would He abandon you after you declared your faith in Him alongside His Messenger, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*?

The story of this security began with the incident of the elephant. In this event, an army general known as Abraha came to destroy the *Ka'ba* in order to force its people to visit his temple in Yemen. Allah *Glorified is He* thwarted Abraha's plot and destroyed his army in the same way crops are eaten by cattle. You can grasp this meaning easily when you recite the chapter of *al-Fil*

and connect it with its following chapter of Quraysh. You will be able to see the reasons for this security and protection that Allah *Glorified is He* granted to the tribe of Quraysh in Mecca. Allah *Glorified is He* says in the chapter of *al-Fil*: 'Are you not aware of how your Lord dealt with the Army of the Elephant? Did He not utterly confound their artful planning? Thus, He let loose upon them great swarms of flying birds which smote them with stone-hard blows of pre-ordained chastisement, and caused them to become like a field of grain that has been eaten down to its stubble' (*al-Fil*: 1-5). Then, the next chapter of Quraysh starts with the verses: 'So that Quraysh might remain secured and protected in their winter and summer journeys' (*Quraysh*: 1-2).

The reason Allah *Glorified is He* destroyed the transgressing army of Abraha, leaving them defeated like the stalks of chewed crops was the protection of Quraysh's security and agreements. This is lexically shown by the presence of the Arabic particle *le* at the start of the verse in which Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'So that Quraysh might remain (*Le-eelaifi Quraysh*).' The particle *le* in this case is the causative particle *le* (*lam-ut-ta'leel*). This particle differs in function from the commanding particle *le* (*lam-ul-'amr*) that was discussed in a previous verse (*al-'Ankabut*: 66).

The causative particle (*lam-ut-ta'leel*) means: 'this is for'. This causes the Arabic phrase at the beginning of the chapter of Quraysh: '*Le-eelaifi Quraysh*' (*Quraysh*: 1) to literally mean: 'This is for the benefit of Quraysh, to remain in its agreements'. Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* did not allow the army of Abraha to destroy the Sanctuary, in order to preserve the dignity and position of Quraysh amongst the Arabs. Indeed, the dignity of Quraysh was based on the presence of the *Ka'ba*, and the fact that people travelled to visit this *Ka'ba* from the surrounding lands. This position protected the businesses of Quraysh during the winter journey to Yemen and the summer journey to the Levant. No one desired or dared to harm their journeys because they were the custodians of the temple. Therefore, they remained secure and beloved to all the Arabs, and their trade journeys continued without problems.

Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Let them, therefore, worship the Lord of this House Who has given them food against hunger, and made them safe from danger,' (*Quraysh*: 3-4). They should have worshipped the Lord of the House

who gave them these blessings of safety, security, food and drink, which they did not possess due to their own power. Rather, it was their proximity to the Sacred House of Allah *Glorified is He*.

Thus, when these disbelievers audaciously said to the Messenger of Allah, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him*: 'If we were to follow the guidance to which you (Muhammad) invite us to follow, we would be torn away from our very land' (*al-Qasas*: 57), their own words constituted an argument against them. At the time when people were being attacked in the lands surrounding them, the people of Quraysh were safe by Allah's Grace and His blessings upon their sanctified land. The first part of their conditional clause: 'If we were to follow the guidance to which you (Muhammad) invite us to follow' (*al-Qasas*: 57) is not a logical premise to the second part of their argument: '...we would be torn away from our very land' (*al-Qasas*: 57).

If they recognised that the religion that Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* had brought to them was 'guidance', they should have believed in it. However, since they did not believe it to be a true religion of guidance, their statement certified that they were liars. They had previously claimed that the Quran was fabricated, false and a book of magic. How did they call it 'guidance' then? This was one of their strange contradictions.

The pagan disbelievers also asked: 'Why was not this Quran revealed to a great man of either of the two cities?' (*az-Zukhruf*: 31) This meant that they saw no problem with the Quran itself, but it had a problem that it was revealed to this man, Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* in particular.

Allah *Glorified is He* says concerning their disbelief: 'Will they, then, (continue to) believe in things false and vain, and thus, deny Allah's blessings?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 67) Their false and vain beliefs are their beliefs in their idols. In this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* mentioned that they denied His blessings, and did not mention, for instance, that they denied 'faith in Allah'. The reason is that if these disbelievers had nothing to encourage their faith in Allah *Glorified is He* except His blessings, the way He fed them when they were hungry and kept them safe from fear, it would be sufficient and obligatory for them to believe in Him *Glorified is He*.

Falsehood is the opposite of truth and it is ever diminishing. Indeed, falsehood comes to its end quickly. You might ask, 'Since falsehood will always be vanquished, what is the need for a battle between truth and falsehood'? If falsehood did not assail society, people would not feel the need for truth to save them from it. Therefore, falsehood is itself one of the forces of truth, just as disbelief is one of the forces of faith. Were it not for disbelief and the way transgressors mistreated people, no one would yearn for a true faith that would give them firm security, sincere tranquillity and peace of mind.

The Arabic word *kafara* (to disbelieve) is derived from the root word 'to cover'. This is because disbelief is an effort to hide the true faith in Allah *Glorified is He* the Only Necessary Being in all existence. Therefore, even the word of disbelief is a proof of faith.

We previously mentioned that a person might dislike certain things that Allah *Glorified is He* has created for his benefit. We gave the example of pain. In reality, pain is a signal that incites a person to search for its cause, in order to protect oneself from illness and seek any appropriate remedies. In this manner of looking at things, we can perceive pain as one of the forces of health. Observe, for instance, that the most dangerous of illnesses are those that cause no pain to alert the body until these diseases reach terminal intractable states. Such illnesses are 'malignant' because they sneak into the body without leaving any traces to alert us of their presence.

Therefore, Allah *Glorified is He* created pain for a beneficial reason, which is to alert us to any problems in our bodies. The limbs which feel pain may not be in their best states to perform their normal roles. For this reason, one of the definitions of health is not noticing the different parts of the body as they perform their daily functions. For instance, you may use your teeth to eat for a long time without noticing their presence. Then, when you are attacked with a toothache, you start noticing the hidden blessings of teeth. At that point, the toothache is a message that is guiding you to seek medical attention.

Similarly, when falsehood prospers in a society, it reminds people of the sweetness of truth so that they yearn and hope for it. This is why Islam spread through the world, not by the sword as some people claim, but because people saw its moral principles and tolerance. In Persian and the Byzantine Empires,



people had experienced many hardships because of their corrupt religions and laws. When they heard about the morals and teachings of Islam, they easily embraced it. If falsehood had not afflicted them, they would not have sought refuge in the true faith. Therefore, Islam was able to spread widely in half a century not because of the faithful urgency of Muslims to convert people to Islam, but rather because the falsehood drove the people to the true faith of Islam. In that manner, Islam was spread by two means. Firstly, its adherents were keen to see its guidance spreading. Secondly, existing falsehoods drove people to embrace its teachings.

Allah *Glorified is He* gave us a clear example of truth and falsehood in His saying: 'He (Allah) sends down water from the sky, so that the valleys are filled with running rivers, each to its determined (course). The (river's) flood carries away (on its surface) a foaming scum (*zabad*). And, likewise, scum rises from that (metal) which they kindle upon the fire, when they seek (to make) ornaments or utensils. Thus, Allah sets forth the parable of truth and falsehood. 'As for the scum, it goes away as refused debris. (And) as for whatever profits mankind, it stays in the earth. Thus, Allah sets forth (similar) parables.' (*ar-Ra'd*: 17)

The Arabic word *zabad* (scum) refers to the refuse and dirt that is carried by floods. This refuse forms a film on the surface of the water and is then blown off to the sides by the air, so the water remains clean and pure. This scum resembles falsehood, in that it hastily rises to the surface. However, you should not consider it to have a high status or that its prosperity will last forever. Indeed, it is only a worthless film that will quickly disintegrate, leaving behind the valuable clean water.

Likewise, when a jeweller smelts gold or silver metals, scum also rises from the metal when it is heated so that the precious metal is cleansed of its impurities. A wise righteous man once said, 'Allah never abandons the truth. He never submits the truth to the powers of falsehood but only tests the people's concern for it. If they show no concern for its presence, He takes care of it Himself'.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَمَنْ أَظْلَمُ مِمَّنِ افْتَرَى عَلَى اللَّهِ كَذِبًا أَوْ كَذَّبَ بِالْحَقِّ  
لَمَّا جَاءَهُ ۚ أَلَيْسَ فِي جَهَنَّمَ مَثْوًى لِّلْكَافِرِينَ ﴿٦٨﴾

**Who could be more wicked than the person who invents lies about God, or denies the truth when it comes to him? Is Hell not the home for the disbelievers? [68] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 68)**

This is a rhetorical question posed by Allah *Glorified is He*. The answer to this question will highlight the crucial matter to which Allah is referring in this verse. Allah *Glorified is He* did not convey a direct statement, stating that people who deny the truth are wicked. This is because direct statements are open to being believed or disbelieved. Instead, Allah *Glorified is He* posed a question that we must answer ourselves.

If you ask a rhetorical question to a person who has denied your favours towards them, 'Who gave you these favours?' the humility of your question may confront them, 'I gave these favours to you'; such a statement might incite the person's arrogance to reply, 'You gave me nothing'.

Therefore, a statement made in the form of a rhetorical question is a stronger way of encouraging someone to admit the truth than a simple direct statement. In addition, a direct statement is a declaration from your side alone, whereas a rhetorical question might harvest a more valuable declaration from the other person. Hence, people generally use rhetorical questions when they are confident that the reply will be the answer they were looking for.

So, the question: 'And who could be more transgressing (and wicked) (*zdhlamu*),' (*al-'Ankabut*: 68) actually states that no one is more transgressing or wicked than those who deny the truth. The Arabic word *zhulm* means: taking the right of someone and giving it to another individual. Some forms of wickedness are more grave and severe than other forms, and these include the wicked and corrupt doctrines propagated by some people. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Behold, such (a false) ascribing of divinity (to others besides Allah) is indeed a severe transgression (*zhulm*)!' (*Luqman*: 13)

Some forms of wickedness might be simple and trivial. However, inventing lies about Allah *Glorified is He* is the most transgressing act a person can commit.

If that person had invented lies about his fellow creatures, it would have been a lesser grave matter. However, lying about the Creator, Allah *Glorified is He* is the most immense form of wrongdoing. In addition, it is foolish to lie about Allah *Glorified is He* because He is stronger than you are, and can defeat your premises and endeavours. In fact, those who dare to commit such an act of wickedness are only wronging themselves.

We previously said that the fabrication of a lie (*iftira'*) is the deliberate formulation of words that do not correspond to reality. This process is different from involuntary lying which is when a person issues an untruthful statement that he sincerely believes is truthful. However, despite his sincerity and lack of awareness, his speech is still a lie because it is still contrary to reality.

In essence, the scholars have defined truthfulness (*sidq*) to mean the conformity between a person's speech and the reality in existence. On the other hand, they defined untruthfulness (*kadhib*) to be when a person's speech is contrary to reality. So, if I say something that I believe to be true, not intending to speak falsehood, but my speech is contrary to reality, it is still termed as an untruthful lie, although I am not termed a liar.

Allah *Glorified is He* says about the most wicked of people: '...or denies the truth when it comes unto him (through revelation)' (*al-'Ankabut*: 68). That person did not only invent and fabricate lies about Allah *Glorified is He*, but they transgressed further by denying matters of utter sincerity and truthfulness. Allah *Glorified is He* then declared the punishment prepared for their denial, again using a rhetorical question: 'Is the hell-fire not a (sufficient) abode for all who (thus) deny the truth?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 68) Will the hell-fire not have enough space to accommodate all the disbelieving people? Indeed, there is space in the hell-fire for every disbelieving individual. In fact, the hell-fire will yearn for them when it is asked: 'Are you filled with people?' – and it will answer, "(Nay,) is there yet more (for me)?" (*Qaf*: 30)

Why are these people inventing lies about Allah *Glorified is He* and denying the truth? Do they not know that there are places in the hell-fire prepared for them? Therefore, this divine rhetorical question was a condemnation of the notion that the hell-fire has no sufficient places for the disbelievers. It was the will of Allah *Glorified is He* to create mankind, from the time of Adam *peace be upon him*

until the rising of the Hour, and to give them free will, as Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'Let, then, him who wills, believe in it, and let him who wills, reject it' (*al-Kahf*: 29). When He did this, He allowed for the possibility that they would all believe, and so made places for all of them in paradise. Similarly, He allowed for the possibility that they might all disbelieve, and so made places for all them in the hell-fire.

When the judgement is finally established on the Last Day, the people of Paradise will enter its gardens and the people of Hell will enter its perils. Then, Allah *Glorified is He* will give the believers the places in paradise that would have been given to the disbelievers had they believed. The believers will share these gardens amongst themselves. Likewise, the disbelievers will share amongst themselves the places of the believers in hell. So, if someone had one place in hell, he will be given two places therein.

As previously mentioned, the rhetorical question: 'Is the hell-fire not a (sufficient) abode for all who (thus) deny the truth?' (*al-'Ankabut*: 68) makes the listener join in the discourse. It also serves as an admonition and a condemnation for the disbelievers, as in the case of Allah's words: 'Behold, those who have transgressed in sins used to laugh at those who have believed. (And) whenever they passed by them, they used to wink at one another (derisively). (And) whenever they returned to the people of their own kind, they returned while jesting. (And) whenever they saw those (who believe,) they said, "Behold, these (people) have indeed gone astray." (And) in no way were they sent as preservers over them. But today, on the Day (of Judgment), the ones who have believed are laughing at the steadfast disbelievers: (for resting in paradise) on couches, they will look down (at the disbelievers), "Have the steadfast disbelievers been requited for what they were performing?"' (*al-Mutaffifin*: 29-36)

After the believers enter paradise, Allah *Glorified is He* will ask those believers who have been mocked in this life, 'Did we amply requite these disbelievers, and give you your rights back'? This is meant to comfort the believers and rebuke the disbelievers. The believers will exclaim, 'Yes, O lord! Yes, O Lord! Yes, O Lord!' Allah *Glorified is He* wants the believers to exasperate the disbelievers without sympathizing with their destinies. This is

because these disbelievers were transgressors and tyrants. They were provided proofs and sound arguments and have denied these signs in their stubbornness and extended transgression, after this verse, Allah *Glorified is He* says:

وَالَّذِينَ جَاهَدُوا فِينَا لَنَهْدِيَنَّهُمْ سُبُلَنَا وَإِنَّ اللَّهَ لَمَعَ الْمُحْسِنِينَ ﴿٦٩﴾

**But We shall be sure to guide to Our ways those  
who strive hard for Our cause: God is with those  
who do good [69] (The Quran, *al-'Ankabut*: 69)**

The Arabic word *jahadu* refers to the people who strive hard in any endeavour. It is derived from the root letters *j*, *h* and *d*. The verb *jahada* means to work hard, and *ijtahada* means to do work diligently in a particular effort. The Arabic verb *jahada* is a reflexive or reactionary verb which means that the verb has two opposing aspects. The first aspect is that it requires effort from the person doing it, and the second aspect is that it will invoke a resistance from the opposing force. The word *jahada* is embodied in the Arabic lexical form known as *mufa'ala*. This implies that one of these two parties or aspects has a greater share of the action, and the other is more passive. For example, you can say that Zayd cooperated with 'Umar, or that 'Umar cooperated with Zayd. Generally, the one who plays a greater role in the partnership will be the subject, and the other will be the object.

After Allah *Glorified is He* declared that the final abode of the disbelievers will be in Hell, Allah *Glorified is He* urged the believers to stand up to the transgressors. Since these transgressors have perpetrated gross injustices, they must be disciplined in some way. This discipline is not to force them into believing, since Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Let, then, him who wills, believe in it, and let him who wills, rejects it' (*al-Kahf*: 29). Rather, this discipline is simply calling for our message loudly and clearly, and giving our support to the words of truth. After we have done this, people are free to either believe, or remain as they are. Therefore, this verse clarifies the position of the believers in the face of these deniers: 'But as for those who strive hard (*jahadu*) in Our cause – We shall most certainly guide them onto paths that lead unto Us' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69). The meaning of the words: 'strive hard in

Our cause' is that these believers have worked hard for Allah's sake, with the aim of bringing victory to their religion.

We must strive sincerely against many rivals. We have rivals in the highest matter of doctrine which is the existence of Allah *Glorified is He*. Atheists claim that there is no god. There is a specific way of striving against such people. Pagans and idolaters accept the existence of Allah *Glorified is He* but claim that He has partners. There is a different strife and effort to be exerted in their regard.

Atheists are striven against with logic and reason so that they themselves may come to admit that Allah exists. We say to them: Is there anyone who claims to have created himself or herself, or created anyone else? Consider the simplest things you use in your lives: this glass cup, which is a luxury item, do you say that it simply exists without a maker? Is there a tree that fruits these cups for us? Of course, there is not. They are a product made by a producer who used the intellect Allah gave them, and utilised the substances Allah placed in the universe to produce glass.

Another example is the light bulb which Edison invented; how much effort, research, and study did it take to invent it? Then, it needs factories, workers, and engineers to manufacture and service it. Then it can be broken easily. Yet, Edison is very famous, and we have immortalised his memory, and all humanity still praise him for his achievement.

Why do they not then consider the sun which gives light to the whole world since Allah has created it, and will do so until the day of Judgement, without needing any maintenance or spare parts? Could anyone approach it to process any repair in it? Has the sun ever failed to rise, or has it continued to provide you with warmth, light, and heat?

You know who made the light bulb, but do not know who made the sun? You know all about the most trivial things, and who made them. Moreover, you have chronicled the histories of their inventions, and immortalised the memory of their inventors. Had not it better that you reflect on the greatness of Allah's creation and find faith in Him?

Then tell me, O atheist: When the darkness of night covers you, how do you make it light? They say that lights differ from a person to another according to everyone's capacity; in the darkness of night, we see different sources of

light. Some people sit in the glow of a candle, some use a gas-lamp, some use an electric lamp some a neon lamp. The sources of light used at night clearly indicate the capability of those who use them. Once the sun rises, however, and the lamp of Allah shines forth, all these other lights are put out, and they have no effect when the lamp of the Almighty Creator shines forth.

Is not this a sign that when a ruling comes from Allah, we should abandon our own rulings and seek light in Allah's judgement? Do material realities not indicate the truth of spiritual ones?

As for those who claim Allah has partners in His sovereignty, we ask them: Who was it who said Allah has partners? You invented this notion yourself because when Allah said, 'I am One God, and I have no partners', no one contradicted Him, and no one else claimed to be a partner to Allah. This proves that either such a 'partner' does not exist, or else it does but is unaware of what Allah said, or else it is aware, but is unable to respond. Either way, such a partner could not possibly be Allah.

But supposing such a being did exist, what is its system? What does it command and forbid? What delights does it promise you if you worship it? What punishment does it prepare for you if you deny it? Then, such an alleged god has no system, and consequently, to worship it would be absurd.

As for those who believe in a divinely-revealed religion but do not believe in the Mission of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* we say to them: It is enough for you, to believe in Muhammad's Mission, to note an aspect of the greatness of the character of Muhammad Ibn 'Abdullah which is he never fanatically took his own side because his heart was attached to all who believed in Allah, even if they denied him. Muhammad loves all those who believe in Allah, even if they disbelieve in Muhammad; he took the side of his Lord, even with regard to those who disbelieved in him personally.

Another hint is addressed to the Jews or Christians who lived at the time when Islam emerged, yet still denied it. Your own religion was successive to other religions preceding it, and the same is true to your messenger; so why, when Muhammad came to you, did you disbelieve in him and deny him? Why do you allow that 'Isa (Jesus) *peace be upon him* have come after Musa (Moses) *peace be upon him* but deny that Muhammad has come after 'Isa (Jesus)?

So, every kind of controversy on Allah's religion has its corresponding kind of debate, relating to the verse 'But as for those who strive hard in Our cause – We shall most certainly guide them onto paths that lead unto Us...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69). You should first consider the type of striving you need to make. There is a specific style of striving against the atheist, another against the polytheist and another against the people of the Book. The struggle that one Muslim undertakes against another also has its own way, if differences arise between them. However, Allah *Glorified is He* has said, 'Verily, as for those who have broken the unity of their faith and have become sects – thou hast nothing to do with them...' (*al-An'am*: 159).

Then, when you see two Muslim parties opposing one another and you cannot follow either of them, then both are wrong since Islam is a single entity. Previously, we compared it to pure, clear water which has not been mixed with any colour, flavour, or scent; if caprices colour it, and people break into factions within it, just as different juices have different colours, they will lose their way, and miss the truth.

This is because we are all agreed on those matters about which Allah has given us a clear, direct verdict; as for those things which Allah has left for us to exercise our judgement about, we must all respect the opinions of others concerning them, and say, 'My opinion is correct, but there might be something wrong with it; the other party's opinion is not so true, but it might be correct'. In this way, we can coexist with our different views.

The True Lord *Glorified is He* give us a clear example of this; if there is a matter which He wishes to be absolutely unequivocally clear, He makes it clear with a single statement which cannot be differed over. For example, when describing the lesser ritual ablution, Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'O you who have attained to faith! When you are about to pray, wash your face, and your hands and arms up to the elbows...' (*al-Ma'ida*: 6). He did not specify the exact area meant by 'face' since everyone agrees on what the face is; he did specify the area meant by 'arms', since people differ about this. And so, the issues over which Muslims differ should be discussed in a particular way in light of this without any zealous bigotry. If something is clear, and is not subject to personal judgment, all must accept it; and if a text is subject to a difference of opinion, everyone should follow his own understanding of the text.



For example, the prepositional particle *bi* in Arabic is used as a partitive, supportive or additive; if you suggest using it in one of these, do not deny another person's right to interpret it according to another usage.

If fighting breaks out between two factions of Muslims, there must be another moderate party which can mediate between and reconcile them. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'Hence, if two groups of believers fall to fighting, make peace between them; but then, if one of the two [groups] goes on acting wrongfully towards the other, fight against the one that acts wrongfully until it reverts to Allah's Commandment; and if they revert, make peace between them with justice, and deal equitably [with them]: for, verily, Allah loves those who act equitably!' (*al-Hujurat*: 9)

Notice that Allah *Glorified is He* called them 'believers'. This means that our shared belief does not mean that we will never have differences of opinion. This faith, that does not exclude a possibility of disagreeing, obliges us to ensure that there is a third neutral party who assumes reconciliation between the two fighting parties and deterrence of the transgressor until it returns to the right path and abide by the order of Allah.

If they do return, we do not simply leave the winner-loser scenario shade over the place. Rather, we reconcile between them, and remove the rancour and enmity from their hearts; for the stronger party will be humbled if we chastise them, and the weaker party will gain strength if we support them. Thus, balance is achieved, and both sides will be equal, and everyone will return to the realm of peace and security.

We have still to talk about a more important form of striving which is the striving by a person against his own soul. Upon returning from a battle, the Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessing be upon him, said, 'We have returned from the lesser struggle to the greater struggle.'<sup>(1)</sup> So, he described the struggle one does against their own soul as the greater struggle. Why? Because on the battlefield, you face a tangible, clearly defined enemy whose numbers and methods are clear to you; but if your enemy is inside yourself, it is difficult to fight it. Indeed, you love to fulfil the desires your soul longs for, and to obey its whims and inclinations, and all the while it induces you from your inside.

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(1) Narrated by Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi in (*Tarikh Baghdad*)

When striving against your soul, you should make a comparison between the gain of immediate desires of your soul and their consequential eternal woes, and the loss of the reward of your Lord in paradise where there are the delights that no eye has seen, nor any ear has heard nor has any human heart imagined.

Make this comparison between your soul and your Lord and reflect, and know that your Lord has done much for you, and that He prepared many blessings for you before you even existed. The One Who created this universe for you, and placed it at your service, is certainly worthy of your trust. You are His servant and His creation; have you ever seen an artisan take one of his products and destroy it?

If you see a carpenter take a plane and run it across a piece of wood, know that he is getting it ready to serve its purpose. I remember the story<sup>(1)</sup> of the little boy Ayman who came crying to his mother one day because the maid was beating the rug; so his mother took him and showed him the dust that was falling from the rug every time the maid hit it, and so the child understood as best he could.

Likewise, when the True Lord *Glorified is He* tests His creatures, He does not do so to harm them, but rather to improve them. We sometimes hear a mother here (in Egypt) say to her only child: 'O Allah, let me drink his fire!' meaning 'Allah kill you'. By Allah, what would she feel if Allah answered her prayer? But in reality, she does not hate her child, the apple of her eye; rather, she hates the characteristic of his that has made her angry.

Likewise, the True Lord *Glorified is He* does not hate His servant, but rather, dislikes his bad characteristics. Therefore, He wishes to purify him by afflicting him by tribulations so that he may become pure again like the day he was born. Then, you should think well of your Lord, O man!

Thus, we say that one of the greatest forms of striving is to strive against your own soul because it is always urging you to fulfil its desires, and it is open to the temptation of caprice, and the whispers of the devil that makes every evil alluring to it, and every foul thing beloved.

We explained before how to differentiate between the enticement of the devil and the enticement of the human soul. The soul certainly has part in

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(1) *The story of the boy Ayman and the beating of the carpet*

driving man to commit sin. The evidence on this is the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* saying, 'When *Ramadan* comes, the gates of Paradise are opened, and the gates of Hell are closed, and the devils are shackled.'<sup>(1)</sup>

If all sins were caused by only the work of the devil, this would mean that no one would sin in *Ramadan*. Yet, many sins are committed in *Ramadan*, which means that they must be the result of the soul's enticement. It is as though the True Lord *Glorified is He* wanted to show up the sons of Adam and says to them: 'See how I have chained the demons, yet you still sin'!

If you want to know whether a sin was caused by your soul or by the devil, know that the soul will insist on a specific sin, for which it will accept no substitute, and will keep on urging you until you fall into that sin; the devil, on the other hand, wants you commit whatever sin no matter its form; if you refuse to do a certain sin, he will try and make you do another.

A prudent person must reflect on this: a sin gives you immediate pleasure, and a passing enjoyment, which can never be appropriate for the human being whom Allah has honoured, making him His vicegerent on earth, and a master of the universe. The entire universe, heaven and earth, serve him; does it make sense that a servant lives longer than its master?

You will die, whether after one year or a hundred years, whilst the sun that serves you has lived for millions of years. Then, you must have another life which is more lasting than that of your servant; if you are now living this life that is called *dunya* (lower life, that is/the life of this world), this means there must be another 'higher' life which is your life in the hereafter, where there is no more death.

When the Noble Quran speaks to us of striving, it sometimes says: '...and strive hard in Allah's Cause with your possessions and your lives...' (*at-Tawba*: 41). And it says, 'But as for those who strive hard in Our cause...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69).

Striving in Allah's Cause means to strive in the way to Allah to demonstrate faith in the One God and the sincerity of the Messenger He sent with a

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Muslim and Ahmad, on the authority of Abu Hurayra

miracle and a system of guidance. Once this way has become clear to you, and you have come to believe in the One God. He says to you: take every action in your life in the light of 'But as for those who strive hard in our cause...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69); that is with complete sincerity and devotion to Allah, not considering anything else but Him.

However much a person seeks sincerity in his actions, intending Allah's regard alone, he will not be completely safe from the possibility that his action might be tainted with ostentation, or showing-off. Even Prophet Muhammad *peace and blessing be upon him* who was protected by Allah from committing sins, said, 'O Allah, I seek your forgiveness for every action I intended to devote to you alone, but which might be intermingled with something that was not completely for you.'<sup>(1)</sup>

This is the meaning of '...strive hard in Our cause...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69); that is our actions are exclusively dedicated to only Allah. Otherwise, what is the difference between the believer and the disbeliever? They both work hard in this life to make a living and support their families, and so they are equal in their action. What, then, is the advantage of the believer?

The distinction is that the disbeliever works as much as they can to satisfy only their needs, while the believer works as much as they can to satisfy their needs and to give a hand to those who are unable to work for themselves. A believer intends to work for themselves and for the needy.

An example of this is a grocer who one day sold a lot of products in the morning and made the money he needed for himself, then he closed his store. He did not consider the buyers dealing with him for the settlement, or the housewife who was waiting for her husband to come home so she can go out and buy what she needs. He only considered his own needs, and forgot the needs of others.

It is worthy reading the verses saying: 'Truly, to a happy state shall attain the believers; those who humble themselves in their prayer, who turn away from all that is frivolous and who are intent on inner purity'. (*al-Mu'minun*: 1-4) Allah *Glorified is He* did not say, 'Who pay the poor-due', but rather, 'who are intent

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(1) This is a prayer of *Mutraf ibn 'Abdullah*, as narrated by *Ibn Rajab Al-Hanbali*.

on (giving) the poor-due', that is, who work for the sake of the poor-due, working as hard as they can, not only as much as they need to. Those who cast their actions in the light of 'But as for those who strive hard in Our cause...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69), always have Allah on their minds.

In order to understand this issue, let yourself think about a favour you have done for someone, but you intended a worldly purpose, not to please Allah. The person you did the favour for might deny it; some may even dispraise you. If this happens, blame only yourself because your intention was wrong. If you did the favour for the sake of people expect your reward from them as might be. If, on the other hand, you act for Allah's sake, trust that your good deed will be honoured by Allah, and by the people, too.

When the True Lord *Glorified is He* has given mankind free will to choose whether to believe or disbelieve, He draws our attention to the fact that if you do someone a favour and he then denies your favour and is ungrateful for it, do not be sad because the people even did this to Allah *Glorified is He*; He created them and provided them with their livelihood, and then they denied Him.

Then comes the reward for striving in Allah's Cause: 'But as for those who strive hard in Our cause, We shall most certainly guide them onto paths that lead unto Us...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69). That is, We shall guide them to Our paths; as though there is more than one path to Allah. Therefore, you should not belittle any good deed, no matter how small it seems. Allah forgave a man who gave water to a dog that was panting with thirst.<sup>(1)</sup> As well, you should not belittle any sin; Allah sent a woman to hell for imprisoning and starving a cat.<sup>(2)</sup> Moreover, you do not belittle any person, whoever they are, for Allah has hidden secrets within His creatures. Many a person with dishevelled hair and covered with dust, whereas he is held in such high esteem by Allah that if he were to adjure in the name of Allah about anything, Allah would fulfil that.

Thus, if you know that you have some type of quality that distinguishes you from others, consider those things in which the other surpass you, and beware of looking at them with pride, and of deeming yourself better than

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(1) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* on the authority of *Abu Hurayra*

(2) Narrated by *Al-Bukhari* on the authority of *'Umar*

others; if you are superior in one thing, you are inferior in many others. We said before that Allah divided talents among people so that people would remain in need of each other.

Allah's words: '...We shall most certainly guide them onto paths that lead unto Us...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69) means the ways that will lead to the delights of paradise, and ways that enhance the certitude of faith of which Allah says, '...with their light spreading rapidly before them and on their right...' (*al-Hadid*: 12).

'Umar ibn 'Abd Al-'Aziz *Allah rest his soul* said, 'What prevents us from learning things unknown to us is our failure to implement what we do know.'<sup>(1)</sup> That is the reason we are unable to know Allah's secrets is our failure to abide by His commands. How, then, should He give us from His Grace, while we have not utilised what He gave us before? But if you implement what you know from His orders, you become a guardian on the system of Allah, and, indeed, He will give you more of His Grace. Allah *Glorified is He* says, 'just as for those who are [willing to be] guided, He increases their [ability to follow His] Guidance...' (*Muhammad*: 17); and: 'O you who have attained to faith! If you remain conscious of Allah, He will endow you with a standard by which to discern the true from the false...' (*al-Anfal*: 29).

'Standard' or 'Criterion' is also one of the names of the Quran; and so when you are conscious of Allah as you should be, following the guidance He lays out in the Quran, He will give you another criterion and another illumination, by which you will perceive the reality of things, and be guided to sound judgement. This is the illumination Allah gave to 'Ali *Allah be pleased with him* when he went to see 'Umar ibn al-Khattab *Allah be pleased with him* and found that he intended to punish, for adultery, a woman who had given birth after six months of marriage, while a pregnancy usually lasts nine months. 'Ali said to 'Umar: 'But Allah says otherwise, O Commander of the Faithful!' 'Umar replied, 'What did He say, 'Ali?' 'Ali explained that Allah *Glorified is He* says: 'And the [divorced] mothers may nurse their children for two whole years, if they wish to complete the period of nursing...' (*al-Baqara*: 233); That is,

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(1) Narrated by Al-Qurtubi in his (*Tafsir*)

for twenty-four months. And in another verse, He said: 'and her bearing him and his utter dependence on her took thirty months...' (*al-Ahqaf*: 15). By subtracting the two numbers, we are left with six months, which is therefore the minimum period a pregnancy can last.

This is the criterion that Allah gives the believers who act upon what they know from the Lord's teachings. Then, considering how magnificent 'Umar was, he was such an inspired man that the divine revelation would come down in support of his opinion. He used to say henceforth: 'A wretched land it is where Abu Al-Hassan ('Ali) is not present.'

It is well-known that 'Ali, *Allah be pleased with him*, grew up in the household of Messenger Muhammad *peace and blessings be upon him* was closely related to, and gained his knowledge directly from, him; that is to say that 'Ali's background was purely and entirely Islamic, and he is an authority and master of logic to argue for the sake of the truth. For example, at the Battle of Siffin, which raged between 'Ali and Mu'awiya, 'Ammar ibn Yasir was amongst 'Ali's troops, and was killed by one of Mu'awiya's troops. The Companions there present then remembered the statement of Messenger Muhammad: 'Alas for 'Ammar! The unjust faction shall slay him!'<sup>(1)</sup> Thus, they realised that Mu'awiya's faction was the unjust one. Therefore, the Companions began to abandon Mu'awiya's troops to join 'Ali's. 'Amr ibn Al-'As, who was on the side of Mu'awiya rushed to Mu'awiya and said: 'O, Commander of the Faithful, a rumour has spread amongst the army, and if it continues there will be none left with us!' Mu'awiya asked what it was; 'Amr explained: 'they remembered that Messenger Muhammad said: "Alas for 'Ammar! The unjust faction shall slay him!"' Mu'awiya replied, 'Spread the word amongst them that no one killed him save the one who brought him out to fight' meaning 'Ali. When 'Ali heard this, he replied using the sound criterion and logic he possessed: 'Then ask him who killed Hamza ibn 'Abd Al-Muttalib!'

So, if you act in accordance with your knowledge, Allah will teach you, by whatever method, what you do not know. We previously gave an example on this issue; suppose you have a clumsy son who is not successful in his

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(1) Narrated by Al-Bukhari, Ahmad and Al-Bayhaqi, on the authority of Abu Sa'id Al-Khudri

worldly endeavours. Your brothers advise you to try him even with a simple project, costing only one hundred pounds. If you did this, and your son wasted the money and made no good use of it, would you dare to give him more? But if he had invested this money wisely, and profited from it, you would have been happy to give him more.

Then, Allah *Glorified is He* says: '...for, behold, Allah is indeed with the doers of good' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69). 'Doing good' means to worship Allah as though you see Him; if you do not actually see Him, He indeed sees you. Literally, *ihsan* means to do something excellently especially in worshipping Allah, while abiding by the instructions of Allah. If you do good deeds, Allah will do good deeds to you by increasing your illumination and brilliance, and alleviating difficulties of obedience to you, and making sins seem naturally vile to you.

One of the righteous men loved doing good deeds so much that he said, 'O, my Lord, I fear that You will not reward me for my obedience because it has turned into a desire to me.' That is, if there were no Paradise and no Hell, I would still obey You, because Your obedience has become a desire to me. Yet You commanded us, Lord, to resist the soul's desires, and so I fear You will not reward me for it. Responding to this pious man, Allah says: '...behold, Allah is indeed with the doers of good' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69).

The word 'with' implies company, which in our human understanding means someone meets with another. But, for Allah to be with you, it is different. It must be understood considering the verse: 'there is nothing like unto Him' (*ash-Shura*: 11). You exist, and Allah exists, but is your existence like Allah's existence? Allah knows that we are now recording this lecture in Abu Bakr As-Siddiq Mosque; but is our knowledge like His Knowledge? Allah knew this before this mosque was even built, and before we were even born.

Therefore, Allah gives us a parable, saying: 'just as [there are signs thereof] within your own selves: can you not, then, see?' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 21) This is an answer to those who demand to see Allah *Glorified is He* even though He is unseen in this worldly life. This reminds us of those who said to their prophet: 'Make us see Allah face to face' (*an-Nisa*: 153). How can they see Him, when part of the Majesty of Allah is that He cannot be seen, or sensed by



human faculties? Allah *Glorified is He* gives us evidence of this in our own selves: 'just as [there are signs thereof] within your own selves: can you not, then, see?' (*adh-Dhariyat*: 21) Think of the closest things to you in your own self, not the horizons around you. Is there not a spirit within you, which controls your body, makes you live, and moves your limbs? This is clearly demonstrated by the fact that if this spirit were to leave your body, it would become a lifeless corpse? Have you ever seen this spirit, though it lies between your two sides? Have you ever perceived it with any of your senses?

Then, it is with you, but not under your capacity of perception, though it is a simple creature of Allah's. So, how can you hope to see the Creator *Glorified is He* while you cannot even see a creature? If you ask, 'But what about the believers' vision of Allah in the hereafter?' we reply that, in the hereafter, Allah will create us in another form with which we will be able to see Him *Glorified is He* because all creatures will exist according to different standards. Is it not true that you will eat and drink in paradise, but yet never have to relieve yourself?

When the ruler of Byzantium asked one of the Muslim scholars how we could eat and drink in paradise but need not to relieve ourselves, the Muslim scholar replied: 'What is amazing about that? Do you not see that a foetus in its mother's womb eats and grows, but it does not produce waste? If it were to defecate in its placenta, it would choke itself.'

Then, the emperor asked the scholar: 'How do you say that you will enjoy the delights of paradise without them decreasing or ending?' He replied, 'Suppose you have a flame, and everyone in the whole world comes and lights a candle from it, will this flame be decreased? Then the emperor asked, 'So, where do all the spirits that were inside us go when we die?' He replied, 'They go to wherever they were before they came to dwell within us.'

These are examples of the Allah-given success and guidance to the truth implied by the verse: 'But as for those who strive hard in Our cause – We shall most certainly guide them onto paths that lead unto Us...' (*al-'Ankabut*: 69), as well as described in the verse: '... If you remain conscious of Allah, He will endow you with a standard by which to discern the true from the false ...' (*al-Anfal*: 29).



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